



Child Health Equity Summit 2025



Child Health
Equity Center

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June 5, 2025

AC Hotel Worcester

Summit Agenda

Thursday, June 5th

Start	End	Length	Title	Presenter(s)
8:30	— 9:00	0:30	Registration	
9:00	— 9:30	0:30	Welcome and Opening Remarks	Arvin Garg, MD, MPH (He/Him) Founding Director, Child Health Equity Center at UMass Chan Medical School and UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center
9:30	— 10:45	1:15	Panel Discussion: Addressing Food Insecurity for Families: Synergistic Approaches Between Community Organizations and Health Systems	Casey Burns (She/Her) Executive Director, Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester and Co-Chair, Center on Food Equity Worcester Mario Florez (He/Him) VP of Community Health and Caregiver Belonging, UMass Memorial Health Jean McMurray (She/Her) CEO, Worcester County Food Bank Gina Plata-Nino, JD (She/Her) Deputy Director, SNAP, The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
10:45	— 11:00	0:15	Break	
11:00	— 11:20	0:20	Politics, Policies and Health	Tim Foley (He/Him) VP, Government Relations, UMass Memorial Health
11:20	— 12:00	0:40	Panel Discussion: Advocating for Public Policies that Lift Children Up	Yolanda Ramos Guzman (She/Her) Consultant Naomi Meyer (She/Her) Lead Attorney, Greater Boston Legal Services Tricia Pistone (She/Her) Senior Director of External Affairs, UMass Memorial Health, HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital Gina Plata-Nino, JD (She/Her) Deputy Director, SNAP, The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Dodi Swope (She/Her) Coalition Coordinator, Together for Kids Coalition and the Investing in Girls Alliance
12:00	— 12:45	0:45	Lunch	

Start	End	Length	Title	Presenter(s)
12:45	— 1:00	0:15	Drumming Activity	<p>Claudia Bastante (She/Her) Co-Owner & Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Monano Art</p> <p>Jack Bastante (He/Him) Co-Owner & Chief Operating Officer (COO), Monano Art</p> <p>Monano Art is a Massachusetts-based organization that fosters and promotes imagination, creativity, and play through expressive arts. They offer a wide range of services designed to engage and inspire children and families, including the Creative Kids Corner, expressive arts workshops, bucket drumming, seasonal camps, after-school programs, and creative birthday experiences.</p>
1:00	— 1:45	0:45	Keynote Address	<p>Rachel H. Monárrez, PhD (She/Her) Superintendent, Worcester Public Schools</p>
1:45	— 2:15	0:30	Panel Discussion: Creating a Child and Family Health Promoting Ecosystem with Schools at the Center	<p>Casey Burns (She/Her) Executive Director, Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester and Co-Chair, Center on Food Equity Worcester</p> <p>Nicole Kazarian, MSN, RN, NCSN (She/Her) School Nurse Supervisor, Worcester Public Schools</p> <p>Rachel H. Monárrez, PhD (She/Her) Superintendent, Worcester Public Schools</p> <p>Casey Starr (She/Her) Co-Director of Family & Community Engagement, Worcester Public Schools</p> <p>Michelle Trivedi, MD, MPH (She/Her) Pediatric Pulmonologist, Vice Chair of Research Career Development, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Pulmonology, UMass Chan Medical School, UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center and Child Health Equity Center</p>
2:15	— 3:15	1:00	Panel Discussion: Supporting Immigrant Children and Families in a Time of Political Uncertainty	<p>Gina Landrin (She/Her) Outreach Worker, African Community Education (ACE)</p> <p>Jillian Phillips (She/They) Director, Office of New Americans</p> <p>Carmen Rosado, MA, MEd (She/Her) Family and Community Engagement Liaison, Latino Education Institute/Worcester State University</p> <p>Olga Valdman, MD (She/Her) Family Physician and Executive Director, Worcester RISE for Health</p>
3:15	— 4:15	1:00	Breakout Sessions	
4:15	— 4:30	0:15	Closing Remarks	<p>Arvin Garg, MD, MPH (He/Him) Founding Director, Child Health Equity Center at UMass Chan Medical School and UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center</p>

Presenters



Claudia Bastante (She/Her)

Claudia Bastante is an artistic visionary dedicated to fostering creativity, imagination, and community engagement through expressive arts. Under her leadership, Monano Art empowers individuals of all ages to explore, create, and connect—making a lasting impact through the transformative power of the arts.



Jack Bastante (He/Him)

Jack Bastante is a visionary leader and accomplished musician, composer, and producer. With a deep understanding of music's power to connect and inspire, Jack leads the operational side of Monano Art, ensuring the seamless execution of programs that bring creativity and culture to life.



Casey Burns (She/Her)

Casey Burns, an alumna of Clark University (BA/MS) is the Director of the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester, MA and the co-chair of the Central Massachusetts Center on Food Equity. She is an experienced program manager and community organizer. She brings her foundational experience in grassroots food justice organizing to her current roles engaging with community members, organizations and institutions to implement the Greater Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan.



Mario Florez (He/Him)

Mario Florez has spent over 25 years working in service of the community through various fields including counseling, social services, education, and now public health. He currently leads the Community Benefits function for UMass Memorial Medical Center, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging for the health system. Mario is dedicated to effecting change for our most vulnerable by centering authentic community engagement grounded in the UMass Memorial Health spirit of empathy and compassion for all.



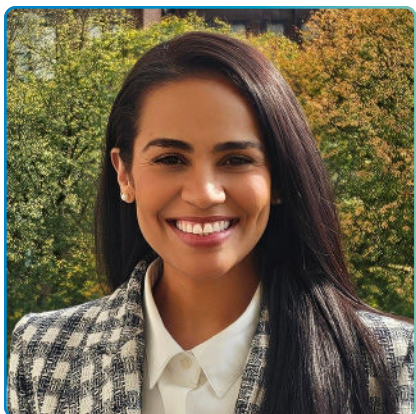
Tim Foley (He/Him)

Tim Foley is the Vice President of Government Relations for UMass Memorial Health. Previously, Tim served as Executive Vice President and Massachusetts Division Director of 1199SEIU. Over his nearly 20 years at 1199SEIU, Tim held numerous leadership roles representing and advocating on behalf of more than 85,000 members. Tim has developed deep relationships with key leaders in the political, health care, and public policy arena to promote the legislative and funding priorities of one of the largest and most influential unions in the state.



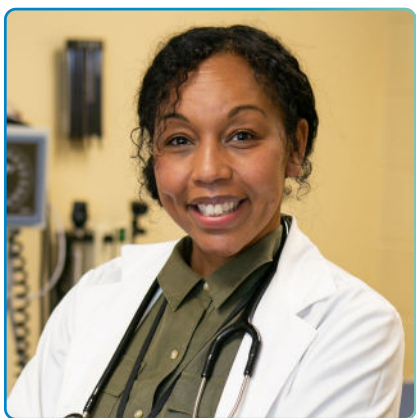
Arvin Garg, MD, MPH (He/Him)

Arvin Garg is a Tenured Professor of Pediatrics and Vice Chair of Health Equity at UMass Chan Medical School and UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center. He is the Associate Chief Quality Officer for Health Equity for the UMass Memorial Health system. Dr. Garg is also the Founding Director of the Child Health Equity Center at UMass Chan and UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center.



Yolanda Ramos Guzman (She/Her)

Yolanda Ramos Guzman is an advocate and consultant with over a decade of experience in mental health, early childhood development, and community engagement. She is the founder of Yolanda Ramos LLC, where she provides strategic consulting in child wellness, trauma-informed care, and leadership development, and currently serves as the Youth Social-Emotional Facilitator for UHAI for Health and Mental Health Programmer for The WellStorm Inc. Yolanda is a consultant with the Together For Kids Coalition and works to strengthen early childhood systems across Worcester, while also serving on multiple advisory boards focused on equity, maternal health, and community leadership.



Nicole Kazarian, MSN, RN, NCSN (She/Her)

Nicole Kazarian is a master's-prepared, nationally certified registered school nurse, servicing the Worcester Public Schools for over 28 years. As a nursing supervisor since COVID, Nicole brings her passion for school health and love of advocacy for the needs of children to her expanded role and is an active member of multiple collaborative forums that seek to provide support to the students and families within the WPS. These include participating in the School Health Advisory Council and Wellness Committee, coordinating services with the Oral Health Coalition, consulting with the Refugee and Immigrant Health Partners, and regularly meeting with the School-Based Health Center leaders who provide health equity services to the Worcester Public Schools.



Gina Landrin (She/Her)

Gina Landrin is an Outreach Worker at African Community Education (ACE). Born in the vibrant island of Haiti, Gina brought her warmth and dedication to Worcester in 2017, seeking to be close to her family. Before her journey with ACE, Gina spent a decade in Haiti as an assistant manager, holding a bachelor's degree in accounting. Gina is fluent in French, Haitian Creole, and English. At ACE, Gina finds joy in using her native language daily and empowering families to navigate the system more effectively. She didn't have the same support when she first arrived, but now, she is committed to ensuring others don't feel the same isolation.



Jean McMurray (She/Her)

Jean has served as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Worcester County Food Bank (WCFB) since 1998, providing leadership and a comprehensive vision to all areas of WCFB's advocacy and operations. Jean is a recognized leader in the anti-hunger arena and Worcester County and serves as a volunteer with the following organizations: Board Member Emeritus of Project Bread Board of Directors; Trustee, UMass Memorial Health; Corporator at the Greater Worcester Community Foundation; and Corporator at UniBank Savings Bank. Her passion for social change and food justice extends beyond Worcester County having worked on the Central American Peace Scholarship Program at the United States Agency for International Development and in sustainable agriculture at the Center for Tropical Agriculture Research and Training in Costa Rica.



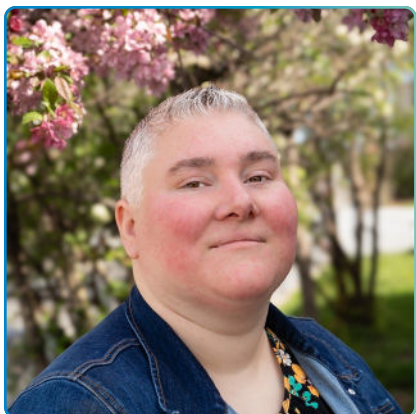
Naomi Meyer (She/Her)

Naomi Meyer is a Lead Attorney in the Welfare Law Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services, where she has worked since 2002. She represents clients in cash assistance, Food Stamps/SNAP and subsidized child care cases, often representing those facing problems with immigrant eligibility and language access barriers. She also engages in systemic advocacy to improve these programs throughout Massachusetts, including legislative advocacy through the Lift Our Kids Coalition. Ms. Meyer holds a J.D. and a Masters of Public Policy from the University of California at Berkeley.



Rachel H. Monárrez, PhD (She/Her)

Rachel H. Monárrez believes in the possibility of every child, and this approach guides her daily interactions as the Superintendent for Worcester Public Schools. Dr. Monárrez holds a vast knowledge base for academic excellence, professional development and collaborative practices. Rachel has served as a teacher, school principal, Director of English Learner Programs and Special Education, Assistant Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent. As a social justice champion, she works collaboratively with all stakeholders to foster a culture of equity, academic excellence and high expectations for all learners. Dr. Monárrez received a BA, History from UC Irvine, an MA in Education and PhD from Claremont Graduate University with an emphasis in Urban Education. She is the proud mother of Natalee, an emerging writer, teacher, and poet and married to Jesus Monárrez, a retired educator.



Jillian Phillips (She/They)

Jillian Phillips is a social worker who has dedicated more than two decades to supporting the residents of Worcester through mental health supports, early intervention, and now supporting the new arrival immigrant community.



Tricia Pistone (She/Her)

Tricia Pistone is an accomplished leader with over 15 years of experience in the nonprofit and healthcare sectors, specializing in philanthropy, health equity, collective impact, and strategic innovation. She has a proven track record in securing multi-million dollar funding, advancing public policy, and leading cross-sector initiatives to address social determinants of health and drive community transformation.



Gina Plata-Nino, JD (She/Her)

Gina Plata-Nino, JD rejoined FRAC in December 2024 as the SNAP Deputy Director. Previously, she served as a Senior Policy Advisor for Nutrition and Agriculture in the Biden-Harris Administration's Domestic Policy Council, where she helped lead the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. In this role, she worked with federal agencies and private stakeholders to advance the goal of ending hunger and diet-related diseases by 2030.



Carmen Rosado, MA, MEd (She/Her)

Carmen Rosado is a passionate and persistent advocate for health, education and social justice in the community. She has more than 40 years working in the community. Her job is to continually advocate for equitable access and meaningful change through grassroots engagement and collaborative leadership.



Casey Starr (She/Her)

Casey Starr is the Co-Director of Family & Community Engagement for Worcester Public Schools, a role she has held since 2023. Prior to joining the district, she spent 15 years at the Main South Community Development Corporation, most recently as the Director of Community Initiatives. Ms. Starr brings deep expertise in community engagement, cross-sector partnerships, and project management, with a strong track record of leading community-centered initiatives.



Dodi Swope (She/Her)

Dodi Swope has over 40 years of experience across the continuum of behavioral health prevention, intervention, and treatment. She is a trained educator and family therapist. She currently supports two large community coalitions, serves as adjunct faculty at Clark University and supports local nonprofits engaged in strategic planning and resource development.



Michelle Trivedi, MD, MPH (She/Her)

Michelle Trivedi is a pediatric pulmonologist and clinical researcher committed to the improvement of the delivery of evidence-based care to underserved communities with the overarching goal of improving health outcomes and advancing health equity. She leads clinical trials and observational studies in pediatric asthma, as well as community and school-based partnerships.



Olga Valdman, MD (She/Her)

Dr. Valdman is a Family Physician and a graduate of UMass Chan Medical School. While in medical school she got very involved with the refugee and immigrant communities in Worcester including co-founding African Community Education program (ACE). She was the Director of Refugee Health program at Family Health Center of Worcester for almost 10 years and two years ago founded Worcester Refugee and Immigrant Support and Empowerment (RISE) for Health - a non-profit organization fully dedicated to serving newly and recently arriving refugees and immigrants.

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