

## Act Early Ambassadors 2021-2022

### Alabama



#### **Tish MacInnis** **Alabama Partnership for Children**

Tish MacInnis is the Alabama Strengthening Families Coordinator. She is the state lead for the Strengthening Families™ program in Alabama and a certified Trainer for Strengthening Families™ by the National Alliance for Children's Trust Funds. Her work involves partnering with parents and key stakeholders to support a statewide framework to build protective factors and support families. This collaboration among systems also has resulted in the early identification of young children with developmental delays/disabilities, including autism, with timely and appropriate access to family-centered services. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from the University of South Alabama with a major in Therapeutic Recreation/Special Education.

### 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



### **Angela Scott** **Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics** **at the University of Arkansas for** **Medical Sciences**

Angela Scott MD, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pediatrics, Division of Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock. After completing an MD/PhD program with a doctorate in the Medical Humanities from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, she completed residency training in pediatrics at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. She completed fellowship training in developmental-behavioral pediatrics at UAMS in 2016 and stayed as faculty with a joint appointment in the Department of Medical Humanities and Bioethics. Her clinical work is focused on multidisciplinary diagnostic assessments for



autism spectrum disorder at the UAMS James L. Dennis Developmental Center. She serves as Medical Director of UAMS Kids First, an early intervention day treatment program serving young children with special needs at 11 sites across the state. She sits on the Arkansas Autism Legislative Task Force and serves on the Autism Node of the Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics Research Network (DBPNet). Much of her academic position is dedicated to clinical education. She directs the longitudinal clinical skills course for first year medical students and several senior electives in the UAMS College of Medicine. She is actively involved with interprofessional education at UAMS and workforce development efforts around the state through the Kids First program. She is the proud parent of a teenage son with autism spectrum disorder.

## 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 upon graduating with her Master's in Business Administration, spent 13 years with AT&T providing project management, technical assistance, and system and data analysis to large business customers.

Because of her passion of being a parent of a child with special health care needs, Eileen followed her dreams of working in the disability community and in 2002 became a service coordinator which allowed her to assist families with children eligible for early intervention services. Eileen also worked for the Colorado Department of Education as part of a training cadre which developed training curriculum for early intervention providers and parents. With her strong ties to the Denver community and knowledge of navigating through the medical system, Eileen was asked to lead Colorado's ABCD project in 2006.

## Connecticut



### **Bethanne Vergean** **University of Connecticut UCEDD**

Bethanne has been working in the field of early childhood for 15 years and has worked as a Disability and Behavioral Health Manager in center-based childcare (School Readiness), preschool (Head Start), and in collaborative preschool special education classrooms in the head start programs. Bethanne attended Quinnipiac University and Saint Joseph's University. She has also provided professional development and technical assistance to staff and directors through Connecticut. Her areas of professional development interest include inclusion, autism, social and emotional curriculum, and medically fragile children. Bethanne also worked as part of several community outreach and mentor coaching grants within early childhood programs. She currently provides training and technical assistance for early childhood programs.

## Delaware



### **Sarah Mallory** **University of Delaware**

Sarah Mallory, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Delaware with a joint appointment at the School of Education and Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS). She currently directs the Health and Wellness Unit at CDS, where she serves as principal investigator and project lead on multiple mental health, early childhood, and public health initiatives. Sarah is a special education faculty mentor in the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) program, and a faculty member at the School of Education. She mentors and teaches graduated 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. Sarah previously directed the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA) – a training and technical assistance center focused on evidence-based supports for individuals with autism - and serves as co-chair of the state’s Interagency Committee on Autism.

## District of Columbia



### **Yetta Myrick** **DC Autism Parents**

Yetta Myrick is the mother of a teenage son diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder and Intellectual Disability. She is the Founder and President of DC Autism Parents (DCAP), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the District of Columbia, where she oversees the daily operations and has created programs for children and youth diagnosed with autism and their families. Ms. Myrick has served as the CDC’s Act Early Ambassador to the District of Columbia since 2016 and is currently leading the DC Act Early COVID-19 Response Team Project. 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. 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 (CASD) at Children’s National from 2016-2020 and a Studio Technician at C-SPAN from 2005-2016. In 2019, she was appointed by DC Mayor Muriel Bowser to serve as a



member of the DC Developmental Disabilities Council. Additionally, Ms. Myrick is a member of Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee and the Got Transition® National Family Health Care Transition Advisory Group. She deeply believes that parental involvement is key to obtaining quality services for all children, and that an informed parent is an engaged parent.

## Florida



### **Alexandra Goldberg Help Me Grow Florida**

Alexandra Goldberg is the Statewide Director for Help Me Grow Florida at the Children's Forum. After completing her undergraduate degree at Florida State University in Family and Child Sciences, she went on to graduate with her master's degree in Early Childhood Education and is currently working on her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. With experience as an early childhood teacher and program director, Alexandra has firsthand experience working directly with young children and families with a variety of backgrounds. Her professional experience has fostered her passion for child development, specifically brain-based learning, and social-emotional development. As an active early childhood education and development advocate, Alexandra has presented at statewide early childhood conferences and is an active member of professional membership organizations. Through these organizations and other networking opportunities, Alexandra enjoys meeting and collaborating with other early childhood professionals to advocate for the needs of young children and families.

## Georgia



### **Bridget Ratajczak University of Georgia**

Bridget Ratajczak provides support for early childhood professionals in the state of Georgia on the topics of developmental monitoring, child development and family engagement. She has a Master's in early childhood special education from the University of Georgia. Her extensive experience in early childhood education and special education includes an instructor at the University of

Georgia's Birth through Kindergarten teacher preparation program, early intervention specialist with the Babies Can't Wait early intervention program 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.

## Guam



### **Elaine Eclavea Early Learning Council, Guam**

Elaine is the Chairperson of Guam's Early Learning Council since the initial establishment in 2008 and currently works as an Early Childhood Consultant for the University of Guam Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service and the Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services – Preschool Development Grant. She has a passion in early childhood systems work and is a BUILD Equity Leaders Action Network (ELAN) Fellow. Elaine 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, and the Pacific region. She was the Guam LTSAE Consultant and former Director of Project Tinituhon: Guam's Early Childhood Comprehensive System. Elaine earned a Master's in Education and a Bachelor of Arts in Special Education from University of Guam.



## Hawaii



### **Jeffrey Okamoto** **University of Hawaii**

For more than 20 years, Dr. Jeffrey Okamoto has been a faculty member at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He also enjoys clinical work at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children as a board certified Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) subspecialist. Dr. Okamoto obtained his MD degree at JABSOM. His residency in Pediatrics was at Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles and his Fellowship in DBP at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. Dr. Okamoto was a Public Policy Fellow in Washington, DC for the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation from July 2010 to June 2011. He was placed with the Disability Policy Collaborative, the National Council on Disability, and with the staff for the Subcommittee for Children and Families in the HELP Committee under Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland. He was previously the Medical Director and Interim Administrator of the Developmental Disabilities Division in Hawaii. In these positions he was Manager of the Year and had a Sustained Superior Performance Award from the Hawaii Department of Health in 2015. The Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawaii Manoa (Hawaii's UCEDD) selected him for the Outstanding Community Contribution to Persons with Disabilities Award in 2006. In 2018, Dr. Okamoto received the Professional of the Year Award from the Special Parent Information Network (SPIN).

## Idaho



### **Melissa Crist** **University of Idaho**

Melissa Crist is the Director of IdahoSTARS at the University of Idaho's Center on Disabilities and Human Development (CDHD). IdahoSTARS houses multiple quality initiatives for early care and education in the state of Idaho, including the state quality rating and improvement system, professional development system and registry, childcare resource and referral system, childcare health consulting program and childcare subsidy and licensing support services. Melissa has a B.S. in Early Childhood Development and Education and an M.S. in Family and Consumer Science with an emphasis in inclusive childcare. She holds an Idaho Early Childhood Blended Teaching Certificate, certifying her to teach children with and without disabilities, birth through third grade. Melissa has worked in the field of early childhood education/early intervention for the last fifteen years. Her professional experience includes work as a lead teacher in an inclusive early care and education program, a child developmental specialist with the Idaho IDEA Part C early intervention program, and coordinator of the Idaho Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC) Program. During her time as coordinator for the Idaho CCHC Program, she supervised a team of childcare health consultants across the state to support implementation of health and safety practices, including developmental monitoring, within Idaho early care and education programs.

## Illinois



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

Cari Roestel is the nurse care manager for the Pediatric Developmental Center at Advocate Children's Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, the largest developmental pediatric practice in Illinois. Ms. Roestel works with families every day to manage their child's medical needs by coordinating care with a variety of providers and agencies. As a mother of a son on the autism spectrum, Ms. Roestel knows from her own family's experience the importance of helping families identify developmental concerns early and get appropriate interventions. She is proud to be both the parent advocate and program coordinator for Advocate Children's Hospital's ECHO (Extension of Community Health Outcomes) Autism Projects, which focus on educating primary care physicians and Early Intervention providers across Illinois to better recognize developmental differences and facilitate improved access to appropriate interventions. Ms. Roestel graduated from Wellesley College and completed her Master of Nursing Science at Rush University.



## Indiana



### **Stephan Viehweg Riley Child Development Center, Indiana LEND**

Stephan Viehweg, ACSW, LCSW, IMH-E®, CYC-P the Associate Director of the Riley Child Development Center – Indiana LEND, a nationally recognized interdisciplinary leadership training program supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and faculty

member of the IU School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, and the IU School of Social Work. He also serves as Associate Director of the IUPUI Center for Translating Research into Practice. He is founding chair of Infancy Onward, Indiana’s infant mental health association, and founding president of Family Voices Indiana. He is the Treasurer Mental Health America of Indiana, Chair of the Conference Planning Committee of the Association of Social Work Boards, and a Governor appointee to the Indiana Behavioral Health and Human Services Licensing Board. He is co-author of *Tackling the Tough Stuff: A Home Visitor’s Guide to Supporting Families at Risk*. Steve’s experience as a social work provider with families and their children with delays as well as adults with disabilities, and his ability to communicate in Spanish and American Sign Language, make him a well-respected, sought-after therapist, presenter, and consultant.

## 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 at the University of Kentucky as a Content Coordinator for Child Care Aware, a statewide contract with the Kentucky Division of Child Care providing 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". She has served as a Child Development Specialist, Case Manager and early childhood special educator in seven states across urban, rural and suburban settings. She currently collaborates with the statewide network of Child Care Aware Coaches on the dissemination and integration of "Learn the Signs: Act Early" materials and resources. Childcare providers are encouraged to share the materials/resources to support developmental monitoring. CCA Coaches also assist providers in identifying ways to engage families to support early



identification. As a Professional Development Content Coordinator, Christine integrates this information into existing and newly developed training accessed by early care professionals from various agencies and organizations. Current LTSAE partnerships include child welfare organizations, Department of Health, Cooperative Extensions' Grandparents as Parents, and home visitors.

## Louisiana



### **Julie Emory** **The Children's Coalition for Northeast Louisiana**

Julie Emory is a Provider Engagement Consultant at the Children's Coalition for Northeast Louisiana, a non-profit with a mission to create communities where families and children thrive. She is currently working on the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant as the team lead in the place-based community of Morehouse parish. Under her leadership, the parish has increased access to developmental screenings, improved widespread parent education, and built a cross sector coalition working to elevate child and family outcomes. Prior to this work, she was the Lead Agency director for three parishes and part of the transformation of the childcare industry in the state of Louisiana. Prior to the Children's Coalition, Julie was a University Academic Advisor and an Early Head Start Home Visitor and Family Services Specialist. She is avid believer of community involvement and serves on numerous committees and boards such as Executive Director of the Big Whit 77 Foundation, a board member of the Wellspring Alliance against Domestic Violence, Sterlington Little League, and The Children's Museum for Northeast LA. In addition, she is a Trust Based Relational Intervention Practitioner and a founding member of the Foster Hope Alliance. Julie is a graduate of Leadership Ouachita and selected for the Top 20 under 40 Professional Award. She holds a M.S. degree in Family and Child Development and a B.S. in Early Childhood Education with a concentration in Child Life both from Louisiana Tech University. She also holds a Graduate Certificate from Portland State University in Infant Toddler Mental Health.

## Maine



### **Nancy Cronin** **Maine Developmental Disabilities Council**

Nancy has been the Director of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) since 2014. In her role with MDDC, she shares responsibility for operations, quality assurance and compliance. She serves as the lead expert for the Council regarding children issues and focuses on efforts to improve access to and coordination of systems that affect individuals with DD. Nancy has had the honor to serve as the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Ambassador for three terms. Prior to becoming the Director of MDDC, Nancy was the Coordinator for the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Systems Change Initiative and the State Autism Implementation Grant Manager in Maine. In that role, she facilitated an inter-agency effort to achieve an efficient and cost-effective comprehensive system of care for persons with ASD. Nancy joined the staff of the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council in January 2008, having previously served for over four years as the Executive Director of the Autism Society of Maine. While at the Autism Society, Nancy's work at the local, state, and national levels focused on the development of effective services and supports for persons with ASD of all ages and their families.

## Maryland



### **Kristen Paul** **Early Childhood Specialist, The Parents' Place of Maryland**

Kristen Paul has worked in the field of education for more than 20 years as a teacher, education advisor, and administrator in a variety of environments. After working as the Family Support Liaison for Birth to Five for her local school district, she became 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. Ms. Paul serves on numerous statewide working groups, including the SEFEL Pyramid Model State Leadership Team, State Systemic Improvement Plan Implementation Team, State Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers (SICC), and the Division of Early Childhood's State Early Childhood Advisory Council, on which she serves as the SICC representative. At the local level, she currently serves on the Executive Board of the Citizens' Advisory Council for Special Education. Kristen resides in St. Mary's County with her husband and young son, the latter of whom received services through Early Intervention, which ignited her passion for working with the families of children with disabilities and special healthcare needs.

## 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.

## Minnesota



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

Jennifer Hall-Lande, PhD, is a Psychologist and Research Associate at the Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD) at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Hall-Lande does both clinical work in child development including early identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder and other developmental disabilities. Dr. Hall-Lande also conducts research in prevalence and identification of developmental delays and disabilities. She is an investigator on the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) network and has led many "Learn the Signs. Act Early." projects. Dr. Hall-Lande is also a former LEND (Leadership in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities) fellow and remains actively involved in the Minnesota LEND program. Dr. Hall-Lande's principal research and community outreach activities focus on early screening, assessment, and interventions for children at risk for developmental delays and developmental disabilities. Dr. Hall-Lande has a specific interest in community outreach and training around developmental screening in universal access environments such as childcare settings and Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) programs. Further, Dr. Hall-Lande has a strong professional interest in outreach to culturally diverse communities with an end goal of increasing screening rates and reducing the age of diagnosis for children from diverse communities. Additional areas of focus have been



ASD prevalence rates in diverse populations and policy issues around children's ASD waivers. She has served as a co-leader of the statewide Minnesota Act Early team for the past five years.

## Mississippi



### **Leslie LaVergne University of Southern Mississippi, Institute for Disability Studies**

Dr. Leslie LaVergne is the Emphasis Area Director for Wellness Programs at the Institute for Disability Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. LaVergne is also a Parent Navigator and Trainer for the Early Years Network: Children with Special Needs Program, a collaborative grant housed within the Institute for Disability Studies at the University of Southern Mississippi. As a navigator she provides families with support through the diagnostic process and in obtaining services from state and private agencies. Furthermore, Dr. LaVergne administers the Inclusion Classroom Profile, a classroom assessment of inclusion practices of children with special needs in early childcare centers. As a navigator, she conducts developmental screenings and Autism specific screenings throughout South Mississippi. Dr. LaVergne received a Master of Science in Art Therapy from Eastern Virginia Medical School 2006 and a Ph.D. in Special Education from The University of Southern Mississippi in 2012. She is the co-author of numerous professional publications related to children with special health care needs and their families and helps coordinate research for the Special Needs program.

## 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 work within the autism community. Currently, she works at the University of Missouri, where she is the Director of Operations for the Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) Autism Program, as well as serves as a Family Panelist on three expert hub teams. Additionally, she is the Family Faculty Member for the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program, Program Manager and Quality Improvement Lead for the Autism Learning Health Network (AHLN), and the CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early. Ambassador for Missouri. Curran 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 LEND graduate. She is very active in the autism community and has a passion for family empowerment.

## Montana



### **Marcy Hanson** **Montana State University**

Marcy Hanson is a registered nurse (RN) with a background in public health and nursing education. Prior to her current role, she was the Maternal/Child/Health WIC nurse for Sanders County and worked closely with their local primary care offices as well as schools. She was instrumental in implementing supplemental nutrition programs for the County's school age children as well as the Text-4-Baby program in their WIC Department. She also has experience as a children's case manager for Western Montana Mental Health and as a school nurse for multiple districts. In these roles, her work focused on pediatric physical and mental health as well as supporting, educating, and advocating for families and caregivers. Marcy currently leads a Community Health Nursing course for Montana State University's College of Nursing in Missoula. In this course she can share her passion for prevention and community-based services with future RN's. She is pursuing a PhD in Public Health from the University of Montana. Marcy is also a foster-adoptive parent and foster care advocate in her community.

## Nebraska



### **Kerry Miller** **University of Nebraska Medical Center**

Dr. Kerry Miller is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Education and Child Development at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Munroe Meyer Institute. Dr. Miller is a program evaluator for several state early childhood programs and a Developmental Specialist for Nebraska's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) follow-up program, Developmental Tracking Infant Progress Statewide (TIPS). As a Developmental Specialist, Dr. Miller provides specialized developmental follow-up for infants who have been in a NICU. The TIPS program is a collaborative program between Nebraska Departments of Education and Health and Human Services and collaborating hospitals. The program is one of Nebraska's primary Child Find efforts aiming for early identification of children with or at-risk for developmental delays and disabilities. Dr. Miller is the instructor of a course focused on the needs of infants and toddlers with 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 an Early Interventionist and maintains Nebraska teacher certification with an endorsement in early childhood inclusive practices. She has extensive experience in family-centered practices, typical/atypical child development, key-evidenced based practices used in early childhood special education programs, and early childhood assessment practices. Dr. Miller has particular expertise in screening and evaluating infant and toddler development and determining the need to refer children for special education evaluation during the early childhood years.

## Nevada



### **Debra Vigil** **University of Nevada Reno**

Debra C. Vigil, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at University of Nevada Reno in the Department of Speech Pathology & Audiology, Director of the University Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment (UCAN), Co-Director of the NvLEND program, and Chair of the NvLTSAE state team. As Director of UCAN, Dr. Vigil directs a multidisciplinary team of professionals from a wide array of disciplines to conduct evidence-based assessments.

Training is provided to child psychiatry fellows, master's and doctoral level speech-language students, and NvLEND trainees to gain experience in interdisciplinary work with children with autism and other neurodevelopmental disabilities. The NvLTSAE state team is an active, collaborative effort that is leading an educational agenda in the state for families and professionals. Her research interests include cultural diversity issues in treatment of minority children with language disorders, and social interaction predictors of language disorders, and diagnosis of autism from a transdisciplinary perspective.

## New Hampshire



### **Jennifer Pineo** **New Hampshire Family Voices**

Jenn is a parent of two children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. She understands the importance of developmental screening and has lived experience navigating the often-complex system of care and has worked to support all involved in the Developmental Screening process to put the child and family at the center of developmental screening process. She is a Program Coordinator at NH Family Voices, working on various projects and trainings

within the organization. Under the same umbrella organization, Jenn is the Family Engagement Specialist supporting Positive Solutions for Families Facilitators within the Pyramid Model at the Parent Information Center. She has worked closely with the past NH LSAE Ambassadors. Jenn is the Co-Lead on the Watch Me Grow Team, NH's Screening and Developmental Monitoring System. She 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 Business Administration along with Minors in Marketing and Applied Group Leadership. Additionally, she completed NH Leadership in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Program (LEND) within the Family Discipline, the



Parent Information Center Volunteer Education Advocacy Training, and am certified in the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support.

## New Jersey



### **Deepa Srinivasavaradan Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey**

Deepa Srinivasavaradan is NJ's Act Early Ambassador since 2014 and the State Parent Lead for NJ's Early Childhood initiatives - Help Me Grow, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems ColIN, and Home Visiting ColIN 2.0. She is also the Division for Early Childhood aRPy Ambassador for New Jersey and the Southern

Regional Coordinator of the Family to Family Health Information Center and the State Parent Lead at New Jersey's Early Childhood Initiatives at SPAN Parent Advocacy Network. She is passionate about early identification and early connection to services for families with young children because she firmly believes that healthy child development leads to lifelong health and wellness. She is committed to helping families, including the most underserved, to navigate systems of care because of her own experiences as an immigrant mother. Deepa is also NJ's Association for Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Family Delegate and LEND Family Fellow. She has collaborated with NJ's UCEDD/Act Early team lead on the Act Early State Systems Grants. As the co-leader of the "Early Screening & Diagnosis" workgroup of NJ's Community of Care Consortium and a member of the Infant-Child Health Committee of the NJ Council for Young Children, she has helped create several NJ-specific resources to address gaps in connecting to services when developmental concerns are identified in young children.



## New Mexico



### **Rachel Nowak** **University of New Mexico Early Childhood Services Center**

Rachel Nowak manages New Mexico Kids Resource and Referral (R&R) under the University of New Mexico Early Childhood Services Center. This department serves as the centralized statewide referral entity required under the federal Child Care Development Fund for childcare assistance. Rachel has overseen the expansion of R&R to include phone-based and online referrals to home visiting programs, and other community resources. Rachel is a member of several regional and statewide collaboratives and workgroups. The Resource and Referral team regularly participates in public events including family events and professional conferences. In addition to her work at University of New Mexico, Rachel also serves as an education consultant for the Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations at Highlands University for the Family-School Partnerships Framework project. Her background is in education/early childhood education, project and change management, sociocultural anthropology, and culturally responsive family engagement. She has lived and worked in both inner city and rural (tribal) communities in New Mexico and California.

## New York



### **Romina Barros** **Rose F. Kennedy Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center, Montefiore Medical Center**

As a Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician (DBP) and Medical Director of Trauma Services at Rose F. Kennedy Children's Evaluation & Rehabilitation Center, Dr. Barros oversees and coordinate medical, developmental and behavioral care of 1000 birth to five-year-old children, with 355 children at their main site and 680 birth to three families city-wide, through the Group Attachment Based Intervention-GABI, to serve families with multiple adverse childhood experiences, who are struggling to meet the developmental and emotional needs of their children and are receiving prevention services through the Administration for Children's Services. Through the review and monitoring of developmental concerns, their clinical team can identify and intervene early. 1,000 children under 5, for whom Dr. Barros is responsible,



are being monitored and gaining swift access to optimal child development services. Her reach is expanded by training Child Development Specialists (25), DBP Fellows (3) and Child-Adolescent Psychiatry Fellows (4). As a Board Member of Brooklyn Healthy Families Advisory Group, Dr. Barros integrate a developmental perspective into work with families. Previously Dr. Barros was a Director of a DBP Program; Director of Community Pediatrics and Advocacy Program at Brookdale Hospital Medical Center; and Clinical Assistant Professor at New York Medical College. Board Certified in Pediatrics & DBP, she completed residency at Brookdale (2004) and a fellowship in DBP at Einstein/Children's Hospital at Montefiore (2007). With \$185,000/annual private funding and a three-year NYS Office of Mental Hygiene grant, Dr. Barros brought and directed the Healthy Steps Program to Brookdale.

## 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 Carolina



### **Sharon Loza** **North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program**

Sharon E. Loza, PhD, is the Branch Head and Part C Coordinator for the NC Infant-Toddler Program (NC ITP) that provides early intervention supports and services for families and their infants and toddlers with varying abilities and special needs. A critical aspect of the NC ITP is Child Find, a legal mandate to find children who have disabilities as early as possible, which aligns with the critical work of Act Early. Dr. Loza also serves on the Board of the North Carolina Infant and

Young Child Mental Health Association and the Duke Center for Autism and Brain Development. She is also a Fellow with the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations and participates in multiple cross-sector collaborations to address issues of equity and access to high quality early childhood health, care, and education. Her career has focused on research, practice, and policies supporting early identification and referral of young children at-risk for and with developmental delays, social emotional/early childhood mental health, early childhood systems improvement, workforce development, child outcomes, evidence-based practices, and family engagement and leadership. Prior to her current role, Dr. Loza worked at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, the Carolina Population Center, and RTI International holding roles as a Research Investigator, Implementation Specialist, Technical Assistance provider, and Project Manager on various global, national and state-level initiatives supporting children's development, health, education, and well-being.

## North Dakota



### **Hilory Liccini** **North Dakota Center for Persons** **with Disabilities at Minot State** **University**

Hilory Liccini is the Assistant Director for Program Management at the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities and an adjunct professor for the 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).

## Ohio



### **Steph Weber** **University of Cincinnati** **Department of Pediatrics**

Dr. Steph Weber is an assistant professor in the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's within the University of Cincinnati Department of Pediatrics. She is the Training Director for the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Program and University of

Cincinnati Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCCEDD). She specializes in interdisciplinary graduate training and behavioral intervention for individuals with disabilities. Dr. Weber is also working toward her Master of Public Health degree in Health Services Management at University of Cincinnati.



## 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. Dr. McBride's research interests have focused on effective interventions for young children with ASD. She is the Principal Investigator of two federally funded multisite efficacy trials for early intensive intervention for toddlers and preschoolers with autism. She serves on several statewide committees to improve early identification and intervention services for children with developmental disabilities including ASD. She was the team leader for the Act Early Regional Summit and chairs the group that was formed as a result of that summit. In this role, she obtained funding for Oklahoma Early Access Autism Project, which focuses on raising awareness regarding ASD by offering Act Early materials, free information seminars and screening for underserved populations. She has served as Oklahoma's Ambassador for the Act Early Campaign in 2012-2014 and has recently been awarded an Act Early State Systems Grant.

## Oregon



### **Sherri Alderman** **Oregon Pediatric Society**

Sherri is a Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician, CDC Act Early Ambassador to Oregon, Oregon Help Me Grow Physician Champion, Immediate Past President of Oregon Infant Mental Health Association, and Portland State University Adjunct Faculty. She is endorsed as Infant Mental Health Mentor--Clinical and Policy and has a Masters in Public Health. Her special interests include child rights, early childhood development, systems of care, and reflective supervision. She has made more than 175 presentations and serves on advisory committees, work groups, and boards.

## Pennsylvania



### **Ilecia Voughs** **Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network's Early Intervention Technical Assistance**

Ilecia Voughs is from Harrisburg, PA. and a graduate of Harrisburg High School and received her B.A. in Psychology with a Minor in Education from Messiah College. Ilecia received her Masters in Social Work with a concentration in the Administration of Services to Children & Families from Temple University. Ilecia is a licensed social worker who has worked in the field of education for the past 18 years.

She began her career working as an assistant pre-school teacher. After receiving her B.A. she worked as a Social Worker for the Harrisburg School District for 5 years where she served students in Kindergarten through 12th grades. After serving children and families in the Harrisburg School District, Ilecia worked as a Social Services Coordinator for Capital Area Head Start, where she coordinates social service supports to children and families in the Pre-K Counts Program. Ilecia has also participated in advocacy efforts for the Pre-K for PA Campaign. In 2018, she participated in the Office of Child Development & Early Learning's (OCDEL) Policy Fellowship Program. Ilecia currently work as a Family Support Consultant for OCDEL's Home Visiting & Family Support Program under the Bureau of Early Intervention & Family Support Programs (BEIFS). As a Family Support Consultant, she provides monitoring and technical assistance for home visiting programs throughout the state. She also works on various state-wide projects related to the well-being of children and families who receive Family Support & Early Intervention Services.

## Puerto Rico



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

Nancy Nieves-Muñoz has a master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education with a minor in Early Intervention and an Advanced Degree in Administration and Supervision of Special Education Programs from the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign. She worked with the New York University Quality Improvement Center for Disabilities providing training and technical assistance to the Early Head Start and Head Start staff in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands regarding identification, eligibility and intervention for infants, toddlers and preschoolers with disabilities. During this time, she



received the West Ed Infant and Toddler Caregiver Program Certification of Sonoma State University and a certification from the Center for the Social Emotional Foundation of Early Learning of the University of Vanderbilt. She also worked with Sonoma State University as an Early Head Start Special Quest Learning Coach promoting collaboration between the Early Intervention Program and Early Head Start Programs in PR and was the Part C Early Intervention System Coordinator for the Caguas Region in Puerto Rico. 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 Preventive Pediatric Health Care Guidelines that support the early identification of children at risk for developmental delays. She recently participated in the development of the Guide for Early Identification: Surveillance, Screening and Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders.

## Rhode Island



### **Jenn Sanchez** **Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities,** **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. Most recently, she joined 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. 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



### **Lorraine Cragan-Sullivan** **Help Me Grow South Carolina**

Lorraine Cragan-Sullivan has nearly 20 year of experience working with children and families in diverse settings. Lorraine received her Bachelor and master's degrees in psychology from Marist College and Master of Social Work degree from the University at Albany. Lorraine is employed by the Greenville Health System in the Bradshaw Institute for Community Child Health & Advocacy and serves as a Community Outreach Coordinator for Help Me Grow South Carolina. Help Me Grow is an evidence-based program

founded on the fundamental premise that developmental surveillance and screening, along with early detection of children with developmental or behavioral health concerns and their connection to community services improves health outcomes for children.

## South Dakota



### **Lisa Sanderson** **South Dakota Parent Connection**

Lisa has served as Project Director for the statewide Family to Family Health Information Center at South Dakota Parent Connection since 2008, also home to the state's Parent Training Information Center. She 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. She has been a proponent of the Act Early campaign since program launch and looks forward to serving as the state's Act Early Ambassador.

## Tennessee



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

Toni Whitaker, MD is a Professor of Pediatrics and Division Chief in Developmental Pediatrics with the University of Tennessee, Health Science Center (UTHSC) and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis. Dr. Whitaker's work is primarily in interdisciplinary settings in clinical, academic, research, and community outreach endeavors. She serves as the Director of the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities graduate-level, interdisciplinary training program (LEND) at UTHSC Center for Developmental Disabilities and as Medical Director for the Screening Tools and Referral Training (STaRT) for the Tennessee Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

## Texas



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

Laura Kender is the Chief of Early Childhood Services (ECS) at My Health My Resources of Tarrant County, where she oversees the largest Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program in the State of Texas. ECS serves 14,000+ infants, toddlers, and young children (birth to age 6) annually, who live in 12 Texas counties, with a staff of 350+ licensed/credentialed professionals and support staff. Under Laura's leadership, ECS is dedicated to increasing parents' ability to enhance their child's learning and development through coaching strategies and by utilizing a Primary Service Provider approach to teaming. In 2015, Laura created the first-ever local ECS Community Advisory Committee, comprised of stakeholders, representing a large cross-section of interests and expertise, who provide input and engage in collaborative work. Laura substantially grew ECS after award of the Project HOPES (Healthy Outcomes through Prevention & Early Support) grant in 2017, which increases family strengthening to reduce the likelihood of abuse, neglect, and adverse childhood experiences. Late in 2018, Laura opened the first HealthySteps program in Texas, where ECS staff work inside a pediatric setting and conduct screenings and monitoring. In 2019, Laura joined efforts with local hospitals to start the first Family Connects program in North Texas that provides home-visiting nurse services for parents of newborns. She also co-founded the first Help Me Grow affiliate in Texas, which connects families and providers to community resources and child development



information. Laura was recently selected as Chair of the Early Learning Alliance of North Texas. Laura holds a master's degree in Educational Administration with focuses on early childhood and special education.

## Texas



### **Claire Niday** **Texas Department of State Health Services**

Claire Niday is the State Child Health Coordinator for the Maternal and Child Health Unit at the Texas Department of State Health Services. In this role, she oversees activities, programs, and grants that relate to the selected National Performance Measures for the state's Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant Program that impact early childhood. Claire is the Project Manager for Help Me Grow

Texas, a statewide network of communities maximizing the potential of early childhood systems to promote the healthy development of Texas children. She leads the State Developmental Screening Workgroup, a cross-sector team of early childhood professionals that contribute to the statewide promotion of developmental screening, surveillance, and service linkage. Additionally, Claire oversees the production and dissemination of a parent resource guide for healthy child development, sits on the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Subcommittee for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, and is a member of the interagency Early Childhood Systems Integration Group. Through these various roles, Claire plans to integrate Learn the Signs. Act Early. messaging and materials into a wide variety of programs and initiatives.



## Utah



### **Janel Preston** **Center for Persons with Disabilities, Utah** **State University**

Janel serves families in the early intervention program (Up to Three) Center for Persons with Disabilities, 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 personnel responsible for the scope and practice of the early intervention autism services. Her responsibilities include training families, staff and working with the community for early identification of ASD. Ms. Preston was a lead project member on the child find campaign using the CDC LTSA materials. As part of this project, she established embed ASD query questions into the early interventions intake procedure to identify ASD early on. This project increased identifications of ASD at intake by 27%. Preston is responsible for the continuing monitor of procedure. This procedure has been adopted by the Part C lead agency resulting in the use of the ASD query questions statewide. Ms. Preston is a certified P.L.A.Y home consultant. She is a former URLEND trainee and has presented a poster at AUCD detailing the child find campaign.

## Vermont



### **Janet Kilburn** **Vermont Department of Health**

Janet Kilburn, LCSW, is the Child Development Coordinator for Maternal and Child Health at the Vermont Department of Health. 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 Child Development Clinic and on Part C Early Intervention teams). For several years, 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 care and education systems for early identification and timely diagnosis of developmental concerns in young children. Janet is currently part of a cross-system state effort working on developmental promotion, developmental screening, and service linkage via Vermont's Help Me Grow system. She works to improve Vermont's cultural competence in early screening and assessment and is active on Vermont's Act Early State Team. She is an instructor for Vermont Northern Lights, a professional development and career center for early childhood professionals.



## Virgin Islands



### **Karen Brown** **University of the Virgin Islands** **Schneider Regional Medical Center**

Associate Professor and interim Dean at the School of Education at the University of the Virgin Islands and speech-language pathologist at Schneider Regional Medical Center. Dr. Brown was a tenured Associate Professor of Speech-language Pathology and served as director of that program. She has 27 years of experience as a speech-language pathologist and maintains the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). She is a 2014-2015 trainee of the Georgia Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Other Disabilities (GA LEND) program and 2015 graduate of the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities. Dr. Brown serves as a committee member of the Maternal Infants and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program's Community Advisory Board in the VI Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Division, and on the Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) Community of Practice (CoP) on Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Developmental Disabilities National Advisory Committee.

## Virgin Islands



### **Leone Rohr** **Parents Empowering Parents of** **Children with Disabilities, Inc.**

Leone is a 30-year Guam resident with a personal interest in early detection, referral and intervention of developmental delays and disabilities, including autism. She is a parent of two children living with Autism. This experience led her to where and who she is today; an advocate and change agent. Years as a business owner, strategic planning and leadership opportunities for disability training and personal growth propelled her into the leadership role of an advocate and change agent for children and families living with disabilities. Leone has turned her struggle and passion into a positive approach by forming a nonprofit parent disability organization. Parents Empowering Parents, Inc., offers parent, student and professional training, advocacy, and support for parents of children with disabilities. As an Act Ambassador she plans to work with early childhood programs to improve developmental monitoring in childcare by systematically integrating LTSAE materials into classroom.



## Virginia



### **Deana Buck** **Virginia Commonwealth University,** **Partnership for People with Disabilities**

Deana McGuire Buck's has worked in the field of early childhood development in Virginia for 30 years. She continues to be amazed by the sequence of development that occurs in the first five years of a child's life. Since 1992, she has worked at the Partnership for People with Disabilities, Virginia's UCEDD, as the Early Childhood Content Leader. She also serves as the Principal Investigator for statewide initiatives funded to improve supports and services for young children and their families through professional development, evaluation, and dissemination. She also serves as the Co-PI for Virginia's Autism Implementation Grant. As a result of her work, she has established a strong network of early childhood colleagues at the state and local level who work in a variety of settings and systems, including higher education, early intervention, and home visiting. She has just been appointed to her fourth term as the CDC's Act Early Ambassador to Virginia. As the Act Early Ambassador, Ms. Buck will focus her efforts on regional activities that engage Head Start/Early Head Start partners.

## Washington



### **Devon Love** **Public Health of Seattle & King County**

Ms. Devon Love has worked in the health care field for over 20 years. In 2015, Ms. Love transitioned from her thirteen-year tenure at a local community-based organization into a new role at Public Health of Seattle & King County (PHSKC). At PHSKC, Ms. Love is building on her previous relationships within the community and promoting Vroom, an initiative focused on early learning and brain development for birth to five-year old's. She is also working on the development of a King County Help Me Grow framework through the County's Best Starts for Kids initiative. Currently, Ms. Love serves as an Executive Committee member for the Equal Start Community Coalition – a coalition focused on improving birth outcomes in King County, Washington and is President of Mahogany Moms Breastfeeding Coalition, which works to educate and support breastfeeding efforts in King and Pierce Counties. She serves on the equity committee for the Healthy King County Coalition - an effort that works to mobilize communities in achieving health equity through a variety of topics and issues and is a board member for the African American Health Board. Additionally, Ms. Love was appointed to the State's Maternal Mortality Review Panel by Secretary John Weisman in December of 2017 and has just begun a second term in this work.



## 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



### **Wendy Warren** **Wyoming Institute for Disabilities**

As UW ECHO project coordinator, Wendy Warren coordinates University of Wyoming ECHO networks for building the capacity to meet the needs of educators in Wyoming. Her work includes facilitating stakeholder discussions, planning, and launching networks for specific education and disability related topics for professional development needs, and the evaluation of UW ECHO network outcomes. Wendy graduated from the University of Wyoming with a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education and is currently working towards a Master of Arts degree in Education with a concentration in Curriculum and Instruction. She has over 13 years of experience in teaching as well as expertise in working to meet the unique assistive technology needs of students.