



## **Statewide Stigma & Discrimination Consortium Members Biographies**

<http://calmhsa.org/sdr-consortium/>

### **Leticia Alejandre**

Executive Director, California Family Resource Association (CFRA), a statewide membership association representing over 200 community-based Family Resource Centers that provide an array of human and social services to millions of low-income, culturally and linguistically diverse communities of color. Ms. Alejandre's career encompasses diverse fields including, public policy, community-development, education and public-private partnerships. She has a passion and commitment to equity and social justice.

### **Kirsten Barlow**

Kirsten Barlow, MSW, is Associate Director, Legislation and Public Policy, at the California Mental Health Directors Association. In this position, as well as in her prior work at the California Department of Mental Health and Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, she is an advocate for resources that assist in the recovery of persons with serious mental illness and serious emotional disturbance. She has also worked as a consultant for the Assembly Human Services Committee in the California State Legislature. She earned her B.A. in psychology at the University of Michigan, and M.S.W. at the University of California at Berkeley.

### **Adrian Bernard**

I have been a consumer advocate for a little over a year and in that year have been to multiple conferences learning about the issues of mental health. I work for the SAMHSA funded Respite House program in Santa Cruz. I work for NAMI as well. I have learned to live a balanced life with what is called mental illness and am finally ready to work more intently on establishing global mental health.

## **Rocco Cheng**

C. Rocco Cheng is Corporate Director of Prevention and Early Intervention Services at Pacific Clinics. He is responsible for planning and coordinating PEI services for various ethnic and age groups in the Clinics' five-county service area. A licensed clinical psychologist since 1996, Dr. Cheng has worked as a crisis counselor, team leader, project coordinator and program director. He directed programs on mentoring, parenting and gang awareness, as well as several prevention projects aimed at reducing substance abuse, HIV, youth violence and gang affiliation.

Dr. Cheng has served on two of the five committees for the Mental Health Service Oversight and Accountability Commission. He has also directed the Asian Pacific Islander portion of the California Reducing Disparities Project since 2010. Dr. Cheng is very interested in the spiritual dimension of mental health. He is a steering committee member of the statewide Mental Health and Spirituality Initiative.

## **Kathleen Derby**

Kathleen Derby is a peer and family advocate with over 25 years of lived experience in mental health. She serves as Advocacy Director for NAMI California, representing the voices of peers and family members on statewide mental health policy issues. She helps to educate and activate stakeholders to support their involvement in policy, planning, quality improvement of services and access. She began her community involvement in mental health in an effort to address stigma by launching the county's first In Our Own Voice program. She remains an active speaker. Kathleen earned a BA in English Literature from Loyola Marymount University and an MA in Communication Studies from California State University Sacramento. Her graduate studies centered on mental health advocacy, stigma, and the cultural portrayal of mental illness.

## **Andy Duch**

Captain Andy Duch (Duke) of the Butte County Sheriff's Office is a California State University Chico graduate and a 22 year law enforcement veteran. He is currently the co-chair of both the Butte County Behavioral Health Advisory Board and Crisis Intervention Team Steering Committee. He teaches crisis de-escalation and voluntary compliance attainment to law enforcement and civilian

groups. For the past 15 years, he served on the Butte County Sheriff's Office SWAT team, the last 11 years as SWAT Tactical Commander.

### **Renu Garg-Peterlinz**

Renu Garg-Peterlinz lives in Fremont, CA with her husband Kevin, a Research Scientist and a son who is 11 and a daughter who is 8. She was born in India and raised in the Midwest and holds a BA in Economics from Northwestern University and an MBA from The Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University in Hospital and Healthcare Management Services. In the past four years Renu has worked in many capacities with The Life Reaching Across to Life Organization with the last title of Assistant Director. She has also, presented sermons and homilies to combat mental health's stigma at the Mission Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation and gave a lecture and screened "Crooked Beauty" to Irvington High School to reduce stigma. She also started four support groups: "Creating Communities and Alternatives to support Mental Health Wellness", "Empowerment for Parents Labeled with a Mental Health Diagnoses", "Women's Self-Empowerment Group" and a Third Grade Girl's Support Group to teach about friendship, acceptance and reduce bullying.

### **Azizza Davis Goines**

Azizza Davis Goines has over 30 years experience in Association Management. Her experience includes expertise in fund development, program development, community relations, event planning, board development, public policy, strategic planning, collaboration building and strong facilitation skills. She has headed nonprofit agencies in the capacities of Executive Director and President/CEO. She is now President/CEO of the Sacramento Black Chamber of Commerce. The one thread woven throughout her experiences is her commitment to finding parity for all people through economic development, healthcare and social justice.

### **Myel Jenkins**

Myel Jenkins is Sierra Health Foundation's program officer for the Respite Partnership Collaborative (RPC), a partnership of the County of Sacramento, Division of Behavioral Health Services, Sierra Health Foundation and the community at large. The RPC will support a continuum of respite services aimed at reducing mental health crisis in Sacramento County. Myel previously was a

program planner with the County of Sacramento, leading the development of community-driven programs under the Mental Health Services Act. She also served at First 5 Sacramento Commission, where she was responsible for grant-making programs that supported the healthy development of families with young children.

### **Betty F. Malks**

Betty F. Malks has over 30 years experience in the field of aging. Appointed its director in 1997, she spearheaded the creation of the Santa Clara County Department of Aging and Adult Services, bring together Adult Protective Services, Public administrator/Guardian/Conservator, In-Home Supportive services, Senior Nutrition, and Veterans Services under one umbrella. Ms. Malks is the architect of the Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST) which has recovered/prevented the loss of more than \$200 million of clients' assets. Granted by the Mental Health Services Act of CA, she created a partnership with Santa Clara County Mental Health department to expand outreach efforts to all faith communities. She is a Board member of the national adult Protective Services association and has served on the National Advisory Panel of the NY academy of Medicine's Social Work Leadership Institute. She is the current Vice Chair of the Board of the CA Elder Mental Health and Aging Coalition.

### **Kenneth McPeters**

I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and have been involved in the fields of counseling, education and mental health for over 15 years. I consider myself to be a change agent and look forward to working with the Consortium.

### **Pamlyn Millsap**

I started by working at Victim Witness in 1985 and then worked in a locked psych unit until 1992 when I accepted a position with Humboldt County Mental Health as the Homeless Coordinator. I worked with DHHS until 2011. I left mental health to start a program working with the homeless for Eureka Police Department to reduce incarcerations and provide support to those in need.

### **Catherine Morris**

Catherine Morris is a Veterans Counselor and Professor at Sierra College in California. In addition to over 15 years of military service in the Marines, Ca.

Army and Air National Guard, Morris also brings a decade of counseling, teaching, and advocacy for over 8,000 veterans, guard, and reservists. She developed and teaches College Success, part of the “Boots to Books Learning Community” which is linked to an English course and designed to assist veterans in transitioning from military to college. Morris has created the Veterans Resource Center at Sierra College, which offers use to peer mentioning, Veterans specific orientations, computers break out rooms, and access to Vet Center counseling and other community resources. Morris has presented dozens of workshops to colleges, military units, community, and veteran organizations on topics such as: combat stress, educational benefits, creating veteran friendly campuses, and military competencies.

### **Ralph Nelson Jr., M.D.**

Ralph Nelson Jr. was a radiologist and a partner of the Kern Radiology Medical Group from 1974 until his retirement in 1999. He also worked as a radiologist at William Beaumont U.S. Army Medical Center from 1973 to 1974. He previously served as President of NAMI California Board of Directors from 2004 to 2008 and was a member of the California Collaborative Justice Court Advisory Committee from 2007 to 2010. He currently is a Commissioner to the Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission, serves as a board member of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), is a member of the California State Licensing and Certification Advisory Committee, and is Chair of the Tulare County Mental Health Board. Commissioner Nelson holds a seat as a family member of a child who has or has had a severe mental illness.

### **Victor Ojakian**

I'm a mental health family member and professionally am a nationally certified project planner. Living in Santa Clara County (SCC), I chair or co-chair three mental health related committees -- the SCC Mental Health Board, the SCC Stakeholder Leadership Committee (SCC MHSA review committee) and the SCC Suicide Prevention Oversight Committee. Additionally I participate in several national, state, regional, or local committees or organizations that work on mental health care or suicide prevention.

### **Tara Pir**

Dr. Tara Pir clinical psychologist and diplomate in behavioral medicine &

professional psychotherapy, has nearly three decades of experience in clinical practice, clinical training and supervision, mentorship, graduate level teaching, consultation, research, international speaking, community services, human rights advocacy, and leadership positions at the local and global level. Having founded the Institute for Multicultural Counseling and Education Services (IMCES) in 1989, Dr. Pir has led the Institute to become one of the few nonprofit outpatient community clinics designed to treat the varied needs of the underserved culturally and linguistically diverse communities of Los Angeles. At the State level, Dr. Pir has an extensive history with the Mental Health Services Act, making tremendous strides with mental health services in California.

### **Suamhirs Rivera**

Suamhirs Rivera is a 21-year-old former foster youth, originally from Honduras. At age 15 Suamhirs was kidnapped, trafficked and smuggled into the United States. For 6 months Suamhirs was a victim of child sex trafficking. Suamhirs then was rescued and placed in foster care. Suamhirs was placed in 17 different placements from the lowest level of care to the highest and "aged out" of foster care in 2009. Suamhirs found his voice as an advocate and has advocated for foster youth and victims of child sex trafficking at the local state and national level. Suamhirs is currently working for the San Diego Center for Children as a Youth Partner where he provides first hand services to kids in foster care. Suamhirs is part of several advocacy organizations all over the state, such as The YOUTH Training Project, Youth in Mind and The Real Word Panel. Suamhirs has been invited to be part of a special task group with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to prevent international child sex trafficking. Suamhirs also has been invited to present in the 2012 Conference of the European Countries Against Child Sex Trafficking. Suamhirs is a part time student at the University of California San Diego, where he is a double major on Political Science and International Relations. Suamhirs hopes to become an attorney.

### **Peter Schroeder**

Peter Schroeder is a mental health consumer who has been advocating at the state level around private health insurance issues for over 10 years. He currently serves as President of the California Coalition for Mental Health and is a Board Member at Mental Health America of California. He has been particularly involved in voicing consumer concerns related to the implementation of the state

and federal mental health insurance parity laws. Peter is a data and operations manager for the Space Physics Research Group at the Space Sciences Laboratory of the University of California, Berkeley.

### **Karen Ventimiglia**

Karen Ventimiglia, was appointed to the position of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Coordinator for the County of San Diego in 2008. She currently serves on the California Mental Health Directors Association MHSA Committee. Ms. Ventimiglia has been appointed as the San Diego County Liaison for the California Statewide Prevention and Early Intervention programs, and as an Alternate Voting Member of the California Mental Health Services Authority. She manages the award winning It's Up to Us Stigma Reduction and Suicide Prevention Campaign, and the Courage to Call program, a prevention program serving Veterans, Military, Reservists, and their families. Ms. Ventimiglia received the Mental Health Manager of the Year Award in 2010.

### **Ken White**

Ken White is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has over 32 years experience providing and managing mental health, substance abuse, nephrology, child welfare, sexual offender and emancipation programs. With over 20 years dedicated to supporting employment services for people with mental health challenges and as a teacher of NAMI's Provider Training Course, he firmly believes in recovery and the important roles of the individual, family, provider and community to promote recovery and wellness. Ken's service as a PTA and Homeowners Association President, as a Tribal and Nation Chief in the Y-Indian Guides/Princesses and as a coach for Little League and girl's fast pitch softball for 25 years demonstrates his beliefs and commitment to family and community activities to support health development and wellness. He hopes to use his experience as a friend, family member, professional and advocate to support the development programs the eliminate stigma and discrimination for people with mental health challenges.

### **Scott Whyte**

I was born in Canada and served for 23 years in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police before being medically discharged with a late-onset breakdown and diagnosis of Bipolar Mood Disorder. During my recovery I've been working

within the community mental health sector as an educator, mentor, and advocate. I've been helping to train law enforcement officers in Crisis Intervention for the past four years in Orange County.

### **Chong Yang**

I was born in a refugee camp in Thailand after the Vietnam War. My family came to the U.S. as refugees and I grew up in the Central Valley. I am a 2003 graduate from CSU, Fresno with a Masters of Science degree in Counseling and a K-12 Pupil Personnel Services Credential. I have been a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist since 2007. In 2002, I facilitated the Restore the Learning Environment Project, a Hmong youth focus group with Fresno Unified School District to address the rise of Hmong student suicide. I am currently an active community member of Stanislaus County and work as a Manager II of Workforce Education & Training/MHSA Planning with Stanislaus County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services. I am a member of the Stanislaus Asian American Community Resource, the Southeast Asian-American Professionals Association and a certified trainer of Mental Health First Aid.

### **Gayle Zepeda**

Gayle Zepeda is a Workforce Development Coordinator for the California Indian Manpower Consortium in Ukiah, California and has served as the Chairperson of the Redwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California. Her prior work has included the role of Career Development Coordinator with the California Tribal TANF partnership and as a consultant to the American Indian Training Institute, Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority, and California Rural Indian Health Board. In 2001 Ms. Zepeda was appointed as a member of a delegation of women from around the U.S. to represent the needs of women and girls at the World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa.

### **Sally Zinman**

Sally Zinman is a consultant, currently primarily working as Consumer Relations Specialist with the Office of Consumer Relations, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services. Sally has been active in the mental health consumer/survivor empowerment movement for over 35 years, having served as Executive Director/Coordinator of several organizations which she also helped found. In 1986, Sally co-edited and wrote articles for *Reaching Across: Mental*

*Health Clients Helping Each Other*, and, in 1994, *Reaching Across II: Maintaining Our Roots/ The Challenge of Growth*, landmark manuals that describe consumer run program principles and practices.