



IGNITING SYSTEMS CHANGE

Exploring Strategies for Improving Maternal & Child Health

May 30th & 31st | Wyndham Pgh University Center (Oakland)

Keynote by Dr. Sayida Peprah-Wilson

Invited Speaker Chidiebere Ibe



This multi-day, multi-track conference will promote systems change, going beyond symptoms to address root causes of issues like infant mortality and other health disparities. Let's collaborate to ensure everyone has the opportunity for optimum health and wellbeing, despite race, economic status, or zip code.

SCHEDULE

Day One – May 30, 2024

8:45am	9:15am	Continental Breakfast
9:15am	9:30am	Welcome
9:30am	10:15am	Maternal Health Keynote by Dr. Sayida Peprah-Wilson w/Q&A
10:25am	11:25am	Breakout 1
11:35am	12:35pm	Breakout 2
12:45pm	1:35pm	Lunch Presentation
1:35pm	2:00pm	Poster Gallery Walk and Networking
2:00pm	3:00pm	Breakout 3
3:10pm	4:00pm	Panel Discussion hosted by Art Terry "Fathers, Families and Systems: The Healthy Start Legacy"
4:00pm	4:15pm	Closing Remarks & Evaluations

Day Two – May 31, 2024

8:45am	9:15am	Hot Breakfast Buffet
9:15am	9:25am	Welcome from Dr. Valerie Arkoosh, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
9:25am	9:30am	Day 1 Reflection
9:30am	10:30am	Embodied Collective Joy & Rest Practices with Felicia Lane Savage
10:40am	11:40am	Breakout 4
11:50am	12:50pm	Health Equity Keynote by Chidiebere Ibe w/Q&A
12:50pm	1:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm	2:00pm	Poster Gallery Walk and Networking
2:00pm	3:00pm	Breakout 5
3:10pm	3:30pm	Closing Remarks & Evaluations

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Breakout 1

SESSION 1A: **Maternal Nutrition Care: Reestablishing the Standard of Food Wellness For Childbearing Families**

WORKSHOP

Taylor Clemm, [DAWA](#)

Maternal nutrition plays a critical role in the health and well-being of childbearing families. However, modern dietary patterns and lifestyle habits have strayed from traditional standards of food wellness, impacting maternal and child health outcomes. This workshop, "Maternal Nutrition Care: Reestablishing the Standard of Food Wellness for Childbearing Families," aims to address this issue by exploring strategies to promote optimal maternal nutrition during the perinatal period. Through interactive discussions and practical activities, participants will learn about the importance of maternal nutrition, evidence-based recommendations for a healthy diet during pregnancy and lactation, and culturally sensitive approaches to supporting diverse families. By reestablishing the standard of food wellness, we can enhance maternal and child health outcomes and contribute to the well-being of future generations.

SESSION 1B: **"I wish that they understood that if a woman is being held hostage by money, she is being held hostage physically": Experiences, Impacts, and Implications of Economic Abuse on Perinatal People**

PRESENTATION

Sarah Scott, University of Pittsburgh

Background

Economic abuse is one form of intimate partner violence (IPV) intended to control a survivor's ability to make, save, or spend money to gain power over them. Economic abuse creates barriers for survivors to maintain employment, critical for securing health insurance, avoiding food insecurity, and sustaining stable housing. Perinatal people may be more vulnerable to economic abuse due to changes in financial and employment life such as parental leave, increased expenses, and increased healthcare costs. Yet, little is known about how economic abuse manifests within the perinatal period.

The objective of this presentation is to share results of a research study that explores explore: 1) how economic abuse manifests within the perinatal period; 2) what impacts economic abuse has on perinatal people; and 3) how best to support perinatal survivors.

Design/Methods: We conducted virtual semi-structured interviews with IPV survivors and IPV advocates. Participants were recruited through an online recruitment registry, national IPV organizations, and local domestic violence agencies. Interview audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim. We used a deductive-inductive thematic analysis approach. Two research team members individually coded each transcript.

The codebook used apriori codes matching the interview guide and inductive codes. The coders met several times to resolve discrepancies in coding. The research team met monthly to review emerging codes, consolidate codes into themes, and make iterative changes to the interview guide.

Results: We completed 18 interviews with advocates and 20 interviews with survivors. We identified seven themes. Participants described several experiences of economic abuse, including financial control, exploitation, and employment sabotage. Participants described health, financial, and social impacts on survivors and children. Partners leveraged the criminal-legal, child welfare, and healthcare systems and cultural norms about pregnancy, including those related to gender and religion to financially harm survivors. Participants highlighted finances as a barrier to leaving the relationship. Advocates described how economic abuse impacts marginalized survivors. Dream resources described include cash assistance, healthy relationship and financial education, and employer policies.

Conclusions: This study built on existing literature to highlight the ways that economic abuse specifically impacts perinatal survivors and their children. Findings emphasize the need for support for perinatal survivors of economic abuse.

SESSION 1C: Evaluation 101: A Step by Step Approach to Capturing Your Impact

WORKSHOP

Vinu Ilakkuvan, [Pop Health LLC](#)

PoP Health's Evaluation 101 workshop captures the key steps of crafting an evaluation to understand your impact - including determining your audience, defining your program, establishing SMART objectives, planning and conducting a process and outcome evaluation, and disseminating your learnings.

Breakout 2

SESSION 2A: "A Circle expands forever...": The Ripple Effect of a CenteringPregnancy™ Model of Care

PRESENTATION

Alicia Vervain, [The Midwife Center](#)

CenteringPregnancy™ is an evidence-based group prenatal care program that brings together pregnant people all due in the same month, helping to build relationships as the participants go through the same pregnancy milestones at the same time. Across 10 prenatal visits that are 2 hours long each, Centering allows clients to have more time with a provider, engage in conversation, and learn about nutrition, stress management, breastfeeding, labor, delivery, and more. Centering Pregnancy along with midwife-led care have been demonstrated to improve maternal and infant health outcomes and reduce racial disparities.

This offering will demonstrate the purpose, impact, and potential of the CenteringPregnancy™ model of care by learning from the very folks that brought it to Pittsburgh, as well as clients who have participated in the program with the lived experience to educate and empower other parents-to-be.

SESSION 2B: Evidence Based Programs and Their Effect on Teen Behavior

PRESENTATION

Tiffani Germany, Taylor Dawkins and Tiara Martin, Healthy Start Inc.

Rates of STIs and challenges with healthy interpersonal relationships have been on the rise among local tweens and teens. Healthy Start's Adolescent Services department facilitates evidence-based curricula for middle and high school students. The Wyman Teen Outreach Program (TOP) empowers teens with the tools and opportunities to build social-emotional skills, strengthen relationships, and avoid risky behaviors. It promotes positive youth development through curriculum-guided, interactive group discussions, positive adult guidance and support, and community service learning. Be Proud! Be Responsible! Curriculum empowers youth to reduce their risk of HIV through the knowledge, motivation, and skills to change behaviors, reducing risks.

Amid the dire need to offer health and life planning education to adolescent youth in in-school and afterschool settings, behavioral challenges can derail opportunities for learning and engagement. This session will offer tips and tools on how coupling real-world education with meeting students where they are, via trauma-informed care, has worked to address challenging behaviors. Students have shared the lessons that have helped them make good choices, resolve conflict, and manage their emotions in their daily lives.

SESSION 2C: Community-Partnered Research at Healthy Start: Reflections & Lessons Learned

PRESENTATION

Adena Bowden, Healthy Start Inc. & Healthy Start Community Health Advocates

Healthy Start's involvement in research has grown exponentially over the last 5+ years. It's important to pause and reflect on our growth to fully appreciate our successes & impact, as well as to identify areas for improvement. Perspectives from Healthy Start's past and current research partners, research staff, and research participants will inform a review of Healthy Start's historical, current, and future roles in MCH research, as well as an outline of the steps needed for us to consistently be viewed as equal partners in MCH research.

Breakout 3

SESSION 3A: Self-Care Matters for Parents and Providers

WORKSHOP

Ta'Lor L. Pinkston (The Heart Advocate), Healthy Start Inc.

"Self-care Matters has been called "vibrant, relatable, and informational" by Khavah Murray, LCSW, the founder of Hope Deals Counseling and Consulting, LLC.

The workshop includes a PowerPoint presentation, interactive discussions, and journal prompts. The workshop provides Caregivers (parents, individuals and other caregivers) and their Care Providers, (Clinicians, Social Workers, Community Health Workers, and Home Visitors) with an in-depth description of self-care and how to use self-care as a coping skill for mental health and work/life balance. During the workshop, attendees will complete a Self-care Needs Plan that will give them the opportunity to choose their self-care needs based on the Six Types of Self-care.

Caregiver and Care Providers will learn how to normalize self-care personally and professionally to disrupt guilt and the stigma that self-care is selfish. Caregivers and Care Providers making choices that reflect why their Self-care Matters reinforces the importance of lifelong wellness, can aid in reducing mental health concerns like depression and anxiety, and can reduce professional burnout and compassion fatigue.

Caregivers and care providers will be asked to reflect on this question, "Do you behave as if your self-care matters?"

SESSION 3B: The ART of Data Visualization

WORKSHOP

Liz Monk, Western PA Regional Data Center

Please join us as we explore the connection between art and the creative side of visualizing data. In this workshop we will share data art inspiration, local data resources, and spend time getting creative making our own art using data.

Data is collected and shared in a myriad of ways and sometimes can be complicated or difficult to understand (especially in a presentation where the slide goes too quickly and the numbers are small and you are in the back of the room); however, there are many ways to use, share and talk about data.

During the workshop, you'll build connections, discover new ways of displaying data and feel more confident exploring datasets on your own. No computers will be used in this workshop, and there are no prerequisite skills or experiences. You are encouraged to join even (or especially!) if you feel like you shouldn't because you aren't a "data" person. Come!

SESSION 3C: "The Rest of the Story": Where Medical Data Abstraction Meets Storytelling

PRESENTATION

Onome Oghifibibi, MD, MSc, FAAP, UPMC Magee Womens Hospital/UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh; Robert Cicco, MD, Retired Neonatologist; and Montia D. Brock, LPC, NCC, IMH-E, CLC, CD(DONA), MindBreastWomb/Healthy Start Inc.

In 2021 Healthy Start, the Allegheny County Health Department and UPMC Children's Hospital began the planning process to establish a Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) process. FIMR is the community-based, action-oriented process of reviewing fetal and infant death cases to improve maternal and infant health outcomes. Essential to this process is pairing medical record data abstraction with family stories via interview or similar storytelling process. This session will lead attendees through the evolution of the FIMR process, the FIMR's focus on community engagement, and elevate the importance of capturing the voices of families as a lever for systems change.

SESSION 4A: Community Leadership in Black Maternal Health

PRESENTATION

Monet Olivis, Community Health Advocate and Mother

In this session folks will understand why it is imperative to keep community centered around the work we do in maternal and child health (MCH), why community should be involved in the MCH workforce, how community members can become MCH champions and leaders, how to keep community engaged in the MCH work, and the importance of authentic relationships with community members and partners. I will also expand on the importance of MCH professionals completing annual training on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), bias and mental health.

SESSION 4B: Identifying Infants at Risk of Sudden Unexplained Death with an Automated Predictive Risk Model

PRESENTATION

Rachel Berger MD, MPH, UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and Julia Reuben, Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) is a common cause of infant death. We evaluated whether a predictive risk model (PRM) - Hello Baby - which was developed to stratify children by risk of entry into foster care could also identify infants at highest risk of SUID and non-fatal unsafe sleep events.

Participants and Setting: Cases: Infants with SUID or an unsafe sleep event over 5½ years in a single county. Controls: All births in the same county.

Methods – Retrospective case-control study. Demographic and clinical data were collected and a Hello Baby PRM score was assigned. Descriptive statistics and the predictive value of a PRM score of 20 were calculated.

Results – Infants with SUID (n=62) or an unsafe sleep event (n=37) (cases) were compared with 23,366 births (controls). Cases and controls were similar for all demographic and clinical data except that infants with unsafe sleep events were older. Median PRM score for cases was higher than controls (17.5 vs. 10, $p < 0.001$); 50% of cases had a PRM score 17-20 vs. 16% of controls ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions– The Hello Baby PRM can identify newborns at high risk of SUID and non-fatal unsafe sleep events. The ability to identify high-risk newborns prior to a negative outcome allows for individualized evaluation of high-risk families for modifiable risk factors which are potentially amenable to intervention. This approach is limited by the fact that not all counties can calculate a PRM or similar score automatically.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this presentation the listener will be able to:

- (1) List at least three risk factors for sudden unexplained infant death (SUID)
- (2) Describe the Hello Baby predictive risk model (PRM)
- (3) Explain how the Hello Baby PRM could be used to identify infants at highest risk for SUID

Link: [Identifying infants at risk of sudden unexpected death with an automated predictive risk model](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877907420300000) (sciencedirectassets.com)

SESSION 4C: Improving Maternal Health Through Clinical/Community Collaboration

PRESENTATION

Takiyah Durham, MBA, Allegheny Health Network, [First Steps and Beyond](#)

The issue of racial disparities in maternal health requires a concerted effort from all caring for our birthing people and infants. These disparities are evident across educational levels, ages, backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and geographic areas and impact the birthing experience and a woman's lifespan. To address this challenge, it is incumbent upon all those who interact with birthing persons to address biases in the maternal experience and build trusting relationships. A systemic approach is necessary to combat existing racial inequities and promote maternal health equities. The significance of community engagement in this regard cannot be overstated. First Steps and Beyond, a community collaborative addressing Black maternal and infant mortality, has taken concrete steps towards ensuring that all birthing persons receive equitable and safe care. Cultural humility training, unconscious bias training, obstetric racial inequity training, and community engagement in racial inequity discussions have contributed to favorable health outcomes for birthing persons in the fight against maternal and infant mortality. Incorporating clinical teams and partners in program design is essential to the community approach of enhancing the maternal experience. Increased education and awareness among all involved in the maternal continuum is necessary to promote equity in maternal health. We invite you to learn how leveraging training and education in partnership with healthcare systems, clinicians, doulas, and government agencies helps create a level of continuity of care that ensure every birthing person is awarded with the birthing experience they deserve.

Breakout 5

SESSION 5A: Unpacking Food Insecurity in Pregnancy: Findings from Focus Groups to Improve Screening

PRESENTATION

Christine Call, PhD and Abby Jo Perez, University of Pittsburgh

Food insecurity (having limited or uncertain access to sufficient food) is associated with negative mental and physical health outcomes in pregnant individuals and their child(ren). For example, food insecurity is linked to perinatal depressive and anxiety symptoms, gestational diabetes and hypertensive disorders, preterm birth, and low birth weight. In the U.S., food insecurity affects ~1 in 5 pregnant individuals, with disproportionately high rates among Black and Hispanic/Latine communities due to longstanding systemic injustices. Pregnancy involves biopsychosocial processes that likely impact food insecurity, including pregnancy-specific nutrition recommendations, financial strain, and changes in appetite, eating, mood and physical functioning. Thus, innovative screening for and interventions are need to address prenatal food insecurity. Presenters are researchers and community advisory board members who collaborate on a study that aims to characterize prenatal food

insecurity to improve its screening/identification. Presenters will discuss findings from four focus groups with pregnant individuals with food insecurity (N=43 individuals; 91% Black-identifying; 58% WIC participants) that suggest that pregnancy uniquely affects food access (e.g., fatigue limits ability to walk to affordable stores), ability to ration food (e.g., due to increased hunger), and food insecurity-related distress (e.g., worry about consequences of food insecurity on the developing baby). Presenters will also discuss core features of prenatal food insecurity that emerged across focus groups: disruptions to food access (insufficient food quantity, nutrition quality, and preferred foods) and associated distress (psychological and physiological distress, stigma, cognitive labor). Implications for screening/intervention among diverse pregnant individuals, and considerations for building on existing research, will be discussed.

SESSION 5B: Closing the Gap: A Conversation with Leadership in Healthcare

PANEL

Montia D. Brock, LPC, NCC, IMH-E, CLC, CD(DONA), MindBreastWomb/Healthy Start

Within the Healthy Start Inc. Pittsburgh's BIRTH Plan for Allegheny County Goal 2, Strengthening Systems of Care, the goals created by community members consist of outcomes that include the direct involvement of the systems and leaders that facilitate and pay for the care. In the nature of the creation of the BIRTH Plan, an open forum of conversation and problem solving, we would like to have a discussion with the leaders of our birthing and perinatal health and mental health institutions—including managed care organizations—to give professionals and community members an opportunity to discuss feedback and concerns regarding the state of Black birth and their direct commitment to the BIRTH Plan.

SESSION 5C: Lactation; Beyond the Trend

PRESENTATION

Rena Green, IBCLC

Since the beginning of existence, our bodies have been designed to nourish our offspring. And in less than a century, infant feeding traditions completely changed due to the urbanization and industrialization of society, giving rise to the formula industry. Here we will explore the resurgence of lactation as a profession from non-existence to its high demand of today as well as how human milk feeding has become more commonplace despite competition from the formula industry's capitalist practices in the infant feeding markets. Furthermore, we will investigate the impact of social media on lactation and its role in assisting with feeding practice decisions. Finally, we will look at how effective intervention efforts that extend breastfeeding rates can help us enhance lactation practices. There is lactation in the future!

POSTERS

Resource Mapping for Fathers in Allegheny County

Authors: Phoebe Balascio-University of Pittsburgh Public Health, Emma Ford-University of Pittsburgh, Arthur Terry-Healthy Start Inc.

Engaging fathers is imperative to improving outcomes of birthing people during pregnancy. Yet, there is a dearth of information on resources available to assist fathers during the perinatal period. The purpose of this project was to create a user-friendly resource map of father-serving organizations and agencies in Allegheny County. With the assistance of Healthy Start collaborators, we surveyed members of the Fatherhood Collaborative Council of Western PA to identify existing resources and services supporting fathers around pregnancy. This information was independently verified and iteratively collated into a user-friendly resource map for fathers looking for pregnancy support. With the resource map created, our group aims to disseminate the graphic back to the FCC and community partners, so strengths and gaps in current services may be used to advocate for programs and policies that advance the health of fathers in Allegheny County.

Project Butterfly: Reshaping the Allegheny County Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR)

Authors: Montia D. Brock, LPC, NCC, IMH-E, CLC, CD(DONA), Mind Breast Womb, LLC as a contractor of FIMR, Dr. Onome Oghifibibi, Dr. Robert Cicco, Mr. Arthur Terry, Ngozi Tibbs

As the Allegheny County FIMR enters into its second year of facilitating the national effort to reduce infant mortality through the Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR), we reflect on all we have done in our first year (i.e., formation of the CAT and CRT, CAT goals and efforts, number of interviews along with any observance of common occurrences of preventative deaths, etc.); what changes we plan to make based on what we have learned so far; and how to take what we've learned to create change (i.e., how to report back to birthing hospitals and professionals, developing systems of accountability and prevention). With a poster presentation at the Healthy Start Inc. Pgh 2024 Symposium we are hoping for feedback, suggestions, and engagement with our peers and community.

Postpartum Pittsburgh: Connecting and Collaborating with the Providers of Today and Tomorrow

Authors: Montia D. Brock, LPC, NCC, IMH-E, CLC, CD(DONA) and Chaunda Cunningham-[Postpartum Pittsburgh](#)

Postpartum Pittsburgh is a 501c3, founded in 2016, with the vision that all birthing individuals in Western Pennsylvania will have access to current mental health treatment and resources. Postpartum Pittsburgh seeks to fulfill this vision by bringing together Western PA birth workers, health professionals, and community organizations for twice yearly networking and educational events. Our presentation will highlight how professional, racial, and ethnic diversity of the Postpartum Pittsburgh board has enabled effective cross-system collaboration to create programs that center Black

and other minoritized birthing people. A "Listening Session" format introduced in the 2022 Spring conference provided genuine dialogue and conversation that is rooted in personal experience and expertise. Spring 2024 conference Listening Sessions are planned on the topics of birth worker and immigrant testimonies. During our Fall 2023 resource event, approximately 20 community, county-supported, and hospital-based organizations tabled in a large ballroom. Three hours of the 4 hour-long event were devoted to introducing the tabling organizations and giving time for participants to visit tables and network so that they can take back information to their clinics and patients.

Networking programs and community outreach, dialogue, and collaboration, are critical building blocks to improving the mental health care of minority birthing people as well mitigating the adverse social determinants of mental health. In the coming year we will continue these events and integrate the content on our website to increase visibility and uptake of perinatal mental health resources for mothers and professionals.

A Combined Questionnaire and Biomarker Analysis of the Impact of the 2020-2021 COVID Pandemic on Stress and Placental-Maternal Health

Authors: Kharlya Carpio, Stacey Pharrams, Demia Tyler, Andrea Richardson, Alison Hipwell, Janet Catov, Ernesto Marques, Jennifer J Adibi

Introduction: This study aimed to assess the challenges faced in social, psychosocial, infectious, and physical environments during the COVID pandemic by measuring individual and neighborhood exposures, stress biomarkers, and maternal mental health outcomes.

Methods: With Healthy Start as a community consultant, we recruited birthing people who delivered at Magee-Womens Hospital between June 2020 and December 2021. Individuals living in high COVID+ neighborhoods and who self-identified as Black were prioritized. Participants completed a questionnaire and contributed biospecimen samples at a postpartum visit. The environment was measured in four domains: social, psychosocial, physical, and chemical (diet related). Analyses are underway on the relationships between exposures, biomarkers of placental function and maternal well-being, and postpartum depression.

Results: The mean age of participants (N=73) was 31 years, 32% were Black, and rated their health as slightly better before the pandemic vs at the time of questionnaire completion (3.56 vs. 3.28; 1=poor, 5=excellent). Major sources of pandemic-related stress were access to baby supplies (31%) and medical and mental care (16%). Most (68%) reported mild or no stress about general changes to birth experiences, with no changes in the support received from prenatal care providers (69%), and a slight decrease in feeling support from social networks before and after the pandemic (5.46 vs 5.14; 1 no support, 7 very much). Participants did not exhibit depressive symptoms and were adaptive to coping.

Conclusion: Birthing people in this study were not strongly negatively impacted by the COVID pandemic. Understanding various forms of stress, not only during periods of

societal upheaval, is important to meet the needs of pregnant people, acknowledge their pregnancy experiences, and foster positive mental health outcomes."

Dads Do Skin to Skin, Too!!!!

Author: Jessica Yvonne Parham, BSN, RNCI-Healthy Start and Our Place Doula Services LLC

This poster will focus on the importance of inviting dads to perform skin to skin with infants during the golden hour and throughout infant development.

The Allegheny County PN3 Systems Collaborative

Authors: Amy Malen, Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS); Lisa Jones, Allegheny County Health Department; DaMarra Underwood, Allegheny County Department of Children Initiatives; Jada Shirriel, Yazmin Bennett-Kelly, and Angela Gresse, Healthy Start, Inc.; Cara Ciminillo and Ashley Harland, Trying Together; Karin Shafer, The Alliance for Infants and Toddlers

How government, private, and nonprofit partners collaborate to build a system where partners work together to provide accessible, high-quality, and community-informed services to all families from pregnancy to age 3, with a focus on addressing racial equity and the disparities in maternal and infant mortality rates. The aim is to ensure every family feels supported and connected during pregnancy and the crucial period of adjusting to life with a new baby.

The Collaborative and their partners provide high-quality, easily accessible services (perinatal health care, home visiting, family centers, child care, early intervention, and assistance with basic needs) for families in Allegheny County.

The Allegheny County PN3 Collaborative Members are interested in sharing some of the lessons they have learned about collaboration and pulling together system leaders, creating trust among partners, sharing funding responsibility and power, and remaining focused on racial justice and equity. They look forward to connecting with and providing light TA to other counties and communities interested in our goals, services, and impact.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dr. Sayida Peprah-Wilson



Dr. Sayida Peprah-Wilson is both a licensed clinical psychologist and doula with specialty in multicultural psychology, trauma, suicide prevention and maternal mental health. Dr. Sayida earned her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, with a Multi-cultural Clinical-Community Emphasis, from the California School of Professional Psychology, at [Alliant International University](#). She completed her undergraduate studies in Psychology and Religion at [Spelman College](#). She has had a multi-faceted career as a psychologist having worked in community-based, in-home, psychiatric hospital, prison and private practice settings.

Dr. Sayida's study and work strongly emphasize multicultural awareness and in an effort to further this, she has traveled to Ghana, Mexico, Egypt and India, studying mental health approaches, indigenous culture and local spiritual traditions. Dr. Sayida is the Founder and Executive Director of the non-profit organization [Diversity Uplifts, Inc.](#), through which she regularly offers cultural competency, mental health and maternal mental health trainings and consultations throughout the U.S. In 2014, she was a featured speaker at the United Nations 65th NGO Conference on the topic of Mental Illness, An Invisible Disability.

Dr. Sayida's work in maternal health include serving as a co-director and trainer for perinatal health

programs in Southern California ([Frontline Doulas](#) and [Sankofa Birth workers Collective](#)). Dr. Sayida is also an active member of the [Black Women Birthing Justice Collective](#) and a Movement Partner with the [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#), promoting research, education and community-based services to positively transform birthing experiences of black families. Dr. Sayida has served and continues to serve on advisory committees to improve maternal health including the [California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative](#) (Maternal Suicide Review Committee 2018-2019 and SoCal Maternal Mortality Review Committee 2020-Present), [Perinatal Equity Initiative Committees](#) of San Bernardino and Riverside County (2019-Present), [DHCS Medi-Cal Doula Stakeholder Workgroup](#) and others aimed at systemic improvement and/or prevention around disparities.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Chidiebere Ibe

Chidiebere Ibe (born Sunday 31 March 1996) hails from the Igbo ethnic group and is a native of Ebonyi State, Nigeria, was born in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. He speaks English, Igbo, and Ibibio. Chidi has 3 siblings.

Having lost his mother to surgery for fibroids, he became passionate about medicine, especially as it relates to women and children. He began medical illustrations by reading anatomy textbooks, watching videos online, and practicing illustrations using hand sketches, and a computer mouse. Presently, he is a Medical Illustrator, renowned for the creation of the Black Fetus Illustration.

Chidiebere has MBBS in view at Kyiv Medical University, Ukraine. He holds a BSc degree in Chemistry from the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. He is a TEDx speaker whose impact and works have been featured by reputable online media like Forbes, CNN, BBC, Good Morning America, WebMD, and Huffington Post among others.

He currently serves as the Medical Illustrator of Harvard Medical School International Center for Genetic Disease, the Chief Medical Illustrator & Creative Director of the Journal of Global Neurosurgery, Research Fellow and Creative Director of the Association of Future African Neurosurgeons (AFAN), a Junior Member of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies, Global Neurosurgery Committee, etc.

Chidiebere's career in medical illustration started in 2020. He quickly realized the under-representation of People of Color, especially black people in medical illustrations which created health inequities and hampered proper diagnostics for black patients; so he took the initiative to bridge this gap by creating hyper-realistic, diverse and inclusive black-skin medical illustrations with the hope that this will improve the health outcomes of People of Color.



WELCOME ADDRESS

Dr. Val Arkoosh



Valerie A. Arkoosh, MD, MPH, was appointed to lead the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services by Governor Josh Shapiro on January 17, 2023. She completed the nomination process and took office as Secretary on June 29, 2023.

Prior to this role, Secretary Arkoosh served on the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners since January 2015, when she was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Commission. Arkoosh won election to a full four-year term in November 2015 and served as Commission Vice Chair until her election as Commission Chair in November 2016. She was the first woman ever to serve in this role. Arkoosh was re-elected in November 2019 and unanimously chosen by her colleagues to again serve as Chair in January 2020. The three-member Board of Commissioners oversees a budget of more than \$500 million and directs more than 2,800 employees charged with administering and overseeing county functions including human services.

As Commission Chair, Secretary Arkoosh was committed to strengthening services for children, veterans, and seniors. She led the efforts to eliminate street homelessness of veterans and streamline delivery of human services. Recognizing the need for a strong, supported workforce in executing these goals, she instituted a \$15 minimum wage and gender-neutral paid parental leave for Montgomery County employees. Drawing on her background as a physician, she oversaw a multi-pronged, integrated response to the opioid overdose epidemic, including issuing a standing order in 2015 to enable participating pharmacies in Montgomery County to dispense the overdose antidote naloxone at the request of any member of the public.

As a physician and public health professional, Secretary Arkoosh was at the center of Montgomery County's efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, leading a data- and science-driven approach to the unprecedented challenge. Arkoosh's leadership was praised during the county's response, especially her transparency and public communication throughout the pandemic. Secretary Arkoosh is also a staunch advocate for maternal health and reproductive rights, and previously served on the Pennsylvania Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

Upon obtaining her Master of Public Health in 2007, Arkoosh became deeply engaged in the national effort to achieve comprehensive health care reform. She led the National Physicians Alliance, a national non-profit organization of physicians, who, putting their patients before profits, joined a broad-based nation-wide coalition for reform. During this time, she developed policy and legislative strategy, and promoted public engagement in Washington, D.C., Pennsylvania, and throughout the country. Dr. Arkoosh maintains comprehensive knowledge of the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and its impact on individuals and the health care system.

Prior to stepping into public service, Secretary Arkoosh was Professor of Clinical Anesthesiology and Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Perelman School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. Arkoosh is a graduate of the University of Nebraska College of Medicine and received a Master of Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She performed her residency at Jefferson Medical College in Anesthesiology with a special focus in Obstetrics. She has an undergraduate degree in economics from Northwestern University.

Secretary Arkoosh lives in Springfield Township, Montgomery County, with her husband and their three children.

SESSION SPEAKER BIOS



Jonathan Backers, Fatherhood Advocate

Born and raised in the vibrant but challenging community of St. Clair Village in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Mr. Backers understands firsthand the power of resilience and community support. A graduate of Morehouse College with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Administration, Mr. Backers has dedicated over two decades to delivering programs and initiatives in the health and human services field. His work spans a breadth of issues, from empowering at-risk youth, directing reentry programs for formerly incarcerated individuals, guiding teen parents, to enhancing manhood and fatherhood development and promoting initiatives focused on establishing housing for Pittsburgh's homeless veterans. Throughout his journey, Mr. Backers credits his faith and the spirit of "RE" for helping him overcome obstacles and fulfill his purpose. His motto, "It's all about 'RE'", reflects his belief in the transformative power of redemption and second chances. As a living testament to the resilience of the human spirit, Mr. Backers continues to inspire hope and empower individuals to embrace their own journey of transformation, guided by faith, community, and the unwavering belief in the potential for REnewal and Restoration.



Rachel Berger, MD, MPH

Rachel Berger is Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh. She received her undergraduate degree in biochemistry from Harvard University and her MD from Columbia University. She completed her pediatric internship and residency and a fellowship in general academic pediatrics at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and received a Master's in Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh. She served as chief of the division of Child Advocacy at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh from 2013 until 2022. In addition to her clinical work evaluating children with concerns for abuse and neglect, she has spent over 20 years as a clinical researcher. Her research has focused on decreasing fatalities and near-fatalities in young children due to child maltreatment and unsafe sleep. Her child maltreatment research has focused on improving identification of suspected physical abuse using serum biomarkers, clinical decision rules and the electronic health record. Her research has been funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Beckwith Institute, the Hillman Foundation and others. She has co-authored over 130 peer-reviewed publications and book chapters and was the first child abuse pediatrician to be elected to ASCI (American Society for Clinical Investigation). She has also been involved child abuse-related policy and served on the Pennsylvania Task Force for Child Protection, as the research lead for the Federal Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities (CECANF) during the Obama administration and as a senior policy fellow for Casey Family Programs in 2019.



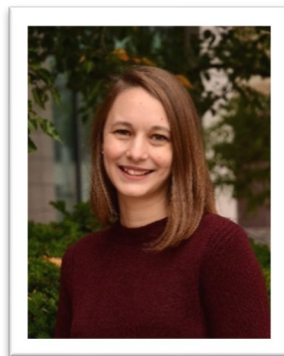
Adena Bowden, MPH, Research Manager - (She/Her)

Adena Bowden is the Research Manager at Healthy Start, Inc., managing a variety of research projects with local and regional partners that explore the intersection of health equity, maternal and child health, and chronic disease, such as severe maternal morbidity and infant health outcomes. Adena's education in global health studies (B.S.) and epidemiology (MPH), her experiences in data collection, management, and dissemination; performing clinical and technical research; co-facilitating a data literacy workshop series for data stewards; and in research focused on prenatal and community health situate her to support Healthy Start's unique contributions to the field of maternal and child health. Adena is passionate about advancing health equity using evidence-based practice and eradicating disparities faced by members of the Black community through community-based participatory research. She believes in research that builds capacity and empowers communities to use their own data to continue work even after the academic and organizational efforts have finished.



Montia D. Brock, LPC, NCC, IMH-E, CLC, CD(DONA)

Montia earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Norfolk State University and a Master of Science in Infant Mental Health Counseling from Chatham University. She currently practices as a consultant and birth worker; as a Licensed Professional Counselor in PA, National Certified Counselor, Infant Mental Health Specialist, Certified Lactation Counselor, and DONA Certified Birth Doula. She is currently pursuing her certification as a postpartum doula through DONA International. Montia provides her direct services, teaching, speaking, and consulting through her role as a Behavioral Therapist II with The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's (UPMC) Magee Behavioral Health and her company Mind Breast Womb, LLC. Montia has worked in predominantly minority and lower SES communities throughout her career. She continues to make it her mission to connect to people who look like and have shared experiences with her by providing accessible care, including mental health and birth services at affordable rates along with person-centered, anti-racist, culturally responsible care, supervision, and consulting.



Christine Call, PhD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Pittsburgh - (She/Her/Hers)

Dr. Christine Call, PhD is a licensed clinical psychologist and postdoctoral researcher in the Perinatal Health and Behaviors Lab, within the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. She will be joining the research faculty of the Department of Psychiatry as an assistant professor in June. Dr. Call received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Drexel University in 2021. Through her research, she leverages community engaged, mixed-methods approaches to identify structural, psychosocial, and behavioral factors that influence health and wellbeing during pregnancy and postpartum. Her long-term goal is to use this knowledge to improve health outcomes for communities with unmet needs by developing and testing novel interventions at the system, community, and individual levels. She is particularly passionate about supporting communities and individuals experiencing food and financial insecurity. Dr. Call has authored over 25 peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters and over 50 presentations at national and international academic conferences related

to her research interests. Clinically, Dr. Call has expertise in delivering evidence-based psychological treatments to individuals experiencing eating, mood, and anxiety disorders, including during pregnancy and postpartum, using cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). Dr. Call's passion for supporting the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities living with food and financial insecurity stems in part from personal experiences growing up in a household that benefited from WIC, food banks, free school lunch, educational financial aid, and other supports. She is incredibly grateful to the research participants and patients who share their lived experiences with her in the service of improving their or the greater community's health and wellbeing.



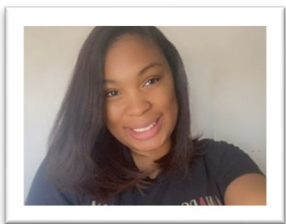
Kharlya Carpio, MPH, Graduate Student, University of Pittsburgh Department of Epidemiology - (She/Her)

Kharlya is a third year PhD student in Epidemiology whose research examines maternal health during prenatal and postpartum periods. She is interested in measuring indicators of maternal stress in the environment, particularly as experienced by Black birthing people. Currently, these include stress exposures that span multiple domains such as psychosocial (e.g., discrimination) and physical stress (e.g., low greenery and walkability) that can be present in neighborhoods. She is also interested in chemical forms of stress, which can be evaluated through endocrine disrupting chemicals that produce molecular changes during pregnancy. By studying the interplay of these factors, my work focuses on promoting health during pregnancy, the postpartum period, and beyond.



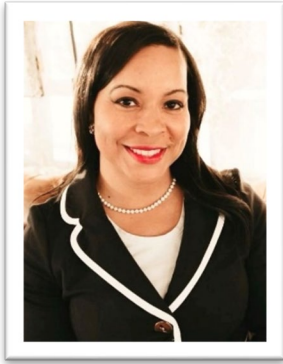
Tayler Clemm, DAWA Teaching Artist, Ancestral Wellness

Tayler Clemm is a wellness enthusiast and the visionary behind DAWA, a joyful lifestyle brand that provides ancestral wellness education and services. As a student of nature and a mother of three children born at home, Tayler's life is rooted in ancestral wisdom. Studying under multiple herbalists, urban farmers, and birth workers, Tayler accumulated a wealth of knowledge throughout her years working in the community. Her work centers around inspiring habits for families to thrive, with a micro focus on joyful birth, and plant food and medicine. Through DAWA, Tayler is on a mission to reignite the DAWA MAMA (medicine mama) in every woman across the nation. She spends most of her time as a homeschooling mom and enjoys any activity under the sun, including gardening, and walking the local parks with her family.



Taylor Dawkins, BSW - She/Her

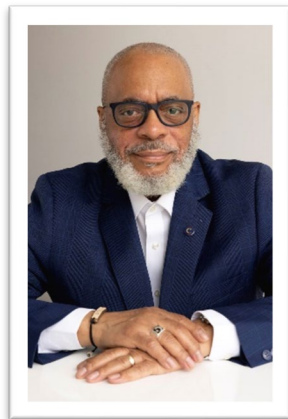
Taylor Dawkins is a graduate of California University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Social Work. She has worked in childcare, foster care and adoption, and other adolescent programming in the city of Pittsburgh. She has always had a love for working with teens and adolescents in hopes of giving back to her community. She has seen first-hand the effectiveness of evidence-based programming on teens and young adults even if it only changed a few lives.



Takiyah Durham, CCHW, MBA, Director, First Steps and Beyond Enterprise – She/Her

Takiyah serves as the director of First Steps and Beyond a community collaborative focused on addressing Black infant and maternal mortality. Takiyah Durham has worked in healthcare leadership for over 20 years, previously holding senior administrator and healthcare leadership positions. Her expertise includes healthcare operations, pediatrics, women's health, maternal health, SoDH, health equity, and community health. Takiyah holds a Master of Business Administration and is certified as a Lean Six Sigma Healthcare Practitioner, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion certified, Community Health Worker certified, and Mental Health First Aid certified. Takiyah won Member of the Year for NEO National Association of Healthcare Executives.

Takiyah also received the Business Professionals of America Alumni National USA Walk of Fame Award for her years of exceptional leadership. Takiyah Durham, Director of First Steps and Beyond, was a member of the honorary committee and one of the 30 leaders recognized for their work in the Pittsburgh community making a place for Black women and girls to not only survive but to thrive. Takiyah currently serves on the Epilepsy Association Board of Directors, Epilepsy Community Advisory Board, and on the Business Professionals of America Alumni Association Award and Finance Scholarship Committee.



Melvin Hubbard El, Senior Community Advisor Office of the Mayor, City of Pittsburgh

Melvin Hubbard El is an accomplished individual based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With a passion for community development and social impact, Melvin has dedicated his life to making a positive difference in the lives of others. Melvin was crucial in numerous initiatives to improve the community's well-being such as his involvement in the statewide coalition of Pennsylvania Father Advocates who assisted in creating the Greater Father Involvement Act-Enactment Act November 2022.

Mr. El is a proud graduate of Westinghouse High School and earned his B.S. degree in Social Studies from Clarion University. He is very pleased to have taught at Penn Circle Community High School Pittsburgh's first Public Alternative High school in the 1980's. Additionally, he has certifications in Restorative Justice, Mediation, Conflict Resolution, and Manhood/Fatherhood Development as a Trainer/Facilitator. Melvin Hubbard El inspires and empowers individuals in Pittsburgh and beyond with dedication, leadership, and steadfast commitment to community development. His tireless efforts serve as a shining example of how one person can make a significant impact and create lasting change.



Felicia Savage Friedman, Wellness thought leader and yoga guide, YogaRoots On Location

For over 30 years Felicia has transformed lives with embodied antiracist organizing through Raja Yoga. Standing firm on the belief that we are all bound and dehumanized by systems of oppression, she envisions a humankind where we have dismantled these systems of oppression and humanely rebuilt new systems together.

A wellness thought leader and yoga guide, her integrative practice ranges from individual to corporate wellness, centered in communities of accountability. Since founding YogaRoots On Location, Felicia has worked with local and national partners including the Allegheny County Health Department's Maternal and Child Health Department, UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine Division, Shuman Juvenile Detention Center, University of Pittsburgh's Office of Child Development, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Repair The World, The Kingsley Association, The Pittsburgh Study, and Bike Pittsburgh to unpack racist, capitalist, and patriarchal systems of oppression. Her incredibly vulnerable practice invites breath, meditation, movement, and discussion as a platform to navigate trauma.

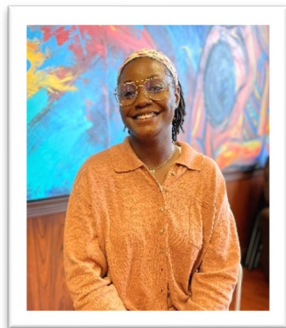
In addition to being awarded a Positive Racial Identity Development in Early Education (P.R.I.D.E.) Artist-In-Residence in 2017 and the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh's F.I.N.E. Artist-in-Residence, 2017–2018, Felicia was recognized as a 2018 Onyx Women Network Woman to Watch. In 2018 and 2019, Felicia was selected to participate in both Alisha B. Wormsley's "The People Are The Light" and "There Are Black People in the Future" as an Artist-in Residence. In 2019, she was honored by Creative Mornings as a featured speaker, and, additionally, in 2019 as a co-keynote speaker at the University of Pittsburgh's Reflective Supervision Symposium and as a keynote speaker for Remake Learning on Social-Emotional Learning. Felicia holds a Master of Elementary Education, is a 500-hour Experienced-Registered Yoga Teacher (E-RYT), a 500-hour Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT), and a Certified Yoga Alliance Continuing Education Provider. She is the Founder and CEO of YogaRoots On Location, LLC® and its 200-hour Certified Registered AntiRacist Raja Yoga School.

Felicia is honored to be married to Martin Lee Friedman, a white Abolitionist Storyteller and AntiRacist Trainer. They are blessed with two adult children: Cleveland, an Independent Inventor in Minneapolis, MN and Maya, the Director of Training with YogaRoots On Location, Pittsburgh, PA.



Tiffani Cheryl Germany, BS, CLS - (She/Her)

Tiffani Cheryl Germany occupies the position of Adolescent Programs Manager at Healthy Start Pittsburgh, where she has been responsible for overseeing and facilitating teen-oriented programs for a duration of five years. With a rich professional background spanning 30 years in adolescent engagement, Ms. Germany possesses specialized expertise in reproductive health, life skills education, and social-emotional learning. Her recent professional endeavors have encompassed the management and execution of two evidence-based curricula, designed specifically for middle and high school students, and implemented across school and community environments. Furthermore, Ms. Germany has engaged in a contractual relationship with the Crossroads Foundation, leading group sessions aimed at educating youth on the topics of healthy relationships and personal decision-making. She harbors a profound belief in the inherent right of all young individuals to achieve success, irrespective of their racial, gender, or socio-economic backgrounds, underscoring the pivotal role of supportive, compassionate adults in facilitating such outcomes. Beyond her professional commitments, Ms. Germany is a devoted mother to two sons, with whom she enjoys spending her leisure time.



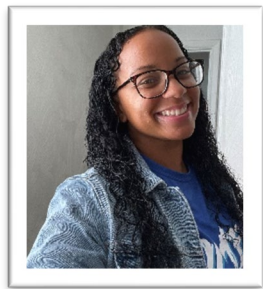
Renae Green, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant, UPMC Magee Women's Hospital

Renae is a tenacious advocate for lactation support equity in Pittsburgh and the surrounding region. Over the past seven years as a lactation professional and IBCLC working in community and hospital settings, Renae has had an indelible positive impact on the lives of Black families via several equity-based lactation support initiatives that she developed and implemented. These programs are growing, thriving, and quickly becoming the backbone of equity-focused lactation care in our region. Starting with her community engagement work at The Midwife Center and lactation internship at West Pennsylvania Hospital, in 2018, Renae became the inaugural Program Manager of the Healthy Start Center for Urban Breastfeeding (CUB). Renae built CUB to provide both individual support to Black breastfeeding families and to develop community capacity to serve these families. CUB offers in-home lactation consultant support, peer support, outreach, advocacy, and lactation training for Healthy Start participants and employees. In its first year, CUB quintupled breastfeeding rates at six months postpartum for Healthy Start families. Renae also recently developed the groundbreaking Lactation Support Specialist program at UPMC Magee-Women's Hospital in Pittsburgh. This program offers a well-paid entry-level position for prospective IBCLCs to obtain their mentored clinical hours from a hospital IBCLC through Pathway 3 (no clinical or university affiliation). Renae advocated to hospital leadership that the program would address the IBCLC shortage in the region, particularly with IBCLCs of color. This program is growing, with plans to expand to other hospitals. Renae has supported social media engagement for the Black Breastfeeding Caucus, a national collective of providers, advocates, academics, and other stakeholders committed to equitable breastfeeding support for Black families.



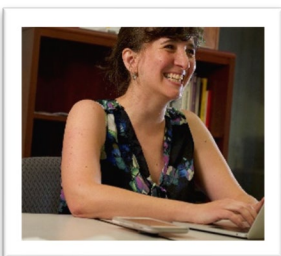
Vinu Ilakkuvan, DrPH, MSPH, Founder and Principal Consultant, PoP Health - She/Her/Hers

Vinu Ilakkuvan is passionate about strengthening community-driven efforts to address the upstream, root drivers of health (pophealthllc.com/tedx). She is Founder and Principal Consultant of PoP Health, a public health consulting practice that partners with community coalitions and collaboratives to transform health in their communities through policy and systems change (pophealthllc.com). PoP Health helps coalitions engage in community collaboration, action planning, participatory evaluation, and effective storytelling. In this capacity, the PoP Health team has been leading evaluation and learning associated with implementation of the BIRTH Plan in Allegheny County. PoP Health also issues a biweekly newsletter, Community Threads, with tools and strategies for anyone seeking to improve community health (pophealthllc.com/newsletter). Vinu received her DrPH in Health Behavior from the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health as a Milken Scholar, a Master's degree with a concentration in Health Communication from the Harvard School of Public Health, and Bachelor's degrees in Biomedical Engineering and Economics from the University of Virginia. She currently serves as a Professorial Lecturer at George Washington University. Vinu began her public health career coordinating the Virginia Department of Health's bullying and youth violence prevention program and later, evaluating the national truth antismoking campaign and managing policy and communications projects at Trust for America's Health.



Tierra Martin, Adolescent Program Facilitator, Healthy Start – She/Her

Tierra is a proud graduate of Woodland Hills High School. She studied Early Childhood Education at the Community College of Allegheny County. Her desire to work with children, especially adolescents, stemmed from the positive role models she had growing up. She is now able to work with evidence-based programs and see the powerful effect they have on teen behavior, while giving back to her very own alma mater and other schools.



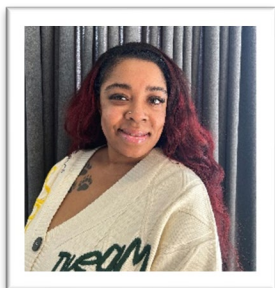
Liz Monk

Liz Monk directs Community Engagement and Special Projects at the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center (WPRDC) at the University of Pittsburgh Center for Social and Urban Research and is the project manager for Civic Switchboard – a federally funded project working to connect libraries and civic data. Before joining the WPRDC, Liz worked in a wide variety of positions in education, public engagement and sustainable agriculture. Her current interests include exploring alternative ways to communicate and convene around data especially through art and conversation.



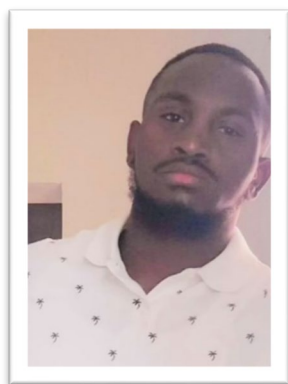
Mone't R. Olivis, BS, MS, Community Coordinator - She/Her/Hers

Mone't Olivis is the Community Coordinator at the Allegheny County Health Department. In her role, she leads the maternal child health initiatives in the Office and Child Health such as Equity Institute, Alignment for Action Collaborative and partners with Healthy Start Pittsburgh co-leading the BEST initiative. She has been with the Health Department since 2021. Mone't has more than 15 years of experience in serving the community starting as an Get out the Vote (GOTV) canvasser. She is an activist for equal rights for Black and Brown folk. She previously served on the Perinatal Health Equity Champion Advisory Committee and participates in her local Parent Advisory Council meetings, MCH Advisory Board (CAB). She is a Slippery Rock University alumna. She received a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology and a Master of Science in Health Informatics.



Jessica Yvonne Parham, BSN-RNC

Jessica Yvonne Parham is the Community Health Nurse for Healthy Start. In her role, she provides unparalleled education, completes nursing assessments, develops treatment plans, and initiates nursing interventions to decrease maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. She works directly on the front lines with mothers and infants. She is in the home, office, or hospital room directly working improve the health outcomes of mothers and infants. Jessica Yvonne Parham is a recently retired Air Force veteran, who has delivered babies all over the world. Her favorite place was England, where she got to understand truly how their midwives care for their mothers. She has experience in maternal child health, patient safety, and navigating difficult health care systems. During her time in the military she has led many initiatives, completed research, and developed individualized strategies to eradicate patient safety errors. She is also a certified labor and delivery nurse, doula, and considered as an expert in her career field. As an innate leader she understands how empowerment, education, and connection can assist in tackling the issues that are faced in the health care systems by minorities. Jessica, a Pittsburgh "Northside" native is now back home serving her city. She is using all of skills, education, and knowledge to bridge the gap between the health care system and improving the health of Black and brown families.



Dashawn Parrish, Team Supervisor, Healthy Start

Dashawn Parrish, a devoted father of two wonderful children, Dashawn Jr. (4 years old) and Jordyn (9 years old), is making a significant impact as a program supervisor for the Healthy Start Hello Baby program. With a bachelor's degree in industrial-Organizational Psychology, Dashawn brings over a decade of experience in the mental health field, alongside pursuing his master's in clinical counseling at the University of Phoenix.

Driven by a mission to encourage men to prioritize mental health through therapy and to advocate for fathers, Dashawn is dedicated to breaking down stigmas and fostering support networks. His journey also includes completing Army infantry training at Ft. Benning, reflecting his commitment to physical and mental discipline.

Dashawn values physical, mental, and financial health, and embodies discipline in all aspects of his life. With a heart for service and a passion for wellness, Dashawn Parrish is making a difference both professionally and personally.



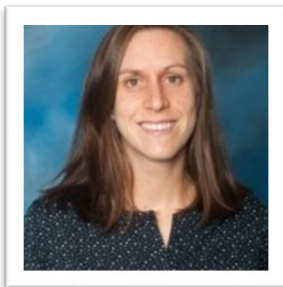
Raheem Perry, Postsecondary Support Manager, Homewood Children's Village

Raheem Perry is the full-time Postsecondary Support Manager at the Homewood Children's Village. He received his MFA in Film and Photography from Duquesne University. He is also an illustrator, graphic artist, videographer, and photographer. His journey as a graphic artist and father led him to Create Fathers-Mind. Perry has been in the educational space for almost a decade and has always had a passion to inspire youth. He has taken that same passion to illustrate the joy and value of parenting from a father's perspective.



Ta'lor L. Pinkston, LSW, Clinical Practice Team Lead at Healthy Start & The Heart Advocate - She/Her

Ta'lor L. Pinkston is a Licensed Self-love Social Worker who received a master's in social work in 2015 at California University of Pennsylvania and was certified in the Foundations of Self-love through the Path of Self-love in 2017. She has worked at Healthy Start Inc. Pittsburgh for five years providing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to prenatal and postpartum moms with Major Depression Disorder in their program called "Moving Beyond Depression" and is currently the Clinical Practice Team Lead.



Julia Reuben, Administrator, Allegheny County Department of Human Services - She/Her

Julia Reuben is an Administrator in Allegheny County Department of Human Services' Office of Analytics, Technology, and Planning. She oversees quality assurance and data analytics in child welfare. Julia earned a Master of Science from the University of Pittsburgh and a Bachelor of Science from Columbia University.



Sarah E. Scott, MPH, CPH, Graduate Student Researcher at the University of Pittsburgh - She/Her

Sarah E. Scott is a Graduate Student Researcher for the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh. She is currently obtaining her PhD in Epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health. Ms. Scott utilizes mixed methods to explore the intersection of gender-based violence, social determinants of health, and women's health. Her research interests include community-based participatory methods, intimate partner violence, economic abuse, mental health, and reproductive and sexual health. She received a BA in Psychology from Pepperdine University and an MPH in Behavioral & Community Health Sciences from the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health.



Art Terry, Fatherhood Coordinator, Healthy Start

As the Fatherhood Coordinator at Healthy Start, Art comes with an established track record of male-focused community-oriented program management experience. With prior stints ranging from Training Coordinator to Project Manager and HBCU Tour Leader onto his current position at Healthy Start, his approach features the utilization of evidence-based and research-assessed curricula and the principled application of those techniques developed over time.

His current community-based board activities include the Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR), The Black Fathers Mental Health Community Advisory Board, The Pittsburgh Study Pregnancy Collaborative and Adolescent Intervention Committees, Black Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Advisory Board, with his most recent accomplishment being the appointment to the National Healthy Start Association (NHSA) Fatherhood Practitioner's Planning Team.

A vigorous, passionate advocate with an active emphasis on perinatal health and nutrition, co-parenting resources, mental health and wellness, and family-focused engagement, Art is proud to carry on the principles and values of Healthy Start, Inc.



Alicia Vervain, MS, DFB, Community Engagement Coordinator, DEI Committee Co-Chair - She/Her

Alicia Vervain joined The Midwife Center team as the Community Engagement Coordinator in September 2022. She previously held a position with Allegheny Reproductive Health Center as an abortion counselor and full-spectrum doula, the latter of which she had been doing for five years and looks forward to doing again.

Alicia graduated from Allegheny College with a double major both in Communication Arts and in Community & Justice Studies with a focus on intersectional identity. After a couple years working for a domestic violence shelter, she moved to Pittsburgh in 2018 with her husband and their two cats. The umbrella of reproductive and sexual health, rights, and education has been a foundational passion for Alicia since she witnessed the birth of a sibling at ten years old. She strives to provide a trauma-informed and radically authentic approach to all interactions within the community, with a critical self-examination and respectful mindfulness of all races, cultural heritages, genders, sexualities, ages, and disabilities. Joining TMC in this capacity while surrounded by equally passionate and compassionate people is a dream come true.

Off the clock, Alicia enjoys taking in stories through any possible medium - be that books, audiobooks, podcasts, TV, movies, tabletop, or video games - as well as writing her own. She is a spoken word poet and performer, belly dancer, and first-time mom to wonderful and hilarious twins.