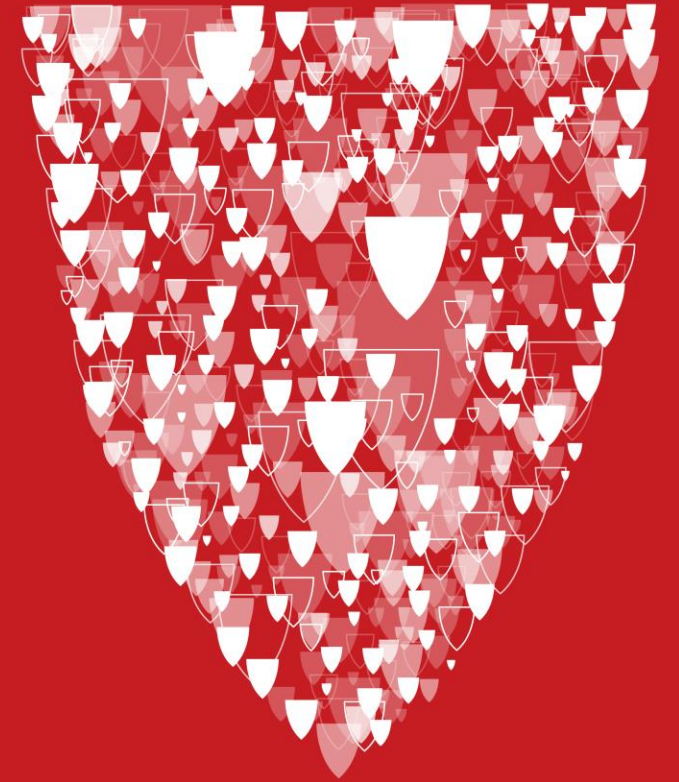


Expanding Behavioral Health Research Beyond Department Walls and Into Our Community

- Molly McVoy, MD
- Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry |
Rocco L. Motto Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- UH Research & Innovation Day



UH's Historic Dedication to Community Mental Health



Over 150 years of service in Northeast Ohio — rooted in the mission that “the most needy should be considered the most worthy.”



Since 2008, UH has invested nearly \$5 billion in community benefit initiatives.



In 2024 alone, \$720 million supported community health programs and prevention efforts.



Regular Community Health Needs Assessments align UH strategy with local priorities.



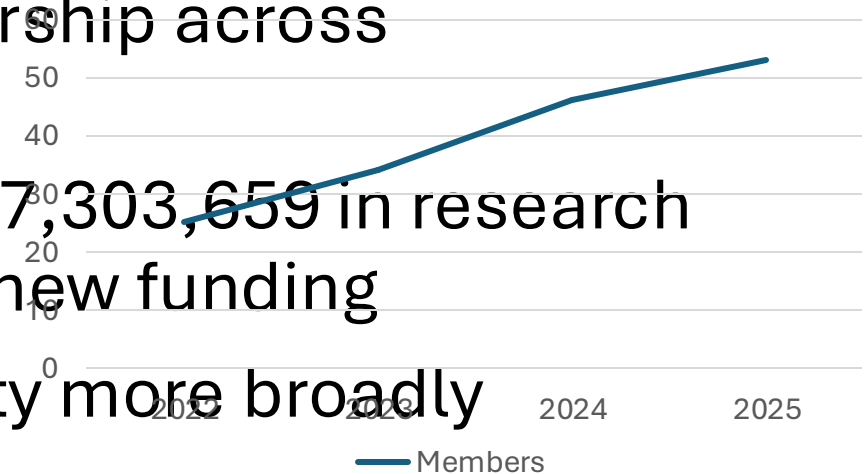
UH Psychiatry has delivered over 600,000 community clinical hours via Public & Community Psychiatry programs.



Joint Public & Community Psychiatry Fellowship with CWRU prepares leaders for public mental health.

Psychiatry Research Collaborative (PRC): Bridging Academia & Community

- Co-directors: Jennifer Levin, PhD & Molly McVoy, MD
- Platform initiated in 2022 connecting UH Psychiatry, CWRU, and community partners.
- Funded by the Tim & Joan Jenkins Fund for Psychiatry Research
- Supports pilot funding, seed grants, and mentorship across disciplines.
- In 2024, members of the PRC had a total of \$167,303,659 in research grant funding and were awarded \$4,450,078 in new funding
- Expands departmental research into community more broadly



PROMISE: suPpoRting teachers tO iMprove Students' mEntal Health



Addresses the national youth mental health crisis — 40% increase in persistent sadness; only 20% receive treatment.



Teachers are critical early identifiers but often lack resources or training.



PROMISE = suPporting teacheRs fOr iMproving Students mental hEalth.



Developed through UH–CWRU collaboration and piloted in Mayfield Schools.

Teachers on the Frontline — With Limited Support



Teachers are often the first to notice mental health concerns — yet most report feeling unprepared to respond effectively.

A 2023 RAND survey found only 20% of teachers felt confident identifying students with mental health needs.

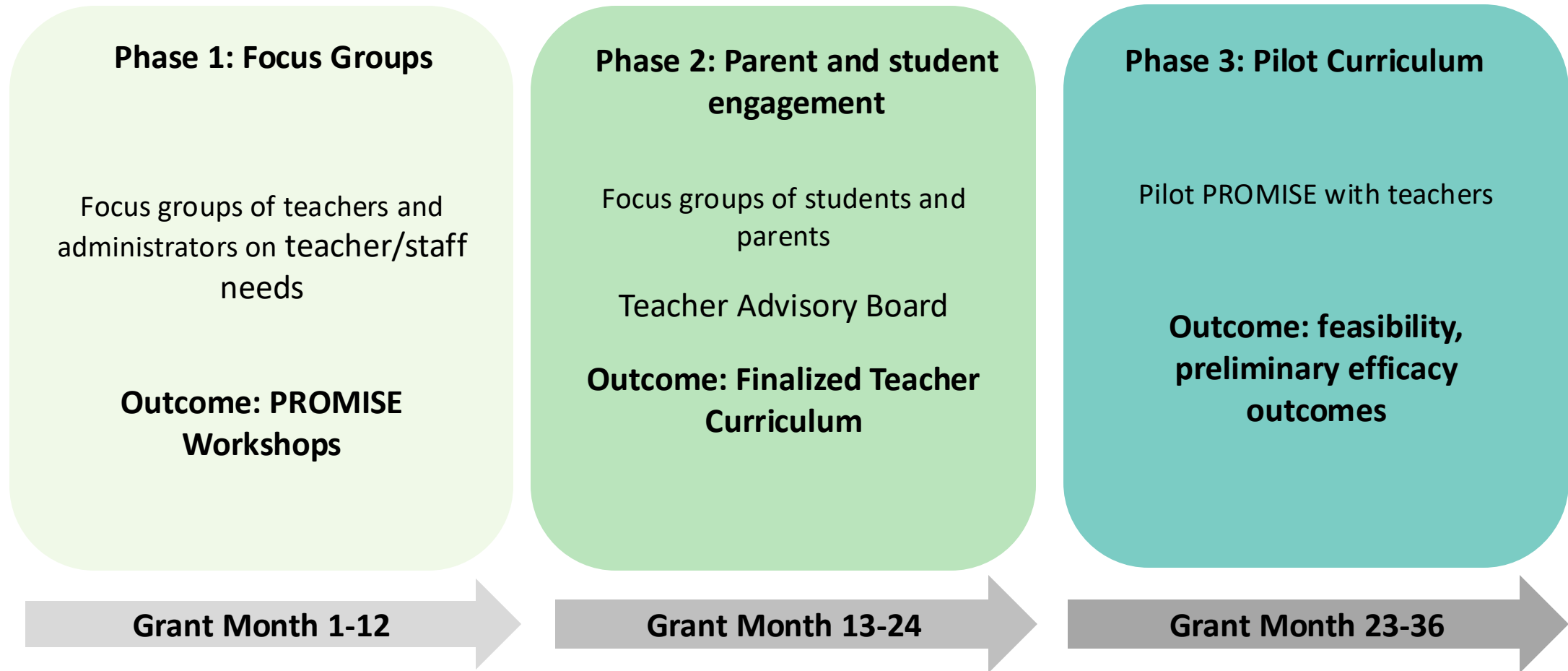
CDC (2021): 42% of U.S. adolescents reported persistent sadness or hopelessness — up 40% from 2009 — but fewer than 1 in 5 receive needed care.

Fewer than 1 in 3 schools have access to a full-time psychologist; many rely on overextended counselors.

PROMISE focus group findings: Teachers described 'wanting to help but not knowing how,' citing lack of training, time, and resources as key barriers.

This gap creates missed opportunities for early intervention and underscores the need for programs like PROMISE.

Three Phase Design for PROMISE



Funded by a combination of donor and State of Ohio

PROMISE Phase 1: Teachers' Voices Informing Design

Five main themes:

- Knowledge gaps
- Barriers to identification
- Access challenges
- Social media stressors
- Communication difficulties

"...the **anxiety** of the number of students that I deal with... has gone up (...) I had two [students] that came to me from 5th grade that had **attempted suicide**"

"I think something that's been lost is the **power of human connection**. The ability to connect with someone who is across the room, who is feeling the same things that you're feeling"

Characteristic	N	Mean (SD)	Range	N (%)
Age	28	50.36 (9.57)	29-67	
Gender				
Female				20 (71.43%)
Male				8 (28.57%)
Race				
White				26 (92.86%)
Black				2 (7.14%)
Ethnicity: Non-Hispanic				28 (100.00%)
Current Role				
Teacher				16 (57.14%)
Counselor				6 (21.43%)
Other				4 (14.29%)
Administrator				2 (7.14 %)
Years in Current Role	28	14.75 (8.95)	4-32	
Years in Education	28	22.68 (8.28)	5-40	
Grades Currently Working with				
Grades 6-8				16 (57.14%)
Grades 9-10				12 (42.86%)
Grades 11-12				9 (32.14%)
Attended Mental Health Workshop				
Yes				16 (57.14%)
No				12 (42.86%)
Number of Workshops Attended	16	2.31 (1.62)	1-5	

PROMISE Phase 2 outcomes: Parent and Student Voices

Parent Demographics (n=28)

Characteristic	Mean(SD)
Age (Range 35-55)	46.82 (5.01)
Number of Children Enrolled in Grades 6 – 12 (Range 1-2)	1.50 (0.51)
Gender	
Female	25 (89.29%)
Male	3 (10.71%)
Race	
White	22 (78.57%)
Black / African American	3 (10.71%)
Asian	1 (3.57%)
Other	2 (7.14%)
Ethnicity	
Not Hispanic or Latino	27 (96.43%)
Hispanic or Latino	1 (3.57%)
Highest Level of Education	
High School	2 (7.14%)
Some College	3 (10.71%)
College Degree	8 (28.57%)
Postgraduate Degree	15 (53.57%)

Student Demographics (n=26)

Characteristic	Mean (SD)
Age (Range 11-18)	14.23 (1.86)
Gender	
Female	18 (69.23%)
Male	8 (30.77%)
Race	
White	21 (80.77%)
Black / African American	3 (11.54%)
Asian	1 (3.85%)
Other	1 (3.85%)
Ethnicity	
Not Hispanic or Latino	23 (88.46%)
Hispanic or Latino	3 (11.54%)
Grade	
Grade 6	4 (15.38%)
Grade 7	3 (11.54%)
Grade 8	3 (11.54%)
Grade 9	8 (30.77%)
Grade 10	4 (15.38%)
Grade 11	3 (11.54%)
Grade 12	1 (3.85%)

PROMISE Phase 2: Middle School Student Voices

“It’s hard to talk about feelings — people might make fun of you.”

Hard to express emotions or ask for help

“Teachers don’t always notice when someone’s struggling.”

Social pressure and online stress

“Social media makes everything worse.”

Desire for connection and understanding

Student voices highlight the need for safe spaces and supportive adults in schools.

PROMISE Phase 2: High School Student Voices

“We need someone to talk to who understands what we’re going through.”

Need for empathetic listeners

“Mental health isn’t talked about enough in school.”

Lack of mental health education

“Sometimes it feels like no one cares.”

Feelings of neglect or isolation

High school students emphasize the importance of empathy and mental health awareness.

PROMISE Phase 2: Parent Voices

“I worry my child doesn’t know how to express their feelings.”

Concerns about emotional development

“We need more resources to support our kids.”

Need for family support resources

“Communication between school and parents could be better.”

Improved school-parent communication

Parents call for better communication and more support for their children’s well-being.

PROMISE Phase 3: Expanding the Reach

Set of 5 workshops for teachers

- When is the Worry Too Much
- Talking to Parents
- Social Media and Technology
- Who's at Risk
- Communication Challenges

Piloting in 3 school districts in NE Ohio (CMSD, Mayfield Schools, Willoughby-Eastlake Schools)

Enrolling up to 100 middle/high school teachers

Pre-Post: MH knowledge, comfort, self-efficacy, stigma

Supported by State of Ohio funding

Looking Ahead: The Future of Community-Based Research



Scale PROMISE across Northeast Ohio school districts.



Integrate data feedback loops between schools and UH behavioral health.

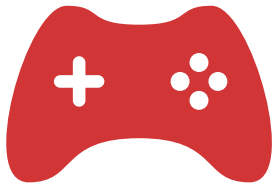


Expand PRC pilot programs for cross-sector behavioral health innovation.



Develop measurable impact metrics and long-term sustainability plans.

Lessons Learned



Play the Long Game



Engage community
partners sincerely



Collaborate,
collaborate, collaborate

Thank you!

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School of
Medicine

