Eunice M. Areba, PhD, PHN, RN, is a third-year Nursing post-doctoral fellow funded the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. Eunice earned her PhD in Nursing from the University of Minnesota and her BSN from Winona State University. Her professional experience includes, neurology and orthopedic postoperative care, community based research with refugee women and youth and teaching at the collegiate level. Her dissertation explored the associations between religious coping, mental health and well-being among Somali college students. As a public health nurse, her research interest lies in the micro to macro level issues at the nexus of health, community, environment and development, especially among refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa. Eunice is interested in developing community-based programs to promote physical and emotional well-being, prevent inter-personal violence and identify effective coping mechanisms for refugee and immigrant youth and their families. Currently, she teaches Public Health Nursing courses at the University of Minnesota, School of Nursing.

Raiza Beltran, MPH, is a first-year pre-doctoral fellow funded by the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) grant. She received her BA in Journalism at the University of Minnesota and interned at the Center for Investigative Journalism in San Francisco, CA. After witnessing and reporting on the economic, social and health inequities experienced by communities of color in the United States, Raiza decided to pursue an MPH at the University of Minnesota’s School of Public Health under the Community Health Promotion track. Raiza was the Community Impact Manager at Neighborhood House, a social service agency in St. Paul's west side prior to entering the PhD program at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work. Now in her fourth year and a PhD candidate, Raiza is working on her doctoral dissertation examining how religious and gender ideology influences contraceptive behavior among unmarried young Filipino women.
Camille Brown, BSN, PHN, RN, is a first-year pre-doctoral fellow funded by the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) grant. She was awarded a BS in Nursing from Winona State University and is currently working toward her PhD in Nursing at the University of Minnesota. Prior to her return to academia, Camille practiced as a licensed school nurse in both rural and urban Minnesota, working primarily with high school age adolescents from economically disadvantaged communities. Her research is focused on improving health equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth, in particular promoting the well-being of transgender and gender nonconforming young people especially as related to healthy sexuality.

Calla Brown, MD, FAAP, is a first-year fellow in Academic General Pediatrics and is funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. She is an internist and a pediatrician, and will be pursuing a master’s degree in human rights at the University of Minnesota during the fellowship. She majored in women’s and gender studies while an undergraduate student at Columbia University, and following college graduation joined the Peace Corps, serving for two and a half years in southern Ecuador. She obtained her medical degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, spending a fifth year as a medical student volunteer in rural El Salvador with Doctors for Global Health. She then completed residency in internal medicine and pediatrics at the University of Minnesota. During the past academic year, she and her family lived in Malawi as volunteer physician educators at the Malawi College of Medicine with Seed Global Health. She is interested in the intersection of health, human rights, and immigration/migration.
Jamie Cheever BA, BS, MA, is a first-year pre-doctoral fellow funded by the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) grant. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Social Work, with a focus on Community Practice, at the University of Minnesota. She received her undergraduate degrees at the U of M while competing as a soccer, cross country, and track and field athlete. Since graduating, she has worked with several sexual and domestic violence agencies while competing as a professional runner. Her research interests include sexual and relationship violence prevention among athletic teams. Long-term, Jamie wants to work with professional sports teams to reduce athlete perpetration of sexual and relationship violence.

Mary Christoph, MPH, PhD, is a second-year postdoctoral fellow in the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) program at the University of Minnesota. She received her BS in Biology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and an MPH/PhD in Community Health from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Mary’s research focuses on how social and environmental factors impact dietary behaviors in adolescents. Working with Professor Dianne Neumark-Sztainer in the Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, Mary utilizes data from Project EAT (Eating and Activity among Teens and Young Adults), a longitudinal cohort study investigating dietary patterns and health in adolescents transitioning to adulthood. Recent projects have included studying how nutrition label use relates to dietary patterns and weight control behaviors in Project EAT. Her secondary line of research focuses on using digital photography methods to assess food intake. When not researching, Mary enjoys hiking, art, and overly-complicated cooking experiments.
Laurel Davis, PhD, is a second year-year post-doctoral fellow in Family Science funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. She was graduated from Macalester College (B.A.); then earned her M.A. and PhD in Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota. Davis’ research focuses on risk and protective factors that affect children’s development. In particular, she is interested in the science of prevention as it applies to family and children in high-risk contexts (homelessness, combat, incarceration). While at the Minnesota Dept of Health, she was Data Manager for the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), the goal for which is to provide funding to public health agencies across Minnesota to improve the health of Minnesotans by changing policies, systems, and environments in order to encourage healthier behaviors in the area of tobacco use, healthy eating, and physical activity. She works as Program Coordinator for Dr Rebecca Shlafer’s study of children’s visits with incarcerated parents. As the primary recruiter for the study, she meets with incarcerated parents to conduct informal consent about the study.

Emily Denight, BS, CHES, is a first-year pre-doctoral fellow funded by the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) grant. She received her BS in Health Science with a concentration in Community, Worksite, and Public Health from Truman State University. She is currently a Master's of Public Health Student in the Maternal and Child Health Track. Denight works as a student worker at the Minnesota Department of Health, supporting the Family Home Visiting Program on continuous quality improvement efforts. She previously worked for four years at the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services as the health educator for the Adolescent Health Program. While in this position, she provided trainings for grantees on evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programming, as well as technical support on program implementation and evaluation. Upon completion of the fellowship, she would like to pursue a career dedicated to supporting the healthy growth and development of adolescents, both throughout adolescence as well as through their transition into adulthood.
Jennifer Doty, PhD, is a third-year post-doctoral fellow in Family Science funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. She received her doctorate from the University of Minnesota in Family Social Science with an emphasis on prevention. Jennifer’s research interests are built around the idea that parent-child relationships are a key leverage point for improving both parent and adolescent health and well-being. She views the online environment as a potential outlet for the dissemination of parent-based prevention programming for families. She has authored eleven journal articles (six as first author) and five book chapters (three as first author). In her dissertation research, she focused on the relationship between parents and adolescents prospectively over three generations in the Youth Development Study. She was awarded a Kappa Omicron Nu Research Award for this work. Her long-term goal is to build bridges between basic research and applied prevention settings. A native of Chicago, she makes a point to visit the windy city a couple times a year. In her spare time, Jennifer enjoys her field work with two teenagers and a pre-teen at home.

Kristen M.A. Kessler, MD MPH, is a third-year fellow in Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics. In addition, she is a fellow in the Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program. She received her BA in Hispanic Studies with a concentration in Biomedical Studies from St. Olaf College. She received her MD and Masters in Public Health in International Maternal and Child Health from the University of Arizona. She completed Pediatrics residency at the University of Minnesota in 2014. She enjoys clinical work with children and families with a variety of complex developmental and behavioral challenges. She has particular interest in parenting and the parent-child connection and how these relate to developmental and behavioral outcomes.
Leslie Kummer, MD, is a second year fellow in Academic General Pediatrics and is funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. She is a pediatrician and is pursuing an MPH in Maternal Child Health as part of her fellowship. Leslie received her BA in Biology from Carleton College, and subsequently lived and studied in Norway for a year as a Fulbright Scholar. She received her MD from Brown University and completed a Pediatrics residency at the University of Massachusetts in 2013. Prior to fellowship, she worked for three years as a primary care pediatrician. Leslie’s research interests focus on health disparities and social determinants of breastfeeding in the United States. She is the recipient of the J.B. Hawley Student Research Award from the UMN School of Public Health, which is supporting a qualitative study of the use of mobile technology in the Minnesota WIC Peer Breastfeeding Support program. Leslie is interested in utilizing research to inform the development and expansion of programs to support the breastfeeding mother-baby dyad. When her nose is not in a book (or computer), she is busy with her husband and two young boys (6 and 3 years).

Christopher J. Mehus, PhD, LAMFT, is a second-year post-doctoral fellow funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. His PhD is in Family Science and Couple and Family Therapy, and he is a Licensed Associate Marriage and Family Therapist. Chris’s research focuses on the prevention of negative child outcomes through family-focused prevention programs. His current research is aimed at increasing the reach of evidence-based parenting programs by embedding these programs in primary care settings.
Lena Carla Palacios, PhD, is a first-year post-doctoral fellow; and is also an Assistant Professor in the Departments of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies and Chicano & Latino Studies at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Lena’s research and teaching focuses on critical prison studies, Black, Indigenous, Chicana/Latina queer and trans feminisms, girls’ and girlhood studies, community accountability and transformative justice, and research justice. As an IRTCAPC fellow, she plans to jump-start a youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) project analyzing how interpersonal and sexual violence interlock with various forms of state violence (administrative, carceral, and enforcement violence) to produce and further perpetuate endemic health disparities. Lena wants to learn more about how to effectively speak within and across disciplines and fields about her own interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research on how adolescents’ exposure to (and resistance to) intersecting and interlocking forms of violence is a key social determinant of health. Her current action research agenda is to address critical social justice and public health issues and promote the leadership capacity of criminalized and marginalized girls, queer, and trans youth in both Canada and the United States. Lastly, Lena is writing a book titled “Weaponizing Safety: Indigenous and Race-radical Feminist Transformative Justice Praxis” focusing on transformative justice movements in Canada and the U.S., particularly around sexual and carceral state violence.
Michael J. Parks, PhD, is a first-year postdoctoral fellow funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from Pennsylvania State University in December 2012, and his M.A. in 2008 (also from Pennsylvania State University). He received a B.A. in psychology in 2005 from the University of Minnesota. After receiving his Ph.D., Michael became a senior Research Scientist at the Minnesota Department of Health within the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Division. Generally, Michael is interested in applied health promotion that addresses health behaviors among youth populations, with a particular focus on reducing disparities associated with socioeconomic status. His research interests lie within three primary areas: (1) population-based prevention that addresses health-risk behaviors (e.g., tobacco use) and promotes health equity, (2) understanding how psychosocial factors (e.g., risk factors, interpersonal communication) can inform public health policy and practice, and (3) community-based prevention across nations, with a focus on urban communities. His research has been published in outlets such as Behavioral Medicine, Addictive Behaviors, Health Education & Behavior, Journal of Health Communication, Journal of Community Practice, among others. For his research on community-based initiatives across nations, Michael received the Marie O. Weil Outstanding Scholarship Award in 2016.

Kelsey Pruitt, BSN, RN, is a first-year pre-doctoral fellow in the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) program. She completed her undergraduate education in nursing science at Viterbo University in La Crosse, WI, during which she assisted with undergraduate research examining the asset-based community development of a socioeconomically diverse neighborhood. Prior to beginning the post-baccalaureate Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program within the Women's Health Nurse Practitioner specialty at the University of Minnesota, she worked professionally as a registered nurse in the inpatient obstetrics and inpatient behavioral health settings. She is currently facilitating a systems-level quality improvement DNP project at an adolescent sexual health clinic with an aim of increasing chlamydia and gonorrhea retesting rates. Her clinical and research interests include examining the facilitators and barriers of evidence-based reproductive healthcare among emerging adults and vulnerable populations; health promotion among underserved populations in the OBGYN setting; and the influence of culture, socioeconomic status, and communities on obstetrical and gynecological outcomes.
Molly (Mollika) Sajady, DO, MPH, is a first-year fellow in Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of Minnesota. In addition, she is a fellow in the Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program. She completed her Pediatric Residency at the University of Minnesota with a focus on global health and child development. She attended medical school and completed a Masters of Public Health degree at Des Moines University. She also received a B.A. in Child Psychology from the University of Minnesota in 2009. As a fellow, Molly is interested in strengthening her advocacy skills for children with disabilities and to become familiar with services and interventions within the community that will better serve her patients in the future. Molly will participate in the LEAH seminar series in the fall of 2018.

Meagan Thompson, MN, RN, is a first-year pre-doctoral fellow funded by the Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) grant. She received her BA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Sociology, with certificates in Women's Studies and American Indian Studies. She received her Masters of Nursing degree from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She is pursuing a Doctorate of Nursing Practice in the Nurse Midwifery specialty. Meagan is currently a Labor and Delivery nurse on a large, high acuity unit in the Twin Cities. She is also a Clinical Instructor for the University of Minnesota with both their undergraduate nursing students and their masters students. She has experience working in adolescent sexual health as a health educator prior to becoming a nurse. Upon graduation, Meagan hopes to work with high risk adolescents in pregnancy prevention and improving pregnancy outcomes for those who become pregnant.
April Wilhelm, MD, is a second-year Academic General Pediatrics fellow funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. April completed her undergraduate education at Carleton College, and then spent two years as a Community Health Education Volunteer with the Peace Corps in Mauritania. April received her medical degree from Brown University. She completed her medical residency training at the United Family Medicine Residency Program in Saint Paul in 2015. Her primary research interests include adolescent health and refugee and immigrant health disparities. April is particularly interested in applying CBPR principles to guide community program design and implementation aimed at improving the wellbeing of refugee and immigrant youth. In her clinical practice, April is interested in full spectrum family medicine in under-resourced settings.

Damir S. Utržan, PhD, MS, LMFT, is first-year postdoctoral fellow funded by the Interdisciplinary Research Training in Child and Adolescent Primary Care (IRTCAPC) grant. He is a licensed marriage and family therapist. Damir earned a master's degree in marriage and family therapy from the Family Institute at Northwestern University. As a practicum intern at the National Immigrant Justice Center, a program of the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, Damir performed comprehensive psychiatric evaluations of asylum-seekers detained by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. He also earned a doctorate in family social science, couple and family therapy specialization with a human rights minor, from the University of Minnesota. Before completing specialized training in behavioral health medicine at the North Memorial Family Medicine Residency Program at the University of Minnesota Medical School, Damir was a doctoral intern in the Psychological Services Unit at the Center for Victims of Torture. His dissertation assessed the United States Refugee Resettlement Program while interviewing Syrian refugees about their experiences navigating asylum. As a former fellow of the University of Minnesota Law School Human Rights and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, Damir is interested in the impact of war on civilian family relationship dynamics, the parent-child relationship, pediatric psychosocial development, and whether navigating the asylum process in the United States exacerbates existing mental health problems. He has lectured on refugee and immigrant mental health topics, including clinical workshops at various national conferences. More recently, Damir was commissioned by the Research and Education Foundation of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy to evaluate refugee resettlement efforts in Minnesota.