International Rett Syndrome Foundation Expands Executive Team to Meet the Moment for the Rett Community

Dominique Pichard, M.D., returns as Chief Science Officer, and Staci Almager joins as Chief Development Officer.

IRSF Logo

CINCINNATI, OH, UNITED STATES, June 11, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The International Rett Syndrome Foundation (IRSF) today announced two pivotal additions to its executive team, reinforcing the organization's leadership at a critical time of growth and opportunity. Dominique Pichard, M.D., will return to IRSF as Chief Science Officer (CSO), and Staci Almager has been appointed Chief Development Officer (CDO). Together, they bring a powerful blend of scientific insight, lived experience, and development expertise to propel IRSF's dual mission forward.

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>
> *Dominique Pichard, MD*

"These two exceptional leaders are joining IRSF at a transformative time," said Laura Hameed, Chief Executive Officer of IRSF. "Dominique is a proven scientific strategist with deep knowledge of rare disease, gene therapy, and translational science, and she brings a multi-faceted scientific and medical perspective while also being the mom of a child with Rett syndrome. Staci is a visionary development leader whose track record of building strong partnerships and growing sustainable, diversified revenue is exactly what we need to fuel our momentum and increase our impact. Their experience and passion make them an incredible fit for our mission and our community."

Dr. Pichard previously served as IRSF's CSO, setting the organization's three-pillar scientific strategy and overseeing foundational initiatives like the Center of Excellence network and the

Rett Syndrome Registry. She rejoins IRSF after serving in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as the Director of the Division of Rare Diseases Research Innovation at the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), where she helped shape national rare disease strategies and fostered collaborative programs to advance treatments, including gene therapy and early-phase clinical trials. Accelerating treatment options across the entire landscape will be critical for Rett syndrome, and Dr. Pichard's experience comes at a critical moment.


Dominique Pichard, MD

"This is more than a professional return, it's a personal homecoming," said Dr. Pichard. "As the mother of an individual with Rett syndrome, I carry this mission in my heart. I'm honored to rejoin this community at such a critical juncture and to help steer the science that will bring meaningful change to families like mine."

David Pass, Chair of the IRSF Board of Directors, added, "Dominique's return signals a major investment by IRSF in the future of Rett research. Her rare combination of scientific acumen, clinical development expertise, and lived experience positions IRSF to lead boldly across both research and family support, just as our mission demands."


Staci Almager

Staci Almager brings more than two decades of leadership in nonprofit development, most recently serving as CEO of Hill Country Family Services, where she led a significant organizational transformation and expanded services to meet growing community needs. Her career includes roles at Transplants for Children, The First Tee, and San Antonio Sports, where she cultivated high-level donor relationships, drove sustainable growth, and built impactful partnerships.

"I've seen firsthand how powerful community support can be for families navigating the challenges of a rare disease," said Almager. "IRSF's work is deeply meaningful to me, and I'm honored to help grow the resources that will accelerate research and provide empowering support to the families we serve."

With these appointments, IRSF strengthens its foundation and focus at a critical time for the Rett community. As the organization looks ahead to its next phase of strategic growth, the expertise and leadership of Dr. Pichard and Ms. Almager will help ensure IRSF continues to drive progress on every front.

Almager will officially begin her tenure on June 16, 2025, with Pichard starting in early July.

For more information about IRSF and its mission to accelerate research and empower families living with Rett syndrome, visit rettsyndrome.org.

About Rett Syndrome
Rett syndrome is a rare genetic neurological disorder that occurs most often in girls (1 in 10,000 births), more rarely in boys, and leads to severe impairments, affecting nearly every aspect of life. It is usually recognized in children between 6 and 18 months old as they begin to miss developmental milestones or lose abilities they have gained, including their ability to speak, walk, eat, and even breathe. The hallmark of Rett syndrome is near-constant repetitive hand movements while awake, and individuals with Rett may experience seizures, scoliosis, breathing issues, GI issues, and more. Rett syndrome is not a degenerative disorder; individuals can live to middle age or beyond.

About International Rett Syndrome Foundation (IRSF)
As the leading Rett syndrome research and advocacy organization, the International Rett Syndrome Foundation (IRSF) builds upon its 40-year commitment to breakthrough discoveries and life-changing advancements in research toward a cure while supporting families affected by Rett syndrome. Through its legacy foundation pioneers, IRSF has invested over $60M in research leading to identifying Rett syndrome's cause, demonstrating Rett syndrome is reversible in mice, and supporting the clinical trials that led to the first-ever FDA-approved treatment. IRSF fights for families living with Rett syndrome and a world without it. Learn more at rettsyndrome.org.

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