

Human Development and Family Sciences

*Master of Arts
Doctor of Philosophy*

For More Information

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Facilities for Graduate Work

The Department of Human Development and Family Sciences is housed in the Sarah M. and Charles E. Seay Building, which provides excellent resources for teaching and research. Computer facilities are extensive. In addition to the facilities of Information Technology Services, students have access to the department's computer laboratory, a state-of-the-art facility equipped with advanced computers and statistical software. These resources are supplemented by extensive computer equipment in individual faculty laboratories.

The Human Development and Family Sciences Reference Room houses a non-circulating collection of more than 500 volumes and 20 journals.

The half-day preschool and infant/toddler programs of the Priscilla Pond Flawn Child and Family Laboratory provide a setting for research by faculty members and graduate students, a facility for student observation and training, and a model program for children and their families. They also provide opportunities for family involvement in the classroom, parent education programs, parent conferences, and family research. Because the laboratory has served Austin families for over 80 years, the opportunities for multigenerational and longitudinal research are significant.

The department has extensive facilities for observing and recording social interaction. The Marital and Family Interaction Laboratory is available for recording couple and family interactions in a comfortable setting. The laboratory consists of a naturalistic living room connected to well-equipped control rooms that enable interactions to be recorded unobtrusively. The facility is augmented by numerous other one-way observation and coding rooms that enable recorded data to be analyzed using state-of-the-art computer-video analysis systems.

The department also has excellent facilities for conducting survey research. These include a series of individual interview rooms and a telephone research center.

Several rich sets of data, many of which include longitudinal data from families, are housed in the department and are available to graduate students for research. These sets of data focus on a wide range of topics, including the early years of marriage; the transition to parenthood; the prediction of divorce and remarriage and their impact on children; parent-child interaction; intergenerational ties; the connection between family and peer relationships; the connection between work roles and family relationships; and the impact of poverty, television, child care policy, and adoption policy on children.

Areas of Study

The graduate program in human development and family sciences is designed to prepare students for research, teaching, and administrative positions in colleges and universities, as well as for positions in government, policy-related research organizations, and other public and private settings. The program emphasizes research and theory on the interplay among individual development, family relationships, and institutions outside the family. Development of the individual is considered within the contexts of the family, peer group, community, and culture. The family is studied as a system of relationships, with attention to roles, communication, conflict resolution and negotiation, and family members' perceptions of each other and of their family. Public policies and care settings outside the family are among the community influences considered in relation to the development of individuals and families. The program emphasizes the investigation of the family and other social processes that contribute to competence and optimal development in individuals from birth to maturity and how such competence is reflected in interpersonal relationships and family interactions.

Graduate Studies Committee

The following faculty members served on the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) in the spring 2025 semester.

Francheska Catalina Alers Rojas	Su Yeong Kim
Maria Mercedes Arredondo	Jeffrey J Lockman
Aprile D Benner	Elma Ines Lorenzo-blanco
Mateo Farina	Elizabeth Munoz
Karen L Fingerman	Lisa Neff
Elizabeth Thompson Gershoff	Nicole Perry
Marci Elizabeth Joy Gleason	Stephen Russell
Sae Hwang Han	Gabriela L Stein
Nancy L Hazen Swann	Fatima Alesia Varner
Deborah B Jacobvitz	Hannah Williamson