

Front & CENTER

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

Appearances & Accolades

Joel Cantor Recognized on 2026 NJBIZ Health Care Power List



CSHP Director Joel Cantor, a widely respected health policy researcher, was recognized on this year's NJBIZ Health Care Power List. A nationally acclaimed expert in health services financing and delivery, he was acknowledged for his decades of leadership in the New Jersey health policy space.

"Over more than two decades," the journal writes, "Cantor has built the Center into a nationally recognized hub for data-driven policy analysis, leading major initiatives on population health, health equity and outcomes for vulnerable populations." [Learn more](#) about the other Rutgers Health honorees.

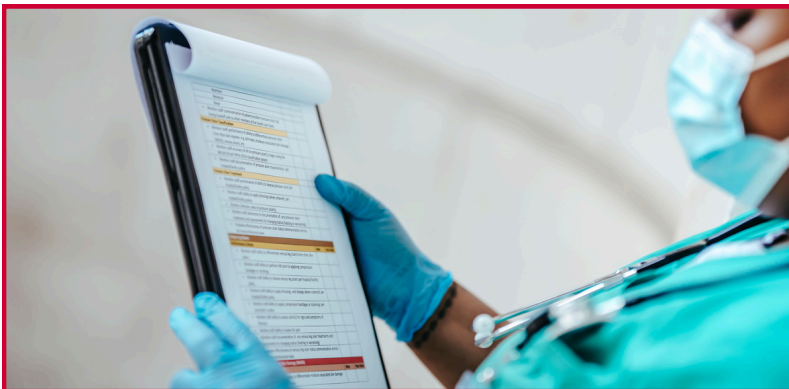
Mara Sheftel's Presentation Sheds Light on Social Isolation and Cognition

Last month, CSHP Instructor Mara Getz Sheftel presented new research on the risk profiles of social disconnection among U.S. older adults at the Herbert and Jacqueline Krieger Klein Alzheimer's Research Center **2026 Symposium**. Her talk explored how different patterns of social disconnection may contribute to cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.



Dr. Sheftel's work is ongoing and aims to identify distinct social risk profiles that could guide targeted prevention strategies to reduce dementia risk.

Article Spotlights CSHP Research on Healthcare for Unhoused Persons



Stronger partnerships between homeless service providers and health care organizations can significantly improve medical care for people experiencing homelessness. A study published in *The Milbank Quarterly* highlights how cross-sector collaboration helps providers stretch limited resources and better meet clients' needs.

Led by CSHP Director Joel Cantor and retired Professor & Senior Medical Sociologist Michael Yedidia, the study found that effective collaborations often co-locate services, maintain intensive coordination, and tailor care to client preferences. Read more about this study in [Rutgers Today](#).



Get to Know Incoming CSHP Director Lindsay Shea

Nationally recognized scholar and Medicaid policy expert **Lindsay Shea, DrPH, MS**, who directs the Policy and Analytics Center at the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, has been selected as the next director of CSHP, succeeding founding director Joel Cantor. She will join the Center on July 6th.

We caught up with Dr. Shea to learn more about her work and the experience she brings to CSHP. An extended version of this interview is available on the [CSHP website](#).

What is one experience from the early days in your academic career that continues to influence your approach to person-centered, community-engaged research?

Before I had a faculty title or a research program of my own, I was doing early-stage work on what would become the Pennsylvania Autism Census. What struck me then — and has never left me — was the gap between what the data said and what families and autistic individuals were actually living. It's why I've always tried to pair quantitative data with community partnership — the numbers need a human frame to be useful, and the community's voice is what keeps research honest about what questions matter.

How have your experiences as a mentor informed your philosophy as both an educator and a leader?

Mentoring has been one of the most clarifying experiences of my career, in part because it forces you to articulate things you otherwise do instinctively. It also requires co-creating conditions where people can do their best work — which means being clear about expectations, being honest when something isn't working, and being genuinely invested in outcomes beyond your own. I believe the environments that make a difference for people are built on trust, intellectual generosity, and a commitment to impact.

Why did you extend your autism research beyond early childhood, and what has this new perspective taught you?

Early in my doctoral work, my dissertation focused on adolescents with autism transitioning to adulthood — a period that was, at the time, receiving very little research attention compared to early childhood. What I found was that we could observe cliffs both in access to services and in the ages included in research and so, for me, it was impossible to limit my research to young adulthood. The biggest lesson this perspective has taught me is that autism doesn't diminish with age — its complexity often grows.

What first drew you to working with large and complex datasets and how have these data helped you answer new and timely questions?

My introduction to Medicaid data came from a practical problem: We needed to understand healthcare patterns for a specific population, and these aren't just large files of administrative records; they're a window into how systems are or aren't serving people. They let us ask questions like: Are autistic adolescents losing Medicaid coverage at the transition to adulthood? Are there differences in service access?

What drew you to apply to be the next Director of the Center for State Health Policy?

The Center sits at the place where rigorous data meets the policy decisions that shape people's lives. My own work has always been driven by a conviction that data should reduce inequity, not just describe it — and that the populations most underserved by health systems are often the ones least visible in the research that informs them. The Center's mission gives a director the platform to act on that conviction at scale, across the full range of health policy questions that states are grappling with right now.

Study Led by Erica Eliason Points to COVID-era Postpartum Coverage Gains



Continuous coverage requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic extended postpartum Medicaid coverage nationwide and sharply increased the number of individuals remaining insured after childbirth, according to a study led by CSHP and School of Public Health Assistant Professor Erica Eliason.

The analysis, published in [The Milbank Quarterly](#), found that this coverage expansion produced modest changes in health care use, with notable increases in emergency department visits and mental and behavioral health diagnoses. [Learn more.](#)

Ann Nguyen Speaks on Landmark Licensure Reforms in New Jersey



CSHP Associate Research Professor Ann Nguyen was quoted in a recent [NJ Spotlight News](#) article about New Jersey's overhaul of licensing rules for outpatient treatment centers. Dr. Nguyen has studied integrated care efforts in the state and voiced support for the new rules that allow providers to offer primary care, mental health, and addiction services at a single facility and under a single license.

Dr. Nguyen called the new framework “tremendous for New Jersey,” noting it will improve access, reduce administrative barriers, and better reflect the reality that many primary care patients also face behavioral health and substance use challenges.

CSHP Collaborates on New Blogs Addressing Healthcare Affordability

Rising health care prices driven by hospital consolidation are contributing to America's affordability crisis, according to two recent blogs for the New Jersey State Policy Lab. CSHP Director Joel Cantor and colleagues Derek DeLia and Bingxiao Wu [explore why](#) US health spending is roughly double that of other wealthy nations. They explain that this is mostly due to higher prices rather than increased utilization.

In a [companion blog](#), the authors explain that price transparency measures have a limited impact where provider monopoly power is strong, arguing that meaningful affordability gains require stronger antitrust enforcement, insurer leverage, and policy tools such as reference pricing.

Inside iPHD

Pew Features Implementation Progress of the NJ iPHD Project

In a new interview with The Pew Charitable Trusts, CSHP Executive Director Margaret Koller and NJ Department of Health Chief Privacy Officer and Governing Board Chair, Rachel Hammond shared insights from the implementation of the [NJ Integrated Population Health Data \(iPHD\) Project](#).

They emphasized the importance of the project's strong governance, privacy protections, and legislative mandate in helping break down data silos, advance health equity, and guide more effective policymaking statewide. Read the [full interview here](#).

New Milbank Blog Reflects on Ten Years of the NJ iPHD Project

In a new blog for the [Milbank Memorial Fund](#), CSHP Executive Director Margaret Koller and Communications Manager Joe Brecht explore how New Jersey is strengthening evidence-based policymaking through the [NJ Integrated Population Health Data \(iPHD\) Project](#) and share operational insights from the project's implementation.

“While barriers to collaboration exist,” they explain, “so too do opportunities to establish new relationships and expand the network of researchers that can ultimately maximize the impact of iPHD data and improve population health.”

iPHD Governing Board Approves New Data Access Policies

The iPHD Governing Board has adopted three new policies to provide clarity and additional guidelines for data access and streamline application review. These policies are available on the [iPHD website](#) and are linked below.

Data Linkage to Non-iPHD Data Sets



iPHD data may be linked to external data sets by the researcher only when the linkage is disclosed in the application, explicitly approved by the iPHD Governing Board, and authorized in a Data Use Agreement.

Requests for Additional Data Years



The iPHD may provide access to additional data years that became available after an approved application was submitted, so long as such requests are received prior to initiation of the Data Use Agreement and Institutional Review Board review process.

New Track for Peer Reviewed Apps

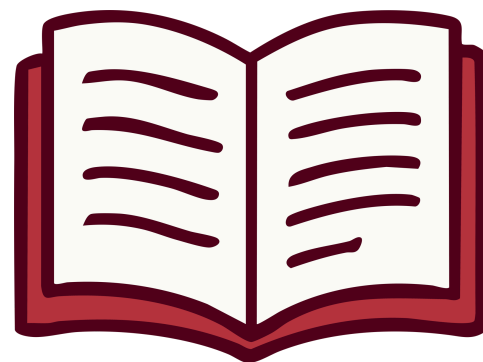


The iPHD will allow for the expedited review of applications previously approved through a scientific peer review process, including federal mechanisms like the National Institutes of Health or other equivalent external peer review processes.

CSHP Publications: Our Contributions to the Field

Healthcare Access & Coverage

- **Children's Enrollment in Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Coverage During the Medicaid Unwinding**
- **Lots of Pain for Little Gain: Three Decades of Medicaid Estate Recovery**
- **Medicaid Continuous Coverage Requirement and Postpartum Hospitalization**
- **Extended Pregnancy Medicaid During COVID-19 and Enrollment and Health Care Use in the Postpartum Year**
- **Emergence and Potential of State Healthcare Cost Growth Benchmark Programs**



Population Health

- **Investigating Predictors of Successful Exits from Permanent Supportive Housing**

New Face at CSHP: Welcome, Neetu Jain!

We are delighted to welcome **Neetu Jain, PhD, MPH**, as a Research Project Manager at CSHP. She joined CSHP in April. Dr. Jain will join the data team and provide analytic support for the Evaluation of the NJ Medicaid Comprehensive 1115 Waiver Demonstration. She brings to the role over fifteen years of experience in healthcare epidemiology, including twelve years at Mathematica as a senior researcher and project director, and has previously led large-scale health policy evaluations and quality measurement initiatives across Medicaid, Medicare, and CHIP.

Dr. Jain also served as an epidemiologist and consultant at the New Jersey Department of Health, directing statewide maternal and child health data analysis and public health surveillance initiatives.

