



What Do Young Children Need to Thrive?

Speaker Bios

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William C. Bell, Ph.D., became president and chief executive officer of Casey Family Programs in January 2006. He chairs the Executive Team and is ultimately responsible for the vision, mission, strategies and objectives of the foundation. Bell has nearly 40 years of experience in the human services field.

Melanie Berry, Psy.D., is a senior specialist, Innovator Supports at the Center on the Developing Child, where she oversees the ongoing development of the Center's innovator support content and offerings including the IDEAS Impact Framework, Science X Design, and Transition to Scalability. She brings extensive experience in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs to support young children and families facing adversity and is passionate about helping innovators in the early childhood field use information and data to achieve better outcomes. Berry was formerly the director of Innovation Strategies at the Center on the Developing Child.

Nicola Edge, Ph.D., is a professor in the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. She conducts research on factors that influence child social and emotional outcomes and designs, implements and evaluates interventions to strengthen children's mental health. Her specific areas of focus include children and families impacted by maternal substance use, depression and traumatic events such as abuse or neglect; and she has published widely in these areas. She also focuses on interventions in early care and education settings designed to build social and emotional skills in young children. She directs an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation program in Arkansas called Project PLAY as well as a teacher training and coaching program called REACH. She also leads the Trauma Resource Initiative for Schools, supporting K-12 schools in Arkansas statewide.

Fajar Farimin is currently serving as Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant Lead for Holding Hope Program at King and Pierce Counties in Washington State.

Philip Fisher, Ph.D., is a professor in the Graduate School of Education and Director of the Center on Early Childhood at Stanford. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Center on the Developing Child and a member of the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, both based at Harvard University. Fisher is currently the lead investigator in the ongoing RAPID-EC project, a national survey on the well-being of households with young children during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is the recipient of the 2012 Society for Prevention Research Translational Science Award, and a 2019 Fellow of the American Psychological Society.



Allison Krutsinger is director of government affairs and community engagement for the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families. She has spent her career focused on creating better outcomes and opportunities for children and families through direct service work, program leadership, policy development and advocacy. Prior roles include early learning policy director at the Children’s Alliance, program director at Child Care Resources, early learning quality improvement coach in Arizona and legislative assistant to former Washington Rep. Ruth Kagi.

Greta Massetti, Ph.D., is the branch chief of the Field Epidemiology and Prevention Branch and a senior epidemiologist in the Division of Violence Prevention of CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Massetti collaborates with CDC global partners to increase the availability of scientific data on the topics of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), violence against children, gender-based violence and related health consequences. She received a bachelor’s degree in psychology and music at Northwestern University; a Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in clinical psychology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook and completed a post-doctoral psychology residency at the University of Chicago Hospitals.

Alison May is an early care and education policy specialist at the National Conference of State Legislatures. She tracks and analyzes legislation, writes policy publications, provides technical assistance to legislators and legislative staff and manages NCSL’s Early Childhood Fellows program. She leads the program’s work on home visiting, early childhood governance structures and paid family and medical leave. Before joining NCSL, May worked at the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado and at a Denver civic engagement organization.

Melissa Mincic, Ph.D., joined NCSL in early 2020 as a senior policy specialist with the early care and education project. She tracks and reports on state appropriations for early childhood initiatives, tracks legislation, and authors policy briefs on a range of early childhood topics. Prior to joining NCSL, Mincic worked as an applied researcher at Denver Public Schools, the University of Denver, and the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and as a data operations consultant at the Colorado Department of Education. She earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and her doctoral degree in applied developmental psychology from George Mason University.

Khanh H. Nguyen is a project manager in the health program at NCSL. In this role, she manages the Maternal and Child Health Fellows Program and conducts policy research for maternal and child health topics, including tracking legislation in all states and territories to identify emerging policy trends. She also supports research and publications in the areas of oral health, women’s health and health equity. Nguyen received her bachelor’s degree in sociology and global health, culture and society from Emory University. She received a Master of Social Work degree in community, management and policy practice and a Master of Public Health degree in maternal and child health and global health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Cynthia Osborne, Ph.D., is a professor of Early Childhood Education and Policy in the Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations at the Peabody College. Osborne is the founder and executive director of the national Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, an academic research center that translates the science of the developing child into state level policies with the strongest evidence base of effectiveness. Osborne's teaching and research interests focus on social policy, poverty and inequality, family and child wellbeing and family demography. She serves on the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's committee, Exploring the Opportunity Gap for Young Children Birth to Age 8. She holds a Ph.D. in demography and public affairs from Princeton University, a master's in public policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and a master's degree in education from Claremont Graduate University.

Jennifer Palmer is a senior policy specialist at NCSL. She works on a range of early childhood policies with a special focus on child care and the early care and education workforce. Prior to joining NCSL, Palmer worked in political communications and in the Iowa House of Representatives. She earned a Master's in Public Administration and an Early Childhood Leadership Certificate, both from the University of Colorado Denver.

Sarah Rafton has served as the executive director of the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics since 2015, leading statewide improvements in access to care, public health and pediatric health care transformation. For over 20 years, Rafton has worked in health policy and hospital administration and has helped to ensure high quality health coverage and access for all Washington children, achieve mental health parity, establish patient navigation for immigrant families and bring kids back to school during the pandemic. Sarah has worked in legislative advocacy and in government affairs roles at the Washington Behavioral Health Council, the Children's Alliance and Seattle Children's Hospital. At Seattle Children's Hospital, Rafton also oversaw medical, dental, mental health and school-based clinics as the director of the Odessa Brown Children's Clinic and was the director of the Center for Diversity and Health Equity. Rafton earned a bachelor's degree in political science and holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Washington.

Libbie Sonnier, Ph.D., is the executive director of the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children where she leverages 20 years of professional experience supporting young children and their families. In her first two years with the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, she helped secure \$18M in new early care and education funding in the Louisiana budget, three new sources of recurring state revenue to expand access to quality early care and education, and guided the use of more than \$300M in federal COVID relief dollars to stabilize child care. Sonnier received a doctorate in human development from Virginia Tech, a Master of Education in early childhood intervention and family support services from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a bachelor's degree in special education with an emphasis in early childhood intervention from the University of Southern Mississippi.



Krista Thomas, Ph.D., is a senior policy fellow at Chapin Hall. Thomas leads blended teams of policy, practice, and research experts in efforts to build the capacity of state and local human service systems across the country to execute large-scale reform initiatives and improve outcomes for children and families facing adversity. Prior to coming to Chapin Hall, Thomas served for over a decade in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau in both regional and national offices. She holds a Ph.D. in social work from the University of Illinois at Chicago, a master’s degree in social work from Washington University, and bachelor’s degree in arts from Knox College.

Mary Ann Woodruff, M.D., and fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, is the physician champion at Pediatrics Northwest for behavioral health integration. Dr. Woodruff is the co-chair of the Early Childhood Committee of the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. She is dedicated to developing systems that provide families with the right resources at the right time. Woodruff has been the medical director for Reach Out and Read Washington State since 2007 and serves as a medical advisor for Reach Out and Read National.

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