Megan Holmes joined the faculty at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences as an Assistant Professor in July of 2012. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from San Diego State University and her Masters and PhD in Social Welfare from University of California Los Angeles. Using her clinical experience with families from domestic violence households to set the foundation for her research, the overarching goal of her work is to contribute to the optimal development of children who have been exposed to family violence (i.e., child maltreatment; intimate partner violence IPV, also known as domestic violence) by identifying risk and protective factors that will be translated into interventions. To that end, her research contributes to child welfare knowledge and has three distinct areas of focus that merge to inform interventions in reducing the negative consequences of IPV exposure: (1) identifying sensitive or critical developmental periods when family violence has a significant effect on children’s behavioral and mental health outcomes; (2) focus on optimal child development by examining protective factors (e.g., child well-being, maternal warmth or responsiveness) in the context of other risk factors (e.g., co-occurrence of IPV exposure and child maltreatment, cumulative risk or context of violence exposure); and (3) identifying specific dimensions of sibling relationships that may ameliorate poor future behavioral and mental health outcomes for children exposed to family violence. Merging these three areas of research, Dr. Holmes’s goal is to build a research program that supports the development of a sibling-focused intervention for children exposed to family violence.

Dr. Holmes has been the Principal Investigator on two federal grants, one foundation grant and one internal grant that has allowed her to move this research agenda forward. The Protective Factors Study, funded by Administration of Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF), Children’s Bureau (CB), examined the effect of protective factors at the individual, relationship, and family level on prosocial and academic outcomes of children who experienced child maltreatment during the preschool to kindergarten transition. This research established that over 40% of maltreated children have resilient development of prosocial skills and academic functioning over time, and that protective factors significantly contributed to these resilient outcomes despite experiencing child maltreatment.
Funded by the HealthPath Foundation of Ohio is a study that examines the effect of IPV on Ohio’s children. This study resulted in making recommendations for policies, system changes, programming, funding streams, and other strategies at the state, county, and local levels to help Ohio better serve IPV-exposed children (http://www.healthpathohio.org/dvimpact). Funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) is an R03 grant that examines the relations between child maltreatment (i.e., neglect, physical abuse, and psychological abuse), sibling structural factors (i.e., sibship size/number of siblings, birth order, gender constellation), maternal warmth, and social-emotional outcomes of IPV-exposed children (called the Family Violence Study). The Sibling Pilot Study, funded by an internal research and training grant through the Mandel School, focuses on gaining new understandings about how sibling relationships may be a possible protective factor in preventing or ameliorating the development of children’s aggression, behavior and mental health. This research also explores the physiological responses to IPV exposure.

Particular areas of focus for Dr. Holmes include:
- Intimate partner violence exposure
- Child maltreatment
- Sibling relationships and maternal parenting
- Early childhood development

At the Mandel School, Dr. Holmes teaches Direct Practice Foundation Methods and Skills and Theory and Practice Approaches in Direct Practice Social Work in the master’s degree program. To teach these courses, she uses interactive technology and active learning strategies aimed at promoting student engagement through in-class dynamic activities and learning experiences. She also teaches the Job Seekers Seminar in the doctoral program, which prepares students for a successful academic job search.

Dr. Holmes is passionate about her ongoing work with the Mandel School doctoral and master’s students. She provides multiple training opportunities to learn essential research and scholarship skills to facilitate the development of becoming a productive independent scholar. For example, under the mentorship of Dr. Holmes, students obtain authorship on publications; learn the process of grant writing; present research at national conferences; and develop their own clear independent research and scholarship plan. Her federal and foundation grants provide funded research opportunities to her students. She also welcomes the opportunity for doctoral students to participate in a teaching mentorship for her current courses.