

Meet the 2024 *Equity Changemakers Institute* Participants

Get to know the participants in the Center for Health Care Strategies' [Equity Changemakers Institute](#).

The program is designed to bolster the capacity of public sector leaders who oversee agency efforts to advance health equity by helping them strengthen the skills to drive transformational change and positively impact the health of those who live in their states. To learn more, visit chcs.org/project/equity-changemakers-institute.



Sarepta Archila *(she/her)*

[Sarepta Archila, LPC, MS](#), is the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Project Director at the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. In this role, she is responsible for leading the state's efforts to increase access to high-quality, sustainable, and accountable integrated health care via the CCBHC model.

Sarepta is an experienced mental health professional with a passion for workforce support and development.



"I am inspired to work with others to improve systems by the resilience I see in the community and by the resourcefulness of helping professionals who stand ready."



Rebecca (Becky) Carrell *(she/her)*

[Becky Carrell](#) is the Deputy Division Director for the Medicaid Programs Division at the Washington State Health Care Authority. In this role, she focuses on leading teams implementing new programs and policies. She is also responsible for ensuring the initiatives and work of the division align with the agency's commitment to providing

equitable access to integrated, whole-person care that is person- and community-centered. As a leader in the agency, Becky is committed to continually looking for ways to incorporate the voices of the communities impacted by the Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) program.



"I am motivated by the innovative teams I am privileged to work with and the knowledge that the results of our efforts have a positive impact on the people of Washington State."



Airregina Clay *(she/her)*

[Airregina Clay, MPAL](#), is a program manager at the CDC Foundation, supporting the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), leading inter-agency training and adopting equity-centered demographic data practices. A first-generation college graduate, she demonstrates commitment to transformative leadership, and champions equity in

governmental decision-making. Previously a health policy analyst, Airregina also has experience in non-profit management and positive youth development. She leverages artistic mediums to inspire and educate.



"I am inspired by the potential of equity-centered data practices, programs, and policies to foster healthier and empowered communities – this fuels my passion every day."



Danita Coulter *(she/her)*

[Danita Coulter, MSW](#), is the Branch Manager, Equity and Determinants of Health in the Division of Quality and Population Health at the Kentucky Department for Medicaid Services. In this role, she oversees the development and implementation of the equity vision and strategic plan, specifically focusing on social determinants of health and barriers impacting Medicaid enrollees. Danita has spent 17 years in the social services sector.



“My intrinsic desire to share knowledge and involve others about how we can collaboratively impact and improve the lives of many serves as my inspiration for equity work.”



Kheya Ganguly *(she/her)*

[Kheya Ganguly, MA](#), is the Director of Trauma Prevention and Resilience Development in the Department of Mental Health at the Vermont Agency of Human Services. In this role, she builds departmental capacity for responding to trauma, provides training, and serves as a subject matter expert and advisor. Kheya has over 20 years as a grant writer and qualitative researcher. Kheya is a passionate advocate for resiliency, trauma responsive, and healing-centered care as well as diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.



“The people who are doing [equity] work inspire me with their passion and commitment to create a world where justice, equity, and inclusion is the rule rather than the exception.”



Aaron Green *(he/him)*

[Aaron Green, MSM, MSW](#), is the Health Disparities and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer at the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (HCPF) – Colorado’s state agency for administration of the Medicaid program, serving 1.6 million members. In this role, he crafts the strategic priorities and milestones to improve health equity and reduce disparities in care across the populations served by HCPF. Aaron is a proud social worker currently serving as adjunct professor at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work.



“Helping to shape and transform the lives of others is a responsibility I do not take for granted, and firmly believe that this is not hard work, but heart work.”



Libby Hobbs *(she/her)*

[Libby Hobbs, MPH](#), is a Program Manager at the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, which houses the state’s Medicaid program. In this role, she provides contract management and oversight for managed care and service contracts to improve access and quality of services, as well as increase engagement with members and providers to build successful relationships. Prior to this role, Libby worked in cancer prevention in Idaho and tobacco and youth substance use prevention in Southwest Colorado.



“I’m inspired and motivated by the people who work to make connections and identify the needs of our communities, rethink programs, and advocate to implement meaningful initiatives.”



Latisha Kennebrew *(she/her)*

[Latisha Kennebrew, LBSW, MSW](#), is the Director of Health Equity and Minority Health at the Alabama Department of Public Health. In this role, she focuses on operations under a health equity lens, strategic planning, process improvement to address equity and inclusion, and outreach and engagement related to improving the health status of the populations served. Prior to this role, Latisha worked in various roles related to social work, including as a Senior Public Health Social Worker and Program Coordinator for the Office of Telehealth.



“I’m inspired to do this work every day from seeing how the impact of it is intentionally and necessarily changing communities for the better — it makes a difference. Our future is everything to me.”



Sarah Lahidji *(she/her)*

[Sarah Lahidji, MHA](#), is the Division Chief of Quality and Health Equity within California’s Department of Health Care Services, which administers the state’s Medicaid program, Medi-Cal. In this role, Sarah leads clinical quality and health equity initiatives, program evaluation, quality assurance, and performance improvement activities across programs and delivery systems serving members that receive care through Medi-Cal. Sarah has focused her career on the intersection of quality and health equity through previous roles at the University of California, San Francisco, and Kaiser Permanente.



“I am inspired by the opportunity to create systems of care and workplaces that are nurturing, accepting, and just, which enable all people to reach their fullest potential.”



Hirah Mir *(she/her)*

[Hirah Mir, PhD](#), is the Chief Diversity Officer at the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. In this role, she provides leadership and oversight of the agency’s operations, programs, and policy efforts toward diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and cultural and linguistic competence. Hirah is an experienced data scientist who began her professional journey as a grassroots organizer for access to higher education for all. Her passion for equity comes from her experience being unhoused and receiving Section 8 housing, food stamps, and other important services for families living in poverty.



“What inspires me in my work every day is knowing that people like me (immigrants, children of immigrants, Muslim Americans, low-income families) belong in government. What inspires me is knowing that any effort toward a more inclusive and just society is a worthwhile effort.”



Laura Mortimer *(she/her)*

[Laura Mortimer, MPP](#), is the Reinsurance and Health Insurance Affordability Enterprise Director at the Colorado Division of Insurance, where she leads the nation’s first state-based commercial health insurance subsidy program for undocumented immigrants. She also manages Colorado’s federal 1332 State Innovation Waiver, which provides funding to make health coverage more affordable and accessible to all Coloradans. Laura formerly led federal health care payment policy reform initiatives at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Innovation Center.



“Everyone deserves access to high-quality, affordable health care, and I am proud of the innovative, inclusive work Colorado is doing to make this possible.”



Michelle Niehaus *(she/her)*

[Michelle Niehaus, LCSW](#), serves as the Program Administrator for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services at the Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental, and Intellectual Disabilities. A former community mental health center clinician, she now focuses on state and national level work to remove barriers and increase access to quality services with and for individuals from marginalized or underserved communities. Through collaboration, she strives for robust systems transformation grounded in community partnerships.



“I am inspired by the opportunity and privilege to partner with colleagues and community members to co-create a more equitable Kentucky with communication access for all.”



Alfonso Ramirez *(he/him)*

[Alfonso Ramirez, MA](#), is the Director of Behavioral Health Equity and Community Partnership at the Oregon Health Authority. He leads a team of health equity specialists and the behavioral health division in elevating the voices of communities most impacted by health inequity in all areas and systems within behavioral health. He is a former clinician, educator, and trauma-informed specialist who strives to build collective spaces that are humanizing, healing, and transformative.



“What inspires me is the daily interactions with the people at work and in the community who are dedicated to centering and serving those most impacted by health inequity.”



Joseph (Joe) Sullivan *(he/him)*

[Joe Sullivan](#) serves as a Health Equity Policy Advisor for the Equity and Inclusion Division in the Oregon Health Authority. In this role, his primary areas of focus are community engagement and workforce development aimed at centering and elevating the voices of those most impacted by inequities. With over 12 years of public service experience, including roles in behavioral health, compliance, and quality assurance, Joe’s work contributes to the goal of eliminating health disparities in Oregon.



“I am inspired by a desire to uplift those from communities experiencing historical and contemporary injustices in the face of great opposition and resistance.”



Jennifer (Jen) Trail *(she/her)*

[Jen Trail, MSW, LAPSW](#), is the Deputy Director for the Office of Strategic Initiatives at the Tennessee Department of Health, where she champions cross-sector partnerships and community health improvement planning to build health equity and community resilience. Prior to this role, Jen coordinated collective impact work focused on preventing adverse childhood experiences in Nashville. Her work experiences include public health administration, non-profit management, child abuse prevention, and community organizing.



“I’m inspired by the passion of local leaders who work tirelessly to build trust and truly collaborate with their community to make sustainable and systemic change.”

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE STRATEGIES

The Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is a policy design and implementation partner devoted to improving outcomes for people enrolled in Medicaid. CHCS supports partners across sectors and disciplines to make more effective, efficient, and equitable care possible for millions of people across the nation. Its national initiatives, including the [Medicaid Leadership Institute](#) and the [Medicaid Pathways Program](#), build the skills and maximize the potential of public sector leaders to positively impact the health of individuals enrolled in Medicaid. For more information, visit www.chcs.org.