

Front & CENTER

NEWSLETTER FROM THE **RUTGERS CENTER FOR STATE HEALTH POLICY** WITHIN THE
INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH, HEALTH CARE POLICY AND AGING RESEARCH

CSHP Celebrates 25th Anniversary



Center faculty and staff stand to be recognized at the Center's 25th Anniversary Symposium & Celebration

Stakeholders from across New Jersey, including nearly 200 policymakers, grant makers and academic colleagues from Rutgers University and beyond came together in November to mark the 25th anniversary of Center for State Health Policy with a symposium and celebration.

"If I were to thank everyone who has supported and collaborated with the Center over the past 25 years... we would be here well into the night," Joel C. Cantor, a distinguished professor of public policy and the founding director of the Center, said at the event last fall.



Brian C. Quinn delivers remarks

"How incredibly fortunate we have been to collaborate with such a passionate group of professionals over the past two and a half decades" across academia, state government and community organizations, Cantor added.



Left to Right: Margaret Koller, Joel Cantor, George LeBlanc, Eugene Lepore, and Chancellor Brian Strom

"At Rutgers Health, we are deeply proud of the Center's enduring impact on New Jersey's public health landscape," Rutgers Health Chancellor Brian Strom said. "The Center exemplifies the type of work that makes Rutgers a renowned research institution – where research isn't just an academic pursuit but a powerful driver of policies and practices that change people's lives for the better."

The analytic capacity and culture of collaboration the Center has fostered has made it "a model for how New Jersey can be a leader on a whole range of health policy issues" said Brian C. Quinn, associate vice president for research-evaluation-learning at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Quinn added that "not every state has an asset like the Center for State Health Policy, and I think it's worth remembering how lucky we are that we've got them here in New Jersey."



Commissioner Adelman presented Cantor and Koller with a proclamation from Gov. Phil Murphy recognizing the Center's silver anniversary

"When I think of all the contributions of the Center for State Health Policy, there's one word that really comes to mind, and that's humanity," said Sarah Adelman, commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services. "The work the Center has produced over the last 25 years has focused on the humanity of the lives being studied. These are not just numbers, not just populations, they are people."

Commissioner Adelman also presented Dr. Cantor with a proclamation from Governor Murphy recognizing the Center's silver anniversary.

John E. McDonough, professor of the practice of public health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health spoke to the changing health policy landscape nationally and the renewed importance of the Center's work.

"There's a level of familiarity and sense of community and being in it together regardless of which stakeholder branch you are a part of, and I think that stands out," McDonough said. "I think that's really what a big piece of value for the state is in making sure that these organizations stay together and thrive."



Sujoy Chakravarty (Left) and Michael Yedidia (Middle) speaking with Tobias Gerhard

Bruce C. Vladeck, chair of the Center's External Advisory Committee (EAC) and former administrator of the then Health Care Financing Administration, now known as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), remarked on the Center's rigor and impact.

"I think, in many ways, [serving as EAC chair] is the easiest job I've ever had," Vladeck said, "because the work of the Center has been so important and so interesting and so well laid out." He also spoke to the "special importance of having resources to study, understand, analyze and advocate for change in Medicaid programs at the state level... I can only think of a couple other [organizations] that are even in the same ballpark as this Center in that regard."



Keynote speaker John E. McDonough (Left) and Bruce C. Vladeck

Tobias Gerhard, director of the Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research, delivered remarks and acknowledged the Center's upcoming leadership transition, with Dr. Cantor stepping down as director after a quarter century. He will remain on the faculty to focus on his research portfolio.

"What has made [Joel] such an extraordinary and effective leader, and why I am so optimistic about the Center's future, is that he has infused all his values into the foundation of CSHP," Gerhard said. "These principles are now a part of the Center's organizational DNA."

For more information about the Center's 25th Anniversary Symposium & Celebration, as well as additional reflection materials, visit the [event page](#) on our website.





Manisha Agrawal
Senior Research Analyst

Hudson County Department of Health and Human Services
Assessment of Hudson County Opioid Crisis Response Strategy



Mara Getz Sheftel
Instructor

National Institute on Aging
Legal Status Exposure, Health, and Kinship Networks among Latino Immigrants



Erica Eliason
Assistant Professor

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Association of Continuous Medicaid Eligibility During COVID-19 with Postpartum Coverage and Health Care Use (HD4A)

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
The Effects of the Medicaid Continuous Coverage Requirement during the Public Health Emergency on Postpartum Coverage and Maternal and Infant Care after Childbirth



Margaret Koller
Executive Director

New Jersey Department of Health
Landscape Analysis of Universal Vaccine Purchasing Strategies for NJ

New Jersey Department of Children and Families
Evaluation of Intensive Mobile Treatment Services (IMTS) for Youth in Children's System of Care (CSOC) with Co-occurring IDD

Evaluation of the Children's System of Care Youth Assertive Community Treatment (Youth ACT) Pilot Program

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Informing and Supporting State Health Policy in New Jersey (Center Infrastructure Grant)

Support for Center for State Health Policy's 25th Anniversary



Ann Nguyen
Assistant Research Professor

Learning Health System Research Project Award Program
Establishing the Value for Integrated Behavioral Health at RWJBH Primary Care Practices

Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (Career Development Award)
An Evidence-Based Leadership Training Intervention to Accelerate Integration of Behavioral Health and Primary Care



Dan Treglia
Instructor

Rutgers Equity Alliance for Community Health
Pairing Data with New Infrastructure to Improve Local Capacity to Address Homelessness in Newark



Dina Belloff, MA
Research Project
Manager



Erica Eliason, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor



Mara Getz Sheftel, PhD
Instructor



Yasmeen Khellah, MPH, CPH
Research Project Coordinator



Angelina Lowder, MHA
Executive Assistant



Matt Mleczko, PhD
Post Doctoral Associate



Allison Oh, MPH
Research Coordinator



John S. Palatucci, PhD, MPA, CPH
Assistant Research Professor



Lifang Pan
Data Analyst



Julian Rodriguez
Data Analyst

Welcome



Mandi Spishak-Thomas, PhD, MSW, LCSW
Assistant Research Professor



Dan Treglia, PhD, MPP
Instructor



Jacob Yun, MS
Data Analyst

Inside iPHD

First Article Citing iPHD Data Published

The first peer-reviewed journal article to cite data from the [NJ Integrated Population Health Project](#) was published in the April 2024 issue of [Health Affairs](#). Assistant Professor [Slawa Rokicki](#) from the Rutgers School of Public Health led a study using linked birth and hospital discharge records for infants to explore the association between perinatal depressive symptoms among new mothers and the use of emergency rooms to treat their infants during the first year of life.

Dr. Rokicki [spoke to Rutgers Today](#) about this work, and you can learn more about ongoing iPHD research projects by visiting the [iPHD project website](#).



Slawa Rokicki, PhD, MS

Ten New Projects Approved in 2024

In 2024, the [New Jersey Integrated Population Health Data Project](#) (iPHD) Governing Board approved ten additional [research projects](#) for data release! These researchers hail from institutions within and beyond New Jersey and will use their access to the iPHD's linked data sets to study some of the most pressing and persistent population health challenges, including maternal morbidity and the opioid misuse epidemic.

Visit [the iPHD website](#) to learn more about ongoing iPHD-supported research projects and the schedule for upcoming application cycles. **The next iPHD Request for Applications (RFA) will be released in May 2025.**



CSHP Attends AcademyHealth ARM 2024

CSHP faculty and staff attended the 2024 AcademyHealth [Annual Research Meeting \(ARM\)](#) in Baltimore, Maryland. The event featured cutting-edge research from the fields of health services research and health policy, including presentations by faculty members, Ann Nguyen, John S. Palatucci, Mandi Spishak-Thomas and Erica Eliason. [Dr. Nguyen](#) shared her work exploring provider perspectives on the integration of behavioral and primary care services.

[Dr. Palatucci](#) presented findings from a CSHP study documenting changes in Medicaid enrollment for individuals experiencing homelessness through ACA eligibility expansion. [Dr. Spishak-Thomas](#) presented a case study of Medicaid estate recovery in the state of North Carolina. Finally, [Dr. Eliason](#) presented work and took part in a panel discussion about changes in postpartum Medicaid coverage in the context of pandemic-era continuous coverage requirements.

Visit the CSHP website [publications page](#) for more.



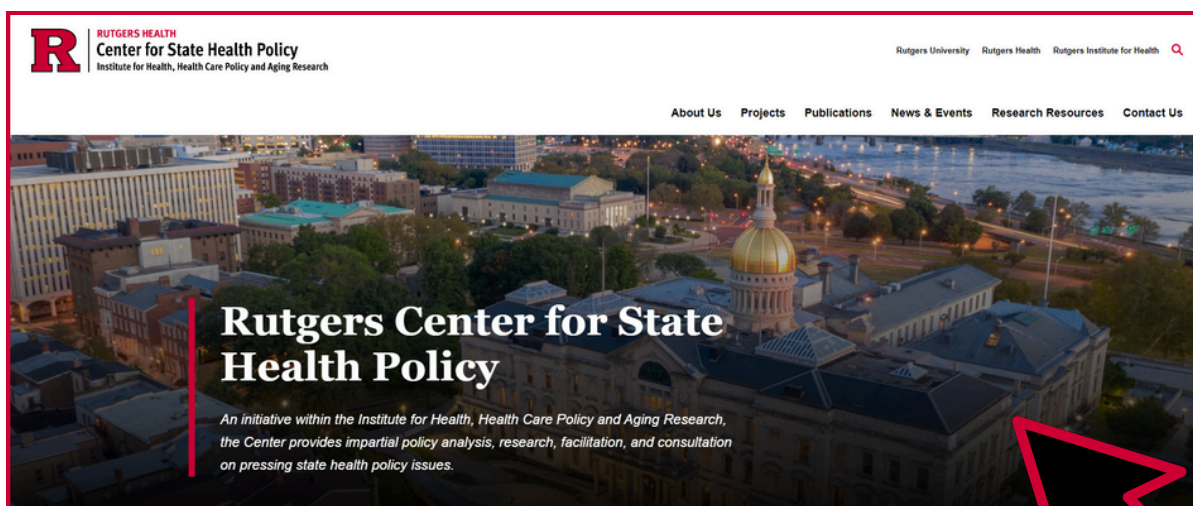
Center faculty and leadership attended the 2024 AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting (ARM)

CSHP Debuts New & Improved Website

We are excited to share with our colleagues and partners [a new and improved website](#)! With generous support from the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#), the Center designed and developed a flagship website with enhanced navigation and an intuitive user experience.

Anchoring the site is the Center's more than 800 openly accessible [publications](#), from journal articles and reports to presentations and issue briefs, as well as the research [projects](#) for which the Center has become known. The website also highlights the accomplishments of our [faculty and staff](#), as well as the [latest news and thought leadership](#) pieces featuring insights from the Center's work.

Visit the Center's new website, cshp.rutgers.edu, to learn more!





Exit Interview with Dr. Michael Yedidia

THANK YOU!

In January 2025, CSHP said farewell to Senior Medical Sociologist and Research Professor [Michael Yedidia, PhD, MPH](#) after a distinguished 18-year tenure at the Center.

“In addition to leading a large body of research addressing some of the most pressing population health issues of our day, Michael was a generous mentor to our faculty and staff in countless ways,” Director Joel Cantor said. “His high standards for research rigor, ethics, and community engagement will live on for many years in the work of the CSHP team.”

We caught up with Dr. Yedidia and asked him to share some reflections about his time and work with CSHP.

What is it that brought you to work at the Center?

My research agenda has been largely aimed at informing strategies for improving access to essential services, increasing their effectiveness in meeting the needs of under-served populations, and improving health professions education to better equip providers to serve such needs.

The Center’s mission to produce sound evidence for informing health policy and improving programs aligned well with my interests and values.

What impact do you feel your work had on health policy and practice and on your own research career?

Our 15-year longitudinal study, following children in 120 schools in four predominantly low-income cities, afforded the opportunity to identify the impact of exposure to changes in the school and community environments on changes in students’ weight status.

It has also facilitated assessment of the influence of emerging environmental and policy developments (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic and associated school closings, and new federal regulations on the nutritional content of school meals) on children’s nutritional status.

Findings have guided interventions and policies, local and national.

Pursuing this research has allowed me to address population health disparities and to apply my training in public health and sociology and my experience in evaluation research to a new and vital area. It also afforded the stimulation and satisfaction of working with a research team that included the disciplines of sociology, demography, economics, nutrition, geography, and health education.

Directing the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s (RWJF) national program on *Evaluating Innovations in Nursing Education (EIN)* provided a new way of pursuing my longstanding interest in conducting research aimed at improving health professions education.

New to me, it was a chance to have an impact on education through funding and providing guidance to research pursued by others rather than directing grant-funded research on my own.

If you had to represent your time and your work at the Center using three words or phrases, what would they be and why?

Aligning my research priorities with my personal values: Maintaining this coherence has been key to enjoying my work at the Center over the years.

Keeping interested: The Center’s success in engaging people from varied disciplines in its projects not only results in better research and sounder findings, it also makes for a lively and invigorating workplace.

It’s the people: The faculty and staff of the Center have been central, not only because of their commitment and what they bring to their jobs, but also because of the joy of working with them as colleagues and friends.

What are you most proud of from your time working at the Center? Why?

Putting pride aside, I’m particularly satisfied, and somewhat amused, at my success in finding something interesting to dwell on in the daily routine and tasks of doing my job. While I can credit my imagination and interests for some of this satisfaction, the setting is crucial to keeping people engaged, and I am grateful for the Center’s role in maintaining a supportive work culture.