

A Fighting Chance: Summit on Basic Needs and Child Success

Thursday, March 24, 2022 | 10:00 am to 12:00 pm (CT)

Speaker Bio's



Melissa Atkins Wardy, Director of the Texas Family Leadership Council, CHILDREN AT RISK

Melissa Atkins Wardy is a change agent, creative strategist, and intentional storyteller offering expertise in collaboration, abundance thinking, and fundraising leadership with a foundation in relationship stewardship, equitable team building, and public relations. Melissa's career has been dedicated to steering a shift in the way people think about and advocate for children.

Melissa is the Director of the Texas Family Leadership Council, a statewide collaborative of CHILDREN AT RISK. The TXFLC is made up of child and family-focused organizations, community leaders, and influencers who come together to share information and resources to improve the quality of life for Texas children. TXFLC working groups tackle the most pressing issues facing families in our state by sharing information, evaluating policy solutions, and developing a united advocacy agenda.

Melissa lives with her husband and two teens in beautiful El Paso, Texas. When not at work, you can find her on a trail in the mountains.



Kindel Nuno, Executive Vice President, Legal, General Counsel and Secretary, Mattress Firm

Kindel Elam Nuno serves as Mattress Firm's Executive Vice President and General Counsel. She joined Mattress Firm in July 2012 as Vice President and General Counsel, responsible for providing guidance on legal compliance and responsibility. Prior to her work at Mattress Firm, Elam was an Associate and then Senior Associate at Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P. from October 2004 through June 2012. During that time, Elam spent one year on secondment in Tokyo, Japan with Mitsui & Co., Ltd., a Japanese trading company traded on the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Elam has experience in a wide range of legal activities, including mergers and acquisitions, public and private securities transactions and finance. Kindel holds a B.A. in Psychology and Political Science from Vanderbilt University and a J.D. from the University of Texas. She lives in Houston but enjoys exploring the world every chance she can.



Dr. Bob Sanborn, President & CEO, CHILDREN AT RISK

Dr. Sanborn is a noted leader, advocate, and activist for education and children and the President and CEO of CHILDREN AT RISK. He earned his undergraduate degree at Florida State University and his doctorate at Columbia University in New York City. Before entering the non-profit sector, he had a distinguished career in higher education at institutions such as Rice University and Hampshire College.

Under his leadership, CHILDREN AT RISK has expanded its influence considerably. Notable achievements include opening up centers in Dallas and Fort Worth; launching the Public Policy & Law Center, the CHILDREN AT RISK Institute, the Center for Parenting and Family Well-Being and the Center to End Trafficking and Exploitation of Children. Sanborn is the Executive Editor of two peer reviewed, open-access academic journals, the *Journal of Applied Research on Children* and the *Journal of Family Strengths*.



Sharmily Roy, Director, Center for Social Measurement & Evaluation, CHILDREN AT RISK

Prior to Children at Risk, Sharmily Roy has work experience in global and domestic public health programs. At the Texas Department of State Health Services, she supported evaluation and technical assistance to improve disease surveillance and reporting. Growing up, Sharmily held a passion for becoming an aid worker to help others, which has inevitably carried into her work today. She is dedicated to improving systems to serve the needs of children so they can live safe, fulfilled, and empowered lives in good health.

Sharmily is originally from Atlanta, GA, where she received her Bachelor's degree in International Relations from Agnes Scott College and Masters in Public Health at Georgia State University. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at UTHealth Science Center at Houston.



Sara Moran, Associate Director, Center for Social Measurement & Evaluation, Children at Risk

Sara holds a Master's degree in Public Policy with a focus in Quantitative Research from the University of Houston. Prior to joining CHILDREN AT RISK, she was a Data Analyst in the University of Houston's Measurement and Evaluation Center.

Sara joined CHILDREN AT RISK's CSME department in January of 2019. She works on various data-driven projects for CHILDREN AT RISK and is particularly interested in the intersection of geography and opportunities for children as well as reducing the inequities caused by them. Sara is excited to be a part of CHILDREN AT RISK's work toward achieving improved outcomes for Texas children and families.



Jessica Bundage, Program Coordinator, Center for Social Measurement & Evaluation, [CHILDREN AT RISK](#)

Jessica's interest in education came as a result of her time serving as an AmeriCorps member, in which she worked as a day camp counselor and after school instructor for inner-city elementary and middle school students in Dallas. Following her graduation from Southern Methodist University, where she double majored in Political Science and International Studies, she then went on to serve in the Peace Corps as a Community Health Educator in Ethiopia. These experiences led her to pursue a Master's degree in International Education from New York University.

Prior to joining Children At Risk, Jessica served as an Americorps VISTA for the Houston Chapter of the United Nations Association, where she successfully led the relaunch of its Global Classrooms/Model UN program for inner-city Houston schools. Jessica is eager to apply these experiences to advocating for children's rights here in Texas.



Savine Villatoro, Project Coordinator, CHILDREN AT RISK

Savine's interest in public policy stems from her time as a KIPP Federal Policy Fellow where she interned at the US House of Representatives for Congressman Joaquin Castro. Her passion to create positive change for her community lead her to pursue a master's degree in Public Administration with a focus in Public Policy Analysis from The Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. Prior to CHILDREN AT RISK, she interned with non-profits like Habitat for Humanity, Episcopal Health Foundation, and Families Empowered.

Savine works with the Early Childhood Education and Center for Social Measurement and Evaluation teams at CHILDREN AT RISK and is particularly interested in education and immigration initiatives. As a first-generation Latina, she is excited to aid CHILDREN AT RISK in closing equity gaps for children in Texas.



Dr. Binal Kancherla, Medical Director, Children's Sleep Center, Texas Children's Hospital

I attended medical school at Boston University. Completed pediatrics residency at UT Health Science Center Houston. I completed fellowships in pediatric pulmonary medicine and sleep medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. I joined the faculty at Texas Children's Hospital in 2010 and am triple board certified in pediatrics, pediatric pulmonary, and adult/pediatric sleep medicine. I am the current medical director for the Children's Sleep Center at Texas Children's Hospital and I treat children with sleep disorders at Main Campus as well as the community hospitals.



Dr. Kimberli Darrough, Senior Director, Early Head Start and Head Start, BakerRipley

Dr. Kimberli Darrough has dedicated her life to advancing the educational success of at-risk, economically-disadvantaged children. Her career in education spans from middle school/high school teacher, after-school program coordinator, Title I coordinator, and elementary/middle school principal. Currently, she serves as the division lead for the Early Childhood Program at BakerRipley, one of the state's largest community-based nonprofits. The Early Head Start/Head Start Program serves 3000 low-income children and families in southwest Harris County and all of Fort Bend County.

Dr. Darrough is a Texarkana native and is a proud graduate of Prairie View A & M University, receiving her Bachelor and Master's degrees from the Historically Black College & University. Dr. Darrough obtained her Doctorate in Education from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority-Katy Area Alumnae Chapter, Jack and Jill of America-Sugar Land Chapter, and the Links Incorporated-Katy Richmond Chapter. She is married, has one son, and three bonus children.



Melanie McGuire, Chief Program Officer, San Antonio Food Bank

Melanie McGuire joined the San Antonio Food Bank in 2019. Under her leadership, she oversees the Food for Today, Food for Tomorrow, and Food for Lifetime strategies for the food bank's 29 counties. As Chief Program Officer, she leads the Programmatic departments, along with the food bank's direct programming for children, seniors, workforce and nutrition education. In addition, she oversees the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and benefit assistance

programs. Melanie has 9 years of food bank experience in programs design and data insights to include several new initiatives including on a Food Bank Food Pharmacy Program, Apple Seeds Apartments, and an electronic referral systems for healthcare providers. Prior to working at the San Antonio Food Bank, Melanie was Chief Impact Officer at Second Harvest Food Bank in New Orleans.



Zoe Middleton (she/her), Housing and Climate Justice Advocate / Policy Adviser for Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Zoe Middleton is a housing and climate justice advocate living in Houston, Texas. Her current work focuses on utilizing American Rescue Plan Act funds to improve the quality of life of all Harris County residents through investments in housing, health, and jobs. She serves on the board of the Midtown TIRZ, West Street Recovery, the Harris County Development Fund and was appointed to the joint city-county COVID19 Housing Stability Task Force.



Dr. Candice Castillo, Executive Officer, Student Support Services, Houston ISD

Dr. Candice Castillo currently serves as Houston ISD Executive Officer of Student Support Services. Dr. Castillo is responsible for districtwide oversight and strategic leadership of the district’s non-academic supports which includes Wraparound Services, Family and Community Engagement, Afterschool Programming, Counseling and Socio-Emotional Learning, Student Assistance, Health and Medical Services, Athletics, and Equity and Outreach programming. Dr. Castillo’s extensive experience engaging multicultural and cross-functional audiences, developing bilingual communications in various settings and leading community engagement efforts has fueled her passion for empowering communities and families to help their children succeed in school and in life, which she also does through active volunteerism in her community. Dr. Castillo was born and raised in Panama City, Panama. She has a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration, a master’s degree in Global Management and will be receiving her Doctorate in Education degree in Ethical Leadership at the University of St. Thomas, Houston in May 2022.



Guadalupe Fernández, Director, Children’s Immigration Network, CHILDREN AT RISK

Guadalupe Fernández joined CHILDREN AT RISK in 2022. As the Director of the Children’s Immigration Network, she is responsible for the development and advancement of CHILDREN AT RISK’s advocacy projects and campaigns to transform the policies and practices that impact immigrant children and families across Texas. Guadalupe is committed to advancing justice and equity by building collective power among immigrant families, advocates, and allies.

Guadalupe joins C@R with a wealth of experience advocating for rights and policy for migrant children and families at all levels of advocacy: individual, systems, and social change. As the Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager at the Tahirih Justice Center’s Houston office, she developed the first program for local and state advocacy on policies that impact immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. Over the years, she has served on multiple local and state-wide coalitions, working groups, and task forces. Guadalupe is also a consultant for Praxis International, where she mentors domestic violence programs across the country in strengthening their individual, institutional, and social change advocacy to end all forms of gender-based violence. Guadalupe is the proud daughter of immigrants and a first-generation college graduate from Georgetown University.



Dan Longoria, President, Mattress Firm, El Paso

Dan Longoria has worked for Mattress Firm for over 23 years, and now serves as the President of Mattress Firm El Paso. He has grown the company significantly in that time. Dan has held multiple non-profit board positions over the years, including service to Operation Noel, the Hispanic Chamber, and the Better Business Bureau, among others. He is looking forward to raising awareness of CHILDREN AT RISK, particularly within the Spanish speaking community.

