

# EMPOWERING FUTURES



**NJJA** | Nebraska Juvenile  
Justice Association

**2024 NJJA CONFERENCE**

KEARNEY, NEBRASKA | YOUNES CONFERENCE CENTER

**MAY 1-3, 2024**

## Presenter Bios

### Lincoln Arneal

Lincoln Arneal lives in Lincoln, Nebraska partially to boost his ego, but he also likes the community. He currently serves as the Assistant Vice President of Leadership and Policy at Nebraska Children. Lincoln works with several youth-focused groups to promote leadership development and involvement in the community. Lincoln is a North Bend native and graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for both undergraduate and law school. On the side, Lincoln volunteers for local elections as a poll worker and is a part-time sports reporter. In his spare time, Lincoln likes to explore the trail system on runs, write about Nebraska volleyball, collect bobbleheads and watch European soccer leagues.

### Liz Bartels

Liz Bartels is a Training Specialist at Project Harmony. In her role as Training Specialist, Liz trains professionals and community members about child abuse laws, trauma, methods to engage youth and families, and prevention strategies. Prior to working at Project Harmony, Liz spent 8.5 years at a local foster care agency providing in home support, crisis management, training foster parents, licensing foster homes, and walking with youth and families through the foster care system. Liz is passionate about empowering those who work with and care about kids by providing trainings that are engaging and relevant.

### Amoreena Brady

Amoreena Brady is a Juvenile Division Director at the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation for the State of Nebraska. She began serving in this capacity in August 2023. Ms. Brady has 28 years of probation experience in variety of settings, including county-based probation in Orange County, California and statewide probation in Nebraska. In Ms. Brady's current role, she oversees a team that is focused on enhancing the best practices probation approaches implemented within Nebraska Juvenile Probation. Ms. Brady provides support to expand the knowledge and application of Implementation Science across the probation system. In June of 1996, Ms. Brady earned her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Chapman University, Orange, CA. In 2014, Ms. Brady became a fellow of the Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. In 2023, Ms. Brady completed an Implementation Leadership Certificate Program through the Alliance for Community and Justice Innovation. In 2021, Ms. Brady was awarded the Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association Commitment in Leadership Award and the Supreme Court Team Award. In 2022, Ms. Brady was awarded the Supreme Court Innovation Award.

### LeLynda Briggs-Linstadt

LeLynda Briggs (she/her) is a graduate of Loyola University New Orleans and has been in the mental health field for nearly 20 years. Since graduating, LeLynda has worked in the non-profit sector, juvenile justice, and early childhood education. She is passionate about preventative services and supports especially as it relates to marginalized communities. Prior to returning to Omaha, LeLynda worked at a charter school in New Orleans as well as a juvenile detention center. Since returning to Omaha, she has worked in various capacities including family visitation, juvenile crisis stabilization and currently at Child Saving Institute as an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant. LeLynda is the co-chair of CSI's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee as well as a member of the Nebraska Coaching for Equity Group.

## Nicole Britten

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Nicole Britten works for the Nebraska Supreme Court Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR). ODR works with and oversees the 6 Nebraska Mediation Centers, which provide mediation and restorative justice services. Nicole provides training to mediators as well as New Probation Officers and existing Administration Office of the Courts and Probation staff. Nicole has been with ODR for over 2 years and has worked with the state of Nebraska for over 10 years. Prior to working for ODR, Nicole worked for Children and Family Services first as a juvenile services officer, then as an Adult Protective Services worker, then as a Quality Assurance Reviewer and her last role with CFS was as a Program Specialist. As a Program Specialist with CFS, Nicole oversaw the Child and Adult Abuse and Neglect Central Registry and represented the Department at appeal hearings regarding expungements from the Central Registry. Nicole is an Association for Conflict Resolution Board Member as a Director at Large as of October 2023. Nicole also contracts with the Office of the Administration for Children & Families to review state child welfare systems through the Children and Family Services Review.

## Crystal Rush Cardenas

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Crystal is the CEO of CNW Alliance, a crisis intervention program for youth in the juvenile system. She is a passionate advocate, co-host of a community podcast, and holds leadership positions in various organizations in Omaha. Crystal's career spans roles in counseling, advocacy, and community service. She is an inspirational first-generation Mexican American-Indigenous Woman, overcoming personal challenges in her childhood and adolescence to earn a bachelor's degree in Sociology and a Master's in Justice Administration and Crime Management. Crystal is recognized for her contributions and was honored as one of the influential leaders in Omaha on the Midland's Business Journals' 40 under 40 list in 2022. She is a devoted wife and mother of five children, balancing her roles as a leader, advocate, and nurturer while inspiring others with her resilience and determination to create positive change.

## Lawrence Chatters, PhD

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Dr. Lawrence Chatters currently serves as the Executive Associate Athletic Director for Strategic Initiatives at the University of Nebraska Lincoln. Previously, Chatters served as the Chief Diversity Officer and Vice President for Student Affairs at Midland University in Fremont, Nebraska. Chatters holds a Doctorate and master's degree in counseling psychology from The University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Midland University. Prior to Midland Chatters participated in a post-doctoral fellowship at Penn State University. Chatters has extensive experience in work focusing on diversity, inclusion, and equity. Chatters spent three years working in the Nebraska Athletic Department as the Coordinator for Diversity and Inclusion. Chatters also serves as the Executive Director of the Goldwin Foundation, an organization committed to providing funding for Pediatric-focused research, nationally. Chatters is most proud of his wife Katie and his two daughters Airalon and Mikayla.

## Erin Curran

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Erin Curran is the Juvenile Behavioral Health Specialist within the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP) Juvenile Services Division. Erin holds a bachelor's degree in behavioral sciences and master's degree in clinical counseling from Bellevue University. She started her work with Probation in District 2 as a high-risk juvenile probation officer in January 2017, and within a year, she transitioned to a Juvenile Treatment Officer position. For the past three years, Erin has served as the Juvenile Drug Court Officer in Sarpy County, working with youth with significant substance use needs. Erin has served on several community-based committees and was a statewide trainer for Question Persuade Refer (QPR), Trauma, and Resiliency. Prior to joining Probation, Erin worked as an Intensive Family Preservation therapist with KVC Nebraska, as well as an outpatient therapist with Behaven Kids and Beneficial Behavioral Health. Erin's career has focused on supporting youth and families involved in the court system through delinquency or abuse/neglect cases. In her time as an Intensive Family Preservation therapist, she also was a treatment provider working with Sarpy County Juvenile Drug Court. Erin's passion is to work with justice involved youth and to afford them every opportunity to connect to resources to help them be successful in their lives.

## Jonathan Davis

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Jonathan Davis is a Training Specialist at Project Harmony in Omaha, Nebraska and has been in the child welfare field for the past 9 years. In his role as a Training Specialist, Jonathan trains teachers, nurses, child welfare workers, and other professionals about child abuse laws, reporting procedures, and prevention. Prior to working as a trainer, Jonathan has worked as a case manager, visitation specialist and family support worker. He is able to weave his experiences in the field into his training, making it accessible and relevant to trainees. Jonathan has a Bachelors in Liberal Arts from Iowa State University.

## Nicole Deere-Andersen

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Nicole Deere-Andersen serves as KVC Nebraska's Human Resources Manager and has over 15 years of valuable human services experience. Beginning her career with KVC in 2010, Nicole gained experience as an Admissions Liaison, Foster Care Specialist, and Foster Care Supervisor before transitioning to her current role. As an Admissions Liaison, Nicole placed over 1,600 youth in need of a safe and loving home with KVC-licensed foster parents over a six-year period. Nicole earned a master's degree in human resource management from Doane University in 2019 and received a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in history from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2008.

# Presenter Bios

## Cassandra Dittmer

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Cassandra Dittmer is the Director of Quality & Impact at KVC Nebraska. In this role, she collaborates with internal and external stakeholders and partners to both ensure KVC is meeting internal expectations and achieving our mission: To enrich and enhance the lives of Nebraska families. For more than a decade, Cassandra has helped vulnerable and at-risk populations because she believes safe, secure, and connected relationships within families and communities are key to optimizing human potential. Her KVC team of teachers (trainers) ensures that our affiliated homes and staff are not only in compliance but are also learning and practicing cutting skills that promote safety, stability, and wellbeing. Cassandra is licensed in Nebraska as an Independent Mental Health Practitioner and a Marriage and Family Therapist. She holds a master's degree in family and consumer sciences from University Nebraska-Lincoln and a bachelor's degree in family studies from Central Michigan University. She is an Approved Supervisor with the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. She is also a certified Gallup Engagement Champion and a Gallup Global Strengths Coach in Training.

## Latasha Ellis

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Latasha Ellis is a Community Youth Coach for Community Based Services in Omaha, Nebraska. She has been in this role for five years and is committed to the youth on her caseload. She assists them in being successful by navigating the daily challenges they experience. She is passionate about their educational outcomes and works with community resources to ensure they can meet their educational outcomes.

## Gaelin Elmore

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Gaelin Elmore is a dynamic and nationally sought-after keynote speaker, trainer, and thought leader. He works with organizations and people to become belonging-informed in order to help children overcome trauma and unleash their potential. Gaelin's passion and energy for his work stems from his heart for justice and his own lived experience. His own belonging journey has led Gaelin to the National Football League, and now stages, board rooms, and organizations, all across the country, aiming to inspire, encourage, and equip others to think differently about their work and its long-term impact on others. Gaelin now lives in Eden Prairie, MN, where he gets to experience the purest form of belonging as a husband to his wife, Micaela, and dad to their two daughters, Laniah and Tatum.

## Martonia Gaskill, PhD

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Martonia Gaskill is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Nebraska Kearney where she teaches both graduate and undergraduate, online and face to face classes in the department of Teacher Education. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska Lincoln in Educational Studies with an emphasis in Educational Technology. She currently serves as the Graduate Program Chair and advisor for the Learning Design and Technology Master Program, Digital Pedagogy Specialist for UNK Online, and Academic Diversity Officer for the Office of Graduate Studies and Academic Outreach. Her research interests include open education resources, collaboration in online environments, teacher education, technology integration, faculty development for online and digital education, and learning design.

## Maeve Hemmer

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Maeve Hemmer is a community navigator with RISE, an Omaha, Nebraska, based nonprofit that has a mission to break the generational cycles of incarceration. She graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a bachelor's degree in political science and is now pursuing a master's degree in public health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. In her work at RISE, she uses her education and experience to provide reentry support to individuals incarcerated at the Nebraska State Penitentiary and Reception Treatment Center. Maeve has a passion and vision for helping our community facilitate transformative justice that supports all people toward achieving and maintaining holistic wellness.

## Anne Hobbs, JD, PhD

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Dr. Anne Hobbs is a licensed attorney, special appointment faculty, and the Director of the Juvenile Justice Institute at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She is passionate about translating research into practice, and thereby improving services for youth. Dr. Hobbs has extensive experience evaluating and training on a variety of Nebraska projects ranging from diversion to mentoring. She led the design and implementation of the Evidence-based Nebraska project which evaluates over 200 community-based programs annually. She often gets her inspiration from international partners. She has volunteered in Haiti, taught criminal justice in China, presented at the international youth dialogue in Malaysia, and serves on the Lutheran Community Care Services Board based in Singapore. In 2022, she was awarded a Fulbright to study reentry in Singapore. Dr. Hobbs' research interests include restorative practice, inequality in access to justice, translating research into practice, juvenile re-entry, after incarceration, and mentoring youth who have been involved in juvenile justice system.



## Shawne Johnson

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Shawne Johnson is Director of the Douglas County Juvenile Assessment Center in Omaha, Nebraska. Prior to assuming the director position in 2015, she served as the Community Resource and Data Analyst for nine years. She received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln and her Master of Arts in Counseling and Psychology from the University of South Dakota. Shawne was a key stakeholder in the implementation of the Douglas County Crossover You Practice Model (CYPM) initiative, which is still managed within the Juvenile Assessment Center and is in its 11th year of operations. Shawne's previous experience includes both direct care and supervisory experience in all of the following settings: adjudicated youth residential care, in-home family therapy, private counseling with children, adults, and families, program management for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and juvenile assessment and diversion. Her passion lies in assisting, supporting and collaborating with adolescents and their families; and in system reform efforts, addressing the intersection of issues which culminate in youth who experience mental or behavioral health challenges becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. Shawne enjoys hiking, adventuring, spending time with friends and family, and helping others recognize their strengths and skill-sets in order to thrive. She is a Myers Briggs Certified Trainer, served as a youth group advisor in her church for ten years and is the mom of two amazing daughters.

## Diante Jones

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Diante Jones educates youth service professionals on the contextual realities contributing to the statistical outcomes of frontline gang intervention efforts. This presentation grapples with the tools, tricks and gems of street-gang intervention, allowing youth service providers to gleam and be inspired in sharpening their program's approach to serving street gang involved youth.

## Nick Juliano, PhD, MBA

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Nick Juliano, PhD, MBA is an accomplished senior leader with over 25 years of nonprofit human services experience. He is currently President & CEO of RADIUS, a nonprofit multiservice agency serving youth in the juvenile justice system and their families. Nick serves on a variety of committees seeking to improve system responses for youth and families including the Juvenile Services Committee of the Nebraska Children's Commission and the RFK National Resource Center Transformation of Youth Justice Practice Network. Nick has been co-chair of the dual status initiative in Douglas County, known as Youth Impact!, since its launch in 2012. He is a fellow of the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare: Multi-System Integration Certificate Program at the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy.

## Mark Kiepke

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Mark Kiepke has been working with at risk youth for the last twenty years. He has been with Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota for 17 years working to provide services for youth in the community and the treatment level. While at Lutheran Social Services of SD he has worked in a Psychiatric Residential Facility, Foster Care Program, and now the Director of the Arise Youth Center (Alternative to Detention in Rapid City). Prior to these roles, he worked in youth corrections in the state of Colorado for two years and a youth treatment facility in Colorado for two years. Mark graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of South Dakota in 2004.

## Alicia Kozak

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Alicia Kozak is an internationally-acclaimed and highly sought-after motivational speaker, advocate, and Internet safety expert, and television personality who has inspired millions through her in person and on-screen appearances. Alicia's extraordinary life story exemplifies the strength of the human spirit's ability to overcome adversity and to deny defeat. At age 13, Alicia became the first widely reported Internet-related child abduction victim, after she was kidnapped and held captive by an Internet predator. Following her miraculous rescue, Alicia has devoted her life to raising awareness of missing persons and protecting children against predatory crime. She has been featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show, Dr. Phil, Fox & Friends, Good Morning America, Anderson Live, Investigation Discovery (ID), Oxygen, Lifetime, The CW, ABC, BBC, A&E, CNN, MSNBC, and many others, as well as in international publications such as People Magazine and Cosmopolitan. Internet safety expert and founder of The Alicia Project for the past 20 years, starting at just age 14, Alicia pioneered insightful Internet safety and sexual exploitation awareness presentations to children and adults. One of the most vocal and outspoken advocates for child safety legislation, she has testified before Congress, and works to pass Alicia's Law, her namesake nationally. Alicia's Law provides a dedicated revenue stream to the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force. Recently, an electronic-sniffing K-9 Officer was added to the Wisconsin DOJ. He was named "Kozak" in honor of Alicia. Her mission is to promote Internet and child safety awareness, advocate for missing and recovered persons, and battle against child sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Alicia's life, mission, and passion prove that she – that all of us – are more than our stories.

## Amy Latshaw

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Amy Latshaw's 33-year career in juvenile justice has spanned juvenile detention, juvenile corrections reentry, and probation. Amy began serving as a Nebraska Juvenile Probation Officer in 2000, then joined the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation in 2009 as a Juvenile Justice Specialist. Her position supports probation officers providing services, evidence-based assessment/screening, and quality investigative reports to the court. Amy also co-leads statewide collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services for dual-system youth. Amy holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska Lincoln/Omaha and is a certified Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory Trainer.

## Verla Little

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Verla Little is the JDAI/Diversion Program Coordinator for Northern Hills Diversion in South Dakota. Verla graduated from Black Hills State University with a major in Biology. She attended South Dakota State University as a graduate student working on her masters in Botany with an emphasis on germination ecology. She began her career in law enforcement as a Communications Officer (dispatcher) and progressed to Reserve Officer, Patrol Officer, and Corporal. Verla loved working with youth and advocating for justice involved youth. As a D.A.R.E Officer she worked with youth in the schools of Spearfish and their teachers. In July 2022, Lawrence County Teen Court offered her the opportunity to work part time with youth in Lawrence County. In April 2023, Verla retired from 26 ½ years in Law Enforcement to work full time with justice involved youth in the Northern Hills of South Dakota. Verla is passionate about restorative justice for youth and advocating for justice involved youth to have opportunities for improving their situation.

## Judge Robert Lung

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Judge Robert Lung currently serves as a District Court Judge in the 18th Judicial District of Colorado. He also provides presentations nationally and internationally on issues such as human trafficking, childhood trauma and resiliency to an exceptionally diverse audience base including the military, the medical field, the educational field (including the U.S. Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Education), various judiciaries in the U.S. and internationally, faith-based organizations, first-responders, mental health professionals and law enforcement. In 2016 Judge Lung was appointed by then Colorado Chief Justice Nancy Rice to serve as the Judicial Representative of the Colorado Human Trafficking Council and he was elected the Vice-Chair from 2018 to 2020. In 2017 Judge Lung was Presidentially appointed to the National Advisory Council on the Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States on which he served from 2017 to 2022. Judge Lung was also Presidentially appointed to the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking from 2018 to 2020 and was elected the Chair in 2020. In 2021 Judge Lung served as an Adjunct Professor at St. Thomas University College of Law and taught Human Rights Lawyering. Judge Lung has also served as a consultant with Office for Victims of Crime under the U.S. Department of Justice, the Office on Trafficking in Persons under the U.S. Administration for Children and Families, the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons under the U.S. State Department and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). In his "free time" Judge Lung works on writing his first book, a biography about hope and resiliency, and he endeavors to keep up with his two adopted sons in hiking and downhill mountain biking.

## Dennis Marks

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Dennis Marks holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Briar Cliff University and a Juris Doctorate degree from Creighton University of Law. He has been representing juveniles in adult, juvenile and appellate courts since Sept. 1996 as a Deputy Public Defender for Sarpy County, Nebraska. During this time, he has also been a member of numerous local, state, regional, and national boards, committees, subcommittees, and task forces dedicated to juvenile justice. Mr. Marks represented the Sarpy County Public Defender Office in the creation of both the juvenile and adult drug treatment courts in Sarpy County. He has testified before the Nebraska Senate Judiciary Committee on numerous legislative bills involving criminal justice reform. Mr. Marks has been an Admiral in the Nebraska Navy since 2002.

## Chloe Mcshannon

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Chloe McShannon is a 24-year-old former youth of the child welfare system and juvenile justice. She has a passion for advocacy and is currently studying psychology and sociology at UNL. Chloe loves spending time outside!

## KB Mensah

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Kwabena (KB) Mensah graduated from the College of Hair Design in 1997 and became the owner of Oasis Barbershops in 2008. Fueled by a passion for making people feel good, KB has now been a barber for 27 years, has grown the business to include a second location, and has built a staff of like-minded individuals that are dedicated to their craft, serving others with genuine love and acceptance, and giving back to the community. He now serves as a mentor for barbers across the community including experienced entrepreneurs and students. KB has used his connection to community through the barbershop to give back to youth and families since 2012 with the annual Free Haircut and Backpack Event and two additional events beginning in 2019 under the umbrella of the nonprofit founded by Mensah, Visionary Youth. As Executive Director of Visionary Youth, KB has grown the organization to a sustainable and thriving nonprofit that maintains and grows these three events yearly and has implemented an innovative combination barbershop mentoring/peer group therapy program for minority youth, Mentoring in New Dimensions. In addition to his titles as barber, barbershop owner, and nonprofit executive director; KB is also a successful DJ and photographer, father, and husband.

# Presenter Bios

## Lindsay Meyer

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Lindsay Meyer is a Juvenile Justice Reform Specialist within the Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation (AOCP) Juvenile Services Division. Lindsay obtained a bachelor's degree in social work from Nebraska Wesleyan University. She began her work in this field as a high-risk juvenile probation officer in District 3J in Nebraska working with a wide variety of youth who presented with significant risk, needs, and responsivity struggles. Lindsay moved to the Administrative Office of Probation in July, 2021 where she began by overseeing multiple programs including monitoring and reporting significant juvenile incidents, including youth who attempt suicide while on probation supervision. Through this work Lindsay gathered data, worked to identify best practices to support youth at risk of suicide, and identify and fill gaps in training for those working directly with these youth. Recently, in November, 2023, Lindsay moved into the Juvenile Justice Reform Specialist position where she will lead, support, and help oversee statewide efforts to enhance the juvenile justice system. Lindsay's passion is seeing the potential in all justice involved youth and supporting our justice system workforce.

## Monica Miles-Steffens, MPA

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Monica Miles-Steffens, MPA, MPA, has over 25 years of experience in juvenile justice, policy, training, and leadership development. She has experience leading organizations and system's change initiatives in both government and non-profit sectors. In her role as the Assistant Director at the Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, she leads the training and technical assistance activities of the institute, including the juvenile justice certificate program and Evidence-based Nebraska project training. Monica is the principal investigator leading the program evaluation for the implementation of statewide restorative justice programming funded by OJJDP through the Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution. Monica has a passion for restorative practices and is a trained mediator and restorative conferencing facilitator.

## Brianna Mumm, LCSW, LMHP

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Brianna Mumm, LCSW, LMHP graduated from Grace Abbott School of Social Work in 2019. She has worked with Family Service Lincoln since July 2019 as a school-based therapist. Prior to that she worked for the Boys Town hotline and Nebraska Family Helpline providing crisis management, suicide prevention, and connecting families with support services. She also has experience providing case management services supporting adults with severe and persistent mental health concerns as well as youth and their families. Through work and education, she continues to grow her passion for working with families in a variety of ways.

## Katie Nungesser

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Katie Nungesser is a Policy Coordinator at Voices for Children in Nebraska. She is passionate about helping others share their stories and centering individuals with lived experience. She believes that those directly affected by social challenges should have a seat at the decision-making table, as their perspectives are invaluable in shaping effective and inclusive solutions. Katie earned a bachelor's degree in social work from Nebraska Wesleyan University and has 15 years of nonprofit experience.

## Alisa Parmer, PLMHP, MBA

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Alisa Parmer, PLMHP, MBA, In-Home Director with RADIUS implements a family engagement program that addresses life changing traumatic family events following a restorative practice model. Responsible for leading a team of family engagement professionals in the community with the goal to work with youth and their families for a positive transition back home and the community. Alisa has been working in the greater Omaha, Nebraska community for the past 20 years. A shaker and mover in various roles: higher education, behavioral health, children and family services and economic development. An advocate for juvenile justice reform, mental health services, urban economic development, and equality in education. Alumni of UNO, Purdue University Global, and Bellevue University. Currently serving on Omaha Economic Development Community Board, Leadership Omaha, Curriculum Committee, and Nelson Mandela Community Advisory Committee.

## Peggy Reisher

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Peggy Reisher has a master's degree in social work and is the executive director of the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska (BIANE) whose organizational mission is to create a better future for all Nebraskans through brain injury prevention, education, advocacy, and support. Ms. Reisher has over 25 years of experience working and advocating for individuals with brain injury and their families across the state of Nebraska. Ms. Reisher helped start the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska and currently serves as the chair of the US Brain Injury Alliance. She has received local and national awards for her advocacy work.



# Presenter Bios

## Steve Snodgrass

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Steve Snodgrass, LCSW has served as School Social Worker for Ralston Public Schools in the Omaha metro area for the past 25 years. In addition to providing School Social Work services that include a substantial role in developing collaborative plans for addressing school attendance, Steve served as previous task force chair of Douglas/Sarpy County truancy initiatives that became rebranded as an interagency Community Based Attendance Coalition. Steve brought awareness and training of school refusal assessment and intervention strategies to juvenile probation, mental health professionals and school districts. Having served on the Douglas County Abuse/Neglect Treatment team and the Nebraska Department of Education Commissioner's Advisory Board on Out of Home Placements, Steve currently also serves on the Metro Area Education Consortium's student services committee. Steve has served as leader of Ralston Public Schools' Crisis Response Team since 2001 and was awarded School Social Worker of the Year in 2008, State of Nebraska Attendance Champion in 2017, and School Mental Health Champion in 2021. As he was planning for retirement, Steve decided to take what he has learned from developing attendance intervention plans with individual students and turn it into a proposed curriculum that a variety of juvenile service providers could use to assist youth.

## Christina Sogar, PhD

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Dr. Christina Sogar joined the UNK Social Work department in 2013. Her research interests include child welfare, disability, and family well-being. Dr. Sogar received her PhD in Social Welfare from the University of California at Berkeley and her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Chicago. She has worked in diverse social service settings, including schools, hospitals, churches, research centers and family support agencies.

## Ryan Spohn, PhD

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Ryan Spohn, PhD, is the Director of the Nebraska Center of Justice Research (NCJR) 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. Dr. Spohn has published in numerous sociology and criminal justice journals, including *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, and *Crime & Delinquency*. Dr. Spohn has served as both a research partner and a consultant for the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). He has a Ph.D. in Sociology/Criminology from the University of Iowa, an MS in Sociology/Criminology from Texas A&M University, and a BS in Sociology/Criminology from Kansas State University. Dr. Spohn is a Fellow of the BJA Innovations Suite Research-Practitioner Academy and a Fellow of Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

## Miranda Stoll, LIMHP, LADC

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Miranda Stoll, LIMHP, LADC is a LIMHP, LADC therapist that works for Healing Hearts & Families, as well as Inner Reflections Counseling Center. Miranda has been fortunate enough to learn from and work with a diverse population that includes Veterans, survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and their families, drug court participants, federal parolees, and many other youth and adult populations. Before becoming a therapist, Miranda worked in many areas involving adolescents and their families. This included working at CEDAR'S Youth Services where Miranda wore many hats that included Relief Youth Specialist, Juvenile Services Officer, and Assistant Program Manager, for both TLC & Family Support Services. Miranda then expanded her work with juveniles to include therapeutic interventions at an inpatient male facility working with young men from the ages of 10-18. Miranda has continued to work in the therapeutic setting since 2011 and has continued to develop her skills and deepen her understanding of the issues that youth today are facing. Miranda has spent the past few years obtaining certification in EMDR, Synergetic Play Therapy, and becoming a Consultant in Training for EMDR. Miranda continues to deepen her understanding through training, personal coaching, and hands on learning experiences. Miranda earned her bachelor's and master's degree through Doane College in 2007 & 2010. Through both agencies the service area that is covered includes 13 different counties in Nebraska. Miranda has presented at Through the Eyes of a Child Conference, NJJCA Conference, Nebraska Community Aid and Juvenile Justice Conference, to numerous high school administration and staff, to many community agencies and is always looking for opportunities to share this information.

## LaDonna Strong

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LaDonna Strong has over 20 years of juvenile justice experience in the Omaha, NE area. She has experience in mentoring, probation, family support, and currently is a Community Youth Coach with Community Based Services. She is passionate about helping youth and families and continuing to learn new strategies to help them be successful. LaDonna holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Bellevue University. In her free time she enjoys working out, traveling, and relaxing with family and friends.

## Kim Teegerstrom

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Kim is a Behavioral Health Therapist at Family Service Lincoln and provides mental health therapy to kids at an elementary school. She has also facilitated a support group for grandparents raising grandchildren. She is driven to partner with kids and families to help them grow, build positive relationships, and overcome trauma and challenges. Kim received her master's in social work from Grace Abbott School of Social Work at UNO in 2018. Previously, she provided direct care and case management at CEDARS Youth Services and then ran the volunteer program at Pathways to Compassion Hospice.

# Presenter Bios

## Shayla Tausch

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Shayla Tausch is a Family Permanency Specialist with the Families Forever program of NCHS. In her role, she assists families formed through guardianship and adoption in navigating the struggles and joys that come along with this process. She is a mother of a 16-month-old boy who is her whole world! She enjoys spending time watching him grow and learn. When she has a little bit of spare time, she enjoys oil painting.

## Teffany Ulrich

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Teffany Ulrich is a confident and dynamic leader with more than 25 years of increasing experience dedicated to working with and serving children, youth, and their families. She possesses a clear understanding of the economic, cultural, and social environment of the human services, child welfare, and juvenile justice sectors. She is the co-chair of CSI's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and has been a staunch supporter of creating brave and safe spaces for youth, families, and staff in within the agency and the community. Teffany has worked tirelessly to advocate for youth and families in the juvenile justice system in a variety of capacities including direct service as well as leadership positions. Teffany has a passion for preventative supports and services for youth and families. She is a member of several organizations in the juvenile justice field and does so through a DEIJ lens.

## Betty Usher-Tate, PhD

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Dr. Usher-Tate is the Data & QI Administrator II with the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH). She earned a PhD from the University of Nebraska Lincoln in Quantitative, Qualitative and Psychometric Methods with a minor Educational Administration. She also holds a master's degree in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) from Murray State University, and bachelor's degree in Secondary School English from the University of Belize. At DBH, Dr. Usher-Tate leads the Data Team, manages the Centralized Data System, and provides oversight for other data systems. In her previous career in Education, she worked primarily with high school teens, then later in a university-based cultural exchange program for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners.

## Brian Welch

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Brian Welch is the Family & Community Engagement Specialist at The Nebraska Department of Education. He focuses on connecting schools, families, and community partners. Specializing in Instructional Technology, Brian uses that experience to digitally connect stakeholders in meaningful ways. Brian's experience in Title I Middle School classrooms developed an understanding that significant academic gains are more likely with strong family and community engagement. With a BA in English Education and MS in Instructional Technology, Brian's passion for strong educational pedagogy led to his focus on family and community engagement. When he's not at work, Brian is an avid Board Gamer and loves spending time reading.

## Kris Whisenhunt, BSW, MPA

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Kris Whisenhunt, BSW, MPA earned a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from Nebraska Wesleyan University, a master's in public administration with a Nonprofit Management specialization from the University of Nebraska-Omaha and is a Certified Public/Nonprofit Manager through University of Nebraska-Omaha Professional Programs. Kris currently serves as the Deputy Director for Visionary Youth, and prior to this position, served as the Assistant Vice President, Youth Economic Success at Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. Kris also has worked for several years as a fundraising, program design, and nonprofit management consultant. Along with her commitment to serving youth, Kris is a passionate advocate for poverty prevention and serves as a Facilitator for Bridges Out of Poverty, a Certified Financial Social Worker and Financial Education Instructor.

## Kirby Williams

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Kirby Williams (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma) is a violence prevention specialist addressing violence against Native people and tribal communities and is a survivor of intimate partner violence and sexual assault. She holds a master's degree in clinical psychology from Missouri State University. Since 2014, she has worked in her professional and personal life to raise awareness and promote prevention of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and stalking, and has conducted numerous trainings on serving Native American survivors of these crimes. She is a Class 5 graduate fellow of the National Human Trafficking Leadership Academy (HTLA), in which she and 11 other Indigenous fellows addressed how culture can be used as a protective factor in the trafficking of all Indigenous youth. For her work in violence prevention, she was named an inaugural recipient of the Cherokee Phoenix's Seven Feathers Award and the Nebraska recipient of the 2022 National Sexual Violence Resource Center's (NSVRC) Visionary Voice Award. In 2022, she helped to establish the Nebraska Tribes Addressing Violence Coalition (NETAV) and was named the executive director for the organization in 2023. In addition to her understanding of violence against Native Americans, she has a background of knowledge and training in psychological diagnostics, statistical analysis, the impact of trauma from a physical and psychological perspective, healing from a culturally relevant perspective, and yoga teaching. She currently serves on the board for the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs (NCIA) and is the tribal representative for the Nebraska Domestic Abuse Death Review Team.

## Karolina Yoder

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Karolina, 24, possesses first-hand knowledge of juvenile justice, child welfare, and juvenile probation. Passionate about advocacy and policy reform, she dedicates her efforts to effecting positive change. Beyond her professional pursuits, she finds joy in the companionship of her beloved dog.



# Presenter Bios

## KaCee Zimmerman

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KaCee Zimmerman has been in the field of social work for over 25 years. For the last 17 years she has worked for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services as a supervisor and administrator for Adult Protective Services, Children and Family Services and Office of Juvenile Services. Currently she oversees all Children and Family Services out of the Grand Island and Hastings offices. A part of her administrative duties includes being part of the Crossover Implementation Team for the State of Nebraska. KaCee holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Colorado-Boulder.