

Psychosocial Impact of COVID-19-Induced Social Isolation (PICS) on Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Longitudinal Study

OVPR COVID-19 Seed Grant Program

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Project Summary:

Mandated quarantine can lead to considerable negative psychological effects for individuals impacted by that quarantine. Youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are at considerable risk for experiencing elevated levels of social isolation and loneliness, already significant public health concerns, and are uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of mandated social isolation. This study will be the first to investigate longitudinal differences in the psychosocial impact of compulsory isolation on youth with ASD and without ASD during (and immediately following) isolation. Two hundred youth (100 ASD, 100 non-ASD) ages 8-18 and their parents will be drawn from a large sample of well-characterized youth who have participated in prior research studies in the PI's lab. Participants will complete biweekly measures of the psychosocial impact of isolation, internalizing symptoms, loneliness, and parenting stress for up to six months during and post-isolation. We will use multilevel models to examine differences in initial, enduring, and post-isolation impact on these psychosocial variables. Consistent with the goals of the Seed Grant Program, the proposed project will provide a rare opportunity to capitalizing on a rich existing sample to assess the psychosocial impact of the current pandemic on youth with and without ASD.