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October 10, 2017

UofSC receives grant to expand research of children with disabilities, birth defects

The Centers for Disease Control has awarded the University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health a five-year, \$14.8 million grant to expand its research focus on children with disabilities and birth defects.

This award will allow for the creation of the Coordinating Center for Research to Promote the Health of Children with Birth Defects and People with Developmental and Other Disabilities, which is an expansion of the Disability Research and Dissemination Center. The DRDC, housed at the Arnold School, is a partnership among the University of South Carolina, the State University of New York Upstate Medical University and the American Association on Health and Disability.

The principal investigator on the grant is Suzanne McDermott, epidemiology and biostatistics professor.

“The overall aim of this cooperative agreement is to expand the capacity to conduct research, increase scientific knowledge, and promote the health and well-being of babies, children and adults,” McDermott says. “We expect to advance knowledge through a combination of research, translation document development and dissemination through the Disability Research and Dissemination Center.”

The Arnold School conducted 12 funded projects during the first cycle and there were 26 projects at other universities including Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Ohio State, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Colorado. Researchers focused on an array of aspects of birth defects and disabilities such as spina bifida, hearing loss, cerebral palsy and autism spectrum disorder. There were also three overarching studies related to genetics and pregnancy nutrition in the U.S. and internationally that have the potential to change the science of prevention and early treatment.

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