# Developmental Disabilities and Human Services 20th Anniversary Report 1999-2019

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*Elizabeth Kilgallon ’20, psychology, with Beasley, a service dog in training*
It has been my pleasure to serve as the director of the Developmental Disabilities and Human Services (DDHS) specialization program for the past five years. When I learned about this program, I was immediately drawn to it. Very few undergraduate courses even touch on the topic of disability, yet this program offers students the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of disability, how it affects everyday life for the individual and the family, as well as how to best support people with disabilities. It is the type of program I wish I had the opportunity to participate in during my tenure as an undergraduate—or even graduate—student.

Beyond the coursework, the practical experiences obtained in this program set it apart. Students are placed in community settings working with real people, professionals, and organizations. They are challenged to translate what they learned in the classroom to real-world settings. Perhaps equally as important, they bring what they learned in their internships into the classroom to enrich discussion and debate. Given the unique combination of coursework and internship experience, our students are competitive for careers in the disability field.

DDHS offers students a sense of community on an otherwise large campus. Admission is competitive, so only students who are passionate about the topic and dedicated to pursuing a career in this field are admitted. Students develop connections with their like-minded peers that often last beyond their time at UMass.

Over the past decade, DDHS has grown both in terms of the number of students and the richness of the student experience. New courses have been added to the curriculum and new organizations have joined the program as internship partners. DDHS now offers volunteer, service learning, and study abroad opportunities. There are additional improvements on the horizon for DDHS. I will be petitioning the faculty senate to advance DDHS from the status of letter of specialization to certificate, which will improve its standing on campus as well as provide students with a more interdisciplinary selection of disability-related coursework. As part of the revised psychology curriculum (Fall 2021), a new course on Disabilities and Development will be offered. In the future, I also plan to develop a new course focused on careers in disability as well as an honors thesis course focused on research in disability.

This report provides an opportunity to reflect on the history and successes of the DDHS program. I am grateful to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services, the University of Massachusetts Amherst College of Natural Sciences, and the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences for their continued support of this program. As you will hear throughout this report, alumni find DDHS to be a highlight of their time at UMass and of continued relevance to their professional careers. As the prevalence of disability is on the rise, the importance of this program is only increasing.

Ashley Woodman, PhD
DDHS Program Director (2014-Present)
Alessandra Chicos ’20, psychology (left), supports Caitlin O’Connor (center) from the Pathways to Independence Program at the Amherst Regional High School, with supervision and support from physical therapist Emily Dannen (right).
The Developmental Disabilities and Human Services (DDHS) specialization program arose out of an interagency collaboration between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (formerly the Department of Mental Retardation) and the University of Massachusetts developed in 1995. Then Commissioner Philip Campbell of DDS and then President Sherry Penney of the University of Massachusetts signed a formal agreement to “form a collaboration for the purpose of developing a joint venture which will provide leadership on a wide range of issues pertaining to public practice, values and customs which affect the lives of people with disabilities and their families.”

Out of that initial collaboration agreement came a series of demonstration projects, under the direction of Janet George, PhD, then and now the Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Planning and Children’s Services at DDS, with the leadership and support of Robert Feldman, PhD, then Professor of Psychology at UMass and subsequently Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and then Assistant Chancellor. The initial goal was to develop a specialization for undergraduate psychology majors to prepare them for possible careers in the disability or broader human services field. The demonstration projects in 1997 and 1998 involved local administrative and clinical staff from the May Institute, who provided a course in applied behavioral analysis and internship opportunities at their program sites in the greater Amherst area. Based on the success of those early demonstration projects, DDS worked with Dr. Feldman to launch a permanent specialization within the Department of Psychology in 1999.

There have been three distinct phases in the development of the program:

PHASE 1
1999-2004

During the first five years of the specialization, the program relied heavily on Alan Harchik, PhD, senior clinical manager of Western Massachusetts Programs at the May Institute, with the support of Robert Putnam, PhD, Director of Clinical Training at the central office of the May Institute, and Elizabeth Noonan, PhD, EdD, Regional Director of Community Services at DDS. Both Dr. Harchik and Dr. Noonan taught courses each semester and oversaw student internships, primarily at May Institute sites. In 2004, the Donahue Institute was asked to do an evaluation of the program which included fewer than 25 students at that time, and to make recommendations about future development. The results indicated that students had a generally positive experience in the program, but felt it could be improved by having a stronger leadership presence, more availability of faculty advising and mentoring, a greater sense of community within the specialization, and greater academic challenge in the overview course. Based on the extensive feedback from the Donahue Institute, DDS made a commitment to respond to the feedback and overhaul some key aspects of the program.

PHASE 2
2004-2014

This decade saw major development and enhancement of the specialization, as it grew from approximately 20 students to over 100. Starting in 2004, DDS Regional Director Teresa O’Hare agreed to let William Zimmer, PhD, Area Director of the Franklin-Hampshire office of DDS, devote significant time to expanding and overhauling the program. DDS took a number of steps to enhance the program. Dr. Zimmer did a major reworking of the overview course in intellectual disability, introducing students to many of the policy and programmatic conflicts and controversies within the field. Dr. Zimmer taught this revamped course every semester from 2004-2014 and made himself available for extensive advising and mentoring of students. In addition, starting in 2007, DDS added a third core course to the specialization, a course in intellectual disability and mental health, taught by Marie Hartwell-Walker, EdD, an experienced teacher and senior clinician who was a colleague of Dr. Zimmer’s at the Franklin-Hampshire office of DDS. Dr. Zimmer and Dr. Hartwell-Walker worked together to significantly expand the range and number of internship opportunities available to students, from just a handful in the initial five years of the program to over 20 by 2014. Dr. Harchik eventually transitioned out of his role as the teacher of the applied behavioral analysis course and was succeeded by a number of excellent clinicians who have maintained a high-quality ABA course within the program.
Three other important changes occurred in the program during this 10-year period.

First, Dr. Tamara Rahhal, PhD, became the psychology department DDHS coordinator, succeeding Dr. Feldman, as part of her role within the student advising office in the Department of Psychology (now the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences). She provided a critical role in providing guidance to potential DDHS students and helping Dr. Zimmer and other DDS staff navigate the complexities of UMass academic and administrative structures.

Second, the program expanded eligibility beyond the confines of the psychology department, to include a significant number of students from communication disorders, education, nursing, public policy, plus other departments within both the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences and the College of Natural Sciences, and students from the Five College Consortium.

Third, in anticipation of Dr. Zimmer’s impending retirement in 2012, Dr. Zimmer worked closely with Dr. Feldman from UMass and Dr. George from DDS to develop a proposal for the hiring of a full-time DDHS program director to ensure the continued stability and development of the program. A formal agreement was reached between DDS and multiple departments within the university–Melinda Novak, PhD, from the Department of Psychology, Steve Goodwin, PhD, then dean of the College of Natural Sciences and now Assistant Chancellor, and John Hird, PhD, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences–to jointly fund the program and hire a full-time program director. After an extensive search, Ashley Woodman, a PhD in applied developmental and educational psychology from Boston College, accepted an offer to begin as program director.

Dr. Woodman became the first full-time program director in September 2014 and had an immediate and dramatic impact on the program. Because Dr. Woodman’s experience and research interests focus on the impact of disabilities on families, the program eliminated the course in intellectual disabilities and mental health and substituted a new core course on the impact of disabilities on families. In addition to teaching that course Dr. Woodman took on the responsibility of teaching the overview course, previously taught by Dr. Zimmer, and establishing an expanding number of internship opportunities. She also developed and has taught a course in autism spectrum disorder, and a course in international perspectives on disability, which is a faculty-led study-abroad program.

In the interim between Dr. Zimmer’s retirement in 2012 and Dr. Woodman’s hiring in 2014, there had been a moratorium on accepting new students into the program and enrollment decreased sharply from 110 to just 70. Dr. Woodman quickly reversed that and increased enrollment to between 130 and 150 students. The program is currently graduating more than 40 students per year.

The program continues to draw some of the most outstanding undergraduates from across the university and works with over 30 community-based agencies that provide internship experiences for students. Recent surveys of graduates show that approximately half are currently in graduate programs in a variety of fields–speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, special education, nursing, social work, applied behavioral analysis and psychology–and almost 90% expect to pursue graduate education in the future. Almost 100% of students who have graduated who are not in graduate school are employed, and over 80% work in disability related fields.

Dr. Woodman has met all of the goals we identified for future development before she was hired, including outreach within the university and in the wider community, and is currently exploring the potential for DDHS becoming an official certificate program.

The past 20 years have reflected significant accomplishments for the DDHS specialization program and we look forward to even greater success in the years ahead.

Bill Zimmer
DDHS Program Director (2004-2014)
Franklin Hampshire Area Director of DDS (1998-2012)
The DDHS program is supported by a diverse advisory committee, composed of faculty in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, alumni, and parents and professionals from the local community.

ALUMNI
  Casey Gavin ‘16, psychology
  Morgan Upham ‘18, communication disorders

PARENTS & PROFESSIONALS
  Karen LaClair ‘88, ‘92G
  Lisa Modenos ‘02G
  Donna Kushi
  Michael Hutton-Woodland

FACULTY
  Christina Metevier ‘01, ‘03G, ‘06PhD, Senior Lecturer
  Tammy Rahhal, Senior Lecturer and Associate Chair for Teaching, Learning and Advising
  Kirby Deater-Deckard, Professor
  Lisa Harvey, Professor
  Matt Davidson, Lecturer
CURRENT STUDENTS
In any given semester, approximately 140 to 150 students are enrolled in the DDHS program. While the most common majors are psychology and communication disorders, over 18 different majors are currently represented in the program.

Admission to the program is competitive. Students are required to write an application essay to be considered for the program. Students must demonstrate academic strengths, emotional maturity, and a commitment to the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. The average GPA of incoming students is approximately 3.6. Many students (18%) are members of the Commonwealth Honors College.

MAJORS CURRENTLY REPRESENTED IN THE PROGRAM
Most students join in their sophomore year and complete the required courses and internship in their junior and senior years.

**STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY YEAR**

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<td>Freshman</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>34%</td>
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**HISTORICAL TRENDS**

Students from over 39 different majors have joined DDHS over the past decade (2009-2019). During this time, 910 students enrolled in core DDHS courses.

**MAJORS REPRESENTED IN THE DDHS PROGRAM (2009-2019)**

- Psychology, 490
- University Without Walls, 152
- Communication Disorders, 100
- Individual Concentration, 14
- Five College Interchange, 15
- Continuing Education, 19
- Education, 25
- Biology, 9
- English, 7
- Nursing, 7
- Other, 47
- Public Health Sciences, 13

Kinesiology, 12
The DDHS program has become increasingly interdisciplinary over time. The percentage of students beyond the psychology major has grown over the past decade, due to expanded recruitment throughout campus.

My involvement with the DDHS program has been the highlight of my academic career here at UMass. I am extremely grateful for all of the opportunities that this program has opened to me to explore my interest in disabilities. As a part of the program I was able to intern at a school for autism, take autism specific courses, and participate on a disability focused research team. The courses are exceptionally well thought out and serve to not only provide background to disability issues, but also to create understanding and promote disability advocacy.

The program made the process of finding an internship that fed into my interests in disability an easy one. The program has a wealth of connections with disability service providers, schools, and organizations in the local area. I was able to follow my interest in special education to an internship application where, because of my DDHS affiliation, I already had a leg up.

I became involved in my first research position through my connection with DDHS. As a DDHS affiliate, I was asked to work on a disability specific research project where I conducted interviews with students on the UMass campus about their experiences. This was an incredible experience that not only left me with new skills in qualitative research and analysis, but also provided me with a new understanding of what policy needs to be changed and the humans on the receiving end of disability policy.

DDHS is an incredible community anchored by a passion to effect change in the lives of people with disabilities. This program educates the future teachers, medical professionals, policy makers, and many more in the issues of people with disabilities and intern helps to create a future full of advocates. I am extremely grateful for my opportunity to be involved in this program and am excited to see what the future has in store for DDHS.

Liam Eagen ’19
psychology
Students in the DDHS program are required to complete three courses: 1) *Intellectual Disability: Concepts and Controversies* (PSYCH 480), 2) *Impact of Disabilities on Families* (PSYCH 491D), and 3) an autism-focused course, *Applied Behavior Analysis* (PSYCH 581) or *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (PSYCH 397D). Students are permitted to substitute an autism-focused course outside of the psychology department, such as *Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders* (COMMDIS 540) or *Behavior Analysis in Applied Settings: Theory, Research, and Practice* (EDUC 532).

The core courses are restricted to students in the DDHS program, to ensure that admitted students can complete the courses within a reasonable time frame. The enrollment restriction also fosters a better learning environment for students in the program, as every student in the class has demonstrated an interest in pursuing a career in the disability field. Due to the competitive nature of the program, students enter the program with the academic strengths to handle advanced coursework.

The core courses are taught in a seminar format, with a limit to 20-25 students per class. Students are expected to participate in small group and whole class discussion, read primary sources such as peer-reviewed research articles, and write critical and reflective papers regularly throughout the semester.

**INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY: CONCEPTS AND CONTROVERSIES (PSYCH 480)**

This is considered the introductory course for the DDHS program. This course has been offered since the inception of the DDHS program. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to key concepts and perspectives in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. There are few “facts” or “truths” relevant to the topics covered, therefore the students are encouraged to consider multiple stakeholder perspectives (e.g., people with disabilities, parents, educators, policymakers) when critically analyzing the issues. This course introduces students to appropriate language and terminology relating to disability as well as the history of intellectual
disability in the U.S. context, including institutionalization, sterilization, and the disability rights movement. This course also considers how intellectual disability affects key domains of a person’s life, including identity, friendship, sexuality, parenthood, and employment. Students are expected to read historical texts as well as contemporary research articles. They write several reflection papers throughout the course to go in depth on topics relating to the class material.

**IMPACT OF DISABILITIES ON FAMILIES (PSYCH 491D)**

This course was first offered in 2014, when a new program director was hired. Before retiring as program director, Bill Zimmer felt it was important to add this course to the list of core courses for the incoming program director to teach. Students in the DDHS program plan to support people throughout their future careers, but this also means interacting with and supporting members of that individual’s family. In this course, students gain perspective on the impact on the family of raising a child, adolescent, or adult with a disability. The course primarily focuses on the impact on parents, exploring topics such as reaction to diagnosis, coping and resilience, stress and parent satisfaction, work-family balance, and marital quality. Students also learn about impacts on siblings during childhood and adolescence as well as impacts on grandparents. Each week, students read empirical research articles and watch case study videos of parents, siblings, and extended family members. Students write weekly reflections integrating the required reading with the families’ stories. By the end of the semester, students have an appreciation for the research basis of these topics as well as the lived experiences of families raising children with disabilities.

**APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (PSYCH 581)**

This course has been a core requirement of the DDHS program since the program began. It was first created through a partnership with the May Institute, one of the largest providers of private schools serving children with autism in Massachusetts. Board Certified Behavior Analysts from the May Institute served as the instructors for this course. Students learn the basic principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA), which is considered the gold standard intervention for people with autism. Students learn the defining characteristics of ABA, basic concepts of respondents and operants, positive and negative reinforcement and punishment, defining target behaviors, and ethical considerations. In 2017, this course was redesigned to meet the standards for the registered behavior technician (RBT) credential from the Behavior Analysis Certification Board. After completing this course, students are eligible to complete the exam and competency assessment for the RBT credential, which improves their ability to get employment in the ABA field prior to or after graduation.

**Instructors from the May Institute**

Alan Harchik
Patrick Heick
Shannon Kay
Meg Walsh
Candice Colón-Kwedor

**AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (PSYCH 397D)**

The core DDHS courses were designed to prepare students to support the individuals served by the Department of Developmental Services. At the time the DDHS program was first launched, DDS primarily served adults with intellectual disability. As a result of recent legislation, their mission expanded to serve new populations, including individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) with and without intellectual disability. For this reason, as well as the rise in prevalence of ASD in the U.S., a new course on ASD was created in 2016. This course provides students with a broad overview of ASD across the lifespan. Students learn about the defining characteristics of ASD as well as the biological, neurological, and environmental causes of ASD. Identification, diagnosis, assessment, and approaches to intervention within family and school settings are also discussed. In lieu of a traditional textbook, students read novels written by people with autism throughout the semester.

I applied for DDHS as a sophomore in college when I wasn’t sure who I was or what I wanted to do as a career. Upon being accepted and attending meetings and classes led by Dr. Woodman, I began to learn more about myself. As someone with multiple developmental disabilities, I began to identify with my disability in a positive way through Dr. Woodman’s curriculum and guidance.

DDHS gave me the opportunity to intern at the Federation for Children with Special Needs where I expanded on my disability identity even further in order to educate families who had children with similar disabilities. Through this incredible DDHS internship, I decided to switch my career goal from medical school to a PhD. I felt that with my experience as an individual with developmental disabilities and my passion for psychology, I would be able to keep educating the public on the limitless capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

All of this would not be possible without Dr. Woodman, DDHS, and the Psychology Department. I feel as though UMass Psychology and Brain Sciences Department is all the more unique and progressive due to the Developmental Disabilities and Human Services Specialization.

Catherine McEachern ‘19

**psychology**
Students in the DDHS program complete 120 hours of internship working directly with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The DDHS program has over 40 long-standing partner organizations in Massachusetts and beyond. When the DDHS program first began, it partnered primarily with Department of Developmental Services vendors that served adults with intellectual disability. Over time, however, the program expanded its reach to include adult day and residential programs, public and private schools, recreation and enrichment programs, early intervention programs, and therapy services (e.g., speech-language pathology, occupational therapy).

Beyond the established DDHS partners, students have the option of finding their own internship site—in the U.S. or abroad. Students have completed internships in Brazil, Israel, Costa Rica, and the U.K. among other countries.

REFLECTIONS FROM A COMMUNITY PARTNER

In my five-year tenure with the REACH Early Intervention Program, and even before then, REACH has been fortunate to have the DDHS students participating and learning in our developmental play groups. REACH generally engages five to eight interns every semester, and they are enthusiastic, well-prepared, conscientious, knowledgeable, and fun to have around! They are more than willing to jump in when needed, and their care and attention to the infants and toddlers with whom we work is exemplary. The interns are all contemplating working in the early childhood arena, and so they quickly absorb new information from the clinical staff. REACH clinical staff come to rely on these interns, and are always sad to see them finish the internship at the end of the term. Dr. Woodman is to be complimented on her preparation of the student interns for the experience, and the training in early intervention she provides before they come to us. REACH is fortunate to have such an amazing academic partner in DDHS.

Dr. Michael Hutton-Woodland
Program Director,
REACH Early Intervention Program, ServiceNet
WILLIAM ZIMMER OUTSTANDING INTERNSHIP IN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AWARD

A new internship award was created in 2019 to honor a graduating senior in DDHS who made an outstanding contribution to an internship supporting adults with intellectual disability. This award is open to all DDHS students, regardless of major. It is given in honor of William Zimmer, the DDHS program director from 2004-2014, who strongly believed that undergraduate students in the program should gain experience working with adults with intellectual disability.

The inaugural recipient of this award was Sophia Davis. She created her own major in occupational therapy through the Bachelor’s Degree with Individual Concentration Program. She supported adults with intellectual disability, among others, in her internship at the National Institute for People with Disabilities Center for Specialty Therapy. Upon graduation, she began full-time employment in their Brooklyn location.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS’ INTERNSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

Students in the DDHS program are often honored with the Outstanding Internship in Psychology award from the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. This award goes to a graduating senior psychology major who has demonstrated outstanding performance in an internship placement.

Katelyn Loring ’19, psychology, for her internship at the Center for Human Development Early Education Program

Jenna Arturi ’18, psychology, for her internship at the ServiceNet REACH Early Intervention Program

Emily Starratt ’17, psychology, for her internships at the Boston Higashi School, Gateway Arts, and Berkshire Hills Music Academy [pictured with Tammy Rahhal, Chief Undergraduate Advisor]
ON-CAMPUS INTERNSHIPS

Although most students pursue an internship in the local community, many choose to support people with disabilities on our campus. DDHS students have supported students in the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) program. This program supports students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who would not otherwise have access to college to take courses and complete internships at UMass Amherst. DDHS students have served as peer mentors as well as program assistants.

In addition to the MAICEI program, some students have pursued internships on campus with the Assistive Technology Center (ATC). The ATC offers instruction, training, and support for assistive technology tools to any member of the university community. The ATC provides a workspace and access to specialized software, equipment, and tools for individuals with disability.

Through DDHS, I have had the opportunity to intern at the Assistive Technology Center at UMass Amherst. I have learned a lot about accessibility and how to teach students about the assistive technology that UMass offers. This experience is very rewarding as I know that I am helping to make students’ learning experiences better. As a student with a learning disability who wants to work with people with disabilities, this DDHS internship has taught me about the wide array of job possibilities that I have in the disability field. Using the knowledge that I have gained through DDHS, I want to bridge the gap between access and opportunity so that everyone has the ability to succeed.

Deanna Ferrante ‘19
psychology
I spent the second half of my junior year in Matagalpa, Nicaragua working at Familias Especiales de Santa Julia Billiart. I was working alongside teachers, therapists, and volunteers in La Rayitos and Progresso, which are the foundation’s schools, in the adolescent afternoon program. Through this experience, I gained perspectives on disability, including cultural differences, that I wouldn’t have had without my time spent there. The DDHS program was the reason I chose to find Familias Especiales. It made me want to learn about how other countries view disability, and what work they are doing. When I returned to the states, the lessons I learned in both Nicaragua and the DDHS program continued to foster and expand my interest in the disability sector.

Hannah Burbidge ’16
psychology
The DDHS program partnered with Family Empowerment (Pathlight) to offer a new service learning. This course was designed to complement one of the core DDHS seminars, Impact of Disabilities on Families, in which students learn about research and theory relating to parents, siblings, and grandparents of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To give students a deeper understanding of families’ experiences, they provide home-based respite care services to a family raising a child, adolescent, or adult with an intellectual or developmental disability. This experience affords families a temporary break in caregiving responsibilities.

HISTORY
The impetus for this course came from Donna Kushi, manager of the Family Empowerment Program at Pathlight in Hadley, Massachusetts. Kushi recognized a need in the families served by their program for qualified respite care providers. Woodman teamed up with Kushi to propose a project to the Public Service Endowment Grant at UMass Amherst. The project was funded in 2016-2017.

PROJECT
The project aimed to better understand the need for respite care services in the local community as well as to understand the experiences families had recruiting and retaining respite care providers through interviews and surveys. Undergraduate students who had worked as respite care providers also completed a survey to better understand their background training and experiences in this role.

Beyond research, the project funded the development and implementation of a respite care curriculum. The first free, publicly available training was offered as a full-day workshop in spring 2017. All participants received free CPR training, as the families who participated in the research project had identified CPR and first aid training as essential background for qualified respite care providers. The curriculum will be publicly available for use by community organizations throughout the U.S.
PARENT REFLECTION

As the parent of a child with special needs who has little to no childcare and who passes the torch back-and-forth between herself and her husband, having respite care regularly one day a week was incredible. I knew that when Marzia and Molly were coming I could take care of things that were hanging over my head during the week and adding to my stress (clean the litter box, do some billing, put four tons of laundry away). Knowing they would be coming always gave me the ability to exhale a bit and when they were here I knew my little one was happy and tended to, which let me exhale even more. I wish they came over every day.

And for my kid, he loved the attention and play. They followed his lead. He has tons of therapies in school, after school and is always being guided and shifted to behave in specific ways. When the girls came they followed his lead and played with flags and planets the entire time without making him shift to anything else. Pure happiness for any kid but especially an autistic kid who is in therapy a lot.

Lisa Modenos

COURSE

In addition to stand-alone workshops, the respite care curriculum was used to create a new service learning course. The first course was offered in spring 2019 and will continue to be offered each semester. In this course, students learn basic information about how best to support people with disabilities in the home environment, including disability terminology, assistance with activities of daily living, communication strategies, managing challenging behaviors, and interacting with families among other topics. Pairs of students are matched with vetted families in the local community to provide 2-3 hours of respite care per week. Students are challenged with creating engaging and enriching activities with children as well as their siblings in some cases.
Knowing they would be coming always gave me the ability to exhale a bit and when they were here I knew my little one was happy and tended to, which let me exhale even more.

Lisa Modeno, Parent
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON DISABILITY

Dr. Ashley Woodman, DDHS program director, and Dr. Christina Metevier, Lecturer in Psychological and Brain Sciences, created a faculty-led study abroad program focused on international perspectives on disability. The motivation for creating this course came from DDHS students. Like many other students at UMass, those enrolled in the DDHS program go abroad at some point in their undergraduate careers. These students were lamenting the lack of disability-related coursework available at their partnering institutions. Drs. Woodman and Metevier created a faculty-led course to fill this gap.

The course discusses cross-cultural differences in the understanding of disability. It also explores the policies and practices that affect the lives of people with disabilities across the globe. Topics such as employment, education, and health are explored through the lens of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The course involves a weekly spring seminar followed by two weeks of summer travel. This course was first offered in 2017 with a destination of Ireland. In summer 2019, this course traveled to Scotland.

Ireland (June 10-24, 2017)
• International Disability Law Summer School, Centre for Disability Law and Policy, National University of Ireland Galway
• Centre for Disability Studies, University College Dublin
• Inclusion Ireland
• Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disability

Scotland (August 3-17, 2019)
• International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Conference
• Glasgow Center for Inclusive Living
• University of Edinburgh, Disability Services
• Edinburgh Napier University, Nursing in Learning Disabilities Program
• Scottish Society for Autism
• Queen Margaret University

INCLUSIVE TRAVEL
New in 2019, this course coordinated travel with the Education Through Travel program offered by Toward Independent Living and Learning (TILL, Inc.). Education Through Travel offers people with learning differences the opportunity to gain interpersonal and social skills through the transformative experience of world travel. During the spring semester, students in the UMass course visited some of the travelers at the TRASE After School program and group home in Boston. In Scotland, we attended the IASSIDDD conference together among other activities and site visits.

The 2019 Study Abroad trip to Scotland
Students in the DDHS program have opportunities for mentored research focused on disability with the Developmental Milestones Lab. Students support larger projects as research assistants as well as design and implement their own projects for independent study or honors thesis credit.

**RECENT PROJECTS**

*Mapping the Ecology of College-Going and Within-College Support for Students with Intellectual and other Disabilities*

Students and faculty in the DDHS program collaborated with the Center for Student Success Research (Ezekiel Kimball and Ryan Wells, College of Education, UMass Amherst) to explore the experiences of students with disabilities in Massachusetts. In addition to students with disabilities more broadly, this project seeks to better understand the barriers to higher education access for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in particular. This study was funded by the Department of Higher Education.

**Research assistants:**

Catherine McEachern, Shannon Kirshy, Liam Eagen, Emily Achuck

*Adolescent Well-Being Study*

This study explores the well-being of adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (age 12-22) and their parents. Using a daily-diary approach that incorporates actigraphy, this study examines how day-to-day changes in physical activity affect behavior problems, affect, and sleep quality. This pilot study was funded by the Developmental Science Initiative at UMass Amherst.

**Research Assistants:**

Bryn Hennigar, Caitlyn Wilson, Hannah Wisniewski, Gillian Kiernan

*Respite Care for Families of Children with Disabilities*

This project explores access to respite care services among families of children, adolescents, and adults with disabilities. This study attempts to identify barriers for families in finding and retaining qualified respite care providers through interviews and surveys in the local community. The survey was revised and disseminated through the SPARK(Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research for Knowledge) cohort. This study was funded by the Public Service Endowment Grant at UMass Amherst.

**Research Assistants:**

Liam Eagen, Bryn Hennigar, Shannon Kirshy, Katelyn Loring, Caitlyn Wilson

**STUDENT INITIATED PROJECTS**

*Attitudes toward the Sexuality of Adults with Intellectual Disability: Perspectives from Typically Developing Young Adults, Katelyn Loring ’19, psychology*

Katelyn Loring’s study explored attitudes toward the sexuality of adults with intellectual disability in a sample of undergraduate students at UMass Amherst. She found that students were more likely to have positive attitudes toward sexual behaviors for themselves and their peers compared to adults with intellectual disability, indicating that the stigma toward sexuality for people with intellectual disability persists today. Katelyn’s study was presented at the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Conference in Glasgow, Scotland.
The Effect of a Gratitude Intervention on Young Adults with Intellectual Disability, Caitlyn Wilson ’18, psychology

Caitlyn designed and implemented a gratitude intervention with a group of young adults with intellectual disability in Hadley, MA. She found that most participants found the activities enjoyable. Although not statistically significant, her findings suggest that simple gratitude interventions can have an impact on positive affect. Caitlyn’s study was presented at the Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference.

The Effect of Music on Exercise Intensity among Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Emily Breviglia ’17, psychology

Emily Breviglia worked with the Boston Higashi School in Randolph, Massachusetts, to randomly assign elementary school students to different music conditions during their exercise classes. She found that students exercised most intensely when listening to slow music, as compared to fast music or no music. Breviglia’s study was published in the Journal of Clinical Medicine (Woodman, Breviglia, Mori, Golden, Maina, and Wisniewski, 2018).

Early Intervention for High Risk Families, Emily Starratt ’17, psychology

Emily Starratt used archival data from an early intervention (EI) program to better understand the receipt of early intervention services for families who also receive services through the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as a result of suspected or confirmed abuse or neglect. This study provides descriptive information on the nature of risk factors experienced by this population. Her findings were presented at the Psychological and Brain Sciences Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Attitudes toward the Value of Higher Education, Abigail Aveni ’18, communication disorders, Kaylyn Powers ’17, psychology, and Emily Achuck ’20, public health sciences

Abby Aveni, Kaylyn Powers, and Emily Achuck examined the attitudes of undergraduate students at UMass Amherst toward the inclusion of students with intellectual disability in college courses and campus life. They found that students generally had positive attitudes toward inclusion of people with intellectual disability in higher education, with positive attitudes most evident among students who experienced inclusive K-12 educational settings.

After working on many different research projects involving DDHS, I have learned the importance of having accessible, and accommodating support for those at UMass with any sort of disability. Through our research, I learned how critical a role disability services has played for many students, and their successes, during their time at UMass.

Emily Achuck ’20, public health sciences
Program Activities

SPEAKER SERIES
Each semester, students in the DDHS program convene for a program meeting. Most program meetings feature an outside speaker and are open to the community.

Navigating Autism Services in a Structurally Unequal Society
Jennifer Singh, PhD, associate professor of sociology, Georgia Institute of Technology

Andrew Wakefield and Medical Myth: The History, Science, and Misinformation Surrounding Vaccines and Autism
Emily Hamilton, PhD, assistant professor of history, UMass Amherst

Prenatal Diagnoses of Down Syndrome: Delivering Results in our New Age of Genetic Testing
Brian Skotko, MD, co-director of the Down Syndrome program at Massachusetts General Hospital

OMPACO: A Collaborative Effort to Improve ASD Training for Educators in Tanzania
Amanda Cannarella, PhD, Organization for Medical and Psychological Assistance for Children Overseas (OMPACO)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): Strategies for Promoting Parent-involvement and the Parent-professional Partnership
Ashlyn Smith, PhD, Hussman Institute for Autism
EVENTS

PATH, Intl. Regional Conference
The DDHS program and the UMass Hadley Farm hosted the regional conference for the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH). This two-day event featured presentations in the Campus Center as well as hands-on activities and workshops at the Hadley Farm.
NEURODIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM
Students and faculty from the DDHS program and the Boltwood Project assisted Anne Ciecko, PhD, in organizing the 2018 Neurodiversity Symposium. This full-day event focused on the theme of intersectionality and spectrum identities. The event was free and open to the public. It featured best-selling author and advocate John Elder Robison, multiple break-out-room sessions and a neurodiversity town hall.

SENSORY-FRIENDLY SANTA
Students from the DDHS program volunteer to support a sensory-friendly event at Santa’s Trains at Look Park.

WORKSHOPS
Throughout the year, the DDHS program hosts several workshops on specific careers in the disability field, including social work, occupational therapy, applied behavior analysis, and more.
MASSACHUSETTS DOWN SYNDROME CONGRESS
Students from the DDHS program attend the annual Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress to support the self-advocates through various workshops on independent living, healthy eating, and other topics.

CAREER FAIR
The DDHS program hosted employers from Massachusetts and beyond to recruit graduating DDHS students.

DDHS and other students connect with non-profit organizations supporting people with disabilities and their families at the annual Psychology Career Fair.
Students in the DDHS program are competitive for employment and graduate school. Based on a survey of alumni from 2016 and 2017 one year after graduation, many are pursuing advanced degrees and finding employment in the disability field.

**EMPLOYMENT**

Since graduating from UMass, 84% have had a job that relates to the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

The Developmental Disabilities and Human Services program at UMass allowed me to explore career options in a field I was passionate about. By expanding my knowledge with class offerings and gaining valuable experiences through internship opportunities, I discovered occupational therapy was the career for me. When I began graduate coursework, I realized the classes I took through DDHS gave me a unique perspective on disability that I could share with my classmates. As I started working in the field, I truly experienced how DDHS provided me with the background knowledge and holistic outlook to best serve patients and family members being affected by disability or disease.

Casey Gavin ’16

psychology
All but one of the students not in graduate school are currently employed. 87% are employed full-time. More than half (61%) of the students currently in graduate school are also employed. Most of alumni’s jobs relate to the field of IDD (88%).

**EMPLOYMENT ONE YEAR AFTER GRADUATION**

- Teacher
- Sales
- Retail
- Respite/PCA/Nanny
- Mental health services
- Insurance
- Higher education
- Research assistant
- Medical assistant
- Adult day/residential program
- Adapted sports instructor
- Speech language therapy assistant
- Teacher’s assistant/paraprofessional/aide
- ABA therapist/behavior specialist

**GRADUATE SCHOOL**

About half (45%) of alumni are in graduate school. Most of them (78%) are pursuing a master’s degree, but some (17%) are pursuing a doctorate. More than a third (36%) of those in master’s programs plan to continue on for a doctorate. All but one alumnus expect their graduate degree to prepare them to work with people with IDD.

**CURRENT GRADUATE SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

- Nursing
- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Psychology
- Special Education
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech-language Pathology

Most of the alumni not currently in graduate school plan to pursue a graduate degree in the future (86%). Most of these alumni expect to pursue a master’s degree (72%), but some plan to pursue a doctorate (28%).
During my time in Haiti I volunteered for a mission called Tree of Hope Haiti. This organization is Haitian-owned and -operated, so they can understand traditional Haitian views while pushing for culturally appropriate progress. On my first trip, I helped to build a house for a family in need. On my second and third trips, I worked specifically with the children. There is no special education in Haiti. We used our summer camp to teach basic skills to students who are on our school sponsorship list. We worked on math, French, English, basic writing, and reading. Some of our students had never been to school before and could not write their names. We individualized each student’s day so that we could help each of them catch up for the next school year.

We also worked with Haitian high school students to help them learn appropriate techniques for working with younger children. Children are fed one big meal at school for lunch, meaning that during the summer a lot of the children go for days without food. We made sure that we had a snack every day and sometimes would send home packages of food. The children are so bright and loving that they all would wait, even a group of 30 four- and five-year-olds, for everyone to have their snack before eating together.

I also organized a dental day that utilized donations from my dentist at Amherst Dental. The children were overjoyed to receive a toothbrush and toothpaste. Often times when children get injured they do not receive medical care. A little boy, nine years old, cut the bottom of his foot open. We were able to find an American pediatrician who came and gave the child a few stitches right on our kitchen table. This was the best medical care the boy had received. All of the students I met in Haiti are the most loving, hopeful, and appreciative students I have had the pleasure of working with.

Sarah Berthier, ‘15, psychology

REFLECTIONS ON THE DDHS PROGRAM

Of the alumni, 95% agreed that the coursework in the DDHS program prepared them extremely or very well for a career working with people with disabilities.

“"For the first time in my educational career, I heard from the point of view of individuals who have disabilities and their families. I continue to apply that knowledge every day in my current position.

I loved being in small classes with other people who shared the same passion for people with disabilities.

Coming from a background with almost no experience working with individuals with disabilities, the DDHS program gave me the knowledge and tools I needed to seek and obtain a full-time job working with individuals with autism.

The course on families of children with intellectual disabilities helped to prepare me to work with my clients’ families and gain some empathy.

Of the alumni, 86% agreed that the internship prepared them extremely or very well for a career in this field.

“"You can learn only so much in the classroom. Having the opportunity to work in a hands-on setting allowed me to apply what I learned in the classroom to everyday life.

Both of my internships had a profound impact on my career as both a student and a first-year clinician. The most important part about these internships was hands-on experience and the opportunities that I had to apply theory and what I had learned in class to a situation in real time.

My DDHS internship led me straight to what now is my full-time job. It helped me get out of my comfort zone and learn about autism and ABA in a hands-on way.

Sarah Berthier, ‘15, psychology
You can learn only so much in the classroom. Having the opportunity to work in a hands-on setting allowed me to apply what I learned in the classroom to everyday life.
I became extremely grateful when I had the opportunity to participate in the DDHS Program as it made the large campus of 30,000 students feel more like a community.