



BEST PRACTICES CLEARINGHOUSE

- Lessons from the Field -

Understanding and Preventing Student Marijuana Use

Wednesday, March 22, 2023 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET

SPEAKER BIOS

Helen Hernandez

Assistant Director, Drug-Free Communities Support Program, Office of National Drug Control Policy



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.

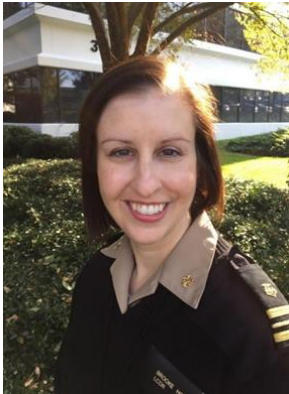
In 2010, Ms. Hernandez enlisted in the U.S. Public Health Service and was stationed at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention as a Public Health Advisor for the DFC Program until 2013.

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.

Dr. Brooke Hoots, PhD, MSPH

Epidemiologist and Cannabis Strategy Unit Lead, Division of Overdose Prevention



Dr. Brooke Hoots, PhD, MSPH, is an epidemiologist and the lead of the Cannabis Strategy Unit in the Division of Overdose Prevention. In this role, she provides programmatic and technical direction for CDC's cannabis-related activities, which focus on surveillance and research to address gaps in the benefits and harms of cannabis use. She has served in this role since September 2020.

Dr. Hoots came to CDC in 2011 as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer in the Division of STD Prevention and subsequently worked as an epidemiologist in the Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, where she focused on behavioral surveillance of HIV in hard-to-reach populations, including persons who inject drugs. Following several deployments to respond to HIV outbreaks related to injection of opioids, she transferred to the Division of Overdose Prevention, where she has become a subject matter expert in drug overdose surveillance.

Dr. Hoots received her AB degree in human biology from Brown University and her MSPH and PhD degrees in epidemiology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a lieutenant commander in the United States Public Health Service. She has authored over 60 publications in peer-reviewed journals, MMWRs, and government reports and has given over 50 presentations.

Dr. Ruben Baler

Health Scientist Administrator, Science Policy Branch, Office of Science Policy and Communications, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIH/NIDA)



Dr. Ruben Baler received his Ph.D. in Microbiology and Molecular Biology from the University of Miami in 1993. He carried out his postdoctoral training at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development where he specialized in Molecular Studies of the Biological Clock. He then moved to the National Institute of Mental Health, where he conducted basic research on the regulation of circadian gene expression in vertebrates. In October 2004 he joined the Science Policy Branch in the Office of Science Policy and Communications at the National Institute on Drug Abuse as a Health Scientist. His early publications were focused on the temporal regulation of gene expression in the brain's clock. Since joining NIDA, he has written and lectured about the Neurobiology of Drug Abuse and Addiction. Dr. Baler has gathered critical insight from diverse disciplines, which he combines to advance NIDA's scientific mission. These include cellular and molecular biology, genetics, bioinformatics, neuroscience, and neuroethics.

Dr. Bertha Madras

Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, McLean Hospital



Dr. Bertha K Madras is a Professor of Psychobiology at Harvard Medical School (at Harvard 37 years). She is based at McLean Hospital where she heads the Laboratory of Addiction Neurobiology and is cross appointed at the Massachusetts General Hospital. She is the past Deputy Director for Demand Reduction in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. Dr. Madras is a current member of the National Academy of Medicine Collaborative on the Opioid Crisis and served on the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis.

Her research is multidisciplinary, spanning neuroscience, pharmacology, brain imaging, drug discovery and drug policy. Alone or together with collaborators she: invented a class of compounds now in widespread use for detecting Parkinson's disease in living brain, characterized brain targets of a number of psychoactive drugs, discovered differences in adolescent and adult behavioral/molecular responses to psychoactive drugs and designed new classes of candidate therapeutics. In public policy research, she was the first to publish positive federal data from screening, brief intervention, referral to treatment (SBIRT) services, the risks of multigenerational substance use, and approaches to improved treatment for opioid use disorder.

She is author of more than 200 scientific manuscripts, articles, book chapters and principal or co-editor of books: “The Cell Biology of Addiction”; “Effects of Drug Abuse on the Human Nervous System”; “Imaging of the Human Brain in Health and Disease”.

Recipient of 19 U.S. and 27 international issued patents with collaborators. Dr. Madras is the recipient of numerous honors and awards for her research, development of educational courses and media, and her technical innovations. Her experiences in neuroscience research, drug addiction, education, government, and public service offer a unique perspective at the intersection of science and public policy.

Courtney Esparza

Public Health Advisor, Youth Engagement Lead, Office of Prevention Innovation, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)



Ms. Courtney Esparza, MS, MBA, LPC has worked in mental health and substance use for over twenty-five years. She is a Public Health Advisor at SAMHSA/CSAP and the Youth Engagement lead in the Office of Prevention Innovation, developing innovative prevention strategies with youth. Previously, she worked in health services innovation focused on integration of behavioral health and physical health, youth services, crisis services and solutions and strategies for individuals with mental health or substance. She also has extensive experience and training in human centered design including facilitating consumer journey mapping, design sprints, and stakeholder co-designing workshops, and evaluating technology enabled health solutions. Prior to working in the innovation and business side, her many years of clinical experience and clinical program development focused on behavioral health prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery with youth and young adults. In her free time, Courtney likes to be outdoors, running, hiking, surfing, and hanging out with her two Great Danes, Willow and Bodhi.

Dr. Charlene McGunn

Executive Director, Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families



Dr. Charlene McGunn has been the Executive Director of the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families for 28 years. The Coalition, located in Macomb County Michigan, focuses on promoting resilient and drug-free youth and preventing youth suicide. The Coalition was named the Prevention Organization of the Year for the State of Michigan in 2014 for its creation of strategies and materials to prevent and reduce youth substance use, particularly marijuana use and vaping. These prevention materials, including a multi-component campaign Tool Kit – *Mobilizing Michigan...Protecting Our Kids from Marijuana* - are available on the Coalition website at www.cvcoalition.org.

Dr. McGunn has been a part-time faculty member at Wayne State University Graduate School of Social Work for 30 years and has a private clinical practice in Rochester Hills, Michigan. She has a Master's Degree in Social Work from Wayne State University, a Specialist Degree in School Psychology from the University of Detroit, and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Detroit. Dr. McGunn has presented widely on the detrimental effects of youth substance use, particularly the consequences of marijuana use.