

**Statewide Stigma & Discrimination Reduction Consortium
Member Biographies**

Updated 10-14-2013

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

Estephani Alanis

Estephani Alanis, 22, was once labeled a mental health consumer, bulimic, schizo, crazy, at-risk, and incompetent. Ms. Alanis is now the Youth in Mind OC President and Mad Organizer. Her vulnerability to share her story has guided her to take part as a peer leader for Inspire USA, under the ReachOut.com forum project, which helps millions of young people lead happier lives. As an advocate, Ms. Alanis facilitated her first workshop at the California Mental Health Advocates for Children and Youth (CMHACY) Conference 2012, focusing on undocumented/immigrant families in mental health. Her drive to spread awareness and hope to her peers comes from gained life experience and reflections on the value of work in recovery from mental illness.

Kirsten Barlow

Kirsten Barlow, MSW, is Associate Director of Legislation and Public Policy at the California Mental Health Directors Association (CMHDA). In this position, as well as in Ms. Barlow's prior work at the California Department of Mental Health and Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, she advocates for resources that assist in the recovery of persons with serious mental illness and serious emotional disturbances. Ms. Barlow has worked as a consultant for the Assembly Human Services Committee of the California state legislature. She earned her BA in psychology at the University of Michigan, and her MSW at the University of California, Berkeley.

Adrian Bernard

Adrian Bernard has been a consumer advocate for close to two years, and in that time has attended multiple conferences to learn about the issues of mental health. Mr. Bernard works for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)-funded Second Story Respite House program in Santa Cruz; he also works for the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI). He has learned to live a balanced life with what is called mental illness, and is finally ready to work more intently on establishing global mental health.

Ana Aguayo-Bryant

Ana Aguayo-Bryant has spent the past twenty years working the field of education, and is currently the Program Manager for the California Mental Health Student Initiative of the California State University Office of the Chancellor. Prior to taking this position, she spent many years as a Coordinator and grant

programs director for the Santa Ana College Service Learning Center. Over the past decade, Ana has also been a college instructor, which has allowed her to strike a balance between both the managerial and instructional sides of field of education. Through her experience working with AmeriCorps, she has gained an understanding of the special challenges involved in dealing with the foster care system, and how to aid foster youth not only physically, but emotionally and mentally as well.

Kathleen Casela

Kathleen “Kat” Casela has been an advocate for at-risk and homeless transitional age youth (TAY) for over ten years. She is originally from the San Francisco Bay Area and currently resides in Sacramento. Kathleen’s knowledge, expertise and personal lived experience as an emancipated foster youth has allowed her to utilize her voice in her commitment to making a positive change within the public systems. Kathleen also has experience in project management, coordination, facilitation, policy, advocacy and curriculum development. She has been a member of several committees, both local and statewide, including: Honoring Emancipate Youth, Transitional Youth Task Force, California Youth Connection (CYC), California Youth Empowerment Network (CaYEN), and the Services Committee, a subcommittee of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC). She is currently the Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Coordinator for the United Advocates for Children and Families (UACF), working on a statewide mental health project with individual counties in order to raise awareness and address mental health stigma.

Maribel Chavez

Maribel Chavez is a Community Organizer and Key Family Contact for Project ABC, as well as a member of the Los Angeles chapter committee of United Advocates for Children and Family (UACF). Through her work, she has gathered a team of parent partners that are making a difference in their community by voicing their stories to government officials, and Maribel has even advocated to senators in Washington D.C. to address policies that impact mental health. Through her personal experience, she has developed a keen understanding of the barriers that can arise when facing mental health in different ethnic communities, and her collaborative work with other healthcare, school, and family organizations has been geared towards assisting communities in a way that respects family values, culture, language, race, and ideology.

Rocco Cheng

C. Rocco Cheng is corporate Director of Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) 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 has 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.

Gigi Crowder

Gigi Crowder serves as an Ethnic Services Manager/Cultural Responsiveness Coordinator in Alameda County. Through both her personal and professional work over the past twenty-five years, she has advocated for many different communities with the aim of providing culturally-responsive approaches to achieving mental wellness. Her unique understanding of the decision-making process on the community and local levels has allowed her to provide progressive approaches that once implemented, result in better outcomes for all. Gigi has also served as the co-chair of the California Mental Health Director's Association's (CMHDA) former Social Justice Advisory Committee, and currently participates in a local committee to advance efforts for African American males.

Holly Davison

Holly Davison is a Program Manager for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Holly oversees NAMI's stigma-reduction programs for high school and middle school students, K-12 teachers and staff and mental health professionals. In her previous position as Director of Programs for NAMI California, Holly managed the NAMI California CalMHSAs Stigma and Discrimination Reduction (SDR) Project. Through her work with SDR programs and the CalMHSAs SDR project, Holly has developed a strong passion for reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness. Holly also has a background in teaching and education, receiving her MS in Chemistry from the University of California, Davis.

Kathleen Derby

Kathleen Derby is a peer and family advocate with over twenty-five 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. Ms. Derby began her community involvement in mental health in an effort to address stigma by launching the county's first "In Our Own Voice" program, and remains an active speaker. Ms. Derby 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 graduated from California State University, Chico, and is a 22-year law enforcement veteran. He currently co-chairs both the Butte County Behavioral Health Advisory Board and the Crisis Intervention Team Steering Committee. He currently teaches crisis de-escalation and voluntary compliance attainment to law enforcement and civilian groups. For the past fifteen years, Captain Duch served on the Butte County Sheriff's Office SWAT team, and the past eleven years as the SWAT Tactical Commander.

Azizza Davis Goines

Azizza Davis Goines has over thirty 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; Ms. Goines 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.

Reina Juarez, Ph.D

Reina Juarez has over thirty years' experience working in the mental health field as a clinical psychologist, with twenty-five years also spent reducing stigma in the field of higher education. She currently works for the University of California, San Diego, engaging the community of San Diego County through her expertise in Positive Psychology and training in suicidology. As a bicultural and bilingual Latina who specializes in culturally-competent service delivery, Reina understands the mental health needs of both her community and students. She also believes that creating a network of partners is essential to the success of all mental health advancement, having worked in a number of multidisciplinary and diverse teams over the years.

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. Ms. Jenkins previously was a program planner with the County of Sacramento, leading the development of community-driven programs under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). 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.

Diane Kubrin

Diane Kubrin has worked in the field of public mental health for the past twenty-five years, and has been a licensed marriage and family therapist since 1997. She currently serves as the Director of Behavioral Health at the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center. Prior to this position, Diane served as Division Director for Adult and Older Adult Services at the Didi Hirsch Community Mental Health Center; while there, she co-wrote one of the first requests for proposal for Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding and was ultimately able to secure \$3 million to implement a number of services. Diane also has seven years' experience advocating for clients with severe mental illness as a member-at-large for the California Association of Social Rehab Agencies (CASRA), working on a variety of issues at the county, state, and even federal level.

Nga Le

Nga Le was born in Vietnam and grew up in Sacramento. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Integrative Biology from the University of California, Berkeley. During her undergraduate career, Ms. Le volunteered with the Asian and Pacific Islander Recruitment and Retention Center and the Southeast Asian Student Coalition. Ms. Le coordinated a youth program that encouraged students of color from under-resourced communities to pursue higher education. She was also an interpreter for Vietnamese patients through the Volunteer Health Interpreters Organization and the Asian Health Services Labor Coach Program. Ms. Le is currently working at Community Health for Asian Americans, as the Tobacco Prevention Coordinator, to prevent and reduce tobacco use among Southeast Asian youth.

Betty Malks

Betty F. Malks has over thirty 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, bringing together Adult Protective Services, Public Administration/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 (MHSA) of California, 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 New York Academy of Medicine's Social Work Leadership Institute. She is the current Vice Chair of the Board of the California Elder Mental Health and Aging Coalition.

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 the National Alliance on Mental Illness (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 Commissioner to the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSAOAC), serves as a board member of NAMI, 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

Victor Ojakian is a mental health family member and professional, nationally-certified project planner. Living in Santa Clara County, Mr. Ojakian chairs or co-chairs three mental health-related committees: the SCC Mental Health Board, the SCC Stakeholder Leadership Committee (SCC's MHS review committee), and the SCC Suicide Prevention Oversight Committee. Additionally, he participates in several national, state, regional, and local committees or organizations that work on mental health care or suicide prevention.

Tara Pir, Ph.D

Dr. Tara Pir, a clinical psychologist and diplomat in behavioral medicine and 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 levels. 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 non-profit 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 (MHSA), making tremendous strides with mental health services in California.

Sandra Poole

Sandra Poole has over thirty years of policy, regulation, and legislative expertise in both local and state government. She has a unique understanding of the broad policy issues impacting government agencies, and the impact that these policies have at the local level. Through her previous and current employment in both the government and non-profit sectors, she works on behalf of underserved populations throughout the state; her work in mental health has been as an advocate for reducing disparities in unserved and underserved communities, as well as suicide prevention in the African American community. As a result of having worked over the years with multiple stakeholders who have diverse interests, Ms. Poole has gained an experience that allows her to see issues from a broader perspective, through which she can bring these groups together to find a common ground and agreement upon policy issues.

Jim Raphael

Jim Raphael has spent more than thirty years as a mental health patients' rights advocate, during which time he has represented over thirteen thousand clients in both short-term civil commitment and capacity hearings. He has also served on a number of mental health committees, including serving as a member of the California Association of Mental Health Patients' Rights Advocates (CAMHPRA) for twenty-five years, and three years as President of its board. Jim has gained an intimate knowledge of how the mental health system not only works, but also fails, at the state local levels, and it's this experience that has shaped his belief in client empowerment and the ability of mental health clients to navigate the course of their own lives and recovery. Through his work serving as a surrogate for client concerns, Jim has collaborated on a wide variety of strategies related to solving the complex problems of the mental health system in California.

Suamhirs Rivera

Suamhirs Rivera is a 21-year-old former foster youth, originally from Honduras. At the age of fifteen, Mr. Rivera was kidnapped, trafficked, and smuggled in the United States, and for six months was a victim of child sex trafficking and abuse; he was then rescued and placed in foster care. He was placed in seventeen different placements, from the lowest level of care to the highest, until he "aged out" of the foster care system in 2009. He found his voice as an advocate and has advocated for foster youth and victims of child

sex trafficking at the local, state, and national levels. He 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. He is part of several advocacy organizations all over the state, such as the YOUTH Training Program, Youth in Mind, and CASA's "The Real Word" Panel. Mr. Rivera has been invited to be part of a special task group with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to prevent international child sex trafficking; he has also been invited to present at the 2012 European Countries Against Child Sex Trafficking conference. He is a part-time student at the University of California, San Diego, where he is a double-major in both Political Science and International Relations. Suamhirs hopes to one day become an attorney.

Stephen Salva

Stephen Salva is an Assistant Principal, Secondary Counseling Services for the Los Angeles Unified School District; he has also been the president of the California Association of School Counselors (2011-2012). With twenty-six year in education, Mr. Salva has been an elementary teacher in South Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. He holds both multiple-subject and single-subject teaching credentials, as well as his Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential and a Master's Degree in School Counseling. He also teaches Educational Psychology and Learning Theory, as well as Advocacy and Leadership in School Counseling at the graduate level. Originally from New Jersey, Mr. Salva now calls both Silverlake/Los Angeles and Palm Springs, CA home.

Peter Schroeder

Peter Schroeder is a mental health consumer who has been advocating on private health insurance issues at the state level for over ten years. Mr. Schroeder currently serves as President of the California Coalition for Mental Health (CCMH), and is a board member at Mental Health America of California (MHAC). He has been particularly involved in voicing consumer concerns related to the implementation of state and federal mental health insurance parity laws. He is a data and operations manager for the Space Physics Research Group at the Space Sciences Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley.

Adrienne Shilton

Adrienne Shilton has spent the past five years working for the California Institute for Mental Health (CiMH), providing technical assistance to local county behavioral health organizations that are currently developing workforce development and educational plans and programs. Through collaborations with organizations such as the California Health Occupations Students of America (Cal-HOSA), the California Council of Community Mental Health Agencies (CCCMHA), and the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC), Ms. Shilton has gained an understanding of the unique needs of the county behavioral health systems, as well as an understanding of the skills and abilities that are necessary for individuals providing services in the public behavioral health system.

Lisa Smusz

Lisa Smusz has spent more than fifteen years working in the mental health field as a counselor, university instructor, and project manager, with areas of work spanning across the Bay Area, Central Coast, and rural

Yosemite regions; she currently serves as Executive Director of Peers Envisioning and Engaging in Recovery Services (PEERS) in Oakland. Aside from being a mental health provider, she also has experience as consumer, which she has utilized while working with an extensive number of diverse communities and groups. Her passion to improve mental health outcomes and increase efficiency in the current mental health system has allowed her to be involved in many initiatives, including the Alameda County Social Inclusion Campaign, which brought together stakeholders from all over the community to address the issue of mental health stigma and discrimination.

Tracey Tripp

Tracey Tripp recently received her Bachelor's Degree in Human Services/Management and is looking to pursue her Master's Degree. Tracey is an enrolled member of the Lone Band of Miwok Indians; she sat on the Tribal Council from 2003-2012, as a Tribal Secretary. She also sat on the Mariposa, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne (MACT) Health Board, California Rural Indians Health Board (CRIHB), and other various committees.

Ken White

Ken White is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has over thirty-two years of experience providing and managing mental health, substance abuse, nephrology, child welfare, sexual offender, and emancipation programs. With over twenty years dedicated to supporting employment services for people with mental health challenges and as a teacher of NAMI's Provider Training Course, Mr. White firmly believes in recovery and the important roles of the individual, family, provider, and community in promoting recovery and wellness. His service as a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and Homeowners Association president, a Tribal and Nation Chief in the Y-Indian Guides/Princesses, and as a coach for little league and girls' fast-pitch softball for twenty-five 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 of programs that eliminate stigma and discrimination for people with mental health challenges.

Scott Whyte

Scott Whyte was born in Canada and served for twenty-three years in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, before being medically discharged after a late-onset breakdown and the subsequent diagnosis of Bipolar Moon Disorder. During Mr. Whyte's recovery, he worked within the community mental health sector as an educator, mentor, and advocate. He has helped to train law enforcement officers in Crisis Intervention (CIT) for the past four years in Orange County.

Seng Yang

Seng Yang has spent over ten years as a service provider with the Hmong Cultural Center of Butte County, not only for the Hmong population, but for the greater Southeast Asian community in the area as well. His fluency in both Hmong and Lao have put him in a position to effectively serve his local community, reconciling issues that are common in rural areas with those of the many Asian populations in the region.