

# 2025 NBDPN CONFERENCE



**NBDPN**  
NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS  
PREVENTION NETWORK

## PROGRAM BOOK

Funding for this conference was made possible (in part) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The views expressed in written conference materials or publications and by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	3
NBDPN Board of Directors	4
Inspirational Speakers	5
Thank You and Conference Information	6
Schedule	7-14
Poster Presenter List	15-16
Speakers	17-41
Abstracts and Evaluation	42



NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS  
PREVENTION NETWORK

# Welcome!

## 2025 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Welcome to Denver and the 2025 National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) National Conference! We have chosen a fantastic venue surrounded by the culture and scenery of Denver, Colorado.

The NBDPN's 2025 National Conference, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is collocating with the Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention (BDRP). The Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS) and the Developmental Neurotoxicology Society (DNTS) will hold annual meetings concurrently with NBDPN and BDRP, allowing for joint sessions and networking opportunities. BDRP and OTIS will also host joint sessions with NBDPN during the conference. We are thrilled to be surrounded by a convergence of innovative minds, breakthrough ideas, and collaborative ventures.

This year, the NBDPN received numerous submissions for the Breakout/Roundtable Sessions and Abstract (Oral and Poster) Presentations. The review process included thorough discussions to ensure conference attendees have the opportunity to explore possibilities with top-notch speakers, be immersed in the latest advancements shaping the field, and connect with like-minded professionals in a unique space. NBDPN wishes to congratulate the authors of all sessions.

We are delighted to have Dr. Florence Roget, President of the European Surveillance of Congenital Anomalies (EUROCAT) Association, join us for the opening session. NBDPN is looking forward to collaborating more often with EUROCAT in the future on birth defects surveillance methodology and research projects.

Also, this year, NBDPN Committees will have in-person meetings and planned activities (e.g., meet the Board, mentoring session, and social networking). These sessions cover a range of exciting topics and offer networking opportunities. Many thanks to all the session speakers for presenting their unique research and ideas at the 2025 NBDPN National Conference.

Finally, the NBDPN Board of Directors Chair, the Conference Committee Chair and Co-Chair thank the planning committee members for volunteering their time and expertise in organizing the conference. We would also like to thank the NBDPN Functional Committee Chairs and members for their efforts in planning conference meetings and activities.

Thank you for being part of this vibrant community! We eagerly await your participation in making this conference a resounding success and hope you enjoy it and your time in Denver, Colorado!

Brennan Martin, 2025 NBDPN Chair

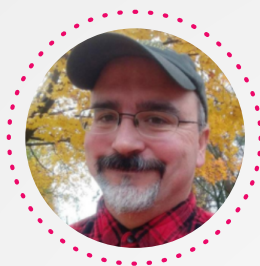
Wendy Nembhard, 2025 NBDPN National Conference Committee Chair

Nina Forestieri, 2025 NBDPN Past Chair and National Conference Committee Co-Chair



NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS  
PREVENTION NETWORK

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**BRENNAN MARTIN, MPH**  
CHAIR



**SAMARA VINER-BROWN, MS**  
VICE CHAIR



**JEAN PAUL TANNER, PhD**  
SECRETARY/TREASURER



**NINA FORESTIERI, MPH**  
PAST CHAIR

## BOARD MEMBERS



**PETER LANGLOIS, PHD**



**JASON SALEMI, PHD**



**MARK CANFIELD, PHD**



**ALLISON FORKNER, MPH**

## OUR MISSION & VISION

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) is a group of individuals involved in birth defects surveillance, research, and prevention. It was created to establish and maintain a national network of state and population-based programs for birth defects surveillance and research. The Network assesses the impact of birth defects upon children, families, and health care; identifies factors that can be used to develop primary prevention strategies; and assists families and their providers in secondary disabilities prevention.

To fulfill its mission and vision, the NBDPN pursues the following goals:

**Improve access** to, and application of information about the prevalence and trends of birth defects.

**Increase collaboration** among members within the birth defects community.

**Advance science** through birth defects surveillance and its application to public health efforts and resources allocation.



# INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKERS



## **Kiera Zink** - Mom to Jordy and Nico

Advocate and Founder/Executive Director of Empowering Vision Foundation

Kiera, her husband Lee and their two kids Jordy (10) and Nico (9) live in Littleton, CO. Their daughter Jordy has a rare genetic condition called Wolf Hirschhorn Syndrome (also called 4p-) as it's a deletion of the 4th Chromosome. They love spending time outside, including all the water activities offered at the small lake in their neighborhood. They also have a 2-year-old Bernadoodle named Zeke. Both Kiera and Lee are passionate about the disability community. They have a fund administered by The Denver Foundation to help award scholarships to individuals getting their masters degrees in the areas of Special Education and Teachers of the Visually Impaired. They also recently started a non-profit called Empowering Vision Foundation to help families with resources and connect children with visual impairments and additional disabilities to critical vision services in their homes and communities-something that is not currently covered by insurance or any other agency past three years of age.



## **Jill Hampton** - Mom to Carter

Jill Hampton is from Castle Rock, Co and lives with her husband of almost 20 years and her 15-year-old son, Carter. She also has a 22-year-old stepdaughter, Rylee. They also have a beautiful black lab, Onyx, who just recently retired as Carter's service dog. When Jill was about 16 weeks pregnant, they found out that Carter's spine and lower limbs were not developing normally. He was born with Caudal Regression Syndrome, and he is missing from partial L3 and below.

As a family they love to spend time outdoors, watch movies and play board games. Carter is an avid sit skier and if he could have snow all year round, he would be a very happy teenager!

Jill works for Family Voices Colorado as their Intake Coordinator and Administrative specialist. Family Voices is a wonderful non-profit organization that comes alongside caregivers to assist in navigating the complex systems, along with advocating for the disability community. She is new to this role since April 2025 but loves supporting families in similar situations as her own.

## CONFERENCE INFORMATION



### THANK YOU!

The 2025 NBDPN National Conference was organized and executed by a dedicated team of NBDPN members. Led by Dr. Wendy Nembhard, this group of individuals spent significant time working through changes, challenges, and the unknown to ensure a welcoming event greets you in Denver. The NBDPN Board of Directors would like to thank Dr. Nembhard for her dedication and work on ensuring that the 2025 National Conference is a memorable event for the NBDPN Membership. The leadership Dr. Nembhard exhibited during monthly meetings, in making decisions, and incorporating the unexpected is a demonstration of her commitment to NBDPN. The Board would also like to thank the following committee members for their willingness to participate in organizing the National Conference, committing their time and energy over the last year as we sorted through expectations, unknowns, and especially the final few months as everything came together:

**Russell Kirby**, PhD, *University of South Florida College of Public Health*, **Nina Forestieri**, MPH, *North Carolina Department of Health*, **Allison Forkner**, MPH, *Indiana Department of Health*, **Brennan Martin**, MPH, *Vermont Department of Health*, **Jodi Snow**, BS, *Illinois Department of Public Health*, **Mahsa Yazdy**, PhD, *Boston University School of Public Health*, and **Erin Cooper**, MPH, *Michigan Department of Health and Human Services*

- 2025 NBDPN Board of Directors



### SHARE YOUR PHOTOS!

We want to see all the fun you're having! Scan the QR code to share your conference photos to the 2025 NBDPN Conference OneDrive folder.

Scan Me!



### WIFI

Network Name: Hilton\_Meeting  
Password: BDRP2025



# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## SATURDAY, JUNE 28TH

8:00am - 12:00pm	Registration Opens
12:00pm - 2:00pm	Lunch on your own
	<b>Training Workshop</b> <i>2:00pm - 3:15pm</i> <i>Topic: Power BI and Tableau for Healthcare – Dashboards for BD Registries</i> <b>Presenters: Ms. Aubree Boyce (UT) and Ms. Erin Hodson (TN)</b>
2:00pm - 5:00pm	<i>3:15pm - 3:30pm BREAK</i>  <i>3:30pm - 5:00pm</i> <i>Topic: Aligning Program Activities with Title V Funding</i> <b>Presenters: Ms. Sam Viner-Brown (RI), Ms. Stephanie Pocius (UT), and Ms. Allison Forkner (IN)</b> <b>Facilitator: Ms. Sam Viner-Brown (RI)</b>
5:00pm - 5:50pm	National Conference Planning Committee Meeting

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## SUNDAY, JUNE 29TH

8:00am - 8:50am

**Surveillance Data (SD) Committee Meeting**

9:00am - 10:30am

**Welcome Session and Inspirational Speakers**

- o Welcome by Mr. Brennan Martin, 2025 NBDPN Board of Directors Chair
- o A quick word from Eurocat President Dr. Florence Rouget
- o Inspirational Speakers: Ms. Jill Hampton and Ms. Kiera Zink

10:45am - 11:45am

**Sessions - Oral, Breakout and Roundtable**

**Oral Presentation Session**

**Preconception Supplementation:**

*Clusters of Sociodemographic and Socioeconomic Factors and Preconception Folic Acid Supplementation in the National Birth Defects Prevention Study, U.S. 2004-2011*

**Speaker: Dr. Julie M. Petersen (University of Nebraska Medical Center)**

*Promoting Interconception Folic Acid Use at Well-Child Visits – the Power of a Brief Intervention*

**Speaker: Ms. Paige Fairchild (MN)**

*Preconception Multivitamin Supplementation and the Risk of Multiple Gestations*

**Speaker: Dr. Anne Marie Darling (MA)**

**Session Moderator: Dr. Mahsa Yazdy (MA)**

**Breakout Session**

*Recent Changes to Race/Ethnicity Data Collection and Reporting and Implications for Birth Defect Surveillance in the United States*

**Speakers: Dr. Ilana Ventura (National Opinion Research Center/University of Chicago), Mr. Adrian Michalski (NY), Dr. Sook Ja Cho (MN), and Ms. Nina Forestieri (NC)**

**Session Moderator: Ms. Dayana Betancourt (TX)**

**Roundtable Session**

*Mysteries of the Medical Chart*

**Speakers: Mr. Stephan Villavicencio (University of South Florida), Ms. Jessie Ferroni (AZ), Ms. Liz MacIntyre (MI), and Ms. Jodi Snow (IL)**

**Session Moderator: Ms. Jodi Snow (IL)**

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## SUNDAY, JUNE 29TH CONT.

11:45am - 1:15pm

Lunch on your own

1:30pm - 2:30pm

Sessions - Oral, Breakout and Roundtable

### Oral Presentation Session

#### **Program Enhancement:**

*University and State Health Department Partnerships to Enhance Birth Defects Surveillance in Colorado*

**Speaker: Dr. Tessa Crume (CO) and Ms. Ashley Juhl (CO)**

*Impact of Expanding Surveillance beyond One Year of Age for 26 Major Birth Defects*

**Speaker: Ms. Erin Hodson (TN)**

**Session Moderator: Dr. Russell Kirby (University of South Florida)**

### Breakout Session

*Current Topics in Stillbirth Research*

**Speakers: Dr. Sarah Fisher (NY), Dr. Martha Werler (Boston University), and Dr. Kari Weber (University of Arkansas)**

**Session Moderator: Dr. Anne Marie Darling (MA)**

### Roundtable Session

*Primary Prevention of Birth Defects and Adverse Infant Outcomes: Insights on Folic Acid, Growing Impact of Metabolic Conditions and Infections*

**Speakers: Ms. Dayana Betancourt (TX), Ms. Valorie Eckert (CA), and Ms. Barbara Frohnert (MN)**

**Session Moderator: Ms. Dianna Contreras (AZ)**

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## SUNDAY, JUNE 29TH CONT.

2:30pm - 3:30pm

**BREAK**

3:30pm - 4:30pm

**Sessions - Breakout and Oral**

### Breakout Session

*Surveillance for Multiple Congenital Anomalies: Dos & Don'ts*

**Speakers:** Dr. Washa Liu (MA), Ms. Jessie Ferroni (AZ), and Ms. Jodi Snow (IL)

**Session Moderator:** Ms. Jodi Snow

### Oral Presentation Session

*Birth Defects Epidemiology/Etiology: Epidemiology of Colpocephaly in the Texas Birth Defects Registry, 1999-2020*

**Speaker:** Ms. Caitlyn Yantz (TX)

*Trends in the Prevalence of Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21) in Texas by Maternal Race/Ethnicity and Maternal Age Groups, 1999-2020*

**Speaker:** Dr. Charles Shumate (TX)

**Session Moderator:** Dr. Peter Langlois (TX - NBDPN Board of Directors)

4:30pm - 5:15pm

**BREAK**

5:15pm - 6:00pm

**Mentoring Session**

6:00pm - 7:00pm

**Meet the Board/New Members/New Attendee Welcome**

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## MONDAY, JUNE 30TH

8:00am - 8:50am	<b>Surveillance Guidelines and Standards Committee (SGSC) Meeting</b>
9:00am - 12:00pm	<p><b>Joint Session with BDRP</b>  <i>Down Syndrome: Assessing Outcomes across the Lifespan</i>  <b>Speaker(s):</b> Dr. Sonja A. Rasmussen (Johns Hopkins School of Medicine), Dr. Philip J. Lupo (Emory University), Dr. Joaquin Espinosa (University of Colorado), and Dr. Deborah Fidler (Colorado State University)  <b>Session Moderators:</b> Dr. Sonja A. Rasmussen (Johns Hopkins School of Medicine) and Dr. Philip J. Lupo (Emory University)</p>
12:00pm - 1:30pm	<b>Lunch on your own</b>
1:30pm - 4:00pm	<p><b>Sessions - Oral, Breakout, Joint, and Roundtable</b></p> <p><b>1:30 PM-2:30 PM</b>  <b><u>Breakout Session</u></b>  <i>State Perspectives on Folic Acid Fortification of Corn Masa Flour</i>  <b>Speakers:</b> Ms. Dayana Betancourt (TX) and Ms. Valorie Eckert (CA)  <b>Session Moderator:</b> Ms. Dianna Contreras (AZ)</p> <p><b><u>Breakout Session</u></b>  <i>Noninvasive Prenatal Screening and Its Impact on Birth Defects Surveillance</i>  <b>Speakers:</b> Dr. Sonja A. Rasmussen (Johns Hopkins School of Medicine), Ms. Nevena Krstic (University of South Florida), and Ms. Rebecca Liberman (MA)  <b>Session Moderator:</b> Dr. Eirini Nestoridi (MA)</p> <p><b><u>Breakout Session</u></b>  <i>The Impact of Case Ascertainment Through Agreements with Border State Facilities: Insights from New Jersey's Birth Defects Registry</i>  <b>Speakers:</b> Ms. Elena Napravnik (NJ), Ms. Jing Shi (NJ), and Ms. Lisa Stout (NJ)  <b>Session Moderator:</b> Ms. Nina Forestieri (NC - NBDPN Board of Directors)</p>

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## MONDAY, JUNE 30TH CONT.

**2:30 PM–4:00 PM**

**Joint Session w. OTIS**

*Mitigating Exposures to Teratogenic Medications Science & Practice*

**Speakers:** Dr. Judy Maro (Harvard Medical School), Dr. Almut Winterstein (University of Florida), Dr. Yanning Wang (University of Florida), and Dr. Nicole Smolinski (University of Florida)

**Session Moderator:** Dr. Sonja A. Rasmussen (Johns Hopkins School of Medicine)

**2:45 PM–3:45 PM**

**Breakout Session**

*Audience Engagement and Outreach Strategies in Health Promotion*

**Speakers:** Ms. Karmen Dippmann (MN), Ms. Courtney Miller (MI), and Ms. Susie Leo (AZ)

**Session Moderator:** Dr. Mahsa Yazdy (MA)

**Roundtable Session**

*Referral to Services for Children with Birth Defects – State Models and Strategies*

**Speakers:** Ms. Jodi Snow (IL), Ms. Dayana Bentancourt (TX) and Ms. Sabra Anckner

**Session Moderator:** Ms. Jodi Snow (IL)

**Oral Presentation Session**

**Program Evaluation:**

*Program Enhancement and Monitoring; Exploring Data Quality and Utilization to Improve Program Outcomes*

**Speakers:** Ms. Aubree Boyce (UT) and Ms. Nina Forestieri (NC)

*Measuring Timeliness of Birth Defects Surveillance in North Carolina*

**Speaker:** Ms. Kristin Bergman (NC)

**Session Moderator:** Dr. Washa Liu (MA)

**4:00pm - 5:15pm**

**NBDPN Member Meeting, Awards, and Social Networking**

**5:30pm - 7:00pm**

**Poster Session and Poster Awards- Joint with BDRP**

Please refer to the 2025 NBDPN National Conference Poster Presentations List

**Poster Judges:** Dr. Russell Kirby (University of South Florida), Dr. Mahsa Yazdy (MA), and Ms. Dianna Contreras (AZ)

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## TUESDAY, JULY 1ST

7:00am - 7:50am

Health Promotions (HP) Committee Meeting

8:00am - 8:50am

Program and Professional Development (PPD) Committee Meeting

9:00am - 9:30am

Closing and Awards

9:45am - 12:00pm

Sessions - Oral, Breakout and Roundtable

**9:45 AM – 10:45 AM**

**Oral Presentation Session**

*Differences in Non-Syndromic Orofacial Clefts by Infant Sex in the National Birth Defects Prevention Study*

**Speaker: Ms. Katherine Ludorf (TX)**

*Timing of Mortality and Trends in Survival of Infants Diagnosed with HLHS in United States, 2007-2021*

**Speaker: Dr. Ramesh Vidavalur (Cornell University)**

**Session Moderator: Dr. Russell Kirby (University of South Florida)**

**Breakout Session**

*Evaluating Electronic Case Reporting (eCR) for Birth Defects Surveillance*

**Speakers: Dr. Rachel Allred, Ms. Caitlyn Yantz, Ms. Dayana Betancourt, and Ms. Rebecca Howell (TX)**

**Session Moderator: Dr. Peter Langlois (TX - NBDPN Board of Directors)**

**Roundtable Session**

*Expanding the Net: Evaluating New Data Sources to Improve Birth Defects Case Ascertainment in Stillbirths and Live Births*

**Speakers: Dr. Jason Salemi (University of South Florida), Ms. Rebecca Thom (MN), and Ms. Ashley Dixon (University of South Florida)**

**Session Moderator: Ms. Jodi Snow (IL)**

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## TUESDAY, JULY 1ST CONT.

**11 AM – 12 PM**

### **Sessions - Breakout and Oral**

#### **Oral Presentation Session**

##### **Access to Services/Referral:**

*Early Intervention Program Utilization among Infants with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome in Massachusetts – 2020-2024*

**Speaker: Ms. Alyssa Pochkar (MA)**

*Evaluating the Outcomes of Referrals From the SC Birth Defects Program to Early Intervention Before and After Process Changes*

**Speaker: Ms. Heather Blackwell (SC)**

*Accessibility to Down Syndrome Specialty Clinics for Individuals Born with Down Syndrome, 1999-2020 in Texas*

**Speaker: Dr. Henal Alpesh Gandhi (TX)**

**Session Moderator: Dr. Mahsa Yazdy (MA)**

#### **Oral Presentation Session**

##### **Non-BD Session:**

*Adherence to Pre-Pregnancy Health Guidelines, Socioeconomic Disparities, and Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes Among U.S. Childbearing Women with a Recent Live Birth (2016-2022)*

**Speaker: Dr. Julie M. Petersen (University of Nebraska Medical Center)**

*The Impact of Medical Record Abstraction on Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Case Classification in Tennessee*

**Speaker: Ms. Janelle Wenstrup (TN)**

*Receipt and Timing of Brain Imaging among Infants with Congenital Cytomegalovirus – Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Pregnant Women and Infants Network*

**Speaker: Dr. Paul Romitti (University of Iowa)**

**12:30pm - 2:00pm**

**Lunch on your own**

**2:00pm - 5:00pm**

#### **Joint Session with BDRP**

*Genomic Studies of Birth Defects: Findings from the Centers for Birth Defects Research and Prevention*

**Speakers: Dr. Paul Romitti (University of Iowa), Dr. Nanette Nascone-Yoder (North Carolina State University), and Dr. Horacio Gomez-Acevedo (University of Arkansas)**

**Session Moderator: Dr. Paul Romitti (University of Iowa)**

## 2025 NBDPN NATIONAL CONFERENCE POSTER PRESENTATION LIST

	Poster Presenter(s)	Title of Poster
1.	<b>Mr. Adrian Michalski, and Dr. Sarah Fisher (NY)</b>	<i>Evaluation of Hospital Diagnostic Codes among Non-Liveborn Pregnancy Outcomes in New York State: 2017-2022</i>
2.	<b>Ms. Lexi Richardson (OK)</b>	<i>An Evaluation of the Oklahoma Birth Defects Registry's Spina Bifida Coding Tool</i>
3.	<b>Ms. Stephanie Pocius and Ms. Aubree Boyce (UT)</b>	<i>Effects of Modified Algorithm for Pulse Oximetry Screening on Missed Critical Congenital Heart Defects in Utah Infants: A Retrospective Analysis</i>
4.	<b>Ms. Heather Pint (MN)</b>	<i>Birth Defects and Newborn Screening Longitudinal Follow-Up: A Look Back on a Fruitful Partnership for Critical Congenital Heart Disease</i>
5.	<b>Ms. Flor Rodriguez (OK)</b>	<i>Folic Acid Distribution in Oklahoma</i>
6.	<b>Dr. Lindsay Denson (OK)</b>	<i>Gastroschisis-Related Mortality in Oklahoma</i>
7.	<b>Dr. Sook Ja Cho (MN)</b>	<i>Assessment of Burden of Additional CDC Reportable Fields on Case Abstraction Process in Minnesota</i>
8.	<b>Ms. Julie A. Johnston (LA)</b>	<i>Orofacial Cleft Case Review – A Pilot Study in Louisiana</i>
9.	<b>Ms. Rebecca D. Howell (TX)</b>	<i>Exploring the Utility of Electronic Case Reporting Data in Birth Defects Surveillance: Lessons Learned from Three Pilot Projects</i>

## 2025 NBDPN NATIONAL CONFERENCE POSTER PRESENTATION LIST

	Poster Presenter(s)	Title of Poster
10.	<b>Ms. Jing Shi (NJ)</b>	<i>Surveillance of Fetal Deaths Affected by Birth Defects in New Jersey</i>
11.	<b>Ms. Dayana Betancourt (TX)</b>	<i>Barriers to Accessing Specialized Genetic Services Faced by Families of Children with Birth Defects: Perspectives from Pediatric Geneticists Providers</i>
12.	<b>Ms. Helen Parker Atkinson (NC)</b>	<i>Evaluation of Data Sources for Critical Congenital Heart Defect Case Ascertainment in North Carolina</i>
13.	<b>Mr. Adam Zbib (GA)</b>	<i>Comparing Congenital Heart Disease Prevalence in States with Varying Health Coverage, Access, and Affordability for Women of Reproductive Age</i>

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## ORAL PRESENTATIONS



### ALYSSA POCHKAR, MPH

Alyssa Pochkar, MPH, is the Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Surveillance Epidemiologist in the Division for Family Health Data and Analytics at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Pochkar oversees neonatal abstinence syndrome surveillance activities and leverages surveillance data for many analyses.



### DR. ANNE MARIE DARLING, PHD

Dr. Anne Marie Darling is a Research Epidemiologist with the Division of Family Health Data and Analytics, where she has worked since 2020. She primarily contributes to the Birth Defects Study to Evaluate Pregnancy exposures (BD-STEPS), a multi-site, population-based case control study focused on identifying potential risk factors for birth defects. She has over 15 years of experience conducting epidemiologic research in the field of perinatal health. Much of her work has centered on understanding how various nutritional exposures impact maternal and infant outcomes.

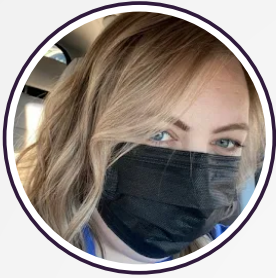


### ASHLEY JUHL, MSPH

Ashley Juhl, MSPH, is the Colorado Responds to Children with Special Needs Program Manager in the Health Statistics and Evaluation Branch at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. In her role, Ashley oversees two work units: 1) the Birth Defects Monitoring and Newborn Hearing Screening Unit and 2) the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Surveillance Unit. Combined, these two units provide broad data infrastructure and analytic support to public health and human services programs focused on pregnant and postpartum people, infants, and children (including children with birth defects and hearing loss). Prior to joining CDPHE over sixteen years ago, Ashley earned a Master of Science in Public Health with an emphasis in epidemiology from the University of Colorado Denver and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Northern Colorado.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### ORAL PRESENTATIONS

**AUBREE BOYCE, MPH**

Aubree Boyce is the epidemiologist for the Utah Birth Defect Network (UBDN) at the Utah Department of Health and Human Services. Since completing her graduate studies in Utah, Aubree has provided support to the UBDN for over five years where she has developed a special interest in bridging the gap between maternal and child health epidemiologic findings and implementation of public health practices.

**CAITLYN YANTZ, MSPO**

Caitlyn Yantz has a master's degree in Prosthetics and Orthotics from Alabama State University and a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies from UT at Dallas. She is the Medical Research Specialist for the Texas Department of State Health Services Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch. Caitlyn conducts various epidemiological analyses, manages vital records data from the Texas Birth Defects Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch registry, assists with data requests and linkages, and manages Texas DSHS Institutional Review Board applications for studies involving program data. Additionally, she serves as a grant team member for the CDC cooperative agreement to improve surveillance.

**DR. CHARLES SHUMATE, PHD**

Charlie Shumate is the Director of the Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch at the Texas Department of State Health Services. He oversees the Texas Birth Defects Registry and leads multiple state and federally funded projects focused on improving the identification of birth defects and prevention of birth defects. His work includes moving towards the integration of public health data systems, studies on social factors and birth defect outcomes, and the descriptive epidemiology of birth defects. He serves as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator on several initiatives and regularly collaborates with academic and public health partners.

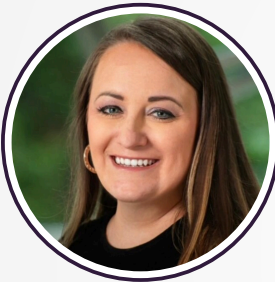
# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## ORAL PRESENTATIONS



### ERIN HODSON, MPH

Erin Hodson has worked as an Epidemiologist in the field of Maternal and Child Health for seven years. She received her MPH from Emory University and completed a fellowship program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities before coming to the Tennessee Department of Health in 2017.



### HEATHER BLACKWELL, MSHS

Heather is the Program Manager for the Birth Defects Program at the South Carolina (SC) Department of Public Health. She previously worked as the Operations Manager for SC's early intervention program, BabyNet. Heather currently serves on a local Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Committee and is a 2024-2025 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) trainee. She is a certified Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) master trainer and has maintained Infant Mental Health Association Endorsement through the SC Association of Infant Mental Health since 2021. She has a master's degree in Human Services and is currently pursuing her PhD in Health Sciences. Heather's interest in and love for the fields of early intervention and birth defects come from her experiences as an older sibling to her sister, who has multiple disabilities.



### DR. HENAL ALPESH GANDHI, MPH

Henal Gandhi completed her pediatric dentistry residency in India and practiced in India and Qatar before relocating to the United States. She earned her MPH in Epidemiology from UTHealth Houston in 2023. She joined the Texas Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch in 2024, and in her role as a Research Specialist she oversees family outreach initiatives, manages activities under the branch's five year CDC surveillance grant, and is leading the analysis on access to Down Syndrome specialty clinics in Texas which she is now expanding into a multistate NBDPN project. Henal has contributed to several projects on family outreach and genetics provider access, authored three first author publications, and coauthored numerous manuscripts and abstracts. In her free time, she enjoys painting, cooking, exploring diverse cuisines, and previously had her own food and travel blog.

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## ORAL PRESENTATIONS



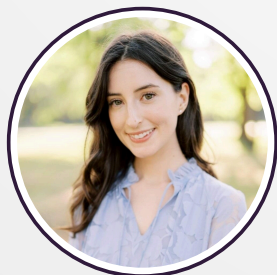
### JANELLE WENSTRUP, MPH

Janelle Wenstrup, MPH is an Epidemiologist at the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH), where she leads efforts within the Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) program. In her current role, Janelle focuses on monitoring and addressing the impact of prenatal substance exposure on newborns across the state. Prior to joining the NAS program, she served in the Zoonotic and Waterborne Disease section at TDH, where she investigated COVID-19 clusters and contributed to the state's pandemic response. Janelle holds a Bachelor's degree from Ball State University and a Master of Public Health (MPH) from the University of Missouri.



### DR. JULIE M. PETERSEN, PHD, MPH

Julie M. Petersen is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health and an Associate Editor for the open-access journal *AJE Advances: Research in Epidemiology*. Dr. Petersen completed her Masters in Public Health with dual concentrations in biostatistics and epidemiology and her PhD in epidemiology at the Boston University School of Public Health, and received postdoctoral training at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Boston University School of Public Health. Her research aims to inform pregnancy and pre-pregnancy clinical guidelines (e.g., diet and vitamin supplementation, birth spacing) to prevent adverse outcomes, including congenital anomalies, fetal growth restriction, and preterm birth, and to identify higher risk subgroups for targeted intervention. In addition, Dr. Petersen conducts research in the development and evaluation of methods that summarize and quantify bias from selection factors, variable mismeasurement, and confounding. In 2022, Dr. Petersen was awarded the Tyroler student prize by the Society for Epidemiologic Research for her paper "The Confounder Matrix: A Tool to Assess Confounding Bias in Systematic Reviews of Observational Studies."



### KATHERINE LUDORF, BA, EMORY UNIVERSITY

Katherine Ludorf is a doctoral candidate in Epidemiology at the University of Texas Health Science Center. Her work focuses on infants with birth defects, with specific interest in infant outcomes and preterm birth. She has worked with data from the National Birth Defect Prevention Study and Texas Birth Defect Registry to analyze risk factors and outcomes affecting perinatal health. Her research aims to improve methodologies for risk prediction, contributing to better clinical outcomes for at-risk infants.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### ORAL PRESENTATIONS

**KRISTIN BERGMAN, MPH**

Kristin Bergman is an Epidemiologist with extensive experience in data analysis, including 7+ years of population-based surveillance at the North Carolina Birth Defects Monitoring Program. Kristin currently serves as the Statistician for a CDC cooperative agreement to identify and address mechanisms contributing to health disparities, improve surveillance data quality, and support data timeliness. Kristin holds a Master of Public Health (MPH) with a concentration in Maternal and Child Health from the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health.

**NINA FORESTIERI, MPH**

Nina Forestieri is the director of the North Carolina Birth Defects Monitoring Program in the NC Division of Public Health. She has over ten years of experience in data analysis and management of research, clinical, and public health surveillance data, with a focus on risk and protective factors associated with infant and child health outcomes. Ms. Forestieri earned her MPH from the Gillings School of Global Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She currently serves on the NBDPN Board of Directors as Past Chair.

**PAIGE FAIRCHILD, MPH**

Paige Fairchild is a Senior Epidemiologist at the Minnesota Department of Health. After receiving her MPH from the University of Minnesota, Paige has managed research and evaluation projects in many public health domains, including diabetes quality of care and family planning. She is currently the Outreach and Prevention Epidemiologist in the Children and Youth with Special Health Needs section, where she designs and implements evaluation projects to determine the effectiveness of the section's outreach and prevention activities.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### ORAL PRESENTATIONS



#### **DR. PAUL ROMITTI, PHD**

Dr. Paul Romitti is a reproductive molecular epidemiologist and University of Iowa Professor of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Toxicology. Dr. Romitti has over 30 years of experience in surveillance and research of congenital and inherited disorders and in conducting molecular epidemiology investigations of these outcomes. He directs the Iowa Registry for Congenital and Inherited Disorders and Iowa Center of Excellence for Birth Defects Research and Prevention. As Registry director, Dr. Romitti leads population-based surveillance of major birth defects and maternal and pregnancy outcomes of emerging threats, along with life course surveillance for major birth defects and other congenital and inherited disorders. As Center director, he leads epidemiological studies, high-throughput genomic studies, and studies of gene-environment interaction effects. Dr. Romitti has served as President of the National Birth Defects Prevention Network and as Executive Committee Chair for the International Clearinghouse for Birth Defects Research and Prevention. Currently, he serves on the World Health Organization (WHO) Technical Working Group on Burden of Birth Defects, WHO Mother and Newborn Information for Tracking Outcomes and Results Advisory Group; WHO Expert Steering Committee on Safety Surveillance in Pregnancy in Low- and Middle-income Countries; and as Vice-Chair of the France Scientific Expert Committee on Congenital Anomalies.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### ORAL PRESENTATIONS



#### **DR. RAMESH VIDAVALUR, MD**

Dr. Ramesh Vidavalur is a neonatologist serving as a staff physician at Cayuga Medical Center in Ithaca, New York. He earned his medical degree in India, completed a pediatric residency and a fellowship in Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. He also holds an executive MBA from West Virginia University, Morgantown, USA.

Currently, Dr. Vidavalur holds an academic appointment as an Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York. His research primarily focuses on the clinical epidemiology of neonatal conditions, health economics, and global neonatal health. He has a particular interest in quantifying and valuing the burden of neonatal diseases, analyzing trends worldwide, with a special emphasis on low- and middle-income countries. Additionally, he is dedicated to investigating, analyzing, and addressing health inequalities within the United States. Dr. Vidavalur is a fellow of American Academy of Pediatrics, an elected member of the Society for Pediatric Research, the European Society for Pediatric Research. He is also a Global Burden of Disease Collaborator with Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. His current work revolves around identifying global disparities in the decline of neonatal mortality rates and spearheading the development of a multidisciplinary international research collaboration. This initiative aims to continuously assess neonatal epidemiology and outcomes using publicly available disaggregated global health data.

Dr. Vidavalur has authored over 30 publications in peer-reviewed academic journals and is a regular presenter at the annual Society for Pediatric Research national meeting and Joint Congress of European Neonatal Society.



#### **DR. TESSA CRUME, PHD, MSPH**

Tessa Crume is an Associate Professor in the Epidemiology Department at the Colorado School of Public Health at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. She is a perinatal epidemiologist with a research focus on functional consequences of in utero and early life exposures during sensitive or critical periods of human development. Her research encompasses a variety of longitudinal studies of complex chronic diseases with multifactorial etiologies such as cardiovascular, metabolic disease and birth defects and congenital heart disease. She specializes in the development of population-level surveillance systems for complex chronic diseases with origins in in utero or early life using linkages of electronic health records from diverse healthcare systems, claims and public health data.

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## BREAKOUTS

**COURTNEY MILLER, BS**

Courtney Miller is a Program Assistant/Educator for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Birth Defects Education, Outreach and Surveillance Program. With over 20 years of experience in public health, Courtney focuses on creating unique outreach approaches to reach women in reproductive years and supporting birth defects across the lifespan.

**DAYANA BETANCOURT, BSA, MPH, MBA**

Dayana Betancourt is a program supervisor for the Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch at the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). In this role, Dayana oversees the branch's family outreach and prevention activities including the referral of children with select birth defects to agency social workers. Dayana plans and conducts studies related to the epidemiology, prevention, and outcomes among children with birth defects in Texas, with a focus on evaluating the impact of referral to services. She also oversees the neural tube defect recurrence prevention initiative and leads projects focused on increasing awareness about folic acid for the prevention of neural tube defects. Dayana has a master's in public health and a master's in business administration. She lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and two dogs.

**ELENA NAPRAVNIK, M.ED**

Elena Napravnik is a research scientist and program manager of Early Identification and Monitoring (EIM), within Special Child Health Services at the New Jersey Department of Health. She directs the activities of New Jersey Autism Registry, Birth Defects Registry, and Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs, ensuring that children are identified timely and have access to services.

She has worked in the field of special child health, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and birth defects for more than 15 years, using her background in education and writing to create presentations, publications and website content that help families and the professionals who work with them.

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## BREAKOUTS



### JESSIE FERRONI

Jessie Ferroni currently works as a Birth Defects Surveillance Specialist with the Arizona Department of Health Services. Prior to this role, Jessie worked at Banner Health for over 22 years. With 20+ years of health information experience, she has extensive understanding of data integrity and medical records abstraction, and has consistently demonstrated a passion for quality, accuracy, completeness and timeliness of case abstraction.

In her current role, Jessie specializes in abstraction and coding of birth defect cases, including quality assurance. Jessie has served as co-chair of the Abstractors Networking Group with NBDPN for the past year, and also actively participates in the Technical Tools Workgroup.

Outside of work, Jessie enjoys being a Lifetime Member and volunteer with Girl Scouts- Arizona Cactus-Pine Council.



### JODI SNOW, BS

Jodi has been with the APORS Program for over 13 years and is currently the Manager of the Bio-Medical Coding Unit additionally, Jodi has worked in the medical field for over 30 years. She has been with NBDPN for several years and currently is the Chair for the Surveillance Guidelines and Standards Committee (SGSC) as well as the Technical Tools Workgroup. Jodi has been on several committees and workgroups over the years with NBDPN including the workgroups of the SGSC, Health Promotions, and the NBDPN Conference Committee.

In her current role, Jodi supervises the abstractor staff for the State and maintains coding standards. She has a special interest in data modernization and finding data sources. Jodi also has degrees in accounting, business administration, and emergency medical services and is currently completing her master's degree in healthcare informatics.

In her spare time, she works as a volunteer firefighter/EMT and captain on her local fire department, she is strongly engaged with activities in her local community and teaches CPR and Women's self-defense as well as spending time with friends and family.

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## BREAKOUTS

**DR. ILANA VENTURA, PHD**

Ilana Ventura, Ph.D., is a Research Methodologist at NORC at the University of Chicago, with over a decade of experience in both qualitative and quantitative survey methods and demographic methods. Dr. Ventura earned her doctorate in Sociology from the University of Chicago. Dr. Ventura's substantive research studies families, wealth, labor, and housing, while her methodological research focuses on how to improve measures of self-reported demographic and economic information across survey modes. She presently works in lead methodological and analytic capacities on the National Survey of Early Childcare and Education (NSECE) funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, and the General Social Survey (GSS) funded by the National Science Foundation. Dr. Ventura's research has appeared in the International Migration Review, Royal Statistical Society Series A, Discover Social Science and Health, the JSM Proceedings Survey Research Methods Section, the Russell Sage Foundation Journal for the Social Sciences, and Sociological Science, as well as in OPRE-published reports.

**DR. KARI A. WEBER, PHD, MHS**

Dr. Weber is a perinatal epidemiologist with an environmental focus. She is an Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and a co-Investigator of the Arkansas Center for Birth Defects Research and Prevention. Prior to coming to UAMS, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University working with the California Center for Birth Defects and the March of Dimes Prematurity Research Center. Her current research is on the health impacts of greenspaces and extreme heat on adverse birth outcomes like birth defects, stillbirth, and preterm birth. She also studies environmental exposures as they relate to maternal hypertensive disorders and child health outcomes.

**KARMEN DIPPMANN, MPH**

Karmen Dippmann is the Outreach and Prevention Planner at the Minnesota Department of Health in the Children and Youth with Special Health Needs section. Her work includes raising awareness and education around modifiable risk factors for birth defects and preventable conditions that cause birth defects. She also works as the grant manager for the state's fetal alcohol spectrum disorders grant. Before this role, she worked in the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases after receiving her Master of Public Health from the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities.

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## BREAKOUTS



### **LISA STOUT, BSN, RN**

Lisa Stout is a seasoned nurse and ardent maternal and child health advocate. With a comprehensive background spanning over 30 years, she has garnered extensive expertise in various areas, including Labor & Delivery, Childbirth Education, HypnoBirthing, Labor Doula support, and coordination of a perinatal bereavement support program. Throughout her career, Lisa has been deeply committed to providing unwavering support to expectant mothers and their families, guiding them through the transformative journeys of childbirth and early parenthood.

She currently serves as the Birth Defects Registry Coordinator and Nursing Consultant for the New Jersey Department of Health's Early Identification and Monitoring program, focusing on implementing robust data collection processes to capture and analyze critical information related to babies with birth defects born alive and fetal deaths. In her role, Lisa diligently works to ensure accurate identification and monitoring of birth defects, advocating for early intervention, and advancing birth defect prevention strategies to enhance health outcomes for all.



### **DR. MARTHA WERLER, DSc**

Dr. Werler is Professor of Epidemiology at Boston University School of Public Health. She is a perinatal epidemiologist whose NIH- and CDC-supported research focuses on the impact of pregnancy exposures on birth outcomes, including congenital malformations, fetal growth, and neurodevelopment. She has studied medication use in pregnancy, including analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti-emetic, anti-depressant, and anti-epileptic drugs. Recent work includes medication used for the treatment of pain and opioid use disorder among pregnant women. She has published over 275 papers in peer-reviewed journals, served as President of the Society for Epidemiology Research (2020) and the Society for Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research (2014), received awards for mentorship, been honored for her research on congenital anomalies by the National Birth Defect Prevention Network and the former Teratology Society (now Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention); and served on numerous NIH advisory and review boards.

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## BREAKOUTS



### NEVENA KRSTIĆ, MS, CGC

Nevena Krstić is a board-certified genetic counselor at USF Morsani College of Medicine, Associate Program Director for USF's Genetic Counseling Program, and Program Coordinator for MotherToBaby Florida. She has a B.S. degree in Microbiology and Cell Science from the University of Florida and a M.S. in Genetic Counseling from the University of Texas-Houston (2012). Nevena is currently an assistant professor at USF where she provides prenatal and preconception genetic counseling in various clinics throughout Tampa Bay as well as provides exposure counseling to the general public utilizing the MotherToBaby Florida teratogen service line. She has been involved in training and education of both Genetic Counseling students as well as Maternal Fetal Medicine Fellows. She is a member of several professional organizations including the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC), Organization of Teratogen Specialists (OTS), and the Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention (BDRP).



### DR. RACHEL ALLRED, PHD, MPH

Rachel Allred holds a PhD in behavioral neuroscience from UT Austin. She was out of the neuroscience field for some time and decided to go back to school during the pandemic in pursuit of a public health degree. She graduated with an MPH in epidemiology from UT Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health in 2022. She is currently the Epidemiology Team Lead for the Texas Department of State Health Services Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch. She conducts various epidemiological analyses, contributes to data requests, and assists in preparation and production of numerous data reports. She is heavily involved in the birth defects program's interoperability efforts and is one of the program's primary contributors to understanding the utility of electronic case reports in birth defects surveillance.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### BREAKOUTS



#### **REBECCA HOWELL, BS, BSA**

Rebecca Howell has worked with the Texas Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch (BDESB) since 2021. In her role as a Research Specialist III, she acts as data manager for BDESB's 5-year CDC surveillance grant. Additionally, she prepares manuscripts, collaborates with external research partners, conducts data quality improvement projects, and other functions as a member of the epidemiologist/data analyst team. She has been published in three accepted articles, including one first authorship, and numerous poster presentations. She graduated cum laude from UT Austin in 2020, obtaining a B.S. in Public Health (Biostatistics and Public Health Informatics track) and a B.S.A. in Biology. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband and family, trying new recipes, and singing soprano II with a classical choir.



#### **REBECCA LIBERMAN, MPH**

Rebecca received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University and her MPH from the University of Michigan School of Public Health. She has spent most of her career studying reproductive health and birth defects. Since 2012, she has been an Epidemiologist with the Massachusetts Birth Defects Monitoring Program. Current research projects include assessing dual diagnoses of aneuploidy and evaluating the impact of non-invasive prenatal screening on birth defect prevalence.



#### **DR. SARAH FISHER, PHD**

Sarah Fisher is the Director of the New York State Birth Defects Registry and Assistant Director of the Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Epidemiology at the New York State Department of Health, where she has been a research scientist since 2014. She is also the Co-Principal Investigator of the New York site of the Birth Defects Study to Evaluate Pregnancy Exposures (BD-STEPS). Dr. Fisher's research interests include investigating associations between medication use in pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes and surveillance methods.

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## BREAKOUTS



### DR. SONJA A. RASMUSSEN, MD, MS

Sonja Rasmussen is Professor in the Department of Genetic Medicine at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. She joined Johns Hopkins after 4 years at the University of Florida (UF) College of Medicine and College of Public Health and Health Professions where she served as a Professor in the Departments of Pediatrics, Epidemiology, and Obstetrics and Gynecology and as the Director of UF's Precision Health Program. Before joining University of Florida in 2018, she served for 20 years at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, where she held several scientific leadership roles. She served in leadership roles during several CDC responses to public health emergencies, including 2009 H1N1 influenza, H7N9 influenza, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and Zika virus. Dr. Rasmussen is an author on >290 peer-reviewed publications and is the lead editor of The CDC Field Epidemiology Manual, released by Oxford University Press in 2019. Her research interests focus on understanding the effects of infections and medications during pregnancy, genetic and environmental risk factors for birth defects, and morbidity and mortality associated with genetic conditions.



### DR. SOOK JA CHO, PHD

I have served as the Principal Epidemiologist of the Birth Defects Monitoring & Analysis Unit at the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) since I joined the Unit in 2013.

My primary roles are as follows: 1) Serve as principal investigator of two federal non-research grants, "Advancing birth defects surveillance capacity (CDC-RFA-DD21-2101)" and "Population-based surveillance of outcomes, needs, and well-being of children and adolescents with congenital heart defects (CDC-RFA-DD22-2203)", also known as CHSTRONG KIDS; 2) Design and conduct various types of investigations for the distribution and determinants of birth defects occurrence in Minnesota; 3) Serve as birth defects epidemiology expert within/outside MDH.

I earned my doctorate in public health focusing on exposure assessment of mold and allergens in homes from the University of Minnesota in 2008. I had research fellowship of epidemiology in indoor air at occupational settings such as public schools, universities, or public buildings at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Morgantown, WV before joining the Minnesota Department of Health.

# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

## BREAKOUTS



### **SUSIE LEO, MPH, RDN**

Susie Leo is the Parent and Child Health Dietitian in the ADHS Bureau of Nutrition and Physical Activity. She has worked in public health for 24 years in several programs. Susie's work includes managing the Power Me A2Z folic acid program, which provides free multivitamins with folic acid to people in Arizona who can get pregnant to prevent birth defects.



### **VALORIE ECKERT, MPH**

Valorie Eckert, MPH is an epidemiologist with expertise in public health surveillance, infectious disease research, and maternal and infant health. As Chief of the California Birth Defects Monitoring Program at the California Department of Public Health, she provides scientific leadership and oversees data-driven initiatives to monitor congenital conditions and improve health outcomes. With a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from Tulane University and dual bachelor's degrees from UC Berkeley, Valorie has dedicated her career to improving data-driven public health strategies. She has led numerous initiatives, including electronic case reporting, HIV surveillance system enhancements, and longitudinal studies on maternal and infant health. Her leadership has earned her multiple awards for excellence in data quality improvement and public health program implementation. Through her work, she continues to advance epidemiological research and inform policy decisions that impact population health.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### BREAKOUTS



#### **DR. WASHA LIU, MD**

Washa Liu is a Chinese pediatrician and a US-certified medical doctor through the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). In her home country, she spent nearly two decades at Jiangmen Central Hospital - a teaching hospital affiliated with Zhongshan Medical College, specializing in pediatric endocrinology and rare disorders, including birth defects. She provided comprehensive medical care to young patients, trained medical students, and conducted clinical research.

Upon relocating to the United States, Dr. Liu advanced her training in basic science research as a postdoctoral fellow at Boston Children's Hospital and the Floating Hospital for Children at Tufts Medical Center. Her research focused on fetal lung development, enhancing her knowledge of essential developmental mechanisms. Her outstanding expertise and contributions led to her faculty appointment as an Instructor at Tufts University School of Medicine.

Since 2012, Dr. Liu has served as Program Coordinator and Medical Record Abstractor for the Birth Defects Monitoring Program within the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Her primary responsibilities include data collection and quality assurance. She has been an active contributor to the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) since then, participating in committees and working groups that shape birth defects guideline revisions and standards, data quality indicators, educational materials, articles of interest, among others. She currently co-chairs the Surveillance Guideline and Standard Committee (SGSC) within the NBDPN.

Throughout her career, Dr. Liu has demonstrated unwavering passion and dedication to promoting maternal and child health and well-being as a physician, scientist, and public health professional. Her decades of experience in clinical practice, research (both clinical and laboratory-based), and public health initiatives across academic, industrial, and public service settings have provided her with a solid foundation for well understanding complex congenital anomalies and syndromes from cytogenetic, clinical, and public health perspectives.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### ROUND TABLES



#### **ASHLEY DIXON, MPH, CPH**

Ashley B. Dixon is the Project Manager for the Birth Defects Surveillance Program at the University of South Florida, where she earned her BS, MPH and currently completing a DrPH in Advanced Program Leadership. She has been with the program at USF and in collaboration with the Florida Department of Health for over 13 years. Her areas of experience encompass extensive medical record abstraction, assisting with database development, quality control and assurance protocols, attaining remote access to medical records, and maintaining rapport with hospital management and health information team members across all birthing and children's hospitals at a state-wide level. Her research interests include evaluation projects and her doctoral project will assess the accuracy and utility of fetal death certificate data in Florida.



#### **BARBARA FROHNERT, MPH**

Barbara is currently the supervisor of the Birth Defects Monitoring & Analysis unit at the Minnesota Department of Health. Barbara earned her MPH in Maternal and Child Health with a focus in Epidemiology from the University of Minnesota. She completed the CDC/CSTE Applied Epidemiology fellowship where she focused on developing a birth defect surveillance system in Minnesota. Barbara served as the Minnesota PRAMS coordinator, tracking state trends of folic acid supplementation, maternal diabetes, and other preconception health measures. Barbara returned to the Minnesota Birth Defects program as a senior epidemiologist and became unit supervisor in 2014.

During this period, Minnesota expanded from a regional surveillance system to statewide and is striving to keep up with advances in interoperability. With their CYSHN partners, referral to services for families with children with birth defects has grown into a robust collaboration with local public health agencies to assist families with children identified with birth defects, hearing loss, CCHD, and other newborn conditions. In 2023, Outreach and Prevention for CYSHN spun off into its own unit, adding expertise in program planning, health education, and community partnerships.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### ROUND TABLES



#### **DR. JASON L. SALEMI, PHD, MPH, FACE**

Dr. Jason L. Salemi is a Professor and Interim Chair of Epidemiology at the University of South Florida, where he earned his BSc, MPH, and PhD. His areas of expertise include birth defects surveillance and epidemiologic methods, with a particular focus on causal inference. For nearly 20 years, Dr. Salemi has been a core member of the longstanding collaboration between the Florida Department of Health and University of South Florida in supporting the Florida Birth Defects Registry, and he now leads the USF team on these CDC- and state-supported initiatives.

He has authored over 200 peer-reviewed publications and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, developed a widely used Florida dashboard that gained national attention and led to more than 500 media appearances across television, radio, and print. Dr. Salemi has held leadership roles in the National Birth Defects Prevention Network, including Chair of two national committees, a past term as President, and a current term on the Board of Directors.

He is a Fellow of the American College of Epidemiology and in the past few years has received both USF's Outstanding Research Achievement Award and the Excellence in Teaching Award. Dr. Salemi is deeply committed to mentoring and education, and he directs PhD training in epidemiology and serves as faculty advisor for the Epidemiology and Biostatistics Student Association.



#### **LIZ MACINTYRE, BA**

Liz MacIntyre is a departmental analyst with the State of Michigan (SOM) Birth Defects Registry. Her educational background is in Exercise Health Science. Liz transitioned to public health in 2000, also working in the SOM HIV/STI unit. She is involved in many work groups under the NBDPN Guidelines and Standards Committee. Liz resides in the middle of the mitten with her husband, 3 children and mini dachshund. Outside of work you can find her cheering on her favorite resident athletes, perfecting her protein energy ball recipe, or outdoors in the garden.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### ROUND TABLES



#### **REBECCA THOM, MPH**

Rebecca obtained her undergraduate degree in microbiology and biotechnology from South Dakota State University. She then continued her education with an MPH in epidemiology from University of Minnesota. Rebecca has been an epidemiologist with the birth defects team at MDH since February 2024. Her primary responsibility is working on the CHSTRONG KIDS (Congenital Heart Survey To Recognize Outcomes, Needs, and well-being of KIDS) project. She also previously worked in the Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention and Control (IDEPC) Division at MDH. Her presentation describes her work evaluating case finding methods for birth defects in stillbirths.



#### **SABRA ANCKNER, RN, MSN**

Sabra Anckner, RN, MSN (Greenblanket Consulting) is a public health nurse and maternal child health consultant. She was previously the Associate Director of Clinical & Community Collaboration at the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP), where she led the past partnership between NBDPN, CDC, and AMCHP, alongside other projects including those focused on telehealth in MCH. In the past, she worked for the State of Alaska managing its newborn bloodspot screening program and infant safe sleep efforts. She worked as an itinerant public health nurse based in Nome, Alaska, providing health care throughout the Bering Straits region. She was also a PHN at the county level in Colorado. She holds an MSN in nursing administration from the University of Alaska – Anchorage, a BSN from the University of Colorado – Denver, and a BA in Sociology from the University of Colorado – Boulder. She resides in Washington, DC.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### ROUND TABLES

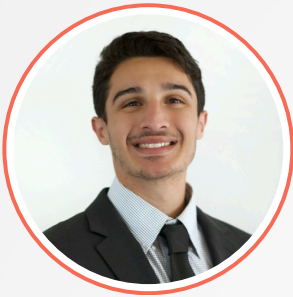


#### **STEPHAN VILLAVICENCIO, MPH**

Stephan has been abstracting on the “Florida Birth Defects Surveillance Program” for the last 8 years. He has a Master of Public Health from George Washington University and a Bachelors Degree in Biology from University of Virginia. He has also been a member of Toastmasters at Club 1810 in Tampa, Florida for six years. (Toastmasters International is a public speaking club, in which members practice speech presentation, speech evaluation, and impromptu speaking.) His favorite role in toastmasters is "emcee" of regular meetings at club 1810, which he has done 18 times. Although he loves Toastmasters, he also values being a part of the Florida birth defect group and of NBDPN. His favorite NBDPN group is the Abstractors Technical Tools Workgroup, because the volunteers have a lot of heart, and the core group has succeeded in meeting the needs of the abstractor community for years.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### POSTERS



#### **ADAM ZBIB**

I am a fourth-year medical student at the Medical College of Georgia. I attended Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA and graduated Summa Cum Laude with a bachelor's degree in Neuroscience. During my time in Atlanta, I volunteered with programs that provided aid for inner city youth living in poverty. Through those early experiences and now clinical rotations in medical school, I realized I wanted to pursue pediatrics. As an aspiring pediatrician, I'm excited to attend the NBDPN conference this year to advance my knowledge of congenital disease and network with experts in the field.



#### **ADRIAN MICHALSKI, MPH**

Adrian is an epidemiologist with experience primarily in birth defects research and environmental health surveillance. He studied Chemical Biology at Stevens Institute of Technology and obtained a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University at Albany. Since 2012, he has been working at the NYS Department of Health's Birth Defects Registry (BDR). He currently leads the BDR's Data Modernization & Evaluation Unit handling a variety of data focused aspects of the Registry including database management, data requests, evaluation efforts and dashboard development. In addition, Adrian has led and collaborated on several analyses using data from the National Birth Defects Prevention Study. A strong believer in the National Birth Defects Prevention Network's mission, he has been actively involved since 2018 as a member of the Surveillance Data Committee (Chair 2024-present), and as a member of the Steering Committee for the Network's Standards and Guidelines Revision effort. Adrian lives in New York's Capital Region with his wife and three children where he enjoys all things outdoors.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### POSTERS



#### **ALICIA N. LEE, MPH**

Alicia is a research scientist at the New York State Department of Health's Birth Defects Registry (BDR). Her journey in birth defects surveillance began in 2019 and she is currently a part of the BDR's Data Quality and Operations Unit. Alicia studied biology at Union College, and obtained a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University at Albany. She has led many efforts to work closely with the BDR's reporting partners including hospitals, medical providers, and laboratories across NYS, to ensure quality, complete, and timely reporting of birth defects to the BDR. She has collaborated to host many trainings for these groups and routinely implements important updates to the BDR's reporting guidelines. Additionally, she works closely with DOH's Electronic Clinical Laboratory Reporting System (ECLRS) program, to access and extract laboratory results for chromosomal and genetic birth defects, and integrate these results into the BDR. She has also been a member of the National Birth Defects Prevention Network's Surveillance Data Committee since 2023. Alicia lives in Albany, New York with her partner and two children; and is expecting her third, soon! She enjoys cooking and spending time with family.



#### **HEATHER PINT BSN, RN, PHN**

Heather Pint received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Minnesota in 2003. She has nursing experience in obstetrics, newborn nursery, home care, and public health at the county and state level. She began her public health career working at the community level doing case management at a rural access hospital. She then moved to county level work within disease prevention and control with immunizations, refugee health and TB control. She continued on to the Minnesota Department of Health and spent around six years with the Immunization program, working with clinics and public health in the MnVaccines for Children program. Heather has been in the Children and Youth with Special Health Needs Section at MDH for 10 years. She is currently working on the development of the Critical Congenital Heart Disease longitudinal follow-up program and the cardiac nurse reviewer for the Birth Defects program. She is also the Lead Project coordinator and Co-PI for the CH STRONG Kids Grant.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### POSTERS



#### **HELEN PARKER ATKINSON, MPH**

Helen Atkinson is a Statistical Assistant with the North Carolina Birth Defects Monitoring Program in the NC Division of Public Health. She collects and analyzes data related to the diagnosis of critical congenital heart disease (CCHD), with a particular focus on the role of pulse oximetry (POX) screening of newborns. Ms. Atkinson earned her MPH from the Gillings School of Global Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a concentration in Applied Epidemiology, and she has been with the NC BDMP for four years.



#### **JING SHI, MS**

Jing is a Research Scientist for Special Child Health Services at the New Jersey Department of Health. She is responsible for data management, data quality assurance and reporting for Birth Defect and Autism registry.



#### **JULIE A. JOHNSTON**

Julie Johnston is the program manager of the Louisiana Birth Defects Monitoring Network (2012) and the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (2023) in the Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health. Julie earned a Bachelor of Science in Administration of Justice from Mississippi College (1991). Julie served NBDPN as Member at Large in 2020.

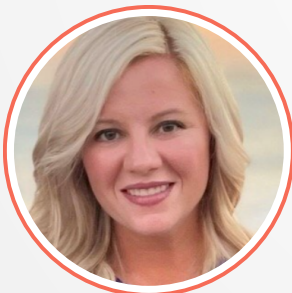
## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### POSTERS



#### **FLOR RODRIGUEZ, MPH**

Mrs. Rodriguez earned her Bachelor of Science in Public Health and Master of Public Health degrees from Baylor University, graduating Summa Cum Laude. Although she graduated with a focus in health promotions, she was introduced to the world of data analysis through her first position as a Data Analyst during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seeing her work product drive decision-making and public health outcomes inspired her to shift her career goals to include data visualization and epidemiology. Mrs. Rodriguez joined the Oklahoma Birth Defects Registry in 2021. She is excited to present her most recent work describing folic acid distribution in Oklahoma. Additionally, she is a contributing author on the An Evaluation of the Oklahoma Birth Defects Registry's Spina Bifida Coding Tool poster.



#### **LEXI RICHARDSON, BSN, RN**

Mrs. Richardson earned her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish at the University of Oklahoma before pursuing a Bachelor of Nursing degree at Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing. Her nursing background includes experience in postpartum mother/baby care, pediatric nursing, and neonatal intensive care nursing. Her passion for maternal child health combined with her personal experience as a mother of a child affected by a birth defect led her to a career in public health nursing, joining the Oklahoma Birth Defects Registry (OBDR) in 2018. Mrs. Richardson not only serves as a Registered Nurse Abstractor but facilitates connecting Oklahoma families affected by birth defects with beneficial resources. In addition to these roles, she also performs quality review of all OBDR cases and assists with the improvement of abstraction protocols. Her poster describes the implementation and evaluation of a new spina bifida coding system and tool.

## CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

### POSTERS



#### **LINDSAY DENSON, PHD, RDMS**

Dr. Denson's first career as an obstetrical sonographer provided her with invaluable clinical experience but left her with a desire to learn more. She pursued a doctoral degree at the University of Oklahoma intent on a career in ultrasound research. Eager to obtain experience while in school and unaware it would completely alter her career path, she joined the Oklahoma Birth Defects Registry as a student in 2015. The knowledge of anatomical defects obtained through her sonography career coupled with her epidemiological training prepared her perfectly for a career in birth defects surveillance and research, which has since grown into a passion. Dr. Denson's research interests and publications include topics in women's health, diagnostic imaging, and birth defects. She has authored/co-authored twelve peer-reviewed publications. She is currently working on studies investigating critical congenital heart defects screening and gastroschisis in Oklahoma. Her poster describes findings from a recent study examining gastroschisis-related mortality in Oklahoma.



#### **STEPHANIE POCIUS, MHS**

Stephanie Pocius is the program manager with the Utah Birth Defect Network (UBDN), which includes the Critical Congenital Heart Disease screening program, at the Utah Department of Health and Human Services. As an epidemiologist by training, Ms. Pocius's passion lies in using data to empower and strengthen maternal and child health. Ms. Pocius has been with the UBDN since 2023 after completing her graduate studies in Infectious Disease Epidemiology with a concentration in Maternal and Child Health.

## SESSION ABSTRACTS AND POST CONFERENCE EVALUATION

### SESSION ABSTRACTS

All session abstracts are posted online!  
**Scan the QR Code below to access.**



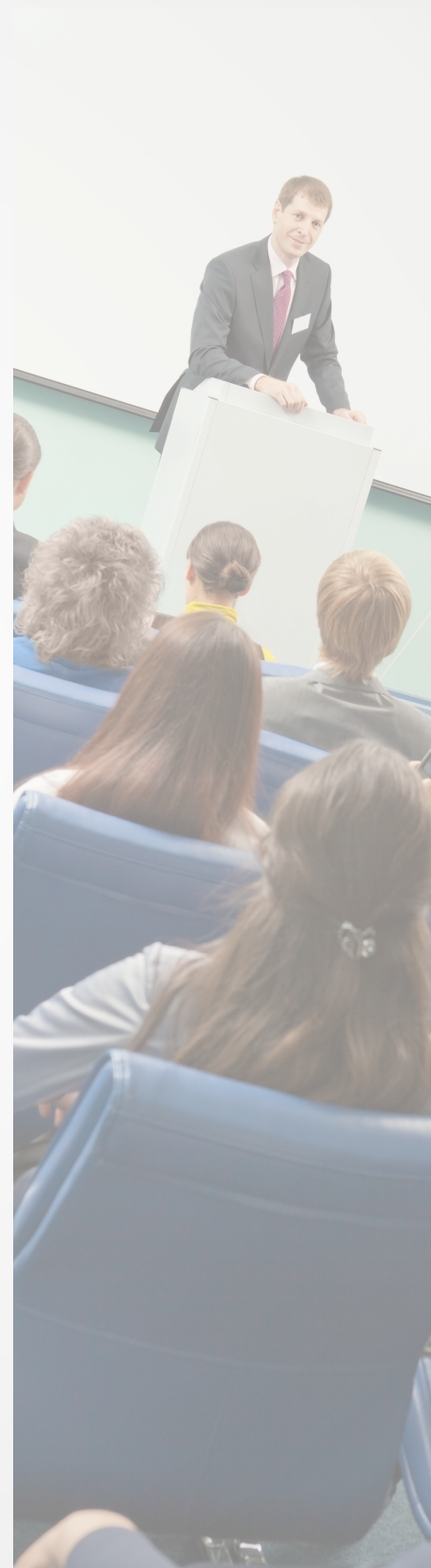
### POSTER ABSTRACTS

All poster abstracts are posted online!  
**Scan the QR Code below to access.**



### POST CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Thank you for attending the 2025 NBDPN National Conference. The post conference evaluation will open the morning of **Tuesday, July 1st.**





NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS  
PREVENTION NETWORK