

# Stakeholder Engagement through Participatory Action Research at iSPARC

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Established in 2018, the Implementation Science & Practice Advances Research Center (iSPARC) is a new Massachusetts DMH-funded collaborative effort between the former UMMS Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center, UMMS Population & Quantitative Health Sciences and Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. With 52 core and affiliate investigators, iSPARC features four interacting programs: Stakeholder Engagement, Public Mental Health and Implementation Research, Technical Assistance and External Funding, and Workforce Development.

The mission of the **Stakeholder Engagement Program** is to lead the mental health research community and beyond in working in partnership with individuals with lived mental health experience, their families, and the agencies that serve them. This program intersects with several of iSPARC's activities. It includes three active advisory groups with more than 20 members representing youth & young adults with lived mental health experience, older adults with lived mental health experience, and family members. These advisory groups adopt a participatory action research (PAR) approach and seek to engage community stakeholders at every stage of research, from development through enrollment and dissemination.

The iSPARC Stakeholder Engagement Program seeks to increase engagement and diversity through several initiatives:

- Development of a community provider advisory board
- Annual assessment of diversity representation on advisory boards
- Annual assessment of participation action research across all iSPARC projects
- Ongoing dissemination of products to assist other organizations in initiating and maintaining stakeholder engagement

**Conducting an annual diversity survey of our existing advisory groups**

2018 results (n=14)	
Diverse in:	
Ethnicity?	No
Race?	Yes
Language?	No
Gender?	Yes
Sexual orientation?	Yes
Disability?	Yes
Lived experience of mental health?	Yes

**Developing dissemination products around stakeholder engagement**



**Measuring and improving participatory approaches in existing studies using a structured tool**

