

# Michael McGarrah

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## **Professional Summary**

Mission-driven research director and policy strategist with 15 years of experience designing and managing large-scale, policy-relevant research in education, health, and criminal justice. Proven leader of cross-sector initiatives in state and federal government, nonprofit research institutes and think tanks, national advocacy organizations, and global settings, directing \$30M in research funding and applying rigorous methods to evaluate and scale social programs and interventions. Skilled in research strategy, stakeholder engagement, and translating evidence into action to inform policy and drive system improvement.

## **Areas of Expertise**

Policy-Relevant Research | Causal Inference & Evaluation | Criminal Justice Reform | Program & Grant Management | Cross-Sector Partnerships | Federal Acquisitions & Contracts | Survey Design & Data Collection | Mixed-Methods Research | Stata, SPSS, R, Mplus, NVivo, Excel, Tableau | Research Translation & Publishing | Strategic Communication | Stakeholder Engagement | Project Leadership

## **Professional Experience**

### **Study Director & Statistician, U.S. Department of Education** **04/2022–Present**

- Lead the Crime and Safety Surveys Program at the National Center for Education Statistics, overseeing a \$30 million research portfolio and a team of 25+ staff and contractors.
- Directed publication of national reports on school crime, safety, bullying, and student well-being used to inform federal and state policy.
- Developed and awarded \$3.9 million in federal contracts and led large-scale surveys on crime and safety in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Census Bureau.
- Reviewed and awarded over \$3 million in educational technology grants, assessing impact and innovation in AI- and VR-based learning tools.
- Launched new research initiatives leveraging AI and web-scraping to modernize data collection on school shootings and emergency school closures.

### **Visiting Scholar, Harvard University** **05/2023–Present**

- Apply advanced, causal quantitative methods to uncover early warning signs for early youth substance abuse, translating findings into applied prevention frameworks and solutions.
- Analyze data on youth delinquency and crime using statistical software (Stata, R, Mplus), econometric and psychometrics methods, structural equation models, and data viz techniques.

### **Independent Research Consultant** **02/2019–04/2022**

- Led psychometric validation study of a tablet-based test to detect early reading and other cognitive deficits (AppRISE) with over 300 students in grades K-3, as part of the MIT Applied Educational Neuroscience Initiative, writing up full methodological report.
- Directed evaluation of student well-being and “soft skills” development program in Jharkhand, India, for IDinsight, impacting 1.6 million students in nearly 5,000 schools.
- Designed the quantitative program evaluation of a curriculum designed to improve literacy

outcomes for middle school students with dyslexia at the Carrol School in Lincoln, MA.

- Developed surveys focused on “soft skills” for Global Citizen Year and led program evaluation of nearly 500 pre-college gap year program participants, measuring growth in “soft skills” over the course of the one year program.

**Doctoral Researcher, Harvard University**

**08/2017–04/2022**

- Led quantitative analysis of a nationally representative survey of over 1,000 K-12 schools focused on social and emotional learning (SEL) program implementation.
- Published groundbreaking quantitative analysis of developmental trajectories to early substance use, uncovering a previously underappreciated “internalizing pathway” and potential treatments.
- Co-authored journal article focused on scaling up social and emotional learning initiatives in K-12 schools, winning the Best Paper of the Year award from the American Psychological Association.

**Research and Policy Associate, The Aspen Institute**

**08/2016–08/2017**

- Managed research and policy communication strategy for the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, securing \$6.7 million in funding over three years
- Produced briefs and background papers that shaped national discourse on criminal justice diversion-related programs in K-12 schools that formed the basis for national policy

**Research Associate, American Institutes for Research**

**07/2013–08/2016**

- Published analyses of faculty labor trends and spending at U.S. colleges and universities.
- Managed a \$6M federal technical assistance center on college and career readiness.
- Led survey development for a national RCT on K-12 principal-teacher feedback systems, showing improvements in classroom management and academic performance in mathematics.

**Fulbright Scholar, U.S. Department of State, Government of Madrid, Spain**

**09/2012–07/2013**

- Led professional development on teaching English as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language in Madrid bilingual schools.
- Instructed classes for middle and high school students in English and Spanish in all subjects.

**Early Childhood Education Policy Intern, Children’s Defense Fund**

**06/2011–09/2011**

- Authored a white paper on the effectiveness of full day kindergarten programs and met with Members of Congress to advocate for early childhood education policy initiatives.

**Research Assistant, Institute of Child Development, Univ. of Minnesota**

**01/2011–09/2012**

- Developed assessments of emotion regulation and conducted early childhood policy analysis.

**Certifications And Languages**

Teaching Certificate, Derek Bok Center for Teaching & Learning, Harvard University, 2023

Contracting Officer’s Representative (Federal equivalent to PMP), Federal Acquisition Institute, 2022

Certified Rater, Framework for Teaching (FFT), The Danielson Group, 2014

Proficient in Spanish, University of Minnesota Diploma Credential, 2012

**Education**

Ph.D. in Human Development, Learning & Teaching, Harvard University, 2023

Credential of Business Readiness, Harvard Business School, High Honors, 2020

B.A. in Child Psychology, University of Minnesota, *Summa Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa*, 2012

An expanded curriculum vitae with more detailed professional and research experience and a list of relevant publications, presentations, honors & awards, and professional and academic service may be found at <https://scholar.harvard.edu/mcgarran>