

The Pursuit of Permanency: The First 90 Days

June 11–12, 2020

Presented by the University of San Diego School of Law's Children's Advocacy Institute

Sponsored by the Judicial Council of California

Presenter Bios

Sue Abrams has been working at Children's Law Center of California (CLC) since 2005. She began her career implementing an Equal Justice Works, where she sought to reduce the rate of dependent youth entering the juvenile justice system. Following her fellowship, Ms. Abrams worked as a staff attorney for several years until she transitioned from the courtroom to focus on macro level policy work. She now serves as CLC's Director of Policy and Training – developing and strategizing CLC's public policy priorities and legislative advocacy efforts at the local, state and national levels.

Michele Cortese has served as Executive Director of the Center for Family Representation in New York City since January 2016. She joined the organization as Deputy Director in 2002. Since joining CFR, Ms. Cortese has personally conducted more than 175 training sessions, and has presented or provided TA to practitioners from more than 15 states. She supervised the development of interdisciplinary models of representation for parents in CFR's child welfare cases. In addition to representing parents, Ms. Cortese served as an Attorney for the Child (law guardian) for over a dozen years and has also represented foster care agencies in trial and appellate proceedings. She worked at the NYC Legal Aid Society Juvenile Rights Practice, as the Director of Professional Development, where she coordinated and conducted training citywide for attorney, social work, paralegal and management staff. She also served as the Attorney-In-Charge of JRP's Manhattan trial office that represented 12,000 children annually in child protective, delinquency and PINS proceedings. Ms. Cortese has been a member of the faculty of the Practising Law Institute, the New York State Judicial Institute and the Child Welfare League of America, and has written for the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law. In May of 2010, Ms. Cortese received the Kathryn A. McDonald award from the New York City Bar Association for Excellence in Service to the Family Courts. Ms. Cortese is a graduate of Columbia University School of Law and Colgate University.

The Hon. Marian Gaston was appointed to a judicial seat by Governor Jerry Brown in 2015. She currently serves as Assistant Supervising Judge for San Diego County's Juvenile Court. Prior to her appointment, Gaston served as a deputy public defender for 19 years including several years in the Juvenile Delinquency Division as an attorney and Assistant Supervisor. There, she collaborated with other county agencies and non-profits to create a restorative justice diversionary program, and, in partnership with local medical professions, she established a method for assessing detained youth for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. She created a process that allowed defense attorneys to quickly access their clients' Child Welfare records so that each

child's needs could be identified and appropriate services provided. She also conducted a research study showing the high prevalence of trauma in the lives of incarcerated minors.

As a public defender, she litigated the full range of adult criminal cases including homicides and sexual offenses. While a member of the San Diego County Sex Offender Management Council, she worked with law enforcement and the prosecution to implement policies to prevent sexual assault.

She has taught classes on Contemporary Forms of Social Control at the University of California at San Diego; Sexual Deviance and Crime at Thomas Jefferson School of Law; and trial advocacy at both the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law and California Western School of Law. She also teaches at trial advocacy programs throughout the country for the National Institute of Trial Advocacy.

Judge Gaston earned her Juris Doctor from the University of California at Berkeley, Boalt Hall, in 1996. For her undergraduate degree she attended Emory University, graduating in 1993 with majors in political science and history.

Carolyn Griesemer is a graduate of University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and St. Louis University School of Law. Carolyn began her legal career in 1999 as a judicial clerk in the Eastern District of Missouri Court of Appeals. She entered trial practice at the St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney's Office as an Assistant Prosecutor in the Domestic Violence Unit. She moved to San Diego to work at the San Diego Family Justice Center in 2004 as a Deputy City Attorney's Office Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Unit. In 2009, Carolyn entered the field of juvenile dependency law as a senior staff attorney with Minors Counsel Office of Dependency Legal Group. From 2014-2016, Carolyn ran her own practice serving caregiver and relative clients in the juvenile and probate court systems. In 2016, Carolyn co-founded Children's Legal Services of San Diego and currently serves as the Executive Director.

Rebecca Ingerman is currently an attorney at Children's Law Center of California, Sacramento (CLC), where she represents juveniles in a variety of dependency hearings and staffs the specialized CSEC and non-minor dependent courtrooms. Prior to joining CLC, Rebecca worked at the Center for Family Representation (CFR) in New York for 10 years. Starting as a staff attorney and leaving as the Director of Government Affairs and Special Projects, Rebecca represented parents in dependency proceedings as part of an interdisciplinary team model. She also managed the development of new practice initiatives including into the areas of housing, criminal defense, and immigration. Rebecca frequently conducted training throughout New York State and nationally, and developed the first modules for CFR's community based presentations and child welfare briefings. Rebecca is a graduate of New York Law School and George Washington University and is a National Association of Counsel for Children Certified Child Welfare Law Specialist.

Alice Kennedy, MSW is the Assistant Director for the County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services (CWS) and serves in the functional role of Director of

Child Welfare Practice. Ms. Kennedy has over 28 years of experience in the field of Social Work and graduated from San Diego State University; she holds a Master Degree in Social Work with an emphasis in Administration. Ms. Kennedy's breadth of experience includes Child Welfare regional operations and leadership of countywide programs including the County of San Diego Adoption Program, Foster Home Licensing (Resource Family Approval- RFA) and the Child Abuse Hotline. Formerly, Ms. Kennedy held roles as manager of Policy and Program Support, the Child Welfare Ombudsman, Civil Rights Liaison and Department of Justice Grievance Hearing Officer. She also previously served as Secretary of the San Diego Child Abuse Coordinating Council Child Fatality Review Team. Since 2008, Ms. Kennedy has worked as a consultant/trainer for the Public Child Welfare Training Academy (PCWTA now CWDS) and in 2015 she began consulting and training for Southern Area Consortium of Human Services (SACHS) Leaders in Action; specifically focusing on race and diversity in the workplace. Ms. Kennedy will be transitioning into retirement in June 2020 and will continue to consult and train in the areas of social work and child welfare.

David Meyers is an attorney who serves as Chief Operating Officer of Dependency Legal Services, a non-profit that holds contracts to represent parents and children in four Northern California Counties. In addition, David serves as part time staff to the UC Davis Northern Training Academy, and runs the Law Office of David M. Meyers.

He has been working in the field of juvenile dependency law since 1995. David served for many years as a Senior Attorney with the Center for Families Children and the Courts where his primary responsibility included curriculum development and training facilitation for attorneys and court professionals engaged in juvenile dependency practice. David is licensed to practice law in California, Arizona and the Pascua Yaqui Nation.

Prior to joining CFCC, David was an Assistant Attorney General in Tucson representing their Child Protective Services Division. He worked for Sacramento Child Advocates, and for many years served as the supervising Attorney of Parent Advocates of Sacramento where he was responsible for the representation of indigent parents in child welfare cases.

He is currently a member of the American Bar Association's Parent Attorney Representation Project Steering Committee, where he works to advance attorney representation issues throughout the country. David holds a Bachelor's in Journalism and Music from the University of Florida and his JD from the University of Arizona.

Sarah Pauter. After spending 17 years in the child welfare system before ultimately emancipating or "aging out," Sarah earned a Bachelor's in Social Work from San Diego State University and a Master's in Public Policy and Administration from Northwestern University. Sarah has dedicated her life and career to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth, even testifying before Congress and the California Senate on mental health treatment options for young people in foster care. Prior to launching Phenomenal Families, Sarah was the Program Director of the Family & Youth Roundtable, where she developed and enhanced public

child-serving systems through policy formulation and implementation. Her efforts were recognized by the San Diego County Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council which honored her with their annual STARS award. Sarah is a former FosterClub California Youth Ambassador, Foster Care Youth and Alumni Policy Council Member, and Co-Chair of the San Diego County Children's System of Care Council. Currently, she serves as a Trauma-Informed Systems Specialist with the Center on Child Welfare Trauma-Informed Policies, Programs, and Practices (TIPs Center), on the Polinsky Children's Center Advisory Board, and the San Diego County Juvenile Justice Commission. She is passionate about preventing intergenerational and cyclical system involvement and ensuring that all youth, regardless of past adversity, can create a strong and flourishing family of their own.

Caitlin E. Rae is Chief Deputy County Counsel with the Office of County Counsel-Juvenile Dependency Division. Ms. Rae has been working as a Deputy County Counsel since 2003. Along with a juris doctor, Ms. Rae holds a Master's degree in Social Work. As a Senior Deputy County Counsel, Ms. Rae has worked in the trial courts, on the appellate level, and with the Health and Human Services Agency on various policies and programs. She has argued at the California Supreme Court and Ninth Circuit. She is the author of "Compendium and Treatise on Juvenile Dependency" used exclusively by the Offices of County Counsel across California. Additionally, Ms. Rae has handled civil litigation cases involving child welfare and social worker defendants.

Adam Reed is the managing director of Dependency Legal Services San Diego. Dependency Legal Services San Diego began providing representation to families in the San Diego County Superior Court in October of 2016. Dependency Legal Services San Diego is the counterpart to Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, which has provided parent representation in Los Angeles County since 2007. Prior to organizing and opening their San Diego office, Mr. Reed was a supervising attorney with Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers for approximately ten years. Prior to that he personally represented parents and children in the Los Angeles County Dependency Court. Mr. Reed has a combined total of 23 years of experience in Child Welfare. Mr. Reed has worked on legislation and served on various committees and boards with the goal of implementing systemic improvements in Child Welfare statewide on topics such as disproportionality, CPS reform, and the promotion of family reunification.

Christina Riehl serves as a Deputy Attorney General for the California Department of Justice, Bureau of Children's Justice where she protects the civil rights of California's children through investigatory work, litigation, and amicus support. Before joining the California Department of Justice, Christina served as Senior Staff Attorney for the University of San Diego School of Law's Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI), where she worked on CAI's impact litigation, regulatory and legislative advocacy, public education programs, and directed USD School of Law students engaged in CAI's Policy and Dependency clinical programs.

Jennifer Rodriguez is Executive Director of the Youth Law Center (YLC), advocating to transform foster care and juvenile justice systems across the country so youth can thrive. Jennifer spent many years of her childhood in foster care and juvenile justice facilities, and has spent most of her life advocating to ensure justice, compassion and opportunity for system involved youth. Jennifer's advocacy has resulted in significant national policy, practice and culture changes around the fundamental needs of youth and formally including system involved youth as part of all policy processes. Jennifer's leadership at YLC has a special focus on ensuring youth in both child welfare and juvenile justice receive the parenting necessary to heal and thrive and live in conditions that meet their developmental and emotional needs. Before coming to the Youth Law Center in 2007, Jennifer served for eight years at the California Youth Connection, a nationally-recognized foster youth advocacy organization, leading efforts resulting in major legislative and policy accomplishments for California probation and foster youth, including stronger educational rights, higher education funding, increased funding for transition services, and promotion of normalcy and permanence for teenagers. Jennifer received her G.E.D. from San Jose Job Corps, her B.A. from UC Davis, and her J.D. from UC Davis law school and is mother to two beautiful children.

Antonia "Toni" Torres, MSW - Kumeyaay, San Pasqual Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of California, worked for a consortium of eight San Diego County tribes as an Indian child welfare advocate and program supervisor at Indian Health Council, Inc from 1995-2000. She began working for the County of San Diego, Child Welfare Services (CWS) in 2002 as a protective services social worker after earning her MSW from San Diego State University. In 2005, she worked as a Child Welfare Policy Analyst and assisted in the development and implementation of the County's System Improvement Plan (SIP) that included strategies aimed at reducing the number of Native American children in the child welfare system and improving the outcomes for Native foster children. She was the supervisor of the County's Indian Specialty Unit from 2010 thru 2016, established in 1992 in response to the growing concern by the tribal community that their children were being "lost" in the system. She is currently a manager over Policy and Program support unit that develops or oversees various policy implementation, protocols and training. She is a member of 7th Generation, a workgroup of various child welfare and community partners working together collaboratively to improve child welfare services for Native children and their families. She is also a trainer for the Academy of Professional Excellence-Cultural Responsiveness Academy.