

## Early Childhood Advisory Group - Directory



**Ella Daniels** is a community health and food systems advocate. Her professional experience is focused on connecting mission-driven organizations to the right resources and audiences. In her current role at the Partnership for a Healthier America, Ella leads the organization's "Veggies Early & Often" initiative, which aims to transform the food landscape for our nation's youngest eaters. Working with early childhood educators, medical professionals, researchers and food industry leaders, she is helping to advance a cross-sector approach to incorporate the latest science and recommendations on the importance of early vegetable introduction during a child's first 1,000 days of life. Previously, she worked on government and corporate relations at the United Nations

World Food Programme and the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, DC. Ella earned a Bachelor's degree in Spanish Literature and International Affairs from the University of Puget Sound and a Master's from The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. She lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota and is trying her best to raise two adventurous eaters who will grow to enjoy a wide variety of vegetables.



**Jacob Davis** earned his graduate degree from North Dakota State University and was the first graduate in the MPH program with the American Indian Public Health specialization. He has over fifteen years of experience working with Indigenous populations through various positions at a state, tribal, and national level. Jacob has worked for Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota (PCAND) since 2017 when he was encouraged to create his position to serve the needs of the Indigenous population within the state. At PCAND, his mission is to raise awareness on the impacts of historical trauma within Indigenous populations by keeping it at the forefront when working with state, tribal, and federal partners. To accomplish this, he infuses a self-healing community framework with empowerment approaches as a way to create public

health change through collective impact strategies. On a personal note, Jacob has three boys that serve as motivation for his work, including the community service he provides within various boards, coalitions, committees, and work groups. To help him balance his lifestyle, Jacob participates in volleyball leagues and tournaments with his friends.



**Lily Dosina** works as the WIC program Manager at Hunger free America, leading a team that focuses in raising awareness about WIC for eligible low-income women, infants, and children. She started HFA's WIC Help NY Hunger Solutions pilot program which was focused on Staten Island (Richmond County). Due to the success of this intervention and the support from different organizations, the organization was able to expand their services to the rest of NYC boroughs. Lily was born and raised in Cuba and obtained her B.A. in Media and Communications at the Higher Institute of Arts, University of the Arts in Cuba. In the U.S., she previously worked at Optimize Today's Wellness Therapy Solutions, Inc., Hunger Free Vermont, and at the WIC Program in New Jersey.



**Jonathan Doster** is the Illinois Legislative Director at Start Early. With colleagues from the Illinois Policy team, he leads the agency's state legislative affairs, working directly with the General Assembly and other policymakers in Springfield to increase access to and funding for early learning programs across Illinois. Born and raised in Chicago's south suburbs, he holds a Bachelor's of Arts from the University of Michigan and a Master's of Public Policy and Administration from Northwestern University. Jonathan lives in Chicago with his wife, son, and chocolate Labrador, Josie.



**Jodie Fishman** has worked at the intersection of public health and communications for nearly 2 decades. She currently serves as Chief Content Officer for Bright by Text, a national nonprofit that sends free, timed text messages to parents to promote all aspects of their child's healthy development and school readiness. She has led numerous maternal and child health education programs and campaigns for organizations including Text4baby, the Office of Head Start's National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health, the American Association of Poison Control Centers, and more. Jodie holds a Master of Public Health with a focus in maternal and child health and is a master certified health education specialist (MCHES). She is a regular writer for PBS KIDS for Parents, and her writing on parenting and health has also been featured in the Washington Post, HuffPost, and more. She has 3 young children and a passion for making the caregiving journey easier for all parents—including connecting them with food and other critical resources.



**Devin Foote** is a program officer for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. In this role, he supports foundation efforts to promote thriving children, working families and equitable communities. He is responsible for identifying and nurturing opportunities to effect positive systemic change within communities. Foote specializes in initiatives to improve food systems, increasing access to fresh, local, healthy food, and improving nutrition outcomes for children and families. Before joining the foundation, Foote served as a senior program specialist for Child Nutrition Programs at the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. While at USDA he developed and evaluated program plans for the Child and Adult Food Care, Summer Food Service, and Farm-to-School programs. Foote has varied experiences across the food system including in agricultural production systems, public policy, and supporting access to healthy foods. He holds a Bachelor of Science in environmental science and management and a Master of Science from Michigan State University.



As a Community Food Educator (CFE) with FRESHFARM, a local non-profit based in Washington, DC, **Alicia Gaskins** is passionate about creating a more just food system. A native Washingtonian and food enthusiast, Alicia has always enjoyed experimenting in the kitchen and trying new cuisines. In her role as a CFE, she is supporting the efforts to improve the food future for her daughter and others in her community. Alicia's work has been more specifically geared towards food equity and accessibility in early childhood centers through community engagement and education programming. Alicia has aided in securing federal funding through data analysis and grant writing. Provided classroom support for DC Public Schools focused on nutrition and urban gardening. Lead community programming by creating positive attitudes towards healthy eating through hands-on education and demonstrations. Alicia has found synchronicity in her professional work and what she's passionate about, food and community. Being able to guide and empower families to connect them to their food is one of the greatest rewards for her.



**Kate Girard** is the State Director for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in Montana. Her WIC career started in Asheville, NC as a Nutritionist in the local WIC clinic between completing her BS in Nutrition/Dietetics from Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, CA and completing her master's in health science and dietetic internship through Western Carolina University. After becoming an RD, she went back to work in rural western North Carolina as a local WIC agency Director, Public Health Nutritionist prior to transitioning to the Montana State Office in 2013. A career in public service, particularly in WIC, was born from a strong desire to focus on prevention, science, psychology, social determinants of health, health equity, and stopping the cycle of poverty. As a child she too faced

food insecurity, poverty, lived in a single parent household and often had to find her own way. Knowing that there are safety nets out there being under-utilized, and inequitable systems contributing to poor health outcomes is her primary motivation in this space. On a personal level, Kate grew up in New York state in addition to CA, NC and now MT where she will stay with her partner, 2 kids (7 yr. old boy, 3 yr. old girl and 9 yr. old husky). She loves hiking, backpacking, floating rivers, and reading (or listening) to books and podcasts when able.



**Dr. Laura Plencner** is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Missouri Kansas City and a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Dr. Plencner attended medical school at Saint Louis University and completed pediatric residency and chief residency at Children’s Mercy Kansas City. She is a pediatric hospitalist at Children’s Mercy Kansas City. She is currently completing the 3-year Health Policy Scholars Program through the Academic Pediatric Association to advocate for health policies that benefit children and increase research skills to evaluate the impact of health policy and community programs. Dr. Plencner is a co-founder and co-chair of the Children’s Mercy Hospital Hunger Free

Hospital Council, which is a multidisciplinary council with the goal of improving the food security of patients, families, and the community. In this role she advocates for innovative strategies within the healthcare setting to improve food security. Key initiatives led by Dr. Plencner in this role include implementation and sponsorship of healthcare-based USDA Summer Food Service Program, a hospital-based community garden, hospital-based food pantry, food insecurity screening, and produce delivery through home visiting programs. Dr. Plencner leads research to evaluate the feasibility and impact of healthcare-based interventions to improve food security. Dr. Plencner is the Co-Director of the Pediatric Residents Advocacy Curriculum. She is course director of the Community Health and Child Advocacy Rotation and the Missouri Statewide Collaborative Advocacy Track with the goal to train pediatricians to advocate for child health and work with community partners to improve the health of children.



**Harumi Reis-Reilly**, she/hers, serves as a Lead Program Analyst in the Maternal Child and Adolescent Health team at the National Association of County and City Health Officials since 2014. She oversees the *Reducing Breastfeeding Disparities through Continuity of Care* project, that aims to improve public health chest/breastfeeding systems, and the local infant and toddler nutrition landscape within the first 1,000 days. She is responsible for the training and technical assistance content delivered to communities across the United States. She is a thought leader and ideator, as she has applied public health and healthcare concepts and frameworks to the first

foods field. Through this work she has helped advance concepts such as *Breastfeeding Policies, Systems and Environmental (PSE)* changes, the *breastfeeding public health pyramid* and most recently, *Continuity of Care in community lactation support*. Harumi is a multilingual, Licensed Dietitian-Nutritionist (LDN), Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS), a Certified Health Educator (CHES) and an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). She has worked in multiple settings through the past

decades, including within the universal public health system of Brazil, in private practices, hospitals, local public health nutrition programs in the fields of maternal child health and chronic diseases prevention. Being a Latinx immigrant mother from a mixed-race background, Harumi center racial equity and justice in all her work to strengthen local health departments and other local organizations serving pregnant and postpartum families, which have pivotal roles to play in dismantling structural racism and social injustice.