



**Weill
Cornell
Medicine**

Children's Health Council

Annual Impact Report

September 2026



From Our Vice Chairs

We asked our volunteer leaders of the Children's Health Council to reflect on the year and tell us what had the biggest impact on the year's successes.

"We were excited to bring back the BioBus for this year's Family Science Day, the theme of which was "Traveling Through the Human Body." Our members' children took part in hands-on experiments and activities learning about the major body systems. Witnessing the wonder, engagement and inquisitiveness of the children is what makes this event so special and we are so proud of the opportunity to help foster an appreciation for science and research in the next generation!"

Erika Feil-Lincoln

Vice Chair, Programming
CHC member since 2015



"It was a privilege to host Dr. Priya Katari for a Children's Health Council fireside chat this past fall and benefit from her expertise in the challenges and realities of childhood allergies. Her insights underscored how essential continued research is to improving outcomes for children and providing families with the knowledge and support they need."

Danielle Rayman

Vice Chair, Marketing
CHC member since 2022

"We were thrilled to welcome eleven new households to the Children's Health Council this year – each one is a powerful affirmation that our community believes every child deserves access to world-class care and the pioneering research that makes that care possible. When members partner with us, they help fuel the discoveries and treatments that will define the future of pediatric medicine."

Whitney Snider, M.D.

Vice Chair, Membership
CHC member since 2021



The vice chairs are key CHC leaders, partnering with the chair and the Development Office to guide strategy in their respective areas, while representing the CHC to their networks, engaging the Executive Committee and strengthening the institution through outreach, events and community building.

Eighty-five households are now part of Weill Cornell Medicine's Children's Health Council. Members know that their giving helps fund the research and medicine that can change lives.



For more information about the Children's Health Council, or to make a gift, please email us at chc@med.cornell.edu, or use this QR code.

Letter From Our Chair



It's a pleasure to share with you our 2026 Children's Health Council (CHC) Impact Report.

This has been an amazing year for Weill Cornell Medicine and for our CHC community. Through the Children's Health Investigators Fund (CHIF), we provided support to three outstanding scientists whose work exemplifies the great research at Weill Cornell Medicine (and you can read more about them in this report).

Eleven new member households joined us – our membership is now the largest it's ever been. We offered diverse events, giving you opportunities to connect with experts on a range of health topics:

- The Fall Fireside Chat at the Rayman home, where Dr. Priya Katari taught us about managing childhood allergies
- A joint lab tour – with the Women's Health Council – of the Perinatal Intergenerational Research Institute (PIRI) and Alexandra Cohen Hospital Labor and Delivery unit and NICU
- A fantastic Family Science Day in March
- The annual All-Member meeting, spotlighting the 2026 CHIF recipients

Our wonderful vice chairs – Erika Feil-Lincoln, Danielle Rayman and Whitney Snider – dedicated themselves to ensuring our membership could make the most of CHC events, communications and conversations. Our Executive Committee members were exemplary partners, helping to steer the Council's work and activities. And once again, the guidance of our CHC faculty advisors was enlightening to us: They connect us to the ever-growing clinical and research accomplishments of children's health and pediatrics.

What all these great people have in common with you is a commitment to children – not just their own, but children and families everywhere – and faith in a healthy, hopeful future through life-changing discoveries and breakthroughs.

Thank you for being such generous champions of this great work. The depth of your commitment is always an inspiration!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Casey S. Weiss".

Casey S. Weiss

Chair, Children's Health Council

Total CHC funds raised from 2014-2026:

Funds raised, fiscal year 2026

Total raised **\$1,048,644**

Weill Cornell Medicine children's health faculty produced

264 unique publications

including book chapters and articles published in peer-reviewed journals

As of May 31, 2026

35

Weill Cornell Medicine
children's health faculty
held National Institutes
of Health awards

\$42 million

in total project funds



There are

281

open clinical studies
in the Department
of Pediatrics

25

Children's Health Investigators Fund
(CHIF) recipients since 2014

Children's Health areas funded by the CHC since 2014



Allergy/Immunology
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Cardiology
Emergency Medicine
Endocrinology
Gastroenterology and Nutrition
Global Health
Health Equity
Hematology/Oncology
Neurology
Neurosurgery
Newborn Medicine
Otolaryngology
Pulmonology
Surgery

FY2026
New member
households:

11

FY2026
Total member
households:

85

Children's Health Investigators Fund

Recipients 2025-2026

(Left to right) Dr. Oded Bein, Dr. Julia Brown and Dr. Sean Cullen
at the 2026 CHC All-Member Meeting



The Children's Health Investigators Fund is a vital source of support for early-career scientists, providing the funds needed for Weill Cornell Medicine pediatric investigators to establish promising preliminary results and then qualify for large-scale federal grants. In September 2025, \$249,000 was distributed from the Fund to support the exciting research projects outlined on these pages.

Oded Bein, Ph.D.

Instructor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry

Dr. Bein is a computational neuroscientist who uses artificial intelligence to improve treatment for young people with mental health conditions. He studies how depression affects the brain and thinking, with the goal of developing more targeted, scalable treatments. His work uses brain imaging, behavioral and clinical data, and computational models to better understand each individual and help tailor care to their specific needs.

"CHIF has been crucial in advancing my research toward personalized depression care. I developed a smartphone app targeting memory deficits and social isolation common in depression. **We piloted the app and generated preliminary data that led to a competitive external funding application.** The app does not require clinicians and is free to use, so it has the potential for wide reach. I also advanced my research on AI techniques to uncover heterogeneity in depression, providing a foundation for tailoring interventions to individual patients. These lines of research share a common vision: bringing innovative, high-quality mental health care to every child who needs it. The generosity of the Children's Health Council makes this work possible."

Julia Brown, Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Associate in Pediatrics, Gale and Ira Drukier
Institute for Children's Health

Dr. Brown investigates how gut microbiota regulate immune system function during pregnancy and infancy. Her work has uncovered regulatory pathways by which the microbiota contribute to a successful pregnancy by promoting the fetus' immune tolerance (that is, the ability of the fetus to distinguish between its own cells and tissues and foreign substances like bacteria and viruses). Dr. Brown is also studying how the microbiota of preterm infants dysregulate the immune response to infection, with the goal of identifying pathways that could be targeted to improve infection outcomes in newborns.

"CHIF funding has been invaluable to my work, and I'm deeply grateful for the philanthropy that makes this research possible. **Our research is helping us better understand how gut bacteria shape the immune system during pregnancy and early life, with the potential to improve outcomes for both mothers and newborns, especially premature infants.** Philanthropic support gives scientists the freedom to pursue these important questions and translate discoveries into better care for patients."

Sean Cullen, M.D., Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Department of Pediatrics
The Friedman Family Foundation Clinical Scholar in Newborn Medicine

Dr. Cullen's research is focused on the mechanisms by which obesity and metabolic diseases like diabetes are passed down through generations, with a particular interest in the influence of epigenetics – the ways that behaviors and the environment can change how genes are expressed, without mutating the DNA itself – on obesity inheritance. Models of epigenetic inheritance can be altered by the environment itself, by exposures to certain diets, by medications and even by stress, and thus present targetable avenues for reducing disease inheritance rates. Dr. Cullen observes the epigenetic inheritance of obesity at the bench, in mouse models and in translational studies examining early infant growth patterns.

"CHIF has enabled me to dedicate substantial research time and effort towards addressing how complex, multifactorial diseases like obesity are inherited across generations. We have demonstrated the lasting impact of a high-fat diet in mice on weight, glucose regulation and gene expression in their children and grandchildren. We have also shown that changes to small RNA expression in the sperm of these mice are likely mediators of this increased disease risk in subsequent generations. My future research will focus on directly translating this work to human studies. **It would be difficult to find funding for these investigations without the philanthropic support of donor communities like the Children's Health Council, for which I will always be extremely grateful.**"



Member Spotlight

Paying it Forward: Aditi Banga and Jonathan Schwartz

For Children's Health Council members Aditi Banga and her husband, Jonathan Schwartz, supporting pediatric research at Weill Cornell Medicine is both deeply personal and profoundly hopeful. They're the parents of two young daughters – with a third child on the way – and they see philanthropy as a means to ensure that future generations have access to advanced healthcare.

"We have benefited from the foresight of those who invested in groundbreaking research before us," says Aditi, who has built a career at the intersection of entertainment and technology. "We can't think of a better way to help children and their families than to pay it forward by supporting today's brilliant scientists."



Jonathan Schwartz and Aditi Banga with their children (at left), and the family at the 2026 Family Science Day (above)

Through their participation in the CHC, the family is doing just that. Aditi serves on the CHC Executive Committee and especially values the opportunity to meet the annual recipients of the Children's Health Investigators Fund grants. For her, they represent the future of pediatric research.

"The council's informative programs expand my mind every time," Aditi says. "I am grateful to be part of this community of inquisitive and caring scientists, physicians and families. I feel that together we really are making a difference."

Across Generations

The couple's belief in giving back is firmly rooted in family values. Born in India and raised in several countries before settling in New York City more than 25 years ago, Aditi notes that philanthropy was central to her upbringing. Her parents are longtime Weill Cornell Medicine supporters Ritu Banga, a Board of Fellows member, and Ajay Banga, a past Board member.

"Health and medicine have always been very close to our family's heart," Aditi says. "My parents' involvement at Weill Cornell Medicine,

which goes back a very long time, was very meaningful to all of us when I was growing up."

Jonathan's path was different but marked by a similar sense of purpose. A native New Yorker, he, too, grew up in a family shaped by service: His mother taught English to immigrant students, while his father volunteered with seniors in

Greenwich Village.

"I am grateful to be part of this community of inquisitive and caring scientists, physicians and families."

I feel that together we really are making a difference."

In his professional life, Jonathan started out as a mechanical engineer before moving into strategy consulting and eventually finance.

"My parents were wonderful people who helped inspire my own philanthropy and interest in helping the community,"

Jonathan says. "I love giving back and feeling that I'm making a difference."

The couple's experiences have shaped the way Aditi and Jonathan are raising their own family. Their daughters were born at the Alexandra Cohen Hospital for Women and Newborns, which deepened the couple's appreciation for the research taking place behind the scenes at Weill Cornell Medicine.

"The time it takes to go from basic research all the way to clinical trials to getting access to treatments is mind-boggling," Jonathan says. "Most of us just see the tip of the iceberg."

Aditi agrees: "The Children's Health Council allows us to peer under the hood, as it were, and see more of the meticulous work and creativity essential for medical innovation."

Transforming the Future



Dr. Zachary Grinspan is a physician-scientist who specializes in treating children with epilepsy, autism and other serious neurological conditions. In January 2026, he presented an overview of his work to the Children's Health Council Executive Committee. Here, he reflects on that presentation and why caring for children is so important to him.

I very much enjoyed the opportunity to present our work to members of the Children's Health Council (CHC). It was a great conversation: They brought a passionate interest and asked detailed, focused questions.

I have been working with children throughout my professional career, starting with teaching high school just after I graduated college. In medical school, I fell in love with the field of neurology and, later, with the study of epilepsy.

Ever since, I have been devoted to helping children with neurodevelopmental disorders and seizures. We have a great deal to offer these children, including medications, devices, surgeries and special diets. But there are lingering questions about the optimal choices for a child whose seizures continue despite our best efforts. Particularly for genetic diseases, our epilepsy treatments help the seizures but not the underlying developmental impairments.

Promising therapies

My work is focused on serving these children through three linked sets of activities. First, I have worked to build the foundational infrastructure that lets us gather data from centers around the country. Second, my observational portfolio helps me understand the natural history of the children, using modern statistical methods to make inferences about what works best. And third, through my interventional portfolio of clinical trials, I try to change their trajectories.

The exciting promise of gene therapies resonated most with the CHC audience. Our team has helped two

families deal with two different, ultra-rare conditions, using two first-in-human gene-replacement therapies. As I write, we have another first-in-human precision therapeutic scheduled in the coming weeks.

Looking ahead

When I met with the CHC in January, we were waiting to hear from ARIA (Aligning Research to Impact Autism), a major international initiative to develop therapies for children with autism, with a focus on genetic disorders that cause both autism and epilepsy. Our application was successful, and we are now part of a \$17.2 million joint project with Columbia University Irving Medical Center and the New York State Psychiatric Institute.

All this work begins with philanthropy. Just as it did for me, support from the CHC and other sources helps junior faculty and early-career physician-scientists write their first papers and submit applications for more substantial funding.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to share my work with such an important audience – and I look forward to updating them on our progress in the years to come.

Zachary Grinspan, M.D.

Director, Pediatric Epilepsy Program
Associate Professor, Pediatrics
Associate Professor, Population Health Sciences
Principal Investigator, Pediatric Epilepsy Learning Health System

From Our Faculty Advisors: Why CHIF?

We're grateful to our distinguished CHC faculty advisors for the multiple roles they play in our programs – including the selection of recipients for annual Children's Health Investigators Fund funding.



“Support from the CHC gives our trainees and junior investigators at the Drukier Institute the runway to turn a promising early discovery into a competitive federal application – funding the bold, early-stage work that no National Institutes of Health grant can yet support. It reaches them at the most formative moment of their careers, and shapes what kind of scientists they become. For this, we are deeply grateful.”

Virginia Pascual, M.D.
Drukier Director, Gale and Ira Drukier Institute for Children's Health at Weill Cornell Medicine
Ronay Menschel Professor of Pediatrics, Weill Cornell Medicine

“CHIF is vital to the future of pediatric medicine and to our collective future. Supporting physician-scientists who can both care for children and drive the discoveries that transform their health requires exactly this kind of intentional investment. CHIF builds the pipeline we so urgently need, ensuring that the next generation of pediatric researchers is trained, funded and supported to tackle the toughest health issues that children and families face.”

Sallie Permar, M.D., Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Pediatrics
Nancy C. Paduano Professor of Pediatrics, Weill Cornell Medicine



“Opportunities for research support to early-career faculty in child psychiatry are uncommon and yet so important for the advancement of both our faculty and our field. We are so grateful to the Children's Health Council for creating this opportunity. It gives me much hope for the future!”

Rebecca Rendleman, M.D., C.M.
Vice Chair for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medicine

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As of June 30, 2026



For more information about the Children's Health Council, or to make a gift, please email us at chc@med.cornell.edu, or use the QR code.



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We're
Changing
Medicine.