

Moderator and Panelist Bios

Moderator

Alison Leipsiger, LCSW

Alison is the Senior Associate Legislative Director for the State Innovation Exchange, a national resource and strategy center that supports state legislators in advancing and defending progressive policies. She previously worked as Policy Director for Forefront, Illinois' association for foundations and nonprofits, and prior to that served as then-state Rep and state-Senator Daniel Biss's Chief of Staff. Alison has an MSW from Washington University in St. Louis and serves on the Illinois chapter of the National Association of Social Workers Board of Directors.

Panelists

Debbie Hege, LCSW

Debbie is the Director of Counseling at Family Service of Lake County. She has been a therapist with Family Service since 1999. As a therapist, she partners with clients across the lifespan with an emphasis on creating hope and focusing on a client's strengths. Prior to her role as therapist at Family Service, Debbie worked with high risk families throughout Lake County partnering with DCFS, SEDOL, The Lake County Juvenile Courts, area schools and other social service organizations to provide coordinated counseling services to families and crisis intervention.

Dr. Cynthia Plazas, PhD, LPC

Cynthia is the full-time Social Services Worker for The City of Highland Park Police Department where she provides emergency crisis intervention, short-term counseling, referrals for longer term services and resources, and court advocacy. She also works part-time as the Social Services Worker for the Winnetka Police Department and is an Adjunct Professor for the Criminal Justice & Behavioral Sciences Department at Triton College in River Grove.

Alesia Margetis

Alesia is the Department Chair of Counseling at Highland Park High School. She has been a member of the HPHS faculty for the past 24 years. Prior to her role as Department Chair, she was a counselor at HPHS and a teacher prior to that. As a counselor, she coordinated the services in the Drop-In Center, the hub for social/emotional support for students. At the beginning of her career, she worked with adolescents in a substance abuse inpatient treatment center and realized her passion for counseling.

Marcella Bicoff, LCSW

Marcella has been with NorthShore University Health System for 20 years. She is currently the Clinical Manager for the NorthShore University Health System Adolescent and Young Adult Partial Programs (PHP) and Intensive Out-Patient Programs (IOP) located in Deerfield. Previously, Marcella has worked as a Social Worker at Highland Park Hospital with adults, young adults and adolescents. She has also worked with crisis in the Emergency Room and Intake.

Sam Johnson-Maurello, MBA, LCPC, RDDP

Sam has been both a direct care provider and an administrator for behavioral health programs in Lake County for over 25 years. His work at the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center has often focused on underserved populations, and people with severe mental illness. Recent areas of focus include building capacity for behavioral health services, responding to the opioid crisis, collaborating with law enforcement, and Mental Health First Aid.

Senator Julie Morrison

Senator Julie Morrison has been serving Illinois' 29th Senate District since 2013. She is Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee, founding Co-Chair of the Special Needs Caucus, and forming member of the Children's Health Caucus. She also sits on the Public Health, Agriculture, Environment and Conservation and Transportation Committees. Morrison has led the charge to reform the Department of Children and Family Services, and has worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass common-sense gun reforms and to end political district gerrymandering.