



National Quality Improvement Center on the Representation of Children in the Child Welfare System

Advisory Committee Members

Biographical Information:

[Maryellen Bearzi, MS, LMSW](#)

Maryellen Bearzi is the Protective Services Administrative Deputy Director for the New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department (CYFD). She manages the administrative operations for the Protective Services Division, including oversight of federal programs, policy and procedures, training, quality assurance and program improvement, youth services, management information system, and research and evaluation. Ms. Bearzi is responsible coordinating New Mexico's efforts and complying with the federal Child and Family Services Review. She also works to maintain the State's compliance with the Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act, is involved in New Mexico's behavioral health purchasing collaborative initiative and New Mexico's Court Improvement Project. Ms. Bearzi serves as a consultant reviewer and co-site leader for the federal Child and Family Services Reviews and has served as a reviewer for federal grant applications. She has worked with National Resources Centers to develop training and programs for New Mexico state staff and has presented at state and national conferences. Ms. Bearzi served as Clinical Deputy Director for CYFD's Protective Services Division from 2000 to 2005. She was responsible for oversight and management of twenty-seven protective services field office responsible for providing child protective, foster care, adoption and youth services. She earned her master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Illinois State University, and has a B.S. in Psychology and Sociology from Millikin University. Ms. Bearzi has been working within the field of child welfare and child protection for over twenty years. Ms. Bearzi is a licensed Masters Social Worker by the New Mexico Social Work Examiners Board.

Frank Cervone

Frank Cervone represents a Consortium of the ABA Litigation Section, Children's Rights Committee, and the National Children's Law Network, a group of eight law offices from around the country representing children. Before assuming his present position, Cervone was a Staff Attorney at Delaware County Legal Assistance Association and Adjunct Clinical Professor at Villanova University School of Law, where he instructed law students in domestic abuse and child support litigation and served as counsel for Saint Gabriel's System, an agency providing treatment services for juvenile offenders. He presently serves as Chair of the Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund. Cervone chaired the Advisory Committee on Child Welfare Services for the Joint State Government Commission, the research arm of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. He also serves as a member of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee, and is a member of the Board of the Philadelphia Children's Alliance. In 2006-7 Cervone served as a member of the Mayor's Child Welfare Review Panel examining the Philadelphia child welfare system

BJ Jones

BJ Jones graduated from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1981 with a B.A. in history, Phi Beta Kappa, and from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1984. Before becoming the Director of the Northern Plains Tribal Judicial Training Institute, he was Litigation Director for Dakota Plains Legal Services. Jones has devoted his law practice to serving indigent residents of South and North Dakota Indian reservations and adjoining counties, and has represented clients in Federal, state, and tribal courts as well as in administrative hearings. His areas of expertise include federal entitlements, Indian law, domestic relations and health law. Jones is admitted to the state bars of Virginia, South Dakota and North Dakota; the Federal bars of the US District Courts for North and South Dakota, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, and the U.S. Supreme Court; and the Rosebud Sioux, Standing Rock Sioux, Oglala Sioux, Flandreau-Santee Sioux, Yankton Sioux, and Spirit Lake Nation tribal bars.

Jones is also the Chief Justice of the Turtle Mountain Tribal Court of Appeals, a Special Magistrate of the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Tribal Court, and an alternate judge of the Three Affiliated Tribes Tribal Court. He is a member of the Diversity Committee at the N.D. School of Law, has taught Indian law, and has acted as a clinical instructor for the Native American Law Program there. . Jones serves on the North Dakota Supreme Court Committee on Tribal-State Court Affairs, and the ABA Committee on the Unmet Needs of Children. He publishes and presents in the area of Indian law.

Martin Guggenheim

Martin Guggenheim is one of the nation's foremost experts on children's rights and family law, and has taught at NYU School of Law since 1973. He served as Director of Clinical and Advocacy Programs from 1988 to 2002, was the Executive Director of Washington Square Legal Services, Inc. from 1987 to 2000, and for 15 years taught the Juvenile Rights Clinic in which students represented accused juvenile delinquents in New York's Family Court. He then created the Family Defense Clinic, which represents parents and other adult relatives of children in foster care in New York City. Guggenheim has been an active litigator in the area of children and the law and has argued leading cases on juvenile delinquency and termination of parental rights in the U.S. Supreme Court. He is also a well-known scholar, having published more than 40 book chapters and articles in leading law reviews in the United States. Much of his research has focused on the role of counsel for children in court proceedings, child welfare practice, juvenile justice and family law. He is the author of five books on children and parents and his most recent book, *What's Wrong with Children's Rights* was published by Harvard University Press in 2005.

Kay Farley

Ms. Farley monitors and analyzes congressional and federal government agency activity affecting state court operations, with particular emphasis on funding and children and family-related issues. She is also responsible for informing state court leaders about national activities and assisting in policy development and articulation for the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), National Association for Court Management (NACM), and American Judges Association (AJA). Ms. Farley serves as liaison for the NCSC, CCJ, and COSCA with Congress and federal government agencies on the issues of funding and children and family policy. Before joining the NCSC, Ms. Farley was Director of MAXIMUS, Inc. and served as Coordinator of Children and Family Programs, Office of Judicial Administration, Kansas Supreme Court.

Mimi Laver, J.D.

Mimi Laver is the Assistant Director for the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues. She brings an agency attorney perspective to her supervisory role at the Resource Center having served for seven years as a Deputy City Solicitor in the Health and Human Services Unit of the Philadelphia Law Department. She is an expert in ASFA, court improvement, parent and agency representation, and improving the legal functioning of child welfare agencies. She has written extensively on representation issues post-ASFA and helped author the ABA representation standards for children's, parents', and agency attorneys. She received her J.D. from Temple University School of Law in 1990, and her B.A. from Vassar College in 1987.

Hon. Patricia M. Martin

The Honorable Patricia M. Martin is the Presiding Judge of the Child Protection Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois. She is a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. She has chaired the Supreme Court of Illinois Judicial Conference Study Committee on Juvenile Justice, and has been a member of other Illinois Supreme Court committees. In addition, Judge Martin has presented at local, national, and international conferences on child abuse/neglect topics and has received numerous awards for her work. Judge Martin was elected to the bench in 1996 and retained in 2002. From 1986 to 1996, Judge Martin was an assistant Cook County Public Defender, where she rose to Deputy Chief, Fifth District. Judge Martin has a Juris Doctorate from Northern Illinois University College of Law in Dekalb, Illinois and a Bachelors of Arts with honors from Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. She also studied at and received honors from the University of Nairobi in Kenya.

Michael Piraino, CEO

Michael Piraino has served as chief executive officer of the National CASA Association since 1994, overseeing such projects as a nationwide grants program providing millions of dollars in funding for volunteer advocacy programs, a new 30-hour comprehensive volunteer training curriculum, a national quality assurance program, a major multi-site outcome evaluation project and national public relations efforts. Piraino has law degrees from Cornell Law School and Oxford University. While practicing law, he represented children as a guardian ad litem and served as a consultant to international social service and child advocacy organizations in Europe and Southeast Asia. Piraino has also worked as a juvenile probation officer and was an associate research scientist for the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University.

Among Michael Piraino's professional achievements, he has authored and co-authored several publications including "Discrimination in Employment" in the Cornell Law Review, A Guide for Children's Advocates and The Children's Databook . He has also been a frequent speaker and presenter at symposia on children, including the United Nations NGO Experts' Meeting on Adoption and Foster Care, the Rockefeller Archives Institute Symposium on Children at Risk and the Amnesty International Forum on Children. As a result of his service to children, Piraino received the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' President's Award in 1998 and the New York Decade of the Child Award in 1992.

Carol Wilson Spigner, MSW, DSW

Carol W. Spigner, D.S.W. joined the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice in July, 1999 as a visiting professor and joined the faculty permanently in September, 2000. At Penn Spigner, directs the social policy program and teaches policy and macro practice. Prior to her arrival at Penn, Dr. Spigner had been the Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and was responsible for the administration of federal child welfare programs. Most recently Spigner has served on: the Pew Commission for Children in Foster Care; the Mayor's Child Welfare Review Panel for the City of Philadelphia; and the Workgroup for the Michigan Racial Equity Task Force. She also serves on the Board of the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Dr. Spigner has published a variety of articles in the areas of cultural competency, permanency planning and relative care. Her work focuses on the reform of public child welfare agencies and child welfare policy.

Mark Testa, Ph.D.

Currently Mark Testa is Director of the Children & Family Research Center, School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He will join UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Social Work in January 2010 as the first Sandra Reeves Spears and John B. Turner Distinguished Professor. Dr. Testa earned his bachelor's degree in Sociology from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, studied social welfare policy in 1973 at the University of Stockholm, Sweden and earned his A.M. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. For 30 years, Dr. Testa has provided leadership on research and public engagement to improve the lives of children and families involved in the income assistance and child protection systems. Professor Testa is the architect of several major child welfare innovations in Illinois. He is currently leading the evaluations of replications of the Illinois subsidized guardianship demonstration in Wisconsin and Tennessee. His sustained contributions to child welfare innovation resulted in his becoming Principal Investigator of Fostering Results in 2003 – a public education campaign funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts to improve federal financing and accountability in foster care.

Professor Testa has received numerous awards and honors for his research and public service. He is the recipient of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Adoption 2002 Excellence Award for Applied Scholarship and Research on kinship care and permanence. In 2004 he received the Blue Bow Award for research and leadership in improving systems of care for children from the Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois; in 2005 he received the University of Illinois Campus Award for Excellence in Public Engagement; and in 2006 he was nominated by Senator Dick Durbin and received the Angel in Adoption Award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. He also serves on numerous federal committees and philanthropic boards as part of his effort to improve outcomes for children and families involved in our nation's child welfare systems.

Nancy Thoennes, Ph.D., Associate Director

Dr. Thoennes is the Associate Director at the Center for Policy Research. She has conducted numerous studies related to juvenile courts and child protection agencies. Her current work includes an evaluation of the use of mediation in the New York City Family Court. Past work includes numerous studies on the use of dependency mediation, as well as explorations of: innovations in court systems designed to provide coordination to families with multiple-court cases; case management in the dependency court; models of legal representation for children in child welfare cases; models of providing guardian *ad litem* services; assessments of citizen, judicial and administrative foster care review. She is currently serving on the Court Improvement Project Technical Working Group convened under a contract from the Children's Bureau to help guide the direction of CIP evaluation.

Casey Trupin

Casey Trupin is a staff attorney at Columbia Legal Services in Seattle, where he advocates for at-risk, homeless and foster youth as well as adults who are homeless. Trupin has handled impact cases in state and federal court involving the rights of these populations and has successfully worked to pass relevant state and federal legislation. Trupin is a Special Advisor to the American Bar Association's Commission on Homelessness and Poverty, which he chaired from 2006-2009. Trupin has edited a number of books, including *Educating Children Without Housing* (ABA, 2nd and 3rd Eds.), and *Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Law: Model State Statutes* (ABA 2008), as well as written articles on legal issues related to homeless and foster children and homeless adults. Trupin has also lectured nationally on these topics. In 1997, Trupin co-founded Street Youth Legal Advocates of Washington (SYLAW), and directed the program until 2005. Trupin has also served as Counsel for Special Projects for the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) in Washington D.C. working on federal child welfare policy. In 2005, Trupin was recognized by the Congressional Commission on Adoption Institute as an Angel in Adoption for his work on behalf of homeless and foster youth. In 1996, Trupin conducted a year-long study of programs for homeless youth in Latin America as a Thomas J. Watson Fellow. Trupin currently serves on the Advisory Boards of the National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness (NPACH), Center for Children and Youth Justice, ABA Bar-Youth Empowerment Project, the University of Washington Gates Public Service Law Program and SYLAW. Trupin graduated from the University of Washington School of Law with honors in 1999.