

SUMMER 2026

ABCD Study Newsletter



ABCD Science: Celebrating **10** Years

The Adolescent Brain Cognitive DevelopmentSM (ABCD) Study is proud to officially turn 10 years old! This important milestone is made possible through the commitment of our participants and families. To celebrate, the ABCD Study[®] team is publishing a [special journal series](#) made up of over 30 articles summarizing research on a range of topics. The topics include brain structure and function, mental health, physical health, social relationships, school climates, and substance use. When all the articles have been published, we will share the final version so that you can see the power of ABCD data, learn about questions researchers are asking, and get a glimpse of where future research is headed.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of ABCD participants, families, and study staff. We are incredibly grateful for the time, effort, and support you have provided over the past decade, and we look forward to continuing our work together in the future. Together, we are helping move science forward!



ABCD Study Data: How Data Collection Becomes Research

The ABCD Study has been collecting data for ten years and has shared seven data releases as of May 2026.

Researchers collect new information from participants at every study visit (such as surveys and brain scans). Then, once per year, the newest information is packaged into a data release. The information in a data release must be free from personal details to protect participant privacy, carefully organized into usable formats, cleaned to remove errors, and reviewed by statisticians and scientists before it is made available on a data platform. This process takes a long time because of the many different types of data the study collects.

Data are stored within a secure system called the [NIH Brain Development Cohorts \(NBDC\) Data Hub](#), which is designed to protect participant privacy. Researchers who complete a data use agreement, as well as training on responsible data and biospecimens use, may be approved to access data on the NBDC Data Hub. Approved researchers can use the available data to conduct analyses and publish findings.



A **data release** is how researchers share information collected during a study so it can be used to answer important scientific questions.

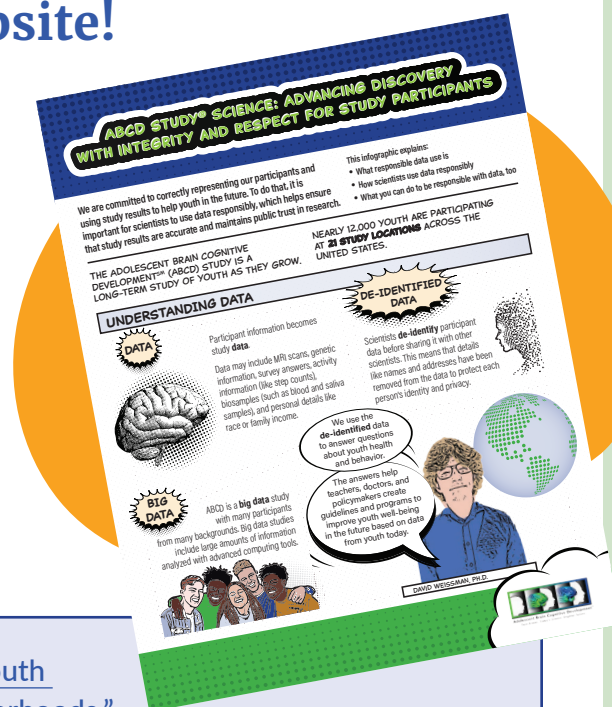
New Resources on the ABCD Website!

ABCD is proud to share three new resources highlighting insights from the study.

1. [Teaching the Teen Brain: Helping Adolescents Learn, Discover, and Thrive](#)
2. [Childhood Obesity and the Brain: What a Landmark Study Reveals about Kids' Health](#)
3. [ABCD Study® Science: Advancing discovery with integrity and respect for study participants](#)

We hope you find these resources helpful to dive deeper into insights created from ABCD Study findings.

Watch the recording of our recent webinar, [“Insights on Youth Obesity from the ABCD Study®: From Neurons to Neighborhoods.”](#)



Staff Feature: Laura Ziemer



Laura Ziemer is a Scientific Project Manager for the ABCD Study's Data Analysis, Informatics & Resource Center (DAIRC). She has spent nearly her entire career with ABCD!

Laura holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Neuroscience from the University of Vermont (UVM) and a Master's degree of Neuroimaging and Informatics from the University of Southern California. Outside of ABCD, she loves the Buffalo Bills, baking her famous chocolate chip cookies, and spending time with her dog, Parker.

Q: How did you get started with ABCD?

A: I started as an undergraduate intern at the ABCD Study's UVM site in 2019. I stayed with ABCD until the COVID-19 pandemic, which is when I left to get my master's degree from USC. However, I couldn't stay away for long—I made my way back to ABCD at the University of Rochester site in a variety of roles, including site coordinator.

Q: What kept you involved with ABCD all of these years?

A: Persistence has been key. I knew I had a passion for the work ABCD was doing from the start, so I made it my goal to find my way back to the study. I've loved the opportunity to grow and learn in many different ways. When I worked at the sites, my favorite part was developing relationships with our fantastic participants and seeing them year after year.



University of Vermont Clinical Research Center

Q: Can you describe your current role?

A: As part of the DAIRC team, I work on a range of projects that help make sure ABCD's data is organized, managed, and quality controlled.

Q: Do you have any career tips for our participants?

A: A lot of my career trajectory comes from putting myself out there, saying yes to exploring, and saying yes to exposure. My career didn't go where I thought it would, but each experience opened the door to the next and helped me get where I am today!

We hope that Laura's unique career path inspires you to follow your passions and take every opportunity to grow!

Student Space

By: Simi Keil, Research Assistant at the Children's Hospital, Los Angeles ABCD Site



We have heard the warnings about screen time, shortened attention spans, social media feeds designed to keep us scrolling, and phone addiction. It is no surprise that research shows social media is linked to sleep disruption, social comparison, and mental health concerns. But for those growing up today, social media is not separate from real life. It is part of how friendships are formed, identities are explored, and communities are built. So while the simple answer might seem to be “stay off social media,” it is not that simple

in reality. The question in both research and society is no longer just how social media influences us, but how adolescents can learn to exist in an increasingly online world without letting it completely take over identities or sense of self.

Adolescence is a particularly important period for forming an identity, a sense of belonging, and social connections. During this stage of life, feeling part of something larger than yourself can become especially important. Social media platforms are intentionally designed to capture and hold attention, which can sometimes blur the line between authentic self-expression and pressure to constantly perform, compare, or stay connected¹.



Research also suggests that adolescents may be more motivated to manage their social media use when they feel informed, independent, and able to make choices that align with their own values and goals². Understanding that social media platforms are intentionally designed to influence behavior may help adolescents become more aware of where they place their attention and whether their online behaviors truly align with their identities, values, and goals.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the ways social media can create connections. Fashion trends, memes, phrases, hand gestures, and shared internet humor can become ways of relating to others, especially as adolescents get older, move away for college, or meet people from different backgrounds. What once connected people mainly through local communities, sports, or music may now also happen online. Viral jokes, phrases, and gestures can spread almost instantly, creating what can feel like a kind of “universal language” where adolescents from completely different geographical regions still understand the same references.

What makes this especially important is that no two adolescents are growing up in exactly the same environment. Even if youth across the country recognize the same memes, trends, or online jokes, factors like sleep, school experiences, extracurricular activities, substance use, family environments, and community opportunities still shape development in very different ways.

References:

1. Roedder John D, Pechmann C, Nguyen Chaplin L. Understanding the Past and Preparing for Tomorrow: Children and Adolescent Consumer Behavior Insights from Research in Our Field. *J Assoc Consum Res*. 2024;9(2). doi: 10.1086/729274
2. Galla BM, Choukas-Bradley S, Fiore HM, Esposito MV. Values-Alignment Messaging Boosts Adolescents' Motivation to Control Social Media Use. *Child Dev*. 2021;92(5):1717-1734. doi:10.1111/cdev.13553



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