

# BRIDGING THE GAP: SHAPING AUTISM RESEARCH TOGETHER

Autism Connect 2025



# GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- Provide a brief overview of autism-related research and clinical services at the University of South Carolina
- Learn from you!
  - Research priorities
  - Clinical needs
  - Barriers for participating in research





# CAROLINA AUTISM & NEURODEVELOPMENT CENTER

## MISSION

The mission of CAN Research Center is to improve the health and well-being of families and individuals with NDDs, including autism, intellectual disability, learning disorders, and genetic syndromes (e.g., Fragile X Syndrome, Down Syndrome).

## RESEARCH

- CAN conducts research on genetics, behavioral analysis, intervention methods, and development across the life span
- Participation opportunities for ages 0 to 21 years
- Participants may receive:
  - Free diagnostic assessments
  - Monetary compensation
  - Opportunities to advance research

# COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

## MISSION

The CAN Center Community Advisory Board (CAB) is a group of community members who meet with our researchers, with the goal of gathering input about the alignment of our research and community outreach activities with the needs and values of the community.

## INTERESTED?

Contact our CAN Program  
Coordinator:

Sydney Arsenault, MSW  
[Sydneya@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:Sydneya@mailbox.sc.edu)



# Terra Linville

Moderator



**Research Program Coordinator**, Communication in Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (CANDi) Lab

## Navigating the Journey of Motherhood with a Child on the Spectrum

### Journey

- My experience as a parent exploring research and services for my child who has recently been diagnosed.

### Community

- Locating support groups for parents of children with ASD
- The CAN Center at USC

### Resources

- Research conducted at the University of South Carolina
- DDSN
- BabyNet
- The CAN Center at USC



# Abby Hogan, PhD

**Assistant Professor**, Communication Sciences and Disorders  
**Director**, Communication in Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (CANDi) Lab


## Research Focus:

- How, when, and why anxiety develops in autistic children
- How anxiety impacts broader functioning and quality of life

## Current Research Project(s):

- *Anxiety in School-Aged Autistic Children*
  - Predictors of anxiety
  - Impact of anxiety on social skills, challenging behaviors, family accommodations, and quality of life
  - Sex differences in anxiety
- *Sensory Impairments and Social Anxiety in Autistic Children with Intellectual Disability*



 **Communication Sciences and Disorders**  
Arnold School of Public Health  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



 **CAROLINA AUTISM & NEURODEVELOPMENT CENTER**

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# Rob Hock, PhD

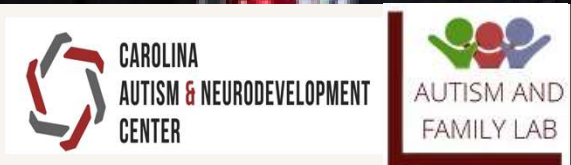
**Associate Professor**, College of Social Work  
**Director**, Autism and Family Lab

**Research Foci:**

- Developing interventions to support family systems
- Improving family-centered care in autism services
- Peer support interventions
- Strengthening co-parenting teams
- Supporting fathers

**Current Research Project(s):**

- Autism Parent Navigators Intervention for Parents of Young Children with Autism,
- Caregivers of Autistic Adults Qualitative Study,
- Using EMA to understand what promotes and hinders parents' use of new parenting skills.



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# Angela McLeod, PhD, CCC-SLP

**Director, Montgomery Speech, Language, & Hearing Clinic**  
**Clinical Associate Professor & Speech-Language Pathologist,**  
Communication Sciences and Disorders  
**Qualified Orofacial Myologist (QOM)**

**Research/Clinical Focus:** Child language, Literacy, Speech Sound Disorders, Myofunctional Disorders, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, a range of other areas in the SLP's scope, given the Clinic's focus on professional training of graduate students

**Current Research Project(s):** Self-reported quality of communication measures among patients who have Parkinson's disease; various aspects of young children's early literacy skills

 **Communication Sciences  
and Disorders**  
Arnold School of Public Health  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

 **University of  
South Carolina** **Montgomery Speech,  
Language, & Hearing Clinic**

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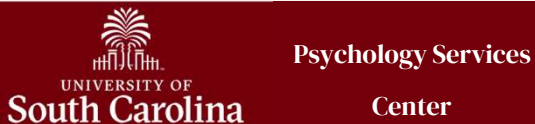
# Kimberly Hills, PhD

**Licensed Psychologist SC**

**Clinical Professor, Psychology Services Center**

**Research/Clinical Focus:** Specializes in the identification and diagnosis of autism and its coexisting disorders, such as ones involving language, learning, anxiety or attention. She trains graduate students and supervises child and adolescent services, including autism evaluations, at the university's Psychology Services Center.

**Current Research Project(s):** Dr. Hills facilitates the Clinical Best Estimate research diagnostic process and trains staff on clinical assessment measures (e.g., ADOS-2) for three research labs at USC (Roberts, Hogan, Will).



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What clinical services would you like to see offered at USC?

*What do you see as the current gaps in research?*

**Now it's time to hear  
from you!**

What are the barriers that make it hard for you to participate in research?

*What research priorities or topics would you like to see studied at USC?*



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*Thank you! Please contact us if you have any questions!*

# Conference Survey

