

## 2026 PSYCHIATRY UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAM AND LEARNING EXPERIENCE (PURPLE)

The 2026 **P**sychiatry **U**ndergraduate **R**esearch **P**rogram and **L**earning **E**xperience (**PURPLE**) is designed to introduce undergraduates to a variety of careers in psychology and psychiatry through participation in mentored research activities with faculty members from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and the Children's Hospital of Colorado. Applicants will have the opportunity to learn about the CU Department of Psychiatry's research mission: to promote brain health for all, for life.

**This year's program will be held with a hybrid model** (some in-person work and some online) and may be held completely digitally depending on evolving institutional guidelines. The program will run from **May 19th to August 6th, 2026**. An outline of the research activities is listed on page three. **Didactics will be mostly in person on Tuesdays and Thursdays.** Students in previous cohorts have indicated **this is an intensive program requiring a significant time commitment.** If selected, students should plan their other summer commitments accordingly.

This year, the PURPLE Program, the Avielle Foundation, and the Jeremy Richman Brain Health Fund will be collaborating to support one student and mentor pair who embody their mission to enhance brain research and increase compassion. The student will have the opportunity to travel to a conference to present their work.

Specifically, PURPLE seeks to:

1. Provide undergraduates with basic research skills
2. Introduce undergraduates to careers in behavioral health, psychiatry, and psychology
3. Give undergraduates the tools to successfully apply to graduate school and/or job opportunities

**Program Overview:** During the program, each student is paired with a faculty mentor (and the mentor's research team) to complete a research project (refer to pages 6-14 for faculty mentor profiles). Students are expected to commit approximately 25 hours per week to the research program. Work schedules are flexible and will be arranged in advance with faculty mentors. However, students are still expected to be physically present during in-person didactics and digitally present (e.g., attending digital meetings, completing work via computer, participating in digital class sessions, etc.) for 25 hours per week during the 12-week program.

Upon completion of the research program, students are required to formally present their work to the department and their peers in the form of oral and poster presentations given digitally. This year's program will be hybrid and will become virtual as needed depending on changing guidelines.

***Please note that based on feedback from previous cohorts, this is an intensive program requiring a significant time commitment. The hybrid program will be no exception.*** If selected, students should plan their other summer commitments accordingly.

**Applicant Eligibility:** This year, we are recruiting **5** highly qualified undergraduate students for the 12-week program. Competitive applicants will: A) Have a cumulative college GPA of >3.0; B) have taken at least one college statistics course; and C) show a demonstrated interest in pursuing graduate school or careers related to behavioral health, psychiatry, or psychology.

If you do not meet the listed requirements, you are still welcome to apply. We examine student profiles holistically, taking into consideration student hardship, demonstrated strengths outside of college, and overall



potential. However, given the large number of applicants we receive each year, these requirements are usually the *bare minimum* qualifications we see from accepted students to our program.

Applicants are subject to complete a required toxicology test and pass a background check upon hiring. This will be paid for by the PURPLE program.

**Student Stipend: A stipend of \$3,920 will be provided to each selected student.** Although the program will be partially digital, it is expected that transportation, housing, and living expenses are paid by students and are thus not included in the stipend amount. Selected students must make their own transportation and living arrangements prior to the start of the summer research program.

**The application deadline is Monday, March 16th, 2026, by midnight (MST).** Submissions received after this deadline will not be accepted. It is your responsibility to ensure that your recommendation letter(s) is turned in via RED Cap by the March 16th deadline, along with your application materials. Letters of Recommendation may also be emailed to [PURPLE@ucdenver.edu](mailto:PURPLE@ucdenver.edu) by midnight Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> deadline. See page three for application details.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Application Materials: Interested applicants are required to submit the following materials:

1. A one-page cover letter expressing your interest in PURPLE. Please address the following:
  - a. Why are you applying to PURPLE?
  - b. What are your career goals and how will this program help you realize these goals?
  - c. Which mentors do you most wish to work with, and why?
  - d. What unique abilities, attributes or skills do you bring to PURPLE?
2. An unofficial academic transcript
3. An updated resume or CV
4. A letter of recommendation from a program advisor or faculty member who can speak to your professionalism, work ethics, academic performance, and any other qualities you possess that are pertinent to this summer research program
5. OPTIONAL: A second letter of recommendation from an individual who can speak to your ability to succeed in this program. This is not required, but in some cases may allow us to more holistically understand your strengths and abilities (e.g., you have a letter from both a professor and an employer, you are a double major and have letters from two professors in different fields, you have a second letter from a volunteer organization leader, etc.).

**Please submit all of the above documents using [this link](#) or web address by Monday, March 16th, 2026 (midnight MST): <https://redcap.link/1ba9f52z>**

Letters of recommendation can be submitted via the above link or emailed directly by your recommender(s) to: [PURPLE@ucdenver.edu](mailto:PURPLE@ucdenver.edu)

**Applications that do not follow the above instructions will not be reviewed.**

Timeline: Successful applicants will be notified by email if selected to interview faculty mentors via teleconferencing in April 2026. All applicants will be notified of final application decisions, regardless of selection status, by the first week of May 2026.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

The information in this packet serves as general guidance to the 2026 PURPLE program. Individual faculty mentors and the program director reserve the right to modify the activities and scope of the program as described herein. If you have further questions about this program, please contact the program team:

<p><b>Yunliang (Lily) Luo, BS</b> Director <a href="mailto:PURPLE@ucdenver.edu">PURPLE@ucdenver.edu</a></p>	<p><b>Shanna Trott, BA</b> Assistant Director <a href="mailto:PURPLE@ucdenver.edu">PURPLE@ucdenver.edu</a></p>
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## PROGRAM OUTLINE

During PURPLE, selected students will be paired with a faculty mentor to conduct a mentored research project. Students will also: 1) attend digital didactic sessions to learn basic research and effective scientific communication skills, 2) receive coaching on professional development skills and applying to graduate school, and 3) complete digital clinical shadowing (telehealth) opportunities. Research and didactic activities may include but are not limited to the following:

Competency	Individual Tasks	Learning Goals
Scientific Thinking and Using Tools of the Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Literature search and writing a literature review</li> <li>● Developing a research proposal</li> <li>● Pitching your ideas to funders</li> <li>● Shadowing digital study visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Practice the scientific method from the proposal stage through implementation and closeout</li> <li>● Gain skills with various scientific tools</li> </ul>
Data Handling and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data collection and data entry</li> <li>● Data analysis</li> <li>● Data visualization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Familiarity with data manipulation techniques, including basic statistics</li> <li>● Develop skills in collecting, analyzing, summarizing, and reporting data</li> </ul>
Scientific Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Designing a scientific poster and oral presentation</li> <li>● Presenting research to a scientific audience</li> <li>● Writing up results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop confidence in communicating research outcomes to a real-world audience</li> </ul>
Career and Graduate School Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Workshops on various research skills, graduate school, and career preparation</li> <li>● Directed readings</li> <li>● Panel discussions</li> <li>● Campus and facilities tours</li> <li>● Clinical shadowing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prepare for careers and graduate education in behavioral health, psychiatry, and psychology</li> <li>● Gain exposure to the major concepts and controversies in the discipline</li> <li>● Explore potential job and educational pathways</li> </ul>
Collaboration and Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaborate with diverse teams, cohort members, and faculty</li> <li>● Networking with notable thinkers in the discipline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Professionally present your personal brand</li> <li>● Learn to work with diverse teams</li> <li>● Connect with real scientists doing the work of the discipline</li> </ul>



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# Mentor Profiles



**Matt Mishkind, PhD**

Dr. Matt Mishkind and the Johnson Depression Center's Community Programs team have developed community-based training and education programs that are designed to extend the reach of the center to communities across the state and nationally through diverse educational offerings to increase understanding of depression, bipolar, anxiety, and related disorders, reduce stigma, prevent suicide, and increase access to quality mental health care. Educational offerings are delivered to communities, in schools, businesses, and to professional groups including health care professionals, and university faculty, staff, and students. The JDC community and education programs trained have trained over 100,000 individuals since 2016. Over the past several years, the JDC has expanded its VitalCog: Mental Health and Suicide Education programs. It now offers training for the workplace, construction, throughout athletics, and peer support. The VitalCog program includes the management of over 1000 trainers across the nation. The JDC now offers 21 mental wellness education programs.

Our project would be related to developing, evaluating, and disseminating one or more of our educational programs. We anticipate this summer to focus on further development of our mental health and athletics programming, suicide prevention efforts in the construction industry, analyzing community programming needs, and implementation of community-based education. One need will be a review of workplace-based mental health initiatives with the intent of publishing and presenting results. There are multiple opportunities across programs, and we will work with the selected student to find the best fit with their interest. We are not a traditional research lab and anticipate that the student will be involved in a range of professional activities.

- The student would have the opportunity to:
  - Shadow activities in various program rotations.
  - Attend clinical, research, and operational team meetings.
  - Engage with the JDC Board of Directors.
  - Conduct training and education sessions.
  - Participate in focus groups.
  - Develop evaluations.
  - Enter into and review data in REDCap

Learn more: [www.coloradodepressioncenter.org](http://www.coloradodepressioncenter.org);

[www.vitalcog.com](http://www.vitalcog.com);



## **Emily Hemendinger LCSW, MPH, CPH, ACS**

The OCD and Anxiety Programs provide medication management and individual and group therapy at the outpatient level of care as well as at the intensive outpatient program (IOP) level of care. This specialized program is unique in that it is the only program that accepts most private insurances, Medicaid, and Medicare. Through an inclusive and equitable lens, this program has expanded access to specialized and evidence-based treatment for OCD and anxiety disorders across Colorado. The team frequently engages in national and international conference presentations, publishes in journals, and still has the time to do an annual fundraising/community awareness event, Exposurepalooza. This team provides the highest level of care to patients and seems to always have a variety of projects they are working on. If you are a conscientious, dedicated, and passionate human, you will feel right at home on this team. Emily Hemendinger is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Assistant Professor with the Department of Psychiatry. She is the Clinical Director of the Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Anxiety Programs. She has over twelve years of clinical experience and has a background in behavioral and community health sciences. Her research focuses on treatment refractory OCD, Deep Brain Stimulation, and quality of life. She also is studying executive functioning (specifically cognitive flexibility) in OCD and eating disorders. Other research interests of hers include social media and mental health, sexuality, weight-inclusive healthcare, and increasing specialized mental health care access.

Our primary project would be related to the ongoing evaluation of our OCD and Anxiety IOP. We have recently added follow-up/long-term outcomes assessments for patients who have discharged from our care. This follow-up care and long-term assessment will assist in evaluating our current programming and allow us to address gaps in our care. There may be opportunities to work on curriculum development based on these results. Creating curricula could also be a part of these projects. Depending on the level of contribution from the student, this may lead to an opportunity for them to be on a journal article/publication project. We are not a research lab and are fully a clinical team. However, the student would be able to engage in several projects and shadowing opportunities based on their interests.

The student would have the opportunity to:

- Review IOP patient assessments and assist with entering data
- Conduct analyses for IOP data and follow-up care data
- Shadow individual and group therapy sessions (outpatient and IOP)
- Shadow IOP family programming
- Shadow team meetings and operational meetings for outpatient and IOP
- Write an article for the program's quarterly newsletter
- Learn more:

<https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/psychiatry/PatientCare/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-program> or <https://www.erp4ocd.com/>



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## **Jessica Kenny, PhD and Ayelet Talmi, PhD**

Jessica Kenny, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and a Licensed Clinical Psychologist. Dr. Kenny is the Director of Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Training at Children's Hospital Colorado. She is also Affiliate Faculty at the Eugene S. Farley, Jr. Health Policy Center within the Department of Family Medicine. Her primary clinical and research interests focus on integrated behavioral health in primary care and specialty medical settings, program development and outcomes evaluation, addressing adolescent depression/suicidality, social determinants of health, and family/caregiver needs, providing trauma-informed and culturally sensitive-care, and increasing access to care for historically marginalized populations.

Ayelet Talmi, PhD is a Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and a Licensed Clinical Psychologist at Children's Hospital Colorado. Dr. Talmi is the Vice Chair of Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry, a Director of the Irving Harris Program in Perinatal, Infant, and Early Childhood Mental Health, and the Director of CLIMB, an integrated behavioral health services program. Dr. Talmi has been engaged in early childhood and integrated behavioral health systems, building efforts, direct service, advocacy, and policy in Colorado and nationally. Her primary clinical and research interests focus on behavioral health service delivery systems for children and families, integrated behavioral health in primary care and community settings, early childhood mental health, and young children with special health care needs.

The current project uses clinical informatics and multidisciplinary electronic health record documentation to track, characterize, and evaluate integrated behavioral health services for adolescents and/or children in pediatric primary care settings. Examples of ongoing projects include assessing the impact of: adolescent depression screening in primary care, psychosocial risk and adversity on adolescent depression, behavioral health and primary care provider interventions and recommendations and adolescent health outcomes, and health disparities on service utilization and health outcomes (e.g., for families who speak languages other than English). The student will learn about electronic health record data collection, clinical informatics as a driver for clinical decision-making, assessment of health outcomes to determine program impact, and enhancing clinical care through research and quality improvement efforts.

Students have the opportunity to shadow integrated pediatric primary care clinical work for youth aged 0-18 in a large, urban pediatric primary care clinic serving predominantly Medicaid-insured patients, with about 30% of families identifying as monolingual Spanish-speaking. They will be joining CLIMB (Consultation and Liaison in Mental health and Behavior) Team meetings, have weekly professional development meetings with their co-mentors to discuss career options and trajectories, and participate and learn about clinical informatics, data entry and cleaning, dataset management, and creation of a poster and oral presentation. Students will be encouraged to learn and think about research that informs clinical practice and systems-level reform.



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## **Allison Dempsey, PhD and Susanne Klawetter, PhD**

Dr. Dempsey is a licensed psychologist and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. She specializes in development and evaluation of integrated behavioral health programming, particularly for women with high-risk pregnancies, infants with complex medical conditions, and their families. She is the Director of the Connections Program for High-Risk Infants and Families. Dr. Dempsey and the Connections team have developed comprehensive behavioral health programs for infants and young children with complex medical conditions and their families and deliver services in the University of Colorado Hospital Antepartum Unit and NICU, the CHCO Pulmonary Hypoplasia Multidisciplinary Clinic, and the CU Medicine Psychiatry Community Practice Program. They have several grant-funded research projects in this area.

The student will support evaluation and manuscript development for the NICU Parent Responsiveness and Engagement Program (N-PREP), a dyadic intervention designed to strengthen infant-parent mental health for medically complex NICU infants. They may conduct secondary analyses of existing quantitative data and contribute to coding and interpretation of qualitative feedback gathered from families and NICU staff, consistent with ongoing evaluation efforts in N-PREP implementation. They will also attend weekly Connections Research meetings to learn about additional perinatal mental health studies-such as a clinical trial supporting individuals with cesarean deliveries-and may assist with components of those projects. Opportunities to observe clinical research sessions will further support exposure to perinatal mental health research and intervention delivery.

A strong emphasis is placed on mentorship: students will receive direct guidance from faculty and research staff, participate in discussions on study design and data interpretation, and observe clinical research sessions-including N-PREP delivery and other intervention encounters-to understand how behavioral health services are integrated in NICU and perinatal care settings. They will also be invited to learn about ongoing research within the Connections Program, including opportunities emerging from collaborations across NICU sites and outpatient perinatal behavioral health services.



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## **Jonathan Safer, PhD**

Dr. Safer-Lichtenstein research has focused on diagnosis and intervention for neurodivergent children, including those with autism and ADHD. His ongoing research primarily centers around developing the evidence base for low-cost interventions that are more accessible to underserved groups, including Hispanic/Latinx populations in both the U.S. and Latin America, who experience severe disparities in service utilization.

The project on which a PURPLE student could become most involved is related to the translation and adaptation of a manualized intervention called Unstuck and On Target for Spanish-speaking families. Aspects of this project will include piloting the Spanish version of the intervention at our clinic in the U.S. and working with interested partners in different Latin America countries to help them determine what is necessary for them to adapt, pilot, and evaluate the intervention in their settings. The student could be involved in any aspect of this project, including shadowing/assisting with data collection and entry, child assessments, and intervention groups. The student could also be involved in other research projects/activities going on in our broader program, including a large trial of Unstuck and On Target in community mental health settings.

The student would have the opportunity to:

- Shadow child and caregiver intervention groups.
- Shadow child assessments.
- Attend research team and community partner meetings.
- Set up REDCap databases for research projects.
- Enter data into REDCap.
- Assist with preparing IRB applications and revisions.

Learn more: <https://som.cuanschutz.edu/Profiles/Faculty/Profile/39551>