

Shawn Whiteman receives \$1M Grant to Study Pandemic-Related Substance Use in Families

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Pandemic-induced challenges may have long-term impacts on adolescent development.

Shawn Whiteman, professor in Human Development and Family Studies and Associate Dean for Research and Innovation in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, was recently awarded a \$1 million grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (National Institutes of Health). The grant will support Whiteman's continuing research on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescents' and their parents' substance use.

The COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 disrupted the daily lives of adolescents and their families in the United States. Emergency school and community closures confined children and adults together in their homes with severely limited access to other supportive adults and institutions. The impacts of this interrupted state of living varied greatly among communities, between family members, and even on a day-to-day basis as the pandemic progressed over months and years.

Whiteman's longitudinal study examines how these life disruptions affected the short-term and long-term health of adolescents and parents, especially in terms of their alcohol and substance use.

"Given the duration of the pandemic, we were interested in understanding how the many changes that youth and their parents experienced shaped their adjustment," said Whiteman. "These changes likely had the opportunity to

promote growth and healthy development, but also to exacerbate challenges and increase substance use."



Shawn Whiteman

Examining how families dealt with the pandemic is key for supporting recovery for those who were heavily affected. It could also help researchers anticipate long-term trends in alcohol and substance use and abuse among the adolescents involved in the study.

"Understanding how adolescents and parents suffered, adapted, and coped with pandemic challenges is critical for developing responses to public health crises," said Whiteman, "as well as supporting resilience and recovery."

The grant, which totals more than \$1 million over the course of three years, is a collaboration between Whiteman and Brian C. Kelly (Purdue University), Jennifer L. Maggs (Penn State University), Sarah A. Mustillo (University of Notre Dame), and Sarfaraz Serang (University of South Carolina).

Whiteman hopes to continue to follow the families involved in the study as youth transition into early adulthood to continue to gain understanding of the long-term implications of the pandemic for their health and adjustment.