

potential

A publication of Kennedy Krieger Institute Fall | Winter 2020

SPECIAL EDITION

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Critical Elements for Creating
Equitable Healthcare,
Education, Research
and Communities



Kennedy Krieger Institute



Greetings From Our President

Our mission is to serve individuals and families who are often marginalized because of their “differences.” This past year, as the COVID-19 pandemic sharply revealed our nation’s long-standing health and education disparities, we acted quickly to provide ongoing services to our patients and students, and their families. And as people gathered across the country to protest racism and social injustice, we looked critically at how we could better help our patients, students and families experiencing the traumatic effects of racism—and at what we could do to reduce or eliminate disparities in the care and education we deliver, and in the work environment we foster for our colleagues.

This past summer, we established Kennedy Krieger’s Office for Health, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (O-HEID). We consider health to be inextricably linked with equity, diversity and inclusion, without which society cannot foster good health for everyone. This new office supports employee excellence, retention, leadership and development, addressing issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion. It also serves as a resource for training, advocacy, research and collaboration with local, state and national partners.

The establishment of the O-HEID exemplifies how we’re striving to do better—the best we possibly can—by our patients and students, and their families, as well as by our employees and trainees. We believe that enhancing workforce diversity and promoting equity in health, education and opportunity are critically important to reducing—and eventually eliminating—health and education disparities.

In this special issue of *Potential*, we take a closer look at this topic, sharing with you what we’re doing and where we are headed. We hope you’ll join us in working together to help make our society more equitable and inclusive.

We wish you a very happy and safe holiday season, and a wonderful start to the new year.

Thank you so very much for your ongoing support,

Bradley L. Schlaggar, MD, PhD
President and CEO
Kennedy Krieger Institute

On the cover: Marcel receives therapy for a spinal cord injury at Kennedy Krieger Institute. Visit [KennedyKrieger.org/Marcel](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/Marcel) to watch a video about Marcel.

A publication of Kennedy Krieger Institute **Fall | Winter 2020**
Volume 20, No. 2

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EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ARE ESSENTIAL

Equity, diversity and inclusion are essential to providing quality healthcare and education for our patients and students.

“The reason why we do what we do every day is because we want every single person to have full access to every opportunity they should have available to them,” says Bradley L. Schlaggar, president and CEO of Kennedy Krieger Institute.

“That’s right at the heart of what we’re doing. We want to make sure our patients and students have every opportunity to live satisfying, gratifying lives. We make that happen by adhering to the fundamental philosophy that the world is a better place by having the doors open to everyone.”

At Kennedy Krieger, that goes for patients and students, and their families, as well as employees and trainees. “We proclaim the importance of inclusion on behalf of the people we serve, and we also live by that internally,” Dr. Schlaggar says. “This inclusive approach benefits everyone, and our work and workplace benefit because we have a diversity of perspectives. It’s a driving force for our mission, and we’re always striving to do better. It’s how we live our daily lives as an organization.”

Kennedy Krieger was founded in 1937 to provide medical care and education to children with cerebral palsy. U.S. public schools weren’t required to serve children with disabilities until 1975, but long before then, the Institute’s patients could get the therapies and education they needed to live as independently as possible—a revolutionary achievement at the time.

Kennedy Krieger has never wavered in its mission, increasing its reach to allow hundreds of thousands of children to live their lives as fully engaged in family, school and community life as possible. At Kennedy Krieger, even the rarest of disorders, affecting only a handful of people in the world, are given full attention by clinicians and researchers—every child is worthy of the best healthcare and education possible.

EQUITABLE ACCESS

As 2020 has shown us, access to quality healthcare is far from equitable across the country. It’s especially lacking in rural communities and cities. Even in Baltimore, a city of world-class medical institutions, a lack of health insurance or reliable transportation can leave many children and families without the care they need. And chronically underfunded public schools are often unable to meet the requirements of students’ individualized education programs.

Through ongoing efforts, Kennedy Krieger strives to meet these needs to make childhood more equitable. Kennedy Krieger School Programs serve children from Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., whose needs cannot be met by their local school systems. Some of Kennedy Krieger’s students travel up to four hours a day via school bus to attend school at the Institute. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, with students learning from home, Kennedy Krieger teachers and staff members have worked tirelessly to ensure each student and family has access to the technology they need for the student to attend virtual classes and therapy sessions.

It’s the same with medical care—Kennedy Krieger even provides taxi service for local patients and families in need of transportation to and from the Institute for appointments. Translation services are available for families who do not speak English. Special clinics and programs are dedicated to serving families who are Hispanic, d/Deaf* or hard of hearing, and Jewish. Clinicians and other staff members are trained in providing culturally-sensitive care and services.

Continued on pages 4 and 5

*Kennedy Krieger Institute recognizes that the word “deaf” can refer to both a condition and a culture. Kennedy Krieger spells the word as “d/Deaf” to be inclusive of both hearing status and cultural identity.

“What bind us together as a community at Kennedy Krieger are our shared values and belief system that every individual in our society, without exception, has the basic right to achieve their fullest potential.”

– Dr. Bradley L. Schlaggar

*Dr. Aaron Parsons,
Dr. Jacqueline Stone,
Dr. Harolyn M. E. Belcher
and Dr. Bradley L. Schlaggar*



“The more we are attuned to culture and cultural competence, the more effective we are in providing the best outcomes in health and education. It’s the right thing to do from a societal perspective, but also the right thing for each individual patient and student, to provide an equitable and diverse environment to optimize outcomes,” Dr. Schlaggar says. “To provide the best care possible, we have to take into account an individual’s entire life circumstances, not only the symptoms at hand.”

“That requires recognizing that structural and institutionalized racism exists in U.S. society, and that we must develop an anti-racist system of care for children, youth and families,” says Dr. Harolyn M. E. Belcher, the Institute’s chief diversity officer and director of the Institute’s Office for Health, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity.

AN ANTI-RACIST SYSTEM OF CARE

“There’s a huge gap in income between those who have, and those who do not have, and that gap is worse for people of color,” Dr. Belcher says. Generations of unequal access to employment, housing, healthcare, education and other services have created and worsened the gap, and these inequalities are often accompanied by adverse experiences such as hunger, poverty, violence and racism, all of which can lead to trauma, especially for children. “We must reimagine systems of care to make life more equitable, in terms of policies and practices, and also in terms of integrating mental and physical health services, to address trauma experiences.”

“A huge component of equity, diversity and inclusion is our anti-racism efforts,” says Dr. Jacqueline Stone, Kennedy Krieger’s chief clinical officer. “The critical piece is that this becomes a part of what we do every day. We are infusing it into who we are as an organization and infusing it into our day-to-day operations.”

Kennedy Krieger is currently working to establish the Center for the Neuroscience of Social Injustice to study these adverse conditions and develop evidence-based approaches to providing care for children experiencing these conditions as they grow up, Dr. Stone says. The center will build on work the Institute has been doing in this field for decades, and its work will have positive and far-reaching implications for children in Maryland and across the country.

DIVERSITY MATTERS

Infusing the care and education that Kennedy Krieger provides with cultural sensitivity and anti-racism requires a staff and board of directors that are diverse and dedicated to diversity. The Institute has an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Council and Steering Committee, and its board has an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee.

“It’s exciting that the board is dedicating resources to embedding equity, diversity and inclusion as part of its governance of the Institute,” says Alicia Wilson, a board member and co-chair of the subcommittee, and vice president for economic development at The Johns Hopkins University and Johns Hopkins Health System. “That positions equity, diversity and inclusion as a mission-critical part of the Institute.”



Dr. Arthur Hill




Bayadir Mohamed-Osman



Dr. S. Ali Fatemi



Dr. Carmen Lopez-Arvizu



“Diversity matters because the outcomes are different—better—when you have a diverse set of individuals working together on something.”

— ALICIA WILSON

Equity and inclusion in the healthcare setting “have huge implications not just for the rendering of care, but also for the accessibility of that care to our community, and to those who are the most vulnerable,” she says. “And diversity matters because the outcomes are different—

better—when you have a diverse set of individuals working together on something.”

It’s like diversifying a stock portfolio to maximize the outcome, she explains. “In healthcare, you diminish risk when you have different people looking at something from different angles—you maximize the possibility to have tremendous gains.”

By prioritizing equity, diversity and inclusion throughout Kennedy Krieger, the influence these factors have on healthcare and education will be able to be measured, Wilson says. “As an academic medical institution, we’re used to studying something, measuring it and analyzing the results. And when it comes to equity, diversity and inclusion, our ability to measure and hold ourselves accountable is important, because it means we’ll be able to make measurable improvements.”

Dr. Schlaggar firmly believes in the ability of Kennedy Krieger, through its staff members and trainees, to continue making strides in offering equitable care and education to its patients and students.

“What bind us together as a community at Kennedy Krieger are our shared values and belief system that every individual in our society, without exception, has the basic right to achieve their fullest potential,” he says. “All that we do in care, education, service, advocacy and discovery is with that goal in mind.”

Visit [KennedyKrieger.org/O-HEID](https://www.KennedyKrieger.org/O-HEID) to learn more about Kennedy Krieger’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Office for Health, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Opens at Kennedy Krieger

New office opens to ensure culturally-competent care, education and engagement.

This past August, Kennedy Krieger Institute opened the new Office for Health, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (O-HEID), a significant step in its journey to cultivate and encourage equity, inclusion and diversity among its community of employees, trainees, and patients and students, and their families.

“For many years, Kennedy Krieger has held and engaged in multiple independent equity, diversity and inclusion activities,” says Dr. Jacqueline Stone, Kennedy Krieger’s chief clinical officer.

“The establishment of this new office signifies Kennedy Krieger’s commitment and dedication to working toward achieving equitable health outcomes for all,” adds

Maureen van Stone, director of the Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) at Kennedy Krieger, and of MCDD’s Project HEAL (Health, Education, Advocacy, and Law).



A Passionate Leader



Directing the O-HEID is **Dr. Harolyn M. E. Belcher**. A former trainee of the Institute, Dr. Belcher has been the director of the Institute’s Center for Diversity in Public Health Leadership Training for the past 15 years and associate director of Kennedy Krieger’s Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program for the past five years. From 2003 to 2015, she served as director of research at the Institute’s Center for Child and Family Traumatic Stress (CCFTS), and she was recently named a vice president and the inaugural chief diversity officer of Kennedy Krieger.

“As an institution founded on the premise of treatment, education, research and advocacy for children and youth with—or at risk for—developmental disabilities, Kennedy Krieger has been on a journey to address the needs of children, youth and families who are often marginalized,” Dr. Belcher says.

“I’ve always felt very deeply about helping families to do the best they can, no matter their circumstances,” she adds.

“Through the O-HEID, we can move healthcare forward in a more equitable way, with the goal of everyone enjoying the same sense of health and well-being. We want to be doing all we can to improve the lives of all those who have—or are at risk of developing—developmental disabilities.”

“The O-HEID, with Dr. Belcher’s direction, will galvanize and lead our advancement in health, equity, inclusion and diversity,” adds Dr. Bradley L. Schlaggar, president and CEO of Kennedy Krieger. “And we—everyone at the Institute—will do this work together. Our work will touch all areas of our influence, both inside the Institute and in all the communities we serve.”

One of the O-HEID’s first tasks is to examine the Institute’s policies and services to ensure that it is leading in equitable and anti-racist practices.

“We will work collaboratively across healthcare, education, advocacy and other sectors to determine what needs to be done, promote solutions, and leverage the skills and talents of Kennedy Krieger clinicians, researchers, trainees and staff members to benefit both Kennedy Krieger and the larger community,” Dr. Belcher says.

“There’s a lot of energy in this space at Kennedy Krieger,” she adds. “Our work with children who have—or are at risk of having—developmental disabilities requires us to be compassionate, patient, culturally competent and innovative. That makes us a unique institution with unique skills and abilities that we can use to move into a leadership role in this field.”



Dr. Kathryn Van Eck, Dr. Damoni Piggott, Tyler Weston (a former trainee with the Center for Diversity in Public Health Leadership Training) and Dr. Harolyn M. E. Belcher

O-HEID'S MISSION AND VALUES

MISSION

To provide and create evidence- and equity-based resources for those who work, train and receive services at Kennedy Krieger.

VALUES

- 1 Be inclusive.
- 2 Use creative and evidence-informed problem-solving strategies.
- 3 Identify and address -isms.
- 4 Strive for excellence in mission each day.
- 5 Open communication.
- 6 Listen actively.
- 7 Learn from and respect each other.
- 8 Be flexible.
- 9 Embrace change.
- 10 Work with integrity and ethics.
- 11 Be accountable and data-driven.

A Long History

A quarter of a century ago, the CCFTS—which provides mental health services for children and teens, and their families—formed a Cultural Awareness Committee to encourage cultural and linguistic competency among its staff members. Then about four years ago, an Institute-wide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Workgroup began meeting to address disparities across the Kennedy Krieger community. Two years later, the Cultural Awareness Committee shifted its focus toward anti-racism and joined a national anti-racism initiative through the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. And early last year, the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Workgroup became a formal steering committee, chaired by Dr. Stone.

The O-HEID builds on this work, promoting the health, well-being and cultural competency of all members of the Kennedy Krieger community through evidence- and equity-based approaches that support diversity and inclusion. Services include research, education, support, advocacy and clinical work. The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee supports the O-HEID in an advisory role.

“All of the work that we’ll do in this space will influence and involve Kennedy Krieger’s overall culture, including its board of directors, faculty and staff members, trainees, patients, students, and families, as well as Baltimore, Maryland and the nation,” Dr. Stone says.

Visit KennedyKrieger.org/O-HEID to learn more about the new office.

Dr. Bradley L. Schlaggar (front) and staff members and trainees of Kennedy Krieger.

“Through the O-HEID, we can move healthcare forward in a more equitable way, with the goal of everyone enjoying the same sense of health and well-being.”

— DR. HAROLYN BELCHER

Patient-Centered Care

Providing equitable care to each patient requires compassion, curiosity and humility.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has made clear, Americans across the U.S. experience drastically unequal access to healthcare. While some communities enjoy a plethora of healthcare providers and services, others have far fewer healthcare resources, and many in those communities lack the transportation needed to easily access those resources. That inequality has resulted in a nation in which some populations—including Black, Hispanic, Native American and rural communities—suffer from poorer health, in general, than other populations.

“It’s very important to be culturally aware of the population you serve. It’s not just about the symptoms. It’s about valuing cultural differences.”

— DR. CARMEN LOPEZ-ARVIZU

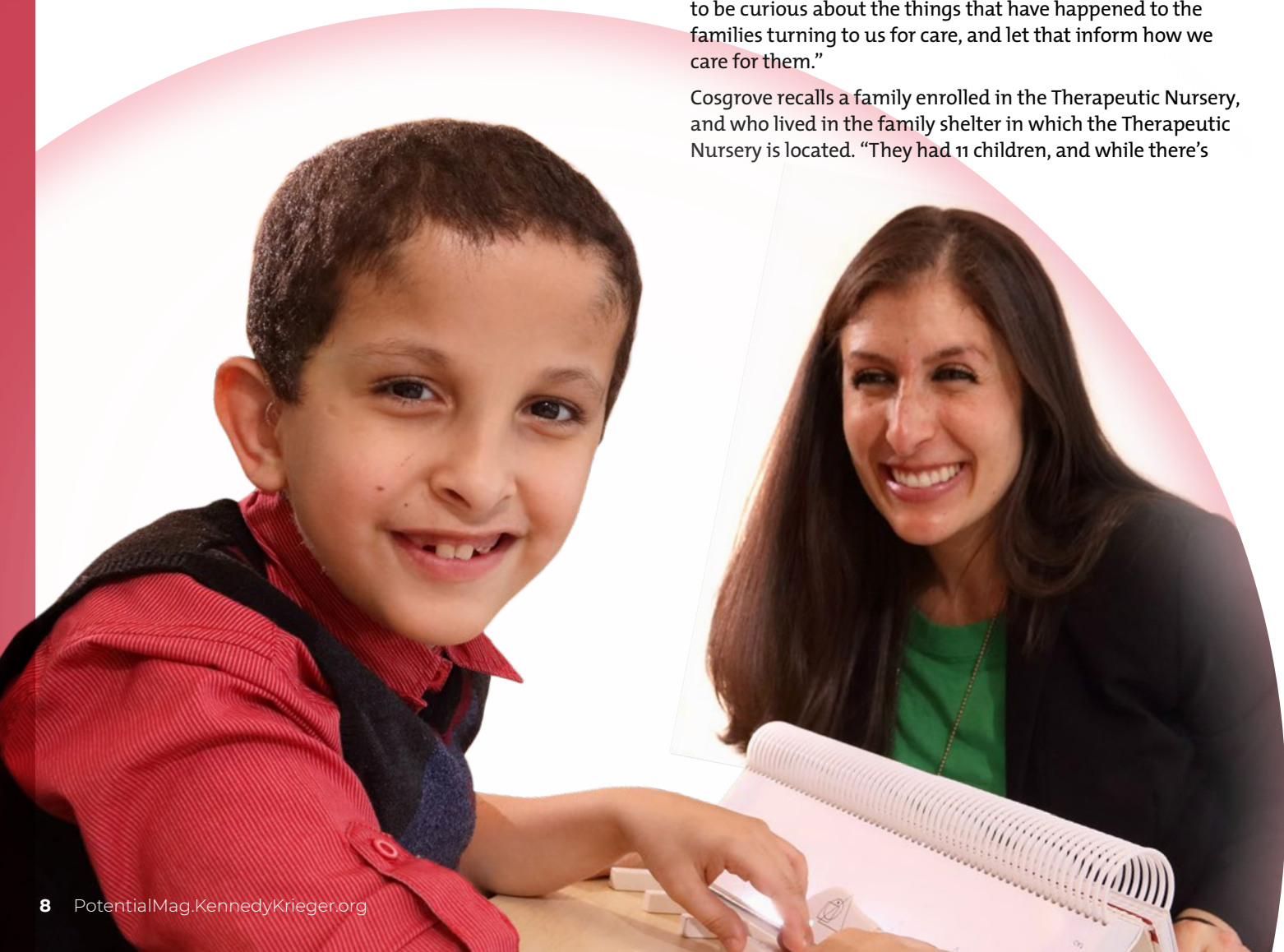
Kennedy Krieger Institute serves patients and families from all segments of society, and takes special care to ensure that a patient’s race, ethnicity, cultural background and socioeconomic status are taken into consideration when developing a treatment plan—that’s the only way to ensure equitable care for all.

‘A FOUNDATION OF RESPECT’

For the Therapeutic Nursery run by PACT, an affiliate of Kennedy Krieger that serves children and families experiencing homelessness, “we meet the family where they are,” explains Kimberly Cosgrove, the nursery’s director. “We support them in what they need in that moment, and make sure that we’re always bringing kindness and compassion into our work.”

“We work from a foundation of respect, hope and curiosity, rather than judgment,” adds Sharon Holloway, who directs World of Care, PACT’s medical child care program. “We need to be curious about the things that have happened to the families turning to us for care, and let that inform how we care for them.”

Cosgrove recalls a family enrolled in the Therapeutic Nursery, and who lived in the family shelter in which the Therapeutic Nursery is located. “They had 11 children, and while there’s



often judgment around the number of children a family has, what we saw was a family that loved their children so much,” says Cosgrove, who remembers seeing the children’s father sitting in the shelter’s dining room surrounded by his children.

“They were all just laughing and enjoying themselves. Even though they were temporarily in a shelter, the love that they had, I knew, would carry through their lives,” she adds. “We have to remember that everyone staying in the shelter has the same desire as we all do to support our children as they grow and learn.”

CARE SPECIFIC TO EACH PATIENT AND FAMILY

“It’s very important to be culturally aware of the population you serve,” says **Dr. Carmen Lopez-Arvizu**, medical director of the Institute’s Psychiatric Mental Health Program. “It’s not just about the symptoms. It’s about valuing cultural differences. We make the effort to really get to know our patients. Sometimes the questions we may need to ask may be awkward, but the rapport is necessary to find a common ground for treatment.”

“For me and my work, no one exists apart from a context and a story. We are all people within a context,” says Dr. Anjelica E. Jackson, a clinical psychologist for the Institute’s Department of Family and Community Interventions. “Many of my clients are people of color, who historically have been marginalized. They’re not just patients with diagnoses. There are environmental, societal and historical factors that impact their ability to function and thrive.”

If a patient is dealing with depression, “I can’t just treat that when they’re also dealing with police brutality and insufficient access to care, and that all goes into the context of who they are, and what it means for me to be a Black therapist for them,” she adds. “Even though we are of the same race, there are so many things that can impact who we are. If I can’t take all of that into account for that person, then I can’t ‘see’ that person, and our clients deserve that.”

ENSURING EACH PATIENT’S NEEDS ARE MET

Sometimes, meeting patients where they are is as simple as asking in advance what they’ll need to be fully comfortable during their medical appointment.

For patients or family members who are d/Deaf* or hard of hearing, that means asking in advance what mode of communication they prefer—American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation or live captioning on an iPad, for example, explains Dr. Jennifer Reesman, supervising neuropsychologist for the Institute’s Deafness-Related Evaluations and More (DREAM) Clinic, which has several ASL-fluent clinicians on staff.

And for a transgender patient, one of the first steps toward providing equitable care means finding out what first name

that patient uses—which could be different from their legal name—and what pronouns they use to refer to themselves.

“Individuals in the LGBTQ+ community represent about 10 to 15 percent of the population,” says clinical psychologist **Dr. Kathryn Van Eck**. “They often don’t feel welcome in healthcare settings. Affirming their sexual orientation and gender identity is crucial for developing a strong patient-provider relationship.”



Not long ago, Dr. Van Eck helped a group of rehabilitation therapists at Kennedy Krieger understand the importance of using a patient’s preferred pronouns.

“They really wanted to learn whatever was necessary to support their patient by being gender-affirming in their care. It made a big difference for the patient, and helped the patient connect with the staff,” she says. “I’ve also witnessed the critical role that using a patient’s pronouns can have in the patient’s parents’ acceptance of their child’s identity. When we model acceptance, using the right pronouns and apologizing when we get it wrong, it’s a big deal for parents who are also struggling with that process.”

When Dr. Van Eck gives presentations to Kennedy Krieger teams and departments on providing gender-affirming healthcare, she always stresses the importance of cultural humility.

“Having an openness to learning and seeking new information and being humble can be uncomfortable, but it’s necessary to provide the best care possible to our patients,” she says. “At Kennedy Krieger, everyone always aligns themselves with the principles of the Institute, providing the best care possible, and connecting with each patient and meeting their needs.”

Visit [KennedyKrieger.org/PatientCare](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/PatientCare) to learn more about patient care at Kennedy Krieger.

*Kennedy Krieger Institute recognizes that the word “deaf” can refer to both a condition and a culture. Kennedy Krieger spells the word as “d/Deaf” to be inclusive of both hearing status and cultural identity.



A NATURAL BLEND:

Advocacy and Inclusion

Kennedy Krieger's advocacy arm champions the rights of individuals with disabilities with a "nothing about us without us" approach.

For the Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) at Kennedy Krieger Institute, which advocates for individuals with developmental disabilities, it is important to practice what it preaches.

"I think what made our efforts so successful was that they were led by individuals with disabilities."

— Mat Rice

"Several of our staff members have one or more disabilities—including cerebral palsy, epilepsy and low vision—and some of our staff members use augmentative or alternative communication methods," explains Maureen van Stone, director of the MCDD, one of a national network of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. "We

demonstrate how the Institute can support individuals with disabilities in having meaningful employment, and how the Institute can adapt to the needs of its staff members."

The MCDD's mission is to advance the inclusion of people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities. It serves a highly diverse population—racially, ethnically and ability-wise—that is often underserved when it comes to medical care and legal representation. Its staff, which includes bilingual lawyers and self-advocates, works tirelessly to spread awareness about the needs of individuals with disabilities; advocate for individuals' rights at the local, state and national levels; and train others in advocacy. The MCDD's Project HEAL (Health, Education, Advocacy, and Law), a community-based medical-legal partnership also directed by van Stone, provides legal and advocacy services to the Institute's patients and their families.

Cultural and Linguistic Competency

In 2018, van Stone invited a team specializing in cultural and linguistic competency from Georgetown University to help MCDD staff members develop a finer sensitivity to the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural differences. The team's visit resulted in a number of actions to better ensure equity, diversity and inclusion in the MCDD's work.

One of those was to start doing a staff-led cultural and linguistic competency exercise at the beginning of each monthly meeting of the MCDD's leadership team. "I think this leads not only to competence in these areas, but also to more team bonding," van Stone says. This example is followed by many departments across the Institute.

A Seat at the Table

Employing individuals with disabilities ensures that all voices are heard—both within the Institute and, through the MCDD's advocacy work, outside of it. Especially when it comes to advocacy, the MCDD's approach is "nothing about us without us."

For example, Mat Rice, public policy specialist for People On the Go Maryland (POG), a partnership between the MCDD and the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, was a leader in ensuring the 2016 passage of the Maryland Ken Capone Equal Employment Act, named after POG's director, to end subminimum wages for individuals with disabilities.

"When I attended Maryland School for the Blind, my vocational training consisted of going to a place referred to as 'the workshop,'" Rice explains. "At the time, I thought this was unique to my school, but when I got into the disability field, I realized that it wasn't, and that this has happened to people for years." In the workshop, Rice did menial tasks such as shredding paper and crushing cans, and was paid "pennies on the dollar. I was lucky if I would end up with enough money to buy a sandwich at the school cafe at the end of a week."

Getting the Ken Capone Equal Employment Act passed was no easy feat, and required months of collaboration with other advocacy groups and state legislators. "I think what made our efforts so successful," Rice says, "was that they were led by individuals with disabilities."

Visit [KennedyKrieger.org/MCDD](https://www.KennedyKrieger.org/MCDD) and [KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectHEAL](https://www.KennedyKrieger.org/ProjectHEAL) to learn more.



A Lifetime of Self-Worth

Kennedy Krieger's special education and workforce support services give individuals with neurodiverse conditions and disabilities the opportunity to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

While Kennedy Krieger Institute focuses primarily on treating and educating children and adolescents, its aim is to provide them with the support and services they need to live their adult lives as independently and fully as possible.

"The hard work that we do on behalf of children, teens and young adults sets them up to live their best possible life," explains Dr. Bradley L. Schlaggar, president and CEO of Kennedy Krieger. "We're setting them up for a lifetime of experiencing the sense of self-worth that can come through employment, independence and engagement with the community."

Kennedy Krieger School Programs provide special education services to about 500 students a year from more than a dozen counties in the Maryland and Washington, D.C., region and with a range of neurodiverse differences, conditions and disabilities. Each student has an individualized education program designed specifically to meet their needs. And over the past few years, the Institute has expanded its services to support young adults with disabilities as they transition from school to adulthood.

The Institute's Meaningful Community Services program helps individuals with disabilities obtain and maintain meaningful employment and community engagement through a person-centered approach, explains Stacey Herman, the Institute's director of postsecondary services. Those services include Project SEARCH at Kennedy Krieger Institute, an internship program; CORE Foundations, which provides individualized services supporting independence; and CORE Foundations Community Programming, which offers community integration and social engagement through a series of events and activities.

From School to Work—And Beyond

One of the roles of the Institute's Meaningful Community Services is to help employers welcome individuals with neurodiverse conditions into the workplace. Kennedy Krieger has worked with more than 30 businesses and organizations in the Mid-Atlantic region, helping them tailor interview processes for—and communicate and collaborate in the workplace with—individuals with neurodiverse conditions.

"We stress the value that individuals with neurodiverse conditions bring to the workplace," Herman says. Research shows that individuals with some conditions, including autism spectrum disorder and dyslexia, can have special skills in memory, mathematics or pattern recognition, she adds.

"There's also value to employers in recognizing the intangibles that come with having a neurodiverse workplace," Dr. Schlaggar says. "That influences how other employees come to understand their workplace and recognize the richness of experiences that comes from meaningful interactions at work with individuals with neurodiverse conditions."

The Intersection of Race and Disability

"Many of our students come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, and for them to succeed, it's important for them to have teachers and other professionals who look like them, and who have a deep understanding of how social determinants affect health and quality of life," says Dr. Aaron Parsons, vice president of school programs at Kennedy Krieger. The same goes for books and other educational materials. "We're currently undertaking a review, to look for unintentional bias in all facets of our schools."

And with people of color often disproportionately targeted by law

enforcement, "our school

community has an ongoing concern that when our students are in public, they may interact in ways that are different from other people, and be misunderstood by law enforcement," making public awareness critical, Dr. Parsons says.

Over the years, Dr. Parsons and his colleagues have had many discussions with students and parents about the intersection of race and disability in the community—because ultimately, the goal of Kennedy Krieger School Programs is to give individuals with neurodiverse conditions and disabilities a chance to make their way in the world.

"Our vision of inclusion is to think about where our students will be across their lifetime," Dr. Parsons says. "If they're engaging with their community, working and living as independently as possible, then we've succeeded."

"Our vision of inclusion is to think about where our students will be across their lifetime."

– Dr. Aaron Parsons



Visit KennedyKrieger.org/Schools and KennedyKrieger.org/Neurodiversity to learn more.



Equity Through Inclusive Research

Research at Kennedy Krieger seeks to bring equity to the lives of children with disabilities, and those growing up in adverse conditions.

“Outside of Kennedy Krieger Institute, there aren’t many researchers studying what we’re studying,” says Dr. Jacqueline Stone, Kennedy Krieger’s chief clinical officer. “The research we do is framed by our mission of helping individuals with neurological disorders and diseases”—one of the largest underrepresented groups of people in the U.S.—“reach their highest potential. Our research supports and adds value to the interventions we are able to offer to our patients, students and families.”



“Research should strive to gain knowledge applicable to every person impacted by the disease under study,” says **Dr. Erika Augustine**, Kennedy Krieger’s associate chief science officer and director of the Institute’s Clinical Trials Unit. Assembling a diverse sample group can be

difficult for research on rare disorders affecting very few people in the world, but in general, studies should be as inclusive as possible. If only one population group is represented in a study, the study may not be generalizable to the full population with the disease.

“For every research study, it is critical to examine what it means to foster diversity within the study. We pay close attention to whether we are doing our best to maximize inclusivity,” Dr. Augustine says. “And when it comes to diversity, we think thoroughly about race and ethnicity. We equally aim to attend to other aspects of diversity, like gender, socioeconomic and geographic factors, and education level, among others.”

There can be substantial barriers to participation in research—for example, lack of transportation to study sites; lack of internet access to complete study questionnaires, or to do study visits by videoconference; and information and consent forms available only in English. “When designing research projects, we look at these barriers, and figure out how to address them,” Dr. Augustine says.

THE NEUROSCIENCE OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE

Children who experience adverse conditions—poverty, homelessness, hunger, violence, racial trauma, lack of access to healthcare, etc.—are at a greater risk for developmental disabilities than their more privileged peers, due to the serious negative impacts these experiences can have on a child’s developing brain and nervous system, explains Dr. Harolyn M. E. Belcher, Kennedy Krieger’s chief diversity officer and director of the Institute’s Office for Health, Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity. Kennedy Krieger has been studying and addressing these impacts, and recently designed the Center for the Neuroscience of Social Injustice to identify interventions to reverse the damage caused by these impacts.

“What we learn will have implications for children across the country.”

— Dr. Harolyn M. E. Belcher

“If 2020 has shown us anything, it’s that social injustice impacts people immensely,” Dr. Belcher says. “This year, the health disparities spotlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the toxic stress that individuals from marginalized groups suffer due to structural and institutionalized racism, showed us just how important it is to better understand how those injustices and disparities adversely affect children.”

With Kennedy Krieger located in the heart of Baltimore, a city whose racial inequities run deep, and in Maryland, where income inequities vary widely from county to county, the Institute sees research in this area as essential to helping all of Maryland’s children reach their full potential.

“What we learn will have implications for children across the country,” Dr. Belcher adds. “It’s an urgent area of research, and it will make a big difference for so many children.”

Visit [KennedyKrieger.org/Research](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/Research) to learn more about research at the Institute, and visit [KennedyKrieger.org/MarylandKids](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/MarylandKids) to learn more about the Center for the Neuroscience of Social Injustice.

Dr. Christina Nemeth Mertz,
Dr. S. Ali Fatemi and Dr. Bela Turk

Intentional Diversity, Innovative Teams

**A DIVERSE STAFF PROVIDES
THE BEST CARE AND
EDUCATION POSSIBLE TO
PATIENTS AND STUDENTS.**

A few years ago, Dr. Erika Augustine, Kennedy Krieger Institute’s associate chief science officer; Dr. Bradley L. Schlaggar, the Institute’s president and CEO; and some of their colleagues developed a program to support the careers of pediatric neurologists from underrepresented groups.

“We wanted to create a process for identifying and encouraging talented individuals who are underrepresented in medicine to stay in academic research careers,” says Dr. Augustine, who also directs the Institute’s Clinical Trials Unit. “Now, four years into the program, we have identified a robust community of individuals who are finding success in their respective careers. If diversity is a priority, there is a real need to be intentional about striving to achieve it.”

Kennedy Krieger’s recruitment strategy includes developing strong partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), schools serving a high percentage of Hispanic students, and schools serving students with neurodiverse conditions, explains **Tina Schmitt**, Kennedy Krieger’s director of talent acquisition and retention.



The Institute also works with national associations, student groups representing underserved populations, and organizations representing individuals with disabilities.

And many staff members are looking to increase Kennedy Krieger’s engagement with the local community, working with public schools in Baltimore to help create pathways for students to follow to attend college. “We’re looking to recruit from HBCUs, but we also want to help students in Baltimore get to college in the first place,” says John Cunningham, the Institute’s director of school information systems.

To do this, “we need to have a team go out on career days at the middle school level,” says Dr. Arthur Hill, assistant vice president for Kennedy Krieger’s Special Education Department. With a wealth of career opportunities at Kennedy Krieger in a variety of fields, “there are opportunities in so many disciplines at the Institute, right here in the heart of the city. We just need to get the word out.”

Retaining Diversity

Retaining employees from diverse backgrounds requires just as much intentional effort. Mentoring is key. For example, one of Dr. Augustine’s roles is to mentor Institute researchers of underrepresented groups. Including individuals of diverse backgrounds in all departments and at all levels of management across the Institute is also important, so employees of underrepresented groups can see co-workers who look like them working in a variety of positions—including in leadership roles. Staff members are encouraged to listen to, learn from and support co-workers of different backgrounds. And employees of underrepresented groups are encouraged to join together, across the Institute, to support—and advocate for—each other.

This past summer, an Affinity Employee Resource Group for Black Staff formed at Kennedy Krieger to foster community, share resources and pursue the professional, social and cultural development of Black staff members at Kennedy Krieger through advocacy, outreach and mentoring. The group meets once a month, and is a place where “we can discuss and share aspirations and work experiences,” and advocate for inclusion and equity across the Institute, says group co-facilitator Paula Waller, a social work manager for the Institute’s Department of Family and Community Interventions.

“This is probably the first time that so many Black staff members from so many different departments across the Institute have gotten together to support and advocate for each other,” says group co-facilitator Dr. Anjelica E. Jackson, a clinical psychologist for the Department of Family and Community Interventions. “None of us can reach our full potential until there is equity for all of us.”

“When we tap into all of the talent out there, we build the best teams possible.”

– Dr. Erika Augustine

Visit [KennedyKrieger.org/MeaningfulCareers](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/MeaningfulCareers) to learn more about working at Kennedy Krieger.



We Are Absolutely Anti-Racist

Anti-racism plays an integral role in ensuring equity, diversity and inclusion in healthcare.

As protests against police brutality unfolded across the country this year, and many individuals, businesses and organizations took a long, hard look at just how pervasive institutionalized racism is in the U.S., Kennedy Krieger Institute redoubled its anti-racism efforts.

Institute researchers have been studying the effects of racism on children and the developing brain for years, and clinicians know all too well that children growing up in underserved communities of color suffer from the repeated trauma of lowered expectations, lack of access to healthy foods and healthcare, underinvestment from outside the community, and racially-targeted violence, among other adverse experiences. Kennedy Krieger provides trauma-informed care to children suffering from this institutionalized racism, and has been working for many years to ensure equity in the care it provides to all of its patients and students, and their families.

“At Kennedy Krieger, we value equity, inclusion and diversity,” says Dr. Jacqueline Stone, the Institute’s chief clinical officer. “We are on an unstoppable journey to ensure we serve as an absolutely anti-racist organization.”

“Racism is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call ‘race’), that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources.”

– American Public Health Association Past-President Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones

Taking Action

“To provide medical care to someone, you have to understand their identity and where they’re coming from, and how that affects their quality of life,” explains Bayadir Mohamed-Osman, an employment training specialist for Project SEARCH at Kennedy Krieger Institute. “To provide resources, like we do at Kennedy Krieger, you need to see the color of their skin and their identity, and understand their history.”

Kennedy Krieger’s mission of helping patients and students live to their fullest potential requires Institute employees to acknowledge the skin color of each patient and student they serve, and how that skin color affects that person’s life. “We need to be compassionate, and to hold our peers accountable when they say something that’s biased or discriminatory,” adds Mohamed-Osman, who is also an activist and a poet. “How are we going to treat and help our patients heal and reach their full potential if we don’t recognize their race and identity, and how that affects their life?”

With employees coming from different backgrounds—many having experienced being the target of racist language and actions—the Institute has adopted a multi-faceted, Institute-wide approach to helping employees practice anti-racism.

Kennedy Krieger recently hosted virtual town halls for employees to talk about racism and how it affects their lives and the lives of the Institute’s patients and students. Employees are encouraged to attend training sessions in anti-bias and cultural sensitivity. And employee resource groups are active across the Institute, within departments and teams, to facilitate discussions about how racism directly affects patients and students, and their families. Group members also discuss how they can work together to recognize racism and help patients and students get the care they need, with each patient’s and student’s unique identity in mind.

“Anti-racism isn’t just about awareness-raising, but looking at the systemic and structural issues that need to change,” says Dr. Elizabeth Thompson, vice president of the Institute’s Department of Family and Community Interventions, which has required cultural competency training for staff members for more than 25 years. “Awareness doesn’t necessarily lead to change.”

“At Kennedy Krieger, we value equity, inclusion and diversity.”

– Dr. Jacqueline Stone



Visit [KennedyKrieger.org/StatementOnAnti-Racism](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/StatementOnAnti-Racism) to read a statement on anti-racism from Dr. Stone and Kennedy Krieger President and CEO Dr. Bradley L. Schlaggar.

Rising to the Challenge!

Kennedy Krieger Institute staff members and trainees have responded to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic with grit, determination, resilience and ingenuity. Our patients and students, and their families, are our top priority, and we are so grateful and proud of the work they continue to do to help us provide much-needed services. **THANK YOU, ALL!**

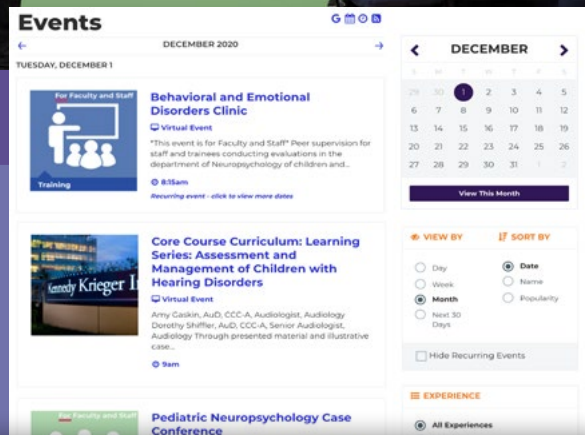


Kennedy Krieger Institute



Kennedy Krieger Events

Kennedy Krieger Institute offers a wide variety of events, from informative talks to fundraising for all ages. Visit EventsCalendar.KennedyKrieger.org to find an event tailored to your interests. New events are added often! Don't forget to sign up for the event digest email to receive a personalized list of events in your inbox every week!



Join us on social media! Visit: KennedyKrieger.org/Connect





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Your support helps amazing patients like Marcel.

When you give to Kennedy Krieger Institute, you're helping us see beyond limits for patients like Marcel. Your gift supports groundbreaking research and care that bring hope and transform lives. Thank you so much!

Visit KennedyKrieger.org/YE20 to make your donation today!

Marcel, who receives treatment at the Institute for a spinal cord injury, with his parents, Marcel and Naimah, at Kennedy Krieger.

Giving to Kennedy Krieger

Many individuals partner with various community foundations and financial institutions to make charitable gifts through donor-advised funds. This ensures their dollars have the greatest impact, while they receive maximum tax benefits. Now is a great time to set up a donor-advised fund supporting Kennedy Krieger Institute! Make a grant recommendation directly from your donor-advised fund to support the critical work of Kennedy Krieger. There's never been a better or more important time to give. Visit KennedyKrieger.org/DonorAdvised to learn more about donor-advised funds.

WHY WE GIVE

"We are gratified to be able to use our donor-advised fund at The Associated to contribute to worthwhile causes such as Kennedy Krieger, and to share our philanthropic values with our sons."

- Jill and Michael Snyder, donors

