

PRA ENEWS

MAY



CONGRATULATING POLICY RESEARCH'S NEW PRESIDENT SARAH DESMARAIS AND RETIRING PRESIDENT PAMELA CLARK ROBBINS



Policy Research is pleased to announce that as of May 20, 2022, Sarah Desmarais, PhD, will be the firm's President. Dr. Desmarais joined Policy Research in May 2021 as a Senior Vice President and Program Area Director of the firm's Research and Evaluation area. Under her leadership, Policy Research's research and evaluation portfolio has grown by 300 percent and returned the company to its original balance of research and technical assistance efforts. As President, Dr. Desmarais will build on Policy Research's success by creating a symbiotic relationship between the firm's technical assistance and research portfolios.

Ms. Robbins, a founding member of Policy Research, will retire at the end of December 2022. Through Ms. Robbins's management, including 7 years as President, Policy

Research has emerged as a national leader in behavioral health-focused research, evaluation, technical assistance, and training.

To reflect on this transition, Dr. Desmarais and Ms. Robbins sat down for a podcast series titled *Conversations on Leadership*. In three episodes, *Conversations on Leadership* explores the leadership transition, the evolution of the firm over the past 35 years, and what the future holds for the two leaders and the organization.

The last two episodes of this mini-series are now available for on-demand listening!

The Future of PRA

In "Episode 2: The Future of PRA," Dr. Desmarais discusses her passion for research and evidence-based practices, how the firm's research and technical assistance work will inform one another under her leadership, and her reflections on her first year on the job. In addition, Ms. Robbins shares her reflections on Dr. Desmarais's first year at the company.

Listen to Episode Two

Pam's Reflection on 35 Years

In "Episode 3: Pam's Reflection on 35 Years," Ms. Robbins walks through some of the highlights from 35 years at Policy Research. The conversation covers the early days of Policy Research when the firm had one research grant, and how the work and culture have evolved over time.

Listen to Episode Three

These episodes are available for streaming on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Stitcher](#), and [SoundCloud](#).

Policy Research Welcomes Research and Evaluation Program Area Director Elan C. Hope, PhD

Policy Research is pleased to announce that Elan C. Hope, PhD, has joined Policy Research as the Program Area Director for Research and Evaluation. As Program Area Director, Dr. Hope will develop and provide oversight on research projects and use her area's research findings to inform and

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assistance efforts. Dr. Hope brings a strong background in research focused on academic, civic, and psychological well-being for racially marginalized groups, youth, and emerging adults. She is excited to apply her research skills to bolster and enhance Policy Research's full behavioral health portfolio.

Dr. Hope takes an assets-based approach to understanding individual and community factors that promote well-being for adolescents and young adults, particularly structural barriers to wellness. Dr. Hope uses qualitative and quantitative methods to examine factors related to behavioral health and well-being, including racial identity, critical consciousness, socialization, and activism. Dr. Hope is also an Associate Editor at the *Journal of Adolescent Research*. Prior to joining Policy Research, Dr. Hope was an associate professor of psychology and a university scholar at NC State University.

Dr. Hope is from Prince George's County, Maryland. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Smith College and her PhD in Education and Psychology from the University of Michigan. Following graduate school, Dr. Hope completed a post-doctoral fellowship (sponsored by the William T. Grant Foundation) in Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago.

Welcome, Dr. Elan Hope



New Resource: Learning for Collective Impact

Policy Research is pleased to release a new resource to the field, *Learning for Collective Impact*. This publication, by the National Center for Youth Opportunity and Justice, explores opportunities for and strategies to merge collective action and improvement science frameworks.

Integrating collective action and improvement science frameworks is essential for developing focused strategies to achieve optimal mental health outcomes for youth. The challenges involved in identifying and meeting the needs of youth are complex—often extending beyond the boundaries of any one system, organization, or profession, as well as being contextually situated with unique considerations based on population or community.

The National Center for Youth Opportunity and Justice's experiences in youth mental health have been integrated with literature to offer solution-oriented strategies for facilitating interdisciplinary teams focused on achieving optimal youth mental health outcomes.

[Access the Resource](#)

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Each May, we celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month! This recognition provides us with an occasion to highlight the importance of mental health care, celebrate those in recovery, and encourage people to pay attention to their mental health and seek help when they need it. To celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month, we are sharing resources from our projects that highlight the importance of community and support.

Peer Support Specialists: A Critical Component for SOAR Programs [Webinar]

In this SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center webinar, panelists with lived experience of recovery from mental and substance use conditions and homelessness shared how they have incorporated their lived expertise into their SOAR work.



Peer-Led Innovations in Reentry Support Programming: Towards Holistic Recovery [Webinar]

This SAMHSA's GAINS Center webinar explored structural supports for reentry peer specialists and reentry peer support programs, including certification, training, and resources needed to effectively serve people in transition from incarceration to the community.



Share That You Care Image Pack and Animation Set [Icons & GIFs]

Share these supportive messages with a friend, colleague, or loved one in an email, a text, or a social media message to let them know that you're thinking of them and are proud of them for taking care of their mental health!



Mindful Breathing for Stress Management [Videos]

These three breathing exercises (Square Breathing, Diaphragmatic Breathing, and Progressive Muscle Relaxation)

alleviate symptoms caused by stress, such as increased heart rate, muscle tension, fast breathing, and high blood pressure.

Mindful Breathing
for Stress
Management



Policy Research at an Event Near You

[Minnesota 2022 Mental Health Court Conference](#)

May 24–26, 2022; Virtual Conference

Join SAMHSA's GAINS Center Director **Chan Noether, MA**, on May 24 from 12:00–3:00 p.m. CT for the session "Building in the Magic of Peer Support."

[National Conference of State Legislatures Opioid Policy Fellows](#)

[Policy Solutions and Innovations Meeting](#)

June 4–5, 2022; Denver, Colorado

Program Area Director **Travis Parker, MS, LIMHP, CPC**, will be presenting at the National Conference of State Legislatures Opioid Policy Fellows meeting. Mr. Parker's presentation will highlight [Sequential Intercept Model](#) Mapping Workshops and their potential to catalyze systems transformation.

[National Co-Responder Conference](#)

June 6–8, 2022; Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Senior Project Associate **Michael J. Hatch, MPA**, will be moderating the "Expanding the Continuum of Support: Co-Response in the City of Pittsburgh" panel. His session will take place on June 7, 2022, 2:45–3:45 p.m. ET.

[National Organization of Forensic Social Work](#)

June 14–16, 2022; New Orleans, Louisiana

Join Senior Project Associate **Lisa Maye, MSW**, for the session "Positioning Equity, Appealing to Communities, and Transforming Systems" (June 16, 2022, 9:45–10:45 a.m. ET). Ms. Maye will share how investing in local justice systems that advance racial equity and justice by providing accessible and culturally competent behavioral health services within communities produces accountability when treating persons of color.

[But You Can't Do That There!: Rethinking the Similarities](#)

[Between Traditional & AltAc Spaces](#)

In February 2022, **Dr. Desmarais** was featured on the American Society of Criminology's Division on Corrections and Sentencing's Alternative-Academic Careers Workshop Series. In her talk, Dr. Desmarais discussed her own career path, career options for graduate

students outside of academia, and the critical importance of person-centered mentorship for students.

Recent Stories From the PRA Blog



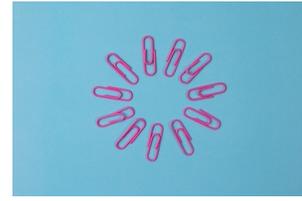
COLA: A More Equitable Approach



Defund to What?



Day of Reflection: Creating Space



Social Work to Supervision



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