



# Supporting Children with Disabilities: Lessons from the Pandemic

CLINICAL  
SCHOLARS

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**NASEM Workshop**

A Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Project

June 2022



em**POWER** NOLA®



# Communities Have Power

- Academics have a long history of paternalistic and exploitative models of collaboration
- Recognize the power of the families, neighborhoods, and communities from which children with disabilities come
- emPOWER culture bearers and health professionals equally to speak a common language
- **This is the emPOWER NOLA method for community elevation & centering to solve complex problems**



# Naturally Occurring Social Networks (NOSNs)

Second  
Line Krewes

Social Aid and  
Pleasure Clubs

Mardi Gras  
Indians

Have decades of history in various communities of Orleans Parish

Serve strong healing purpose for people historically disenfranchised  
from traditional mental health and social supports





**Mask-Up so we can mask next  
Mardi Gras Season**



**Mayor LaToya Cantrell**   
@mayorcantrell

...

Today I was joined by many of the Big Chiefs from our Mardi Gras Indians to stand together in solidarity and acknowledge that this Carnival season will be different.



7:14 PM · Feb 9, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



## The Big Shot says: Get Your (COVID vaccination) Shot

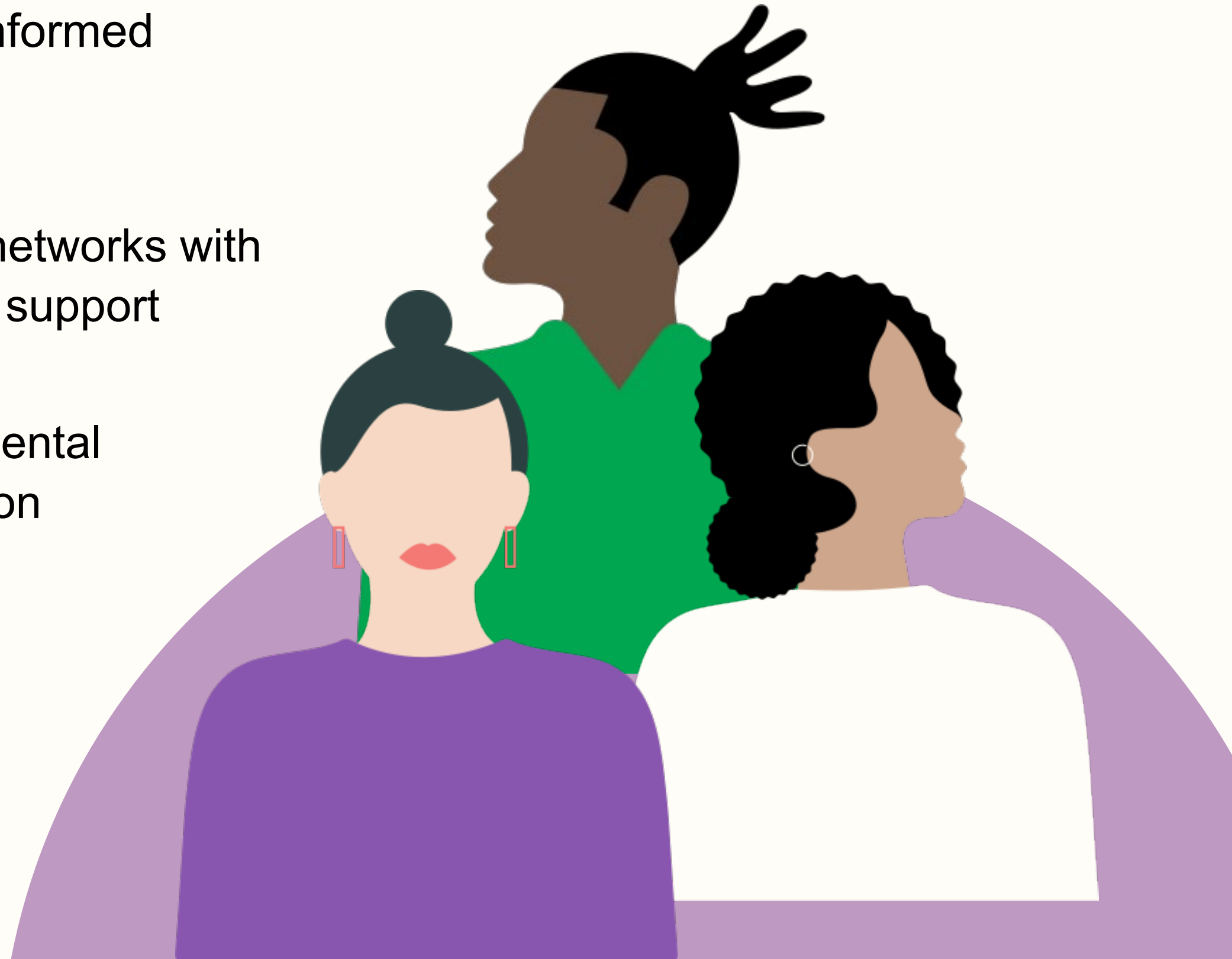
3/19/2021, the New Orleans Health Department and Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club partnered to provide COVID-19 vaccines to 200 eligible Zulu members and nearby residents. These endeavors

"Zulu knows first hand the impact of the COVID-19 virus," said Zulu President Elroy James. "Because of this virus' impact, couple with the health disparity that exists in our community, Zulu is committed to doing its part to get shots into the arms of those impacted."



# Our emPOWER NOLA Mission

- Creating community-based, trauma-informed spaces for children
- Connecting naturally occurring social networks with traditional school-based mental health support
- Training our culture bearers and our mental health professionals to speak a common language
- Developing a collaborative model of respect and exchange



# Program Goals

To help more children living with trauma access services by...

1

Increasing the cultural  
competence of our already  
fragmented mental health  
treatment network

2

Empowering communities  
to more effectively access  
resources to support and  
heal their children



# There is Structural & Systemic Inequity. What Can We Do for kids with disabilities?

1. Focus on action, not just agreement in principle, through policy
2. Gather Data and ask why?
3. Insist that our Institutions of Higher Education have classes and providers that represent the diversity of our community
4. Insist that the leadership and professional staff of our health care systems reflect the diversity of our citizens
5. Review plans for new and plans for expansion of existing health systems with an eye towards access to public transportation and proximity to populations historically marginalized.



35 min 1 hr 34 5 hr 1 hr 16

Depart at 3:56 PM OPTIONS

All Bus Metro Train

Recommended route

1 hr 33 min  
3:57 PM - 5:30 PM  
at 4:05 PM from Crowder at Huntington Pk (Far)

More by bus

1 hr 33 min  
3:57 PM - 5:30 PM  
at 4:05 PM from Crowder at Huntington Pk (Far)

Trip from New Orleans East to  
CHNOLA on public transportation



# Theoretical Activities to emPOWER Communities

- Identify: Community culture bearers
- Engage: Naturally occurring social networks as peers, not pawns, for mutually beneficial interventions
- Listen: Hear and incorporate the priorities of the community equally with the priorities of research or public policy
- Develop: Instruments to measure programs (surveys, cultural competence analysis, and focus groups) that emphasize collaboration and cohesion
- Provide: A mechanism to elevate the voices of those served
- Elevate: elevate community partners to find solutions that do not require perpetual sponsorship (dependence)
- Offer: Continuing Education credits and certificates of completion to community partners. Leave something tangible.



Photo Credit: Matthew Hinton  
Rollin Joe Henry at the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Original Pigeon  
Town Steppers Easter Second Line 4/21/2019

- ◆ What are the mechanisms to allow non-parent guardians to provide consent if parents are unavailable?
- ◆ Can the number and distribution of special needs daycare centers be increase?
- ◆ Can special needs daycare services be integrated into traditional daycare and Head Start programs?
- ◆ Can the access barriers to those on public insurance be decreased to achieve parity with commercial insurance? (access)
- ◆ How are parents of and children with special health care needs incorporated



# The Team







# Thank you!

Send a message at  
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