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NYU McSilver Gets Added NIMH Funding to Study Engagement by Youth of Color in Depression Treatment

NEW YORK — July 22, 2020— The [NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research](#) has received additional funding for its three-year research grant from the **National Institute of Mental Health** to study the effectiveness of a novel treatment intervention for keeping Black adolescents engaged in depression treatment. The additional funding was received through a diversity research supplement application submitted by NYU Provost's Postdoctoral Faculty Fellow [Carolina Vélez-Grau, PHD, LCSW](#), and will add expand the population sample for the study to include Latinx youth.

Rates of engagement and depression treatment completion are [lower for Black adolescents](#) than for White teens, in part due to negative perceptions about services and providers, as well as a reluctance to admit to symptoms. The **Making Connections Intervention (MCI)** has been devised to address barriers to engagement, in youth, as well as their caregivers. [Michael A. Lindsey, PhD, MSW, MPH](#), executive director of the McSilver Institute, is the lead researcher for the MCI study.

MCI is a one-to-two session school-based intervention that involves not only the relationship between youth and therapist, but also between parent and child, and parent and therapist. It is added to the IPT-A, an evidence-based intervention for depression that is delivered in schools and was developed by Columbia University psychologist [Laura Mufson, PhD](#). Additionally, MCI includes the use of unique digital tools and content, developed by the social enterprise [Ker-Twang](#), to inform and engage young participants.

The supplemental funding will allow the study to include a sample of non-depressed Black and Latinx youth to examine interpersonal factors, such as connectedness and burdensomeness, which are associated with suicide and perceptions of mental health engagement among depressed and non-depressed Black and Latinx youth. "Data from the diversity supplement, along with data from a qualitative study—funded by the **NYU Silver School of Social Work Dean's Seed Funds**—will allow the MCI engagement intervention to more effectively address the interpersonal needs aspects of treatment engagement and increase engagement while we reduce suicidal thinking for Black and Latinx youth," explains Vélez-Grau, who is principal investigator for the diversity supplement.

"If we are to meet youth of color's depression treatment needs, then we must address the challenge of keeping them engaged and understand the factors that impede their treatment success," says Dr. Lindsey.

"Engaging Black Youth in Depression and Suicide Prevention Treatment within Urban Schools: A Preliminary Study," is a pilot randomized controlled clinical trial that has been studying the effectiveness of the intervention in sixty Black adolescents who have depression symptoms and attend grades 6-12 within New York City Department of Education Public Schools. The grant period began on March 1, 2019.

The research team for the study includes Drs. Lindsey, Mufson, and Vélez-Grau, as well as [James Jaccard, PhD](#) of the **NYU Silver School of Social Work** and [Nicholas Ialongo, PhD](#) of the **Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health**.

ABOUT THE MCSILVER INSTITUTE

The McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at New York University is committed to creating new knowledge about the root causes of poverty, developing evidence-based interventions to address its consequences, and rapidly translating research findings into action through policy and best practices. Each year it holds the McSilver Awards, recognizing extraordinary leaders transforming systems to tackle structural poverty and oppression. Learn more at mcsilver.nyu.edu and [sign up](#) for updates.

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