

2025 FAMILY STRENGTHENING NETWORK VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Stronger Together: Building Resilience
& Staying Inspired in Family Support Work

MEETING INFORMATION

Date: June 11, 2025
Time: 9:00 am - 12:30 pm

[Zoom Link: Click Here](#)

[Meeting ID: 941 1341 4318](#)

[Meeting Password: 740294](#)

[Call In #: +1 213 338 8477](#)



OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to:

From Support to Success: A Data Snapshot of Family Empowerment

1. Share program descriptive and outcome data
2. Highlight key successes

Keynote: You Never Know Who You're Impacting

1. Affirm and Celebrate the emotional labor, resilience, and humanity of staff in the family strengthening field
2. Foster a sense of hope, peace, purpose through compassionate storytelling and reflection
3. Support staff well-being by offering a moment of healing, connection, and inspiration

Families Share the Lasting Impact of Home Visiting

1. Gain a richer understanding of how home visiting benefits families, with specific examples shared by a family who participated in the Welcome Baby program

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TIME	PRESENTATION	SPEAKERS
9:00 am - 9:30 am	Opening Remarks, Welcome & Introductions Honoring Ruth Beaglehole	Patrick Flippin-Weston, BA <i>Senior Training Coordinator, LA Best Babies Network</i> Karla Pleitez Howell, BA, JD <i>President and CEO, First 5 LA</i> Ashley Skiffer-Thompson, MBA, CLE <i>Director of Home Visiting Systems, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Division of Maternal, Child, & Adolescent Health</i> Sharlene Gozalians, DrPH, MPH, CHES <i>Director, LA Best Babies Network</i>
9:30 am - 10:00 am	From Support to Success: A Data Snapshot of Family Empowerment	Delisa Culver, MA <i>Manager of Data & Evaluation, LA Best Babies Network</i> Monica Charles, MPH <i>Senior Data Analyst, LA Best Babies Network</i> Helen Chan, BS <i>Data Analyst, LA Best Babies Network</i>
10:00 - 11:00 am	Our Sweet Song of Being Woven Together: How Relationships Heal and Lift Us	Dr. Jaiya John <i>Founder and CEO, Soul Water Rising</i>
11:00 - 11:10 am	Break	
11:10 am - 11:15 am	Breathing Exercise	Teresa McKee, MS <i>CEO, Work2Live</i>
11:15 am - 12:00 pm	Families Share the Lasting Impact of Home Visiting	Steve Nish <i>Manager of Communications, LA Best Babies Network</i> Staff from Maternal and Child Health Access
12:00 - 12:15 pm	Strength in Collaboration: Annual Achievements of the LA County Home Visiting Consortium	Anna Ghukasyan, MPH <i>Senior Policy Research Associate, LA Best Babies Network</i>
12:15 - 12:30 pm	Closing Message, Evaluation & Adjourn	Sharlene Gozalians, DrPH, MPH, CHES <i>Director, LA Best Babies Network</i>

KEYNOTE
SPEAKER



DR. JAIYA JOHN
Author

Dr. Jaiya John was orphan-born on ancient Indigenous Anasazi and Pueblo lands in the high desert of New Mexico, and is an internationally recognized freedom worker, poet, novelist, author, and speaker. Jaiya is the founder of Soul Water Rising, a global rehumanizing mission to eradicate oppression. The mission has donated thousands of Jaiya's books in support of social healing, and offers grants to displaced and vulnerable youth. He is the author of numerous books, including *Daughter Drink*

This Water, We Birth Freedom at Dawn, *Fragrance After Rain*, and *Freedom: Medicine Words for your Brave Revolution*. Jaiya writes, narrates, and produces the podcast, *I Will Read for You: The Voice and Writings of Jaiya John*, and is the founder of *The Gathering*, a global initiative and tour reviving traditional gathering and storytelling practices to fertilize social healing and liberation. He is a former professor of social psychology at Howard University, and has spoken to over a million people worldwide and audiences as large as several thousand. Jaiya holds doctorate and master's degrees in social psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, with a focus on intergroup and race relations. As an undergraduate, he attended Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and lived in Kathmandu, Nepal, where he studied Tibetan Holistic Medicine through independent research with Tibetan doctors and trekked to the base camp of Mt. Everest. He is a Lewis & Clark College Distinguished Alumni Award recipient. His Indigenous soul dreams of frybread, sweetgrass, bamboo in the breeze, and turtle lakes whose poetry is peace.



ASHLEY SKIFFER-THOMPSON, MBA, CLE

Director of Home Visiting Systems, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Division of Maternal, Child, & Adolescent Health

Director of Home Visiting Systems, Ashley Skiffer-Thompson is committed to giving back to her community. She has spent majority of her career in the non-profit sector within the home visitation field, gaining experiences in breastfeeding, bonding/attachment, and other maternal and child health topics. She believes there is empowerment through advocacy and education. By providing empathetic support and encouraging medical advocacy, her hope is that families feel empowered, grounded, and valued throughout their birth journey. Driven by one of her favorite quotes, "Let the beauty we love, be what we do", Ashley Skiffer-Thompson aims to be the change she hopes to see.

ANNA GHUKASYAN, MPH

Senior Policy Research Associate, LA Best Babies Network

Anna earned her Master of Public Health from the University of Southern California, with an emphasis in Health Services and Policy. In her graduate work, Anna focused on improving access to healthcare services for underserved populations in Los Angeles County through policy and advocacy efforts. Anna is passionate about decreasing rates of adverse childhood experiences among children in Los Angeles County.



DELISA CULVER, MA***Manager of Data and Evaluation, LA Best Babies Network***

Delisa earned her master's degree in Experimental Psychology from California State University, San Bernardino. Her professional background includes working as a Research Specialist at Five Acres, a child welfare agency that promotes permanency, safety, and well-being for children and families. She supported continuous quality improvement efforts by partnering with the IT department to make the electronic health record system useful for all staff to meet the agency's mission goals, and by providing useful reports to senior leadership to make data-informed decisions. Delisa also has experience conducting health disparities research, which has helped frame her interpretation of data when examining underserved populations. Delisa is passionate about eliminating disparities in health and education and wants to contribute to this cause by using her research and data skills.



HELEN CHAN, BS***Data Analyst, LA Best Babies Network***

Prior to joining LABBN, Helen was a research assistant in a microbiology lab studying the effects of a drug against several bacteria at the University of Rochester in upstate New York. In undergrad, she had the opportunity to volunteer in Honduras with Global Brigades to build a clean water system and a latrine for local villagers in the rural part of the country. She is passionate about serving the underserved population through evidence-based findings.

KARLA PLEITEZ HOWELL, BA, JD***President and CEO, First 5 LA***

Karla Pleitez Howell serves as the organizations CEO. Karla has been a relentless advocate to ensure ALL children have the opportunity to thrive. Through community partnerships and innovative strategies, she has helped to increase resources and targeted programs to those most burdened and furthest from equitable opportunities. Karla has a relentless focus on justice and equity. Karla launched her advocacy for communities furthest from opportunity as an attorney. She also worked as the Directing Attorney for El Rescate Legal Services, a nonprofit focused on assisting families with immigration legal issues. Karla was the Supervising Attorney for Public Counsel's Early Care & Education Law Unit in Los Angeles County. Here she led a coalition in the Southeast cities to increase green space and educational opportunities for young children. As an attorney providing legal services for families stuck in the cycle of poverty, Karla saw patterns of systemic injustices and transitioned to work on policy advocacy. She joined Advancement Project California (now Catalyst California) in 2014. She had the privilege to serve as Director of Education, Managing Director and Chief of Policy and Programs. As an advocate, Karla worked to bring coalitions together to increase childcare facilities funding, improve quality in Transitional Kindergarten programs and increase access to child care for California's youngest learners. In partnership with audacious community partners, Karla has helped direct billions of dollars in investments for low-income communities. Karla earned her BA from UCLA and holds a J.D. from UC Hastings.



MONICA CHARLES, MPH***Senior Data Analyst, LA Best Babies Network***

Monica earned her Master of Public Health from George Washington University. Before joining LABBN, she worked at the Peace Corps Headquarters Office of Health Services on electronic medical record implementation, training, evaluation, and reporting. In her graduate work she focused on improving health outcomes in underserved populations in the Washington, DC, metro area. Monica is passionate about utilizing IT innovations and data to find evidence-based solutions to public health issues.



PATRICK FLIPPIN-WESTON, BA

Senior Training Coordinator, LA Best Babies Network

With a degree in Psychology, he has worked in the social services field in northern and southern California. Prior to joining LABBN, he was an Outreach Caseworker at the Alameda County Community Food Bank, where he assisted with connecting individuals and families with federal nutrition programs. He also worked at the University of California, Los Angeles, as a Training Coordinator for the emerging California Hub and Spoke Program. There, he assisted with statewide trainings on the tools, medication, and resources needed to combat the opioid crisis. Patrick is a true believer that knowledge is power and passionately aims to connect individuals and communities with the resources they need to thrive.



SHARLENE GOZALIENS, DRPH, MPH, CHES

Director, LA Best Babies Network

Sharlene earned her Master of Public Health (MPH) in Health Education and Promotion at the University of Southern California. She continued to earn her Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) at Loma Linda University. Her professional background includes working in the field of home visiting, trauma informed care, maternal and child health, healthy food access and the built environment issues in Los Angeles County, creating healthy and empowered communities, youth empowerment and advocacy, corner store conversions, program planning and evaluation and teaching. Her volunteer experience includes working in Tanzania, Brazil and Armenia addressing prevention, health education and maternal and child health issues. Sharlene's passion for public health addresses the needs of underserved and vulnerable populations.

Steve Nish, MA,

Manager of Communications and Outreach, LA Best Babies Network.

With 20 years of experience in the communications field, he has led national and global communications campaigns in education, corporate ethics, and community building. Prior to working with LABBN, he was Senior Editor of the Los Angeles-based Josephson Institute, where he focused on sustainability and ethics in business, and on character development in schools and youth service programs. He did his undergraduate work at University of California, Santa Barbara, and has a master's from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs..



TERESA MCKEE, MS

CEO, Work2Live

Teresa is a transformation and leadership coach, certified mindfulness meditation facilitator, EFT practitioner and writer. Combining her training and education, including a B.S. in Business Administration and an M.S. in Psychology, specializing in Leadership Coaching Psychology, with her experience of over 35 years as a business consultant, Teresa integrates behavioral science with results-oriented processes to help executives and teams achieve their goals. In addition to executive coaching, Teresa facilitates workshops and webinars, conducts conference presentations and facilitates the Dynamic Coaching Certification Program. She is also the host of A Mindful Moment podcast to help people learn how to live a more enriching life. She is currently providing leadership and team development trainings, leadership coaching, and self-development and advocacy trainings to community members and organizations including parents and nonprofit leaders. She has also recently introduced online mindfulness classes to coaching professionals in the United States and Canada and is a member of the Mindful Society Global Institute.



FAMILY STRENGTHENING OVERSIGHT ENTITY



First 5 LA

First 5 LA is a leading early childhood advocate organization created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues. In partnership with others, First 5 LA strengthens families, communities and systems of services and supports so that all children in Los Angeles County enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life.

LA BEST BABIES NETWORK



Dignity Health
California Hospital
Medical Center

LA Best Babies Network (LABBN)

Best Babies Network (LABBN) is dedicated to achieving healthy pregnancies and births in LA County by providing the infrastructure, programs, advocacy and support to increase the capacity of community partners to succeed in these efforts. Through the Network's trainings, technical assistance and advocacy work, perinatal providers and advocates across the County unite to increase access to quality perinatal care and inter-conception care, create a safety net of resources for at-risk families, create community driven forums to disseminate best practices and find solutions and advance policies that promote healthy deliveries. LABBN is a community benefit program of **California Hospital Medical Center**; a member of the **Dignity Health system of hospitals**.



Work2Live Well

Work2Live Well's mission is to empower individuals and organizations through mindfulness, strengths-based positive psychology, alternative modalities, and cognitive behavioral transformation to enhance the quality of life to the level of flourishing in all key areas. In addition to being one of the oversight entities for the First 5 funded Welcome Baby and Home Visiting programs in L.A. County, we provide coaching, training and development to the staff implementing those programs. Through leadership coaching, team workshops, conflict resolution/mediation, leadership development retreats and multi-media education, our aim is to enhance and maintain team cohesion, while supporting individual staff members delivering direct services, so that they can achieve overall well-being and success. This results in increased productivity, reduced burn-out and compassion fatigue and, through the parallel process, improved outcomes for both staff and clients. In addition to our work with Welcome Baby and Home Visiting programs, Work2Live provides trainings to nonprofit and school-based programs, conducts workshops for parents and individuals in disadvantaged communities, provides mindfulness training and curriculum development to clients in the U.S. and Canada, and offers certification programs in both leadership and professional coaching. Work2Live also produces a highly rated mental health podcast, A Mindful Moment™, in both English and Spanish.

FAMILY STRENGTHENING OVERSIGHT ENTITY BIOS

FIRST 5 LA

Alison Kellman, MSc is a **Program Officer** on the Family Supports Team with over 30 years of experience in Public Health. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Rhetoric and Communication from University of California, Davis and earned a Master of Science in Health Education and Promotion from South Bank University, London. Alison has partnered with many family-serving agencies to include spending ten years at a South Los Angeles agency supporting maternal and child health initiatives, including oversight of a Black Infant Health (BIH) Project. For the past eleven years, Alison has contributed her expertise at a neighboring health department establishing and cultivating collaborative partnerships with family and community health programs; as well as medical and health community stakeholders, to create and implement emergency preparedness plans, while ensuring compliance.

Claudia Molina, MPH is a **Program Officer** at First 5 LA. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Pitzer College. She worked as a program coordinator for several years for a case management program serving high-risk families in South Los Angeles. She earned her Master's of Public Health at Boston University with a concentration on maternal and child health. Ms. Molina has over ten years of experience in program planning, implementation, and grantmaking. Since being at First 5 LA, she has worked on family-strengthening and sustainability strategies, including the Baby Friendly Initiative, the Targeted Case Management (TCM), and County-Based Medi-Cal Administrative Activities (CMAA) pilots.

Diana Careaga, MPH, MA is the **Director** of the Family Supports Team at First 5 LA. Ms. Careaga has over twenty-five years' experience in program planning, administration and public health. She received her Master of Public Health at University of California Los Angeles, with experience ranging from adolescent reproductive health programs to clinical research in women's health issues in Brazil. Since being at First 5 LA, she has worked with the Welcome Baby Pilot program since it began implementation. Currently, she oversees the First 5 LA's family strengthening strategies, with a focus on home visiting policy, advocacy and sustainability strategies geared toward supporting a unified and coordinated system of home visiting countywide.

Ellaine Hartley-Polissky, MPH is a **Program Officer** at First 5 LA. She joined First 5 LA eleven years ago in May of 2012 starting with the Best Start Initiative then transitioned to Welcome Baby and Select Home Visitation under the Family Supports Team in 2015. Her professional background includes over 18 years working in health promotion and intervention programs targeting pregnant women and children; and includes programs such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition program and First 5 LA's Healthy Births Initiative. She joined the First 5 LA team to fulfill a passion of promoting healthy communities and increasing access to resources for pregnant women and children. She earned her Bachelors in Health Science with an option in Health Education, and her Masters of Public Health with an emphasis in Community Health Education from California State University, Northridge.

John A. Wagner, MPA, MPP, is the **Executive Vice President** of First 5 LA's Center for Child and Family Impact (CCFI). In this role, John is responsible for leading the CCFI's systems change efforts to change policy and practice and build public will to prioritize and improve outcomes for young children in Los Angeles County. John first joined the early childhood advocacy and public grantmaking organization as Chief Operating Officer in December 2012, building on his nearly two decades of experience in running a number of state departments in the health and human services arena. In August 2016, John was promoted to the position of Executive Vice President. Prior to joining First 5 LA, John served as Director of the California Department of Community Services and Development from 2011-2012, and Director of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) from 2007-2011. At CDSS, he oversaw a budget of over \$20 billion and programs affecting California's most vulnerable residents including foster children and youth; children and families receiving aid through the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs); and children and adults in state-licensed community care facilities. John earned a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, a master's degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University and a bachelor's degree from Marquette University.

Karlo Herrera, M. Ed., is a **Program Associate** in the Family Supports department. He assists his colleagues with the initial review of Welcome Baby and Select Home Visitation invoices; and manages contracts others would die for. Karlo is a team player and helps his department in any way that he can to keep tasks moving along. He is a huge Dodgers fan, but above all he is the biggest fan of his two kids. Being an active and engaged father is his main drive to wake up every morning.

Karla Pleitéz Howell, BA, JD, is the **Executive Director** at F5LA. Appointed by First 5 LA's Board of Commissioners on Nov. 10, 2022, Karla Pleitéz Howell serves as the organizations executive director. Karla has been a relentless advocate to ensure ALL children have the opportunity to thrive. Through community partnerships and innovative strategies, she has helped to increase resources and targeted programs to those most burdened and furthest from equitable opportunities. Karla has a relentless focus on justice and equity. Karla launched her advocacy for communities furthest from opportunity as an attorney. She also worked as the Directing Attorney for El Rescate Legal Services, a nonprofit focused on assisting families with immigration legal issues. Karla was the Supervising Attorney for Public Counsel's Early Care & Education Law Unit in Los Angeles County. Here she led a coalition in the Southeast cities to increase green space and educational opportunities for young children. As an attorney providing legal services for families stuck in the cycle of poverty, Karla saw patterns of systemic injustices and transitioned to work on policy advocacy. She joined Advancement Project California (now Catalyst California) in 2014. She had the privilege to serve as Director of Education, Managing Director and Chief of Policy and Programs. As an advocate, Karla worked to bring coalitions together to increase child care facilities funding, improve quality in Transitional Kindergarten programs and increase access to child care for California's youngest learners. In partnership with audacious community partners, Karla has helped direct billions of dollars in investments for low-income communities. Karla earned her BA from UCLA and holds a J.D. from UC Hastings. On weekends, Karla enjoys the outdoors with her husband and family and loves to listen to the latest humorous philosophical ponderings from their two kids.

Laura Hoyos Kainsinger, MPH is a **Program Officer** at First 5 LA. She received her Bachelor of Science in Physiological Science and a Master of Public Health in Community Health Sciences from the University of California, Los Angeles. Before joining First 5 LA, she was a program manager for Prevention and Aftercare, a comprehensive, strength-based program providing resources and activities to vulnerable children and families in Los Angeles County. Prior to this work, Laura was the Director of Community Outreach for Growing Great, where she built and maintained positive collaborative relationships with community partners and was responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of school-based nutrition programs. Her professional experience also includes working in the fields of parenting education, health access, and academic event planning. Laura has over 20 years' experience working with community-based programs that provide services to culturally diverse and at-risk families.

Marlene Cole, MPH is a **Program Officer** on the Family Supports Team at First 5 LA with over 25 years of experience working in the fields of maternal and reproductive health and youth development. Marlene oversees grants within the Family Strengthening Network. She is the internal point person for the Parents as Teachers program, provides programmatic guidance to the Stronger Families Database workgroup and serves as a co-lead for the Los Angeles County Perinatal and Early Childhood Home Visitation Consortium Referrals Workgroup. Before joining the Family Supports Team, Marlene worked as a Program Officer with the Best Start communities and with Healthy Births Initiative grantees. Prior to joining First 5 LA, Marlene was a Lead Area Manager for Essential Health Access, managing the Title X family planning program with community health centers and county health departments throughout California. Marlene has a BA in Sociology from UC Santa Cruz and an MPH from Emory University.

Vanessa Mendez, MA is the **Senior Program Officer** at First 5 LA. She joined First 5 LA and the Family Supports team in June 2021. Her focus is on systems change and optimization efforts. Vanessa has over 15 years of experience overseeing, implementing and evaluating community and school-based programs that serve children, youth and families in California, Minnesota and Michigan. Prior to her role at First 5 LA, Vanessa served as the Director of Community Services at Children's Bureau overseeing prevention programming in Metro Los Angeles. Her content knowledge is focused on early childhood development, child abuse prevention, parent-child attachment, family support and community involvement. Vanessa enjoys working collaboratively with partners to contribute to the development of impactful opportunities for families, particularly those with young children. She has a master's degree in Ecological-Community Psychology from Michigan State University.

Connie Preciado-Gonzalez, MA, AMFT, is a Senior Program Officer at First 5 LA joining the Family Supports team September of 2022. Her focus area is sustainability. Connie has over 20 years of experience working with pregnant people and families with children 0-5. She received her Master's Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy with a specialization in working with Latino Families from Pacific Oaks College. She has a bachelor's degree in Social Ecology with a specialization in Clinical and Developmental Psychology from UCI. Prior to joining First 5 LA, Connie was a Director of Home-Based Services at a partner community-based organization overseeing 0-5 home visiting programs. She has experience providing clinical services with an emphasis on infant mental health as well as in the early childhood education realm as a primary provider for infants and toddlers.

LA BEST BABIES NETWORK

Alexis Marron, MPH, is the **Public Health Research Associate and Training Coordinator**. She received her BS in Public Health and Master of Science in Public Health in Health Education and Promotion at California Baptist University. While she was a student there, she served as the President for the Eta Sigma Gamma Chapter. Prior to joining LABBN, Alexis has worked as a Health Educator for the Riverside County Department of Public Health, helping to educate first responders, hospital staff, families, and community members on ways to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. More recently, Alexis worked at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health in their Education Sector Unit, where she had the opportunity to work on piloting programs aimed at improving student health outcomes. Through these programs, she had the opportunity to work closely with schools and families to discuss the health issues that Los Angeles County students may be facing and preventing them from reaching their full education potential. She also led all program communication efforts as well, helping to connect Los Angeles families with valuable resources and health education. Alexis also has volunteer experience with planning and hosting non-profit Health Fairs, helping to connect local community members with health education, resources, and basic check-ups. Alexis is passionate about health equity and helping to address health challenges and barriers for underserved populations.

Amie Aguiar, BA, is the **Communications Specialist II**. She has progressive experience in communications, community outreach, and public relations, with a demonstrated record of developing innovative communication strategies that strengthen brand awareness. The majority of her work has been in the education and healthcare fields. She has always been passionate about finding ways to leave a lasting, positive impact through her work — especially in her local community. She is happy to be working toward advancing the mission of LABBN and is committed to showcasing all of the wonderful work the Network is doing. Amie earned her BA in Communication Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Anna Ghukasyan, MPH, is the **Senior Policy Research Associate**. Anna earned her Master of Public Health from the University of Southern California, with an emphasis in Health Services and Policy. In her graduate work, Anna focused on improving access to healthcare services for underserved populations in Los Angeles County through policy and advocacy efforts. Anna is passionate about decreasing rates of adverse childhood experiences among children in Los Angeles County.

Delisa Culver, MA, is the **Manager of Data and Evaluation**. Delisa earned her master's degree in Experimental Psychology from California State University, San Bernardino. Her professional background includes working as a Research Specialist at Five Acres, a child welfare agency that promotes permanency, safety, and well-being for children and families. She supported continuous quality improvement efforts by partnering with the IT department to make the electronic health record system useful for all staff to meet the agency's mission goals, and by providing useful reports to senior leadership to make data-informed decisions. Delisa also has experience conducting health disparities research, which has helped frame her interpretation of data when examining underserved populations. Delisa is passionate about eliminating disparities in health and education and wants to contribute to this cause by using her research and data skills.

Faith Soltero, MS, is the **Public Health Research Associate and Training Coordinator I**. Faith received her BS in Public Health at California State University, Sacramento. While she was a student there, she served as the Associated Students Inc.'s Vice President of Finance. She is currently pursuing her Master's in Healthcare Management from California State University, Los Angeles. Prior to joining LABBN, she volunteered in the Maternity department at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center. She also interned at Kaiser Permanente, where she helped oversee business operations and project management. Most recently, she worked at the Department of Healthcare Services assisting staff analysts in the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program. Faith is passionate about serving her community and is particularly interested in reducing healthcare disparities. She is happy to be working at LA Best Babies Network as the Office Coordinator and supporting its mission.



Genesis Garcia-Henriquez, is the **Office Coordinator**. She attended California State University – Northridge where she received her Bachelors of Science in Public Health. She pursued this field to be able to assist families in need and bridge the gap between healthcare disparities. Prior to joining LABBN, she worked at a family source center as a Navigator. In that role, she provided families with one-on-one navigation services, conducted community outreach, and hosted educational workshops. She is very passionate about being part of the LABBN team and growing in her career.

Helen Chan, BS is a **Data Analyst**. Prior to joining LABBN, Helen was a research assistant in a microbiology lab studying the effects of a drug against several bacteria at the University of Rochester in upstate New York. In undergrad, she had the opportunity to volunteer in Honduras with Global Brigades to build a clean water system and a latrine for local villagers in the rural part of the country. She is passionate about serving the underserved population through evidence-based findings.

Helen Kontorosis, BS is the **Communications Specialist**. Helen comes from a journalism background, with seven years of experience working in the television news industry, most recently in Sacramento. She has worked behind-the-scenes as a producer, covering crime, politics, health, environmental, entertainment, and community-focused stories. She is excited to help further LABBN's mission and uses her storytelling skills to showcase the work LABBN is doing. Helen earned her BS in Telecommunication from the University of Florida.

Jennifer Jimenez, BS, is the **Public Health Research Associate**. Jennifer has centered much of her career on supporting the needs of families. Prior to joining LABBN, Jennifer worked as a Service Coordinator at Westside Regional Center, where she was responsible for the case management of over 100 bilingual families with children with disabilities. As a member of the LA Best Babies Network team, she is grateful to be part of such an impactful organization and to be able to support its mission to ensure families have the support necessary to thrive and create healthy and prosperous futures for their children. Jennifer received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Child and Adolescent Development and plans to pursue a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree.

Joanna Ramos, BA, is the **Administrative Coordinator**. Joanna is an experienced administrative professional with a strong background in marketing, event coordination, and program development. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Journalism with a Public Relations emphasis from California State University, Northridge. Before joining LABBN, Joanna worked in higher education, focusing on marketing and event planning for first-generation students. Her background also includes experience in local government and service-oriented initiatives through AmeriCorps, where she developed her skills in strategic planning and program management. Joanna is passionate about supporting organizational success by implementing efficient operations, creating meaningful programs, and fostering collaboration through effective communication.

Jonathan Jimenez, BA, is the **Database Trainer and Support Specialist II**. Prior to joining LABBN, he was a data analyst for a cloud-based POS company. With a background in volunteer work for immigrant groups and others in need, Jonathan says he is happy to be working for an organization whose mission comports with his passion for helping underserved communities. He earned his degree in Business Management from California State University, Northridge, and hopes to pursue an MBA in the healthcare field in the near future.

Kathryn Ewing, BA, is the **Public Health Research Associate**. Kathryn serves as a part of the Training and Technical Assistance team supporting the Family Strengthening Oversight Entity leadership as they serve and train home visitors. She got her degree in History and dove into advocacy work as the Executive Assistant at a Postpartum Depression Foundation in Chicago. She managed a grant for the Family and Child Health Department in Pittsburgh, coordinating and supporting local strategic efforts to reduce racial inequities in maternal and infant health outcomes. She became a Certified Postpartum Doula and loves finding ways to make new parents feel supported and cared for as they navigate their new role! She is passionate about helping people and believes that parenting was never intended to be a solo sport. She is thrilled to be part of LABBN as they equip and support those who serve families.

Larisa Malek, BS, is the **Manager of Operations and Grants**. Larisa studied accounting at California State University, Los Angeles, and is responsible for LABBN's financial budget. She works closely with the Director of Administration managing day-to-day operations. Larisa is an innovative and driven accounting professional who is eager to take on new challenges.



Lynnette Marquez, BA, is the **Policy Administrative Assistant**. Prior to joining LABBN, Lynnette worked as a Health Program Analyst at the L.A. County Department of Public Health and as a Health Educator at a nonprofit focused on lung health. She has experience overseeing the implementation of health education programs and coordinating partnerships with community organizations. She wants to continue to help advance public health outcomes, particularly for underserved and vulnerable communities in L.A. County. Lynnette earned her BA in Public Policy from the University of California, Riverside. She also plans to pursue a Master of Public Health degree.

Laurel Murray, BA, is the **Policy Administrative Coordinator**. Prior to joining LABBN, she worked as a coordinator in several acute units at California Hospital Medical Center. As a firm believer that the mission of LABBN is incredibly important for the future of Los Angeles County and for the state of California, she feels fortunate to be part of a team with so much dedication to help the community. She is passionate about improving the quality of care and quality of life for the underserved population of Los Angeles County. She is a southern California native who received her BA in Psychology from Cal State Fullerton.

Monica Charles, MPH, is the **Senior Data Analyst**. She earned her Master of Public Health from George Washington University. Before joining LABBN, she worked at the Peace Corps Headquarters Office of Health Services on electronic medical record implementation, training, evaluation, and reporting. In her graduate work she focused on improving health outcomes in underserved populations in the Washington, DC, metro area. Monica is passionate about utilizing IT innovations and data to find evidence-based solutions to public health issues.

Oswaldo Lopez, BS, is the **Database Trainer and Support Specialist I**. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Healthcare Administration/Management from California State University, Northridge. Previously, at Arroyo Vista Family Health Center, he conducted analyses of regional health care needs and participated in community outreach, social media, and strategic planning — all with the goal of educating underserved community members and connecting them to health care services. Oswaldo has a passion for education and public health, so he is glad to be part of a network that provides this support to mothers and families across Los Angeles County.

Patrick Flippin-Weston, BA, is the **Senior Training Coordinator**. With a degree in Psychology, he has worked in the social services field in northern and southern California. Prior to joining LABBN, he was an Outreach Caseworker at the Alameda County Community Food Bank, where he assisted with connecting individuals and families with federal nutrition programs. He also worked at the University of California, Los Angeles, as a Training Coordinator for the emerging California Hub and Spoke Program. There, he assisted with statewide training on the tools, medication, and resources needed to combat the opioid crisis. Patrick is a true believer that knowledge is power and passionately aims to connect individuals and communities with the resources they need to thrive.

Printess Pickens, MHA, MBA is the **Database Quality Assurance and Project Specialist**. Printess was born in Chicago, IL, where he spent most of his adolescent life. He later moved to Alabama, where he completed his Bachelor of Science in Biology Pre-Med from the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). He went on to earn his master's in health administration (MHA) and Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Maryland University College. He has always had a passion for helping others and improving health outcomes. Printess has done extensive work in the areas of Hospital Quality Management and Performance Improvement. He also has experience on the IT spectrum of healthcare, as an Epic Clinical Documentation & Quality Consultant. He enjoys using his diverse skill set to analyze problems and provide solutions that increase efficiency throughout organizations. He moved to Southern California in 2020, and really enjoys the warm weather and beautiful beaches.

Sharlene Gozalians, DrPH, MPH, CHES, is the **Director** for LA Best Babies Network. Sharlene earned her Master of Public Health in Health Education and Promotion at the University of Southern California; she continued her education to earn her Doctorate in Public Health at Loma Linda University. Her professional background includes working with healthy food access and the built environment issues in Los Angeles County, creating healthy communities, youth empowerment and advocacy, corner store conversions, program planning and evaluation and teaching. Her volunteer experience includes working in Tanzania, Brazil and Armenia addressing prevention, health education and maternal and child health issues. Sharlene's passion for public health addresses the needs of underserved and vulnerable populations.

Steve Nish, MA, is the **Manager of Communications and Outreach**. With 20 years of experience in the communications field, he has led national and global communications campaigns in education, corporate ethics, and community building. Prior to working with LABBN, he was Senior Editor of the Los Angeles-based Josephson Institute, where he focused on sustainability and ethics in business, and on character development in schools and youth service programs. He did his undergraduate work at University of California, Santa Barbara, and has a master's from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.



Vanessa Reyes, MPH, CHES is a **Public Health Research Associate**. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Health Science from California State University, Fullerton. She also recently became certified as a health education specialist. Prior to LABBN, she worked for a private university that focused on allied health occupations where she provided health education, data management, and administrative support. She is passionate about giving back to the community and providing high-quality resources and education to help people lead happy and healthy lives. Vanessa is thankful to have the opportunity to support families across LA County and to be a part of LABBN.

WORK 2 LIVE WELL

Melissa Sims is the **Social Media and Web Manager** for Work2Live Well. She is also one of our workshop contributors and a guest writer for our blog. She brings over 8 years of experience in social media management, and has written numerous guest pieces for various industries, including travel, real estate and yoga. Melissa is also a Certified Yoga Teacher, and sometimes brings yoga into our workshops. Melissa's focus is on mindful meditation, breath work, and asana. Melissa is currently exploring the many facets of yoga, including yoga therapy, the chakras, the application of sound energy, and the practice of pre-natal and post-natal yoga.

Teresa McKee, B.S.B.A., M.S., C.M.M.F., served for six years as the Welcome Baby Program Director for PAC/LAC, one of the Family Strengthening Oversight Entities, and has since continued as **CEO** of Work2Live, serving on the FSOE and providing staff training and leadership and team development. Teresa is a transformation coach and certified meditation facilitator. She brings over 30 years' experience in managing projects, organizations, programs and personnel to the program. Combining her experience with a B.S. in Business Administration and an M.S. in Psychology, specializing in Leadership Coaching, Teresa integrates behavioral science and complimentary alternative methods with results-oriented processes to help individuals and teams achieve their goals. In addition to her coaching and training work, she produces a weekly podcast on mindfulness and administers a coaching certification program. She is the Secretary/Treasurer for the My Stuff Bags Foundation and volunteers for Maternal Mental Health NOW. Her new book, Dynamic Response Ability, is set to be published in 2020.

