

Dana M. Prince, Ph.D., MPH. Prior to joining the faculty at the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University, Dr. Prince completed her NIDA-funded T32 postdoctoral fellowship at the Yale School of Medicine in 2016. Dr. Prince has developed a robust program of health disparities research that focuses on the transition to adulthood for vulnerable and marginalized youth, most notably substance use, incarceration, and homelessness, among adolescents and young adults transitioning from foster care. Early adversity (including maltreatment) may lead to an increased propensity for, and heightened sensitivity to, stressful experiences throughout the life-course, leading to poorer mental health outcomes. System-involved youth experience heightened exposure to adverse events, including trauma and abuse. Subgroups of youth in foster care, notably sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth face additional risks. SGM is the NIH-designated definition for individuals who are a sexual minority (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual) and/or have a minority gender identity or expression (e.g. transgender, gender non-conforming). Nationally, sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth are at a significantly increased risk of psychological disorders including, major depressive disorder and suicidality. Foster youth who are SGM face compounded adversities that place them at even higher risk for psychological symptoms, warranting additional research. Dr. Prince is currently involved in two federally-funded research projects focused on SGM youth in foster care. The first is a four-year site implementation grant administered by the Administration of Children and Families to improve services and outcomes for youth with diverse sexual orientations and gender identity/expression in foster care. This is a partnership grant with Cuyahoga County (OH) Division of Children and Family Services and several local partners, aimed at improving safety, permanency and wellbeing outcomes for SGM youth. The second is a NIH-funded pilot study examining rates of anxiety/depressive symptoms, and suicidality, as well as the sources of chronic stress that may be associated with these symptoms, and sources of social support that may serve as protective factors among SGM youth with current or past foster care involvement in Cuyahoga County, OH.