



**988-Crisis  
Policy Advisory Group  
Member Bios**  
*(alphabetical by last name)*

*\*Includes members and their delegates as applicable.*



**Jared Altenhofel**  
**County 911 Coordination/Senior Dispatcher**  
**Kern County Sheriff's Office**

Jared is an experienced public safety professional with extensive background in 9-1-1 and public safety dispatch operations. Jared has worked for the Kern County Sheriff's Office for 19 years. He began his career as a Dispatcher with the Sheriff's Office back in 2006. Currently, Jared is a Senior Dispatcher for the Sheriff's Office. Jared holds additional collateral assignments of Threat Liaison Officer and Tactical Dispatcher. He is also the 9-1-1 County Coordinator for Kern County and is involved in several groups and committees working to improve public safety and the emergency services provided to all people in California. The Kern County Sheriff's Office is also one of the few Public Safety Communications Centers in the state to have mental health clinicians working alongside dispatchers. Jared is a member of the following professional associations and groups:

- National Emergency Number Association (NENA), Member
- California Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association's (CALNENA) Legislative Committee, Member
- Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO), Member



**Christine Bagley**  
**Acting Deputy Director, Statewide Clinical Services**  
**Division and Safety Net Branch Chief**  
**California Department of Developmental Services (DDS)**

Christine Bagley has worked alongside people, children, families, providers and system partners providing direct services and supports, leadership, and policy and program guidance to public and private sectors that serve people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) for the past 20 years. Christine has worked for the California Department of Developmental Services since 2016 and presently serves as the Acting Deputy Director in the Statewide Clinical Services Division and as Safety Net Branch Chief. Prior to that, she was the Children and Youth System of Care Specialist, supporting local child serving systems across the state in the development and installment of their Children and Youth Systems of Care.

Drawing on experience from the private sector, her civic work has focused on service integration, coordination and navigation for people served by multiple systems, including child welfare, probation, justice, behavioral health, education and developmental services, with an emphasis on improving cross-system service access and practices for people with I/DD who have a diverse constellation of needs. Christine is fluent in American Sign Language and has provided services and supports in early intervention, classrooms, and community-based programs for individuals across the lifespan focusing on the strengths, needs, and cultural considerations of the I/DD and Deaf+ community.



**Kirsten Barlow**  
**Vice President, Policy**  
**California Hospital Association (CHA)**

Kirsten joined the California Hospital Association as Vice President, Policy in December 2021, where she manages behavioral health policy issues. Over the three prior years, Kirsten established an independent consulting practice providing policy, finance, and strategic expertise to clients, including: Aurrera Health Group; the National Alliance of Mental Illness – California; California Public Administrators, Public Guardians, and Public Conservators Association; California Hospital Association; Hospital Association of Southern California; and Hospital Council of Northern and Central California.

Prior roles during her career have included serving as lead lobbyist and then Executive Director for the County Behavioral Health Directors Association, Executive Officer at the Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health, and policy and communications positions at the California Department of Mental Health, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, and the California Assembly Human Services Committee in the State Legislature.

Kirsten has a Master of Social Welfare (MSW) degree from the University of California at Berkeley, and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.



**Elizabeth Basnett**  
**Director**  
**California Emergency Medical Services Authority**  
**(EMSA)**

Elizabeth “Liz” Basnett, of Sacramento, was appointed Director of the California Emergency Medical Services Authority in August 2023, where she has been Acting Director since 2021. Basnett was Chief Resilience Officer at the California Health and Human Services Agency from 2020 to 2021 and a Senior Managing Associate at Hagerty Consulting from 2018 to 2020. She was Chief of Planning and Preparedness at the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency from 2017 to 2018. She was a Disaster Preparedness Program Representative for the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services from 2016 to 2017 and Deputy Director for the Callaway County Emergency Management Agency from 2012 to 2016. Basnett earned an Executive Master of Professional Studies degree in Emergency and Disaster Management from Georgetown University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science from the University of Missouri.



**Rebecca Bauer-Kahan**  
**Assembly Member (AD-16)/Author of AB 988**  
**California State Assembly**

Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan was first elected to represent Assembly District 16 in the California State Assembly in 2018, which includes Alamo, Danville, Dublin, Lafayette, Livermore, Moraga, Orinda, Pleasanton, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek.

Rebecca is an accomplished attorney, environmental advocate, community volunteer, law professor, and mother. A Bay Area native, she is the granddaughter of refugees who came to the United States to escape the Holocaust. Their experiences inspired her to use her career and personal time to help others in her community, solve complex problems, protect civil rights, and fight to ensure everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

As an attorney, Rebecca specialized in ensuring major corporations complied with environmental laws and regulations by leading internal investigations to improve their environmental practices, while maintaining profitability. She also worked with major tech companies on intellectual property cases involving such topics as copyright, trademark, and trade secret theft. Rebecca oversaw and grew her office's pro bono program, and, under her leadership, the office expanded its efforts to include civil rights, immigration, homelessness, and domestic violence. She has also served on several boards and committees, helping attorneys throughout the Bay Area provide their services to those who desperately need them.

During her time in the Assembly, Rebecca has introduced and advocated for legislation that addresses some of the most pressing needs of our communities and her constituents. Her background as a technology attorney and her dedication to safeguarding reproductive rights are highlighted in her

work as chair of the Privacy and Consumer Protection and as founder and chair of the Select Committee on Reproductive Health, respectively. She has championed multiple bills to make California a safe place to live and a bastion for equal rights including protections from AI and the 988 Suicide and Crisis lifeline.

Rebecca is a product of Bay Area public schools and a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Georgetown University Law Center. Before serving in the Assembly, she taught appellate law and legal research and writing at Santa Clara University and Golden Gate University and often volunteered at her children's schools. She currently resides in Orinda with her husband, Darren, and their three children.



**Phebe Bell**  
**Behavioral Health Director**  
**Nevada County**

Phebe Bell, MSW, is the Director of Behavioral Health for Nevada County where she oversees mental health and substance use disorder services, including the crisis system. Phebe started her career running a suicide prevention crisis line and went on to work in a variety of crisis response services including a domestic violence and sexual assault agency. As a longtime resident of Nevada County, Phebe is particularly interested in crisis response in rural communities. And as a survivor of losing someone she loves to suicide, Phebe is deeply passionate about creating compassionate and effective crisis response systems.



**Ivan Bhardwaj**  
**Division Chief**  
**Medi-Cal Behavioral Health – Policy Division**  
**California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)**

Ivan Bhardwaj is Chief of the Medi-Cal Behavioral Health – Policy Division within the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), where his team oversees program and policy for California’s Drug Medi-Cal, Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System, and Specialty Mental Health Services programs. In addition, Ivan and his team oversee DHCS’ CalAIM Behavioral Health initiatives, 988, and the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment Act. Prior to his current role, Ivan served as Chief of the Federal Grants Branch in DHCS, where his team administered most of the Department’s federal behavioral health grant programs, including the State Opioid Response grants; Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grant; and Community Mental Health Services Block Grant. Ivan received a bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Massachusetts.



**Michelle Cabrera**  
**Executive Director**  
**County Behavioral Health Directors Association of**  
**California (CBHDA)**

Michelle Cabrera joined CBHDA as Executive Director in May 2019. Prior to joining CBHDA she served as the Healthcare Director for the California State Council of the Services Employees International Union (SEIU California), where she advocated on behalf of healthcare workers and consumers, including SEIU California's county behavioral health workforce, on issues related to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, Health Equity, Health4All, and cost containment, among others. She served as a Senior Consultant for the Assembly Human Services Committee, where she specialized in child welfare issues and staffed legislation which extended foster care in California to age 21. Ms. Cabrera also served as a Program Officer for the California Healthcare Foundation, working as a liaison on state health policy in Sacramento. Ms. Cabrera served as a member of Governor Newsom's Council of Regional Homeless Advisors and was recently appointed to the California Disability and Aging Community Living Advisory Committee, representing the needs of individuals with behavioral health conditions. Ms. Cabrera has been an inaugural member of the National Quality Forum's Standing Committee on Disparities and has served on the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN) Board of Directors since 2015. She earned her B.S.F.S. in International Politics from Georgetown University.



**Rayshell Chambers**  
**Commission Member**  
**Commission for Behavioral Health (CBH)**

Rayshell Chambers is a Black community leader and systems-change advocate from Oakland, California, whose work bridges lived experience, public policy, and culturally responsive mental health care. With over a decade of experience designing and implementing community-based health and human service programs, Rayshell centers the voices and needs of historically marginalized populations in every facet of her work.

She is the co-founder and Executive Director of Painted Brain, a peer-led, Los Angeles-based nonprofit building community-driven solutions to mental health challenges. At Painted Brain, she leads the development of integrated peer support, clinical partnerships, and workforce development initiatives aligned with Medi-Cal's Enhanced Care Management and Community Health Worker models. Her leadership has been featured in the Los Angeles Times and other media outlets highlighting her innovation in peer-led service delivery. Rayshell's background in Sociology (BA) and Public Policy and Administration (MPPA), combined with her own journey through mental health challenges, deeply inform her advocacy and approach to care. As a mental health peer, she works to reimagine recovery through creativity, community, and culturally grounded practice.

In 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom appointed Rayshell to the California Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission, where she helps shape statewide policy to ensure equity, transparency, and lived experience remain central to behavioral health reform. Beyond Painted Brain, Rayshell is an independent consultant supporting small nonprofits in capacity building, fund development, and program design, especially those serving POC communities. She is also spearheading a national platform to advance Psychiatric Advance Directives (PADs), a peer-driven, rights-based model to improve autonomy and trust in mental health treatment planning. When she's not designing systems to shift the paradigm of care, you'll find Rayshell

watching NBA basketball or developing social enterprise projects like Honest Enterprise, Painted Brain's employment-based program that promotes dignity through work.



**Claudia Chavez**  
**Social Service Director**  
**Pala Band of Mission Indians**

Claudia Chavez is a fortunate lifelong learner and accomplished leader of a great team supporting the Pala American Indian community. She acts as a liaison with various state and federal agencies that aid and assist the native community and is working on various projects in support of mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the impacted population and ensuring the fiscal solvency of each project.

As the Director of Pala Social Services Pala Band of Mission Indians, she oversees a team of 2 supervisors and 8 tribal social workers to provide critical services in collaboration with County Welfare, Department of Juvenile Hall, School Unified Districts, Regional Centers, and Tribal Affairs. In addition, she meets regularly with the California Department of Children Services, Office of Tribal Affairs to drive grant work and created the Tuchily Mobile Crisis Response Team funded through SAMHSA. As a Tribal Social Worker with the Pala Band of Mission Indians, she provided County Child Protective Services to Native American populations on the reservation based on reservation jurisdictions. This required attending monthly court hearings on the reservation and extensive grant writing.

Claudia also has a clinical background. In San Diego, she provided psychosocial assessments and direct casework and counseling services to patients and families. This also included preparing clinical and progress notes for clinical records and maintaining knowledge of community resources and facilitating referrals to patients and families, as needed. Lastly, as a Mental Health Services Assessment Specialist with SVCS-Los Angeles Areas, she completed mental health assessments with diagnoses, as well as established tentative treatment plans and goals designed to resolve or cope with the mental, emotional problems of the clients. Chavez earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Social Work from California State University, Dominguez Hills.



**Le Ondra Clark Harvey**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**California Council of Community Behavioral Health**  
**Agencies (CBHA)**

Dr. Clark Harvey is a psychologist and the Chief Executive Officer of the California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies a statewide advocacy organization representing mental health and substance use disorder non-profit agencies that collectively serve over two million Californians annually. She is also the Executive Director of the California Access Coalition- a group of advocacy organizations and pharmaceutical industry companies that advocate for patient access to behavioral health treatment.

Dr. Clark Harvey has previously served as Chief Consultant to the California State Assembly Committee on Business and Professions, Principal Consultant to the Senate Committee on Business, Professions and Economic Development, and a health policy consultant to the office of former Senator Curren D. Price, Jr. Prior to her work within the California Legislature, she completed her Masters and Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison where she worked in community and hospital settings as a Licensed Professional Counselor. She completed her pre-doctoral fellowship at the University of Southern California Children's Hospital Los Angeles and a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of California, Los Angeles Mattel Children's Hospital.

Dr. Clark Harvey has maintained an impressive record of national and local leadership. She was appointed by the California Lieutenant Governor to the CIRM Board and is a past appointee to SAMHSA's Advisory Committee for Women's Services. She is a current Board member of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, California Association of NonProfits and is a past Board member of the American Psychological Association, Association of Black Psychologists, First 5 California Advisory Committee, Sacramento Children's Coalition and Sacramento County Public Health Advisory Committee.



**Chad Costello**  
**Executive Director**  
**California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies**  
**(CASRA)**

Chad has more than thirty years of service in the non-profit sector of California's public behavioral health system. In addition to many years of working in legislative and administrative advocacy, Chad has experience ranging from direct practice, team supervision and program development to curriculum design, training, and teaching. Chad became CASRA's Executive Director in August of 2021.

Chad began working directly for CASRA in January 2021 as its Public Policy Director, after almost 20 years of work for Mental Health America of Los Angeles, first as a director of a care coordination team at its renowned Village ISA in Long Beach. This was followed with positions as the organization's Public Policy Director and most recently as the Vice President of Policy. Prior to MHALA, Chad served as the Director of Programs for MHA Orange County overseeing a range of programs serving individuals who were unhoused, including Orange County's first AB 2034 program.

CASRA is a statewide provider association whose non-profit members contract for a range of behavioral health services with 25 California counties. The Association focuses its efforts on shaping and supporting policies that promote recovery and create alternatives to locked/involuntary care. CASRA's member organizations pioneered the development of crisis residential treatment in California and currently provide this level of care in 11 counties. In addition, CASRA member organizations provide peer respite, urgent care, crisis stabilization, and mobile crisis outreach services and a range of residential and outpatient services. Several CASRA member agencies are also part of the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline network. CASRA is a member of the Crisis Residential Association.

Chad has extensive experience in both in-person and virtual training and has presented at the local, state, national and international levels. He has held a Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner (CPRP) certification since 2001 and has many years of experience as a Mental Health First Aid Instructor. He has taught at the A.A., B.A. and graduate levels for many years, and currently instructs in the areas of policy practice, community development, and leadership in the School of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach.

Chad received his MSW, with a specialization in Community Organization, Planning and Administration from the University of Southern California and his B.A. in Social Ecology from the University of California, Irvine. Chad has an adult daughter and counts backcountry skiing, backpacking, climbing and photography as his passions.



**Erika Cristo**  
**Assistant Deputy Director**  
**California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)**

Erika Cristo is an Assistant Deputy Director (ADD) for Behavioral Health at the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). In this role, Erika serves as the policy lead for all crisis continuum of care initiatives and proposals and behavioral health policy related to improving care for children and youth, particularly for children in the child welfare system. Erika also serves as DHCS' behavioral health lead on efforts to improve the quality of behavioral health data reporting and use and provides leadership support for the DHCS Community Services and Licensing & Certification Divisions related to departmental priorities in these areas.

Erika has over 20 years of State of California experience in the behavioral health field. She began her state career as an Associate Mental Health Specialist with the former Department of Mental Health, and has worked in various analyst, specialist, and management capacities since then. Prior to her ADD role, Erika was the Branch Chief overseeing the Program Policy, Legislation, and Regulations Branch in the DHCS Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Services Division, where she was responsible for overseeing teams analyzing, developing, and implementing policy related to the Medi-Cal behavioral health delivery systems, including DHCS' CalAIM Behavioral Health initiatives.

Erika earned a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of California, Davis, which solidified her desire to pursue a career in public service.



**Susan DeMarois**  
**Director**  
**California Department of Aging (CDA)**

Susan DeMarois was appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom to serve as Director of the California Department of Aging on November 1, 2021. In this role, she leads California's State Unit on Aging, overseeing a broad range of home and community-based services while advocating for older adults, people with disabilities, and family caregivers. The department holds primary responsibility for implementing the Governor's Master Plan for Aging – California's 10-year blueprint that calls on all sectors of government and society to build an age and disability forward state by 2030 when one in four people will be 60 or older.

Since taking on this role, Director DeMarois and her team have led 46 new initiatives, focusing on strengthening the direct care workforce, rebuilding community infrastructure post-pandemic, raising awareness of aging and disability services, and bridging the digital divide for older adults. Her top priority has been creating a "No Wrong Door" system across California communities, with Area Agencies on Aging, Caregiver Resource Centers and Aging and Disability Resource Connections as key partners in building a future-ready network.

Prior to her appointment, Director DeMarois spent over a decade as the California lobbyist and government affairs director for the national Alzheimer's Association. Her career also includes leadership roles in government and community relations at UC Davis Health System, and early experience with LeadingAge California.



**Narges Zohoury Dillon**  
**Executive Director**  
**Crisis Support Services of Alameda County**

Narges Zohoury Dillon is the Executive Director of Crisis Support Services of Alameda County and President of 988 California, the consortium of the state's 988 centers.

Her career in the helping profession began as a case manager in 2006 and has remained focused on reducing barriers to access for communities that have been historically underserved or inappropriately served by the mental health system. A Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Narges gravitated to suicide prevention as a clinician, driven by both personal experience with loss and a belief in the transformative power of connection during moments of crisis.

Narges believes deeply in the stigma-reducing power of speaking openly about suicide. Since joining CSS, she has worked to expand non-English services and is dedicated to using data to advocate for a robust crisis continuum that does not rely on law enforcement. Her commitment to systemic change is reflected in her past participation in statewide 988 budget and mobile crisis workgroups.

Prior to joining CSS in 2019, Narges oversaw the Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Program in San Mateo County, where she was a regular fixture on the Friday afternoon hotline shift. Narges also serves as the volunteer President of the Bridge Rail Foundation, an organization dedicated to suicide prevention through means restriction. The Foundation is best known for its successful advocacy for the suicide barrier on the Golden Gate Bridge and now provides technical assistance to communities worldwide advocating for similar life-saving infrastructures.



**Tara Gamboa-Eastman**  
**Director of Government Affairs**  
**Steinberg Institute**

Tara Gamboa-Eastman is a seasoned policy and advocacy professional with a deep commitment to advancing public policy solutions that drive meaningful change. Currently serving as the Director of Government Affairs at the Steinberg Institute, Tara leads integrated advocacy campaigns, leveraging her expertise in policy analysis, strategic communications, and coalition building. She plays a key role in shaping legislative, budget, and regulatory priorities, ensuring that critical mental health and social policy issues remain at the forefront of policymaking.

At the Steinberg Institute, Tara has spearheaded numerous legislative and budgetary initiatives. She was the lead advocate for AB 988 (Bauer-Kahan), a groundbreaking bill establishing a statewide mental health crisis response system. Additionally, she played a pivotal role in securing hundreds of millions of dollars in workforce funding through the state budget to address our behavioral health workforce shortage.

Before joining the Steinberg Institute, Tara served in the California State Assembly in the Office of Assemblymember Phil Ting, where she managed legislative efforts related to housing, homelessness, and human services. Over her career, she has also held impactful roles with the San Francisco Treasurer's Financial Justice Project, Western Center on Law & Poverty, and the California Work & Family Coalition, driving research, advocacy, and policy development in areas of economic and social justice.

Tara holds a Master in Public Policy from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from UC Berkeley. With a track record of policy innovation and legislative success, she remains dedicated to fostering equitable and effective public policies that improve the lives of all Californians.



**Dr. Hernando Garzon**  
**Chief Medical Officer**  
**California Emergency Medical Services Authority**  
**(EMSA)**

Hernando Garzon, MD has practiced Emergency Medicine since 1992. His career has focused on domestic and international disaster response, Emergency Management, and pre-hospital care. Dr. Garzon served as Sacramento's EMS Medical Director for 14 years and currently serves as the Chief Medical Officer for the California Emergency Medical Services Authority.

Dr. Garzon's 14 domestic disaster response deployments have been with the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue System, and have included the Oklahoma City bombing, the World Trade Center during 9/11, New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, and others. His 18 international disaster responses have included the Southeast Asia Tsunami, earthquakes in Kashmir, Haiti and Mexico, civil violence Kenya and Nigeria, famine in Somalia, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, and others.

Dr. Garzon has helped develop capacity building medical programs in Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Vietnam, Cambodia, Guatemala, Colombia and other countries.

Dr. Garzon has served on national and state panels to define Crisis Medical Care guidelines and Pandemic Flu guidelines, and he has been a consultant for the U.S. Department of State on medical care for weapons of mass destruction.



**April Michelle Giambra ASW, SUDCC III-CS**  
**Clinical Deputy Director- Alcohol and Drug Administrator**  
**Lake County Behavioral Health Services**

April Michelle Giambra serves as the Clinical Deputy Director for Lake County Behavioral Health Services, overseeing both specialty mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) services and serving as the County's SUD Administrator. Over the past 13 years, she has advanced from an SUD intern to executive leadership, while simultaneously completing her drug and alcohol counseling certification, a bachelor's degree in psychology, and a Master of Social Work from Capella University. She is a waived Registered Associate Clinical Social Worker and is currently pursuing a PhD in clinical psychology, with a focus on expanding equitable access to care for people with justice and systems involvement.

Ms. Giambra led the development and implementation of one of California's first Department of Health Care Services-approved Medi-Cal Mobile Crisis Response Teams, building community-based, integrated crisis services in a small rural, frontier county. Under her leadership, Lake County has expanded Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System services, strengthened SMHS and SUD prevention, and piloted multiple Medi-Cal transformation initiatives. Her work includes direct crisis response, joint mobile responses with law enforcement, DUI and criminal/diversion court advocacy, and rebuilding trust with systems that have historically fractured relationships with communities. She has shared this work in statewide forums, including the Words to Deeds conference on mobile crisis response.

A former foster youth, justice-involved adult, and prior consumer of Lake County's mental health and SUD services, Ms. Giambra brings a rare combination of lived experience, clinical expertise, and systems-level leadership. Her journey from incarceration and addiction to executive leadership grounds her commitment to peer-led, client-centered care. As a member of the 988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group, she hopes to elevate the voices of rural and frontier communities, people with justice involvement, and consumers and families, helping to shape a comprehensive 988 crisis system

that is trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, and truly accessible to those most often left out of traditional systems.



**Brenda Grealish**  
**Executive Officer**  
**Commission for Behavioral Health (CBH)**

Brenda Grealish is the Executive Director of the California Commission for Behavioral Health where she leads statewide efforts to improve behavioral health outcomes through policy innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and stakeholder engagement. She brings over 25 years of leadership experience in California state government, with expertise in public behavioral health policy and delivery system administration, with a focus on the intersection of behavioral health and criminal justice. Prior to her current role, she served as Executive Officer of the Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health, Chief of the Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Division and Assistant Deputy Director at the Department of Health Care Services, and Deputy Director of the Office of Research at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Ms. Grealish is known for her collaborative leadership style, deep policy knowledge, and commitment to ensuring that individuals with complex behavioral health needs can live healthy, meaningful lives.



**Taun Hall**  
**Executive Director**  
**The Miles Hall Foundation**

The day Taun Hall's son Miles was shot and killed, she stepped into her life's work: Creating change to protect families from a system that failed her son.

Since June 2, 2019, Taun has worked tirelessly with her husband Scott and daughter Alexis, to not only promote awareness of the problems embedded in the care for those living with mental illness, but to identify where the levers of change are. Since Miles's death, The Miles Hall Foundation was created. The mission is: To support and protect families by educating communities about mental illness and by protecting those suffering with mental illness from excessive use of force by law enforcement. Her work is supported by the FRIENDS OF SCOTT, ALEXIS AND TAUN HALL, and JUSTICE FOR MILES HALL, which have volunteers and supporters from all over the country. She is an advocate and Co-Sponsor for The Miles Hall Lifeline and Suicide Prevention Act - AB 988 which was signed into California legislation on September 2022. This legislation provides an alternative number to 911 that involves trained mental health professionals, and a mobile crisis response team that doesn't involve the police.

She is an advocate of The Miles Hall Crisis Hub, which is 24/7 as of December 1, 2023 and provides mental health services in Contra Costa County, and is staffed with licensed behavioral health clinicians and peers with lived experience who triage calls, de-escalate situations, and dispatch mobile crisis teams. Taun formed alliances with other families, organizations, and politicians across the country who are working for change. She is a featured speaker and panelist on media and public and private events.

Her message: Black lives matter, Black minds matter, her son Miles matters, and change is possible and inevitable.



**Roberto Herrera**  
**Deputy Secretary, Veterans Services Division**  
**California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)**

Roberto C. Herrera Jr. was appointed Deputy Secretary of Veterans Services by Governor Gavin Newsom on October 10, 2023. He has served in several key positions at CalVet since 2014 including the oversight, design, and strategy of CalVet's mental health, housing, and supportive service programs, CalVet's District Offices, and the accreditation of California's County Veteran Service Offices.

Roberto's prior experience also includes the development of the California Transition Assistance Program, Justice Involved Veteran Initiative, and the Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Program.

Roberto was a Scientific Applications Specialist (9S100) in the U.S. Air Force from 2008 to 2012, ultimately attaining the rank of Senior Airman. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of California, Davis and a Master of Public Health degree from the University of San Francisco.



**Sean Johnson**  
**Assistant Deputy Secretary**  
**California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)**

Sean Johnson has served as Asst. Deputy Secretary at CalVet since 2024, leading the veteran claims and county support operations and a variety of housing and mental health support programs. Prior to this role, Sean led CalVet's partnership with California

Department of Housing and Community Development during implementation of the Veterans Housing and Homelessness Prevention (VHHP) program. Sean's prior experience also includes vocational rehabilitation fiscal and case management policy and procedures at the Department of Rehabilitation. Sean is a Marine Corps veteran. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Marketing from California State University, Fullerton and a Master of Public Policy and Administration degree from Sacramento State University.



**Saurav Jung Thapa**  
**Director of Coalitions and Partnership Engagement**  
**The Trevor Project**

Saurav Jung Thapa has 15 years of experience in policy advocacy, partner and coalition management, and technical writing/editing experience on LGBTQ+ issues, public health, mental health, and global human rights.

Saurav currently serves as the Director of Coalitions & Partnership Engagement at The Trevor Project, the leading suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ+ young people. In this leadership role, Saurav develops, executes, and scales Trevor's presence and impact through strategic coalitions and key institutional partnerships with state and federal governments and with mental health, LGBTQ+, and youth organizations.

Previously, Saurav served as the Senior Manager of Federal Affairs at The Trevor Project for three years. In this role, he led Trevor's federal government and coalition engagement related to the 988 Lifeline's LGBTQ+ youth specialized services. The Trevor Project was the leading provider of 988 '3' LGBTQ+ youth services from 2022 until its termination in 2025. Prior to his federal affairs role, Saurav served as a senior manager on the International Strategy team where he led operational planning for the launch of Trevor Mexico in 2022.

Saurav is a member of the suicide prevention working group and the veterans & military working group of the Mental Health Coalition Group, a national coalition of over 100 leading mental health organizations. He also leads Trevor's engagement with the National Council for Suicide Prevention, the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Youth, the Council for Global Equality, and several national LGBTQ+ coalitions.

Before Trevor, Saurav worked as the associate director of global research at the Human Rights Campaign and was a LGBTQ+ technical officer at the United Nations for a project spanning eight countries in South, Southeast, and East Asia.

Saurav earned a master's degree in law and diplomacy from The Fletcher School at Tufts University and a bachelor's degree in government and international relations from Hampshire College. He grew up in Kathmandu, Nepal and now lives in Washington, D.C. with his husband.



**Carmen Katsarov**  
**Executive Director Behavioral Health Integration**  
**CalOptima Health**

As Executive Director, Behavioral Health Integration, Carmen Katsarov is responsible for the management and oversight of CalOptima Health Behavioral Health department, along with new implementation related to state and county behavioral health initiatives.

Carmen is a Social Worker, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, and Certified Case Manager with direct practice in community, hospital, utilization, and case management and over 20 years of both clinical and leadership roles, overseeing behavioral health utilization management, case management, social services, and leading initiatives for Commercial, Medicaid and Medicare.



**Robb Layne**  
**Executive Director**  
**California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program**  
**Executives, Inc. (CAADPE)**

Robb Layne is the Executive Director of the California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives (CAADPE), the only state-wide association representing all types of substance use disorder services. In this role, Robb transformed the association into a vital player in the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) policy arena, grew the association's financial position and created a wider political footprint for his members.

Robb graduated from the University of California, Davis, and began a career bridging multiple industries. Bookending where he started to where he is now, Robb spent over ten years in the California State Assembly and California State Senate as legislative and committee staff. After leaving the Capitol, he was recruited to work as an executive team member at Partnership HealthPlan of California. After three years with Partnership, he was asked to join the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California. He rebranded the organization, increased its exposure, and enhanced its reputation at the State Capitol.

Both in his role as the Executive Director of CAADPE and as a parent of a son with Serious Mental Illness (SMI), Robb currently sits on the California Health & Human Services Agency Behavioral Health Task Force (BHTF), the California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC) Workforce Committee and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation/ Council on Criminal Justice California Juvenile Justice Compendium and Toolkit Advisory Board.

Robb has sat on various community boards including the Sacramento LGBT Community Center and Sacramento Rainbow Chamber of Commerce Foundation. He currently is the co-president of the Jewish Federation of the Sacramento Region. He lives in Sacramento with his husband Marc Koenigsberg and their dog Riley.



**Amanda Levy**  
**Deputy Director, Health Policy and Stakeholder**  
**Relations**  
**California Department of Managed Health Care**  
**(DMHC)**

Amanda Levy is the Deputy Director of Health Policy and Stakeholder Relations, where she is responsible for fostering proactive and effective relations between the DMHC and its stakeholders, while serving as primary advisor to the Director on critical issues and providing strategic planning and policy direction on emerging issues and industry trends.

Prior to joining the DMHC, Amanda worked for the California Psychological Association (CPA), where she served as the Director of Government Affairs. As CPA's chief lobbyist, she coordinated policy positions, lobbying strategy, and grassroots outreach.



**Dr. Jana Lord**  
**Chief Operating Officer**  
**Sycamores**

Dr. Jana Lord is a Clinical Psychologist and has over 20 years of working within the field of mental health. At Sycamores she oversees Community Mental Health Services, Co-Occurring Services, Psychiatry, as well as operations including Project Management. Dr. Lord's role as COO is instrumental in identifying and implementing Sycamores' new lines of services, in alignment with the organization's mission and strategic plan. Dr. Lord led Sycamores' implementation of Mobile Crisis Outreach Team, in Los Angeles County. Dr. Lord's portfolio also includes the expansion of Sycamores' services into Riverside County. In 2022, Sycamores began to provide Outpatient mental health services, and since December 31st, 2023 additionally provided Mobile Crisis Response Teams across the county. In addition to working for Sycamores since 2007, Dr. Lord has taught graduate courses on Law and Ethics, Interventions with Children and Adolescents, as well as on Psychological Testing. She has also been in private practice since 2004, specializing in loss and grief, anxiety, and navigating life transitions. Dr. Lord is seasoned in conducting training for mental health professionals throughout Los Angeles County in law and ethics, child abuse, crisis management, loss and grief, and differential diagnosis.

Dr. Lord received bachelor's degrees in Neuroscience and Psychology from Muskingum University in Ohio, and her master's and doctoral degrees at California School of Professional Psychology, Los Angeles, at Alliant International University.



**Lee Ann Magoski**  
**Director of Emergency Communications**  
**County of Monterey**

Lee Ann Magoski is the Director of the Emergency Communications Department for the County of Monterey, leading a consolidated 9-1-1 center serving 28 public safety agencies. With 30 years of experience, she has worked at four agencies, beginning her career as a dispatcher and advancing to agency director. She is the current (2025 to 2026) President of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA).

Lee Ann has served as a NENA chair officer since 2023, with a term continuing through 2027, and previously served on the California Chapter of NENA (CALNENA) Executive Board from 2016 to 2022. She also served on California's 9-1-1 Advisory Board from June 2018 through December 2022 and joined the California Health and Human Services 988 Crisis Policy Advisory Group in 2023, contributing to recommendations supporting implementation of California's five-year 988 plan.



**Rhyan Miller**  
**Behavioral Health Deputy Director**  
**Integrated Programs**  
**Riverside County**

Rhyan is currently the BH Deputy Director for Integrated Programs at Riverside County Department of Behavioral Health. This division of BH encompasses the DMC ODS System of Care, BH Crisis Response System of Care, Behavioral Health Integration Programs, Criminal Justice Behavioral Health and Imbedded SUD/MH Programs in RUHS FQHC's and County Hospital ED, along with probation and DPSS sites. Rhyan has been in the Behavioral Health Field for the last 24 years.



**Anete Millers**  
**Vice President of Legal and Regulatory Affairs**  
**California Association of Health Plans (CAHP)**

Anete is the Director of Legal and Regulatory Affairs at the California Association of Health Plans (CAHP), a state trade association representing 44 public and private health care service plans that collectively provide coverage to over 28 million Californians. Anete's advocacy is informed by several years of managed care experience from the state level and from her time at CAHP, along with several years of legal education. Before joining CAHP, Anete was a Legal Analyst in the Division of Medi-Cal Fraud and Elder Abuse at the California Office of the Attorney General, where she analyzed complex legal issues in health care fraud litigation.

Anete looks forward to joining the AB 988 Advisory Group and discussing how the state's efforts to implement a 24/7 crisis lifeline will connect to managed care. During her time at CAHP, a substantial portion of Anete's work has involved mental and behavioral health. From her participation in the DHCS Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) Fee Schedule Working Group to her engagement with health plans and regulators on the implementation of AB 988, SB 855, and SB 1338, Anete has had the opportunity to gain insight and expertise in a variety of areas tied to mental health services in California. Her work at CAHP has also touched on subjects like network adequacy and timely access to care, health equity and quality, claims payments, provider directories, and data exchange.

Anete holds a Juris Doctor from McGeorge School of Law, where her concentration was Trial and Appellate Advocacy. In 2019 she graduated as a member of the nationally renowned Order of Barristers.



**Ashley Mills**

**Assistant Deputy Director, Community Wellness  
California Department of Public Health (CDPH)**

Ashley Mills, MS is the Community Wellness Assistant Deputy Director within the Center for Healthy Communities at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). In her role, Ms. Mills oversees the Injury and Violence Prevention Branch, which includes the Office of Suicide Prevention, the Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch, and the California Tobacco Prevention Program.

She also oversees the Center's Program Alignment, Communications, and Equity Section. Prior to joining CDPH, Ms. Mills held several positions with the Mental Health Services Oversight Accountability Commission, where she established and led the Commission's policy research team. From 2017 to 2019, she led the Commission's effort to develop a statewide strategic suicide prevention plan, which led to the creation of the Office of Suicide Prevention.



**Keris Jän Myrick**  
**Senior Vice President of Partnerships and Innovation**  
**Inseparable (Mental Health Advocacy and Programs)**

Keris Jän Myrick is a leading mental health advocate and executive, known for her innovative and inclusive approach to mental health reform and the public disclosure of her personal story (as featured in the New York Times series: Lives Restored). Ms. Myrick has over 15 years of experience in mental health services innovations, transformation, and peer workforce development. She is known for her collaborative style and innovative “whole person” approach to mental health.

Ms. Myrick is on the Board of California Disability Rights (DRC) and on the Mental Health of America board of directors. She is the developer and host of the podcast “Unapologetically Black Unicorns” focusing on mental health, race equity and lived experience. Ms. Myrick was formerly the Chief of Peer and Allied Health Professions for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, and has served as the Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs for the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) of the United States Health and Human Services’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and was the Board President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Ms. Myrick is a Co-Editor of the Journal of Psychiatric Services “Lived Experience and Leadership” column and has authored numerous peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters. Ms. Myrick was a participant of the GAP (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry) crisis systems reform work and contributor to GAP Roadmap to the Ideal Crisis System report.

Ms. Myrick is a Certified Personal Medicine Coach (CPMC), has a MS in organizational psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology of Alliant International University and an MBA from Case Western University’s Weatherhead School of Management.



**Lan Nguyen**  
**Division Manager**  
**Crisis and Suicide Services**  
**County of Santa Clara Behavioral Health Services**  
**Department**

Lan has been working at County of Santa Clara since 2000. As Division Manager of the County's Behavioral Health Services Department, he oversees Crisis and Suicide Services including 988 Crisis and Suicide Prevention Lifeline. He developed and implemented a Countywide 988 Implementation Plan that facilitates strategic collaborations with local mental health mobile response services, crisis stabilization units, mental health and substance use service providers, ethnic minority communities, and law enforcement partners.

Prior to joining the County, Lan worked as mental health clinician and administrator at various community-based organizations. He continuously advocates for needed mental health services for diverse communities and families in Santa Clara County. He also served on the School Board of East Side Union High School District from 2004 to 2020.

He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and psychology from San Jose State University and a master's degree in counseling psychology from John F. Kennedy University.



**Jackie Pierson**  
**Interim Executive Director**  
**California Consortium for Urban Indian Health (CCUIH)**

Jackie Pierson, MSW, MA (Anishinaabe) is the Interim Executive Director of the California Consortium for Urban Indian Health (CCUIH). Jackie has worked in the behavioral health and healthcare field for 22 years, focusing on trauma, healing-centered care, and advancing health equity across urban Indian public health systems.

She is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) at the University of Southern California, where her work centers on systems change, innovative leadership, and strengthening culturally grounded behavioral health infrastructures. Jackie brings lived experience as an urban Indian, having grown up in the inner city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and is a proud mother of two daughters, an intergenerational perspective that informs her leadership and commitment to healing for Native communities.

Across her career, Jackie has become a recognized leader in culturally responsive, trauma-informed care for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities. Prior to stepping into the Interim Executive Director role, she led CCUIH's Wellness and Healing portfolio, including the Tribal Medication Assisted Treatment (TMAT) statewide opioid response project, expanding education, destigmatizing treatment, increasing naloxone access, and developing culturally rooted materials for AIAN communities. She also developed and led the CalHOPE Redline warmline, overseeing resource navigation, peer support, and statewide referral pathways that address the broad spectrum of issues impacting AIAN relative well-being.

In her current role, Jackie provides strategic leadership across all CCUIH programs, policy and planning efforts, workforce initiatives, and statewide partnerships, working to build a stronger, more equitable Indian health system for urban Native communities throughout California.



**Lei Portugal Calloway**  
**Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist**  
**Peer Team Lead, AOT/CARE Court**  
**Telecare Corporation**

Lei Portugal Calloway has been in the Mental Health field for the past 15 years, moving up the peer career ladder from Peer Support Specialist to Peer Team Lead with Telecare's Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) and CARE Court programs in Orange County. Besides her primary duties, she directs their after-hours on-call staff, who provide crisis support 24/7 evenings, weekends and holidays. Lei has provided support at the Be Well substance use residential programs and as part of a triage team with Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) in San Diego. Lei has also provided nearly 100 assessments and crisis support for involuntary 5150 holds, as well as supporting clients with de-escalation/developing safety plans, choosing voluntary hospitalization or short-term crisis residential and avoiding incarceration.

Along with leading a team and helping to run both programs, Lei has been tasked with supporting 300+ California Telecare peers with becoming Medi-Cal Certified Peer Support Specialists and is also state certified. She recently participated as a paid Subject Matter Expert, in contributing towards the 2024 CalMHSa Certification Exam and is active with many mental health organizations and community advocacy. Personally, Lei is an alumni of Phoenix House drug and alcohol program, where she completed their 18-month program in 2007 and continues to work a program of recovery. She is the mother of two adult daughters, both of whom have had similar challenges in mental health and substance use, making Lei an effective advocate as a Family Peer Support professional.

Prior to her work in Mental Health, Lei had 28 years of experience in Marketing and Corporate Communications in aerospace, software, home design, real estate, the printing industry and health care.



**Miguel Serricchio**  
**Managing Director**  
**eCapital**

Miguel lost his youngest son, Alex, to suicide ten years ago and shortly after found Didi Hirsch. He took advantage of the different programs that Didi Hirsch has to support families with the loss of a loved one by suicide.

Shortly after using Didi Hirsch's services, he felt the need to give back. He didn't want the loss of his son to be just a statistic, so he started volunteering. For the past 9 years, he has had the opportunity to facilitate eight-week groups and monthly drop-ins in English and Spanish, helping loss survivors in their grief journey. Additionally, he has written articles for Didi Hirsch's newsletter, has been interviewed and served on different suicide prevention panels. His goal is suicide-prevention.

Miguel is also a member of California's Behavioral Health Task Force, and the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Network.

Originally from Buenos Aires, Miguel now resides with his wife, in Valencia, California. He holds a degree in international finance from the Universidad Argentina de la Empresa in Buenos Aires, Argentina and is a 35+ year veteran of the banking and finance industry. When not working or volunteering, Miguel enjoys cycling, hiking and traveling with his wife and spends as much time as possible backpacking with his oldest son and spending time with his daughter, daughter-in-law and 2 beautiful granddaughters.



**Adrienne Shilton**  
**Senior Vice President of Public Policy & Strategy**  
**California Alliance of Child and Family Services**

Adrienne is the Senior Vice President of Public Policy & Strategy at the California Alliance of Child and Family Services.

She is a recognized expert in behavioral health policy who has devoted her career to improving the well-being of people living with mental health and substance use conditions. Adrienne became involved in mental health policy as a staff person in the campaign to pass the 2004 Mental Health Services Act. For the past three years, she has directed the multi-faceted legislative and budget advocacy program of the California Alliance, from developing strategic policy goals, to lobbying, building effective coalitions and partnerships, and working with Departments and oversight agencies to effectuate policy changes that enable providers to better serve children and families in public systems.

She has been a champion for culturally relevant program design, incorporating peer support as a crucial piece of recovery, and using evaluation and outcomes-based reporting to drive strategy. Adrienne has served as an adviser on a number of statewide efforts, and currently sits on multiple task forces working to improve behavioral health policy in California, with a particular focus on youth, young adults, and families.

She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Knox College, and a master's degree in public policy and administration from California State University, Sacramento.



**Shari Sinwelski, MS/EdS, LPCC, NCC**  
**Vice President of Crisis Care**  
**Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services**

Currently, as Vice President of Crisis Care at the Suicide Prevention Center (SPC) at Didi Hirsch, Ms. Sinwelski oversees all suicide prevention programs, including individual, family and group counseling services, the SPC Contact Center and Teen Line. Previously, Shari served as the Vice-President of National Networks for Vibrant Emotional Health where she held the role of Deputy Director of the National Suicide Prevention Hotline and played a key role in bringing 988 to fruition nationwide. Shari has directed several hotlines that are part of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline including: the Suicide Prevention Center in Los Angeles, Vialink in New Orleans and 211 Big Bend in Tallahassee.

Shari works diligently to raise the voices of lived experience in the Suicide Prevention Community. She created the Didi Hirsch Survivors of Suicide Attempts Support group curriculum for individuals who have survived a suicide attempt and later co-authored a facilitators' manual and training to bring this support group to individuals nationally and around the world. She helped to develop the National Action Alliance's document *The Way Forward: Pathways to Hope, Recovery, and Wellness with insights from Lived Experience* and authored *A Journey Toward Health and Hope: A Handbook for Recovery After a Suicide Attempt*.

Shari has trained thousands of individuals in crisis intervention and suicide prevention and is a Training Coach for Living Works Education. She has provided subject matter expertise, consultation and mental health support for many national publications, social media companies, major television networks and Broadway productions. Shari Sinwelski is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor in the State of California. She holds a BS in Psychology and Master's and Educational Specialist degrees in Mental Health Counseling from Florida State University. She has nearly 30 years of experience in mental health, rape crisis, domestic violence, crisis intervention and suicide prevention.



**Robert Smith**  
**Chairman**  
**Pala Band of Mission Indians**

Robert H. Smith serves as Chairman of the Pala Band of Mission Indians, a position he has held since 1990. For more than three decades, Robert Smith has dedicated himself to improving the way of life for the members of the Pala Band of Mission Indians. As Tribal Chair, he played an integral role in the complex negotiations that resulted in Governor Wilson's signing of the Pala-State Compact in 1996, a groundbreaking agreement that legalized gaming on Indian lands in California. In 1999, Chairman Smith played an instrumental role in securing Tribal agreement on the Model Compacts, which help to ensure the continued economic freedom and independence of Tribes throughout the state. In 2004, Chairman Smith was one of five Tribal leaders to work side-by-side with Governor Schwarzenegger to come to an agreement on a set of compacts that benefited both Tribes and the State.

Chairman Smith takes great pride in being actively involved in the community and lends his time and energy to a variety of organizations. He serves as a member of California Tribal Business Alliance, San Luis Rey Indian Water Authority, Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association, San Diego Association of Governments, Indian Health Council for North San Diego County, National Fire Protection Agency, Pala Housing Authority, Vivian Banks Charter School Parent Advisory Board, Cupa Cultural Center, California Indian Manpower Consortium, California Fee-to-Trust Consortium, and the Inter-Tribal Long Term Recovery Foundation. Chairman Smith also serves as a delegate to the Tribal-Interior Budget Council for the Pacific Region, CalFire Advisory Board, National Congress of American Indians, and the National Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Board.

Chairman Smith has been a leader and essential contributor in the progression of Pala, including being an advocate for proactively addressing mental health concerns, supporting suicide interventions, and understanding the role and availability of 988 for the Tribal community. He also understands

the need for Tribal people to have access to culturally competent 988 crisis support. Chairman Smith fully supports the Tuchily Mobile Crisis Response Team, which is centered at the Pala Reservation, and is in collaboration with the Indian Health Clinic.



**Dan Southard**  
**Chief Deputy Director**  
**California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC)**

Dan Southard is Chief Deputy Director at the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC), where he is responsible for oversight of the day-to-day operations of the DMHC.

Prior to his appointment, Dan was the Deputy Director for the Office of Plan Monitoring where he was responsible for evaluating and promoting health plan regulatory compliance related to quality improvement, utilization management and member grievances and ensuring health plan networks have the right types of providers necessary to deliver health care services that meet time and geographic access requirements.

Dan has served in a variety of roles at the DMHC including as the Acting Assistant Deputy Director at the Help Center. In this capacity, he led the Help Center through a large-scale re-organization to increase program efficiency. Since joining the department, he has demonstrated an unwavering focus on California's health care consumers, strong leadership skills and deep familiarity with the statutory and regulatory framework under which the DMHC operates.



**Stephen Sparling**  
**Program Manager**  
**California Coalition for Youth**

Stephen Sparling has held effective service and leadership roles at the California Youth Crisis Line (CYCL) for over 8 years. CYCL is a 24/7 call, text, and chat crisis line for youth and their families facing a range of hardships, including homelessness, mental health crisis, suicide, and family conflict. After earning a BA in psychology from California State University, Sacramento, and accruing thousands of hours of crisis counseling experience, Stephen now serves as CYCL program manager. He utilizes perceptive lived experience with family, peers and community to stay connected to youth and understand the evolving challenges they face. He is consistently refining training and protocols for crisis counselors, utilizing data, direct service, and feedback to guide the indefatigable value of compassionate, human conversation to those that find themselves feeling isolated. Having found community in various subcultures through the years, such as music performance, STEM hobbies, online gaming, and recently entering fatherhood, Stephen hopes to continue facilitating spontaneous and impactful connections.



**Sarah Steenhausen**  
**Deputy Director of Policy, Research, and Engagement**  
**California Department of Aging (CDA)**

Sarah Steenhausen serves as Deputy Director of the Division of Policy, Research and Engagement at the California Department of Aging. In this role, she collaborates with state departments and stakeholders in developing policy and research impacting older adults, people with disabilities and family caregivers to advance system change and realize the goals of California's Master Plan for Aging. Previously, Sarah served as Director of Policy and Advocacy at The SCAN Foundation where she focused on working towards policy solutions to improve the system of care serving older adults and their family caregivers.

Sarah began her policy career in 2001 as a Consultant to the California State Senate Subcommittee on Aging and Long-Term Care. After her tenure in the Legislature, she served as Assistant Secretary for Long Term Care at the California Health and Human Services Agency, and later as Assistant Director for Strategic Planning at the Department of Developmental Services.

Sarah holds a Master of Science in Gerontology from the University of Southern California, Davis School of Gerontology and a Bachelor of Arts in History from Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut.



**Doug Subers**  
**Director of Governmental Affairs**  
**California Professional Firefighters**

Doug Subers is currently the Director of Governmental Affairs at the California Professional Firefighters which represents 35,000 professional firefighters and emergency medical service personnel across the state. CPF advocates on policies that impact their members wages, hours, and working conditions. CPF was honored to co-sponsor AB 1544 (Gipson/2020) which established community paramedicine and triage to alternate destination programs, including specialties in alternate destination mental health crisis facility and alternate destination sobering center. CPF's goal is to ensure that the communities they serve have access to systems that deliver high quality care that meets the needs of community members.



**Sohil Sud, MD, MA**

**Director**

**Children & Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI)  
California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)**

Dr. Sohil Sud is Director of the Children & Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, California's multi-billion dollar investment to transform services and supports for children, youth, and families. Prior to this role, he served in the California Department of Public Health and led Safe Schools for All, the state's interagency team to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in TK-12 schools. Dr. Sud is a practicing pediatrician on faculty at UCSF and cares for newborns and hospitalized children.



**Kasey Suffredini**  
**Chief Officer of Prevention**  
**The Trevor Project**

Kasey Suffredini is a nationally-recognized persuasion campaign strategist and expert in LGBTQ+ issues. Over the course of his 25-year career, he has represented LGBTQ+ communities in hundreds of successful efforts at the local, state, and federal levels to secure bipartisan solutions to issues ranging from employment discrimination to marriage equality. He's partnered with multiple presidential administrations to advance policy solutions across virtually all federal departments and agencies.

Kasey currently serves as Chief Officer of Prevention at The Trevor Project, where he oversees the organization's LGBTQ+ youth suicide prevention strategies, combining leading-edge scientific research, stigma reduction campaigns, public education, policy reform, and virtual community-building to enable welcoming environments for LGBTQ+ young people that protect them from entering crisis and ensure they can thrive.

Immediately prior to his appointment to The Trevor Project, Kasey served as CEO and National Campaign Director at Freedom for All Americans, where he was the chief architect of bipartisan campaigns to secure LGBTQ+ nondiscrimination protections nationwide. Under his leadership, the movement for nondiscrimination protections expanded the number of states with statewide protections by 25%, increased public support by 12% to a supermajority nationwide and majorities in every state, and won historic firsts in the Supreme Court and at the ballot. These breakthroughs included securing comprehensive statewide protections for the first time in Republican-led states and in the South, leading the nation's first statewide popular vote on transgender rights to victory by a landslide two-thirds margin (68-32%) and designing the strategy that won bipartisan enactment of the federal *Respect for Marriage Act*, which codified the freedom to marriage nationwide.

Kasey's previous leadership roles include Executive Director of MassEquality, founding Director of Public Policy and Community Engagement at Family Equality, and State Legislative Director at the National LGBTQ Task Force.

Kasey is a sought-after speaker on LGBTQ+ issues, culture change strategy and bipartisan policymaking and has been honored by numerous entities, including by the New Leaders Council, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Harvard Law School. A transgender attorney, Kasey served as President of the National LGBT Bar Association from 2004-2005 and was a member of its inaugural class of Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40 in 2010. Kasey received a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley and a J.D. from Boston College Law School.



**Austin Trujillo**  
**Health Policy Specialist**  
**California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC)**

Austin Trujillo is a Health Program Specialist II in the DMHC Director's Office, where he is responsible for working with county behavioral health departments to provide technical assistance pertaining to payment of medically necessary behavioral health services and investigating claim reimbursement compliance.

Prior to joining the DMHC, Austin worked with the Department of Health Care Services managing audits of Medi-Cal services and has served in several public sector positions focused on behavioral health policy research and development.



**Stephanie Welch**  
**Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health**  
**Office of Policy and Strategic Planning (OPSP)**  
**California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)**

Stephanie N. Welch was appointed Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health at the California Health and Human Services Agency in 2020.

Welch previously served as Executive Officer for the Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health since 2015. Welch was the Senior Program Manager for the California Mental Health Services Authority from 2011 to 2015, an Associate Policy Director at the County Behavioral Health Directors Association from 2007 to 2011, and the Associate Director of Public Policy at the Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies from 2000 to 2005. Welch earned a BA in Social Work from University of California at Davis and a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Southern California.



**Pete Weldy**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**California Alliance of Child and Family Services**

Pete is the CEO of the California Alliance of Child and Family Services and its Catalyst Center. He brings a lifelong commitment to improving the welfare, health, and happiness of children, youth, and families by advancing solutions that are equitable, responsive, and compassionate. With deep experience across public policy, nonprofit leadership, and government administration, Pete is dedicated to ensuring that policy and practice reflect the real needs of communities. Most recently, Pete served as Regional Administrator for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families in San Francisco, where he led 65 staff across a portfolio of human services programs totaling more than \$12 billion of federal investments distributed across 10 states and territories and 157 Tribes.

Pete's cross-sector leadership experience spans philanthropy, consulting, and government, including as Director of Public Policy at Silicon Valley Community Foundation where he led strategic initiatives and launched the *Choose Children 2018* campaign to elevate early childhood issues in the California Governor's race. In his home state of Indiana, he served as the Director of Policy and Research at the Department of Education where he authored a new strategic plan and advocated before legislature. He began his career working for elected leaders in the Indiana House of Representatives.

Pete also serves on several boards of directors, including Full Circle Health Network and Parents as Teachers, a highly respected international organization that provides evidence-based home visiting services to families. Pete has been the recipient of numerous service and leadership awards during his career, including San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria's recognition of "Pete Weldy Day" in 2021. Throughout his career, Pete has built coalitions to advance meaningful change on behalf of kids and families who are often overlooked by systems of power. He is a skilled strategist, communicator, and

policy leader who understands how to navigate complex institutions while centering the needs of providers and the people they serve.

Pete holds a BA in Music and Education from Butler University in Indianapolis and now lives in San Francisco with his wife, Karla, and their two cats.



**Amber Westphal**  
**Behavioral Health Program Manager – Substance Use Treatment**  
**Lake County Behavioral Health Department, Lake County California**

Amber serves as a Behavioral Health Programs Manager at Lake County Behavioral Health Services, supporting substance use treatment and the DMC-ODS plan through program oversight, quality improvement, provider partnership, and implementation support. With 15 years of experience, including work in community-based organizations, crisis services, behavioral health services within small county government, behavioral health clinics, substance use disorder treatment, care coordination, and peer support. Amber brings a practical, system-focused approach to strengthening the continuum of care through the lens of both a professional and a peer. She also has deep expertise in victim services supporting survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, including advocacy and coordinated, survivor-centered response.

Her approach is grounded in trauma-informed care, harm reduction, recovery-oriented practice, and collaboration. Amber is committed to strengthening access to services, improving continuity of care, and advancing effective, client-centered supports. She values cross-functional partnerships with providers, county teams, and community stakeholders to build sustainable solutions and improve outcomes across the continuum of care.



**Jessica Wilson (Cruz)**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**NAMI – California**

Jessica Cruz is the current CEO of NAMI California. Jessica has dedicated her career to fighting for better mental health care and increased awareness of mental illness. Jessica previously worked as the Political Action Committee Administrator for the California Hospital Association and the Director of Media Outreach for the California Broadcasters Association. Jessica is a passionate advocate for mental health care reform and has worked tirelessly to improve access to mental health services in California.

Jessica Cruz's educational career includes a Master's in Public Administration from the University of San Francisco, a Bachelor's in Mass Communication from California State University-Sacramento, and general education courses from American River College.



**Steve Yarbrough**  
**Deputy Director, Public Safety Communications**  
**California Governor's Office of Emergency Services**  
**(Cal OES)**

Steve Yarbrough has served with the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) since 2013. In his current role, Steve is responsible for the statewide public safety radio systems and microwave network that supports state agencies, the 9-1-1 system that supports 438 Public Safety Answering Points with over 27 million 9-1-1 calls per year, the 9-8-8 system, and the Emergency Communications Division. Steve also serves as both the State 9-8-8 Technical Advisory Board and the State 9-1-1 Advisory Board chair.

Steve has over 15 years of communication's experience and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from California State University, Chico.

**California Health and Human Services Agency**  
**PROJECT TEAM BIOS**



**Anh Thu Bui (she/her)**  
**Project Director, 988-Crisis Care Continuum**  
**Office of Policy and Strategic Planning (OPSP)**  
**California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)**

Dr. Bui has worked as a community psychiatrist in California for over twenty years, serving individuals of all ages in several county specialty mental health programs and community health centers. She earned her Medical Degree from the Mayo Clinic School of Medicine in 1995 and holds board certifications in Psychiatry, Community and Public Psychiatry, and Addiction Medicine. She is a proud alumna of the California Health Care Foundation Health Care Leadership Program, Cohort 19.

Much of her work in advocating for individuals with serious mental illness and substance use disorders has been informed by experiencing and witnessing trauma in her family and community as a refugee from Vietnam, and 35 years later, seeing the positive expansion of essential health services via the Affordable Care Act. She worked at the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) for two years as a Medical Consultant in Behavioral Health, including serving as Project Director for the SAMHSA 988 Cooperative Agreement to DHCS to support implementation of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

She is honored to have joined the California Health and Human Services Agency since October 2023 to work on 988 implementation and integration into the crisis care continuum to improve behavioral health services for all Californians.



**Austin Dickman (he/him)**  
**Senior Policy Analyst**  
**Office of Policy and Strategic Planning (OPSP)**  
**California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)**

Prior to joining the Office of Policy and Strategic Planning team in April 2024, Austin was the Executive Assistant with the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) at CalHHS where he supported the Directorate in addition to developing and implementing many of the administrative policies and procedures for the new office. He also has a demonstrated history of success in the nonprofit sector working with diverse populations across the United States. He is highly invested in serving through a social justice and equity lens to advocate for and impact the lives and long-term positive outcomes of all Californians. His professional interests are in preventative, upstream approaches that influence social determinants of health and build healthy communities. Austin has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Gonzaga University and a Master of Public Health from California State University, Sacramento.



**Alison Garibay**  
**Policy Analyst**  
**Office of Policy and Strategic Planning (OPSP)**  
**California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)**

Prior to joining the California Health and Human Services Agency Office of Policy and Strategic Planning team, Alison was a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Fellow focused on equitable health. She was a Health Fellow with the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights and The United States House of Representatives. Alison was also an Executive Fellow through Sacramento State Capitol Fellows program where she was placed with The Data Office of Cradle-To-Career. She comes from the Central Valley where her interest in health policy developed. Alison holds a BA in Social Work from CSU Fresno, a Masters in Social Work from Columbia University in the City of New York, and a Masters in Health Policy & Law pending from UC Law SF.



**Ali Vangrow (she/her)**  
**Senior Behavioral Health Program Manager**  
**Office of Policy and Strategic Planning (OPSP)**  
**California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)**

Ali Vangrow joined the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) in August 2023. At CalHHS, she works on a range of behavioral health initiatives, including the implementation of Proposition 1.

Ali brings eight years of health policy experience at both the federal and state levels. Prior to joining CalHHS, she earned a Master of Public Policy from the University of California, Berkeley. Before her graduate studies, Ali spent nearly five years in Washington, D.C., working in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. While her primary focus was health policy, she also worked on issues related to agriculture, veterans' affairs, and LGBTQ rights.

As a lifelong Californian, Ali is deeply committed to improving the lives and well-being of all Californians through thoughtful, data-driven policy that strengthens communities, reduces disparities, and expands access to care and opportunity.

Ali holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Colgate University, where she discovered her passion for public service and policymaking.

**Hypha Consulting and Advocates for Human Potential**  
**PROJECT TEAM BIOS**



**Jamie Strausz-Clark (she/her)**  
**Principal**  
**Hypha Consulting**

Jamie Strausz-Clark is a Seattle-based facilitator and community engagement strategist with more than 20 years of experience helping government and nonprofit organizations collaborate effectively. Her expertise includes facilitation, equity-focused engagement, environmental justice analysis, strategic communications, and public policy.

As Principal of Hypha Consulting, LLC, Jamie designs and leads inclusive processes that bring diverse voices together to create meaningful change. She specializes in convening advisory committees, facilitating charrettes, and guiding integrated planning efforts. Her work has supported major initiatives such as Washington's behavioral health crisis reform and universal health care, as well as the collaborative drafting of California's 988 behavioral health crisis response implementation plan.

Jamie holds a BA in Political Science from the University of California, San Diego and a Master of Public Policy from Duke University.



**Andrew Guy**  
**Senior Program Manager I**  
**Advocates for Human Potential (AHP)**

Andrew Guy is a Senior Program Manager at Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. (AHP) He has more than 13 years of experience in behavioral health care, with a focus on project management and quality measurement and improvement. Since joining AHP, Mr. Guy has served as the program manager for the Crisis Care Mobile Units (CCMU) and Behavioral Health Justice Intervention Services (BHJIS) projects. In these roles, he worked with county behavioral health directors to help implement and expand mobile crisis systems and with law enforcement agencies to help develop programs to reduce the interaction of people with behavioral health concerns with the carceral system.

Mr. Guy comes to AHP from L.A. Care Health Plan, where he most recently worked as the Behavioral Health Project Manager. Mr. Guy has several years of experience leading both internal and external stakeholders throughout the health care system to improve quality outcomes. Mr. Guy graduated with a B.A. in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles.



**Andunett Langhum**  
**Senior Consultant I**  
**Advocates for Human Potential (AHP)**

Ms. Langhum is a Senior Consultant and Subject Matter Expert (SME) in homelessness and behavioral health at Advocates for Human Potential (AHP). Her expertise encompasses the critical intersections of these fields, with a particular focus on crisis mobile services, housing and homelessness, and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Ms. Langhum's professional experience spans a diverse range of populations, allowing her to gain a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness and mental health issues. Her work has involved providing direct mental health care in the field, demonstrating a hands-on approach to client engagement and service delivery. During the recent pandemic, Ms. Langhum also effectively managed frontline staff in the delivery of vital outreach services, adapting to evolving circumstances and ensuring continued support for vulnerable populations.

As an SME in crisis mobile, Ms. Langhum is uniquely positioned to address the immediate and complex needs of individuals experiencing behavioral health crises in various settings. Her knowledge of housing and homelessness issues extends to understanding the systemic factors contributing to these challenges, as well as the implementation of effective solutions, such as the Housing First approach. Furthermore, her proficiency in HMIS enables her to leverage data for improved program development, service coordination, and accountability in addressing the needs of individuals experiencing mental health crisis' and homelessness.

Andunett has a B.A in Political Science from the University of San Francisco and a Certificate in Drug and Alcohol Abuse Counseling from California State University of Dominguez Hills.



**Brett McMillen, M.S.W.**  
**Senior Program Associate II**  
**Advocates for Human Potential (AHP)**

Brett McMillen is a macro social worker dedicated to health equity, social justice, and creating systemic change through progressive policy and service implementation. She received both her M.S.W. in administration and community development and her B.A. in psychology from San Diego State University.

Prior to joining the AHP team, Brett spent 10+ years in various non-profit spaces within the realm of behavioral health. She has content expertise in grant administration, coalition building, community engagement, public policy, qualitative research, leadership development, social emotional learning, and training facilitation. She previously served as Program Manager of the San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council, leading efforts to implement a countywide suicide prevention action plan, and Program Manager of the San Diego Resident Leadership Academy, empowering residents from under-resourced communities to implement change related to social determinants of health. Brett is a former AmeriCorps City Year Member, a returned Peace Corps Youth Development Volunteer, and has extensive experience working across different sectors with priority populations.

At AHP, she previously served as a Lead Grantee Coach for the CA Behavioral Health Workforce Development Initiative, supporting peer-based workforce efforts to diversify and enhance behavioral health services throughout the state. Currently, she serves as a Grantee Liaison for the CA 988 Network and leads training and technical assistance efforts for Crisis Centers.