

## Title

Educational-Clinical Linkage to Improve Health Equity for Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities

## Abstract

**Background:** Societal and structural inequities have created longstanding health care disparities among Black, Latino/a/e, and low-income preschool-age children with developmental delays and disabilities (PCw/DD) depriving them of necessary educational and therapeutic services. Access to these services not only fosters children's academic, economic, and health outcomes but also improves parental health outcomes.

**Objective:** To present the Preschool and Me (PreM) protocol including the formative work that informed its development.

**Methods:** PreM is a novel community-clinical linkage (CCL) model connecting clinical settings serving historically marginalized communities with early childhood educational services. Funded by the National Institute of Nursing Research Bridge-to-Care Initiative, the PreM protocol includes a randomized waitlist-controlled trial involving 320 parent-child dyads. We will highlight: 1) preliminary work informing PreM development; 2) the hybrid effectiveness-implementation approach to test effectiveness of PreM on indicators of access (primary) and child-, parent-, family- and health service outcomes (secondary); 3) potential mechanisms by which CCL models may lead to improved multilevel health outcomes; and 4) a mixed-methods implementation evaluation to understand and address successes and failures in relation to clinical outcomes.

**Results:** An interdisciplinary team, with a Multidisciplinary Community Advisory Board including parents, pediatric providers, and representatives from Chicago Public Schools, Illinois Governor's Office, Professional organizations, and Equip for Equality oversees study design, recruitment and advocacy. In 5 months, 73 families enrolled, with over 90% identifying as Black and/or Latino/a/e.

**Conclusion:** The results of this study have the potential to: 1) advance scientific knowledge about how gaps and delays in educational and therapeutic services impact health outcomes among PCw/DD and their families; 2) identify mechanisms to increase access to educational and therapeutic services and address longstanding health care disparities; and 3) support effective implementation of CCLs within pediatric clinical settings serving historically marginalized communities which can be utilized to improve health equity.