



children
atRisk

Early Childhood Education Summit

May 11, 2023 | 10:00AM CT

Speaker Bios

[Register here](#)



[Kim Kofron](#) – Director of Early Childhood Education, CHILDREN AT RISK

Kim Kofron is the Director of Early Childhood for Children at Risk. Previously, she served as the Executive Director for the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children from 2014-2021. She hails from the great state of Illinois receiving her Bachelor of Science in Child Development from the University of Illinois but

found her way to Texas where she received her Master's in Education in Early Childhood Special Education from the University of Texas.

Ms. Kofron has worked in many capacities in early childhood, working in both for-profit and non-profit child care settings as a 3-year-old teacher to Director to Manager of Education for a multi-site statewide child care company in Texas. Kofron has served on Governor Perry's Commission on Licensing Standards and currently serves on Governor Abbott's Texas Early Learning Council.



[Christine Thomas](#) – Sr. Associate Director of the Center for Social Measurement and Evaluation, CHILDREN AT RISK

Christine Thomas, MS is the Sr. Associate Director of the Center of Social Measurement and Evaluation for Children At Risk. She earned her master's degree in Applied Demography with a concentration in health disparities and mental health. Her areas of interest include the structural determinants of health

(conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age) and their influence on wellness outcomes. Through the evaluation of data, she seeks to disrupt the current practices and policies which contribute to large disparities between communities in Texas. By incorporating her 8 years of clinical and behavioral experience and data informed methods, she works to engage social services organizations, foundations, researchers and any other collaborates who seek to improve outcomes of children most affected in Texas.



[Mandi Kimball](#) – Vice President and Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, CHILDREN AT RISK

Mandi Sheridan Kimball has been advocating for Texas' children since 2004. In January 2006, she became CHILDREN AT RISK's Public Policy Analyst and quickly made her way to Director. She received her Master's in Social Work from the University of Houston and received her Bachelor's degree in Social Work from St. Edwards in Austin, Texas. Social justice is a priority on Mandi's advocacy agenda. Her experience and knowledge of the Texas Legislature has assisted her efforts in achieving quality care and services to Texas' most vulnerable youth in the areas of early education, human trafficking, juvenile justice/mental health, public education, and food insecurity. Mandi oversees the Public Policy and Law Center's advocacy efforts, all policy briefs and bills drafted and filed by the Center, and provides expert testimony to support positive policy changes. Mandi is highly active within communities in Texas and serves in leadership capacities on multiple local and state coalitions. In 2011, Mandi received the University Of Houston Graduate College Of Social Work Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Award. Furthermore, Mandi works to build coalitions with community stakeholders, business stakeholders, non-profits, and service providers, to ensure a united front of child advocates.



[Jason Sabo](#) – Founder, Frontera Strategies

Jason Sabo is the founder of Frontera Strategy. Jason has led and assisted efforts to pass legislation and secure appropriations at state capitols across the country for more than two decades. Jason knows the issues and politics important to nonprofits and philanthropy, and he knows how to win. He holds a master's degree in History from Indiana University.

Elevating Lived Experiences: Empowering Families as Organizational Leaders



[Jennifer Johnson](#) – President, Project One Day

Jennifer Johnson is the founder of Project One Day (POD), a Houston 501c3 that generates 40 hours a week of free infant & toddler care for parents in need. POD trains parents to assist teachers. Parents volunteer one day and get four days free.



[Trey Oglesby](#) – Director of Family Enrichment Services, Children's Advocacy Center of Greater West Texas

I was born into a Christian home to parents who taught school and a father who was also a preacher. We moved around from time to time due to my father being an Army Chaplain, as well. After high school I enlisted in the U.S. Army and deployed to Bosnia and Iraq. Being a disabled veteran has helped in relating to others who suffer from trauma and other mental health concerns. I've been married to my lovely bride for 15 years this December. We have two children. Taylor is 23 and Zayla is 3. I received my Bachelor of Science in Religion from Liberty University and went on to receive a Master of Divinity, Master of Theology and a Doctorate of Theology. I am currently working on a Doctorate of Christian Counseling with a concentration on the impact of unconditional love on trauma victims. Over the last decade my wife and I have worked with over 1000 at risk children in a Trauma Informed Care setting. I am currently the Director of Family Enrichment Services at the Children's Advocacy Center of Greater West Texas. I oversee the Parents As Teachers and the Family Connections programs.



[Troy Bush-DiDonato](#) – Community Engagement Officer, Episcopal Health Foundation

Troy Bush-DiDonato serves as the Senior Community Engagement Officer for the Episcopal Health Foundation, where he implements EHF's community engagement strategy through capacity-building training with community partners, grant partners, and congregations. Troy's career has traversed many sectors including public schools, clinical research, and philanthropy. A native of Houston, Troy is a founding member and past Chair of the Houston-area Suicide Prevention Coalition and is currently serving on the Board for the Texas Suicide Prevention Collaborative. He is a master trainer for the QPR gatekeeper training and trainer for Texas ASK training. He is active in the recovery and the LGBTQ communities of Houston. Troy holds a Bachelor of Science from Stephen F. Austin State University.



[Dr. Olga Martinez Hickman, Ph.D.](#) – Executive Director, Bachman Lake Together

Dr. Olga Martinez Hickman supports cross-sector partnerships aimed at redesigning systems and strategies to enhance high-quality early childhood education for all children, regardless of background. She has more than two decades of relevant education and experience, including supporting statewide leadership, literacy and system-change initiatives. Her areas of expertise include equity and excellence, parent leadership and second language acquisition for diverse learners. Dr. Martinez Hickman is a product of public education. She began her career as a classroom teacher and taught at the same elementary school she attended. Dr.

Martinez Hickman earned her Ph.D. in K-16 Research, Policy, and Leadership from The University of Texas at Arlington.



[BriTanya Brown](#) – CEO & Owner, Our Loving Village LLC

BriTanya Brown is the proud mother of boy-girl twins, early educator and childcare visionary at [Our Loving Village](#) in Stamford, Texas. She graduated Magnum Cum Laude in 2.5 years with a double major Bachelor's of Science in Speech Language Pathology and Political Science, with an emphasis in Public Policy. Through combination of passion and purpose, she is an agent of change for social justice and creating a better world that works for everyone. In addition to being a residential based childcare educator, she is a national and state level advocacy and community organizer for early care and education for Childcare Changemakers and The Child Care for Every Family Network . She has worked alongside many other advocates and legislators to raise awareness about the childcare crisis by reaching out to those closely impacted by the issue and brainstorming solutions that encompass the broader benefit towards an equitable and affordable childcare system that works for everyone.



[Diane Girouard](#) – State Policy Senior Analyst, Child Care Aware of America

Diane Girouard is currently the State Policy Senior Analyst at Child Care Aware of America, a national nonprofit organization with a vision that every family in the United States has access to high-quality, affordable child care. Prior to this role, Diane was a Child Nutrition Policy Analyst at the Food Research & Action Center, where she analyzed and researched school breakfast and lunch policies in states and at the federal level. She began her career at the state level as an Education Policy Analyst for seven years under both houses of the New York State Legislature.



[LJ Henderson](#) – STEM Product Developer & Founder, Little STEM Academy

Lj Henderson is the Founder of Little Stem Academy and creator of Little StemLabkits. She fosters the development of high-quality learning programs by consulting with academic leaders to make STEM resources affordable and accessible for all children. She also is an Amazon Best-Selling author.



[Madison Mattise](#) – Director of Pre-K Partnerships, United Way for Greater Austin

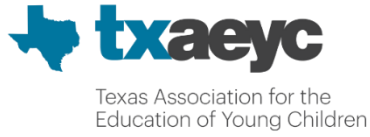
Madison is the Director of Pre-K Partnerships at the United Way for Greater Austin. She has taught Pre-K in public and charter school settings and served as principal for a public charter Montessori school in Austin. She received her M.S. in Early Education from Johns Hopkins. Today, she manages the 1882 PK Partnership between Austin ISD and Travis County child care centers, as well as the formal partnership with Round Rock ISD and Williamson County child care centers. She serves on the Leadership Team for Travis County Success by Six, an early childhood coalition.



[Cody Somerville](#) – Executive Director, Texas Association for the Education of Young Children

Cody Somerville is the Executive Director of the Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TXAEYC), a professional membership association that works to advance early childhood education and the early childhood workforce across Texas. He began his career as a kindergarten teacher and has served in a variety of roles within the early childhood programs, state government, and educational technology, each providing a unique opportunity to support the quality of early childhood education. During his time at the Texas Education Agency, Cody led the implementation of the Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five, which increased coordination and collaboration across multiple state agencies with early childhood programming and engaged over 10,000 Texans in statewide strategic planning efforts. Most recently, Cody served as the Senior Content Expert at Hatch Early Learning where he was responsible for designing child facing technology that supported data-driven instruction in prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. In addition to professional roles, Cody has served in several leadership roles such as Chair of NAEYC's Young Professionals Advisory Council and Board Member for TXAEYC.

Thank you to our partners!



High-Quality Educational Childcare

earlymatters

AUSTIN • DALLAS • EL PASO
HOUSTON • SAN ANTONIO • WACO

[Check out our upcoming Learning Events here!](#)