

## Dr. Freisthler takes reins as PI while HCS enters '23

With memories of Dr. Rebecca Jackson still fresh, it may be difficult to contemplate moving forward, but the HEALing Communities Study is fortunate to have the talents of Dr. Bridget Freisthler available as we move forward into a new year.

"As of this week, I am stepping in as PI of the HEALing Communities Study at Ohio State. Dr. (T. John) Winhusen and I will share PI responsibilities, as he previously did with Dr. Jackson," Dr. Freisthler wrote recently. "One person cannot fill Dr. Jackson's shoes. We will work very closely with the rest of the executive leadership team, Drs. (Tim) Huerta, (Michael) Konstan, and (Pam) Salsberry, to implement Dr. Jackson's vision."

Dr. Freisthler is a professor as well as the Associate Dean of Research and Faculty Development in the College of Social Work at The Ohio State University. Her areas of expertise include drug and alcohol use, drug distribution systems, child abuse and neglect, geographic information systems, spatial analysis, and service availability.

In her [online biography](#), she writes that her work focuses on "1) understanding how health and



Dr. Bridget Freisthler (Ohio State photo)

social problems vary across geographic areas, such as neighborhoods, 2) identifying those areas in a community which are at risk for developing or already experiencing high levels of harms based on a growing understanding of neighborhood ecologies, and 3) examining how the location of services may further help or hinder the development of problems in neighborhood areas."

In particular, Dr. Freisthler is interested in examining how the availability of facilities such as alcohol outlets and marijuana dispensaries – called the substance

use environment – affects other harms, such as crime and child maltreatment.

Her other projects include the [Empowering Communities Initiative](#), which also works to address opioid overdose deaths; [Enhancing Permanency in Children and Families](#); and the [Ohio START Evaluation](#). She also leads the She leads the Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Social Ecological Models Consortium.

After receiving bachelor's degrees in child development and family studies as well as psychology from Purdue University, Dr. Freisthler earned a master's degree in social service administration from the University of Chicago and her PhD in social welfare from the University of California, Berkeley. Before coming to Ohio State, she held several positions, including as a tenured professor, with the University of California, Los Angeles.

"I look forward to working with everyone in this new role. I am thankful to all of you, who work so diligently on this project," Dr. Freisthler wrote. "Together, we will continue to address the opioid crisis in Ohio and improve lives in our communities and beyond."