

Bernadine Waller, PhD, LMHC

Dr. Bernadine Waller is an award-winning National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) T32 Postdoctoral Research Fellow and principal investigator of the DIVAA Lab at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. She is an implementation scientist who partners with faith- and community-based organizations to tailor and implement sustainable evidence-based mental health interventions for underserved survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV).

Dr. Waller's ground-breaking research is transforming the country's domestic violence service provision system. She developed the first US theories that identify multilevel barriers that preclude Black women survivors' help-seeking: *The Theory of Help-Seeking Behavior*, *Sarah Waller's Help-Seeking Model*, and *Constructed Agency*, which is currently being utilized in the UK. Her scholarship can be found in high impact journals, including *The Lancet*, *The Lancet Psychiatry*, and the *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

As principal investigator of the DIVAA Lab, she partners with an interdisciplinary team of community members to deliver culturally responsive mental health care to underserved IPV survivors. She is a rare talent who was able to obtain funding from the NIMH to complete her doctoral research and remains funded by the Institute. This is a feat that few Black women scholars have been able to accomplish. At a time when the NIMH was not funding violence-related research, she secured an R36 to examine Black women's IPV help-seeking process. Her NIMH-funded dissertation research has been used to help shape the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and is currently being used to reshape domestic violence service provision system in New York City. Dr. Waller is a sought-after expert, informing domestic violence policies and protocols for the entities inclusive of the US Department of Defense. Notably, her most recent book chapter is informing the White House's inaugural national agenda on domestic violence.

Dr. Waller is the winner of multiple awards for her research, including 1 international award: the **2022 Elizabeth Young New Investigator Award** from the Organization for the Study of Sex Differences (OSSD) and 3 national awards: the **2022 Violence Against Women and Children's Manuscript Award** from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the **2022 Outstanding Dissertation Award** from the Society of Social Work and Research (SSWR); the **2022 Student Award for Social Work Research** from the Group for the Advancement of Social Work Education (GADE). She has also won 1 respectively from New York State: **2023 NYS Women of Distinction Award** from NYS Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean Pierre; and Columbia University: the **2023 Columbia University Postdoctoral Excellence Award**.

Dr. Waller's research interest stems from more than a decade of practice and ministerial experience. She has provided trauma-informed services to IPV survivors, court-mandated offenders, and emerging adults. Dr. Waller is a member of the ministerial team at Zion Cathedral Church, where she serves as a Deaconess, Assistant Sunday School teacher and member of the intercessory prayer team. Dr. Waller also leads the *Restorer of Broken Walls* ministry, which provides crisis counseling and supports to IPV survivors.

At Columbia Psychiatry, Dr. Waller serves as the Director of Community Engagement for the Mental Health Equity Center. The Center works in partnership with the NYS Office of Mental Health and community-based mental health agencies to implement culturally salient models of care in underserved communities in New York. The goal of the Center is to decrease inequities in mental health care delivery among communities of color that were further exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Waller is a sought-after speaker who regularly shares her cutting-edge work with national and international audiences. Most recently, she was the invited keynote speaker for the *Office for Disparities Research and Workforce Diversity*, the *Safe and Just Summit with Hon. Hakeem Jeffries*, and a twice-invited speaker for the *Consulate General of India*. Her TEDx Talk, [Hindered Help](#), illuminates the barriers that prevent Black women from securing crisis assistance during their IPV help seeking process and is part of the required curriculum at several universities, including the University of Michigan, the University of Central Florida, and Rutgers University. She has been a subject matter expert in the *New York Times* and the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and has written OpEd articles for *Newsday* and the *Huffington Post*.

A scholar-clinician, Dr. Waller has taught in academia for more than 15 years. A testament to her investment in the next generation of scholar activists was winning the **2020 GADE Award for Teaching in Social Work**. She is as a member of the Women's Council, a sub-committee of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) which accredits US schools of social work, and a member of the Research Capacity and Development Committee for the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR). She additionally serves on the Board of Trustees for the Long Island Children's Museum.

Dr. Waller is a NYS-licensed mental health counselor who earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work and a Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling from Adelphi University; as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, with a concentration in Legal Studies from Temple University.