

Meet Your Project Officers

CAPT Madelyn Reyes, MA, MPA, RN



Region: VI & IX (AZ, CA, NM, and TX)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: 16 years

Professional Background: CAPT Reyes serves as a Senior Nurse Consultant in the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's, Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services. She provides programmatic expertise to grantees under the Federal Healthy Start (HS) Program. CAPT Reyes is responsible for managing, monitoring, and providing technical assistance to 12 regionally and culturally diverse Healthy Start Projects that serve the most vulnerable women and infants, including projects along U.S./Mexico Border. The total annual funding for these projects is approximately \$14M. She also serves as the lead PO for MCHB's National Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (NFIMR) Resource Center.

CAPT Reyes leads and coordinates the Administration for Children and Families (ACF's) Early Head Start Program and HRSA/MCHB's Healthy Start Collaboration Workgroup. She is the Bureau's representative for HRSA's Border Health activities. She is also the co-lead for MCHB's Health Equity Special Interest Group. CAPT Reyes managed and led the development of a frequently requested Spanish version of HRSA's Business Case for Breastfeeding tools, which is the HRSA Information Center's most requested topic.

CAPT Reyes earned a Bachelor's of Science Degree in nursing from the College of Mount Saint Vincent, a Master of Public Administration from Troy State University and a Master of Arts in National Security Studies from the U.S. Naval War College. CAPT Reyes joined the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) in 1997, after serving six years in the U.S. Navy.

Research/Academic Interests: CAPT Reyes' interest is in Health Information Technology (HIT) and the impact on vulnerable and underserved populations. She has a special interest in Hispanic health issues especially along the U.S./Mexico border. CAPT Reyes is currently working on her Doctorate in Nursing Practice. Her final project focuses on the impact of prenatal stress, anxiety, social support, and acculturation on pregnancy outcomes in Hispanic/Latina women.

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: My favorite thing about being a HS PO is conducting site visits where I get to not only meet the management and front line staff, but also the HS clients during a home visit. The most rewarding part of my job is hearing how grateful the HS clients are about the services they are receiving from the HS program.

What motivates you to do this work? Knowing that the work that I do contributes to the continued success of Healthy Start and, more importantly, to the health of America's most vulnerable women, children, and families.

CDR Christopher Lim



Region: II & III (NJ, MD, & DC)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: Less than a year.

Professional Background: With a background in public health and data management, CDR Lim currently serves as a Senior Program Management Officer for the Healthy Start Monitoring and Evaluation Data system. Recently, he served as a Senior Program Management Officer, with the HRSA Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) Systems, and managed various BPHC Health Care Management Information System projects such as the BPHC Dashboard and the BPHC Uniform Data System (UDS). Previously, he served as a Senior Public Health Analyst/Project Officer for various BPHC-funded programs, including the community health center program, and primary care association program. In the former HRSA Office of Health Information Technology he monitored health information technology implementation and innovation projects in community health centers and health center controlled networks.

Research/Academic Interests: Early childhood education and health information technology.

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: Supporting Healthy Start programs to reduce disparities in infant mortality and adverse perinatal outcomes.

What motivates you to do this work? The positive impact of the Healthy Start Program on reducing disparities in infant mortality and adverse perinatal outcomes, especially amongst individual members of racial and ethnic minority groups, is hugely meaningful.

Kimberly C. Sherman



Region: IV (LA & AR)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: 6 Years

Professional Background: Public Health & Public Policy

Research/Academic Interests: I have a strong interest in women's health promotion in the areas of wellness, pregnancy preparedness, lactation support, and composition of the postpartum visit.

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: I really enjoy learning about the implementation of the project across projects sites whether they are urban or rural or located in the North or South. My most favorite thing is seeing the success of quality service delivery, and the impact each project has in the family, organization, and community.

What motivates you to do this work? I am motivated to do this work, because babies are born healthy all over the world and thrive! We can impact the disparities in perinatal outcomes, because we know what works. Healthy Start has the unique opportunity to make sure that this information is equitably shared and implemented in the hardest hit areas.

Makeva M. Rhoden, PhD, MPH, CHES



Region: V, VIII, IX, and X (MN, WI, IN, OR, CO, SD, & NV)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: 7.5 years

Professional Background: LCDR Makeva Rhoden is currently a Program Management Officer in the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services where she provides programmatic expertise to grantees under the Federal Healthy Start (HS) Program. In this capacity, she is responsible for monitoring program progress and providing technical oversight in an effort to assist grantees in reducing the burden of infant mortality in vulnerable and culturally diverse populations. Managing a portfolio totaling \$7.5M, LCDR Rhoden utilizes her skills in public health, strategic planning, and program development to guide HS projects in providing needed social services to women, children, and their families. She is also the Program Advisor for the new Supporting Healthy Start Performance Project (SHSPP), a 5-year cooperative agreement (totaling \$10M) focused on providing capacity building, training, and technical assistance to Healthy Start programs in an effort to standardize the Healthy Start Model and improve its workforce.

LCDR Rhoden is the lead for divisional projects and special initiatives devoted to increasing father engagement and male involvement among the MCH population. LCDR Rhoden provides continuous updates on father engagement/male involvement activities among Healthy Start participants; participated in the Text4baby and Dad Workgroup and My Brother's Keeper Project (White House initiatives); and collaborates with internal and external Federal and other partners on strategies addressing male engagement in MCH programs. She is also the MCHB and HRSA representative on several HIV/AIDS workgroups: Preventing HIV in Adolescent Girls and Young Women's Task Force (AGYWTF) or the D.R.E.A.M.S. Initiative; Expert Panel on Reproductive Health and Preconception Care in HIV/AIDS; one of two MCHB representatives for CDC's Elimination of Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission Stakeholder Group; and HRSA PEPFAR Technical Workgroup.

LCDR Rhoden received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Syracuse University and Master in Public Health with a concentration in Maternal and Child Health from the Milken Institute of Public Health at The George Washington University. She recently completed her doctoral studies at Walden University where she earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Health with a concentration in Community Health Promotion and Education.

Research/Academic Interests: My interests include: applying a gender-transformative approach to increase male engagement in maternal and child health; studying the effects of masculinity ideology on family health decisions; and developing family-centered interventions to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration in minority populations.

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: My favorite thing about being a HS PO is connecting and collaborating with organizations, agencies, and programs across the U.S. whose primary focus is promoting the holistic view of the family and providing optimal health services for the men, women, and children they serve.

What motivates you to do this work? The positive work environment and camaraderie between colleagues is what motivates me to come to work each day. Additionally, knowing that I can invest my time and education into developing programs that will ultimately strengthen minority families feels great and is an excellent motivator as well!

Angela Hayes-Toliver



Region: I and II (MA, CT, & NY)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: 23 years

Professional Background: MBA in Health Services Administration, Howard University; eight years as Program Manager for D.C. Social Services Facilities Regulation including licensure and inspections; and six years as a Health Facilities Planner for the federal Department of Veterans Administration.

Academic Interests: Health Care and Social Services

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: Working with diverse communities and projects. No project period has been the same. There are always new challenges for the Project Officer and the Grantee.

What motivates you to do this work? I believe in the positive change that Healthy Start can bring to communities. Having been with the program for many years, I have been able to work with some communities for 10+ years and have actually witnessed the change. I have seen this change in all communities I have worked with--urban, rural, and Native communities. The changes have been especially identifiable with the increase in communication between program and community participants with the provider communities. More importantly, this has resulted in a decrease in the infant mortality rates in most project areas over the 25 year period of the federal Healthy Start Program.

CDR Robert A. Windom



Region: V (MI & OH)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: Less than a year

Professional Background: Served nine years as Medical Service Corps Officer in the US Navy. Assignments included Medical Planning, Deployment and Emergency management, Hospital Administration. Prior experience in law enforcement and adolescent behavioral health treatment.

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: Getting out from behind the desk to meet with and interact with grantees. Conducting site visits and seeing first-hand the exciting and impactful work that is taking place.

What motivates you to do this work? It is extremely motivating that the end result of our daily work is providing services and reducing the barriers between quality healthcare and the people that are most in need of receiving services.

Juliann DeStefano RN, MPH



Region: V (IL)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: 17 years

Professional Background: Ms. Destefano has extensive experience in public health policy and program development and implementation in local public health agencies as well as the federal government. She has contributed to, and been the lead on, a number of interagency collaborative efforts in the fields of maternal and child health and mental health. Juliann holds a Master in Public Health with a concentration in Health Education and Behavioral Sciences from UCLA and is a Registered Nurse with a BSN from University of Maryland. Ms. DeStefano is also CPR certified and keeps herself active in the community teaching CPR and other perinatal classes at a local hospital.

Research/Academic Interests: Systems and practices that support improvement of public health systems of care, expansion of coverage and treatment networks for individuals with mental health issues, health insurance coverage, heart health prevention, epigenetics and its role in perinatal health, assisted reproductive technology.

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: Having a role creating systems changes that positively impact the health of women and their families, recognizing that healthy parents, physically, mentally and emotionally are better equipped to raise healthy infants and children.

What motivates you to do this work? I enjoy ground level work and am in a unique opportunity as a federal employee to influence policies while working with grantees who serve communities.

Sharon Adamo, MS, MBA, RD



Region: Ill (PA)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: 1 year. 17 years as a Federal PO in other programs.

Professional Background: Following graduate school, Sharon spent many years in public health management in North Carolina. She served as a Health Statistician, then as the WIC Nutrition Director for NC's largest WIC Program, managing a staff of 20. Sharon also worked as a consulting dietitian for a rural community health center, where she provided clinical nutrition care for high-risk prenatal patients and patients in the diabetes care clinic. Joining the Federal government in 1998, Sharon worked at the US Department of Agriculture/Food and Nutrition Service/WIC Headquarters as a Registered Dietitian coordinating the national WIC *Loving Support* Breastfeeding Campaign, which still exists today. She served on the Surgeon General's Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding in 2000, and received the Surgeon General's Award for Excellence. She is a well-respected Federal expert on breastfeeding promotion and support and currently co-chairs the Federal Work Group on Breastfeeding with leaders from CDC. Sharon joined MCHB in 2000 as a Program Analyst working in the Office of Program Development, where she utilized her MBA/management skills, before returning to Project Officer work in the Division of Child, Adolescent and Family Health. There she directed the AIM and PIPPAH national grant programs for 10 years. Sharon joined the Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services in 2013 and continues to lead breastfeeding and nutrition efforts for MCHB and HRSA, as well as serving as PO for Pennsylvania Healthy Start grantees.

Research/Academic Interests: Public health nutrition and breastfeeding promotion and support in the US.

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: Working with grantees.

Name: CDR Maria D. Benke, EdD, MPH, CHES



Region: IV (AL & MS)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: Less than a year.

Professional Background: CDR Benke has extensive experience in public health policy and program development, implementation, management, and evaluation, for federal and local public health agencies, as well as the military and academia. She has contributed to and coordinated numerous interagency collaborative efforts spanning the fields of maternal and child health, global health, domestic and international public health emergency preparedness and response, health education, environmental health, and personnel management. Maria holds a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership and a Master in Public Health with a concentration in Health Education and Behavioral Sciences from Rutgers University. She has been a Certified Health Education Specialist since 2000.

Research/Academic Interests: Systems and practices that support workforce, organizational, and leadership development; children and families with special behavioral health and/or educational needs; and early childhood interventions that support educational success and lifelong health.

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: Having a role creating systems changes that not only improve health, but supporting children and their families to realize the American dream – a full and healthy *life, liberty* through equality and opportunity, and *happiness* through the pursuit of their personal dreams and actualizing their full potential.

What motivates you to do this work? I was once an “at-risk” child - a first generation immigrant from a family of very modest means, growing up in a rough urban neighborhood, and in a predominantly single-parent household. I was blessed to have role models and support systems that enabled and empowered me with a good start in life, and I believe in paying it forward. It’s my passion to help ensure all children – regardless of their situation – have the chance to realize their full potential.

John H. McGovern



Region: III & IV (KY, NC, SC, TN, VA, & WV)

Length of Time as Healthy Start Project Officer: 20 years

Professional Background: University of Maryland - BS-Education/Social Sciences, MGA-Administration/Health Care. State of MD-Juvenile Justice 1971-1992 Case Worker, Supervisor and Regional Coordinator, SAMHSA 1992-1995 Project Officer-Adolescent Treatment

Research/Academic Interests: Medical Anthropology, Behavioral Health, and FASD

Favorite Thing about Being a Healthy Start Project Officer: Working with grantees

What motivates you to do this work? Successful health outcomes for women and children community health.