

Responding to the Current Youth Mental Health Crisis and Preventing the Next One: A Virtual Workshop

Committee

Rahil D. Briggs

Member

Rahil Briggs is the National Director of HealthySteps, a program of ZERO TO THREE. Since 2018, she has overseen the dramatic growth of HealthySteps to over 200 sites across the country with 15% average year-over-year growth, reaching over 350,000 children and families in 2021. She is responsible for all aspects of the program's operations, financial sustainability, evaluation and research, policy, model enhancements, and site professional development and training.

She comes to this role after a successful career at Montefiore in New York, where she grew the HealthySteps footprint from one to 21 practices, serving over 30,000 children annually. Additionally, Dr. Briggs is the founder and former director of Pediatric Behavioral Health Services at Montefiore, one of the largest integrated pediatric behavioral health services in the nation. The Academic Pediatric Association awarded her for this work with the 2018 Health Care Delivery Award.

Dr. Briggs is the editor of Integrated Early Childhood Behavioral Health in Primary Care, published by Springer (2016). She is Clinical Professor of Pediatrics & Psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and completed her undergraduate work at Duke University (magna cum laude) and her doctoral work at New York University.

Laura Kavanagh

Member

Laura Kavanagh, M.P.P., is the Deputy Associate Administrator of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration. Kavanagh has served as the Deputy Associate Administrator since April 2015, with a focus on improving the transparency, accountability, and evidence base of MCHB's programs and initiatives. Her 30-year career in government and academia demonstrates a clear commitment to improving maternal and child health, with emphases on teaching, mentoring the next generation of MCH professionals, and advancing a diverse array of programs for underserved communities. Kavanagh earned a Master of Public Policy degree with an emphasis on health policy analysis from Georgetown University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in interdisciplinary studies from the University of Virginia.

Cheryl Polk

Member

Cheryl Polk, Ph.D., is Safe & Sound's first Chief Program Officer. Safe & Sound has worked for more than 45 years to prevent child abuse and reduce its devastating impact. In this position, Dr. Polk supervises the agency's clinical and family teams: Integrated Children & Family Services that bolster mental health, and Community Education & Strategic Partnerships. Prior to this role, she served as president of HighScope Educational Research Foundation. For more than 25 years, Dr. Polk has promoted healthy child development, especially for children at risk of school failure and their families, through her work as a psychologist, academic, and civic volunteer. She served as the executive director of the Lisa and John Pritzker Family Fund where her insight into early childhood development and philanthropy helped create innovative intervention programs for children exposed to community and interpersonal trauma. She was president of the board of directors of Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families and served as a board member of that organization for more than 10 years. Dr. Polk received her Ph.D. in psychology from California School of Professional Psychology-SF/Alliant International University.

Lara Robinson

Member

Lara Robinson, PhD, MPH, is a behavioral scientist with the Child Development Studies Team at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities in Atlanta, GA. Dr. Robinson works on public health program evaluation, policy research, and risk and protective factor research related to promoting optimal child development and preventing mental disorders. Dr. Robinson began her career at the CDC in February 2009 as an agency-wide Healthy Parenting Fellow. Her expertise is in early childhood development, children's mental health, parenting, research translation, and developmental impacts of economic disparities. She received her Master of Public Health from Tulane University and her PhD in Applied Developmental Psychology from the University of New Orleans. From 2006-2008 she completed Postdoctoral Integrative Research Training in Child Mental Health at the Pennsylvania State University.

Deborah K. Walker

Member

Deborah Klein Walker, Ed.D., is the current president of the Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice (formerly the American Orthopsychiatric Association) and a former president of the American Public Health Association and the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs. She formerly served as vice president and senior fellow at Abt Associates, Inc. and as associate commissioner for programs and prevention at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Prior to state service, Dr. Walker was an associate professor of human development at the Harvard School of Public Health and a faculty member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Dr. Walker has authored three books and over 100 articles and book chapters. Her research and policy interests include child and family policy, program implementation and evaluation, public health practice, disability policy, community health systems, health outcomes and data systems. She received her Ed.D. in human development from Harvard University.

David W. Willis

Member

David W. Willis, M.D. , is a senior fellow at the Center for the Study of Social Policy. He leads a national initiative to advance early relational health for child health and communities. A board -certified, developmental-behavioral pediatrician, Dr. Willis was a clinician in Oregon for more than 30 years with a practice focused on early childhood development and family therapy. Most recently, he was the first executive director of the Perigee Fund, a Seattle-based philanthropy focused on strengthening of the social and emotional development of all babies and toddlers, and on advancing the workforce to do so. From 2012-2018, he served as director of the Division of Home Visiting and Early Childhood Services at the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal Child Health Bureau, in Washington DC, and continues to be thought leader in home visiting and early childhood systems. During his career, Dr. Willis has also been a Harris Mid-Career Fellow with childhood development nonprofit ZERO TO THREE; the past president of the Oregon Pediatric Society; an executive member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Section on Early Education and Child Care; and chair of the AAP's Board's Early Brain & Child Development Strategic Initiative. Dr. Willis has been a national lecturer, advisor to early childhood national policy and visionary for the transformation of child health care in coordination with early childhood communities and focused on the advancement of early relational health and young children's social-emotional and developmental well-being. Dr. Willis received his M.D. from Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University.