

Sarah Verbiest

Director

Jordan Institute for Families

### Current Projects

#### *Centering the Needs of Pregnant and New Parents*

Verbiest's research focuses on improving the quality of and access to supports and services to new parents in their 4<sup>th</sup> Trimester (3 months following the birth of a child) and the first year postpartum. Given the recent focus in the past few years on the postpartum period, largely due to the recognition of high maternal mortality rates, her team has created new websites designed by new mothers of color for all new mothers.

#### *Earned Income Tax Credit and Income Supports*

Verbiest and the team at the Jordan Institute for Families recently completed a community-led study with UNC School of Government, Rural Forward NC, and Together Transforming Lives to identify ways to increase Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) uptake in rural North Carolina. Her team is starting a new partnership with the Mother Outreach Network in Washington, D.C. to assist in evaluating a guaranteed income for pregnant and new mothers at risk for child welfare involvement.

#### *Perinatal Incarceration and Substance Misuse Treatment*

In her role with the Collaborative for Maternal and Infant Health, Verbiest leads a team to address the unique needs of pregnant, postpartum, and birthing people who are involved in the carceral system. This movement has helped support the N.C. Dignity Bill, which became law in September 2021. Recently, her team received funds from the Centers for Disease Control to develop community-driven strategies for addressing this issue in local jails and to create educational opportunities for health care providers, corrections officers, and others within the system.

#### *Safe Foster Homes for Infants*

Because of a demand among child welfare workers for training and supports to assure foster parents caring for infants are providing a safe environment, the Collaborative for Maternal and Infant Health has two state contracts to address and infant safe sleep.

#### *Reproductive and Equity-Centered Wellness*

People of reproductive age must have access to mental health services, medical care, and supports for finding ways to work and learn that are fulfilling and for having safe and caring relationships.