

ADvancing States Next Gen HCBS Leaders: 2023



Adrienne Navarro

Social Services Chief II

Nevada Aging & Disability
Services Division

Adrienne Navarro is the Supportive Services Chief within the Office of Community Living at Nevada’s Aging and Disability Services Division. In this role, Adrienne oversees case management for two Medicaid 1915(c) HCBS waivers, as well as the administration and operations of state funded programs that provide in-home supportive services. Additionally, Adrienne has oversight of Nevada’s Communication Access Services Program, which provides services for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have a speech disability. Prior to moving into the role of Supportive Services Chief, Adrienne served as the Advocacy and Community Services Chief providing oversight of multiple programs including Nevada’s Assistive Technology Act federal and state programs, the State Pharmaceutical Assistance Program, and the Medicare Assistance Program. Prior to relocating to Nevada, she worked at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD.

Adrienne completed her undergraduate studies at California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, earning a degree in Biology with a minor in Psychology. She received a master’s degree in Animal Behavior (Psychology/Biology) from Bucknell University.



Ellen Hackenmueller

Health Program Manager III

Alaska Division of Senior and
Disabilities Services

Ellen Hackenmueller, MPH, has managed state and federal grant programs for the State of Alaska for 10 years across a range of programs. Her experience includes compliance monitoring and quality improvement, needs assessment, performance measurement, and systems improvement efforts. She currently oversees all HCBS Grant Programs for the state of Alaska, including Older Americans Act programs, Alaska’s No Wrong Door system, and Independent Living grant services.



Carmen Clutter

Chief, Elder Connections
Division

The Ohio Department of Aging

Carmen Clutter, MS, RDN, LD is the Chief of the Elder Connections Division at the Ohio Department of Aging. Since joining the Ohio Department of Aging in 2019, she has matured from her initial role as the Agency’s Population Health and Nutrition Manager to the Assistant Chief of the Elder Connections Division in 2021, and most recently, Chief of the Elder Connections Division in 2022.

Carmen leads a team of professionals dedicated to advancing elder justice, equity, healthy aging, and well-being for older Ohioans. Her division administers population health programs and supports established by the Older Americans Act and other federal programs including supportive services, nutrition programs, and disease prevention and health promotion initiatives.

Carmen received her Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition and Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition from The Ohio State University and has served as a dietetics advisory council member with the State Medical Board of Ohio since 2018. She is a principal author of Ohio’s 2023-2026 State Plan on Aging and contributing member to the development and implementation of Ohio’s 2020-2022 Strategic Action Plan on Aging.



Dayva Briand

Project Manager – Strategic
Initiatives

MassHealth Office of Long
Term Services and Supports,
MA Executive Office of Health

Dayva Briand is a Project Manager for Strategic Initiatives at MassHealth's Office of Long Term Services and Supports. In this role she supports key projects and policy initiatives for nursing facilities related to improving rate structures, enhancing program integrity, supporting specialized populations and resident transitions to the community. She began her career with MassHealth in 2019, working on projects involving justice involved individuals, Medicaid eligibility processes, and vaccination sites for the COVID-19 response.

Dayva holds a BA in Political Science and an MA in Economics from Boston University.



Clair Benitez

Director, Office of Disability
Services Coordination

Texas Health and Human
Services

Clair Benitez took the helm of the newly formed Office of Disability Services Coordination (ODSC) at the Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC) in May 2021. ODSC aims to improve outcomes for Texans with disabilities by coordinating across and within HHS programs and external agency partners, participating in stakeholder engagement, and focusing on strategic initiatives that propel the vision of ODSC.

Clair keeps a pulse on systemic, cross disability needs and priorities by serving as the Health & Human Services Commission ex-officio member on the Governors Committee for People with Disabilities and lead on the Promoting Independence Plan, Texas' response to the landmark Olmstead decision. Her previous career within state operated facilities included roles such the statewide subject matter expert for resident rights and guardianship, and Continuity of Care Coordinator, managing a team of staff dedicated toward access to services through admission and integration back into their communities.



Heather Larsen Mossinger

Caregiver Compensation &
Medical Respite Program
Manager

Utah Department of Health
and Human Services

Heather Larsen Mossinger is the Caregiver Compensation & Medical Respite Program Manager for the Utah Department of Health and Human Services. Heather has 20+ years of professional experience working with and for individuals with disabilities and has worked for the State of Utah for the last 5+ years. She has been focused on advancing quality improvement in long term services and supports since 2008 and participates in several committees and collaborations related to improving programs and supports for Utahans.



DeNae Gailey
Medicaid Policy Analyst
Idaho Department of Health
and Welfare

DeNae Gailey is a Policy Analyst for the Policy and Innovations team with Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. DeNae is responsible for drafting waiver applications, state plan amendments, and Idaho Administrative Rule changes. She also provides policy expertise and technical assistance to staff and stakeholders to ensure accurate consistent program administration.

Prior to her current role DeNae has held many positions within the State of Idaho including the Lead Operations Care Manager for the Idaho’s Bureau of Developmental Services and a Self-Reliance Specialist for Idaho’s Welfare programs. Before her State of Idaho employment, DeNae was a contracted Corporate Classroom Trainer and her specialties included State Insurance licensure, Medicare Special Needs Plans, Medicare Part C Plans, Medicare Part D Plans, and pharmacy benefits.

DeNae holds dual bachelor’s degrees in Human Services and Criminal Justice Administration from Brandman University.



Ivonne Pantoja
Fiscal Administrative Officer
Connecticut Department of
Developmental Services

Ivonne Pantoja is a Fiscal Administrative Officer for the CT Department of Developmental Services (DDS). She has over 10 years of experience in Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). In her role, she oversees DDS’ HCBS Medicaid Waiver enrollments and supervises staff that focus on supporting families with Medicaid enrollment.

Outside of her professional career, Ivonne has a daughter with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The challenges she and her family have experienced obtaining supports and services has given her the passion to help families like her own. Ivonne aspires to learn more about HCBS and be an avid advocate for families and individuals with disabilities.



Jennifer Hale

Director of Policy for the PA
Department of Human
Services, Office of Long-Term
Living

Pennsylvania State Medicaid
Agency

Jennifer Hale is the policy director for the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' Office of Long-Term Living. In her role, Jennifer is responsible for the policy direction and administration of Pennsylvania's 1915 (c) HCBS aging and physical disability programs which includes PA's managed long-term services and supports (MLTSS) program, Community Health Choices. Over the past 15 years, Jennifer has worked on several aging and disability initiatives that have contributed to her overall knowledge of HCBS policy. In 2019 she earned the PA Governor's award for excellence for her commitment to service and work on the transition from a Fee-For-Service to a managed care long-term services and supports delivery system.

Jennifer earned her undergraduate degree in Rehabilitation Services and master's degree in Psychology from the Pennsylvania State University.



Kayla Trzruc

Money Follows the Person
Project Director

North Dakota Department of
Health and Human Services

Kayla Trzruc has been serving as the Money Follows the Person Project Director since August 2022. This career shift has brought upon an opportunity to create system change and continue to drive the Money Follows the Person Demonstration into record breaking numbers. With a background in both behavioral health and developmental disability, this position allows Kayla to work across all divisions with the Department of Health and Human Services and no day is ever dull.



Kelsey Melah
Program and Policy Analyst
Wisconsin Department of
Health Services

Kelsey Melah is a program and policy analyst in the Managed Care Policy section of the Bureau of Programs and Policy in the Wisconsin Division of Medicaid Services. In this role, she performs key planning and policy development for Wisconsin's managed long-term services and supports (MLTSS) and acute/primary Medicaid managed care programs. Her current projects include leading the 2025 renewal of Wisconsin's 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Services waiver, dental access and quality improvement, and appeal and grievance reporting compliance.

Kelsey has worked in Medicaid policy since 2022. Before her current role, Kelsey worked for the Center for Patient Partnerships as a patient advocate and attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She holds a master's degree in public health and completed a graduate certificate in consumer health advocacy. Before returning for her master's degree, Kelsey spent several years working in health services research on studies related to aging and dementia care. She is an author or co-author of several peer-reviewed research studies.



Melissa Arzabal
Arizona Long Term Care
System CM Program Manager
Arizona Health Care Cost
Containment System
(AHCCCS)

Melissa Arzabal brings over 20 years of social work and case management experience to her current position as the Arizona Long Term Care (ALTCs)-Case Management Program Manager within the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) Division of Health Care Services. In her role, she is responsible for program oversight and monitoring of four long term care Managed Care Organizations serving over 60,000 Arizona residents eligible for Medicaid/Long Term Care. Melissa has been serving in this role for 9 years but has been with AHCCCS for nearly 12 years. Melissa has a Master's of Public Administration, with an emphasis in Health Care from Grand Canyon University and a bachelor's in Social Work from New Mexico State University.



Pam Winsel

Bureau Chief, HCBS Waiver
Operations Management

Illinois Healthcare and Family
Services

Pam Winsel is the Chief of the Bureau of HCBS Waiver Operations at the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services. The waiver operations bureau is responsible for oversight and coordination of the nine 1915(c) home and community-based services waivers in Illinois; these include programs for the elderly, medically fragile/technology dependent, developmentally/intellectually disabled, physically disabled, brain injury, and HIV/AIDS. The bureau also oversees the Statewide Transition Plan, Money Follows the Person, and Electronic Visit Verification.

Pam has more than 15 years of experience with 1915(c) HCBS waivers, quality improvement, and care coordination through her work at the State of Illinois and in the private sector with an external quality review organization and a managed care organization.



Riyyah James

Program Manager

Alabama Medicaid Agency

Riyyah James is professionally employed with the Alabama Medicaid Agency and currently serves as Program Manager for the Long-Term Healthcare Reform Division's Specialized Waiver Unit. Riyyah is primarily responsible for monitoring the compliance of three Alabama 1915(c) Home and Community Based Waiver Programs serving Alabama's intellectually disabled population and is the Project Manager for the 1115 CWP Demonstration Waiver. Riyyah serves as a Medicaid Representative on the Alabama Department of Mental Health Developmental Disabilities Division Stakeholder Taskforce and Subcommittee meetings, Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council. Prior to managing Waivers, Riyyah began her career at Medicaid as a Beneficiary Services Specialist before being promoted to the Long-Term Care Healthcare Reform Division.

Riyyah holds a bachelor's in Business Administration with a Concentration in Marketing and a master's in Business Administration from Auburn University.



Sarah Hoerle

Waiver Administration and
Compliance Unit Supervisor

Colorado Dept. of Health
Care Policy and Financing

Sarah Hoerle graduated from the University of Wyoming with her master's degree in Social Work in 2007. After graduation, Sarah worked for 2 years in Wyoming as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for individuals who had a Severe and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI). When Sarah moved to Colorado, she worked for a short time as a hospital social worker in Denver. However, her passion for healthcare policy won out and she began working at the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, Colorado's single state Medicaid Agency, in 2012. Since that time, Sarah has worked in a variety of positions, but always working with Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver. Currently, Sarah is the Unit Supervisor over the Waiver Administration and Compliance unit which obtains and maintains all federal approvals for State Plan Amendments, 1915(b)(4), 1915(c), and 1915(k) programs. Her team is also responsible for all the quality assurances for these programs and also manages member surveys through the National Core Indicator survey.



Seth Kilber

Assistant Commissioner
Kansas Dept. for Aging and
Disability Services

Seth Kilber's passion for improving the lives of marginalized individuals is evident in his 10 years of experience in the LTSS field, beginning as a direct support professional and advancing to his current position as Assistant Commissioner for the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS). With his previous work at one of the state's Community Developmental Disability Organizations (CDDO), where he determined eligibility for IDD services and performed quality oversight of IDD providers, Seth brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his current role. His commitment to the idea that a society's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members fosters in him a drive to continually deepen his knowledge and understanding of HCBS in an effort to bring inclusion and fulfillment to all individuals.