

Action for Impact Team 2024

Megan Atchison

Program Specialist, *National Center for Homeless Education*

Browns Summit, North Carolina

Megan Atchison is a Program Specialist with the National Center for Homeless Education which is housed in the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Megan works with communities who have been awarded grant funds on behalf of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) by providing technical assistance with the inclusion of education and employment into strategic plans to end youth and young adult homelessness. She has extensive knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, is passionate about supporting YYA with accessing education and living wage employment opportunities.

Dolores Blackman

Director of Family Mental Health, *Brave Families Rising Above*

Berkeley, California

Dolores Blackman is the founding Director of Family Mental Health for **Brave Families Rising Above**, an empowering Mental Health Alternative service for families experiencing housing trauma, based in the East Bay, California. As Director and Beloved Community Facilitator, she now coordinates direct client services, in collaboration with partnering CBO's. Her other roles in the community are Mental Health Speaker/ Educator, Corporate Trainer & BFRA* Parent-Partner with *Lived Expertise that meets families where they are, with hope.

Sara Cowling

Housing Program Manager, *Outside In*

Portland, Oregon

Sara Cowling has had extensive experience in homeless services, harm reduction, and Emergency Room social work. Sara is passionate about doing radical, trauma informed, community based social work that works to fight back against the harmful systems we all exist in. Sara also has a background in critical social work research, which she strives to incorporate into her work whenever possible.

Ezra Feliciano

Lead Youth Mentor, *Sunrise Movement*

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Ezra Feliciano is an Indigenous Latinx trans man who has dealt with housing insecurity such as water, heat, and electricity being constantly shut off. He has fought to close an immigration prison in Berks, PA. Ezra is currently learning ASL and the Taino language. He is a mentor for high schoolers and loves to work with other LGBTQ2S+ youths. He believes we are all teachers and learners.

Kelli Foster

Program Manager, *Children's Home Society of Florida - Statewide*

Pensacola, Florida

Kelli Foster has over 15 years of experience supporting children and families suffering adversity. She serves with lived experience, becoming a parent at 15 years old, as a front-line worker, and now in a management capacity. Kelli currently is the Program Manager of Street Outreach and Transitional Living Programs where she not only manages but implements new programs and works toward sustainability when there are funding losses.

Samantha Gillis

Chief Program Officer, *National Runaway Safeline*

Chicago, Illinois

Sam Gillis oversees programs and services for the National Runaway Safeline that are designed to aid young people in crisis, who have left home, and/or are experiencing homelessness. She has 14 years of experience serving vulnerable populations and survivors of violent crime, with extensive experience supporting survivors of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Previously working for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the National Human Trafficking Hotline, Sam is passionate about supporting young people experiencing complex trauma, exploitation, and homelessness.

Joli Guenther

Executive Director, *Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services (WAHRS)*

Portage, Wisconsin

Joli Guenther, LCSW, has over 20 years of experience working with Wisconsin agencies and supporting their collaboration in serving youth experiencing homelessness at local, state, and national levels. As the current Executive Director of WAHRS, she directs policy and advocacy efforts improving collaboration and service provision and works directly with FYSB multi-site projects to support accountability, training, program improvements, and collaboration in service provision.

Amba Johnson

Director of Learning and Prevention, *Covenant House California*

Oakland, California

Amba Johnson has been working with High Risk and Trafficked Youth for over 20 years. Her work is informed by her experience in the sex industry in her early adult years as well as extensive experience as a direct service provider. Amba is a subject matter expert, trainer, advocate, and consultant for other agencies, police, and community organizations developing their programs preparing as service providers to homeless and trafficked youth.

Paris Mendoza

Youth Ambassador, *The Greater Kansas Coalition to End Homelessness*

Kansas City, Missouri

Paris Mendoza is a Hispanic Trans woman of color who has experiences with homelessness and being in the foster care system. She uses this expertise to join her local Youth Action Board in Kansas City, Missouri and statewide Youth Action Board in Missouri. She has worked on Advocating not only in her state, but also our nation's capital Washington DC. She advocates for POC, LGBTQ+ rights, Mental Health, Immigrants' Rights, and much more.

Lisa Miller

Chief Program Officer, *Homeless Youth Connection, Inc.*

Phoenix, Arizona

Lisa Miller serves as the Chief Program Officer at Homeless Youth Connection. Her professional experience includes over 30 years working in non-profit and behavioral health agency environments. She is responsible for overseeing the HYC youth programming, including the Host Family Program and the Hatcher Transitional Living Program. She holds a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and independent licensure. Her passion for serving youth and families has spanned throughout her career in leadership roles, creating, developing, and executing vision through collaboration.

Kristen Patterson

Executive Director, *New Morning Youth and Family Services, Inc.*

Placerville, California

Kristen Patterson is the Executive Director of New Morning Youth and Family Services in California. She was a CSEC youth and teen mom who has spent her career working with at-risk youth. She started her career in Contra Costa County Probation. She is the former president of PFLAG, and currently sits on the Child Abuse Prevention Council, the Commission of Youth and Families, the PFLAG Board, and the El Dorado County Continuum of Care to address homelessness.

Christa Price

Senior Program Director, *True Colors United*

New York, New York

Christa Price received her MSW from the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College community organizing program in 2015. Since then, she has been committed to advancing social justice and promoting social reform through macro social work and policy advocacy. At True Colors United, Christa works primarily on integrating technology solutions into their programmatic work. Prior to school she spent two years working in China with the Peace Corps.

Carly Schotz

Transition Specialist, *TGTHR*

Boulder, Colorado

Carly Schotz grew up in New Jersey and received her B.A. in Sociology at Ithaca College. Carly has developed strong skill sets in case management, housing, goal-planning, life-skill development, trauma-informed care, substance abuse, employment/education, inclusivity, and has strong ties to local resources. Carly has had experience working with both adults and youth, in residential and community settings, but has really found a passion for working with young people. Their drive, resilience, enthusiasm, and talents inspire her daily.

EJ Velez

Youth and Young Adult Consultant

Reading, PA

EJ is a current CoC board member in his community focused on funding and a leading facilitator of his County's YAB. His educational background is in Applied Psychology and Behavioral Analyst, his hope is to support young people and families in need. EJ's main goal is to ensure proper education and training are being provided to limit harm when offering care to YYA and those in other marginalized groups.