New associates enhance Institute’s research agenda

Columbia, SC — The Institute for Families in Society welcomes two new associates to enhance its research agenda.

Jodi Nearns, PhD joins the Institute as Research Assistant Professor. Dr. Nearns will be working under the direction of Dr. Ana López-De Fede to carry out health disparities research funded by the Medicaid contract and to expand the Institute’s funded research on health disparities. With extensive clinical experience as a Registered Nurse in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner in a collaborative Primary Care practice. Dr. Nearns recently completed her doctoral training at the University of South Florida College of Public Health with research focused on the application of advanced multilevel modeling techniques to examine cross-level interactions between neighborhoods and individuals via secondary data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Her research interests include community-based health promotion, policy approaches to reducing health disparities, and social epidemiology.

Mr. Aaron Kissler joins the Institute’s Division of Health and Family Studies as GIS (Geographic Information System) Manager. A graduate of the MPH program in Environmental and Occupational Health at the University of South Florida, he will be responsible for the development, implementation, and management of the GIS projects of the Division. Aaron brings to this position a strong background in working with state and local health departments on the application of GIS to environmental health disaster planning. These skills were most recently tested in his work in post-Katrina New Orleans and with the UCLA Center for Public Health Disasters.

Both Dr. Nearns and Mr. Kissler have previously worked with the new Institute director Melinda Forthofer. She comments, “I’m delighted to find that the world is small enough to allow our paths to cross again so serendipitously! I look forward to their contributions to the Institute’s mission and goals.”

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