

# Overcoming Challenges to Evaluating Child Welfare Programs

## Speaker Biographies

**Mark E. Courtney, PhD**, is the Samuel Deutsch Professor emeritus in the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice at the University of Chicago. He also serves as Senior Advisor for the Transition Age Youth Research and Evaluation Hub, California Child Welfare Indicators Project, UC Berkeley. Courtney's fields of special interest are child welfare policy and services, the connection between child welfare services and other institutions serving families living in poverty, and the transition to adulthood for marginalized populations. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare and the Society for Social Work and Research. He received the 2010 Peter W. Forsythe Award for leadership in public child welfare from National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators and the 2015 Distinguished Career Achievement Award from the Society for Social Work and Research.

**Serita Cox** is the CEO and Co-Founder of iFoster. She is responsible for strategy and programs. As the driving force behind iFoster, Serita brings to bear her personal experience with foster care, devoted commitment to a number of youth development initiatives, and over a decade of experience in executive-level management in Silicon Valley, corporate strategy consulting and non-profit strategy consulting. Despite all this corporateness, she is also the person "most likely to be hugged" by a client. For her work with iFoster, Serita has been recognized as a White House Office of Social Innovation Citizen Innovator, an Echoing Green Fellow, and an American Leader of Change.

**Bridgette Lery, MSW, PhD**, is a senior fellow and child welfare practice lead at the Urban Institute. Her research focuses on child welfare and other human services, including administrative data systems, performance measurement, capacity building and evidence use in the workforce, program implementation, and evaluation. Her current work involves leading several program evaluations, including a foster care prevention program in Kentucky; California's guaranteed income pilots; San Francisco's family resource centers; and California's Children's Crisis Continuum Pilot Program. Lery previously worked in local government directing research and evaluation for the San Francisco Human Services Agency.

**Pamela Lilleston, PhD, MHS**, is the Director of the Office of Applied Research & Evaluation and Scientific Advisor at the NJ Department of Children and Families. In this role, she oversees a team of researchers who design, coordinate, and implement research and evaluation projects focused on the safety, health and wellbeing of children and families in New Jersey. Prior to this position, she served as a Social and Behavioral Scientist at the International Center for Research on Women, and an Evaluation Fellow at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Lilleston earned her PhD and MHS from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and her BA from Georgetown University.

**Michael Pergamit, PhD**, is a senior fellow at the Urban Institute. A labor economist, he has focused much of his research on youth at the transition to adulthood, with emphasis on youth aging out of foster care, youth experiencing homelessness, and youth from low-income families. He also leads or has led numerous program evaluations, especially those serving youth and families in the child welfare system, using experimental, quasi-experimental, and nonexperimental methods. He currently co-leads evaluations of a program aimed at helping substance-affected parents in the child welfare system better parent their

children, a supportive housing program for families involved the child welfare system, and a program to help transition-age youth in foster care successfully transition to adulthood. Pergamit earned his PhD from the University of Chicago and his BA from the University of Washington.

**Shannon M. Quinn, MSW**, is a social worker with over 15 years of experience both in non-profit and government work with vulnerable populations. Her career has included working in an early learning setting, residential settings, and in licensing for long term care settings. Her child welfare career has included roles in intake, case management, supervision and program management. She currently serves as the Youth and Young Adult Housing Response Team Manager with DCYF, convening a cross-agency team that supports young people exiting publicly funded systems of care to access safe and stable housing.

**Kris A. Robles, LCSW**, is a seasoned social worker and clinical leader with over 20 years of experience working with youth and families impacted by behavioral health, substance use, intimate partner violence, child welfare and the juvenile justice system. He is the Behavioral Health Clinical Director for CT Children and Families. He has served in direct care, clinical supervision, and statewide leadership roles, including work with justice-involved youth and adults. Currently, he is a leader of statewide initiatives focused on substance use, maternal health, recovery support, intimate partner violence, and youth behavioral health. Passionate about creating community-based, trauma-informed services, Kris is committed to transforming Connecticut's behavioral health service system through collaboration, policy advocacy, and healing-centered approaches.