



ANNE AND HENRY ZARROW SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
**RUTH KNEE INSTITUTE FOR
TRANSFORMATIVE SCHOLARSHIP**
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

2025-2026 Newsletter

The Knee Institute for Transformative Scholarship has had a productive year supporting innovative research and scholarship. The highlighted projects have informed service provision for the most vulnerable and helped to create pathways toward empowerment and renewal. The strength of the Knee Institute comes from the people and their commitment to excellence in academics and impact. Their work continues the legacy of advocacy, promotion of social justice and excellence in service that was modeled with the life and work of Ruth Irelan Knee and Junior Koenig. I hope you enjoy reading their stories.



Christina R. Miller, PhD
Knee Institute Coordinator

"Tell Me First": Informed Communication as a Salient Feature of Childbirth Narratives in Online Birth Stories.



December Maxwell, PhD
Coordinator of the
Center for Social Work in
Healthcare

This project analyzed 2,388 birth and women's health narratives collected on Reddit from 2013-2023 to better understand what women remember most about their birthing experiences and health care navigation. **Dr. Maxwell** partnered with **Dr. Julie Miller-Cribbs** and a team of 4 MSW students: Bryce Murdock & Riley Henson (graduated) Andrea Hernandez-Vasquez, and Janoa Ellis. The team has presented at the Southwestern Social Sciences Association Conference, the REACH-OUT symposium in Tulsa, and the Council on Social Work Education Conference. The team has submitted one article for review with several others are in development.



REIMAGINE DANCE



This pilot study, funded by the **Knee Institute**, examined the influence of dance instruction on individuals with developmental disabilities and their caregivers. **Dr. Clark-Andrejkovics** and **Jasmine Aaenson-Fletcher** partnered with inclusive dance studios in Sarasota, FL, and Tulsa, OK. They administered the Hope Scale and General Self-Efficacy Scale to 11 dance participants at pre and post dance intervention. The Researchers then facilitated two focus groups with caregivers. Caregivers shared observations about the dancer's experience with the outside world and the connection with the community that was influenced by the dance program. Results were shared at the NASW FL conference.

The Center for Adoption and Family Well-Being Statewide Survey

The Center for Adoption and Family Well-Being is a research center dedicated to the study of adoption and permanency operating under the Child Welfare Impact Institute at the Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work. We strive to explore the challenges and experiences of children and youth transitioning from foster care to adoption and guardianship, as well as the impacts of adoption into adulthood.



Dr. Bonni Goodwin &
Sierra McClendon

With the support of the **Knee Institute for Transformative Scholarship**, **Dr. Bonni Goodwin & Sierra McClendon** of The Center for Adoption and Family Well-Being launched a survey of Oklahoma licensed behavioral health providers to better understand their experiences serving children and families involved in foster care, adoption, and guardianship. The survey explored providers' training backgrounds, adoption competency, perceived challenges, and support needs when working with these populations. More than 3,700 behavioral health professionals from across the state participated. Results revealed strong interest and personal connection among providers who serve foster and adoptive families, while also highlighting a significant need for additional adoption-specific training, supervision, and organizational support. Specialized education focused on adoption-related issues, including grief and loss, identity development, trauma, and family stability and integration, was identified as a top priority for strengthening services statewide. These findings will help guide future initiatives aimed at expanding adoption-competent care across Oklahoma.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Internationalization of Social Work

The Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work has expanded its engagement with international practice and research and the **Knee Institute** has actively supported this work by sponsoring the Innovations and Best Practices in Disaster Preparedness symposium co-hosted with the Consul General of Japan and supporting the research of **Dr. Noyori-Corbett** to assess the internationalization of CSWE accredited social work programs. This work promotes the important impact social workers make on a global scale.

Innovations in Social Work Practice: Psychedelic Assisted Therapy

Trina DuVall, Instructor and Field Education Faculty Liaison at the OUAHZSSW with over 17 years in child welfare work now teaches and supports the next generation of social workers.

Trina is also pursuing her PhD in Social Work at OU, and her scholarship focuses on psychedelic-assisted therapy, Indigenous knowledge systems, post-traumatic growth, Hope, and workforce development. Her research explores how emerging psychedelic therapies can be integrated into ethical, culturally responsive, and interdisciplinary models of care while honoring Indigenous perspectives and traditional healing practices.

In 2024, Trina presented “Psychedelics as a Therapeutic Intervention with Indigenous Considerations” at the Council of Social Work Education Conference, which led to new connections and mentors within the psychedelic and social work space.



Trina DuVall, MSW

With support from the **Knee Institute**, in 2025, Trina attended the multidisciplinary psychedelic conference hosted by the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), where she engaged with researchers, clinicians, educators, and advocates from across the country. Since that conference, her work has expanded through partnerships with researchers, clinicians, nonprofit organizations, legislators, first responder support organizations, and national leaders in psychedelic science, research and policy development. These collaborations led to Oklahoma HB 3834, the Oklahoma Therapy Breakthrough Act, which was signed into law in May 2026.

Trina is currently developing one of Oklahoma's first social work practicum opportunities focused on psychedelic-assisted therapy.

Trina presented at the Open Plains Symposium at OU-Tulsa on, “Preparing the Profession: Integrating Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy into Social Work Field Education Through Indigenous and Interdisciplinary Frameworks”. The presentation explores how social work education can responsibly prepare students for emerging therapeutic approaches while remaining grounded in ethics, cultural humility, Indigenous perspectives, and interdisciplinary collaboration.



GRA SPOTLIGHT



Bridges of Norman: Outdoor Wellness Program in Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Hadassah Jones, Knee Institute GRA, has designed an Outdoor Wellness Program for teens living at Bridges, a non-profit serving unhoused teens. The program will teach mindfulness, stress management, and emotional regulation through engagement with nature and participation in outdoor recreation and adventure. The OWP will run from May-August, 2026 and with support from the **Knee Institute**, is being evaluated by **Drs. Sangwon Lee and Christina Miller**.



Hadassah Jones, GRA



Andrea Hernandez Vazquez, GRA

Andrea Hernandez-Vazquez, Knee Institute GRA, has contributed to multiple faculty research projects. She is a member of **Dr. Maxwell's** Birth Stories research team and has completed a literature review and used NVIVO to code cases for data analysis. She is now collaborating to prepare manuscripts for submission. She has also presented a CEU with **Dr. Venera Bekteshi** on "Advancing Health Equity Through Cultural Humility," which highlighted the results from the Lucha Study on breast cancer awareness among Latina women. Additionally, Andrea is completing data collection for **Dr. Noyori-Corbett's** Internationalization of Social Work Education project.