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Acknowledgments

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Developmental Disabilities Network Journal

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Journal Subject Area: The *DDNJ* publishes high-quality research and evaluation about the multiple systems that serve individuals with disabilities and their families. Central to these systems is the "Developmental Disabilities Network," a group of federally designated programs in each U.S. state and territory, that provide advocacy, training, research, and service focused on the unique needs of people with disabilities and their families. This journal specifically highlights programs, practices, and policies that encourage the full inclusion of people with disabilities in communities and all aspects of public life.

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Acknowledgments

This issue of *DDNJ* is focused on research and practice related to co-occurring mental health issues in individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (MH/IDD). Current epidemiological estimates indicate that 50-65% of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities may also experience co-occurring mental health issues. This emerging awareness of MH/IDD issues has led to a surge of interest in the last 10 years, and there has been a significant increase in federal and state funding allocated to supporting the mental health needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. Given this increase in visibility and awareness, we felt like it would be good to focus a special issue on some of the research and practice efforts that are occurring in relation to MH/IDD.

This special issue was a collaborative venture with the [National Research Consortium on Mental Health and Intellectual / Developmental Disabilities](#). This committed group of scholars, researchers, and advocates came together in 2019 under the leadership of the National Center for START Services to begin formalizing research efforts around MH/IDD issues. Although there has been quite a bit of funding allocated to training and supports for MH/IDD, there has been a significant shortage of dedicated research funding to gather evidence on the efficacy of various approaches. The National Research Consortium on MH/IDD has taken a crowdfunding approach to stimulating high-quality research in this domain, and all members of the consortium provide a small amount of funding each year to support competitive research grants to scholars who are working on expanding the evidence for MH/IDD treatments and interventions.

It has been a tremendous privilege to work with Dr. Joni Beasley and Dr. Luther Kalb, who serve as the Consortium Director and Chair. We have enjoyed having them as guest editors for this special issue and have greatly benefitted from their insights and guidance as we have sought to put this issue together. Both Joni and Luke are committed researchers in MH/IDD. Joni's entire career has been focused on creating that START service model to support the mental and emotional health needs of individuals with disabilities. Luke is an epidemiologist who is seeking to bring a more systematic approach to validating interventions for the MH/IDD population. His keen eye was helpful in reviewing and tightening up some of the articles in this issue. Both Joni and Luke have been great collaborators, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their efforts to bring this special issue to fruition.

One of the challenges we encountered in the process of pulling this special issue together is that there is a dearth of high-quality research and model development in MH/IDD. There is quite a bit of training and policy work going on, but dedicated research is still limited and underfunded. This is especially true regarding the application of the principles of positive psychology to the field of MH/IDD. Many mainstream mental health interventions today draw upon the principles and approaches developed through the field of "positive psychology." Positive psychology is concerned with reframing the approach to mental health diagnosis and treatment so that it is more focused on individual strengths, quality of life, and happiness/well-being—a framework that we feel would be especially important and empowering for individuals with intellectual and

developmental disabilities.

Although positive psychology may be increasingly common in mainstream mental health, there is still a significant lack of positive psychological approaches in the realm of MH/IDD. One of the major issues we noted through the process of screening abstracts and reviewing manuscripts is an overreliance on top-down behavioral interventions and deficit-based approaches to diagnosing and treating individuals with developmental disabilities who also experience co-occurring mental health issues. The continuing focus on behavior modification for this population is short-sighted and ignores the underlying fact that behaviors are often just a method of communicating that there may be an underlying mental health issue. For example, modifying problematic self-soothing behaviors does not address the underlying anxiety or depression that may be triggering the behaviors in the first place. There is a significant need for the community of researchers and practitioners working on supporting the mental health of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to embrace participatory, strength-based approaches. Our hope is that this issue of *DDNJ* can help provide some ideas and guidance to others who may be working within this domain. Hopefully, we can revisit this topic in the future and highlight more person-centered approaches to treatment and research that build upon the foundations shared within the articles in this issue.

We express our deepest gratitude to everyone whose contributions made this latest issue of the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal* possible. Your collaborative efforts, expertise, and support ensure the continued growth and success of our publication.

First, we extend sincere thanks to the authors who shared their time, knowledge, and research in the articles featured in this issue. Your work advances our understanding of mental health, developmental disabilities, and inclusive systems of care. We feel that the ideas and approaches in this issue have the potential to impact countless individuals, families, and professionals within our communities and schools.

We are deeply grateful to the reviewers who volunteered their expertise. Your meticulous feedback and constructive criticism significantly strengthen the quality and rigor of our published papers, fostering academic excellence. The quality of the articles and the content in the journal is reliant upon the reviewers, and we appreciate everything that our reviewers do to ensure the ongoing quality of this journal.

Our heartfelt appreciation also goes to the dedicated members of our editorial board and staff. Your commitment and professionalism are essential to the journal's high standards. A special thanks to our Managing Editor, Alex Schiwal; our Copy Editor, Mary Ellen Heiner; and our Assistant Editor, Dave Clark! Your tireless efforts keep the publication process moving smoothly and make this entire enterprise possible.

We are also grateful to the many organizations, including UCEDDs, LENDs, IDDRCs, DD Councils, and P&As that submit their work to *DDNJ*, and who share this research with their staff and constituents. The DD Network's commitment to promoting research, advocacy, and collaboration

in the field of developmental disabilities has provided a vital platform for the dissemination of knowledge and the exchange of ideas.

Furthermore, we extend our thanks to Utah State University's Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice and the USU Library whose financial and technical support has enabled us to produce this journal. Your investment in research and education has played a crucial role in advancing the field of developmental disabilities and improving the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families.

Last, we extend our appreciation to our readers, whose engagement and support have been instrumental in the success of the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal*. Your enthusiasm for the journal and its mission inspires us to continue promoting high-quality research and disseminating knowledge to foster positive change in the field. Research needs readers, otherwise, it is just sending data out into the void! We are grateful for your continuous support and encouragement.

We acknowledge that this list is not exhaustive, and we apologize for any unintentional omissions. The collective efforts of everyone involved have made this latest issue of the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal* a testament to the collaborative spirit and dedication of the developmental disabilities' community.

If you would like to be a reviewer for *DDNJ*, we would love to add you to our reviewer board. We are seeking individuals with broad expertise in disability research, policy analysis, participatory action research, diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are especially interested in recruiting individuals with developmental disabilities, siblings of individuals with disabilities, and/or parents of children with disabilities as reviewers. If you are interested in joining our review board, please send us a short email describing your areas of expertise and any past review experience. If you have a resume or CV, please attach that to the email. Please send emails to editor.ddnj@usu.edu. You can also call us at 435-797-0836 if you need assistance submitting this information.

Thank you so much for reading and supporting the work of *DDNJ*! We hope that you find value in this issue, and we are interested in your thoughts and feedback. If there are ways that we can make this publication more accessible or inclusive, we want to hear from you. Please send your comments and feedback to editor.ddnj@usu.edu.

Thank you so much.

Matthew T. Wappett, Ph.D.
DDNJ Editor-in-Chief