

Spring 2021

UAIDPR Newsletter

What is the Registry?

The University of Alabama's Intellectual Disability Registry (AKA "The Registry") is a database of families & individuals with intellectual disability (ID) who are interested in participating in behavioral research studies. We work to match families & individuals with appropriate studies. The registry currently includes Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, & Florida.

Interested in learning
more?

Call (205) 348 – 4253
or email idl原因@ua.edu

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Spotlight on Jenna Reardanz

Jenna is our latest graduate student to prepare to leave us for brighter horizons. Some of you may remember Jenna's master's thesis on peer victimization (see results in the Winter 2019 newsletter). These results were published in *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* last summer.

This year, Jenna is completing her dissertation on typically developing children's tendencies to include vs exclude peers with Down syndrome or physical disabilities in their activities. Later this spring, she will be launching her career in policy work, turning research into action!

Good luck Jenna!

Note from the Registry Director

Dr. Fran Connors

Dear Registry Families,

Greetings from Tuscaloosa! What a strange and difficult year we are having. I hope you are all hanging in there and staying positive. As you may guess, the Registry has been idle for several months, with very few (no) updates to our Facebook page and very few (no) invitations into research studies. We are hoping to gear up again soon, as we have several studies in the planning process.

A big change in the Registry is that Eric Cooks, our Registry Coordinator, finished his PhD and took a job at The University of Florida, starting last August. We are all so happy for Eric, but at the same time, we sure do miss him. In this newsletter, we remind you of some upcoming studies and introduce some of the people who will be helping with the Registry (and the research) in the coming months. A big thank you goes to Jenna Reardanz for the new and upbeat newsletter design. Also, please see the feature on Jenna in the panel to the left.

I'm hoping we will be starting research again soon, and in the mean time, please stay well!

Best to you,
Fran Connors
Director, UAIDPR





Cognitive Changes

**Funded by the
NIH!**

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/>

Cognitive Changes in Teens and Young Adults

This study is by Dr. Conners at UA and Dr. Abbeduto at UC Davis. It seems that people with intellectual disabilities (ID), especially Down syndrome (DS), may experience age-related decline earlier than others.

This study will look at patterns of change over time and aims to identify early signs of cognitive aging in memory, language, and everyday skills.

Who? Recruiting individuals with DS or ID ages 15-25 years and their parents/guardians

When? Planning to start in Summer 2021 or as soon as it is safe

Where? At our lab at UA! Or a location of your choice

What to expect?

- Participants will complete cognitive tasks with picture books and iPads over 2-3 interactive testing sessions
- Caregivers will complete an interview and measures on an iPad
- Participants will receive Visa gift cards as a thank you!

Numerical Skills in Children and Teens

Research is starting to show that youth with Down syndrome may be stronger in non-symbolic numerical skills (e.g., represented with dots) compared to symbolic numerical skills (e.g., digits).

This study will examine different types of numerical skills in kids and teens with Down syndrome and those without.

Who? Recruiting youth with Down syndrome ages 6-15 years

- AND typically developing kids ages 3-7 years

When? Planning to start in Spring 2021

Where? Over ZOOM! This study is completely online.

What to expect?

- Participants will complete computer tasks and a vocabulary test in 1 testing session that will usually take < 1 hour to complete.
- Participants will receive a surprise in the mail as a thank you!



Numerical Skills

**Kristina
Bagget's
Master's
Thesis!**



Reading Skills

Funded by the NIH!

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/>

Reading Skills in Children and Teens

This study is by Dr. Loveall at University of Nebraska and Dr. Conners at UA. Often youth with Down syndrome (DS) or intellectual disability (ID) do well with word reading but struggle with reading comprehension.

This study aims to better understand why youth with DS or ID sometimes struggle with reading comprehension.

Who? Recruiting kids and teens with DS or ID ages 10-15 years

- AND typically developing kids ages 6-10 years

When? Planning to start in Summer 2021 or as soon as it is safe

Where? At our lab at UA! Or a location of your choice

What to expect?

- Participants will complete cognitive tasks with picture books and iPads in 1-2 interactive testing sessions
- Participants will receive a gift card as a thank you!

Improving Spatial Skills of Young People

This study is by Dr. Merrill at UA and Dr. Yang at Montclair State (NJ). Spatial abilities are important, including for navigating your environment.

This study looks at whether practice with spatial games like puzzles and Legos can improve spatial abilities.

Who? Recruiting individuals with Down syndrome ages 10-25 years

- AND typically developing kids ages 4-9 years

When? Planning to start in Spring 2021

Where? At your home and over ZOOM! This study is completely online.

What to expect?

- Participants will spend time playing games designed to train spatial skills on a Fire tablet
- Participants will complete cognitive tasks over Zoom with an experimenter to determine if this training worked
- As a thank you, participants may either keep the tablet or choose a gift card!



Spatial Skills

Funded by the NIH!

Want to get involved in these studies?



Email idlab@ua.edu or Call (205) 348 - 4253

Gayle Fought

Meet the Post Doc!

Tell us about yourself!

I am from Tuscaloosa and received my Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from The University of Alabama in 2017. I recently moved from South Carolina back home and am very excited to be working with families in the registry again!

What is your current role?

I am a postdoctoral researcher working on the cognitive changes study. We are currently fine-tuning the project, and if you decide to participate, I will be the primary tester working with you during these sessions!

What do you like to do for fun?

I am lucky to have two young kids (ages 4.5 & 2 years) who find the fun in everything. Never a dull moment! I enjoy taking photos of them. I also started running during the pandemic because it's something I never thought I could do.



GLOBAL
DOWN SYNDROME FOUNDATION

Global Down Syndrome Foundation is tracking vaccine eligibility by state! Visit this website to learn more:

<https://www.globaldownsyndrome.org/covid-19-vaccination-tracker/>



Photo retrieved from Global DS Foundation COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker Website

COVID-19 Vaccine News

Get to Know Registry Researchers & Staff

What is your favorite way to relieve stress?



Fran Connors, Ph.D.
Lab & Registry Director



Walking &
Hiking



Tori Smitherman
Undergraduate Registry
Assistant

Baths & playing
with her cats!



Jenna Reardanz, M.A.
Graduate Student

Photography &
Hiking!



Nadia Dahimene
Post-Bachelor's Registry
Assistant



Painting &
facetimeing
friends!



Kristina Baggett
Graduate Student



Playing with her
new baby!



Kara Acosta
Undergraduate Registry
Assistant

Video & board
games with
friends!



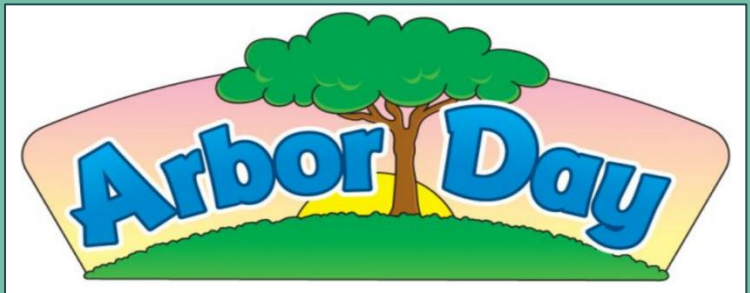
Regional Upcoming Events

Here are some fun events to support folks with DS & ID!

Arbor Day Picnic on April 30

Sponsored by The Arc of Northeast
Mississippi & Our Artworks

<https://arcnems.org/post/first-annual-arbor-day-picnic.html>



*We hope you all enjoyed a wonderful
World Down Syndrome Day!*

Bass Tournament on 6/5

Benefits DS Association
of Middle Tennessee

<https://www.somethingextra.org/events/2nd-annual-3-21-team-at-cumberland-real-estate-open-bass-tournament-to-benefit-dsamt/>



Hosted by The Arc of Central Alabama on May 26
Visit <https://e.givesmart.com/events/kCu/> for more information!

"Like" Us On
Facebook



facebook.com/UAIDPR

Thank You!

Special thanks to
everyone who is helping
the Registry to promote
research on intellectual
disability!



Get in Touch!

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Get Involved!

Do you know someone who
wants to join the registry?

Would you like your group or
group's event to be listed in a
future newsletter?

Let us know!

**Call or email to get in
touch!**

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ALABAMA[®]

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Promoting Research on Intellectual Disability!



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