

2019 NJJA Conference

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Speaker and Presenter
Biographies

2018 Members of the Nebraska Youth Justice Policy Fellowship

The Nebraska Youth Justice Policy Fellowship is a program aimed at supporting students involved in juvenile justice and interested in improving the system to make their voices heard in policy. Through eight sessions over the course of four months, fellowship participants discuss issues in juvenile justice policy, refresh their knowledge of Nebraska civics and how laws and policies come into being, and learn how young people can be advocates for change. In a final project, each fellow prepares a policy plan proposal reflecting on a policy they believe should be changed, drawing on data and research as well as their personal experience, and articulating a strategic plan for making that change happen. The fellowship is run by Voices for Children in Nebraska in partnership with Boys Town, and fellows who wish to remain involved in policy after are encouraged and connected to opportunities for youth engagement. We are excited to be here at NJJA!

Rebecca Bender

Rebecca Bender is the founder and CEO of the Rebecca Bender Initiative (RBI). She is an award-winning, nationally recognized expert on human trafficking. After escaping nearly six years of modern day slavery, she wrote her first book, *Roadmap to Redemption*, followed by her recent curriculum *Elevate*. RBI's advanced trainings have equipped FBI, Homeland Security, Former President Jimmy Carter, local law enforcement, medical professionals, service providers, and faith communities across America. Rebecca serves as an advisor to both the Oregon DOJ Human Trafficking Council and the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. She is also the recipient of the Female Overcomer Award, Unlikely Hero Award, Hero to our Generation Award and multiple FBI and Congressional recognitions. She lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and their four daughters, and is currently finishing her masters. She is a sought after speaker and consultant and has been featured on the Today Show, NBC Deadline Crimes, Forbes, Huffington Post, and Sports Illustrated.

Dr. Jasney Cogua Lopez

Jasney E Cogua is the Director of Community Initiatives at Boys Town. Dr. Cogua has a Ph.D. in Comparative Sociology from Florida International University. In her current role she is focused on establishing and guiding LIFT Together, a multi-tier, multi-component, community-based community implementation system that uses Boys Town's family- and school-based programs to generate community-wide impact. She has worked in the area of program implementation and program evaluation primarily with the Latino community for over 10 years as a Project Director, Project Evaluator, and Principal Investigator. Her research addresses behavioral health access and disparities across ethnic and gender minorities. She has been a part of several university, foundation, and SAMHSA/BJA-funded projects involving the deep understanding of the Latino community, family relations, and drug addiction recovery for youth and adults. Additionally, she has held faculty and research positions at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Florida Atlantic University, Florida International University.

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Regina Costello

Regina Costello is the Director of Community Support Services at Boys Town – South Omaha. In this role, Regina is responsible for managing and supporting all community engagement efforts that support the LIFT Together initiative as well as all the school and home-based services provided by Boys Town. Regina had worked as Bilingual Care Coordination Manager/Supervisor of South Omaha since May 2015 and held other positions at Boys Town since 2003. Regina holds a Master's Degree in Human and Family Services from Bellevue University.

Keith Cruise

Keith Cruise is a Professor and Director of Clinical Training in the Department of Psychology at Fordham University and Adjunct Professor of Law at Fordham School of Law. He holds a PhD in clinical psychology from the University of North Texas and a Masters of Legal Studies degree from the University of Nebraska. Dr. Cruise conducts research on the clinical-forensic assessment of youth within the juvenile justice system. Various research projects have focused on developing and validating specialized risk/needs assessment protocols, investigating the utility of mental health screening instruments with justice-involved adolescents, and understanding the connection between trauma exposure, trauma reactions, and delinquent behavior. Dr. Cruise's clinical-forensic practice has involved providing direct care assessment and treatment services with justice-involved adolescents conducting post-disposition assessments of risk and treatment amenability, providing expert testimony to juvenile courts, and providing technical assistance and consultation to local and state juvenile justice systems in implementing trauma-informed screening and assessment practices. Dr. Cruise is a co-principal investigator on a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention investigating the impact of trauma screening on service delivery and legal outcomes for justice-involved youth and is a co-director of the Center for Trauma Recovery and Juvenile Justice (CTRJJ), a technical assistance center that is part of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN).

Hasan Davis

For more than 25 years, Hasan has held to the belief that each child can and will succeed as long as adults in their world create hope. Starting as a counselor and a teaching artist, and through his years as a youth development specialist, Hasan has transformed the attitudes and strategies of school and facility staff, parents, and members of the community to help hundreds of children graduate from high school and go on to earn degrees from colleges and universities. He brings to the process a powerful combination of passion, caring, and leadership to craft a refreshing, common-sense roadmap to help all youth achieve their dreams, no matter the odds. "I was a tough kid. Growing up in inner-city Atlanta in the 1970s and '80s, I had to be. My teachers didn't know what to do with me, so they just ignored me. The more they ignored me, the madder I got, and the anger just built on itself. After my 7th-grade year, I was put in an alternative school, which I was expelled from in my senior year before anyone discovered that I suffered from dyslexia and attention deficit disorder.

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Scott Eckel

Scott Eckel is a staff attorney with Legal Aid of Nebraska. His specific role is the Juvenile Re-entry attorney, working actively in Nebraska's largest counties to seal the records of youth and help them with other legal matters that may stem from their original juvenile offense. Scott graduated from Creighton Law this past year, and served as Lead Articles Editor on the Creighton Law Review.

Renee Faber

With 20 years of experience in the behavioral health field, Renee Faber serves as the Supportive Services Specialist for the Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation Rehabilitative Services Team. In this role she works with Registered Service Providers and probation staff regarding non-clinical service development, training and implementation for supportive services and tools such as drug testing and electronic monitoring for individuals under supervision.

Sarah Forrest

Sarah Forrest is the Special Projects Coordinator with the Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers. In her role, she focuses on improving the response to the commercial sexual exploitation, including trafficking, of Nebraska's children and youth. Sarah has over eight years of experience researching, identifying, and advocating for improvements to Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. She is a graduate of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Taylor Givens-Dunn

Taylor Givens-Dunn is the Community Engagement Specialist at Voices for Children in Nebraska. She is responsible for leading in-person and online engagement strategies and fostering relationships with communities and individuals impacted by juvenile justice, child welfare, economic stability, and health care access. Taylor holds a Masters in Social Work and a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Prior to joining Voices for Children, she served as a practicum student providing mental health services at Nebraska Children's Home Society. Taylor is an active member of the National Association of Social Workers and a 2017 recipient of the Young, Black, and Influential ServiceAward.

Jessica Haebe

Jessica Haebe is the Prevention System Coordinator for Region 1 Behavioral Health Authority, serving the eleven rural and frontier counties of the Nebraska Panhandle. Her work centers on providing substance abuse prevention training and technical assistance to communities and coalitions throughout the Panhandle.

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Julia Hebenstreit

Julia Hebenstreit is the Executive Director of The Kim Foundation. She received her J.D. from Creighton University in 2005, and her BS in Journalism from the University of Nebraska Omaha in 2002. She has been with The Kim Foundation since 2011, and prior to that worked for local non-profits doing development, strategic planning, communications and advancement. She has a passion for helping people and improving lives, and serves on the Executive Committee for Nebraska Association of Behavioral Health Organizations, as the 2015 Hill Day State Captain for the state of Nebraska, and as an active member of the Nebraska Suicide Prevention Coalition, the Early Childhood Mental Health Coalition, BHECN Advisory Committee, RESPECT Advisory Board, Connections Advisory Board and the Project Propel Planning Group.

Christine Henningsen

Christine Henningsen is Director of Nebraska Youth Advocates a program at UNL's Center on Children Family and the Law (CCFL), which serves as a resource center for juvenile defense attorneys in Nebraska. Prior to joining CCFL, Christine practiced for five years as an Assistant Douglas County Public Defender, primarily in juvenile court. She is a certified trainer through the National Juvenile Defender Center and graduated summa cum laude from Creighton Law in 2003.

Dr. Anne Hobbs

Dr. Anne Hobbs is a licensed attorney, published research faculty, as well as the Director of the Juvenile Justice Institute at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She and her husband have four grown children and then started over in 2018, when their youngest went to college, by adopting five incredible little people. Anne has served on a variety of Advisory Groups including Nebraska Children's Commission Juvenile Services Subcommittees, the Community Planning Advisory group, the Nebraska Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, and the Nebraska Brain Injury Task Force. Anne began evaluating programs roughly 20 years ago, as the director of Juvenile Diversion for Lancaster County, and has never grown tired using data to answer the question "what works?"

Jessica Holder

GOALS Center Family Advocate Jessica Holder has an MPA from UNO and undergraduate degrees in Sociology with an Inequality Emphasis and in Political Science. Prior to working with families, Jessica worked as an employment training specialist to empower those with mental illness to find and maintain long-term work while coordinating their disability benefits. Jessica was a teenage mother with limited resources, and she is passionate about helping families reduce barriers to success by aligning them with relevant community supports. In her free time, Jessica stays busy with her children Korbin, Mailey and Laiken.

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Alisha Jimenez

Alisha Jimenez, M.A., J.D., is the Restorative Justice Program Analyst for the Nebraska Supreme Court's Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR). Alisha's work with the Nebraska ODR includes providing support to the six ODR-approved mediation centers in implementing Nebraska's victim offender mediation program, termed Victim Youth Conferencing (VYC), across the state of Nebraska. She works closely with the University of Minnesota's Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking in collecting and maintaining databases and providing quality assurance with the VYC process. Alisha works with Nebraska's six ODR-approved mediation centers to develop new case management materials, including participant surveys, an evaluation codebook, and an updated database. She convenes regularly with the centers' Restorative Justice Coordinators to help reduce the distance between centers across the state and increase collaborative efforts and learning between centers.

Hon. Douglas F. Johnson

Judge Douglas F. Johnson is a 1987 Creighton University School of Law graduate. He was appointed to the Separate Juvenile Court of Douglas County, Nebraska in 1993. He is an adjunct professor of law at Creighton University School of Law, teaching Juvenile Law since 1995. He is a Past President of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and is a long time member of its teaching faculty. In 2005, Judge Johnson started Nebraska's first Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTC) which focused on families with children from birth to five years of age. In 2014, he worked with Project Harmony to expand 0-5 FDTC to include all families with children birth to five in the Douglas County Juvenile Court, and it is now called: Impact From Infancy. Judge Johnson serves on numerous national, regional and local commissions, committees, and Boards. Judge Johnson and his dog, Finnegan, became a certified therapy team in 2014. Since 2012, Finnegan has come to court every day and provides comfort to children, parents and professionals. Judge Johnson's greatest delights are his wife, Mary, and daughters Anne and Kathleen, and faithful dog Finnegan.

Nick Juliano

Nick Juliano is Director of Regional Advocacy and Public Policy for Boys Town. For more than 20 years Nick's career has been dedicated to improving outcomes for youth and families involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Nick has been co-chair of the Crossover Youth Practice Model initiative in Douglas County since its launch in 2012. He is a Fellow of the Multi-System Integration Certificate Program from the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and is currently working on his PhD in Public Administration at the University of Nebraska Omaha.

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Wendy Kaiser

Wendy Kaiser, MPA, is the Quality Assurance Coordinator at the GOALS Center where she manages program evaluation, data, and quality initiatives. With a history of working in both public and nonprofit child welfare and social service positions for over 10 years, Wendy is a strategic thinker who is passionate about continual improvement within the systems that serve vulnerable youth and families. She is also a faculty member at Bellevue University in the Child Protection and Juvenile Justice program, where she enjoys helping students grow professionally. Outside of work, Wendy is focused on being active in the Papillion community and raising her children, Emma and Benjamin.

Michele Lueders

Michele Lueders has 20 years of experience working with young people and their families in Nebraska. Michele has worked in the field directly with youth and their families, worked as a supervisor supporting front line staff in their work as well as working in an Administrative role to improve outcomes for young people. Currently, Michele serves as one of two statewide JDAI Coordinators for Nebraska. Within this role Michele provides technical assistance to local JDAI jurisdictions in Nebraska and works diligently to expand JDAI framework across Nebraska. Michele has lead multiple initiatives to improve outcomes for young people in Nebraska. Michele's background includes working within child welfare, behavioral health, juvenile justice and management. This background has assisted Michele in advocating for system changes in Nebraska. Michele earned her bachelor's degree through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Human Resources and Family Sciences and her Master's degree in Management with a Leadership emphasis through Doane College.

Monica Miles-Steffens

Monica Miles-Steffens, is currently the Director of Placement-Court Services for the Nebraska Administrative Office of Courts and Probation. In this position she is responsible for the implementation of a continuum of evidence based programs and services aimed at rehabilitation and restorative justice. Her career also includes direct care work in juvenile detention; overseeing state and federal grant funding for youth and victim services; grant writing, management, and training; community and strategic planning; facilitating state level juvenile justice coalitions; and implementation of evidence based initiatives such as the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). Monica has worked diligently in Nebraska and nationally with stakeholders to enhance and expand community based programs and services along with implementing new policies, procedures and legislation to improve Nebraska's Juvenile Justice System. Monica is also the founder and President of Miles Ahead Consulting. As a consultant, Monica has worked with numerous state and local government agencies and non-profit organizations. Her expertise is working with entities on strategic planning, project management and implementation, and training.

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Michael Nehe

Michael Nehe has been serving as the Domestic Violence Program Services Specialist since 2015. He joined the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation as an Intensive Supervision Probation with District #3A in 2006 and served as the Specialized Domestic Violence Officer from 2008-2015. In addition to his work with Probation involving Juveniles Who Sexually Harm, Mike's areas of focus also include Domestic Violence, Victim's Issues, and Adult Sex Offenders. He is an active member of the Nebraska State Domestic Violence Coordinated Response Team, the Nebraska State Batterer's Intervention Program Standards Committee, the Lincoln Threat Advisory Team as well as a member of the Great Plains Chapter of the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals. He also has previous experience as a sworn law enforcement officer.

Mary Rose Richter

Mary Rose Richter is a graduate of the University of Nebraska College of Law and holds an undergraduate degree in Psychology from Marquette University. She is currently the Director of Restorative Justice Programming at Central Mediation Center in Kearney. She is a member of the Nebraska State Bar Association and prior to her current position, practiced in general civil litigation with an emphasis on family and juvenile law. Mary Rose developed an interest in restorative justice as an affiliate mediator with Central Mediation and currently runs the Victim Youth Conferencing program at the Center.

Julie A. Smith

Has 20 years' experience working with high risk youth and families in the State of Nebraska. She began her career in school-based prevention efforts with at-risk youth and families, has provided family support services, and worked with young mothers in residential group home programs. Julie worked for the Department of Health and Human Services prior to beginning her Probation career in 2013. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Development from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and began a Master's program in Education also from UNL before beginning her career with the Department of Health and Human Services. Julie has been the Reentry Program Specialist with the Juvenile Division of the Administrative Office of Probation since 2016 focusing on supporting the implementation of best practice around the utilization of out-of-home placements and reentry and transition planning.

Dr. Ryan Spohn

Dr. Ryan Spohn is the Director of the Nebraska Center for Justice Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, where he performs statewide and local research and evaluation activities targeted at improving the performance of Nebraska's juvenile justice, criminal justice, and corrections activities. His published research includes the areas of juvenile delinquency, families, victimization, and processes of the criminal justice system.

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Juliet Summers

Juliet Summers is responsible for overseeing Voices for Children's policy research, analysis, and advocacy efforts on behalf of children involved in Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile court systems. Prior to joining Voices for Children, Juliet served as a public defender, representing children and families in the juvenile court of Douglas County. Before that, she taught 2nd grade on the Rosebud Indian Reservation through Teach for America. Juliet holds a law degree from the University of Chicago and a B.A. in political science from Duke University. She is a member of the Nebraska bar.

Cheryl Turner

Cheryl Turner is a trauma and attachment therapist who has worked with children, adolescents, families, and adults within the Lincoln Community for the past 19 years. Cheryl has completed extensive training in various areas of trauma and mental health and has focused her career on helping those most in need learn the skills necessary to be successful. Cheryl currently is employed at The Center on Children, Families, and the Law as a training specialist and provides training to Child and Family Services Specialists, Public and Private School systems, audiences at a local, regional, and national level, and is a certified Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid instructor.

Marlon Wofford

Marlon Wofford is a Father Engagement Specialist with the Nebraska Family Support Network. Marlon's primary credentials for this work is his lived experience successfully navigating the judicial system to gain custody of his 4 daughters when his wife's addiction threatened the family's wellbeing. As his journey unfolded, Marlon voluntarily worked with child and family services to get the support he needed to be successful. When his oldest daughter began to display significant mental health challenges, Marlon knew he was out of his depth and called the Nebraska Family Helpline. He was connected with a Family Navigator at the Nebraska Family Support Network. His Navigator helped Marlon get his daughter set up with appropriate mental health services and supported him throughout the custody process. Marlon kept moving forward, even when the going got rough. Marlon brings this same commitment and passion to his work in engaging parents at Youth Impact, helping them better understand the process and goals of diversion.

Lindsey Wylie

Dr. Lindsey Wylie is the Director of Research at the Juvenile Justice Institute. Her research interests include understanding the legal system's therapeutic and anti-therapeutic impact on vulnerable populations, including juveniles and older adults. She also examines the relationship between law and policy and biases towards these groups. Her current projects include evaluating evidence-based practices in Nebraska juvenile justice programs, studying the (un)intended collateral consequences of juvenile justice involvement, and perceptions of youth in the juvenile justice system.