



Center for Children's Advocacy Seminar Series

**Advocacy for Youth and Young Adults Re-Entering from Confinement**

November 21, 2019

**Tenille Bonilla** is a Justice Advisor with the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, New Haven Chapter. Tenille works to ensure that youth voice and direct youth experience is at the forefront of the state's juvenile justice policy advocacy, change and development. Ms. Bonilla believes you have to care about and work with the people around you to make change. As a Justice Advisor, her goal is to learn from her peers, and work with them to improve the communities we live in, while working to make the system safer and more sustainable for all youth.

**Greg Brunson** is Director of Re-entry for DOMUS Kids' INVICTUS program. INVICTUS works on pre-release and successful re-entry for men 18- 25 years old experiencing incarceration and planning to return to the greater Stamford area. Mr. Brunson is also co-chair of the Stamford Re-entry Roundtable.

Prior to working with DOMUS Kids, Mr. Brunson was a Manager of Residential Services with the Apt Foundation of New Haven where he worked with both men and women, including young adults, under Department of Correction and Probation supervision. He also worked for the Department of Children and Families as an adolescent specialist for five years. In addition to his role with DOMUS, he works with the forensic mental health population, and facilitates domestic violence classes for individuals referred by the Family Re-entry program.

Mr. Brunson received his B.A. from Southern Connecticut State University.

**Hernán Carvente Martinez** is National Youth Partnership Strategist for the Youth First Initiative. He manages the Youth First Youth Leaders Network, which provides young emerging leaders with the training and tools to lead the fight against youth incarceration. He is also an advisor to the Credible Messenger Justice Center and serves as a board member for Community Connection for Youth. Previously, he worked as a Program Analyst at the Vera Institute of Justice, where he worked on policy analysis, program development, and elevated the voices of youth and families in statewide policy reform. He has trained policymakers, researchers, non-profits, and professionals in probation, child welfare, juvenile justice and corrections on different approaches to centering and empowering currently and formerly incarcerated youth in policy advocacy, community organizing, and creating a new vision for youth justice in America.

Mr. Carvente Martinez was awarded the "Spirit of Youth Award" by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and the "Next Generation Champion for Change" award by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. He has a B.S. from John Jay College. Connect with him via LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @Carventehernan

**James J. Connolly, J.D.**, has worked in Connecticut's juvenile justice system for 32 years. He is currently Deputy Director of Delinquency Defense for the Office of the Chief Public Defender (OCPD) where he has spent the last 25 years practicing law on behalf of youth in the juvenile justice system.

Attorney Connolly started with OCPD as a defender representing indigent clients in transfer hearings, has supervised OCPD's juvenile Post Conviction Unit, and was appointed this year as Deputy Director of Delinquency Defense. He has always been a zealous advocate for his clients; he was awarded the prestigious Gault Guardian Award from the

Division of Defenders Services in 2017, and was a recipient of the New Leaders in Law Award by the Connecticut Law Tribune in 2002. Prior to law school, Mr. Connolly worked as an officer in juvenile detention in both Hartford and New Haven, and as a juvenile probation officer as a part of an intensive supervision model.

Attorney Connolly received his B.S. from Northeastern University and his J.D. from the Quinnipiac University School of Law. Since 1993, he has served as an adjunct professor at Quinnipiac School of Law where he lectures on juvenile law and delinquency.

**Scott Erfe** is District Administrator of District 2 of the Connecticut Department of Correction, and oversees seven correctional facilities including the county correctional jails; Carl Robinson, a medium level security, sentenced male facility; and Northern Correctional Institution, the highest security level facility in the state. Mr. Erfe worked his way through the custody ranks of Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Deputy Warden and Warden before appointment to his current position.

Mr. Erfe began his career as a Correctional Officer at Montville Correctional Center in Uncasville. He was a member of the Correctional Emergency Response Team (CERT) - the riot control response team for the Agency. Throughout his career, he has been an instructor of new and existing officers, firearms, CERT, Behavior Management and PR – 24. He was chosen as a member of the Special Operations Group, the correctional version of SWAT, and also spearheaded the implementation of instruction for Wardens, Deputy Wardens and Supervisors for the operation of a Command Center at each facility, responsible for handling a disturbance or large scale incident.

Mr Erfe served as Warden of the Corrigan Radgowski Correctional Center, and was later appointed by Commissioner Semple to Cheshire Correctional Institution where his staff implemented the progressive TRUE unit for 18 – 25 year olds, providing targeted programming for successful community re-entry. The TRUE unit has been the subject of national attention for progressive programming.

**Marisa Halm, J.D.** is Director of the TeamChild Youth Justice Project at the Center for Children's Advocacy where she has been since 2012.

She represents youth and young adults who are involved with the juvenile justice or criminal justice systems, many of whom are returning from confinement, to ensure that their civil legal rights are enforced, particularly as they relate to education. She works to ensure that her clients receive the education they are entitled to, whether in the public schools, alternative or therapeutic programs, juvenile justice or adult correctional facilities. She also works with youth and young adults to ensure that they are aware of collateral consequences of their court involvement and helps them mitigate those consequences. She provides Know Your Rights trainings to youth within the Department of Corrections that are focused on their re-entry. Attorney Halm's advocacy includes filing litigation and administrative complaints, working on legislative initiatives, administrative advocacy and facilitating policy change.

Prior to working at the Center, Attorney Halm was in private practice where she represented children with disabilities and their parents against school districts. Attorney Halm earned her J.D. from UConn School of Law and her B.A., with honors, from Mount Holyoke College. She was admitted to the practice of law in 2006.

**Daniel W. Rezende, LCSW**, is Executive Director of the Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR), a Litchfield-based, nonprofit youth services organization providing residential, education, behavioral health and community-based programs across the state.

Prior to his appointment as Executive Director in 2012, Mr. Rezende served as CJR's Director of Programs, with many years of experience in residential services. Mr. Rezende was later responsible for the redevelopment and management of residential and community-based programs across the state, including the expansion of CJR's Wellness Center Program, which provides a full spectrum of behavioral health services for children, youth and families in locations throughout Connecticut. Under his direction, the organization has achieved a comprehensive continuum of care that includes prevention, early intervention, and more intensive services ranging from home-based, family-focused therapy to short and long term residential services for boys and girls.

During Mr. Rezende's tenure as Executive Director, the number of children, youth and families served by the Junior Republic in 11 locations across Connecticut has increased significantly. The Connecticut Junior Republic is accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA); and its Cable Academic and Vocational Education Center is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The organization employs more than 250 staff members, with approximately 1,500 boys, girls and families served annually.

Mr. Rezende currently serves as President of the Children's League of Connecticut (CLOC) and is a member of the Steering Committee of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. He earned his bachelor's degree in Applied Social Relations from Eastern Connecticut State University and a master's degree in Social Work from University of Connecticut.