

ELEVATE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF NORTH DAKOTANS

A Social Determinants of Health Perspective

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Tammy Miller, Lt. Governor of North Dakota

Lt. Gov. Tammy Miller was sworn in as the 39th Lieutenant Governor of North Dakota on Jan. 3, 2023. A native of Brocket, N.D., Miller graduated from high school in Lakota. She earned a bachelor's degree in accounting and a Master of Business Administration degree from Minnesota State University Moorhead and is a certified public accountant.

Miller served as chief operating officer in the Governor's Office from April 2020 through December 2022, working with cabinet agencies to enhance citizen focus, drive innovation and improve the delivery of government services. She previously served as CEO of Fargo-based Border States, the sixth-largest electrical distributor in North America and has an extensive and distinguished record of service on many local and national industry and non-profit boards.

As lieutenant governor, Miller serves as president of the state Senate and chairs the Capitol Grounds Planning Commission, North Dakota Trade Office, Task Force for Military Issues in North Dakota, Northern Plains Unmanned Systems Authority, State Investment Board, State Board of Equalization and Early Childhood Council.



Nancy Hodur, Executive Director

North Dakota State University Center for Social Research

Nancy Hodur is Director for the Center for Social Research at North Dakota State University. Nancy has over 25 years of professional experience in applied research, outreach education and public policy. Her primary areas of research include socio-economic impact assessment, program evaluation and community and economic development. Research efforts have been supported by various stakeholder groups such as state and local government agencies, trade organization and non-government organizations. Study findings are used by a wide range of stakeholders including community leaders, non-profits, state and local leaders and others to help identify needs, assess current trends and inform decision making. Research findings have been published in refereed academic journals, presented at national professional meetings and conferences and delivered to numerous constituent groups in North Dakota.



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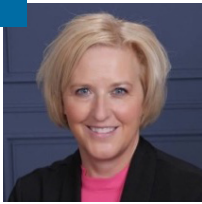
CENTER FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH



Karen Olson, Research Specialist

North Dakota State University Center for Social Research

Karen Olson is a research specialist for the Center for Social Research at NDSU. In this role, Karen's background in demographics and socioeconomics is used to facilitate the public's access to data and information needed to make decisions, design and implement programs and invest in communities across the state. Her efforts involve a wide range of topics including migration, characteristics of the aging population, community efforts to reduce poverty, housing needs and the health and well-being of children and families. Karen formerly served as the program director for North Dakota KIDS COUNT where she worked to provide legislators, public officials and child advocates with reliable data and tools to advance policies that benefit children and families.



Krissie Guerard, Community Engagement Director

North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services

Krissie Guerard is the director of Community Engagement for the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services. The mission of the Community Engagement (CE) Unit is to understand and reduce health disparities among all North Dakotans. The primary goal is to work alongside North Dakota communities in addressing health-related needs to reduce disease rates by providing opportunities for interventions and improving access to health care to ensure all North Dakotans have the ability to reach their optimal health.

Krissie is a graduate of Minnesota State University – Moorhead with a Bachelor of Science degree in community health education and Minnesota State University – Mankato with a Master of Science degree in health science with an emphasis in community health.

Krissie began her public health career with the North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Disease Control, in August 2006 as the Ryan White/HIV surveillance coordinator. She then took over as the HIV/STD/TB/Hepatitis program manager in May 2007. Krissie worked in that role through February 2013. In March 2013, Krissie took over as the STD/HIV/TB section manager at the Minnesota Department of Health. In August of 2018, she came back to the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services as the community engagement director.



Brad Hawk, Deputy Director

North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission

Brad Hawk serves as Deputy Director of ND Indian Affairs Commission. In this role, Brad leads efforts to improve health care systems in each tribal community. Created by the North Dakota Legislature in 1949, the ND Indian Affairs Commission was one of the first such commissions established in the United States. The main goal of the Commission is to create a better North Dakota through the improvement of tribal/state relations and better understanding between American Indian and non-Indian people. An enrolled member of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, Brad holds a MBA from the University of Mary and a BS in Health/Health Care Administration from University of South Dakota.



Erin Oban, State Director

USDA Rural Development

Erin Oban grew up in a farm family in Ray, North Dakota, a small, rural community in the heart of agriculture and oil country in northwest N.D. A graduate of University of Mary, Erin's professional career includes experience as a middle school teacher, in politics and campaigns, as a non-profit director and in public service and educational leadership.

In 2014 and again in 2018, Erin was elected to represent Bismarck's District 35 in the North Dakota Senate. Throughout her legislative service, Erin was a champion for public education and working families and was respected for building relationships across the aisle, being open and accessible, and engaging in honest, direct dialogue.

In March 2022, Erin received a presidential appointment to serve as North Dakota's state director for USDA Rural Development, the first woman appointed to the role in North Dakota's history. Erin makes her home in Bismarck with her husband, Chad, and Kindergarten son, Evin.



Alicia Belay, Community Engagement Assistant Director

North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services

Alicia Belay is the assistant director of the Community Engagement Unit at the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services. She works closely with the HIV and STI programs and helps lead work around women's preventative health, including improving prenatal and postpartum care for women of lower income or from minority populations. She works closely with Indigenous and New American, Foreign-Born, Immigrant (NFI) communities in North Dakota.

Dr. Belay has a master's degree in psychology from Brown University, a doctorate from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in social and health psychology and worked as a psychology professor for six years at Lakeland University (formerly Lakeland College). She spent a year developing a small community center for individuals with disabilities and HIV in Kenya. She served as the North Dakota state refugee coordinator and as a mission director of maternal health through March of Dimes. In all these roles, she helped ensure people received equitable access to care, appropriate and timely medical services and optimal outcomes.

In 2017, she earned a second master's degree in public health in Gondar, Ethiopia, through a two-year Rotary International Scholarship. Since then, in her free time, she has been an active Rotarian implementing local and international grant projects and has developed a small nonprofit organization that provides microloans and job training to women in east Africa.



Vanessa Tibbits, Program Leader

American Indian Public Health Resource Center

Vanessa Tibbits is an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and serves as the program leader for the American Indian Public Health Resource Center. Vanessa has worked in public health for over 20 years with tribal nations focusing on various topics including commercial tobacco prevention, maternal and child health and using culture as prevention. She has experience in conducting focus groups and facilitating conversations and action planning with diverse stakeholders in tribal nations.



Jessica Thomason, Executive Director

Human Services Division, NDHHS

As the Executive Director of the Human Services Division within the ND Department of Health and Human Services, Jessica provides oversight and direction for economic health and family wellbeing services within the department. Jessica holds bachelor's degrees in political science and economics from the University of North Dakota and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in public policy analysis and urban/regional planning, with an emphasis on rural community development.



Dan Conrad, President and CEO

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota

Dan Conrad is the president and CEO of Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND). Dan is one of 35 Blues' CEOs across the country that comprise the national Blue Cross Blue Shield Association Board of Directors.

Previously, Dan served as CLO, providing strategic and legal expertise to formulate and execute business strategies. He also managed the organization's legal and compliance risks and opportunities. During his time with BCBSND, he progressively took on more and more operational and executive responsibility, touching most of the enterprise, culminating in his appointment as CEO on Jan. 1, 2020.

Conrad is a native North Dakotan and brings more than 25 years of varied experience to his role. He joined BCBSND in July 2013 after spending time as in-house counsel at two large public companies. Dan also served in the public sector having started his career as a trial attorney with the U.S. Justice Department.

An active community member, Conrad serves on the boards of directors for Make-A-Wish North Dakota, the BCBSND Caring Foundation, the Greater North Dakota Chamber, as well as a member of the Valley Prosperity Partnership. He is also an active supporter of the United Way of Cass-Clay and he and his wife Rachel will serve as the annual Campaign Chairs in 2022.

Conrad holds a bachelor's degree from Minnesota State University Moorhead and a law degree from the University of North Dakota.

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Pam Gulleson, Director of Community Engagement

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota

Pam Gulleson serves as executive director of BCBSND Caring Foundation and Community Engagement, using her background in health care and public policy to advance the Caring Foundation's goal to support sustainable and innovative efforts that promote better outcomes and create lasting change across North Dakota.

A graduate of North Dakota State University, Gulleson holds a bachelor's degree in nutrition and health education. Before joining BCBSND in 2013, she was employed as director of Allied Health Programs at the North Dakota State College of Science and as a licensed nutritionist and director of Public Health Nutrition in southeast North Dakota. She brings extensive policy background, serving in the North Dakota House of Representatives, representing District 26 in southeast North Dakota for sixteen years and as U.S. Senate state director. Pam currently serves as a member of the North Dakota Health Equity Taskforce, Pediatric Mental Health Grant Advisory Committee, FM Wellness Committee, GFM Chamber Public Policy Committee, State Board of Ag Research and Education (SBARE) and past board member of the Center for Native American Youth and March of Dimes.

Pam has been recognized as Legislator of the Year by the ND Career and Technical Education Association and awarded the Excellence in Public Health Programming by the ND Center for Rural Health. Gulleson lives in Rutland with her husband Bill, where they are partners in a farming and ranching operation with their three sons.



Amber Blomberg, Caring Foundation Manager

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota

Amber Blomberg has been with BCBSND for over 10 years and currently serves as the Community Partnerships and Caring Foundation manager. In her role, Amber forges community and non-profit partnerships across the state and administers the Foundation's grant programs where a key strategic focus is addressing service gaps and health inequities. She works together with grantees to support nonprofit sustainability, collaborate on shared outcomes and create lasting change. Amber also oversees BCBSND's corporate giving where she works to deepen the company's philanthropic roots and further connect North Dakota communities in meaningful ways. In 2016, Amber successfully helped launch BCBSND's employee volunteer program which allows BCBSND employees up to 16 hours annually to volunteer on company paid time.

Amber has been recognized as a nominee for YWCA's Women of the Year and currently serves on the Friends of the Children F-M board, is committee chair for the Ronald McDonald House of the Red River Valley and involved on the BIO Girls Impact Committee.

Amber attended Concordia College in Moorhead where she received her bachelor's degree in marketing and business management. Amber currently lives in Fargo with her husband and three daughters.