



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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MAURAT. HEALEY
GOVERNOR

KIAME MAHANIAH, MD, MBA
SECRETARY

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

February 2, 2026

The Honorable Maura T. Healey
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Rm 280
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Andrea Campbell
Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
One Ashburton Place, 20th Floor
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Diane DiZoglio
Auditor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Rm 230
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Office of the Child Advocate Nominations

Dear Governor Healey, Attorney General Campbell, and Auditor Dizoglio:

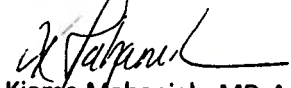
Pursuant to MGL Chapter 18C, Section 3, the Office of the Child Advocate Nominating Committee is pleased to recommend the following three candidates for consideration to become the next Child Advocate:

- *Marisol Garcia, currently serving as Deputy Director, Health Law Advocates*
- *Jacquelyn O'Brien, currently serving as Managing Director, Children & Family Law Division, Committee for Public Counsel Services*
- *Theresa Wilson, currently serving as State Counsel, New York State Office of the State Attorney General*

Please find attached the resumes and contact information for the three nominees. I have also attached the Committee's membership and a summary of its activities. For more details regarding the Nominating Committee's activities and meeting minutes, please visit the website at www.mass.gov/child-advocate-nominating-committee.

On behalf of the Committee, please let me know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Kiamé Mahaniah, MD, MBA

Secretary

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Cc: Kate Cook, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Anne Landry, Chief, Policy and Government Affairs, Office of Attorney General
Kathleen Bitetti, Strategy and Engagement Special Advisor, Office of the State Auditor

Office of the Child Advocate Nominating Committee Charge

Legal Authority: M.G.L Chapter 18C

Statute

Section 3: Child advocate; appointment; vacancies; removal

Section 3. The office of the child advocate shall be under the direction of the child advocate. The child advocate shall be the administrative head of the office and shall devote full-time to the duties of the office. The child advocate shall be appointed by a majority vote of the attorney general, the state auditor and the governor from a list of 3 nominees submitted by a nominating committee to recommend a child advocate. The nominating committee shall consist of: the secretary of health and human services; the commissioner of children and families; the commissioner of youth services; the commissioner of mental health; the executive director of the child abuse prevention board; a pediatrician experienced in treating victims of child abuse who shall be designated by the Massachusetts chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; a child psychiatrist who shall be designated by the Massachusetts Psychiatric Society, Inc.; a child psychologist who shall be designated by The Massachusetts Psychological Association, Inc.; a representative from the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, Inc.; a representative of an organization that advocates on behalf of children at risk of abuse who shall be designated by the Children's League of Massachusetts, Inc.; an attorney experienced in care and protection cases who shall be designated by the Massachusetts Bar Association; a social worker who shall be designated by the Massachusetts chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, Inc.; a person with experience in the juvenile justice system who shall be designated by the chief justice of the juvenile court department and a representative of organized labor who shall be designated by the president of a collective bargaining unit that represents social workers. The work of the nominating committee shall be coordinated by the executive office of health and human services.

Any person appointed to the position of child advocate shall be selected without regard to political affiliation and on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in child welfare, juvenile justice, auditing, law, management analysis, public administration and investigation or criminal justice administration. The child advocate may, subject to appropriation, appoint such other personnel as the child advocate deems necessary for the efficient management of the office.

The child advocate shall serve for a term of 5 years. In case of a vacancy in the position of the child advocate, a successor shall be appointed in the same manner for the remainder of the unexpired term. No person shall be appointed as child advocate for more than 2 full terms.

The child advocate may be removed from office for cause by a majority vote of the attorney general, the state auditor and the governor. Such cause may include substantial neglect of duty, gross misconduct or conviction of a crime. The cause for removal of the child advocate shall be stated in writing and shall be sent to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives and to the governor at the time of removal and shall be a public document.

Office of the Child Advocate Nominating Committee Membership

Committee Chairperson

- Secretary Kiame Mahaniah, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Members

Agency/Organization, per statute	Nominating Committee Member
1. EOHHS Secretary	Kiame Mahaniah
2. DCF Commissioner	Staverne Miller
3. DYS Commissioner	Cecely Reardon
4. DMH Commissioner	Beth Lucas
5. Children's Trust ED (child abuse prevention board)	Jennifer Valenzuela, Executive Director
6. Pediatrician experienced in treating victims of child abuse, designated by Mass American Academy of Pediatrics	Dr. Linda Sagor
7. Child psychiatrist, designated Mass. Psychiatric Society	Neha Sharma, DO, DFAACA
8. Child psychologist, designated Mass. Psychological Association	Margo Townley, MSW, PsyD
9. Representative from MA Association for Mental Health (MAMH)	Meri Viano, Associate Director, PPAL
10. Representative of organization that advocates children at risk of abuse designated by Children's League of Mass	Rachel Gwaltney, Executive Director, CLM
11. Attorney experienced in care and protection cases designated MA Bar Association	Attorney Daniel Mahoney
12. Social worker designated MA National Association of Social Workers	Sandra Best Bailly, NASW-MA Board President
13. Person with experience in the juvenile justice system designated by chief justice of the juvenile court department	The Honorable Amy Nechtem
14. Representative of organized labor designated by the president of a collective bargaining unit that represents social workers	Kate Shea, General Counsel SEIU

Summary of Activities of the Office of the Child Advocate Nominating Committee

October 2025

- October 29, 2025: Review of the Committee’s charges, enabling legislation, and the Commonwealth’s conflict of interest laws, ethics regulations, and open meeting law

November 2025

- November 5, 2025: The Committee held a listening session and written and spoken testimony can be found on the OCA Nominating Committee website:
 - Listening Session – Submitted Written Testimony: [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
 - Listening Session Meeting Summarized Testimony: [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
 - Listening Session Attendees: [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
 - Written Testimony Submissions: Redacted Letter: [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
 - Written Testimony Submissions: Letter—Office of the Child Advocate Nomination Process: [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
 - Written Testimony Submissions: JDL Letter re OCA Selection: [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
- November 12, 2025: Overview of candidate pool, selection and approval of a subcommittee to conduct preliminary review of candidates, and decisions on subcommittees work.
- November 18, 2025: Approval of meeting minutes and vote to go into Executive Session.
- November 25, 2025: Review of subcommittee proposed candidates and interview questions approved by rollcall vote.

January 2026

- January 6, 2026: Interview preparation and logistics discussion.
- January 13, 2026: Interview of Theresa Wilson
- January 14, 2026: Interview of Christine Goldman and Charles Lerner
- January 15, 2026: Interviews of Marisol Garcia and Jacquelyn O’Brien
- January 27, 2026: Review of Interview Feedback Framework and real-time anonymous poll and final selection of nominated candidates approved by rollcall vote.

Marisol Garcia

30+ Years Advocating for Children

SUMMARY

- Over a decade of **executive level program management** experience
- **Two-plus decades of experience representing children in court** (Care & Protection, Child Requiring Assistance, Delinquency, and administrative hearings related to disability benefits and special education services)
- **Significant expertise in policy** areas related to child welfare, children's behavioral health, disability, special education, and the juvenile justice system
- **Experienced legislative advocate** and **skilled communicator**
- **Decades of experience building collaborative partnerships** with government agencies, juvenile courts, advocate organizations, children's healthcare providers, and community-based service providers to advance policies and programs that improve outcomes for children
- **Fluent Native Spanish speaker**

EDUCATION

Northeastern University School of Law

Juris Doctor, 1997

Providence College

B.A. English, Minor Sociology, 1994 (Magna Cum Laude)

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Health Law Advocates, Inc (2015 to present)

Deputy Director (2022 to present)

Senior Director (2021-2022)

Director/Managing Attorney (2017 to 2021)

Project Director/Senior Staff Attorney (2016 to 2017)

Mental Health Advocate (2015 to 2016)

Over the course of a decade, I developed the Mental Health Advocacy Program (MHAP) for Kids from a small pilot program with 2 staff attorneys based in 2 Juvenile Courts into an established, data-driven, high performing statewide program with 25 staff in 16 locations. As the Director of the MHAP for Kids Program, I am responsible for overall strategic direction as well as day to day operations.

Key accomplishments include:

- Establishing and refining a successful model that improves the physical and mental health of children and caregivers, as well as decreased involvement of children in child welfare and juvenile court systems and decreased use of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization and emergency mental health services by children.
- Increasing the capacity of the program by over 900% by expanding statewide – doubling the size of the parent organization in 4 years while significantly increasing state funding to support the expansion.
- Leading legislative advocacy efforts, securing over \$15 million in state public funding through an established earmark while establishing MHAP for Kids as both a credible source of information as well as a trusted partner on policy areas related to children’s mental health and the juvenile justice system.
- Building and maintaining positive working relationships with key partners, including the Juvenile Court, Department of Children & Families, Department of Youth Services, Probation Department, Department of Mental Health, MassHealth, JDAI, and the Office of the Child Advocate.
- Hiring, coaching, developing, and retaining a high performing team, including attorneys, paralegals, and administrative staff, as well as numerous law and MPH interns.
- Establishing organizational structures necessary to support a rapidly expanding team, including staff training, human resources, and internal policies and procedures.
- Improving marketing and identifying new funders, resulting in over half a million dollars in new grants.
- Working with the Director of External Engagement to respond to media inquiries and create videos, social media messaging, newsletters, and other communications to inform and mobilize supporters.
- Developing an innovative special education legal strategy during COVID-19, highlighted as a national model by the American Bar Association.
- Pioneering a groundbreaking partnership with Boston Children’s Hospital to advocate for children boarding in their emergency department.

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Law Office of Ronald Eskin (2012 to 2015)

Attorney

- Represented children and adults in highly successful administrative hearings before the Social Security Administration for SSI and SSDI benefits.

Law Office of Marisol Garcia (1999 to 2012)

Attorney

- Sole practitioner providing high quality counsel and zealous representation for youth and parent clients as attorney and Guardian ad Litem specializing in juvenile delinquency, care & protection, and child requiring assistance cases.

- CAFL and YAD Bar Advocate (Middlesex & Essex Counties). Certified by CPCS for over 15 years, serving a significant number of bilingual clients in their native language. Specialized in representing dually-involved youth.
- Created and led effective defense teams including investigators, experts, and social workers to explore every aspect of a case from supporting the client in the community, meeting with and assessing witnesses, developing legal strategies and theories, to in-court representation of clients in juvenile delinquency cases.

Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts, Inc (1997 to 1999)

MLAC Bart J. Gordon Fellow & Staff Attorney

- Represented children and youth in court and administrative forums in care & protection, special education, school exclusion, delinquency, CRA, and public assistance matters.
- Trained and mentored Pro Bono attorneys in education law as well as administered and supervised the internship program for law students.
- Developed informational materials and conducted legal workshops on education, delinquency, CRAs, and child welfare law in both English and Spanish.
- Coordinated outreach to the Latino community through Spanish print, radio, and television media.

Abortion Access Project (1997)

Legal Intern

U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit (1996)

Legal Intern for The Honorable Bruce M. Seyla

Greater Boston Legal Services (1996)

Legal Intern

Children’s Law Center of Massachusetts, Inc (1995)

Legal Intern

Court Appointed Special Advocate (1992-1993)

Volunteer

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Boston University School of Public Health (2022 to 2025)

- Instructor for Introduction to Mental Health Advocacy.
- Planned and taught a course to assist Master’s level Public Health students learn how advocacy works in the fields of mental health and substance use.

William James College (2009 to 2015)

- Adjunct faculty member for Consultation and Testimony in Forensic Psychology.
- Planned and conducted mock competency and civil commitment hearings for Master’s Level Forensic Counseling Students to train them how to testify as expert witnesses.

University of Massachusetts at Lowell (2010 to 2013)

- Adjunct faculty member in the political science program

- Instructing 2 courses in Introduction to American Politics

STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

American Bar Association Children's Rights Litigation Committee (2024 to present)

Co-Chair and Committee Member

JDAI Race, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee (2021 to present)

Co-chair and Subcommittee Member

Massachusetts Juvenile Court Improvement Task Force (2021 to present)

Task Force Member

American Bar Association Children's Rights Legal Committee (2018 to present)

Education Subcommittee Member

Northeastern University School of Law: Center for Public Interest Advocacy and Collaboration (2019 to present)

Mapping the Cradle to Prison Pipeline Advisory Board Member

TRAININGS & INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Addressing Violence Against Children Within Systems: Time for New Solutions (June 2025)

Sponsored by the American Bar Association Litigation Section

Panel Member presenting on structural violence against children in the US and discussing themes from the 5th Edition of the World Congress on Justice With Children

Changing the Game: Transforming Mental Health Systems for Kids and Families (August 2024)

Sponsored by National Association of Counsel for Children

Presenter at 47th National Child Welfare Law Conference for child welfare lawyers, judges, and others to transform mental health systems to serve children with mental health needs.

Treating Kids Like Kids: Ending the Prosecution of Young Children (April 2024)

Sponsored by Association of Children's Residential and Community Services

Presenter on avoiding juvenile court and incarceration by implementing evidence based innovative best practice responses to youth mental and behavioral health needs.

Reducing Disparities and Centering Equity in School Behavioral Health Through Effective Engagement of Student and Families (December 2023)

Sponsored by the Children's Mental Health Campaign and the BIRCh Project at UMASS

Plenary Facilitator at the Massachusetts School-Based Behavioral Health Summit.

Smart Justice (August 2023)

Sponsored by Hackett Center for Mental Health and Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Presenter at Children's Mental Health Summit on issues of children's mental health and the nexus with court involvement.

Behavioral Health Reform (June 2023)

Sponsored by the Boston Bar Association

Panelist on Massachusetts Behavioral Health Reform and the impact on children at Health Law Conference.

Services Without State Intervention (May 2023)

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Bar Association

Panelist on stopping the cradle to prison pipeline when seeking services for children at Sixth Annual Juvenile and Child Welfare Conference.

Just Say “NO” to CRAs! (May 2023)

Sponsored by the Parent Professional Advocacy League

Presenter at 12th Annual Conference on Child Requiring Assistance Juvenile Court matters.

Future of Children’s Lawyering (November 2022)

Sponsored by American Bar Association Children’s Rights Committee

Panelist on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion faced by lawyers who practice in juvenile justice and child welfare courts

Community, Collaboration, and Advocacy (October 2022)

Sponsored by the Children’s Hospital Association

Lecturer at the Annual Behavioral Health Summit of national children’s hospitals on mental health advocacy and ongoing partnership with Boston Children’s Hospital

Children’s Behavioral Health Summit (October 2022)

Sponsored by Boston Children’s Hospital and Massachusetts Association for Mental Health

Panelist on “Resources for Children with the Most Complex Needs”

Children’s Behavioral Health Summit (October 2022)

Sponsored by Boston Children’s Hospital and Massachusetts Association for Mental Health

Panelist on “Resources for Children with the Most Complex Needs”

A Focus on Impact (June 2021)

Sponsored by MassHealth and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

Panelist on “MassHealth and Schools and School-Aged Children, Teens, and Young Adults”

Addressing Financial and Legal Problems to Improve the Mental Health of Adults and Children in the Pandemic (May 2021)

Sponsored by the National Center for Medical Legal Partnership

Lecturer presenting data on the efficacy of our program as an intervention to reduce suicidality.

Useful Strategies in Juvenile Court Clinic’s Report Writing to Aid Access to DMH, DDS, DCF and SPED services and Ongoing Advocacy (May 2021)

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Juvenile Court Clinic

Lecturer educating juvenile court clinicians on how to draft appropriate recommendations and evidentiary reports to ensure youth access necessary mental health and social services.

Cradle to Prison Pipeline Child Welfare and Legal System Involvement (January 2021)

Sponsored by Boston Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Volunteers

Lecturer on the juvenile justice system, child welfare risk factors for court involvement, and access to diversion programs

Accessing Early Childhood Special Education Services (October 2020)

Sponsored by the Children’s Mental Health Campaign

Lecturer presenting legal strategies and tools for preventing children falling through the cracks during the global pandemic.

Advocating for Special Education Services During COVID-19 (July 2020)

Sponsored by Boston Children's Hospital

Presenter educating medical providers about the educational rights of children during the pandemic.

Advocating for Special Education Needs: Best Practices to Support Children in a Time of Crisis Webinar (April 2020)

Co-sponsored by Alliance for Children's Rights and ABA Children's Rights Committee

Lecturer/ Panel Member invited to present the MHAP model as a best practice at the National Conference to over 600 participants.

Cradle to Prison Pipeline Conference (November 2019)

Sponsored by Northeastern University School of Law

Lecturer/ Panel Member invited to present outcome data from the program to illustrate efficacy in diverting youth from the juvenile justice system.

Mass Bar Association 3rd Annual Juvenile and Child Welfare Conference (May 2019)

Delivered Closing Remarks at annual juvenile justice and child welfare conference.

Panel member discussing impact of school policing and the school to prison pipeline.

Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education – School Law Conference (May 2016)

Lecturer/Panel member at the annual conference School Law Conference for attorneys that provide representation to students with special needs.

Suffolk University School of Law; Boston, MA (April 2011)

Lecturer and panel member at Annual Juvenile Justice Center Children on Trial Conference:

"Evidentiary Issues: Teens, Social Media and Cell Phones". Reviewed relevant statutes as well as identified community resources on the panel entitled: "Dispositional Alternatives for Juveniles and Interaction and Assistance at Disposition Hearing."

Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education – Juvenile Law Basics (February 2010)

Lecturer and panel member at training seminar for CPCS appointed counsel providing representation to indigent litigants appearing in the Juvenile Court. Developed pertinent materials including sample motions and memorandums of law.

American Bar Association (March 2009)

National Spring Teleconference Panel Member on topic of "Breathing Life into Federal Reforms – Utilizing the 'Fostering Connections to Success Act' To Improve Outcomes for Foster Children."

PUBLICATIONS

Medicaid Won't Cover That (and Other Misconceptions) (August 2024)

American Bar Association Children's Rights Litigation Committee

Protecting Kids from the Upcoming Exclusion Epidemic (August 2021)

American Bar Association Children's Rights Litigation Committee

Mind the Gap: Kids at Risk for Falling Through the Cracks in Transition to Early Childhood Special Education from Early Intervention (December 2020)

American Bar Association Children's Rights Litigation Committee

Advocating for Youth Access to Mental Health Services During a Pandemic (June 2020)

Presented White Paper at ABA Commission on Homelessness and Poverty Spring Meeting.
Highlighted as a best practice model nationally.

Advocating for Special Education Services During COVID-19 (April 2020)

American Bar Association Children's Rights Litigation Committee

Fighting Fear of Trump Administration's Immigration Policies with Facts (December 2019)

American Bar Association Children's Rights Litigation Committee

Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline (September 2018)

American Bar Association Children's Rights Litigation Committee

COMMUNITY SERVICE

School Committee Member: Westford, MA (May 2022 to May 2025)

- Elected and served as a member of the School Committee.
- Member of the Finance Committee and DEI Committee.
- Duties include biweekly meetings, overseeing the work of the School Superintendent, deciding the disposition of all issues related to the management of the school district and participating in town meetings.

St. Jude Hero Ambassador (2016 to present)

- Marathon runner fundraising over \$40,000 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

AWARDS

Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly Top Women of Law (2022)

Jacquelyn O'Brien

Professional Summary

Respected legal advocate and systems leader with over 25 years of experience advancing child welfare reform, trauma-informed practice, and equity in public legal services. Proven track record of leading multidisciplinary teams, shaping policy, and driving institutional change. As Managing Director of CPCS's Children and Family Law Division, oversee statewide trial and appellate offices, mentor senior counsel, and collaborate with agency leadership to dismantle systemic barriers affecting children and families. Adjunct professor and published author committed to cultivating the next generation of justice-centered lawyers. Known for integrity, strategic vision, and unwavering dedication to the dignity and well-being of children.

Skills & Expertise

- Child Welfare Law & Juvenile Justice
- Trauma-Informed Legal Practice
- Strategic Leadership & Team Management
- Public Policy & Legislative Advocacy
- Equity-Centered Systems Reform
- Cross-Sector Collaboration
- Legal Education & Curriculum Design
- Investigations & Critical Incident Review
- Public Speaking & Media Engagement

Professional Experience

Managing Director – *Children and Family Law Division (CAFL)* *Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS), Boston, MA*

March 2020 – Present

- Lead statewide oversight of four CAFL Staff Trial Offices and the CAFL Staff Appellate Office, ensuring high-quality, culturally humble representation for children and families in child welfare proceedings.
- Supervise Attorneys in Charge and Senior Trial Counsel; mentor leadership to promote trauma-informed, client-centered advocacy.
- Collaborate with CPCS executive leadership to advance division-wide goals, including systemic reform and equity initiatives.
- Shape policy and practice through strategic planning, interagency collaboration, and public engagement.
- Represent CAFL in statewide forums, legislative discussions, and cross-sector partnerships focused on improving outcomes for children.

Jacquelyn O'Brien

Adjunct Professor

Western New England University School of Law, Springfield, MA

January 2023 – Present

- Director of the Family Defense Practicum and instructor for the Child Protection Law Simulation Course.
- Developed the Family Defense Practicum syllabus and revamped the Child Protection Law Simulation course syllabus to incorporate trauma-informed advocacy, systemic analysis, and experiential learning.
- Facilitate weekly seminars and simulations that develop advanced advocacy skills in law students.
- Provide mentorship and individualized feedback to students, fostering critical thinking and ethical lawyering.

Attorney in Charge – CAFL Division

Committee for Public Counsel Services, Worcester, MA

October 2015 – March 2020

Interim Attorney in Charge

October 2014 – October 2015

- Managed a multidisciplinary trial office of attorneys, social workers, and support staff.
- Oversaw case assignments, staff evaluations, and office operations.
- Provided training and supervision in child welfare litigation and advocacy.

Supervising Staff Attorney – CAFL Division

Committee for Public Counsel Services, Worcester, MA

October 2012 – September 2014

- Supervised attorneys and contributed to staff development and training.
- Litigated Care and Protection, CRA, and Guardianship cases.

Staff Attorney – CAFL Division

Committee for Public Counsel Services, Worcester, MA

January 2012 – October 2012

- Represented children and indigent parents in child welfare proceedings.
- Served as faculty at CAFL trainings.

Attorney at Law

Law Office of Jacquelyn O'Brien, Worcester, MA

May 1996 – January 2012

Jacquelyn O'Brien

- Operated a private practice focused on child and family law, mental health law, and juvenile advocacy.
- Litigated complex cases including Termination of Parental Rights, Adoption, Guardianship, and Delinquency.
- Appointed as guardian ad litem; certified in Basic and Permanency Mediation.
- Mentored new CAFL attorneys and presented at professional trainings.

Partner

O'Brien, Whitcomb & Korman, Worcester, MA

January 1994 – May 1996

- Handled a range of family and juvenile law cases, including CHINS, Delinquency, and Mental Health matters.

Presentations

Presenter, National Association for Public Defense

Defending Families, Protecting Futures: The Frontlines of Defense Advocacy Skills Training

September 10–12, 2025 | Seattle, WA

- “A Genie on Your Shoulder: Appellate and Trial Lawyers Can Work Together to Reach a Client’s Goal”
- “Justice is a Team Sport: Leading Multidisciplinary Family Defense”

Delivering two sessions focused on collaborative advocacy and leadership in family defense to a national audience of public defenders, legal professionals, and policy advocates.

Publications

Hon. Brian Frane, Ann Narris, Esq., Jacquelyn O'Brien, Esq. (2023). *Chapter 7: Initiation of Care and Protection Proceedings*. K. Krywonis & A. Karp (Eds.), *Practitioner’s Guide to State Intervention in the Family (2nd ed.)*. Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education.

Education

Western New England University School of Law, Springfield, MA

Juris Doctor, May 1993

Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, cum laude, May 1990

Bar Admission Commonwealth of Massachusetts, December 1993

TERESA WILSON

MANAGERIAL/ LEGAL EXPERIENCE:

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF THE STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL

State Counsel, Suffolk Regional Office March 2012 - July 2015; October 2024-Present

Handle over 100 diverse state and federal cases from inception through trial. Conduct bench trials and jury trials, as well as negotiate settlements on appropriate cases. Defend claims relating to employment discrimination and civil rights violations.

THE CHRYSALIS PROJECT: Restoring Mindful Systems

Founder/President, 2021- Present

Using a restorative lens to create fair systems by equipping people with the insight and tools needed to recognize and disrupt bias.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC COUNSEL SERVICES 2016-2024

Racial Equity Statewide Training Lead, August 2021- October 2024

Racial Equity Trainer, January 2021- August 2021

Racial Equity Trainer for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Public Defender's Office, which provides legal representation to 285,000 indigent clients. Responsible for the training more than 3000 staff and attorneys on racial equity matters addressing racism and the systemic issues in our justice systems. Created and presented a multifaceted anti-racism training program and trained a group of 20+ of Anti-Racism Trainers to facilitate discussions. Created and manage an intensive race based summer program for more than 100. Project Management of multiple teams concerning race and equity policy development, implementation and execution of training initiatives which advance the Diversity Equity and Inclusion goals of the organization.

Equity Inclusion Diversity Working Group, Race and Training Chair; Agency-wide, Oct 2020 - Present

Work with the Equity Inclusion Director and other team members to address racial disparities in more than 20 offices across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, while engaging in addressing racial disparities with stakeholders in multiple Court Systems, District Attorneys' Offices, and other agencies.

Child and Family Law Division Racial Justice Task Force, Co-Chair; Division-wide, Sept 2020 – Jan 2021

Led private attorneys and staff members in developing, implementing, and recommending programs and strategies to address racial disparities in the child welfare system.

Child and Family Law Division, Staff Attorney, February 2016- January 2024

Handled all aspects of child welfare litigation on behalf of children and families.

Office of the State Attorney General, Government Bureau-Trial Division Staff Attorney, Sept 2015-March 2016

Conducted various aspects of litigation for numerous cases, in diverse areas of practice, including substantial motion practice.

NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT, PROSECUTORIAL DIVISION

(Multiple Promotions within Division) 1998-2012

Attorney in Charge, Juvenile Delinquency, Youthful Offender and Child Support Prosecution, Richmond February 2011 - January 2012

Served as chief legal and strategic advisor on all matters. Managed and supervised overall operations of the county office, including supervision of delinquency and child support practice, and legal and support staff.

Deputy Borough Chief, Juvenile Delinquency, Youthful Offender/Child Support, Queens July 2004 - February 2011

Supervised and managed delinquency and child support attorneys and staff. Developed, organized, and implemented a borough-based training program on criminal law and criminal procedure for attorneys.

Diversion Program Coordinator- Weekend Court, Juvenile Delinquency Prosecution, March 2008 - Feb 2011 Worked with the Mayor's Office and city-wide stakeholders to create a Weekend Court juvenile justice alternative to incarceration program. Managed and coordinated the weekend arraignment court process for the Law Department, participated in inter-agency meetings regarding the implementation of Weekend/Holiday Court.

Equal Employment Opportunity Investigator and Counsellor, Counselor, Citywide, Sept 2005 - March 2012
Explored claims of EEO violation within city agencies documented and reported findings to Commissioner.

Diversity Committee, Member, Citywide, September 2005 – September 2010
Explored internal issues related to diversity concerning employment, promotions, and related issues.

Juvenile Delinquency Community Service Committee Co-Creator and Chair, January 2003- January 2010 Implemented, organized and facilitated a multi-county community outreach initiative for the Division.

Major Case Unit; Sex Crime Prosecution Unit; Firearm Prosecution Unit, Oct 2002 – March 2012
Conducted extensive litigation of cases involving the Major Case, Firearms and Sex Crimes Prosecution Units.
Conducted interagency forensic interviews of children; and community and police department trainings.

Juvenile Court Division, Staff Attorney, September; September 1998-October 2002
Handled all aspects of delinquency litigation on behalf of survivors and community.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Reflections on Lawyering Adjunct Professor, September 2024-Present

Instruct students on the principles of public service lawyering, helping them to navigate success in the legal profession.

SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CENTER

Restorative Justice Trainer, September 2023-Present

Help develop curricula, implement and deliver training regarding restorative justice practices for various stakeholders in the legal field across the County.

ROXBURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Restorative Justice State Initiative Honors Professor, September 2022-June 2024

Develop and Implement curriculum for undergraduate students in Restorative Justice; oversee research and reporting initiative for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Restorative Justice Advisory Committee

Constitutional Law Adjunct Professor, Spring 2020

Instruct students on the principles of Constitutional Law. Develop curriculum for undergraduate students in Racial Inequities and Alternative Dispute Resolution classes as an Adjunct Faculty Member of the Criminal Justice Department.

MASSASSOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Black Studies Adjunct Professor, Spring 2024

Develop and Implement curriculum in Black Studies for undergraduate students behind the wall.

JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE, New York, NY

Visiting Adjunct Professor, Fall 2003

Taught a legal research and writing course designed to encourage critical thinking and legal reasoning.

EASTERN SUFFOLK COUNTY B.O.C.E.S.

Guest Lecturer, Spring 2014

Instructed students on Family Court curriculum, which included child support, orders of protection, and juvenile delinquency.

TRAINING EXPERIENCE:

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TRIAL ADVOCACY

Instructor, 2008 – Present (Recurring)

Instructed attorneys in litigation techniques and trial advocacy skills.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC DEFENDERS

Instructor, 2024

Instructed attorneys in litigation techniques and trial advocacy skills.

NATIONAL BLACK PROSECUTORS' ASSOCIATION

Lecturer, 2005-2006, 2024-2025

Conducted national and local trainings concerning juvenile delinquency prosecution.

NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM

Instructor, 2009

Conducted trainings for Judges, Court Personnel and Others on conducting Pre-Petition Hearings in Juvenile Court to facilitate the development of the Family Court Division-Weekend Court Alternative to Detention Program.

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Instructor, 2004 – 2010

Conducted trainings for NYPD School Safety Officers on issues related to taking statements, making identifications and engaging with juvenile suspects.

NEW YORK STATE CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION; NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT

Instructor, 2003 - 2011

Trained new and experienced attorneys on a local and statewide basis in investigations, trial techniques and advocacy, ethical considerations, and other topics related to juvenile justice, criminal law, and criminal procedure. The creation of written training materials were created to satisfy the State's continuing legal education requirements for instructors.

COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC COUNSEL SERVICES - OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

Trainer, Lecturer, Coach, Panelist, Faculty Organizer, 2018-2024

Instruct private counsel and CAFL attorneys on trial techniques, cross examination, trial preparation and expert witness examination. Develop, implement and conduct trainings concerning racial equity for approximately 3000 individuals throughout the Commonwealth.

LAW SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS, TRAININGS and ENGAGEMENTS

HARVARD UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

- Harvard Defenders - Anti-oppression Addressing Awareness Workshop
- Criminal Justice Institute- Lawyer Wellness: Achieving Balance in Practice

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

Ambassadors for Racial Justice- The Fight to End Racial Injustice in Defender Offices and Beyond Panel Discussion

BOSTON COLLEGE LAW SCHOOL

Public Interest Law Program

- White Saviorism Workshop
- DEI Workshop

BOSTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

- Round table discussion on Race in Criminal Justice
- Public Service Identity and Wellness Workshop

BAR ASSOCIATION PRESENTATIONS, TRAININGS and ENGAGEMENTS

MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION

Trainer, Lecturer, Coach, Panelist, Faculty Organizer Instruct attorneys on race equity issues.

- 2022 Combating Incidents of Bias in the Workplace, 2022
- 2021 Better Legal Outcomes, Better Life Outcomes: Positive Youth Development and Racial Justice in Practice During COVID-19, 2021
- 2021-23 Newly Admitted Attorney Professionalism Training, 2021, 2022, 2023
- 2022 DEIC Wellness Program Panel
- 2023 Microaggressions in the Workplace: Attracting and Retaining Attorneys of Color Panel
- 2024 The Origins of Restorative Justice; Repairing Harm and Building Community
- 2025 Reframing the Narrative

BOSTON BAR ASSOCIATION

2020 *Panelist, Representing Families Through Child and Family Law*
Instruct attorneys on race equity and child welfare issues.

COUNTY ATTORNEY ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Lecturer, 2009

Conducted a State-wide lecture for County Attorneys to facilitate the development of Weekend Court Alternative to Detention Programs throughout the State.

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, CRIMINAL JUSTICE SECTION

American Bar Association Criminal Justice Section Racial Justice and Diversity Committee Chair

- 2022 *Race Equity Discussion Leader*
- 2022 *Bias and Identity Discussion Leader*
- 2023 *Implicit Bias and Racial Trauma Discussion Leader*

MASSACHUSETTS BLACK BAR ASSOCIATION

- 2022 *Advancement in Profession Panel Leader*
- 2023 *Judicial Panel Discussion Panel Leader*
- 2023 *Judicial Meet and Greet Program Coordinator*
- 2023 *Black Economic Advancement in Realty Program Assistant*
- 2024 *Federal Court Judicial Panel Program Assistant*

WORCHESTER BAR ASSOCIATION

- 2021 *A Macro Discussion on Micro Aggression: Better Colleagues, and Upstanders- Panelist*

MISCELANEIOUS PRESENTATIONS, TRAININGS and ENGAGEMENTS

Northeastern University Women of Color in the Academy - *Wellness in Anti-DEI Climate Workshop Facilitator 2025*

National Black Prosecutors Association

- 2024 *National Conference Panel Lead*
- 2025 *Richmond County District Attorneys Office Identity and Bias Training*

Canopy Equity Coaching -*Leadership Forum DEI Training 2024*

Boston Cares

- 2022-23 *Privilege and Bias Discussion Leader*

One Can Help - *Poverty and Justice Keynote Speaker 2022*

Massachusetts Psychiatric Society Antiracism Committee Closing Panel

- 2022 *Envisioning An Equitable Mental Health Crisis Response Panelist*

State of Connecticut Public Defenders Office - *Leadership & Community engagement Trainer 2022*

Youth Advocacy Foundation - *Race Equity in Juvenile Court Keynote 2022*

EDUCATION:

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, Boston Campus Masters of Sociology, concentration in Social Justice, *Hiatus*

HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, Hempstead, NY Jurist Doctor, May, 1998

Honors: Managing Editor of the *Hofstra Law & Policy Symposium Journal*, Co-Associate Editor-in-Chief of the *Family and Conciliation Courts Review: World Congress Issue*, Lawrence C. Schoen Full Academic Scholarship, National Institute of Trial Advocacy Grant, The Association of the Bar of the City of New York Fellow, Student Representative for the Recruiting and Retention of Minority Students Faculty Committee, Law School Public Interest Recognition, and Housing Clinic Intern

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, Central Islip, NY

Bachelor of Science Interdisciplinary Studies, *Magna Cum Laude*, May, 1995.

Honors: Full Academic Scholarship, Inroads Intern at Bankers Trust Company, Humanities Foundation Scholarship, Presidential Academic Excellence Scholarship, Nu Upsilon Tau Honor Society, Martin Luther King Jr. Service Award, Academic Excellence Award, Service to the School Award, National Dean's List and Student Athlete of the Year

BAR ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE EXPERIENCE:

NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

Women Lawyers Division, CJS Liaison, September 2025

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession, CJS Liaison, September 2021-Present

Criminal Justice Section, Racial Justice and Diversity Committee Co-Chair, September 2021 Present *Criminal Justice Section, Committee Member*, January 2021 – Present

MASSACHUSETTS BLACK LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

President Elect June 2025-Present

Board of Directors, June 2023-May 2025

Co-Chair Judiciary Committee, July 2023-2024

Co-Chair Professional Development Committee, 2023 *Member* 2021-2023

MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION, Boston, MA

Diversity Equity Inclusion Committee, Committee Member, July 2021 – Present

DEIC- Education Subcommittee Chair, September 2024

MASSACHUSETTS WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION, Boston, MA

Board of Directors, Member February 2021 – February 2023

NATIONAL BLACK PROSECUTORS' ASSOCIATION, Sterling Johnson Chapter

Queens County Representative, 2005-2015

BOARD OF DIRECTOR EXPERIENCE:

ARTS FOR ANXIETY, INC., Boston, MA

Board of Directors, Executive Director, September 2017 – Present

ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC. BOSTON PEARL FOUNDATION, Boston, MA

Board of Directors, Vice President, February 2021 – Present

BOSTON CARES, INC., Boston, MA

Board of Directors, Member, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Chair June 2021 – Present

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS and ASSOCIATIONS:

Supreme Judicial Court Well-Being Committee DEI Recommendations Courts, Public Agencies,
and Legal Services Working Group Member
Wheelock Family Theater 40 turns 50 Committee
Roxbury Community College Criminal Justice Board Member
Roxbury Community College 50th Anniversary Learning Innovating Responding Panel Discussion
Housing Court's Volunteer Lawyer
National Association of Parliamentarians
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. State Connections Chairman; Alpha Kappa Alpha Day at the Capitol Chair
Alpha Kappa Alpha Day at City Hall: Chair; "Where are we now? Where are we Going? Six Months after George Floyd"
The Links, Incorporated: Eastern Regional Women's Issue Chair; President; Program Chair, Parliamentarian Jack and Jill of
America, Incorporated: Vice President; Teen Advisor; Parliamentarian; Protocol Officer
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated: Parliamentarian; Connections Committee Chair; Protocol Officer Omega Chapter
National Black Prosecutors Association: Queens County Representative
Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association
Massachusetts Women's Bar Association
Metropolitan Black Bar Association
National Association of Parliamentarians- Registered Parliamentarian
Red Line Round Robin Mock Trial Judge
Town of Easton Cultural Council
Cortland University Race in Higher Education Panel Discussion

CERTIFICATIONS:

Certified Forensic Child Interviewer
Harvard University School of Business Outsmarting Bias
Berkeley University Beyond Diversity: Navigating the DEI landscape in these challenging times
Berkeley Center for Cultural Humility Training
Center for Urban and Racial Equity Training
Suffolk University Restorative Justice Facilitator

AWARDS and HONORS:

TEDx Deer Park Women Speaker 2025
National Bar Association Women Lawyers Division Hidden Figure Award
Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly Top Women of Law
TSNE Emerging Consultants of Color 2025 Cohort
New York State Attorney General Aspiring Managers Training Program
Committee for Public Counsel Services Thurgood Marshall Award
Committee for Public Counsel Services Managerial Training Program Tier 1
New York State Attorney General Aspiring Leaders Cohort 2025
Association of the Bar of the City of New York Municipal Affairs Committee Outstanding Achievement Award
New York City Law Department Superior Performance Non-Managerial Award-Edith Spivack
City of New York Management Training Academy
Committee for Public Counsel Services Managerial Training Program
New York City Law Department, Family Court Division Outstanding Community Service Recognition

PUBLICATIONS:

Loyalty Day is No Substitute for Law Day

<https://racematterssolution.com/loyalty-day-is-no-substitute-for-law-day/>

Debunking 5 Myths About DEI

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/theresa-wilson-coney_debunking-five-myths-about-dei-activity-7292195369520648192-udH2?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAADLK2TgBA9pFZMQDRjhfJPRNCG-IPO6X3iQ

Diversity, equity and inclusion vs. merit, excellence and intelligence: Which equation is misguided?

Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly August 12, 2024 issue

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/theresa-coney-0a04751b9_dei-or-mei-which-equation-is-misguided-activity-7228771423580762113-Ds07?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

A Post Racial America? or A Fictitious Ideology

American Bar Association Criminal Justice Section Newsletter Spring 2024

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/theresa-coney-0a04751b9_a-post-racial-america-or-a-fictitious-ideology-activity-7202676268578787328-uV3Y?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

Through the Looking Glass; Creating Workplace Diversity Through Restorative Justice

American Bar Association Criminal Law Magazine Fall 2023

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/criminal_justice/publications/criminal-justice-magazine/2023/fall/creating-workplace-inclusivity-through-restorative-justice/

PODCAST APPEARANCES:

JUSTPOD American Bar Association Criminal Justice Podcast Pending

DR L. Podcast, Dr. Lawrence Hunter DEI Why we need to Work Together February 2025

Syracuse University Culturally and Technically Legal Podcast Identity and Bias Discussion

WEBSITE: www.RMSChrysalisProject.Org