Faculty and Author Biographies

**Susan Abrams** is the director of policy and training at the Children’s Law Center of California in Monterey Park. She has committed her career to working with and on behalf of children. Ms. Abrams worked as an attorney for children in foster care for the past 13 years. She began her career implementing an Equal Justice Works fellowship project at Children’s Law Center of California (CLC), where she sought to reduce the rate of dependent youth entering the juvenile justice system. Following her fellowship, Ms. Abrams worked as a CLC Staff Attorney representing children in dependency court proceedings in Los Angeles Superior Court. In April 2011, Ms. Abrams transitioned from the courtroom to focus on macro level policy work.

**Danny Alicea** is the litigation supervisor for the Center for Family Representation Immigration Practice in New York, providing CFR attorneys with advice on the immigration consequences of family and criminal court proceedings. He provides advocacy for clients detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, screenings for immigration relief and direct representation before the immigration service. Prior to joining CFR, he was special counsel to the Brooklyn DA’s office, creating procedures and training for all ADAs to factor in a person’s immigration status and any potential immigration-related collateral consequences when considering potential pleas. Mr. Alicea received his J.D. from CUNY School of Law.

**Tina Amberboy** joined the Supreme Court of Texas as the executive director of the Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families in May 2007. She is responsible for developing and executing strategies of the Children’s Commission, as well as the day-to-day functioning of the Commission, which is charged with improving child welfare outcomes for children and families through judicial system reform and leadership. Prior to working for the Supreme Court, she worked as an attorney representing children and parents in the child welfare system. She earned a J.D. from Baylor Law School in 1996 and a B.A. in Government from the University of Texas at Austin in 1993.

**Carl Ayers** is the director of the Division of Family Services at the Virginia Department of Social Services in Richmond. Prior to joining the Virginia Department of Social Services, Mr. Ayers held a number of positions with local departments of social services. Most recently, he served as the director of the Floyd County Department of Social Services from 2004 to 2014. Mr. Ayers has more than 21 years’ experience in the child welfare system. Throughout his distinguished career, he has held numerous leadership positions at the local, state and national levels. Presently, Mr. Ayers serves as chair of the Interagency Partnership to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness for the Commonwealth of Virginia and is on the Executive Committee for the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators. Mr. Ayers is also a Board member of the Child Welfare League of America. He is leading Virginia’s implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act and he has led Virginia’s Three Branch Initiative to reduce child fatalities and Virginia’s statewide study involving substance-exposed infants with a focus on how Virginia can improve its response to children and families impacted by substance abuse. Mr. Ayers holds a B.S.W. and an M.S.W. from Radford University and is a graduate of the Virginia Executive Institute and the Commonwealth Management Institute.

**Stephanie Barclay** is a First Amendment scholar at Brigham Young University Law School in Provo, Utah. He researches and writes about the role our different democratic institutions play in protecting minority rights, particularly at the intersection of free speech and religious exercise issues. Professor Barclay’s academic writing has been published or is forthcoming in journals such as the *Washington University Law Review*, the *Boston College Law Review*, the *Indiana Law Journal* and the *Arizona Law Review*. Professor Barclay has frequently appeared in the national media to discuss First Amendment issues, including appearances on BBC World News, Wall Street Journal Live and Fox News. Professor Barclay teaches First Amendment and Family Law. Prior to teaching, Professor Barclay litigated First Amendment cases full-time at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, where she represented many organizations and individuals at both the trial and appellate level, including before the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Prudence Beidler Carr** is the director of the American Bar Association’s Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C., where she manages a team of attorneys and core staff who work on children’s law projects.
throughout the country. Ms. Beidler Carr provides substantive expertise on Center projects related to federal legislation, child welfare and immigration, and legal representation. Ms. Beidler Carr has worked on numerous children’s advocacy projects in child welfare, early care and education, and afterschool program development both domestically and internationally. Before coming to the American Bar Association, Ms. Beidler Carr lived in Mexico City, where she partnered with JUCONI, a Mexican organization that helps street-living youth reintegrate with their families. Previously, Ms. Beidler Carr worked in the General Counsel’s Office at the Department of Homeland Security, where she managed class action, appellate and Supreme Court litigation and advised senior leaders on the legal effects of immigration and national security policies. Ms. Beidler Carr also served as the office’s deputy managing counsel.

Darneshia Bell is a senior technical assistance specialist for ZERO TO THREE’s National Infant-Toddler Court Team Program in Washington, D.C. Ms. Bell served as the Arkansas Safe Babies Court Team Community Coordinator and then Training/Outreach Coordinator from 2009 to 2016. She has presented widely on the safety and wellbeing of infants and toddlers including at the Oklahoma Children in the Courts Annual Conference and the Arkansas Children in the Law Annual Conference. She serves on several boards including Arkansas’ State Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Taskforce and is a member of the Arkansas Judicial Improvement Committee and Network for Early Stress and Trauma.

Ana Beltran is an attorney and special advisor to Generations United in Washington, D.C. She has been working with Generations United’s National Center on Grandfamilies since 1999, virtually since its inception. Ms. Beltran heads Generations United’s collaboration with the ABA Center on Children and the Law, which created and maintains www.grandfamilies.org and jointly developed NARA National Model Family Foster Home Licensing Standards on which the National Standards called for in the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First Act) “relied heavily” and “gave considerable deference.” Ms. Beltran also provides technical assistance and training on the breadth of kinship care issues and has worked to help enact and implement several federal and state laws to support the families, including the Family First Act. Prior to joining Generations United, Ms. Beltran worked in all three branches of the federal government and was a practicing attorney.

W. Warren Binford is professor of law and director of the clinical law program at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, where she created the Child & Family Advocacy Clinic. She is one of the only private citizens in the country allowed to inspect the Wal-Mart facility, where immigrant children are being detained, and interview those children. She also interviewed detained immigrant children and families elsewhere. She served as a Fulbright chair and a Fulbright scholar and has published nearly 60 written works. She holds a J.D. from Harvard Law School and a B.A., summa cum laude with distinction, and an Ed.M. from Boston University.

Morgen Black-Smith is the education law staff attorney at the Support Center for Child Advocates in Philadelphia, which represents children and youth in all stages of dependency proceedings. In this role, Ms. Black-Smith leads Child Advocates’ Project for Youth Educational Success (Project YES!) where she provides direct representation to child clients in dependency and education matters and serves as an educational consultant for all of Child Advocates’ dependency clients. Previously, Ms. Black-Smith represented students with disabilities and their families in special education litigation matters in the private sector, and was a Staff Attorney at the Homeless Advocacy Project. Ms. Black-Smith obtained her J.D from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 2006.

Julie Breslow has served as a magistrate judge on the Superior Court for the District of Columbia since 2002. She has been assigned to Family Court for her entire tenure and presides over a docket of child abuse and neglect cases, as well as domestic relations matters, domestic violence matters and child support matters. She presides over all cases in D.C. foster care involving unaccompanied refugee minors and unaccompanied alien children, as well as all child custody matters where a parent or loved one has filed a custody action with a motion for special immigrant juvenile status for a child. Prior to joining the Superior Court, from 1999 to 2002, she served as the chief of the Victim Witness Assistance Unit at the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia. From 1998 to 1999 Ms. Breslow served as an attorney advisor for the U.S. Department of Justice, Executive Office for United States Attorneys. From 1995 to 1998, she served as the
director of the Court Services Unit, for the general receiver at the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency. In 1995, she worked as an associate at Freer and McGarry P.C. (no longer operational) in Washington, D.C. From 1990 to 1995, she served as assistant corporation counsel at the Office of the Corporation Counsel for the District of Columbia (now the Attorney General’s Office) in the Child Abuse and Neglect, Juvenile Delinquency, and Child Support/Paternity Enforcement sections. Ms. Breslow began her career serving as a law clerk to Administrative Law Judge Edward Terhune Miller in Washington, D.C. from 1989 to 1990. She received her J.D. from Albany Law School in 1989 and her B.A. magna cum laude from Union College in 1987.

Carol Casey has represented children in almost every legal forum as an attorney supervisor at the Office of the Cook County Public Guardian in Chicago. She has represented children in civil rights matters, class actions, abuse/neglect cases, and in contested divorces, delinquency, criminal and guardianship cases. She has presented locally and nationally on such topics as representing children, trial skills, ethics, law office management, training and development. The Illinois Supreme Court has appointed her to the Judicial Education College Guardian ad Litem committee, and the Court’s Professionalism Commission has appointed Ms. Casey to numerous committees and work groups dedicated to elevating the legal profession.

Ashley Chase is a staff attorney and legislative liaison for the Colorado Office of the Child’s Representative (OCR), an independent agency in the Colorado Judicial Branch that oversees guardians ad litem and child’s legal representatives across the state of Colorado, in Denver. Prior to joining the OCR she practiced child welfare law in Weld County for 10 years in both the traditional courtroom and in the family treatment court. Ms. Chase serves on numerous committees and remains passionate about the best interests of children.

Ronnie Cheung has been an attorney with Children’s Law Center of California (CLC) in Buena Park since 2005. She has represented foster youth in dependency hearings as a staff attorney and presented arguments before the Court of Appeal as a writ attorney. She has provided training on a variety of topics such as conflicts, making a good record and case law updates. In her current role as Training Coordinator, Ms. Cheung develops the training curriculum for CLC’s attorneys, investigators and support staff and is part of CLC’s Policy and Training Team. Prior to joining CLC, Ms. Cheung gained unique insight into the dependency and delinquency systems as a law clerk for the Los Angeles Juvenile Court Presiding Judge and participated in various child welfare committees to improve services for children and families.

Lily Colby is the policy and program coordinator for California CASA in Oakland and serves on the Board of Directors for Legal Services for Children and the ABA Commission on Youth at Risk. Ms. Colby received her B.A. in Economics from Yale University and her J.D. from Berkeley Law. Ms. Colby has held fellowships and internships at organizations including CWLA, NCYL, YLC, and the ABA Center on Children in the Law. Mrs. Colby has worked on state and federal laws that impact foster youth. Ms. Colby is also a former foster parent, relative caregiver and alumna of the foster care system herself.

Cristina Cooper is a senior attorney with the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C. As program director of Center’s Child Welfare & Immigration Project, Ms. Cooper supports courts and agencies working with immigrant families who are part of or at risk of entering the dependency system and child welfare and immigration attorneys who seek to understand their clients’ legal needs in both fields. Ms. Cooper also supports juvenile court reform through her work with the Children’s Bureau’s Capacity Building Center for Courts and the Center’s Permanency Barriers Project. Prior to joining the ABA, Ms. Cooper provided direct legal representation to children and youth in the Bronx, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Virginia Corrigan joined the Youth Law Center as an Equal Justice Works Fellow sponsored by Baker & McKenzie and Intel in September 2013 and became a staff attorney in 2015. Ms. Corrigan’s current work focuses on a range of issues affecting children and youth, including improving conditions of confinement, reducing reliance on juvenile detention and congregate care, supports for the transition to adulthood, the treatment of minors in immigration custody, educational quality and equity and supporting quality parenting for children and youth in the foster care system. In addition to pursuing strategic litigation, Ms. Corrigan advocates for legal and legislative reforms, provides training and technical assistance to youth-serving agencies and legal service providers and works with agencies to develop and implement systems reforms,
and advocates. As an Equal Justice Works fellow, Ms. Corrigan represented probation-supervised youth in extended foster care in Contra Costa County and worked to improve conditions for youth in the juvenile justice system across California.

**Kathleen Creamer** is the managing attorney of the Family Advocacy Unit at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia, which represents parents in dependency proceedings and engages in systemic advocacy on behalf of families in the child welfare system. Ms. Creamer served as a Stoneleigh Foundation fellow from 2011 to 2013, dedicated to “Improving Reunification Outcomes for Children of Incarcerated Parents.”

**Alicia Davis** is a principal court management consultant with the National Center for State Courts in Williamsburg, Virginia. She has over 15 years’ experience working to confront challenges in the justice system with a focus on justice children, youth and families. Ms. Davis has worked with courts across the country and internationally to identify programs that support reunification and prevention. Ms. Davis draws from her experience in court administration both at the Colorado State Court Administrator’s Office, where she oversaw Judicial Programs, a clearinghouse of community-focused court planning resources, particularly in the areas of juvenile and family law, probate law and alternative dispute resolution; and at the Utah State Court Administrator’s Office, as assistant juvenile court administrator. Ms. Davis represented families in domestic proceedings for several years before entering court administration. Ms. Davis graduated from the S.J. Quinney School of Law at the University of Utah in 1999. She graduated from the University of California at Santa Barbara with honors in 1994 with a double major in English and Spanish Literature. Ms. Davis is a trained project management professional and certified mediator. She is fluent in Spanish and English.

**Tim Decker** has served the children and families of Missouri since 1984. He recently retired as director of Children’s Division after 34 years in various leadership positions within Missouri’s Department of Social Services. He has been part of three major transformation efforts: reforming the state’s juvenile justice system, building parent and community leadership at the neighborhood level and revolutionizing child welfare. All share a compelling, family-centric philosophy that was the key ingredient to their success. Mr. Decker frequently serves as a national speaker on topics such as leadership and professional development, organizational culture and results-based accountability.

**Bill Delisio** serves as the manager of family law programs in Court Services Division of the Colorado State Court Administrator’s Office in Denver. He is responsible for administering budgets, court programs and managing a team of nine analysts and program specialists in the following areas: juvenile dependency and neglect, probate, domestic relations, Office of Dispute Resolution, child support, court-appointed professionals and distance learning. He has extensive experience at the state level managing grants, overseeing policy matters, developing and implementing training and devising specialized court programs. Prior to joining the State Court Administrator’s Office, he worked at the trial court in Colorado’s Seventeenth Judicial District. His primary responsibilities in the trial court included the daily supervision and management of operations in the juvenile court division, including analysis of work flow, supervision of court staff, case management, coordinating training and monitoring data integrity. He has had extensive experiences with systems change efforts at the state and local level, such as the Adams County Family Court Pilot Project, the Adams County Integrated Family Treatment Drug Court and Colorado’s Dependency and Neglect Systems Reform Program. During his time with the judiciary, Mr. Delisio has worked closely with judges, magistrates, clerks of court, court executives and numerous governmental agencies and community organizations for nearly 20 years.

**Hon. Marguerite Downing** presides over a juvenile dependency calendar in the Los Angeles Superior Court in Monterey Park. Prior to her judicial appointment, Hon. Downing worked as a deputy public defender for over 18 years with the Los Angeles County Office of the Public Defender. As a deputy public defender, she represented clients with mental and physical disabilities along with at risk children involved in the juvenile delinquency system. Hon. Downing chairs the Incarcerated Parents Working Group for Los Angeles County at Children’s Court, which was established to address barriers affecting incarcerated parents seeking to reunify with their children in foster care. She also serves on the Judicial Diversity Committee for the Los Angeles Superior Court. Long involved with the American Bar Association, Hon. Downing is the chair of the Commission on Youth and Risk and is their liaison to the Commission on Disability Rights. She has also served
as a commissioner for CDR. She is the incoming chair of the Judicial Section of the California Association of Black Lawyers (CABL). Hon. Downing is a member of the executive boards of the Judicial Council of the National Bar Association and the Association of African American California Judicial Officers. Hon. Downing is a current advisor to the Criminal Law Section Executive Committee, having previously chaired the committee. She serves as the Hospitality Chair for both CABL and Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles (BWL). Hon. Downing has lectured on various topics, including juvenile justice, dependency law and courtroom civility issues in such faraway places as Dubai, Bangkok, Beijing, Guam, Saipan and Washington, D.C.

Mike Dsida is deputy chief counsel with the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS), overseeing CPCS’s Children and Family Law Division in Boston. Mr. Dsida is a graduate of the University of Chicago (1983) and Harvard Law School (1987). His career has focused primarily on advocacy on behalf of clients in state intervention/child welfare matters. Beginning in 1988, Mr. Dsida worked for the Cook County Public Guardian, representing children in Chicago’s Juvenile Court. His work included class litigation in response to systemic problems relating to sibling visits and placement, permanency planning and caseworker assignment policies and practices. One of his cases was Suter v. Artist M. (503 U.S. 347 [1992]), in which Mr. Dsida sought to have the Supreme Court uphold the enforceability of federal requirements regarding family preservation and reunification. In 1995, Mr. Dsida established the Civitas ChildLaw Clinic at the Loyola University School of Law, one of the country’s first law school clinics, to focus on state intervention/child welfare matters. Mr. Dsida also worked as a senior legislative attorney at the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau. Mr. Dsida joined CPCS as Deputy Chief Counsel in 2006.

Gregory Engle is a staff attorney at KidsVoice in Pittsburgh, where he handles a specialized practice representing older youth in addressing driver’s license, expungement of juvenile and adult records, minor criminal matters, name changes, credit and identity theft, health insurance and other issues affecting transition age youth. Mr. Engle previously spent four years as an assistant district attorney in Philadelphia. He handled countless cases, including those with child victims, mid-level appellate practice and pursuit of restorative, community-based justice models through that county’s Drug Treatment Court. Mr. Engle received his BA from the University of Notre Dame and his J.D. from the University of Richmond.

Amanda Fairchild is an associate professor of quantitative psychology in the Psychology Department at the University of South Carolina. She holds an M.A. in Psychological Science (Assessment, Measurement and Statistics) from James Madison University and a Ph.D. in Psychology (Quantitative) from Arizona State University. Dr. Fairchild completed her undergraduate studies in Psychology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. As a statistician in the social sciences, she has centered her work on quantitative methods for prevention and intervention. Much of this work has concentrated on studying statistical mediation analysis to understand how we can advance methods that illuminate mechanisms of change, underlying reasons why variables relate and developmental pathways of behavior. Dr. Fairchild’s research program involves empirical explorations of novel methodology, publishing practical pieces for substantive researchers to enhance statistical integrity of their work and collaborating with applied researchers across a variety of behavioral and public health domains. She has successfully implemented these analyses in a myriad of NIH projects, acting in both principal investigator and co-investigator roles. She has conducted numerous NIH-funded workshops in mediation analysis, as well as has been an invited speaker on mediation analysis at different federal agency meetings, such as the USDHHS Administration for Children and Families. Most recently, Dr. Fairchild has been conducting work funded by the South Carolina Research Foundation that makes use of big data approaches to empirically evaluate how juvenile court intake structure may impact juvenile court decisions, as well as associated racial disparities in those decisions.

Betsy Fordyce is the director of the Youth Empowerment and Legal Advocacy Program at the Rocky Mountain Children’s Law Center in Denver, focused on creating opportunities for youth advocacy within the child welfare system. She also serves as an adjunct professor at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, a trainer with the Colorado Child Welfare Training Academy and during the 2018-2019 academic year, a Wasserstein Public Interest Fellow at Harvard Law School. Ms. Fordyce previously worked as a staff attorney at the National Association of Counsel for Children and a guardian ad litem for children in Colorado.
Sheri Freemont (Turtle Mountain Chippewa/Omaha) is a senior director with Casey Family Programs, Indian Child Welfare Program, in Denver, where she focuses on providing technical support to state and tribal jurisdictions to improve outcomes for children and families in child welfare systems, as well as supporting the Indian Child Welfare Act practices in national projects and state forums. Her areas of focus include cultural awareness, addressing disproportionality and attorney education for navigating child welfare. Ms. Freemont, an attorney, previously served as the director of the Family Advocacy Center, Chief Prosecutor for the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and a family violence and felony child abuse prosecutor for Maricopa County, Arizona. Outside of her formal employment, Ms. Freemont is a board member for the National Association of Children’s Counsel. Ms. Freemont previously served as president of the Native American Bar of Arizona, chair of the Indian Law Section for the State Bar of Arizona, president of the Arizona Tribal Prosecutors Association and a member of the Board of Directors for the Child Crisis Center of Mesa. Ms. Freemont was appointed to Attorney General Holder’s Violence against Women in Tribal Prosecution Task Force (2011).

Cristina F. Freitas is a partner at Freitas & Freitas, LLP, in Lowell, Massachusetts. She has been in practice since 2010. After briefly serving as a staff attorney in the Lowell Office of the Youth Advocacy Division (YAD) of the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS), she returned to private practice at Freitas & Freitas, LLP. Her practice concentrates on representing parents and children in the Massachusetts juvenile justice and child welfare systems in their delinquency, care and protection, and children requiring assistance cases. She is a council member of the Massachusetts Bar Association Juvenile and Child Welfare Section.

Debbie F. Freitas is a partner at Freitas & Freitas, LLP, in Lowell, Massachusetts. She has been in practice since 2010. After a short time as a staff attorney in the Lowell Office of the Youth Advocacy Division (YAD) of the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS), she returned to private practice at Freitas & Freitas, LLP. Her work focuses primarily on representing parents and youth in the Massachusetts Juvenile Court in their delinquency, care and protection, and children requiring assistance matters. She is also a section council member of the Massachusetts Bar Association Juvenile and Child Welfare Section.

Lee Gelernt is a lawyer at the national office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in New York and currently holds the positions of deputy director of the ACLU’s national Immigrants’ Rights Project and director of the project’s Access to the Court’s Program.

Jenifer Goldman Fraser is a developmental psychologist and senior research analyst for the National Infant-Toddler Court Team Program at ZERO TO THREE, a Washington-based organization working to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life. Her work focuses on enhancing systems and services for very young children affected by trauma and their families. Prior to joining ZERO TO THREE, she was the associate director for the Child Witness to Violence Project at Boston Medical Center, where she served on the leadership team for a statewide initiative to build trauma-informed child protective services delivery across Massachusetts.

Hon. Ernestine S. Gray was first elected to the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, Section “A,” in 1984 to fill an unexpired term. She was re-elected in 1986, 1994, 2002 and again in 2014. Hon. Gray was admitted to the Louisiana Bar on October 2, 1976. Before her election to the bench, she was engaged in the private practice of law. She also worked with the Baton Rouge Legal Aid Society, where she handled hundreds of family law cases. In 1977 she was hired by the Louisiana attorney general, William J. Guste, Jr., to work in the Anti-Trust Unit. In 1979 she became a trial attorney with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, a position she held until she resigned to become a candidate for judge in 1984. Active in civic and community affairs, Hon. Gray is a member of numerous professional and civic organizations and has served on many boards and committees, many of which have as their mission improving the lives of children and families. She has served as president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, past president of the New Orleans YMCA and YWCA Board of Directors and of the National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association.

Allison Green is special counsel at the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC). Prior to joining the NACC team, she served as a Foster America fellow at Missouri’s Children’s Division, where her work focused on strengthening the agency’s collaboration with court partners. Previously, Ms. Green was senior
supervising attorney at the Children’s Law Center of Washington, D.C. In this role, she provided ongoing staff
supervision, developed trial strategy and contributed to training and program planning for a GAL program
that represented 500 foster youth each year. Ms. Green has presented locally and nationally on a variety of
child welfare topics. Prior to law school, Ms. Green worked in a congregate care facility for youth. She started
her career as a Jesuit volunteer at Legal Services for Children in San Francisco. Ms. Green earned her law
degree at Georgetown, where she was a public interest law scholar. She is a certified child welfare law
specialist and has volunteered as a court-appointed special advocate. She is currently licensed to practice law
in Washington, D.C.

**Jami Hagemeier** is a partner at Williams & Hagemeier, P.L.C., in Des Moines, with expertise in child welfare
law and practices. She represents both children and parents involved with the juvenile court system and has
worked with the Safe Babies Court Team in Polk County since 2007. Ms. Hagemeier is a member of Iowa’s
statewide ZERO TO THREE Infants and Toddlers statewide leadership team and the Children’s Justice
Initiative Attorney Training Committee. She also is a Casey Family Foundation trainer of trainers for the
Permanency Values Training and Permanency Roundtable facilitators.

**Mark Hardin** served for almost 30 years on the staff of the ABA Center on Children and the Law as director of
child welfare. Mr. Hardin has long been recognized as an early innovator in the child welfare legal field. His
research and scholarship and his work on legislative, regulatory, and court rule reform affecting abused and
neglected children helped shape child welfare legal policy and practice.

**Leslie Heimov** is the executive director of the Children’s Law Center (CLC) of California in Monterey Park and
an adjunct associate professor of law at Southwestern Law School. She began her career with CLC in 1992 as a
staff attorney, providing representation to parents and children in the dependency system before becoming a
supervising attorney. She then served as CLC’s policy director, leading its legislative and policy agenda in the
child welfare arena. Ms. Heimov serves on many committees, including the Human Exploitation and
Trafficking (H.E.A.T.) Blue Ribbon Panel, and co-chairs the statewide Commercial Sexual Exploitation of
Children Action Team.” Ms. Heimov is a founding member of the Family Justice Initiative. Ms. Heimov has
worked tirelessly to improve outcomes for abused and neglected children and is considered an expert in the
child welfare field.

**Connie Hickman Tanner** is the chief program officer for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court
Judges (NCJFCJ) in Reno. She provides oversight of the Family Violence and Domestic Relations (FVDR) and
Child Welfare and Juvenile Law (CWJL) Departments by leading a talented team of professionals. She ensures
that all programs and activities operate within the mission and values of the NCJFCJ. She works strategically
with the executive team, identifying opportunities for the NCJFCJ to leverage cross-program strengths to
better serve children, youth, families and victims in our courts. Ms. Hickman Tanner has more than 26 years
of experience working with courts. She began her legal career with the Federal District Court, Office of
Desegregation Monitoring. She then joined the Arkansas Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts,
where she worked for 23 years, first as a staff attorney, then as director of juvenile court services and finally
as court services director. She supervised the Judicial Education Division, Public Education and Community
Outreach, Domestic Violence Program, and Juvenile Court Programs, including the Court Improvement
Program (CIP) State Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) Program, Dependency-Neglect Attorney Ad
Litem Program and Parent Counsel Program.

**Carlyn Hicks** is the director of the Mission First Legal Aid Office at Mississippi College School of Law in
Jackson, Mississippi. As director, Ms. Hicks oversees the operations of the Parent Representation Program,
Resource Counsel Project and other pro bono legal services to more than 1,200 clients annually in the
counties of Hinds, Rankin and Madison, Mississippi. Ms. Hicks is a certified child welfare law specialist
through the National Association of Counsel for Children and one of only two Mississippians to hold that
special accredited certification. Ms. Hicks provides training across the country to judges, attorneys and other
child welfare professionals and is involved in court improvement program initiatives and other efforts to
effectuate civil judicial systems improvement and access to justice in Mississippi and beyond.
**Eliza Hirst** is a deputy child advocate with Delaware’s Office of the Child Advocate in Wilmington, where she represents children in dependency/neglect proceedings. She is also an adjunct professor at the Delaware Law School. Ms. Hirst has also partnered with Casey Family Programs and local school districts to increase education supports and opportunities for youth in foster care. Ms. Hirst earned her J.D. from the University of Texas Law School and is a member of the Delaware, New York and Pennsylvania Bars, as well as the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware. In 2012, Ms. Hirst was certified by the National Association of Counsel for Children as a child welfare law specialist.

**Hon. Cathy Hollenberg Serrette** is vice-chair of the Maryland Judicial Conference Domestic Law Committee, a member of the Maryland Court of Appeals Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services and the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, co-chair of the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Committee of the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ) and a member of NAWJ’s Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW) Re-entry Conference steering committee. She served as the Family Division coordinating judge for the Circuit Court for Prince George’s County from 2009 to 2017, chair of the Prince George’s County Family Justice Center Task Force, district director and Maryland chapter president of NAWJ, board president of Maryland’s Pro Bono Resource Center, board member of Prince George’s County Bar Association, president of the Prince George’s County chapter of the Maryland Women’s Bar Association, co-chair of the Maryland Legal Services Partnership Conference and International Electoral Commission electoral monitor for South Africa’s first nonracial election. She co-chaired the Prince George’s County Circuit Court Task Force on Circuit Court Accessibility for the Latino Community, initiated the Maryland Women’s Bar Association’s Thomas J. Waxter Children’s Center program, sat on the Prince George’s County Task Force on Police–Community Relations and has served as the Maryland judiciary’s liaison on the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Hon. Serrette is co-chairing the Circuit Court committee to establish a comprehensive resource center for young adults aging out of Prince George’s County’s foster care system.

**Hon. Karen Howze**, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) judge in residence, retired from the District of Columbia Superior Court in 2015 after serving as a magistrate judge for more than 13 years. During her tenure, she presided over child abuse and neglect cases, juvenile presentments, domestic violence criminal and civil cases, adult criminal arraignments and misdemeanor municipal offenses. During her judicial career, Hon. Howze was responsible for innovations in the management of adult and juvenile criminal presentments and arraignments and developed bench books, materials and processes that improved access to justice for the District of Columbia community. Before her appointment to the Court, Hon. Howze served as special master in the Family Court. She was responsible for the review of all abuse and neglect cases before the court to bring cases into compliance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act. She later served as director of the Adolescent Health Program at the ABA Center for Children and the Law, where she was principal writer and editor of “Health for Teens in Care” (2002). Hon. Howze also represented children in foster care, birth parents, adoptive parents, the mentally ill, children requiring special education services and elders in guardianship proceedings as attorney, guardian, guardian ad litem or conservator. She also assisted in the development of practice standards for attorneys representing parties or assisting the court in Probate and Family Law cases.

**Susan Hurtado** is the social work—advocacy practice supervisor at Still She Rises with a career in social work. Ms. Hurtado received her degree in Shawnee from Oklahoma Baptist University. Before coming to Still She Rises, Ms. Hurtado spent ten years working under ACOG for the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Project as a public health social worker. She has also held positions in Maternal Health and Family Preservation. She has dedicated her career in direct services for over 20 years. Ms. Hurtado continues to be the advocate for families dealing with systemic challenges.

**Nyelah Inniss** is a contractor for her youth advocacy board, Georgia’s EmpowerMEnt, where she provides technical assistance, coordination and facilitation of policy related activities. Ms. Inniss is also a national young fellow with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative through the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Ms. Inniss has demonstrated a commitment to influencing policies that will improve the lives of youth in the child welfare system. Ms. Inniss trained youth on Legislative Advocacy 101, key messaging, strategic sharing and more. Ms. Inniss graduated with her B.A. in Sociology & Anthropology in 2018 and plans to pursue a dual
degree program to obtain an M.B.A. and a J.D. Ms. Innis is passionate about ensuring the successful transition of youth exiting the foster care system to college and would like to see young people equipped with the proper tools to transition successfully while they are in care. Ms. Innis believes that foster care should not define or limit youth; she is passionate about ensuring that youth in the child welfare system are afforded the same opportunities as youth outside of the system.

Nicole Johnson is a staff attorney at the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C. As one who lived on either side of the poverty line, Ms. Johnson knows firsthand, the impact that public service organizations can have on the communities they serve. Ms. Johnson has dedicated her career to improving the lives of families experiencing poverty. She has over a decade of experience providing social services in the D.C. Metro area. Before joining the American Bar Association, Ms. Johnson served as a law clerk to the Hon. Tara J. Fentress and the Hon. Lloyd U. Nolan, Jr. at D.C. Superior Court. In addition to her work at the Center, Ms. Johnson owns Trusted Legal Solutions, a virtual law firm serving landlords in Washington, D.C.; she manages a transitional housing program for homeless women and children; and she is half of a husband-and-wife real estate investment team. As a social worker, Ms. Johnson served children and families in the child welfare, mental health and homeless arenas. Ms. Johnson is a proud alumna of Howard University, where she earned a B.S. in psychology and an M.S.W. She is also an alumna of the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law. Ms. Johnson is a member of Greater Washington Area Chapter of the Women Lawyers Division of the National Bar Association (GWAC) and the Washington Bar Association.

Aisha Jones is a senior attorney with the Office of the Cook County Public Guardian in Chicago. She currently serves as a mental health co-coordinator with a focus on identifying and connecting resources for mentally ill youth in care aging out. Prior to joining the Office, Ms. Jones was a Highbridge Fellowship recipient and interned at Legal Service New York, where she researched compliance with special education mandates for students with Down syndrome. Ms. Jones has taken her legal training international by helping to facilitate the 3rd Annual Police Prosecutors Training on the Conduct of Criminal Prosecutions in Kumasi Ghana through Fordham University School of Law.

Rebecca Jones Gaston is the executive director of the Social Services Administration at the Maryland Department of Human Services in Baltimore. She has worked in the field of human services and child welfare for more than 19 years as a social worker, advocate, therapist, consultant and administrator. She has extensive experience with community engagement, parent partners, mental health and achieving permanency for children in care. She has worked throughout her career to leverage internal and external resources to increase the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families and to reduce the number of youth in out-of-home care. As executive director of the Social Services Administration, Ms. Gaston is responsible for planning and implementing strategies, policies and procedures that ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and neglect. She will continue to develop the Families Blossom initiative, strengthen adult services to meet the needs of a rapidly aging population and ensure that children leave the SSA’s care ready to thrive independently. A long-time resident of Maryland, Ms. Gaston holds a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Georgetown University and a master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania.

Jamie Julian is a social worker and intake coordinator for the Center for Transyouth at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA). The Center for Transyouth is the largest Transyouth clinic in the country. Jamie works on a multidisciplinary team to ensure that all patients are supported and affirmed in their identity. Jamie also works closely with families and young adults to access services at CHLA, maintain family continuity, manage crisis/safety concerns and connect with resources within their community. Jamie currently serves on the LGBTQI2-S UsCC subcommittee in partnership with DMH and the diversity council within CHLA.

Michelle Marie Jungers is the managing attorney of the Waterloo Regional Office of Iowa Legal Aid. She began working as a staff attorney for Iowa Legal Aid in 2007. Ms. Jungers is the lead attorney of the Parent Representation Project in Black Hawk County, representing parents and caregivers involved with the Department of Human Services in juvenile court and with various other civil legal issues. She earned her J.D., *cum laude*, in 2007 from William Mitchell College of Law and her B.A., *summa cum laude*, in 2004 from Buena Vista University. She is a member of the Iowa State Bar Association’s Juvenile and Family Law section.
Tiffany Kell is a licensed attorney and certified mediator in Little Rock, Arkansas. She is the Mediation Program Coordinator with the William H. Bowen School of Law Legal Clinic, responsible for the Arkansas Youth Mediation Project which includes Dependency/Neglect Mediation and Facilitation, Family In Need of Services Mediation, and Juvenile Delinquency Diversion. Tiffany facilitates the Dependency/Neglect Staffings for the Arkansas Safe Babies Court Team, which is an anchor site for the National Infant-Toddler Court Program, and works closely with these sites to train professionals on how to fully participate in mediations and facilitations.

Kristin Kelly is assistant program director of education projects at the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C. Ms. Kelly is a staff member of the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, a project at the Center. Ms. Kelly joined the ABA Center on Children and the Law in 2006 with a strong interest in child welfare law and policy. Her work focuses on youth transitioning from foster care, youth empowerment and the educational needs of children in foster care. She provides training and technical assistance across the country on these topics and enjoys working with cross-agency teams to identify challenges and implement concrete program and policy changes. She has authored numerous articles and publications, including the education advocacy chapter of the National Association of Counsel for Children’s textbook Child Welfare Law and Practice. Ms. Kelly obtained her J.D. from Indiana University School of Law and her B.A. from the University of Notre Dame.

Eva Klain is director of child and adolescent health at the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C. As director of the Center’s child and adolescent health projects, Ms. Klain researches and analyzes legal responses to children’s exposure to violence, polyvictimization and trauma-informed legal advocacy, the health and developmental needs of children and adolescents, domestic child sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. Ms. Klain is currently directing an evaluation of the impact of funding changes on the quality of legal representation in California dependency courts. She is also a liaison with the Children’s Bureau’s Capacity Building Center for Courts, helping Court Improvement Programs identify their priorities and achieve their goals. Ms. Klain currently co-chairs the National Child Traumatic Stress Network’s Justice Consortium Attorney Work Group. She previously worked on criminal child abuse issues for the National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse and spent a year working with the High Court of Prague to improve the Czech Republic’s response to family violence and child maltreatment. Ms. Klain received her B.A. from Cornell University and her law degree, cum laude, from Georgetown University.

Jennie Kneedler is a staff attorney with the ABA Commission on Immigration in Washington, D.C. During the last several months, Ms. Kneedler has worked at one of the Commission's two direct service projects on the Southern border, the South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project ("ProBAR"). ProBAR serves detained adults and unaccompanied children in the Rio Grande Valley, which is the busiest migration sector along the Southwest border. While at ProBAR, Ms. Kneedler met with and assisted adults in immigration detention who had been separated from their children. Before joining the Commission, Ms. Kneedler was an associate at Steptoe & Johnson, LLP, and a senior trial counsel with the Federal Programs Branch in the Civil Division of the Department of Justice. Ms. Kneedler also served as a law clerk for the Hon. Keith P. Ellison, U.S. district judge for the Southern District of Texas. Ms. Kneedler received her A.B. in History from Bowdoin College and her J.D. from Yale Law School.

Beth Kurtz joined the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C., in March 2019. Before that, she was a supervising attorney at Children’s Law Center in Washington, D.C., where she managed attorneys representing children in abuse and neglect cases and carried a limited case load herself, litigating on behalf of children and caregivers in neglect, custody, guardianship and adoption matters, as well as some special education and public benefits work. Ms. Kurtz joined Children’s Law Center as an equal justice works fellow focused on increasing access to community-based mental health services for youth in D.C. Prior to her time at Children’s Law Center, Ms. Kurtz was a law clerk for the Hon. Catharine Easterly of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. Ms. Kurtz is a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Michigan Law School.

Sherry Lachman is the founder and executive director of Foster America in San Francisco. She has devoted her career to improving government systems that serve vulnerable children and families. She was previously
a domestic policy advisor to Vice President Biden, a senior policy advisor at the U.S. Department of Education, a senior education counsel to Senator Al Franken and an attorney at the Juvenile Law Center. Since founding Foster America, she has been recognized as a GLG fellow, as a senior fellow at Harvard’s Taubman Center for State and Local Government and as a Draper Richards Kaplan entrepreneur. Ms. Lachman earned a master’s in philosophy from Cambridge, a J.D. from Columbia and a master’s in public policy from Harvard. Her commitment to child welfare stems from her experience in foster care as a child.

Anne Marie Lancour is the associate director of the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C. She directs the Center’s award-winning Permanency Barriers Project and is a national expert on child abuse and neglect, termination of parental rights, adoption and foster care. She provides training on legal ethics, system reform, permanency planning and serves on several statewide policy reform workgroups in Pennsylvania. Prior to her work at the American Bar Association, Ms. Lancour was an agency attorney in Broome County, New York, where she litigated child abuse and neglect and termination of parental rights cases.

Mimi Laver is the director of legal representation at the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C. In this position, she directs the National Alliance for Parent Representation and co-directs the Family Justice Initiative. Ms. Laver’s publications include Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care: A Guide for Lawyers and Judge, It’s My Life and Foundations for Success: Strengthening Your Agency Attorney Office. She edited Representing Parents in Child Welfare Cases: A Basic Introduction for Attorneys. In collaboration with expert work groups, Ms. Laver drafted Standards of Representation for Child Welfare Agency Attorneys and Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases. She also drafted the Indicators of Success for Parents Representation, which is a guide for courts and states with both qualitative and quantitative tools to measure progress. Prior to joining the American Bar Association, Ms. Laver was a deputy city solicitor in the Health and Human Services Unit of the Philadelphia Law Department. Ms. Laver earned her J.D. from Temple University School of Law and her B.A. from Vassar College.

Alexandra Lohrbach is the senior associate for youth engagement at the Annie E. Casey Foundation with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative team in Baltimore. In her role, Ms. Lohrbach provides technical assistance in developing youth-adult partnership strategies on a national level and with Jim Casey Initiative sites, including the development of youth leadership tools and resources centered around racial and ethnic equity and inclusion, staffing the national Advisory Committee and partnering with young people on various projects. Ms. Lohrbach leads the Adolescent Brain Development body of work, creating new partnerships and developing guides, practice tools and presentations to further educate the field and promote developmentally responsive practice in child welfare. Additionally, Ms. Lohrbach brings her skills and competence around Results Count™ as an intermediate practitioner to support the Jim Casey network in achieving equitable results for young people in and transitioning from foster care. Prior to joining the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Ms. Lohrbach contributed her knowledge and skills to youth organizing efforts and participatory action research with community foundations and grassroots organizations in Minnesota. Her work has been centered on the intersections of identity, racial and ethnic equity, community building and youth-adult partnerships. Ms. Lohrbach earned an M.S.W. with a concentration in Community Practice: Organization, Advocacy and Leadership from the University of Minnesota and a bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Luther College.

Ira Lustbader is litigation director at Children’s Rights, Inc., in New York, a national nonprofit advocacy organization that for over 20 years has led numerous reform campaigns to improve the lives of vulnerable children. In partnership with other advocates and law firms, Children’s Rights maintains active litigation campaigns in over a dozen states and a growing advocacy docket, combining grassroots case-building, impact litigation and policy expertise to hold government systems accountable to the children that depend on them. Mr. Lustbader is actively involved in overall organizational management, the direction of a national program of reform campaigns and the development of partnerships and coalitions.

Randi Mandelbaum is a distinguished clinical professor of law, the Annamay Sheppard scholar, and director of the Child Advocacy Clinic at Rutgers Law School in Newark. Prior to joining the faculty in 2000, she worked as a staff attorney at the Child Advocacy Unit of the Legal Aid Bureau in Baltimore and taught at the
Professor Mandelbaum earned a B.S. from Brandeis University, a J.D. from American University, Washington College of Law, and an LL.M. from Georgetown University Law Center.

Christina McClurg Riehl serves as a deputy attorney general for the California Department of Justice in San Diego, where she has led a coalition of several states to provide amicus support in defense of the Indian Child Welfare Act. Before joining the California Department of Justice, Ms. McClurg Riehl served as senior staff attorney for the University of San Diego School of Law’s Children’s Advocacy Institute (CAI), where she worked on CAI’s impact litigation, regulatory and legislative advocacy and public education programs, and she directed USD School of Law students engaged in CAI’s Policy and Dependency clinical programs.

Gabriella McDonald is the pro bono and new projects director at Texas Appleseed in Austin. In that role, she connects private law firms, practitioners and others to Texas Appleseed’s new and ongoing projects promoting social and economic justice for all Texans. Ms. McDonald’s work includes removing barriers to employment and housing as well as other legal issues confronting youth experiencing homelessness. She is a working group member of the ABA Section of Litigation, Children’s Rights Litigation Committee. Ms. McDonald received her law degree from the University of Michigan, where she served as an executive editor of the Michigan Journal of Race & Law.

Maura McInerney is legal director at Education Law Center—Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, a non-profit legal advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all children have access to a quality public education. Through individual legal representation, impact litigation, and policy advocacy, ELC seeks to improve educational outcomes for children in the foster care, those in the juvenile justice system, children with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness. A litigator for almost 30 years, Maura leads ELC’s litigation efforts and is a national expert on a wide range of education laws. Maura has represented ELC as part of the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education since 2007.

Kathleen McNaught is the program director for the ABA Center on Children and the Law’s education projects in Washington, D.C. She has been with the Center for over 16 years. Ms. McNaught provides training and technical assistance around the country on a variety of legal child welfare issues—in particular, issues related to the educational needs of children in foster care. For over 10 years, she has led the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, a collaboration between the American Bar Association, the Juvenile Law Center and the Education Law Center-PA. She has authored several publications on the topic, including Learning Curves: Education Advocacy for Children in Foster Care and Mythbusting: Breaking Down Confidentiality and Decision-Making Barriers to Meet the Education Needs of Children in Foster Care. Ms. McNaught has also written on the issue of achieving permanency for older adolescents in care, including a guide for judges and attorneys on the unique needs and issues faces by older youth aging out of the foster care system. Prior to joining the Center, Ms. McNaught spent seven years practicing law in the state of Maryland. She was a staff attorney for three years for Maryland’s Legal Aid Bureau in their Child Advocacy Unit. She then went on to private practice, representing parents and children in child welfare cases, as well as in education, delinquency and custody matters. She received her J.D. from The American University, Washington College of Law, in 1994 and her B.A. from Franklin and Marshall College in 1991.

Aisha McWeay is the executive director at Still She Rises in Tulsa. Ms. McWeay received her J.D. from Vanderbilt University Law School. Her career started in 2009 when she joined Nashville Defenders as an assistant public defender. She became the general session division chief in 2014 and was appointed the deputy public defender for Nashville-Davidson County in 2017. Over the course of her career she has made numerous contributions and received recognition within the public defense community. She serves as a faculty member of various training programs, including but not limited to Gideon’s Promise, NAPD and NACDL.

Jerry Milner is the associate commissioner at the Children’s Bureau and the acting commissioner for the Administration on Children, Youth and Families in Washington, D.C. Mr. Milner began his career as a case carrying social worker, served as the state child welfare agency director in Alabama and previously worked
for the Children’s Bureau designing and implementing the CFSR. Immediately prior to his appointment, he
served as the vice president for Child Welfare Practice at the Center for the Support of Families.

Felicity Sackville Northcott is the director of external partnerships and international services at
International Social Service USA in Baltimore. She holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in Anthropology from Johns
Hopkins University. Dr. Northcott has published numerous articles on international child welfare, including
Family Finding and Engagement Beyond the Bench: Working Across International Borders for the National
Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and The Role of Social Workers in International Legal Cooperation:
Working Together to Serve the Best Interest of the Child for the Organization of American States. Dr. Northcott
has expertise in a range of international child welfare issues, including international adoption, international
abduction and international case management.

Crys O’Grady works for the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, California.

Kristen Ornato is a staff attorney at KidsVoice, where she handles a specialized practice in supporting youth
with issues related to Social Security and Title IV, as well as identifying and connecting individuals to
appropriate supports to address any needs related to an intellectual disability or mental health diagnosis. Ms.
Ornato also provides support with regard to a variety of legal issues impacting current and former KidsVoice
clients through age 24, including minor criminal matters, credit and identity theft, health insurance and
guardianship. Ms. Ornato received a B.A. (1994) and an M.S.W. (2013) from the University of Pittsburgh. She
received her law degree from the American University Washington College of Law in 1997.

Alpa Jayanti Patel is chief deputy for the Office of the Cook County Public Guardian in Chicago and has
advocated for children impacted by the child welfare system and adults with disabilities in various capacities
throughout her career. She currently serves as a member of the Cook County Human Trafficking Task Force
Steering Committee, the Illinois Child Death Review Team, the Illinois Biennial Juvenile Conference
Workgroup, the Illinois Family First Prevention Services Act Legal and Policy Committee and the Illinois
Supreme Court Judicial College Committee on Guardian ad Litem education. Ms. Patel has presented at
various law symposiums, law schools and seminars on topics related to juvenile law, children and adults with
disabilities, law office management and career development.

Brent Pattison is a clinical professor of law and director of the Middleton Center for Children’s Rights at
Drake University Law School. He teaches and supervises the Children’s Rights Clinic, in which third
year law students represent children in delinquency and child welfare cases. He also teaches Education Law and
manages the Public Service Scholars program at Drake. Mr. Pattison began his career as a Soros Justice fellow
at TeamChild in Seattle. He currently serves as a co-chair of the ABA’s Children’s Rights Litigation Committee
and is also a member of the Iowa Children’s Justice Advisory Board.

Emily Peeler joined the ABA Center on Children and the Law as a staff attorney in 2016. Ms. Peeler works on
a variety of projects, including the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, Pennsylvania Education
Barriers, the Capacity Building Center for Courts, kinship care and parent representation. Prior to this
position, Ms. Peeler worked at the National Association for Law Placement as a Street Law fellow, where she
managed a legal diversity pipeline program with law firms and high schools across the country. Ms. Peeler
also worked as a youth advocacy coordinator at CASA for Children of D.C. Emily received her J.D. from the
University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law, her M.S.W. from Boston University and B.S.W. from the
University of Louisville.

Jennifer Pokempner is the child welfare policy director at Juvenile Law Center and focuses on issues related
to older youth and their transition to adulthood and permanency. Ms. Pokempner clerked for the Hon. Andre
M. Davis and is an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Raumak Rahmani is a staff attorney in the Los Angeles office of Children’s Law Center of California (CLC).
She graduated from the University of Southern California and went on to attend Southwestern University
School of Law and graduated with her J.D. in 2004. Ms. Rahmani has over ten years of experience working in
the dependency court system. Prior to working at CLC, Ms. Rahmani worked in private practice at a large law

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firm in Los Angeles, but her passion for helping people and working with children attracted her to CLC, where she is an active member of the fundraising committee and mentorship program.

**Heidi Redlich Epstein** is the director of kinship policy and the assistant director of state projects at the ABA Center on Children and the Law. Ms. Redlich Epstein helped develop and currently co-manages the Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center at www.grandfamilies.org in partnership with Casey Family Programs and Generations United. Her other kinship efforts include training and technical assistance on kinship issues and helping develop the National Model Family Foster Home Licensing Standards. In her State Projects work, Ms. Redlich Epstein co-manages the Permanency Barriers Project and provides technical assistance and legal training to judges, attorneys and social service professionals. Prior to her work at the American Bar Association, Ms. Redlich Epstein was a law guardian for Legal Aid of Maryland and a residential social worker in upstate New York.

**Jennifer Renne** is the director of the Capacity Building Center for Courts. She has been at the ABA Center on Children and the Law in Washington, D.C., since 2000, and has provided training and technical assistance in almost every state on a wide variety of issues, including improving permanency outcomes, achieving permanency for older youth and collaboration between court systems and the child welfare agency. Her current focus is working with federal and private partners to build capacity among courts, Court Improvement Projects, child welfare agencies and Tribes to achieve sustainable systems’ change. Her publications include books titled *Making it Permanent: Efforts to Finalize Permanency Plans for Foster Children, Legal Ethics in Child Welfare Cases* and *Child Safety: A Guide for Judges and Lawyers*. Ms. Renne has represented children in dependency cases and has been an adjunct professor at Georgetown University Law Center, teaching legal ethics to students interested in pursuing public interest law careers. She received her J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center and her B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Alexandra G. Roark** is a supervising staff attorney in the Trial Panel Support Unit of the Children and Family Law (CAFL) division of the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS) in Boston. She has been in practice since 1994. Prior to joining CPCS, Ms. Roark was in private practice representing indigent parents and children in care and protection and children requiring assistance matters in the Massachusetts Juvenile Court. She was previously also an attorney for the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families. She is a section council member of the Massachusetts Bar Association Juvenile and Child Welfare Section.

**Alfrieda Robinson-Dawkins** was the founder and director of the National Women’s Prison Project for 13 years in Baltimore. After being implicated in a drug conspiracy that involved her making a phone call on behalf of her son, she found herself serving a 10-year federal sentence, and her son a 45-year sentence. Her background as an educator was now her opportunity to survive prison and to then create programs to assist others after release. Ms. Robinson-Dawkins developed parenting programs, job development and training, family reunification and reentry assistance for women to include finding housing and drug treatment where needed. She also worked with Bon Secours Community Works to create reentry programs for men and women and justice-involved youth via the States’ Attorney’s Office. Ms. Robinson-Dawkins now provides consultations for prison reform and does speaking engagements with her now-released son “David.”

**Miriam Rollin** is founding director of the national Education Civil Rights Alliance in Arlington, Virginia, convened by the National Center for Youth Law. Ms. Rollin previously served for 16 years in leadership positions for the Council for a Strong America, a national non-profit that promotes evidence-based policies for marginalized children/families. She has practiced as an attorney/GAL for abused and neglected children and as an assistant DA, prosecuting juvenile, family violence and child abuse cases. Ms. Rollin was previously on staff at the ABA Center on Children and the Law. She graduated from Yale University (B.A.) and from Catholic University of America (J.D.).

**Micah Schwartzman** is the director of the Karsh Center for Law and Democracy and the Joseph W. Dorn research professor of law at the University of Virginia School of Law in Charlottesville. A scholar who focuses on law and religion, jurisprudence, political philosophy and constitutional law, Mr. Schwartzman joined the UVA Law faculty in 2007. Mr. Schwartzman received his B.A. from the University of Virginia and his doctorate in politics from the University of Oxford, where he studied as a Rhodes scholar. During law school, he served
Rebecca Shafer has been a child advocacy specialist at KidsVoice in Pittsburgh for 15 years and specializes in supporting transition-age youth, including current and former foster youth through age 24. She coordinates the agency’s outreach to transition-age youth. She has significant experience in addressing credit and identity theft issues and also designs the KidsVoice Resource Fairs, where current and former clients have the opportunity to connect with training programs, employers, services and self-care opportunities. Ms. Shafer received her B.A. in psychology from Edinboro University and prior to joining KidsVoice, spent seven years in child and adolescent counseling and experiential learning.

Alan Shapiro is medical director and co-founder of Terra Firma, as well as assistant clinical professor in pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and senior medical director for Community Pediatric Programs (CPP), a collaboration between the Children's Hospital at Montefiore (Bronx, New York) and the Children's Health Fund. Dr. Shapiro has led medical teams in the aftermath of Hurricanes Andrew, Katrina and Sandy. He is the co-author of “Terra Firma: Medical-Legal Care for Unaccompanied Immigrant Garífuna Children” in the Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy (2015). He received his B.S. in psychology from Emory University and is a graduate of the State University of New York Health Sciences Center at Brooklyn. He completed his residency in pediatrics from Montefiore Medical Center’s Residency Program in Social Medicine.

Jerald A. Sharum is the senior general counsel for County Legal Operations at the Arkansas Department of Human Services. Mr. Sharum supervises the 53 attorneys that represent the department in all child welfare cases across the state. Mr. Sharum began with the department as a trial attorney in 2010 and since then has served as the department’s appellate attorney in child welfare appeals, an adjunct professor at the University of Arkansas School of Law and vice chair of the American Association of Health and Human Services Attorneys. Mr. Sharum holds a J.D. from Albany Law School, an M.A. in public administration from the State University of New York—Albany and a B.A. in classical studies from the University of Arkansas—Fayetteville.

Anthony Simpson is a Youth Fostering Change advocate for the Juvenile Law Center in Philadelphia.

Thaddius Smith-Boyd graduated from Franklin Senior High in 2012 and resides in Baltimore County with his with wife and two sons. He was raised in an environment unfamiliar with people going to jail, especially mothers, but, at the age of six years old, his mother had a conversation with him that would immediately change the life he knew. She told him that she would be serving an 11-year prison sentence and would miss some of the most critical times in his life. Mr. Smith-Boyd was challenged on many occasions. When he was questioned about the whereabouts of his mother, he would answer, “She’s away at college.” He was raised by family members, primarily his grandmother and uncle.

Diane Smith Howard is a litigator with 24 years of experience in juvenile and education law. Ms. Smith Howard’s work focuses on conditions for children, youth and adults with disabilities in institutional systems—specifically youth in the juvenile justice, child welfare, education and refugee resettlement systems, as well as adults with disabilities in the criminal justice and mental health systems. She advocates on these issues within the administration and on the Hill and works with a number of coalitions, including the Civil Rights Roundtable.

Christina K. Sorenson is a Zubrow legal fellow at the Juvenile Law Center (JLC) in Philadelphia. As a fellow, Ms. Sorenson supports all aspects of JLC’s work but has primarily focused on older youth in foster care and the intersection of child welfare and the juvenile justice systems. Ms. Sorenson graduated from the University of Richmond Law School in 2015. After law school, Ms. Sorenson served as a law clerk to the Hon. Robert B. Coonin and the Hon. Arlene Minus Coppadge of the Delaware Unified Family Court. Ms. Sorenson’s passion for...
child advocacy stems from her own involvement with the child welfare system, from ages five to fourteen, when she personally achieved permanency through adoption.

**Marlies Spanjaard** is the director of education advocacy for the Youth Advocacy Division of the Committee for Public Counsel Services in Boston, the statewide public defender agency in Massachusetts. In this role, Ms. Spanjaard coordinates the EdLaw Project, which provides education advocacy to court-involved children and youth across the state and technical assistance and training on student rights to attorneys representing children and youth. Ms. Spanjaard is responsible for making program-wide policy decisions, supervising staff attorneys and interns and conducting statewide trainings on education-related issues with a specific focus on representing court-involved youth. She has worked with EdLaw since 2001 and gained valuable experience first working as a staff attorney directly representing students in school disciplinary hearings, special education team meetings and administrative hearings before the Bureau of Special Education Appeals. As the foremost expert on the intersection of juvenile justice and education rights in Massachusetts she has had the opportunity to speak to audiences of parents, youth workers, students and lawyers in the Commonwealth and across the country. She earned her J.D. and M.S.W. at Washington University Law School and George Warren Brown School of Social Work in St. Louis.

**Dylan Spencer Moench** joined the Supreme Court of Texas in Austin as a staff attorney for the Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families in 2016. His focus is on improving outcomes for Texas children through projects on parent resources, legal representation, mediation and the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. Prior to working for the Supreme Court, he worked as a staff attorney for the Travis County Office of Child Representation and as a mediator specializing in child welfare mediation. He earned a J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law in 2003 and a B.S. in Philosophy from the University of Utah in 1999. He is a National Association of Counsel for Children–certified child welfare law specialist and serves as chair of the Texas Board of Legal Specialization Child Welfare Law Exam Commission.

**Sheldon Spotted Elk** (Northern Cheyenne) works as a director at Casey Family Programs, Indian Child Welfare Programs, a direct operating foundation based out of Denver. He has extensive expertise in Tribal law, child welfare and juvenile issues. He is a former guardian ad litem and served as the chief of staff for the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray. He holds a J.D. from the University of New Mexico School of Law, where he was professional articles editor on the *Tribal Law Journal*. He published an article on tribal constitutional reform in 2012.

**Stefanie Sprow** is the deputy director for child welfare and mental health at Children’s Defense Fund in Sacramento, California. Her work develops public policies, practices and programs to help keep children safe and in permanent, nurturing families and communities. Among other responsibilities, Ms. Sprow leads the Child Welfare and Mental Health Coalition, a group of national and regional child advocacy partners.

**Ariella Stafanson** is the policy intern for California CASA and a research assistant for Harder + Company Community Research. Ms. Stafanson received her B.S. in Community and Regional Development, with a minor in Human Rights from the University of California, Davis. Ms. Stafanson has worked and volunteered with organizations and offices, including California Youth Connections, the office of Senator Barbara Boxer, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the International Rescue Committee. Her senior thesis was the first research paper to delve into the cultural access and attitudes of foster youth and its impact on social wellbeing.

**Robin Steinberg** is the CEO of the Bail Project in Venice, California, a national organization modeled after The Bronx Freedom Fund, which she co-founded with David Feige in 2007. Ms. Steinberg is the founder and former executive director of the Bronx Defenders, a community-based public defense office serving low-income New Yorkers in the Bronx since 1997, and the director of Still She Rises, Tulsa, the first public defender office in the nation dedicated exclusively to the representation of mothers in the criminal justice system.

**Jeffrey Sterbenc** is a supervising attorney at the Cook County Office of the Public Guardian in Chicago. He was a member of the City of Chicago’s Mayoral Task Force on Homeless Youth, and he specializes in assisting
older clients develop transition plans and access supportive services. Mr. Sternbenc is also the Public Guardian’s Director of Community Outreach for their Juvenile Division.

Elizabeth Thornton is an attorney consultant with the Family Justice Initiative in Washington, D.C. She has spent most of her legal career focused on helping vulnerable children and families. She has represented both children and parents in child welfare trial court proceedings, starting her child welfare practice with FJI partner organization, the Children’s Law Center of California. From 2009 to 2013, she served as a staff attorney and project director with the ABA Center on Children and the Law, working closely with Mimi Laver to ensure that parents in child welfare proceedings have meaningful access to high-quality legal representation, as well as leading the Center’s child welfare immigration project and serving on the permanency barriers team. From 2013 to 2017, Ms. Thornton worked at Casey Family Programs as an executive on loan to the United States Department of Homeland Security. In this position, she served as a senior advisor on legal access and parental interests at Immigration and Customs Enforcement, where she oversaw implementation of agency policy regarding case processing of immigrant parents, as well as initiatives to reduce family separation and increase access to legal counsel for individuals in custody. She left this position in February 2017. Ms. Thornton has authored or co-authored a number of articles focused high-quality representation for parents, including “High-Quality Legal Representation for Parents in Child Welfare Cases Results in Improved Outcomes for Families and Potential Cost Savings,” published in the Family Law Quarterly. In addition, she has spoken extensively at national and state conferences on immigration issues that impact child welfare involved families.

Robert M. Tudisco is a nationally recognized author, motivational speaker and non-profit management consultant and an attorney diagnosed with ADHD in Tarrytown, New York. He is a past member of the National Board of Directors of Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD) and former vice president of the Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA). Mr. Tudisco writes extensively on special education law and disability advocacy. Mr. Tudisco received his J.D. at Fordham University School of Law. He served four years as assistant district attorney in Bronx County. For the last 25 years, Mr. Tudisco has specialized in the areas of education law, disability advocacy and criminal law.

Mary Van Cleve is a senior attorney at Columbia Legal Services in Seattle, where her law practice seeks system change in laws and policies impacting homeless youth, foster care youth, juvenile justice-involved youth, immigrant youth and other at-risk youth. Recently, she has been successfully incorporating techniques of community lawyering to her traditional legislative, administrative and litigation practice. Ms. Van Cleve has significant private practice experience and was a domestic and sexual violence prosecutor. She is a 1988 graduate of the University of Texas School of Law.

Nandilay Walker is a former youth in care and has worked for the Cook County Public Guardian in Chicago since 2006. Ms. Walker has presented multiple trainings to attorneys and Illinois Department of Children and Family Services representatives on the importance of sibling visits, and she is able to give insight into what life is really like as a youth in care. She is affiliated with the Foster Care Alumni of America’s Illinois Chapter, and she is a liaison to the Illinois DCFS Youth Advisory Board. Ms. Walker is the founder of "Play Where You Stay," a non-profit that hosts recreational events for children in impoverished neighborhoods around Chicago. She also is the mother of two wonderful children.

Ewen Nancy Wang is professor of pediatric emergency medicine at Stanford University and served on the team of medical professionals that inspected the Casa Padre facility, where nearly 1,500 immigrant children were being detained by a contractor paid by the U.S. Government. After serving shoulder-to-shoulder with attorneys on that team, Dr. Wang recognized a need for online training for attorneys interviewing trauma-affected immigrant children and is now creating those materials with a multidisciplinary team of frontline service providers. She holds a B.A. from Harvard University and an M.D. from Stanford University.

Tom Welshonc is a KidsVoice supervisor in Pittsburgh. He has spent 11 years at KidsVoice, first as a staff attorney handling dependency cases and then assuming a specialized caseload focusing on legal issues involving barriers to employment and independent living for transition-age youth. He currently supervises that team. Mr. Welshonc manages the office-wide efforts to expunge KidsVoice clients’ juvenile and adult
records. That includes coordinating a pro bono project to assist with our clients’ expungements. Over 40% of KidsVoice’s dependency clients have delinquency records. Mr. Welsh once received his J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh and his B.A. from West Virginia Wesleyan College.

Paul Wise is professor of pediatrics—neonatal and developmental medicine—at Stanford University. Dr. Wise served on the team of medical professionals that inspected Casa Padre in 2018 and is part of the team developing training materials for attorneys to conduct trauma-informed interviews of immigrant children. Dr. Wise has been providing pro bono services to children in Central America for decades and serves as affiliated faculty with Stanford’s Center of Latin American Studies. He holds an A.B. from Cornell University in Latin American Studies, as well as an M.D. from Cornell Univ Medical College, Medicine. He also earned an M.P.H. from the Harvard School of Public Health.