

The National Children’s Study-Polk County, Iowa: A Community Based Approach to Research

Dr. Rizwan Shah – Site Principal Investigator, Iowa Health-Des Moines
Dr. Jeff Murray – Principal Investigator, University of Iowa
Dr. Martin Schmidt – Associate Professor, Des Moines University
Sarah Brooks – Operations Manager, Iowa Health-Des Moines
Juan Cadenillas – Public Health Planner, Polk County Health Department
Nancy Davin – Program Associate, University of Iowa
Denise Hotopp – Vice President of Operations, Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa
Jeff DeReus – Project Manager, University of Iowa
Rick Kozin – Program Manager for Health Planning and Education, Polk County Health Department
Jennifer Rigdon – Research Study Coordinator, University of Iowa
Karen Sullivan – Field Manager, Visiting Nurse Services
Lori Wahman – Hospital Liaison, Mercy Medical Center
Krishna Winfrey – Senior Survey Director, NORC

Introduction: The Polk County Study Location is located 120 miles west of the University of Iowa Study Center. Subsequently, the study center has opted to rely on local agencies for outreach, engagement, study coordination, and data collection.

Methods: Polk County has a history of collaboration with health care and social service systems. We took advantage of the unique strengths of multiple partners to knit together a cohesive approach to engagement through follow-up.

Partners include the University of Iowa (UIowa) as the Study Center hub providing scientific expertise, oversight, supervising the call center, and IT development. Iowa Health-Des Moines (IH-DM) provides a well respected local pediatrician to serve as Site PI as well as study coordination through the Office of Research. Mercy Hospital provides additional OB PI support at the local level. The Polk County Health Department (PCHD) has established relationships with local community leaders and experience utilizing multiple media modalities. PCHD plays a leading role in outreach and engagement with all populations. Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa (VNS) participates in the enumeration, recruitment, and follow-up visits. Their experience in home visitations and availability of interpretive service is an asset. Des Moines University (DMU) provides a research department for biological and environmental sample collection. The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) provides data collection and case management systems and expertise in listing, household enumeration, and recruitment.

Results: The inclusion of two major health systems, the county health department, a local home health agency, and a local medical school has increased the community ownership of the NCS. A sense of local ownership may help to increase participation and encourage long term retention.

Conclusion: While not always easy, multi-agency collaboration to implement research such as the NCS validates the idea that this is a community based study. Communication between agencies must be open, honest, and on-going to be successful.