

RETAIN Annual Convening 2023 Speakers

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Speaker: Jennifer Sheehy, Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)



Jennifer Sheehy is the deputy assistant secretary leading the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), U.S. Department of Labor. The mission of ODEP is to develop policy that increases job opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities. In 2016, she was also appointed by the president to the AbilityOne Commission. Prior to her current position, Ms. Sheehy spent 10 years at the U.S. Department of Education in many roles, including acting director of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, acting deputy

commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration and special assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Ms. Sheehy came to the Department of Education from the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities where she was senior policy advisor and served a detail as associate director in the White House Domestic Policy Council. Before she joined the task force staff, she was vice president of the National Organization on Disability and director of its CEO Council.

Ms. Sheehy earned a BA from Cornell University and graduated with honors from Georgetown University, where she earned her MBA. While in graduate school, she worked in marketing research with Anheuser-Busch Companies in St. Louis. Before graduate school, she also worked in marketing and management for Sheraton and Marriott.

Ms. Sheehy has received many civic and achievement awards including the 2019 Presidential Rank Award, the Accenture Women in Government "Rising Leader" award, and the Diet Coke/*Glamour* magazine "Women at Their Best" award. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband.

Overview and Objectives

Speaker: Lori Collins, MRC, RETAIN TA Director, Senior TA Consultant, American Institutes for Research (AIR)



Lori Collins, MRC, is a senior technical assistance consultant with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), where she serves as the project director for the RETAIN technical assistance contract with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. With 25 years of experience in the public workforce system, Ms. Collins' expertise lies in facilitation of strategies ranging from big ideas to operational practice. Her experience, prior to joining AIR, includes various facets of workforce development including at a local and state

level and with a large nonprofit providing services to targeted populations. She has extensive experience in workforce development policy and practice, program planning, integration of multiple programs for a shared vision, as well as program design and delivery for universal populations and targeted populations such as people with disabilities and people connected with the justice system connected. Additionally, Ms. Collins has robust experience in employer engagement and business services strategies, having led such efforts at various organizations. Since joining AIR, she has worked on numerous projects regarding governance of the state/local workforce system and has provided training to multiple workforce system stakeholder groups regarding their roles and responsibilities.

Plenary Session

Using Decision Science to Drive Behavior: Strategies to Increase Participation in RETAIN Programs

Speaker: Jessica Fernandez, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher, Motivated Cognition Laboratory, Department of Psychology, University of Maryland, College Park



Jessica Fernandez, PhD, is a social and health psychologist with expertise in social psychology, behavior change, epidemiology, patient-centered research, health policy, and health communication. Dr. Fernandez has 15 years of experience working in public health research, including work in academia, nonprofit research, and the federal government. She is a postdoctoral researcher in the Motivated Cognition Laboratory at the University of Maryland, College Park and recently completed postdoctoral training at the National Institute on

Minority Health and Health Disparities at the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Fernandez's research focuses on building health equity by examining how different life stressors can impact individuals' health goals, decisions, behaviors, and physical health. Her specific research streams include: (a) public and stakeholder engagement in healthcare

research; (b) patient engagement in designing measures of value-based healthcare; (c) health information processing, decision making, and behavior change; (d) structural barriers to health services use; and (e) stress exposure and chronic disease.

Plenary Session

Boost Your RETAIN Website Visibility Using Search Engine Optimization and Web Writing Best Practices

Speakers: Michelle Stergio, Senior Digital Media Strategist, AIR, and Amy Fowler-Dawson, RETAIN TA Communications Lead, Communications Specialist, AIR



Michelle Stergio has more than 23 years' experience in digital media marketing, including 14 years specifically in social media. Ms. Stergio serves as the expert in designing, implementing, and reporting of website and social media analytics and measurement plans that evaluate the digital dissemination activities associated with strategic multichannel/omnichannel programs. Her primary responsibilities include providing guidance and expertise in digital analytics (website and social media), transforming business goals into measurable KPIs and supporting the development of statistical analysis. Ms. Stergio has extensive experience in analytics insights which may include—but are not limited to—campaign measurement, digital landscape analysis, digital audience segmentation and influencer analysis, audience flow analytics and digital activity analytics (website and social media). Ms. Stergio holds a BS in business administration—marketing from Rochester Institute of Technology.



Amy Fowler-Dawson has more than 15 years of experience in a variety of communications roles. Her primary responsibilities include leading outreach support teams to develop comprehensive communication strategies and high-quality communications content and products for a variety of objectives. She has extensive experience in communications functions, including writing and editing, web and email content management and development, social media management, and visual communications.

A former journalist, Ms. Fowler-Dawson previously worked in higher education and with multiple nonprofit research and advocacy organizations. She holds a master's degree in media theory and research from Southern Illinois University and a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of North Texas.

Mathematica Presentation

RETAIN Evaluation: Updates and Insights from Enrollee Interviews

Speakers: Jillian Berk, PhD, Director of Research and Evaluation, Mathematica, and Jayna Jones, BA, Research Analyst, Mathematica



Jillian Berk, PhD, an executive director at Mathematica, is the Evaluation Lead for the RETAIN Demonstration. She has more than 15 years of experience evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of interventions designed to improve the labor market outcomes of individuals with barriers to employment. Her research focuses on intersection of the workforce system and other systems including the disability system, criminal justice system, and behavioral health system. Dr. Berk also has examined issues related to job loss and health insurance coverage including the Health Coverage Tax Credit

available to individuals who lose their jobs due to trade and the COBRA subsidy included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. She has a PhD in economics from Brown University.



Jayna Jones, BA, is a qualitative researcher for the RETAIN Demonstration. She led the qualitative interviews with RETAIN treatment enrollees and conducted two rounds of site visits with RETAIN grantees. Her research interests focus on disability, mental health, health equity, and learning from underrepresented people to elevate their experiences in a valuable way. Her professional experiences include technical assistance support, qualitative data collection and analysis, project management, and security operations. Ms. Jones has a BA in neuroscience from Swarthmore College.

Breakout Presentations: Topic-Based Facilitated Discussions

Social Determinants of Health and Stress: How Different Life Stressors Can Create Disparities in RETAIN Program Participation

Facilitator: Jessica Fernandez, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher, Motivated Cognition Laboratory, Department of Psychology, University of Maryland, College Park

Behavioral Health and RETAIN: Wraparound Support or Collaborative Care?

Facilitator: Beth Kuhn, MILR, Workforce Futurist, Stonegate Strategies



Beth Kuhn, MILR, has more than 30 years of experience creating and implementing innovative workforce, human service, and health programs, leading collaborations among business, government, and nonprofit partners. Ms. Kuhn is a workforce futurist at Stonegate Strategies, a consultancy focused on workforce development strategies across sectors and organizations. Working with clients including the Workforce Information Technology Support Center of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the Kentucky

Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Interplay Learning and Coastal Cloud, her focus is on the workforce of the future and the human and digital transformation of organizations, people practices, and public services needed to support customers.

Ms. Kuhn was most recently chief engagement officer at the Kentucky Cabinet of Health and Family Services, leading workforce policy and operational efforts to better serve customers and offer them multiple pathways to employment and stability. She served in both Democratic and Republican administrations as commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Workforce Investment and as director of workforce development for the Vermont Department of Labor, collaborating across systems to provide employment, vocational rehabilitation, veterans, unemployment insurance, and other workforce services.

Ms. Kuhn has a bachelor's degree in public policy from Michigan State University and a master's degree in industrial and labor relations from Cornell University. She lives in Louisville, Kentucky, and in Vergennes, Vermont, and is a dedicated Red Sox fan.

RETAIN'ing Inclusion by Design

Facilitator: Gabriel Matthews, MA, RETAIN TA Coach, TA Consultant, AIR



Gabriel Matthews, MA, CSM, is a TA consultant at the American Institutes for Research where he provides training, technical assistance, and advisory services to a variety of federal & state agency programs and non-profit organizations. Prior to joining AIR, Mr. Matthews worked in a variety of spaces—from economic policy research with the Roosevelt Institute and the Washington Center for Equitable Growth to equity in education initiatives in philanthropic spaces, including among the New Venture Fund and the Communities for Just Schools Fund.

Gabriel holds a dual BA in political science and philosophy from Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, and an MA in I/O psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, where he has re-enrolled to pursue a PhD in international psychology to focus on the global implications of artificial intelligence on the world of work. In addition, Mr. Matthews is also a Certified Scrum Master.

Plenary Session

Workforce System Integration with a Focus on Sustainability

Speaker: Amy Landesman, MA, Consultant and Subject Matter Expert Specializing in Workforce Development and Capacity Building



Amy Landesman, MA, has more than 25 years of experience in services to community-based organizations and the public sector including program design/implementation, staff training, curriculum design, meeting facilitation, management coaching, leadership development and team building. She has developed and led customized in-person and virtual staff trainings for clients on topics such as employer engagement, participant retention, career pathways, sector strategies, job seeker preparation, performance management, and staff supervision. Her current projects include coaching grantees who receive U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Apprenticeship Building America funds and coaching partners to the Cybersecurity Youth Apprenticeship Initiative (CYAI). She also provides coaching to more than 20 nationwide grantees receiving USDOL Reentry Opportunities funding. She has provided consultation to state and local workforce boards on collaborative case management industry partnerships, career pathway planning, and systems mapping. Prior to her subject matter expert work, Ms. Landesman was the executive director of Workforce Professionals Training Institute in New York City and held multiple positions providing technical assistance or direct service provision to job seekers and employers in the community. Amy holds a master's

degree in rehabilitation counseling from New York University and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the State University of New York at Albany.

Process Mapping Large Group Discussion

Process Mapping Session

Facilitators: Lori Collins, MRC, RETAIN TA Director, Senior TA Consultant, AIR and Mona Kilany, PhD, RETAIN TA Deputy Director, Senior Researcher, AIR



Mona Kilany, PhD, has experience in mental health services and disability research. Her focus is on improving care coordination for people with multiple chronic health conditions. Dr. Kilany currently serves as the deputy project director and state technical assistance liaisons for Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury or Illness Network (RETAIN), which provided guidance and best practices on stay-at-home/return-to-work strategies to states. She also led the development of AIR's Knowledge Hub on Partnering for Better Chronic

Pain Management and Safer Opioid Use to support primary care clinicians, specialists, people with disabilities who are taking opioids for the long term to manage musculoskeletal pain. Additionally, Dr. Kilany has expertise as a mixed-methods evaluation researcher, with experience in data collection, management, Medicaid claims data analysis, dissemination, and developing plain language research results. She holds a PhD and an MSPH degree from the Department of Health Policy and Management at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a BS degree in psychology from Arizona State University.

Plenary Session

Engaging with State and Local Governments to Promote and Sustain RETAIN

Speakers: Katia Albanese and Hope Adler, State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) Coordinators, Concepts Communication



Katia Albanese is a communications and government affairs professional with 20 years of experience conceptualizing and implementing public education and awareness campaigns with a niche focus in the disability policy arena. She boasts extensive expertise in project management and strategic communications and is uniquely skilled at forging effective public/private partnerships to leverage resources and amplify messages around key inclusive employment policy issues at the federal, state and local levels, including career

readiness, return-to-work/stay-at-work strategies, accessible and emerging technologies, transportation, federal and state employment, entrepreneurship, procurement and veterans' affairs. Ms. Albanese has worked with the U.S. Department of Labor in support of workforce development initiatives since 2002. She currently leads the Concepts team in support of several

efforts, including the State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED), which is directed out of ODEP. Her responsibilities include developing, overseeing and expanding the initiative; multifaceted project implementation; and intricate collaboration among diverse organizations, subject matter experts, policymakers and key stakeholders.

She has received several awards for her services in support of federal initiatives, including the Secretary of Labor's prestigious Award of Excellence, and is a member of the National Association of Government Communicators.

Ms. Albanese graduated from the American University in Washington, D.C., with a BS in business administration with a concentration in finance.



Hope Adler is a government affairs and strategic marketing professional with nearly 20 years of experience working with federal, state and local government agencies, nonprofits and commercial organizations. She has extensive experience developing marketing strategies, improving business processes and conducting public outreach, including crowdsourcing, survey development and implementation. Ms. Adler has spent the last 10 years working in the area of disability employment policy.

At Concepts Communications, Ms. Adler provides technical assistance and outreach support for SEED and played an instrumental role on its Stay at Work/Return to Work Policy Collaborative, COVID-19 Policy Collaborative and the Mental Health Matters Initiative.

Ms. Adler is also part of the ePolicyWorks team. Her responsibilities include providing strategic, technical and design support for the ePolicyWorks online dialogues, developing and implementing outreach strategies, producing communications materials, and supporting interagency facilitation and collaboration. She manages and conducts an extensive training program for ePolicyWorks that includes in-person trainings, webinar demonstrations, recorded videos and supporting materials.

She received her MBA with concentrations in strategy and finance from the University of Maryland and her BS in economics from the University of Delaware.

Plenary Session

Business Engagement Plenary

Speaker: Derek Shields, MMDS, PMP, RETAIN TA Subject Matter Expert, President, ForwardWorks Consulting, Inc.



Derek Shields, MMDS, PMP, is a certified Project Management Professional and president of ForwardWorks Consulting. With more than 25 years of experience in disability inclusion and accessibility, Mr. Shields has trained hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals on disability inclusion strategies, worked with multinational employers, global accommodations and domestic violence programs, wounded warrior transition services, vocational and rehabilitation projects for Social Security beneficiaries and veterans, mentoring communities, and other initiatives to improve inclusion for youth and adults with disabilities. Mr. Shields has developed a network of public and private sector partners, including relationships with disability inclusion policy experts, the assistive technology industry, vocational rehabilitation, mental health and workforce development systems. He has also developed partnerships with employee assistance, Tribal partners, homeless organizations, disabled veterans and veteran service organizations to help advance return to work opportunities for adults with disabilities. Mr. Shields received his master's degree in management and disability services from the University of San Francisco School of Management and his bachelor's degree in International Relations from Bucknell University.

Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks

Speaker: Taryn Williams, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)



Taryn Mackenzie Williams is the assistant secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy. In this position, she advises the Secretary of Labor on how the department's policies and programs impact the employment of people with disabilities and leads ODEP, which works with employers and all levels of government to promote evidence-based policy that improves employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities.

Previously, Ms. Williams was the managing director for the Poverty to Prosperity Program at American Progress, which works on progressive policies focused on a broad range of anti-poverty strategies. Before joining American Progress, she worked at ODEP on a variety of issues related to education, workforce policy, Social Security, Medicaid and civil rights. In her role as director of youth policy, Ms. Williams led agency efforts to coordinate

education and employment policy in support of improved labor force outcomes for disabled youth. From 2014 through 2016, she served as ODEP’s chief of staff. She also undertook detail assignments as associate director for public engagement and liaison to the disability community at the White House from 2014 through 2015 and as a policy adviser for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions from 2012 through 2013.

Previously, Ms. Williams worked as the research coordinator for leadership programs at the Institute for Educational Leadership and as the director of programs at the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues in Chicago. She holds a bachelor’s degree in public policy from Brown University and a master’s degree in education with a concentration in administration, planning, and social policy from Harvard University. She lives in Washington, D.C.