



Act Early Ambassadors 2022-2023

Alabama



Tish MacInnis **Alabama Partnership for Children**

Tish MacInnis earned a BS Education degree from the University of South Alabama. Tish is the Alabama Strengthening Families Coordinator. She is a certified trainer by the National Alliance for the Children's Trust Fund and provides statewide for the curriculum of the Protective Factors of the Strengthening Families™ Initiative and Zero to Three's "The Growing Brain". She also manages the distribution of the Smart Start Parenting Kit. This kit provided across the state to parents of newborns, resources from local, state, and national partners. Tish is also the Alabama

Ambassador of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outreach program for Learn the Signs. Act Early. that aims to improve early identification of children with autism and other developmental disabilities so children and families can get the services and support they need. Collaboration with many state departments, agencies and programs are strong in the work she does. To name a few: AL Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, Help Me Grow Alabama, Early Intervention, Autism Society of Alabama, AL Department of Early Childhood Education, Home Visitation, DHR Kids N Kin, Head Start, Learn the Signs. Act Early. and local Children Policy Councils. Passionate about the work of strengthening families in Alabama, has allowed her opportunities to share the progress in Alabama at local, state, and national platforms. Presentations at Help Me Grow National Forums, National Family and Community Engagement Conference, Alabama Early Intervention and Toddler Conference, Alabama First Class Pre K Conference and Alabama Head Start Association.

Alaska



Carmen Wenger **All Alaska Pediatric Partnership, Help Me Grow Alaska**

Carmen Wenger is the program director for Help Me Grow Alaska, a program of the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership. Help Me Grow is a national systems model aimed at helping children and families connect with the services they need with a specific emphasis on early detection and intervention for developmental delays. She holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Earth Science from Dartmouth College and a Master of Public Health degree in International Health and Development from Tulane University. She has worked in public health and community development in the United States, Latin America and southern Africa. Her work has centered around social justice causes, primarily focused on access to appropriate health services and other basic human rights. Carmen's prior work with children and families include being an Orphan and Vulnerable Child Advisor at Child Welfare South Africa, serving as both the Immunization Information System manager and deputy program manager for the State of Alaska's Immunization Program and the interim director of operations for the Joy Greisen Jewish Education Center where she worked with children and their families ages three months to fifteen years. Carmen is trained in family navigation, Strengthening Families, and USAID/PEPFAR Life Skills education.

Arizona



Megan Wills **Easterseals Blake Foundation**

Megan Wills has been with the Easterseals Blake Foundation for 18 years, dedicated to shaping the agency's early childhood intervention and education services—including children with special needs—throughout Southern Arizona. Beginning initially at the direct service level and later in a supervisory/administrative level, she has had the opportunity to gain insight in this field from both perspectives. In her current position as Director of Children and Family Services she spearheads several programs emphasizing early development monitoring and assessment including Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, Early Head Start/Head Start, Neonatal Intensive Care Program and Early Learning Childcare Centers. In this capacity, as well as serving as Learn the Signs. Act Early (LTSAE) Deputy Ambassador for Arizona, she is intimately familiar with working with Head Start and Early Head Start, regional agencies such as WIC, early childhood state agencies, pediatric clinics and home visitation programs on a state-wide basis. She has also served as United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona's Family Support Alliance



Community Chairperson comprised of community leaders. She believes that a collective multi-level approach strengthens family and community through engagement at all stakeholder levels.

Arkansas



Amanda Fender **University of Arkansas for Medical** **Sciences**

Amanda Fender, M.S. CMHC for over twenty years has dedicated a good portion of her life helping and supporting children and their families throughout the state of Arkansas. First by, appreciating others for who they are and able to become by providing empathy, empowerment, and tools that meet their needs. Mrs. Fender started as a preschool teacher for the Arkansas Better Chance Program where she developed a lifelong passion in helping young children. As Mental Health Professional working with children and their families in several school districts throughout central Arkansas and rural areas. Now as a Program Coordinator/ Family Navigator for the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences James L. Dennis Development Center. She also is a stakeholder with the Title V program for Children with Chronic Healthcare Conditions. Mrs. Fender holds an AA in Early Childhood Education, Undergraduate degree in Psychology from Central Baptist College, and a Master of Science degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from John Brown University. Mrs. Fender takes great pride in uplifting and helping others to achieve their goals that are being sought after by individuals and within the family unit. She continues to strive to find new ways to improve the lives of others through her compassion, especially children with disabilities.

California



Patty Moore **Help Me Grow Santa Barbara**

Patty Moore is the director of Help Me Grow Santa Barbara County after serving for 30 years as manager of Children, Family & Advocacy Services at Alpha Resource Center. She began her journey in early intervention and family support after the birth of her third son who was born with Down syndrome and complex health needs. Patty has become a recognized leader in mentoring families in developing skills in informed decision-making; building parent-professional partnerships; individual and systems advocacy. Her current affiliations include consultant to the development of Alpha's Family Empowerment Center, executive council member of Family Voices of CA, former chair and legislative liaison to the Family Resource Centers Network of CA, community representative to the CA State Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Intervention, member of Cen Cal Health Whole Child Model Family Advisory Council, former Commissioner First 5 Santa Barbara County, and former co-chair of the USCUCEDD Advisory Council. She was actively involved in the planning and development of California's Early Start Program. Patty enjoys developing and training on a variety of topics including Family Voices of CA Parent Leadership, National Standards of Family Strengthening and Support, Communicating in Special Education, Turning Three: A transition from Early Start, Transition to Adulthood, and Future Planning. Patty received her certification in mediation in 2014 and currently serves as an IEP facilitator in Alternative Dispute Resolution with the Santa Barbara County Special Education Local Plan Area.

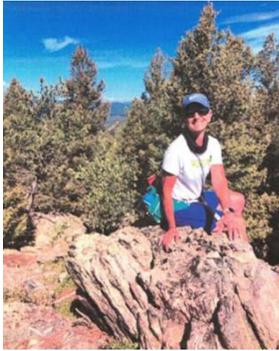
California



Michele Rogers **Early Learning Institute**

Michele Rogers, Ph.D. is the Executive Director and Co-founder of the Early Learning Institute. She earned her PhD in psychology with an emphasis in early childhood mental health/neurobiology from the University of Colorado, Denver. Michele worked for several years on Sonoma County's Early Childhood Mental Health task force, focusing primarily on creating a system of care for children 0-5 that includes social-emotional supports. Michele is a certified childbirth educator and lactation specialist; serves on the public policy committee of the Infant Development Association and is a First 5 Sonoma Commissioner. In celebration of all these efforts, Michele was honored as the 2014 Sonoma County Champion for Children. Michele is married with three grown children and 4 sweet grandchildren.

Colorado



Eileen Auer Bennett **Colorado Assuring Better Child Health & Development**

Eileen Auer Bennett has been the Executive Director of Assuring Better Child Health & Development (ABCD) for 16 years. Her passion for early identification of developmental delay, equitable access to developmental supports, and family engagement has led her to identify opportunities to expand ABCD's advocacy for young children at the local, state, and national levels. Before launching ABCD in Colorado, Eileen provided early intervention service coordination, training and technical assistance for 10 years at both the state and local levels. Eileen's experience as a bereaved mom to a daughter with special health care needs, has led her on a journey to being trained as a Children's Hospital Colorado (CHCO), parent mentor. She provides support to other parents who have recently lost a child. Eileen also is working with the CHCO bereavement team to understand the immediate and long-term impact of legacy building for families when providing grief and bereavement support.

Connecticut



Bethanne Vergean **University of Connecticut UCEDD**

Bethanne Vergean provides technical assistance and training for Connecticut's Early Childhood system. Her work over the past 20 years has been centered on improving developmental monitoring in Connecticut. Through her dedicated advocacy, she has developed strong networking systems throughout the state to bring professionals together to create a universal system for developmental monitoring, screening, and early identification of developmental disabilities for young children. Bethanne is working with local community colleges updating their Early Childhood course syllabi to improve the quality of existing Associate Degree programs that enhances the identification of developmental concerns for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. She has diverse professional and personal experiences, which have fostered her passion in all areas of child development and family engagement. Bethanne has been the Learn the Signs Act Early (LTSAE) Ambassador for the past three years; she is a CDC Mental Health Champion and CT Help Me Grow Advisory Co-Chairperson. Bethanne graduated from Quinnipiac University with majors in Healthcare Management and Public Health. She also attended St. Joseph University majoring in Early Childhood Special Education.

District of Columbia



Yetta Myrick DC Autism Parents, Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders at Children’s National

Yetta Myrick is the mother of a young adult son with an autism spectrum disorder and Intellectual Disability diagnosis. She is the Founder and President of DC Autism Parents (DCAP), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the District of Columbia (DC). Ms. Myrick has served as the CDC Act Early Ambassador to DC since 2016 and is currently leading the DC Act Early COVID-19 Response Team. She leads the DC Autism Collaborative’s Developmental Monitoring, Screening and Evaluation Subgroup and serves as the Parent Educator/Advocate on the ECHO Autism HUB Team at Children’s National Hospital. Ms. Myrick co-leads the “Family Voices United to End Racism Against CYSHCN and Families” Project and the stakeholder collaborative for the “Building Capacity in the African American ASD Community for Patient-Centered Outcomes Research” funded through the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Award. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication Studies from The Catholic University of America. Ms. Myrick was the Community Outreach Coordinator at the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders at Children’s National from 2016-2020 and a Studio Technician at C-SPAN from 2005-2016. In 2021, she was appointed to the Interagency Autism Coordinating committee by Secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra, J.D. Additionally, Ms. Myrick is a member of DC Developmental Disabilities Council and the Got Transition National Family Health Care Transition Advisory Group. She deeply believes that parents are equal partners in their child’s growth and care.

Delaware



Sarah Mallory **University of Delaware Center for** **Disabilities Studies**

Sarah Mallory, PhD is an Assistant Professor at the University of Delaware with a joint appointment with the School of Education and Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS). At CDS, Sarah directs the Health and Wellness Unit, where she serves as principal investigator on multiple public health initiatives focused on developmental monitoring and screening and evidence-based supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Of note, she oversees the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA) –a training and technical assistance center focused on improving the capacity of state systems to support individuals with autism. Sarah is a core faculty member in the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) program, and a special education faculty member in the School of Education. Sarah serves on multiple statewide committees, including the HB202 Core Implementation Team, which is overseeing the implementation of a developmental screening bill in the state. Sarah mentors and teaches graduate students enrolled in the early childhood and elementary special education teacher preparation programs and has expertise in topics related to evidence-based practices for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. Before joining the University of Delaware, Sarah was the director of Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs at the University of Maryland. She received her Ph.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University. Before entering academia, Sarah was a special education teacher with experience working with young children with autism and their families in public school and home-based settings.

Florida



Christina Smith **Help Me Grow Florida**

Christina Smith, M. Ed is a mother of two, one with autism spectrum disorder and the other with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Her passion, combined with her family's own personal journey navigating neurodiversity, is what drives her professional responsibility to all children. Ms. Smith is an early interventionist with over ten years' experience within the early education classrooms. For the past few years, she has been specializing in individualized behavior interventions to integrate students into preschool classrooms and provide quality educational opportunities. After completing her M. Ed from the University of North Florida with a concentration in Early Childhood Education, she is currently completing her postgraduate certificate to become a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst. In her own community she is an advocate for children, promoting early screening and assessment to provide individualized services for children in schools and the home setting. She is a practitioner utilizing the Program Wide Positive Behavior Support Pyramid Model. As an early interventionist she works hand in hand with organizations such as Early Steps, Child Find, Children's Board of Hillsborough County, as well as countless others whose primary goal is to further early childhood education for every child. She has helped create and implement several workshops and parent education programs for monitorization and further support in the home. Her "Transition to Kindergarten" event has assisted parents in learning about appropriate developmental practices and choices in furthering education to meet each child's specific needs.

Florida



Liz Randall **Help Me grow Florida**

Liz Randall is the assistant director of Help Me Grow Florida (HMGF). In this role, she collaborates with community partners, service agencies, and stakeholders and conducts data analysis and research on a statewide scale. As the co-lead for Florida's Act Early/COVID-19 Response Teams Grant, she works regularly with the statewide HMGF affiliates and other early childhood programs to increase awareness of the importance of developmental milestones, surveillance, and screening. Liz has a master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education with a concentration on infants and toddlers. She has extensive experience working hands-on with children and families from a variety of cultures through her work with the Virginia Infant and Toddler Connection as an early intervention service coordinator. Liz enjoys collaborating and forming partnerships with other early childhood professionals to advocate for the needs of young children and families.

Georgia



Bridget Ratajczak **Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning**

Bridget Ratajczak has an M.A. in early childhood special education from the University of Georgia. She has over 30 years of experience in early childhood education and special education and has held various roles including: an instructor at the University of Georgia's Birth through Kindergarten teacher preparation program, an early intervention specialist with the

Babies Can't Wait, and a preschool special-education teacher in Athens, Georgia. Her areas of expertise include early identification of developmental delays, autism, and positive behavior supports and interventions for young children. In her current role as the Child and Family Development Supervisor at Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning, Bridget supports early childhood professionals in Georgia on developmental monitoring, child development and family engagement. She serves on a variety of committees and state-wide collaborative efforts geared at increasing developmental monitoring and positive outcomes for Georgia's children. In the past two years, Bridget has served as the Act Early Georgia Ambassador, implementing several initiatives to inform and train early childhood professionals about developmental monitoring through promotion of the Watch Me! online training modules and Learn the Signs. Act Early resources. She has successfully collaborated with multiple partners to provide training in a variety of child-serving systems, including foster care, home visiting, Early and Head Start programs, and other early childhood education programs. She has also served as a co-lead on the Act Early Georgia team.

Guam



Elaine Eclavea **Guam Early Learning Council**

Elaine Eclavea is a native of Guam and has over 30 years of experience in working with parents and professionals to improve the outcomes of young children with disabilities and their families in Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Eclavea is the Guam's Early Learning Council (GELC) Chairperson since the initial establishment in 2008 and is the Early Childhood Consultant for the University of Guam (UOG) Center for Excellence in Developmental

Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (Guam CEDDERS) and the Department of Public Health and Social Services –Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five. She has extensive leadership experience in the development, implementation, and administration of early childhood projects and continues to provide training and technical assistance to improve, support, and strengthen coordination and collaboration among public and private



agencies and organizations serving young children and their families. Eclavea earned a Master's in Education and a Bachelor of Arts in Special Education from UOG. Eclavea served as Guam's Act Early Ambassador from 2019 to 2022 and was the LTSAE Consultant for Guam CEDDERS - LTSAE Grant from 2016-2018. She was responsible for coordinating, supporting, and conducting LTSAE training and parent-interactive activities in villages to meet the objectives of the Project. In 2015, Eclavea was selected to participate as a BUILD Equity Leaders Action Network (ELAN) Fellow in efforts to promote early childhood systems work to identify and address root causes of disparities and support remedies to address them.

Hawaii



Jeffrey Okamoto **American Academy of Pediatrics,** **Hawaii Chapter**

Dr. Jeffrey Okamoto is a Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children, and faculty in the Department of Pediatrics at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Dr. Okamoto obtained his MD degree at JABSOM. His residency in Pediatrics was at Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles and his Fellowship in Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. He obtained a certificate from the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disorders (LEND) program at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. He was previously medical director and acting administrator for the Developmental Disabilities Division, Department of Health, State of Hawaii. He was responsible for the health and safety of over 2000 clients with developmental disabilities, including those with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability. He has several teaching awards from the medical school. He also received the "Outstanding Community Contribution to Persons with Disabilities" award from the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawaii in 2006. From 2010 to 2011, he was a Kennedy Foundation Public Policy Fellow in Washington DC. He was placed with Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland) in her Subcommittee for Children and Families within the Committee for Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. In 2018 he was recognized as Professional of the Year by the Special Parent Information Network in appreciation of his outstanding service to families of children with disabilities. In 2022 he became president of the Hawaii Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Idaho



Melissa Crist **University of Idaho**

Melissa Crist is the Director of Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance at the University of Idaho's Center on Disabilities and Human Development (CDHD). In this role, Melissa directs the CDHD's early childhood projects that lead both quality improvement and professional development programs in the state of Idaho. This work includes administering the state quality rating and improvement system, professional development system and registry, childcare resource and referral system, childcare health consulting program, childcare subsidy and licensing support services, and the Act Early Idaho state team. Melissa has worked in the fields of early childhood education and early intervention for the last twenty years. Melissa is an active member of national and state organizations, including the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). She is a current DEC Recommended Practices Ambassador, promoting improved outcomes for young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families through implementation of the DEC Recommended Practices. She presents locally and nationally on topics related to early childhood inclusion, quality improvement, and early identification.

Illinois



Cari Roestel **Pediatric Developmental Center at** **Advocate Children's Hospital**

Cari (Caroline) Roestel, RN, is a parent of a child with autism and is dedicated to lowering the age of identification, intervention, and support for young children with developmental delays. After her son's autism diagnosis at the age of six, Ms. Roestel decided to pursue a nursing degree and focus her career on early identification and intervention efforts for children with developmental differences. Ms. Roestel is now the nurse care manager for the Pediatric Developmental Center at Advocate Children's Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, the largest developmental pediatric practice in the state. She works with families every day to manage their child's medical needs by coordinating care with a variety of providers and agencies. Ms. Roestel is the program coordinator for Advocate Children's Hospital's ECHO (Extension of Community Health Outcomes) Autism programs, which provide mentoring supports and educates primary care and early intervention providers to better recognize developmental red flags and provide appropriate follow up measures and enhanced care to pediatric patients with developmental delays. Ms. Roestel has proudly served as a *Learn the Signs Act Early* Ambassador for the state of Illinois since 2020 and co-chairs the Act Early Sub-Committee of the State of Illinois Autism Task Force.



Before changing careers, Ms. Roestel worked in project management and marketing at MTV Networks and NBC Universal's Telemundo Network. Ms. Roestel graduated from Wellesley College with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations with a focus on health and economic policy. She completed her Master of Nursing Science at Rush University.

Illinois



Jean Davis

Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD)

Jean Davis is the Health Policy Coordinator in the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD). The agency leads the state's initiatives to create an integrated system of quality, early learning, and development programs to help give all Illinois children a strong educational foundation before they begin kindergarten. In her work with GOECD, Jean informs policymaking to strengthen collaboration and coordination between early care and education and health. Her responsibilities include facilitating an interagency early childhood programming team focused on responding to COVID-19 and working on projects related to infant and early childhood mental health, data and needs assessments on infants and toddlers, and development of universal newborn supports. Jean staffs the Health and Home Visiting Committee of the Early Learning Council and participates on a cross agency technical assistance team to align Medicaid and early childhood systems. Currently, she is working on projects under the Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five federal grant. Prior to joining GOECD, Jean worked for over two decades at the American Academy of Pediatrics, holding positions in policy development, state advocacy, and community development. Her areas of focus included pediatric practice, health care financing, social determinants of health, health equity, community pediatrics and development, and pediatric residency training. Jean received her Bachelor's in Psychology from the University of Michigan and a Master's in Public Policy from Georgetown University.

Indiana



Stephan Viehweg Indiana University School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics

Stephan Viehweg, LCSW, ACSW, IECMH-E®, CYC-P has been the CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early. Ambassador to Indiana since 2013. He is the

Associate Director of the Indiana LEND, Division of Developmental Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, IU School of Medicine, the Associate Director of the IUPUI Center for Translating Research Into Practice, and Adjunct Professor in the IU School of Social Work. He has participated in a variety of statewide systems projects to enhance services to very young children. He is founding chair of Infancy Onward (Indiana's association for infant mental health) and founding president of Family Voices Indiana, now Indiana Family to Family where he serves as Secretary to the Board. He is Treasurer of Mental Health America of Indiana, a Governor appointee to the Indiana Behavioral Health and Human Services Licensing Board and serves on the Nominating Committee of the Association of Social Work Boards. He has led efforts to support Early Head Start, Head Start and early care/education programs to integrate use of LTSAE into their programs. His clinical work focuses on infant and early childhood mental health supporting infants/toddlers and their families to address concerns with social/emotional development and relationship. He is co-author of Tackling the Tough Stuff: A Home Visitor's Guide to Supporting Families at Risk.

Iowa



Rachell Swanson-Holm Regional Autism Assistance Program

Rachell Swanson-Holm works with the Iowa Regional Autism Assistance Program (RAP) administered by Child Health Specialty Clinics (CHSC) at the University of Iowa. Rachell supports the Family Navigator (FN) Network and other team members located in the 14 CHSC statewide Regional Centers. She also facilitates the quarterly RAP

Family Advisory meetings. CHSC FN's support families and connect them with services for their child with Developmental Disabilities (DD) including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Rachell has an extensive background in family-to-family support and family leadership roles that includes working with numerous stakeholder groups across Iowa to improve the system of care for children with special health care needs, including ASD and their families. Rachell is looking forward to her continued role as an Act Early Ambassador and is especially committed to collaboration with parents, professionals,



and programs that serve young children, state agencies, and campaign partners to improve policy and programs related to early identification.

Kansas



Peggy Kemp **University of Kansas Center on** **Developmental Disabilities**

Dr. Peggy Kemp serves as the Kansas Ambassador under the University of Kansas Center on Developmental Disabilities. Peggy is a returning ambassador. Peggy has worked in the field of early childhood since 1984. Early experience includes serving as a director and education specialist within the DoD childcare system. Since 1997, she has worked in the field of early intervention. Dr. Kemp has served in a variety of local and state leadership positions to include early childhood

special education teacher/early interventionist, local Part C coordinator, state Part C coordinator, and state Part C technical assistance provider. Dr. Kemp holds dual undergraduate degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education and a master's degree in Education with emphasis on Early Childhood Special Education. Areas of specialization include early intervention, infant mental health, families, and policy. Dr. Kemp currently serves as Executive Director for the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Kentucky



Christine Hausman **University of Kentucky Human** **Development Institute, Child Care** **Aware of Kentucky**

Christine Hausman works for the Human Development Institute (HDI) at the University of Kentucky as the Content Coordinator of Training at Child Care Aware (CCA), a statewide contract with the Kentucky Division of Child Care. Child Care Aware provides technical assistance, coaching, and education to childcare providers across the state. She is currently the lead trainer for early childhood professionals seeking their trainers' credential and utilizes those skills in promoting "Learn the Signs. Act Early" any chance she gets. She collaborates with 80+ Child Care Aware Coaches on the dissemination and integration of "Learn the Signs: Act Early" materials and resources with the goal of identifying children with developmental delays or disabilities as early as possible. As the Content Coordinator of Training, Christine embeds this information into existing and newly



developed training accessed by early care professionals from various agencies and organizations. Current LTSAE partnerships include Governor's Office of Early Childhood, Division of Child Care, Department for Health including Help Me Grow, First Steps (Early Intervention) and HANDS (Home Visitors). She recently served as the Lead Facilitator for Project Supporting Children of the OPIod Epidemic (SCOPE), participates on the Kentucky Strengthening Families Leadership Team and the Early Childhood Subcommittee of the KY Advisory Council on Autism. She is an Early Interventionist at heart having served as a Child Development Specialist, Case Manager and Early Childhood Special Educator in seven states across urban, rural and suburban settings.

Louisiana



Leslie Lopez **Louisiana State University**

Leslie Lopez, PhD, CCC-SLP, BCS-CL is a speech-language pathologist with expertise in communication health at the population level. She is an Assistant Professor in the department of communication disorders at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC) in New Orleans and holds specialty in Kentucky and worked closely with Kentucky's Early Intervention System at the Weisskopf Child Evaluation Center, an Interdisciplinary pediatric medical practice housed in the Department of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of Administration (HRSA) Health Tomorrows Partnership for Children Program (HTPCP) grant titled, "Increasing the Use of Routine Standardized, Parent-completed Developmental Screening Louisiana's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) training program at LSUHSC's Human Development Center. Dr. Lopez is committed to risk for, developmental delays, and to the exploration of health promotion activities and educational interventions that engage and empower providers and caregivers of young children with developmental concerns to understand and talk about children confidently. She is dedicated to improving early identification efforts statewide in Louisiana, and to promoting effective health behavior change at multiple levels.

Maine



Nancy Cronin Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

Nancy Cronin, MA is the Executive Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) and has had the honor to serve in that role in 2013. Prior roles included serving Maine as the Autism Spectrum Disorders System Change Initiative Coordinator and before that the Executive Director of the Autism Society of Maine. Through the decades, she has built strong working relationships with Maine medical professionals, early childhood professionals, community support system professionals, policy makers, advocates, and families. Nancy specializes in understanding how the systems that affect individuals with disabilities work and interact with each other. Her work at the local, state and national level focuses on the development and improvement of effective services and supports for persons with DD of all ages and their families. She truly embraces the mission of the MDDC to create a Maine in which all people are valued and respected. Nancy's recent focus has been to work with policy makers and all the stakeholders as they redesign the early childhood system in Maine with the goal of building an effective, quality system of care to provide support and services to children and their families.

Maryland



Kristen Paul The Parent's Place of Maryland

Kristen Paul has been working in the field of education for over 20 years as a teacher, education advisor and administrator in a variety of environments. Shae has experience in providing technical assistance, training, and professional development to parents and colleagues through both her former position as a local Family Support Liason for Birth to Five Programs and her current position as the Early Childhood Specialist at the Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD), the state's Parent Training and Information Center and Family-to-Family Health Information Center and the only cross-disability, stated family organization in Maryland. Kristen is responsible for implementation of the Baby LEADers training program, which was developed in collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education- for parents/guardians of children ages 0-5 with suspected or diagnosed disabilities. The curriculum includes an introduction to CDC resources, including the Milestone Tracker app and other LTSAE materials. Ms. Paul serves on multiple state-level teams, including the pyramid Model State Leadership



Team, State Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Team, State Early Childhood Advisory Council, and the State Special Education and serving as an aRPy Ambassador. Kristen lives in Southern Maryland with her husband and young son, the latter of whom has multiple disabilities and inspires the work she does every day to help families and young children receive the services and supports they need.

Massachusetts



Kate Barlow **American International College**

Kate Barlow, OTD is an Assistant Professor at American International College. She is also the current ambassador for the CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early. program for the state of Massachusetts. Dr. Barlow received her BS in Occupational Therapy from Boston University, and her MS and OTD from Virginia Commonwealth University. She has over 20 years of clinical experience that includes public school practice, early intervention, a pediatric hospital-based outpatient clinic and management. Dr. Barlow's area of clinical expertise is pediatric feeding and swallowing, which she has presented on at the OT state conferences of CT, MA, NH and VA, as well as guest lectured on the topic at Western New England University, Shenandoah University and Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Barlow's passion is in global outreach. She founded the International Interprofessional Mentorship Program that currently provides mentorship to over 100 therapists in developing countries in Africa and South America.

Michigan



Ashley Shayter **Autism Alliance of Michigan**

Dr. Ashley Shayter received her Master's degree in Behavior Analysis and Therapy and her Doctorate in Psychology from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. She is both a licensed and board-certified behavior analyst as well as a certified brain injury specialist with over a decade of experience providing behavioral health services to individuals with and without disabilities throughout their lifespan. She currently serves as the Policy Manager for Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM), where advocates for system change and utility of evidence-based practices within early identification, equitable service access, education, and related services for individuals with disabilities. Dr. Shayter also serves as president-elect for the Upper Peninsula Association of Behavior Analysis whose mission is to facilitate professional development, promote scientific inquiry and dissemination, advocate for policy and best practices, and support a



collaborative network within the region. She was previously appointed as a faculty member of Northern Michigan University's Department of Psychological Science where she provided instruction and supervision within the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and is the former Associate Director of the Behavior Education Assessment and Research (BEAR) Center. She also gained experience evaluating ABA service authorizations and helped develop accreditation standards and resources for high-quality ABA practice and training during her tenure with the Behavioral Health Centers of Excellence.

Minnesota



Jennifer Hall-Lande **University of Minnesota, Institute** **on Community Integration**

Jennifer Hall-Lande is a Developmental Psychologist, Researcher, and MN-LEND Faculty at University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration (ICI) and Masonic Institute on the Developing Brain (MIDB). Dr. Hall-Lande does clinical work in early child development, including early identification of developmental delays and

disabilities. She conducts community-based research in improving identification of early developmental delays and disabilities. She is Principal Investigator on the MN Autism Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network and has successfully led many "Learn the Signs. Act Early" projects. Dr. Hall-Lande also serves on numerous statewide leadership committees on early screening, early identification, and early services and supports. Dr. Hall-Lande's research and community outreach activities focus on early screening, assessment, and interventions for children at risk for developmental delays and disabilities. Dr. Hall-Lande has a specific interest in community outreach and training around developmental screening in universal access environments, such as childcare settings, home visiting, and Help Me Grow programs. Dr. Hall-Lande has a strong professional interest in outreach with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, with an end goal of increasing screening rates and reducing the age of identification diagnosis for all children. Additional areas of focus have been ASD prevalence rates and increasing access to early identification services and supports. She is well connected across statewide systems and has successfully led the Minnesota Act Early State Team. Through her MN Act Early work, she has built many strong and sustained professional partnerships and valuable community connections that have integrated LTSAE into numerous state systems and communities.



Mississippi



Leslie LaVergne University of Southern Mississippi, Institute for Disability Studies

Dr. Leslie LaVergne is the Assistant Director of the Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) housed at The University of Southern Mississippi. She completed a Master of Science in Art Therapy from Eastern Virginia Medical School in 2006 and PhD in Special

Education in 2012 from The University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. LaVergne has been with IDS since 2014 and has worked directly with families of young and school aged children with developmental disabilities and concerns to obtain quality health care and support services. Further, Dr. LaVergne provides consultation and advocacy support directly to families transitioning from early intervention to school-based services. Lastly, she chairs the Act Early State Team, an interdisciplinary team assembled in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to increase reach in promoting and sustaining the integration of family engaged developmental monitoring. As Mississippi's Ambassador to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Learn the Signs. Act Early. Program, Dr. LaVergne provides training and technical assistance to home visitors, community-based service providers, and healthcare professionals to increase awareness and education in early identification of children at-risk for developmental delays including autism. She serves on numerous advisory boards and committees dedicated to the advancement of quality services and supports for young and school-aged children.

Missouri



Alicia Curran **University of Missouri**

Alicia Brewer Curran is the proud mother of four beautiful children. Following her son's diagnosis of autism, Curran devoted her professional career to the autism field, where she has worked in education and healthcare. Alicia has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Drury University, a graduate certificate in Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders from the University of Missouri and is a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) graduate. Currently, she is the Director of Strategic

Initiatives for the University of Missouri ECHO Autism Communities (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes), Program Director for the Autism Care Network and has served as Missouri's Act Early Ambassador since 2016. Alicia spent nearly a decade as Faculty for the LEND program at the University of Missouri, where she led family-professional programs and mentored many family and sibling fellows. Alicia has a specific interest in family resilience, empowerment, and advocacy, as well as autism research. Her personal and professional goals are driven by her belief that everyone should have the opportunity to live their best life.

Nebraska



Kerry Miller **University of Nebraska Medical Center**

Kerry Miller, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and the Associate Director of the Department of Education and Child Development at UNMC, Munroe Meyer Institute. Dr. Miller is principal investigator of the program evaluations for several statewide early childhood programs and Part C Child Find initiatives. She is the Director of Nebraska's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) follow-up program, Developmental Tracking Infant Progress Statewide (TIPS), a collaborative program between Nebraska Departments of Education and Health and Human Services and

collaborating hospitals. Dr. Miller instructs a course focused on the needs of infants and toddlers who are medically fragile and have special health care needs and includes topics related to working with families, supporting child development, identification of children with developmental delays and disabilities, Division of Early Childhood Best Practices, and interdisciplinary teaming. Prior to her current role, Dr. Miller was



employed as a Part C Early Interventionist and maintains Nebraska teacher certification with an endorsement in early childhood inclusive practices. She has extensive experience in family-centered practices, typical and atypical child development, key-evidenced based practices utilized in early childhood special education programs, OSEP outcomes, and early childhood assessment practices. Dr. Miller has expertise in screening and evaluating infant and toddler development and determining the need to refer children for early intervention and special education evaluation during the early childhood years.

New Hampshire



Jennifer Pineo New Hampshire Family Voices

Jenn is a parent of two children with autism spectrum disorder. As someone with lived experience she understands the importance of developmental screening, and the challenges of navigating the complex system of care. She has worked to support all involved in the Developmental Screening process to put the child and family at the center of the process. She is a Program Coordinator at NH Family Voices, working on various projects and trainings within the organization. Prior to becoming the NH LTSAE Ambassador in 2020, she worked closely with the past NH LTSAE Ambassadors. Jenn is the Co-Lead on the Watch Me Grow Team, NH's Screening and Developmental Monitoring System. She is the NH Family Delegate to Title V for the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) and has completed the National Family Leadership Cohort Training. She has been involved in NH's block grant process, including the performance measure around developmental screening. She also represents Title V on the NH Council on Developmental Disabilities. Jenn has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration along with Minors in Marketing and Applied Group Leadership. Additionally, she completed the NH -ME Leadership in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Program (LEND) within the Family Discipline, the Parent Information Center Volunteer Education Advocacy Training, and is certified in the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support.

New Jersey



Deepa Srinivasavaradan Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey

Deepa Srinivasavaradan has served as the CDC's LTSAE Ambassador for New Jersey since 2014. She is also the Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices Ambassador and the State Parent Lead for NJ's Help Me Grow, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Prenatal-Three, and Home Visiting initiatives. She is the Director of Early Childhood Initiatives at SPAN Parent Advocacy Network and in that role, she leads several projects focused on improving early childhood and family engagement outcomes, including the NJ Inclusive Child Care Project. Deepa has received her Endorsement as an Infant Mental Health Specialist, is NJ's AMCHP Family Delegate, and an NJLEND Family Fellow. She is also the recipient of the 2020 Merle McPherson Award for her exemplary contributions to further family-professional collaborations within state Title V programs and AMCHP. With the Boggs Center, NJ's UCEDD, LEND, and LTSAE Team lead, she provided parent-led screening trainings to FQHCs (2013) and Head Start programs (2015) under NJ's Act Early State Systems Grants, and currently co-leads the LTSAE COVID Response Project. In collaboration with the state team, she has helped create several NJ-specific resources to address gaps in connecting to services when developmental concerns are identified in young children. Deepa is committed to helping families with children with special needs to navigate systems of care because of her own experiences as an immigrant mother. She continues to actively collaborate with partners and programs to promote awareness about LTSAE, early identification, and early intervention services, so all children and families have the resources they need.

New Mexico



Alyx Medlock University of New Mexico Early Childhood Services Center

Alyx Medlock is the New Mexico LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities) training director and a speech-language pathologist who has worked with interdisciplinary, family-centered teams for over 20 years. She is a life-long New Mexican with deep family and cultural ties to the state. She works clinically, providing interdisciplinary, developmental, and diagnostic evaluations for children under three. Her previous experiences, in directing an interdisciplinary clinic and running a private practice, fostered varied professional and personal connections throughout the state with a focus on early childhood and autism spectrum disorder. Alyx has also trained and consulted internationally in Tanzania and India.



New York



Liz Isakson **NYU Langone Hospital Long Island**

Dr. Isakson is the Executive Director of Docs for Tots. She is a pediatrician and public health practitioner with decades of experience with Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) and the New York Zero-to-Three Network (NYZTT). Her passion and support for early childhood systems integration (health, education, family) stems from her exposure to the short-and long-term human outcomes of an under-funded and misaligned system for families with young children. Dr. Isakson has multiple publications published across the systems of early care and education, health, and family economic security. She teaches advocacy to graduate level students at Mt. Sinai School of Public Health and is a sought-after speaker on issues of community and state systems to support healthy development in early childhood. As Executive Director of Docs for Tots since 2013, Dr. Isakson has been an active voice in the dissemination of critical knowledge in the field of early childhood at both the community and national academic levels. Dr. Isakson trained in General Pediatrics at Children's Hospital of New York where she served as Chief Resident and received her MD from University of Connecticut Medical School.

New York



Romina Barros **NYU Langone Hospital Long Island**

My name is Romina Barros and I am a Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician. Presently, I'm the Chief Division Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics at the NYU Langone Hospital Long Island, and I maintain a faculty appointment as Clinical Assistant Professor at NYU Long Island School of Medicine. I have been also serving as one of the CDC Learn the Sign. Act Early. Ambassador for New York State since 2019. Before becoming the Chief Division Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics at the NYU Langone Hospital Long Island, I served as the Medical Director of Trauma Services and the Under Five Program at Montefiore Medical Center and had a faculty appointment as an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Einstein College of Medicine. Before joining Montefiore Medical Center, I served as the Director of the Developmental-Behavioral Program and Director of Community Pediatrics and Advocacy Program at Brookdale Hospital Medical Center and held an appointment as Clinical Assistant Professor at New York Medical College. During my term at Brookdale I was awarded with two private funders and with the New York State OMH Grant to start a Healthy Steps Program which I implemented, oversaw and directed. I am Board Certified in Pediatrics as well as in Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics. I completed my pediatric



residency at Brookdale Hospital in 2004 and fellowship in Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics at Einstein/Children's Hospital at Montefiore in 2007. I obtained my medical degree from Universidad Maimonides, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

North Carolina



Rebecca Edmonson Pretzel North Carolina University

Becky is a psychologist and Associate Director of the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities at UNC-CH. Her career has been dedicated to goals clearly compatible with the Act Early campaign; clinical, research and training activities have focused on early identification, screening, assessment, and treatment of young children with I/DD, including ASD. As faculty on the NC LEND and UCEDD grants, her efforts have centered on partnering with and educating interdisciplinary graduate students, parents/care providers, early childhood and healthcare professionals on the early identification of young children with special health care needs. She has been an investigator on HRSA/MCH and AMCHP grants, has multiple state contracts, and is a leader on the NC Act Early State Team /Autism Alliance. Becky is married and has one son who is in college. She enjoys travelling, reading, and being outdoors. In addition, she is a devoted sports fan especially to Carolina basketball and Hurricanes ice hockey.

North Dakota



Hilory Liccini North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities, Minot State University

Hilory Liccini is the Associate Director for the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities and an Assistant Professor for Minot State University's Department of Special Education, where she teaches courses on Autism. She has done extensive work and trainings with medical professionals and early childcare providers on the early warning signs of Autism, as well as how to use the appropriate screening tools. She has been a contributor to the North Dakota state Autism Task Force, which has allowed her to build relationships and partnerships with key stakeholders in her state. Ms. Liccini is a current member of the North Dakota state Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) committee and works collaboratively with state agencies such as Children's Special Health Services, Department of Public Instruction, and Family Voices of North Dakota. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Nazareth College of Rochester in Communication Science Disorders and a master's degree in Education from the University of West



Florida. She is also a past Utah Regional LEND trainee and a graduate of the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental disabilities. Ms. Liccini has presented at numerous local, state, national, and international conferences on disabilities, with a focus on Early Childhood development and early intervention services and is trained on the Autism Diagnostic Observation Scale (ADOS-2).

Northern Mariana Islands



Chrislaine Manibusan FamilyToFamily Health Information Center

Chrislaine Manibusan is a Family Support Specialist for the Family To Family Health Information Center (F2F HIC), a division of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation in the Northern Mariana Islands. She represents three islands in the Commonwealth, which include Saipan, Rota and Tinian. The health information center is located on the island of Saipan; however, she conducts routine assistance to Rota and Tinian through telehealth correspondence and site visits. Prior to becoming a staff of the F2F HIC, Chrislaine was a Family Partnership Advocate for the CNMI Public School System. She has over a decade of experience as both a parent and prior staff of the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. As a mother of three, she continues to actively advocate for her two children who are on the autism spectrum. Her professional experience includes work as a special education teacher aide in Head Start classrooms, Head Start Family Partnership Advocate, Family Partnership Advocate for the H.O.M.E. Visiting Program, and her current role as a Family Support Specialist with the Family 2 Family Health Information Center. She has also been selected as the Parent Representative on the HSAH and R9HSA boards. These roles have helped to develop her skills in working with children and families with disabilities not only as a professional, but also in her personal life. She hopes to continue to foster strong relationships and partnerships with families to support family well-being, positive parent-child relationships, leadership skills, and advocacy for all people with disabilities.

Ohio



Steph Weber **Cincinnati Children's Hospital** **Medical Center**

Stephanie Weber, PsyD, MPH, is a clinical psychologist and public health professional who specializes in serving early childhood populations and conducting interdisciplinary training. Dr. Weber is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. She serves as the

Associate/Training Director for the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program that provides interdisciplinary training to future leaders in Maternal and Child Health and the early childhood coordinator and Training Director for the University of Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). Clinically, Dr. Weber works from a patient/family-centered care approach to build skills and quality of life for children with developmental disabilities, challenging behaviors, or effects of prenatal substance exposure. Dr. Weber has served as the CDC's Act Early Ambassador to Ohio through the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." program and leads the Act Early Ohio state team and initiatives to promote developmental monitoring and screening across state-wide systems, including healthcare and education. She is also a founding member of the Project SCOPE National Training Initiative focused on supporting children impacted by the opioid epidemic.

Oklahoma



Bonnie McBride **University of Oklahoma, Health** **Sciences Center**

Bonnie McBride, Ph.D., BCBA-D is an Associate Professor in the Department of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. In addition to her faculty position, she is a LEND core faculty in ASD, teaches ASD content in other graduate programs on campus and provides professional development to educators and other professionals throughout the state. In addition, she has served

as Oklahoma's LTSAE Ambassador since 2012 and co-led the Act Early COVID-19 Response Team as well as receiving on-going funding for The Early Access Program which has focused on raising awareness about the importance of developmental monitoring and screening for autism. Dr. McBride actively pursues new ways to improve early identification and intervention practices through research and service to the community. She serves on statewide committees that address improvement of early identification and intervention services for children with developmental disabilities including autism. As a result of her involvement with the Act Early Ambassador Program as Oklahoma's Ambassador, she has linked together several state efforts to improve early identification and referral to services.



Oregon



Sherri Alderman **Oregon Pediatric Society**

Sherri L. Alderman, MD, MPH, IMHM-E®, FAAP, is faculty at Portland State University and a board certified Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician with over 15 years of experience in clinical and policy work in infant mental health. She has infant mental health Endorsement® at the highest level (mentor) in both clinical and policy. Dr. Alderman is American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) appointed Council on Healthy Mental and Emotional Development Executive Committee member and Immediate Past Chair of the AAP Council on Early Childhood. She is an AAP Early Childhood Champion in Oregon, CDC Act Early Ambassador to Oregon, and received national distinction as the first National Help Me Grow Physician Champion. She is an appointee to the HRSA Secretary's Advisory Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality and serves on the Oregon state government advisory council to the Oregon Health Authority Behavioral Health Division. She is a Master Trainer with the statewide Oregon Center for Career Development in Childhood Care and Education (OCCD) and has conducted over 200 publications, lectures, trainings, webinars, and key note presentations. Dr. Alderman is Past President of the Oregon Infant Mental Health Association. She was principal investigator for the Nurturing Healthy Attachment project promoting secure attachment with incarcerated mothers and principal investigator on the Act Early Oregon COVID Parent Mentor Project focused on empowering migrant and seasonal farm-working communities. As faculty of the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, Dr. Alderman directed the development and operations of the New Mexico Developmental Screening Initiative across the state.

Pennsylvania



Ilecia Voughs **Pennsylvania Training and** **Technical Assistance Network**

I am Ilecia Voughs and I reside in Harrisburg, PA. I am a wife and mother of two (with one of the way)! I am a Licensed Social Worker and have worked in the field of education for the past 19 years in K-12 settings, Head Start Pre-K Counts Programming, served on a local school board, and currently serves on the board of a local early childhood program. I am a lifelong learner and advocate for the needs of children and families. I received my B.A. in

Psychology with a Minor in Education from Messiah College and received my master's in social work with a concentration in the Administration of Services to Children & Families from Temple University. I have also participated in advocacy efforts and legislative meetings for the Pre-K for PA Campaign. In 2018, I participated in the Office of Child Development & Early Learning's Policy Fellowship Program, I participated in the implementation of The Early Childhood Pathway Program in Pennsylvania which aimed to develop a pathway of credentialing for the early childhood workforce. I am currently a Family Support Consultant for the Office of Child Development and Early Learning's (OCDEL) Home Visiting & Family Support Program under the Bureau of Early Intervention & Family Support Programs. As a Family Support Consultant, I provide monitoring and technical assistance for Evidence-Based Home Visiting (EBHV) & Family Support programs funded through the federal Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Grant and state funding. I also serve(d) on various state-wide projects for children and families who receive Home Visiting & Early Intervention Services such as the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Advisory Committee, Plans of Safe Care, Equity Initiatives, Family Engagement & Early Relational Health Efforts, and Regional Health & Safety Committees. I also served as Pennsylvania's Act Early Ambassador for the 2021-2022 cohort, and I look forward to advancing the work of "Learn the Signs. Act Early" (LTSAE) in Pennsylvania's early childhood systems.



Puerto Rico



Nancy Nieves-Muñoz **Puerto Rico Department of Health**

Nancy Nieves-Munoz has a master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education and Early Intervention and an Advanced Degree in Administration and Supervision of Special Ed Programs from the University of Illinois. She worked with the NYU Quality Improvement Center for Disabilities providing training and technical assistance to EHS/HS staff in PR and VI regarding identification, eligibility and intervention for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities. She received the West Ed Infant and Toddler Caregiver Program Certification from Sonoma State University and a certification from the Center for the Social Emotional Foundation of Early Learning of the University of Vanderbilt. She worked with Sonoma State University as an EHS Special Quest Learning Coach promoting collaboration between the Early Intervention Program and EHS and was the Part C Early Intervention System Coordinator for the Caguas Region in PR. Since 2013, she works with the Children with Special Medical Needs Division of the PR Department of Health implementing a system for the early identification of children with ASD. Within this role, she promotes the EPSDT Guidelines. She recently participated in the development of the following guides for ASD: 1-Early Identification: Surveillance, Screening and Diagnosis of ASD; 2-Assessment and intervention planning for ASD; 3-Evidence based intervention for ASD. She has been an Act Early Ambassador for since 2019 and co-leads the Act Early/COVID-19 Project. She is coauthor and responsible for the distribution of the Passport to Health to the families of every newborn in PR which now includes all LTSAE developmental milestone checklists.

Rhode Island



Jennifer Sanchez Rhode Island College

Jennifer Sanchez has over 10 years of experience in the field of Early Intervention (EI). Mrs. Sanchez began her time in EI as a Service Coordinator and later in a supervisory position, she has had the opportunity to gain insight in this field from both perspectives. Currently, she works as a part of the EI Technical Assistance Team at the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at RI College, RI's UCEDD. As a part of this team, Jenn is responsible for researching, creating, and implementing professional development trainings for Early Intervention staff throughout the state of RI. Recently, she completed training in RI's state LEND program, incorporating her passion for supporting children with disabilities on another level. Her professional passions include early identification and intervention for young children with developmental delays and autism, as well as the deaf and hard of hearing community. Mrs. Sanchez participates in monthly Community of Practice meeting with the states EDHI program, focusing on working with community partners to best meet the needs of our deaf and hard of hearing population. Jenn enjoys traveling and hiking with her husband and four children.

South Carolina



Taylor Bagwell Help Me Grow South Carolina

Taylor is the developmental screening coordinator for Help Me Grow South Carolina. Help Me Grow is a national systems model that strives to support optimal healthy child development by helping families of young children connect with resources and information that will allow them to grow, develop, and thrive to reach their full potential. During her time with Help Me Grow, she has helped establish community developmental screening partnerships, presented child developmental information at trainings and conferences, and spearheaded efforts to improve the system HMG SC uses to track client information and referrals. Her daily work entails processing ASQs, relaying results and information about developmental milestones and activities, and coordinating connection to services if needed. Taylor holds a bachelor's and a Masters of Social Work from Winthrop University. The majority of Taylor's career has been working with children; this includes providing social work services in the school setting, particularly working with elementary-age children and also pregnant and parenting teens. Taylor has also worked within the Strengthening



Families program, which helps caregivers and children ages 6-11 learn skills that strengthen family bonds, improve communication, reduce stressors in the home, etc. Taylor also recently earned her Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health® (Infant Family Associate) through the South Carolina Infant Mental Health Association (SCIMHA.)

South Dakota



Lisa Sanderson **South Dakota Parent Connection**

Lisa has served as the CDC's Act Early Ambassador to South Dakota since March 2018. She is the Project Director for the statewide Family to Family Health Information Center at SD Parent Connection, also home to the state's Parent Training Information Center. Lisa has worked with systems and families across South Dakota for over 20 years, served two terms on the state's Part C Interagency Coordinating Council, and serves as the LEND Family Discipline Head for the state's UCED. Lisa has a Bachelor of Science degree, maintains licensure by the SD Board of Social Work Examiners, and was

a certified educator for many years. Lisa is a parent and grandparent of children with exceptional needs, has been a proponent of the Act Early campaign since program launch, and looks forward to working with program partners across South Dakota as the state's Act Early Ambassador.

Tennessee



Toni Whitaker **University of Tennessee Health** **Sciences Center**

Toni is a Professor of Pediatrics and Developmental Pediatrics, serving as the Developmental Pediatrics Division Chief in the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC), College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics and for Le Bonheur Children's Hospital. As Director of the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities

(LEND) program at UTHSC, she is proud to work primarily in interdisciplinary settings and am involved in clinical, academic, research, and community service pursuits for a variety of neurodevelopmental disabilities. Toni has clinical expertise in working with children of all ages and their families, with special interests in infants and young children as well as autism spectrum disorders and early childhood developmental surveillance (monitoring) and screening. She maintains an active role in educating physicians, interdisciplinary health professions students, early childhood providers, educators, and community members. Toni previously served as the Tennessee Act Early Ambassador



and has served as co-chair for the statewide Act Early Autism Summit Team. As Medical Director of the Tennessee Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Screening Tools and Referral training (START) program, She leads efforts to provide training for healthcare and early childhood professionals across the state about developmental surveillance and screening. Toni directs the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disorders (LEND) program at UTHSC.

Texas



Julie DiGirolamo **Texas Department of State Health Services**

Julie started my role as the State Child Health Coordinator with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in January 2022. Her background is in clinical and program administration with experience in counseling children and teenagers to help improve their mental health. Additionally, she has experience in planning outreach strategies to engage medical professionals in educational opportunities related to supporting their patients with substance use disorders. Julie holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Salem State University and am pursuing my Master of Science in Health and Social Innovation at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. In her role as the State Child Health Coordinator, she serves as the statewide contact for child health knowledge and information. She performs advanced consultative services and technical assistance to DSHS staff, community organizations, professional groups, other state agencies, and the public. Julie can provide subject matter expertise on injury prevention, secondhand smoke exposure reduction, detection of developmental delays and disabilities, chronic disease prevention, nutrition and physical activity, child health disparities, and parent education and engagement.

Texas



Laura Kender **My Health My Resources of Tarrant County**

Laura Kender is the Chief of Child and Family Services for My Health My Resources (MHMR) of Tarrant County. In that role, Kender oversees the largest Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program in Texas and operates grant-funded initiatives and services, such as Healthy Steps, Family Connects, Help Me Grow, Mental Health Consultation, Youth Center, Child/Adolescent Family

Partnership, residential and outpatient substance use disorder facilities, Community Youth Development, Parent Cafés, Youth Cafés, and Strengthening Youth Through Empowerment. In 2020, Kender received the T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. Infant Mental Health Advocacy Award by First3Years and was named Outstanding Leader by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI). Kender is a certified Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) Practitioner and earned an Infant Mental Health Endorsement (IMH-E® IV) from First3Years. For 22 years, she served as an active member and past Chair of the Texas ECI Advisory Committee, a position appointed by the Governor. Kender holds a master's degree in Educational Administration with focuses on early childhood and special education. She resides in Arlington, Texas with her husband; they are blessed to enjoy 3 delightful grandchildren.

Utah



Janel Preston **Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice – Utah State University**

Janel Preston B.S. is a Program Coordinator at the Institute for Disability, Research, Policy, & Practice (IDRPP), Utah State University. Her area of expertise includes young children with ASD and their families, interdisciplinary diagnostic evaluation, direct treatment, clinical assessments, and evidence based therapeutic interventions. She is the lead person responsible for the scope and practice of the early intervention autism services (Up to 3). Her

responsibilities include training families, staff and working with the community for early identification of ASD. Ms. Preston is also involved in many statewide committees and partnerships that support and improve early childhood policy and early identification and screening of young children. Ms. Preston is a certified P.L.A.Y home consultant. Preston is currently and has been for the past 6 years, Utah's Act Early Ambassador and the Principal Investigator (PI) for the CDC Act Early Response to COVID-19 state initiative, Year 2. Ms. Preston was a lead project member on the child find campaign using the CDC LTSA materials. As part of this project, she established embedding ASD query questions and



“Learn the Signs. Act Early” materials into the early interventions’ intake procedure. This procedure has been adopted by the Part C Lead Agency resulting in the use of the ASD query questions statewide. She is dedicated to bringing the most current information on ASD to families.

Vermont



Janet Kilburn **Vermont Department of Health**

Janet is the Early Childhood Director for the Vermont Department of Health, Division of Maternal and Child Health. Janet has a Bachelor of Arts from Principia College and a Master of Social Work from the University of Vermont. Janet has worked with children and families in a clinical capacity in a wide variety of settings – including a community mental health center, a mood and anxiety disorder hospital outpatient clinic, and as a Title V Children with Special Health Needs Program medical social worker (working in the Health Department’s Child Development Clinic and on Part C Early Intervention teams). Since 2013, Janet has been an Ambassador for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” Program, a role which has led to partnership building across health, mental health, family support, and early education systems to improve early identification and timely diagnosis of developmental and behavioral concerns in young children. Janet is currently part of a cross-system state effort working on universal developmental promotion, developmental screening across domains, including screening for social conditions of health, and service linkage via Vermont’s Help Me Grow (HMG) system. She recently helped lead a Community of Practice initiated by the HMG National Center to diffuse an HMG Early Learning Integration innovation to other communities within the HMG and Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) networks, to expand the degree to which early care settings across the country have capacity to address the developmental needs of young children. Janet works to improve Vermont’s cultural competence in early screening and assessment and is active on Vermont’s Act Early State Team, Building Bright Futures Child Accountability Outcomes Council, and HMG Strategic Team. She is a sponsor for Vermont Northern Lights, a professional development and career center for early childhood professionals.



Virginia



Deana Buck **Virginia Commonwealth University**

With a master's degree in special education, Ms. McGuire Buck has worked in the field of early childhood development for 37 years. Through her work in early childhood systems in Virginia, she has established and maintained a strong cross-sector network of colleagues who administer early childhood systems, including early care and education, early intervention, and home visiting. Ms. Buck is currently serving her fifth term as the CDC's Act Early Ambassador to Virginia and has been involved with Virginia's Act Early Team since 2010. Ms. Buck retired in June 2020 from her full-time faculty position at the Partnership for People with Disabilities, Virginia's UCEDD at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she had worked since 1992 as a PI of early intervention and early childhood projects and the Training Director/Assistant Director of the UCEDD. She was a long-standing PI for statewide initiatives, including the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development for Virginia's Part C Early Intervention system and Virginia's Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative that were funded to improve services for young children with disabilities and their families. Ms. Buck has extensive experience in the design and provision of professional development, with a focus on use of distance technology including webinars, ECHO series, and online content development. For the past two years, she has served as an Early Childhood Consultant for the Partnership, continuing her work as the CDC's Act Early Ambassador, co-leading Virginia's COVID-19 Response project, and providing leadership for Virginia's Act Early Team. In addition, she represents the LTSAE serving on the project management team of Virginia's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant. She has expanded her work to include collaborative relationships with the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and, through a consultant role, has also supported the work of Virginia's Developmental Screening Initiative with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.

West Virginia



Jackie Newson **Office of Maternal Child and Family Health**

Ms. Newson has been with Office of Maternal Child and Family Health (OMCFH) for 25 years. She worked with the Family Planning Program for 14 years and transitioned to the Director of the West Virginia Home Visitation Program in 2010. The West Virginia Home Visitation Program supports Parents as Teachers, Healthy Families America, Early Head Start and Right from the Start models. She serves of several workgroups related to social emotional development and ACEs/Resiliency. She works closely with several substance use disorder workgroups striving to support families either seeking treatment or in recovery. She serves on the State's Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council along with being Parents as Teachers State Office chair and on the West Virginia Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association advisory board. Ms. Newson serves on the Governor's appointed Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) and co-chairs the ECAC Health Committee. The Statewide Help Me Grow (HMG) program is under the umbrella of the home visitation program and WV has been an affiliate of HMG since 2011.

Wisconsin



Kris Barnekow **University of Wisconsin**

Kris serves as associate professor in the Department of Occupational Science and Technology. While serving children and families as an occupational therapist in early intervention, she observed toddlers who did not receive services due to a lack of developmental monitoring, screening and evaluation. As an academician, she aspires to be a community-engaged scholar and serve the public through active collaboration with community partnerships. She has collaborated with local, state, regional and national partners in the areas of early intervention, early identification of autism and other developmental disorders, and health literacy. She has received funding from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and the CDC to conduct three studies that examined the barriers to early identification of developmental disabilities and autism. These studies revealed that while early identification practices occur, significant barriers exist. The findings suggest that providers report little knowledge of autism-specific screening instruments, decreased use of the CDC's Learn the Signs: Act Early Campaign (LTSAE), and decreased knowledge about communicating the results of a screening to families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This research has led Kris to serve on



Wisconsin's Act Early state team and continue outreach in Wisconsin about developmental monitoring and screening.

Wyoming



Peg Monteith **Wyoming Institute for Disabilities**

Peg Monteith has over forty years of educational experience including teaching both general and special education and serving in leadership roles at the local, state, and national level. She obtained her bachelor's degree from the University of Wyoming in special and elementary education; a master's degree in special education from the University of Northern Colorado; and a second master's in education leadership from the University of Wyoming. Served as a local director of special education and Title I in Platte County SD #1, before beginning work with the Wyoming Department of Education in 2003. While with the Department she served as Director of Title I and Federal Programs under NCLB and then as the State Director of Special Education. From 2006-2012 Peg served on the board of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDE) including serving as President of that organization 2011-2012. Peg began her work as the Assistant Commissioner for Exceptional Student Services for the Colorado Department of Education in February of 2012. Work at the local, state and federal level involved policy work, including developing regulations aligned with the IDEA for the states of WY and CO. Moved back to WY in order to serve as the Student Support Services Director and lastly as the Superintendent for Park County School District 6 in Cody, WY. Since retiring in July of 2021, Peg has worked as an educational consultant for the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (UAP for the University of Wyoming).