



BEST PRACTICES CLEARINGHOUSE

- Lessons from the Field -

Promoting Health and Well-Being in LGBTQ+ Students

Wednesday, October 25, 2023 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET

SPEAKER BIOS

Elyse Robertson

Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education



Ms. Elyse Robertson serves in the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education. She focuses on school climate, school safety and health, well-rounded education, and youth and young adult drug prevention. Since 2016, she has worked on a variety of grant programs within the Department, including the Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program, the Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk Program, and the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program. Ms. Robertson began her career as an elementary school teacher in Florida and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer. She holds a Masters in Teacher Leadership with a focus in Global, Comparative and International Education, and a Bachelors in Exceptional Student Education from the University of Central Florida.

Helen Hernandez

Assistant Director, Office of Drug-Free Communities, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)



Ms. Helen Hernandez currently serves as the Assistant Director of the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program in the Executive Office of the President (EOP) at the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

Ms. Hernandez oversees the Nation’s leading effort to mobilize communities to prevent youth substance use. The philosophy behind the DFC Program is that local drug problems require local solutions.

The DFC Program provides funding to community-based coalitions that organize to prevent youth substance use. The DFC program serves approximately 67 million individuals to include 2.7 million middle school youth and 3.8 million high school youth.

As the Administrator of the DFC Program, Ms. Hernandez, manages the program's \$101 million dollar budget, manages the grant making process, oversees the National Cross site Evaluation of this program, and is responsible for key trainings and events for the DFC Program. In 2010, Ms. Hernandez enlisted in the U.S. Public Health Service and was stationed at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention as a Public Health Advisor for the DFC Program until 2013.

Prior to joining the Federal government, Ms. Hernandez served as a Health Educator with the Miami-Dade Area Health Education Center as a breast cancer awareness and prevention advocate, where she delivered over 300 bilingual trainings to a primarily youth-based audience.

Ms. Hernandez earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Health Education, from the University of Florida, and received her Master's in Public Health with a concentration in Community Health from Florida International University.

Karen Voetsch

Branch Chief, Drug-Free Communities Program, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



Ms. Karen Voetsch is the Branch Chief for the Drug-Free Communities Program at the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at CDC. She provides strategic direction and oversight for CDC's day-day management of the DFC program. She joined CDC as a Presidential Management Fellow in 2003, starting her career in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. In her 19 years at CDC, she has helped to create new programmatic initiatives for several community-based programs, such as the Steps Program, Communities Putting Prevention to Work, and the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health program. She has also led a number of partnership and strategic development initiatives for the Prevention Research Centers, the Alcohol Team, the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, and the Healthy Schools Program. Ms. Voetsch also has an international health background having served in the Peace Corps in West Africa and as a CDC-assignee on non-communicable diseases and road safety issues in Botswana. Ms.

Voetsch received her Masters' in Public Health in Health Behavior and Health Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her Bachelor of Science from Cornell University. She lives in Decatur, GA with her husband and two children.

Captain Arlin Hatch

Senior Psychologist/ Clinical Advisory, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), Office of the Director, Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)



Captain Arlin Hatch is a clinical psychologist and Commissioned Officer of the U.S. Public Health Service. His experience in the behavioral health field has spanned civil and uniformed service within the Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services and at the State level. Professional positions have included Doctoral Internship Training Director, Mental Health Clinic Chief, Substance Prevention and Treatment Clinic Chief, and Disaster Mental Health Team Chief. He also directed the Resiliency and Psychological Health Service at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, supporting approximately 7,000 providers and auxiliary staff. Dr. Hatch began at SAMHSA in 2018 as Senior Psychologist and serves in the Office of the Director within the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. He served as task lead of SAMHSA's report, *Moving Beyond Change Efforts: Evidence and Action to Support and Affirm LGBTQ+ Youth* and is a member of SAMHSA's Sexual and Gender Minority Interest Group.

Amanda Wallace

High School Student, East Greenwich High School, President, ASAPP, East Greenwich, RI



Ms. Amanda Wallace is a junior at East Greenwich High School. She is the current President of ASAPP- a mental health program which helps drive other youth led programs. Ms. Wallace has also created Alphabet Soup, a Socratic workshop for teens. She volunteers with older adults and is also planning this year's PRIDE picnic.

Dr. Genevieve Weber

Associate Professor of Counseling & Mental Health Professions, Hofstra University, Co-Founder, pRYEde Community Group, Rye, NY



Dr. Genevieve Weber PhD, LMHC is Director and Associate Professor in the Counselor Education Graduate Programs at Hofstra University (New York). She is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the State of New York with a specialization in Substance Use Disorder Counseling. Dr. Weber is the 2021 Teacher of the Year at Hofstra University, recipient of Rye NY's 2021 Human Rights award, and Rye Historical Society's "One of Three Trailblazers of Gender Equality."

Dr. Weber teaches a variety of courses related to the training of professional counselors including theory and skills, group counseling, psychopathology, and psychopharmacology and treatment planning. Her research interests are in the areas of LGBT identity development and the impact of homophobia, campus climate assessment, and substance abuse. She has published multiple book chapters and journal articles and presents locally and nationally. Dr. Weber is the cofounder of pRYEde Community Group, a 501 C 3 nonprofit that supports LGBTQ+ youth and adults in her community and beyond.

Heidi Driscoll

Director, South County Prevention Coalition, Warwick, RI



Ms. Heidi Driscoll is an Advanced Certified Prevention Specialist with a Bachelor's Degree in Business and a Master's Degree in Education. She has been working in the prevention field for 12 years. She is a graduate of the National Coalition Academy and is a certified Media Ready Trainer. Ms. Driscoll is also a member of the Governors' Opioid Task Force in Rhode Island.

Kathy Sullivan

Director, Kent County Prevention Coalition, Warwick, RI



Ms. Kathy Sullivan is an Advanced Certified Prevention Specialist and has been a community coalition leader for almost twenty years and has managed two drug free community grants. She has worked closely with school administrators and staff delivering programs and data collection and is honored to manage a grant dedicated to prevention among LGBTQ+ youth.

KC Aldana

LifeWorks CAN Coalition, Los Angeles, CA



KC Aldana (they/them) serves as a CAN Leader for the Los Angeles LGBT Center where they facilitate workshops for youth audiences and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. KC graduated from the University of Southern California with a bachelor's degree in Sociology and a minor in Psychology. They currently work as an Afterschool Program associate to provide tutoring and fun, educational activities for low-income students. KC is honored to be a panel speaker as they are dedicated to increasing mental health awareness for historically underrepresented groups, such as LGBTQ+ youths.

Kevin McCloskey

Director, Community-Based Programs, Youth Services, Los Angeles LGBT Center, Los Angeles, CA



As Director of Community-based Programs, Youth Services at the Los Angeles LGBT Center, Kevin McCloskey oversees the department's work in the broader community educating and advocating for LGBTQ youth. This includes the CAN Coalition, which brings together community members to help prevent youth from misusing substances. At The Center, Mr. McCloskey supervises the Education, Youth Development and LifeWorks Mentoring programs, including the annual Models of Pride Conference. Mr. McCloskey has 25 years of experience working in non-profit organizations focused on the development of communities, families, and youth, including faith-based organizations, low-income communities, and creative arts programs.

Nancy Pasquale

RyeACT Coalition Coordinator, RyeACT Youth Action Team Co-Advisor, Rye, NY



Ms. Nancy Pasquale's professional background is in human resources development and curriculum design, and she served for two terms as an elected Trustee of the Rye City School District Board of Education, including five years on the Board's Policy Committee. Ms. Pasquale is a founding member of the One Choice Community, in partnership with the Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc., for whom she serves as a Prevention Consultant, and is a frequent presenter at national and regional conferences (e.g., CADCA, Rx & Illicit Drug Summit, and the School-Based Health Alliance). She is certified by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing as an instructor of Youth Mental Health First Aid, and regularly provides YMHFA and Prevention training for school district faculty/staff and parents/community members. Ms. Pasquale oversees all programmatic aspects of RyeACT's operations, is the Drug Free Communities Coalition Coordinator, and serves as Co-Advisor of the Youth Action Team, working directly with youth in public high school and middle school settings. Under her stewardship, RyeACT has been recognized by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for

exemplary leadership in youth engagement. Ms. Pasquale recently led a cross-sector team to develop and disseminate an educational newsletter, “Creating a Community of Belonging,” focused on LGBTQ+ identities.

Sandy Degenhardt

Social Worker, 504 Case Manager, GSA Advisor, Rye ACT Coalition, Rye, NY



Ms. Sandy Degenhardt, LCSW, CASAC has been the High School Social Worker/504 Case Manager at the Rye City School District for over 30 years. Being a Social Worker at a high school affords one an opportunity to provide support, compassion, advocacy, and guidance in a varied array of circumstances. One specific aspect of Ms. Degenhardt’s work over these years has focused on the LGBTQIA student population. Ms. Degenhardt and a student co-founded one of Westchester County’s first GSA clubs in 2003. Ms. Degenhardt is also charged with ongoing alcohol and drug prevention work in and out of the high school community. Her collaboration with RyeACT and pRYEde has been some of the most rewarding work in her tenure.

Yvette Topete

Los Angeles LGBT Center, LifeWorks CAN Coalition, Los Angeles, CA



Ms. Yvette Isabel Topete (she/her/ella) has worked for the Los Angeles LGBT Center with the Community Action Network Program since November 2021. She brings years of experience in working with low-income students in the Santa Ana School District participating in the Jumpstart program and volunteering at her University’s LGBTQ+ Center. From pursuing her higher education at East Los Angeles College by receiving her Associates Degree in Psychology, Sociology, General Studies, and certificate in Child Development and Child Development with Special Needs in 2016 she continued her education at the University of California, Irvine with a Bachelor’s in Sociology and Psychology certified in Social Inequality at the end of 2019. During her undergraduate work, Ms. Topete worked with low-income college students, single parents, and foster youth as a College Counselor Guidance Assistant. Thereafter, Ms. Topete immediately started working with non-profit organizations assisting homeless families retain stability at the Whole Child in Whittier and providing support at their shelter in Echo Park. Ms. Topete pursued opportunities to work with LGBTQ+ youth to prioritize the importance of representation, resources, and community support. As a first-generation Mexican American, Ms. Topete’s experience with little to no resources in the LGBTQ+ community during her youth drives her passion for creating safe and affirming spaces to support youth who identify as queer in her community.