

Using Evidence for Promoting Equity for Children and Youth

Speaker Biographies

Ilene Berman is a senior associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, where she works to help communities, schools, public systems and others join together to improve child and youth well-being through the use of evidence-based practice and programs. She also oversees grants that expand the quality, availability and effective implementation of evidence. Before joining the Foundation in 2011, Ilene was program director at the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices Education Division, where she led projects on key policy issues including high school redesign and literacy. She has also been a member of national advisory boards dedicated to advancing education reform. Ilene served as a director at the Council for Basic Education and the National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform. She taught high school English for eight years in Washington, D.C., and graduate courses at George Washington University. Ilene holds B.A. and M.S. Ed. degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, an M.A. degree from St. John's College and an Ed.D. in education policy and administration from George Washington University.

Batia Katz is a research analyst in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute, where she researches workforce development. Katz's previous research experience includes studying the science labor market, the impact of personality traits on employment outcomes, and gender and family in the workforce. Katz graduated with high honors from Haverford College, where she earned a BA in economics.

Miranda Lynch-Smith holds the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services Policy, within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in HHS. Prior to joining the Biden Administration, Ms. Lynch-Smith was a Policy Fellow at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. At Chapin Hall, Lynch-Smith provided strategic guidance and capacity building to child welfare agencies to enhance their performance and services for families and become more prevention and well-being oriented. Lynch-Smith worked directly with public and private decision-makers to translate and use evidence in decision-making, establish well-functioning continuous quality improvement systems and processes, and restructure and align systems, policy and financial investments towards equitable outcomes for families and children. Prior to joining Chapin Hall, Lynch-Smith was a career employee at HHS for 20 years. At the Children's Bureau, she was responsible for leading the Child and Family Service Review process, strengthening states' focus on outcomes and evidence, and establishing a federal framework for continuous quality improvement systems in child welfare systems.

Lyric Sellers is a student and Department of Human Rights' Youth Action Squad member. She is a senior at East High School born and raised in Des Moines, Iowa. Lyric has always been passionate about advocating for social justice in her community. Outside of fighting for racial equity and justice, Lyric enjoys playing basketball, being in the theatre, and spending time with family and friends. She aspires to contribute to change in any capacity and hopes to leave something that lasts longer than her.

Endi Montalvo-Martinez is a student and Department of Human Rights' Youth Action Squad Member. He is a 1st generation Chicano/Latino from Des Moines, Iowa and a freshman at Iowa State University majoring in Community and Public Health. Endi is very passionate about decolonizing and social justice to serve his community.

Marla McDaniel is a senior fellow in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute. Before joining Urban, she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Columbia University School of Social Work. McDaniel has researched, written about, and spoken about racial disparities; low-income children, youth, and families; and the programs and policy environments that touch families' lives. She is interested in the relationships between vulnerabilities and in how inequality across multiple domains— including health, education, and employment—has a compounding effect on overall health and well-being. McDaniel earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Swarthmore College and worked as a case manager for youth in foster care before earning a doctorate in human development and social policy from Northwestern University.

Demetra Nightingale is an Institute fellow and director of the Federal Evidence Forum at the Urban Institute and was the chief evaluation officer at the US Department of Labor from 2011 to 2016. She conducts research on employment, labor, welfare, and other social and economic policies and programs and teaches a graduate course in program evaluation at George Washington University. She also previously taught a graduate course in program evaluation at Johns Hopkins University. She is the author or coauthor of five books and numerous articles, a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, and serves on many task forces and advisory panels. She received her doctorate in public policy from the George Washington University.

Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom is a consultant with the Forum for Youth Investment specializing in youth development policy, youth organizing, and human-centered systems design. Over the last 20 years, Alicia has worked with youth, families, and organizations in strengthening community partnerships and advancing efforts that ensure that the social and community ecosystem supports all youth and that such efforts center equity in their design, implementation, and evaluation. Alicia has earned a BSW from Calvin University and dual Masters' degrees in Social Work and Public Policy from the University of Michigan. She has completed fellowships with the Moody Exchange Professional Fellowship in South Africa, the New Leaders Academy of the National Youth Employment Coalition, and the Coro Foundation Fellowship for Leadership in Public Affairs.