

# NATIONAL STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER



## Study News and Highlights

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## Clinical Staff Training and Certification Complete

Happy New Year! As the National Study of Mental Health (NSMH) enters its second year, project momentum continues to move forward. In November 2020, more than 70 clinical interviewers and supervisors completed their training to conduct data collection. The training took place virtually over a period of 10 days, with sessions occurring every morning and afternoon. This major NSMH milestone could not have been achieved without the help of all three partner sites and staff.

After completing the training, clinical staff participated in role play interview scenarios to prepare for the certification process. Initial certification interviews took place through the end of 2020 and all clinical interviewers and supervisors are officially certified to start interviewing NSMH study participants.

*The National Study of Mental Health (NSMH) is a large-scale research effort to improve understanding of mental health and health behaviors in the United States. The study will include individuals living in households across the country as well as some individuals who are incarcerated, hospitalized, or homeless. The NSMH is conducted by RTI International in collaboration with partners at Columbia University/New York State Psychiatric Institute, Duke Health, Harvard University, the Treatment Advocacy Center, the University of Chicago, and the University of Washington. The NSMH is a cooperative agreement with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).*

NSMH

National Study of Mental Health

# Progress Report: Data Collection

The data collection instruments that will be used in the study were completed in fall 2020. This includes the creation of the roster that households fill out to initiate their participation in the study and development of a Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI) screening tool to determine a participant's eligibility for a clinical interview. Furthermore, the study just finalized a Computerized Adaptive Test for Mental Health (CAT-MH) as another screening tool, to be used in early 2021. The study will use a modified version of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-5 (SCID), originally developed by the American Psychiatric Association, in addition to an interview guide uniquely developed by the NSMH team to make up the clinical interview portion of the project.

Excitingly, the pilot data collection began in October 2020. For the pilot, 250 addresses were sampled and received letters requesting their participation in the study. After filling out and returning a roster either online or by phone, household members undergo a screening interview to determine their eligibility for a clinical interview. If selected through a randomized process, household members undergo the clinical interview to complete their participation. The NSMH study has already completed the entire interview process with some of the pilot household participants. Over twenty roster and screening interviews were completed online or by phone, and five clinical interviews were completed by video. The study team will contact the remaining households again once in-person data collection is possible.

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The first full release of the household sample mailers occurred on December 31, 2020 and included approximately 25,000 addresses across the U.S. This release date allowed the full-scale data collection process to begin in January and gave the newly certified clinical interviewer staff the opportunity to begin working with participants. COVID-19 and delays in mail delivery could impact mailer response rates, which will be monitored closely in case adjustments to the survey process need to be made.

For general information about the NSMH and the study collaborators please visit

[nsmh.rti.org](https://nsmh.rti.org)

## COVID-19 Updates

The NSMH study is proceeding as planned with continuous adaptations and creative solutions as new challenges arise, including increased use of virtual video-based interviewing and decreased face-to-face contact during household outreach.

Because of the increased vulnerability to the virus in congregate settings, the facilities on the non-household side of the study are a top priority for vaccine distribution. Many of our participating facilities have approved a virtual interview process and the existence of a vaccine will make it easier to recruit facilities into the study.

We are hopeful about the future of the NSMH project and look forward to widespread COVID-19 vaccine availability soon.

"It is exciting to see the launch of NSMH data collection. COVID-19 definitely presents a challenge, but it feels good to be able offer various options for collecting data safely in interested non-household facilities."

- Dr. Lydia Chwastiak, NSMH Co-Investigator, University of Washington

## Facility Recruitment Continues

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On the non-household side of the project, facility recruitment continues and discussions are underway to determine new approaches to data collection given the challenges COVID-19 presents for in-person data collection in congregate settings. Each type of facility needed, prisons, jails, shelters, and hospitals, are in talks with RTI or our partner sites.

There were setbacks and delays in the initial outreach to various locations, as facilities worked to develop their own COVID-19 policies to continue operating safely during the pandemic. Despite the challenges, facility outreach has been well-received, likely in part because these facilities and their staff are aware of the importance of the NSMH study.

Some facilities expressed a preference for video conferencing with participants, while others prefer in-person interviews take place over the course of a few designated dates. We are excited for the continued talks with facilities and expect data collection to begin as early as this spring.

## Upcoming Activities

- Conclusion of pilot data collection efforts
- Continued site outreach and logistical planning for non-household data collection
- Continued household data collection

*Newsletter by the National Study of Mental Health Study Team*

*For more information, please contact [nsmh@rti.org](mailto:nsmh@rti.org)*

