

# The TCU IBR Spotlight

INSTITUTE OF BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH



## What's New

**STAYING CONNECTED DURING  
COVID-19**

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**BRAVO**

## Q&A with Jen Pankow

Jen Pankow is a TCU graduate with experience in prison-based substance use treatment delivery and case management. As an Associate Research Scientist, she has worked on several large-scale federally-funded projects during the past 10 years.

She currently serves as a Research Scientist and the Principle Investigator on the Telehealth-Clinical Advocacy Project (T-CAP), one of seven IBR current projects. We sat down together to discuss her clinical background and its influence on her career as a researcher.

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## Staying Connected During COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, all IBR faculty and staff members have been working remotely since March 23rd. Although we are not in the office, we have been doing our best to maintain office functions and make progress with the many research projects supported by the IBR.

One way we are continuing our teamwork is through the use of Zoom. As a team, we have been conducting our weekly Monday meetings virtually to discuss projects and assignments for the week.

Project coordinators and team members also use virtual spaces to work across projects, hold meetings, attend webinars, and more.

The IBR also incorporated the use of Zoom in a social aspect. Every Wednesday, we host a virtual staff social hour to keep in touch with one another during the pandemic.

Besides the use of Zoom, the IBR staff also collaborate through a Slack channel for a quick getaway from work.

While we are uncertain how long we will have to work remotely. As a team, we continue to stay as focused and connected as possible during this pandemic.

**For more information and updates on TCU during this pandemic, visit [www.keepworking.tcu.edu](http://www.keepworking.tcu.edu).**



IBR Monday staff meeting via Zoom

## Q&A with Jen Pankow

(Continued)

### **Tell me about your experience prior to coming to TCU's Institute of Behavioral Research (IBR).**

My most relevant experience dates back to my work in an elementary school with behavior-disordered students. Some years later, I developed an interest in law enforcement and criminal justice as a 911 dispatcher; I also interned with a county juvenile probation program during that time. In my first years as an undergraduate student in Illinois, I worked as a case manager in a corrections-based substance use treatment program for adult males. I went on to obtain my license to provide substance use counseling in the same program. Those early clinical experiences have provided a valuable foundation for my role as a researcher.

### **Did these experiences influence your decision to seek a career in research?**

Yes, I recognized early on that the need for behavioral health services for justice-involved adults and youth is tremendous, and that research plays a prominent role in developing evidence-based curriculum. I truly enjoyed prison-based case management and treatment, working with individuals with multiple challenges. Interestingly, I was already using some of the tools (as a counselor) that were developed at the IBR. For example, we used Mapping-Enhanced Counseling in cognitive behavioral group and in individual counseling sessions to process obstacles to recovery and sobriety. I was familiar with IBR research in the area of substance use treatment, and the

experience using the researcher materials not only factored into my decision to pursue a researcher career; it also cemented my decision to apply to the TCU psychology graduate program.

### **What recommendations would you share with students thinking of pursuing a career in research with a criminal justice focus?**

I encourage students to seek out every opportunity to experience different types of justice settings. While employment often is not realistic for students, opportunities to volunteer or intern can be informative and provide important context for grant writing and collaborating with criminal justice partners. Connecting with researchers is also a great way to learn about criminal justice research. Recently, the IBR launched an undergraduate student lab, appropriately name Student Overview of Applied Research (SOAR). The lab meets monthly and is open to all undergraduate students. It provides them with an opportunity to learn about IBR projects and to network with senior researchers and graduate students to hear first-hand about conducting justice-related research. We also are in the process of developing additional opportunities for our lab students (e.g. summer internship).

### **Are all of the IBR projects substance use related?**

Substance use is a central theme in IBR projects, but in different ways. For example, some projects might focus on developing and testing treatment interventions.



Substance use also is strongly related to health risk, so these topics can be the focus in one study. For example, the DRR-2 study tested an android tablet app to improve decision-making related to substance use and health risk for HIV. Other projects might include organizational-level service delivery (e.g. JJ-TRIALS). In some cases the study is designed for inside corrections while others are designed as community-based research.

### **In what areas of research are you most interested in?**

My research interests have evolved over my 13 years at the IBR. Originally my primary focus was on client engagement in treatment; particularly on the relationship between client attributes and group process in residential treatment settings. At the IBR, I had an opportunity to collaborate on organizational implementation research, designed to test strategies aimed at improving sustained uptake and services delivery. From that experience, my interests have grown to include how agencies provide services to meet individual treatment needs. Related to both client outcomes and organizational process, I continue to be interested in continuum-of-care models that emphasize linkages to services for justice-involved individuals.

### **How do the results contribute to informing “best practices” in treatment?**

Research interventions that undergo rigorous multiple testing, repeatedly demonstrating efficacy generally will become best practices. Of course, any best practice is also put to the test in a real-world setting, and depending on environmental, program, and client characteristics, may or may not result in outcomes similar to the research.

For example, we are conducting a study called T-CAP to demonstrate the feasibility of augmenting existing community treatment with a telehealth intervention that will link a licensed counselor to individuals in need of treatment for serious often life-threatening opioid use. The existing community treatment option in this case, is available through a police deflection program that utilizes law enforcement resources to move individuals into community treatment and away from the justice system. The T-CAP intervention includes widely utilized practices with demonstrated efficacy (motivational interviewing and telehealth). If successful, the project will provide evidence that supports these approaches as best practices for individuals in need of substance use treatment for opioid use.

### **What do you see in the future for substance use treatment?**

It's challenging to have a sense of what treatment will look like in the future, given the impact of COVID-19 on all types of services delivery. Telehealth is gaining momentum as a treatment modality; however, we have a lot to learn about the efficacy of telehealth to improve substance use treatment outcomes. That said, I believe the work taking place now in response to the pandemic, is paving the way for telehealth to remain a significant part of the treatment landscape in the future.

**For more information about the IBR SOAR Lab, please email Dr. Pankow at [ibr@tcu.edu](mailto:ibr@tcu.edu)**

## *New IBR Faculty & Staff Members*

The IBR family continues to grow. This past quarter, we added 5 new faculty and staff members to our team. These individuals include; [Yang Yang](#), [Rachel Crawley](#), [Elaine Tinius](#), [Sanjana Puri](#) and [Shatoya Young](#).

Yang Yang is a familiar face to IBR because she was once a graduate student here. She currently serves as a Research Scientist working on the LeSA project. In her free time, she enjoys traveling and reading nonfiction books. No matter how she is feeling, Yang will not watch sci-fi.

Elaine Tinius currently serves as a Public Health Research Associate and project coordinator for the LeSA project. At the IBR, we call her "Lainey." Originally from the Midwest, Lainey feels rooted in Texas and excited to be part of the IBR family. In her free time, she enjoys motivational reads or nonfiction, specifically inspired by Brene Brown. She is also an animal lover with 2 dogs, 2 cats, a fish, and has a deep love for all things baseball and the Kansas City Chiefs.

Rachel Crawley is a graduate of the IBR and currently serves as an Associate Research Scientist working on the LeSA project. Rachel has a love for animals and among other titles, she is a companion animal rescue volunteer. She also enjoys going camping and shooting wildlife photography.

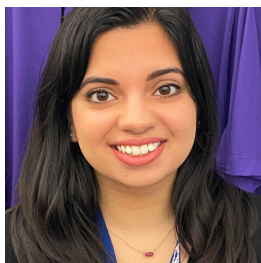
Sanjana Puri is a Public Health Research Associate at the IBR with years of experience in the public and mental health fields throughout Houston and Dallas. Sanjana was born in New Delhi, India and moved to Irving, Texas at the age of four. In her spare time, she enjoys watching the television series "The Office."

Shatoya Young is our latest addition to the IBR family. Shatoya currently serves as a Public Health Research Associate, intervention Specialist for LeSA and Project Coordinator for FAMLI. Shatoya sings in the church choir and serves as the youth choir director at her church.

**Welcome to the IBR everyone!**



[Yang Yang](#)



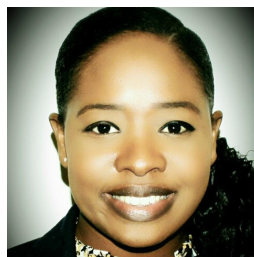
[Sanjana Puri](#)



[Rachel Crawley](#)



[Elaine Tinius](#)



[Shatoya Young](#)

## *Iowa Mobile App Development Project for Corrections*

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the IBR has added a new research project. The Iowa Department of Corrections (IDOC) has recognized that justice-involved clients in many of their rural counties are not receiving recommended dosages of services.

Several factors play a role, including limited or lack of services in many rural areas, and transportation issues getting to services which may be a county or two away.

IDOC has provided funds to design a mobile app to reinforce as well as extend engagement in interventions such as cognitive behavioral approaches, substance abuse recovery tools, trauma, mental health supports, life skills, parenting, and assistance tools that will help reach justice involved clientele where they are and when they need it most in order to assist them in monitoring and managing their own behavior.

The app will be designed to captivate the user, be fun and exciting, and encourage continuous use in an activity that they might not be motivated to participate in otherwise.

Essentially, the product will provide individualized effective interventions in a gamification format to encourage engagement and self-management;

ultimately leading to successful behavior change and improved outcomes.

A key element of designing an app that will be accepted and utilized by users and will ultimately be sustainable is to involve stakeholder groups in its development.

Thus, a critical initial phase of the project is to facilitate stakeholder input regarding the mobile application design, the included elements, look and feel of the app, and assure that it meets user needs.

Interviews will be held with a cross-section of stakeholders including probation/parole officers, management, staff, and probation/parole clients.

This input will be used to develop prototype designs for an app which will be presented to stakeholders for further input before making final revisions.

This project will be led by Wayne E.K. Lehman who currently serves as a Senior Research Scientist at the IBR.

**For more information about this project, please email Dr. Lehman at [ibr@tcu.edu](mailto:ibr@tcu.edu)**



## IBR SOAR Lab

The IBR SOAR (Student Overview of Applied Research) Lab is a new IBR program developed by Jen Pankow and colleagues, to provide opportunities for undergraduate students to experience applied research, coupled with interactive activities designed to enhance academic skills and create networking and mentoring opportunities with research-interested peers, graduate students, and IBR research scientists.

All students are invited to participate in attending the SOAR Lab monthly meetings (Tier 1) featuring research presentations by scientists and graduate students, introducing lab members to IBR project interventions.

Students are invited to apply for Tier 2; a placement at the IBR and hands-on experience with large-scale research projects.

Tier 2 placements are competitive and require a commitment of 6.25 hours a week for the semester. Since the launch of the SOAR Lab in October (2019), two undergraduate students have been selected for Tier 2 placement; Lexie Bryant and Alyssa Nshimirimana—congratulations to both!

**Watch our IBR website for an update on the IBR SOAR Lab Tier 1 monthly meeting schedule and the call for Tier 2 applications for fall 2020 semester.**



Elaine Tinius, Alyssa Nshimirimana, Wayne Lehman, and Lexie Bryant playing Downward Spiral

# Bravo

## Publications

Jennifer Becan & Danica Kalling Knight

Becan, J.E., Horan Fisher, J., Johnson, I.D., Bartkowski, J. P., Seaver, R., Gardner, S.K., Aarons, G.A., Renfro, T.L., Muiruri, R., Blackwell, L., Piper, K.N., Wiley, T.A., & Knight, D.K. (2020). ***Improving Substance Use Services for Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth: Complexity of Process Improvement Plans in a Large Scale Multisite Study.*** Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research

## Presentations

Jennifer Becan

### **CTN Youth SIG Webinar: Improving Motivation for Substance Use Treatment in Justice-involved Youth using Tablet and Group-based Interventions**

- Jennifer Becan completed a CTN Youth SIG Webinar that focused on findings from two NIDA-funded studies with juvenile justice-involved youth.
- She discussed two interventions: Treatment Readiness and Induction Program (TRIP) and StaySafe.
- Dr. Becan presented plans to integrate the TRIP and StaySafe interventions into a web-based health risk-reduction and motivational enhancement intervention for justice-involved youth.

[Click here to watch](#)

Danica Kalling Knight

### **CTN Youth SIG Webinar: Novel Approaches to Preventing & Addressing Substance Use Among Justice-Involved Youth**

- Danica Knight completed a CTN Youth SIG Webinar presentation/webinar titled: Novel Approaches to Preventing and Addressing Substance Use Among Justice-Involved Youth.
- She discussed 3 current NIDA-funded IBR projects designed to improve substance use outcomes among justice-involved youth.
- Dr. Knight presented on the JJ-TRIALS, FAMLI, and LeSA projects.

[Click here to read more](#)

## Achievements

We would like to celebrate our faculty and staff members service at the IBR - [Jennifer Becan](#) and [Jennifer Pankow](#) are celebrating 10 years and [Amy Johnson](#) is celebrating 5 years. Thank you for your hard work and dedication!