

**CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT**  
**GOVERNOR'S**  
**TASK FORCE**



**Strengthening Families and  
Empowering Communities**

**25th Annual Governor's Task Force on  
Child Abuse and Neglect Summit**

**Virtual Event  
December 8 – December 10, 2021**

# Welcome



It is my pleasure to welcome each of you to the 25th Annual Governor’s Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Summit. Thank you for all the work put in to make this Summit a success each and every year. I hope that the presentations over the next three days inspire ideas and discussions around ways to “Strengthen Families and Empower Communities,” as it relates to the vision of the Department in supporting families and partnering with communities to strengthen our service delivery. Promoting the strengthening of families while empowering communities helps ensure that every family is treated fairly, every effort is made to keep families together, and children are protected from abuse and neglect.

## **Demetrius Starling**

**Executive Director, Children’s Services Agency  
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services**



On behalf of the Governor’s Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, I am pleased to join in welcoming you to the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit. The Summit is designed to offer innovative ideas and opportunities to learn from each other so that we may return to our communities inspired to continue our work. This year’s theme, “Strengthen Families and Empower Communities,” is a reminder of the opportunity each of us have to make lasting change. The work you do serving the most vulnerable is critical and appreciated. I am excited to join you in learning during the three-day Summit!

## **Annie M. Harrison**

**Chairperson, Governor’s Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect  
Chair, Summit Subcommittee  
Detective, Ingham County Sheriff’s Office**



I would like to extend a warm welcome to all participants and scheduled presenters in attendance at this year’s Governor’s Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Summit. Thank you for your work on the frontline. Your commitment to families is unwavering and your dedication to this work is awe-inspiring. It is the work you do that keeps children, families, and communities safe. Thank you for being a source of stability and strength. It’s an honor to work alongside of you.

## **Veronica Flores**

**Governor’s Task Force Coordinator  
MDHHS Prevention, Preservation & Protection Analyst**

# Steve Yager Lifetime Achievement Award

Each year, the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect recognizes an individual who has excelled throughout their career in making improvements to the handling of child abuse and neglect cases in the state of Michigan. The award, named for Steve Yager, a former Children's Services Agency Director, is given to an individual who has led the field in developing innovative and effective practices to improve child welfare, who has a demonstrable impact in collaborating with other child welfare system participants in Michigan, and who has shared their expertise with other child welfare system professionals and participants through training, publication, or statewide committee work.

**Please join the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect in honoring Savator Selden-Johnson with the Steve Yager Lifetime Achievement Award.**



**Savator Selden-Johnson** is the Kent County Director of Child Welfare for the State of Michigan. Director Selden-Johnson received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology/Sociology from Sangamon State University and her Master of Social Work from Western Michigan University. Director Selden-Johnson started her career in social work as an in-home family therapist, shortly after she transitioned to a Foster Care case worker, a licensing worker and eventually was promoted to a Licensing Supervisor. Director Selden-Johnson began her career with the State of Michigan as a Children's Protective Services worker in Genesee County before transferring to Kent County where she began working with minor mothers which eventually lead into Children's Services, ultimately becoming the Director of Kent County.

Director Selden-Johnson sits on the Board of the Children's Advocacy Center of Kent County, member of the Kent County Health Advisory Council, the Kent County Child and Families Coordinating council, CSA Antiracism Transformation Team Steering Committee member for the Michigan Child Welfare Improvement Task Force and co-leader of the Kent EMBRACE committee. Director Selden-Johnson taught as an adjunct professor for Western Michigan University's Master of Social Work program 2005-2020. She has partnered in the development and implemented two programs for the County of Kent (Removal Committee & 49507 Parent Nurture Program) to create better outcomes for children and their families by eliminating racial and class bias and creating a community-based support system, as well systems work designed to 'break down barriers and create anti-racist and anti-oppressive structures, policies, practices and procedures.' Director Selden-Johnson has been married for 30+ years, has two amazing children and four adoring grandchildren.

# Summit Keynote Speakers



**Sasha Joseph Neulinger**, is the **founder and president of Voice For The Kids**, and **co-founder and head of production at Step 1 Films**. In 2015, Sasha presented at TEDxBozeman with his first public speech, "Trauma Is Irreversible. How It Shapes Us Is Our Choice." Since his TED Talk, Sasha has presented over 100 keynote speeches around the world, helping raise over \$7 Million for the fight against child abuse. Sasha made his directional debut at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival with his autobiographical, feature length documentary, **REWIND**. **REWIND** had its U.S. television premiere on May 11, 2020, as a part of PBS' Independent Lens lineup, where the film reached 280 million households nationwide. **REWIND** was nominated for a Critics Choice Award for Best First Feature Documentary, and received three Emmy Nominations, including Outstanding Social Issue Documentary, Outstanding Direction, and Outstanding Editing.

**Brett Culp**, is an **acclaimed filmmaker and social entrepreneur** whose work has inspired audiences around the world. Brett's uplifting keynote speeches deliver practical methods for aligning teams behind a meaningful mission and creating growth through trust and genuine connectivity. His high energy programs are filled with touching moments, extraordinary filmmaking stories, humor, and insights about developing rewarding relationships through generosity and authenticity. His message impacts audiences on a personal level, motivating them to find the best within themselves and bring it to their world. Brett has been featured in USA Today, Entertainment Tonight, WIRED, The LA Times, The Hollywood Reporter, Lifetime, WEtv, and many more.





# Summit Speakers



**Alaina Dobkowski** is a foster and adoptive parent in Kent County. She is a member of the Children's Service Agency Antiracism Transformation Team. Alaina has a Bachelor of Social Work from Calvin College, a Master of Urban Studies with a focus on youth development from Eastern University and is currently a Master of Divinity Student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. She has worked with youth and young adults in Philadelphia and Grand Rapids for over 15 years and has been a foster parent for four years. Currently Alaina serves as the Communications and Development Manager as well as Antiracism Team Co-leader at Access of West Michigan. She also co-leads Grand Rapids Mennonite Fellowship. Alaina passionately believes that addressing racism is critical to creating a more just and equitable world for youth and families.



**Alex Brace, Executive Director, Small Talk Children's Advocacy Center** Alex is a licensed counselor in the State of Michigan. He is trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral therapy and specializes in working with children and adolescents who have been impacted by abuse and trauma. He is passionate about helping children heal and become empowered despite the traumatic experiences they have endured. In 2019, Brace was appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to serve on the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. Since January 2020, Alex has joined other professionals around the state to combat child abuse. He serves on the board for the Children's Advocacy Centers of Michigan. He was born and raised in Lansing, Michigan. Alex has been with Small Talk since 2011.



**Mona Guyton, CPS Supervisor**, graduated from Grand Valley State University earning a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, master's degree in Public Administration, and a master's degree in Social Work. She has been employed through the State of Michigan for the past 15 years. During this time, she has worked numerous positions, including Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative Coordinator, where she advocated for foster youth policy and provided various trainings to foster youth as well as worked with youth to have a successful outcome when exiting foster care. Mona has also worked as a CPS worker and is currently a CPS supervisor. Mona serves on the statewide CSA-Antiracism Transformation Team. She also serves on various committees all geared towards a common goal of dismantling racism. She is very passionate about dismantling racism and equally passionate about educating others who seek to learn and/or become involved with antiracism efforts.



**Amelia Siders, Ph.D., Director of Clinical Practice Development and Education** for Children's Advocacy Centers of Michigan (CACMI). Dr. Siders helps to support the clinical and victim advocacy operations throughout the state. Her goal is to make training, practice, and support easily accessible so that CAC staff can focus on providing current state of the art, evidenced-based services to victims and families. Prior to working with CACMI, Amelia was the Program Director for the Traverse Bay Children's Advocacy Center.



**Demetrius Starling, Executive Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Children's Services Agency** has worked in the child welfare field for more than 20 years. He began his career as a Children's Protective Services specialist in Wayne County and has held various management roles including as a first line supervisor in Macomb and Wayne counties, as a services program manager in Monroe and Lenawee, and as a state administrative manager in the Division of Continuous Quality Improvement. Following his tenure as the social services division administrator in Genesee County, Demetrius served as the county director for Sanilac and St. Clair counties. In February, Demetrius was appointed as the

in-home services bureau administrator over prevention, preservation, and protection programs. Demetrius also serves on the statewide CSA Anti-Racism Transformation Team, Court Improvement Process Team, and as the CSA representative for the Michigan Action Plan for Father Involvement Advisory Group. Demetrius has been an integral part of formulating diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, human trafficking initiatives, the Handle with Care work, and various continuous quality improvement teams while serving in both rural and urban counties. Demetrius earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Ferris State University.



**Selene Wadhawan Weiss, Child Welfare Supervisor**, holds an MSW from Grand Valley State University and since 1999 she has been employed by MDHHS. She has experience working in both urban and rural counties in the Michigan Child Welfare system. Her work experience includes Children's Protective Services, Children's Foster Care, Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative, and Native American Outreach Services. Selene has been serving on the CSA Anti-Racism Taskforce since 2019. As a South Asian woman, she is committed to reducing the Persons of Color disproportionality within the Michigan child welfare system.

# AGENDA

Wednesday, December 8 – Friday, December 10, 2021

DAY ONE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021	
9:00 – 9:15 a.m.	<b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b> <i>Det. Annie Harrison, Chair, Governor’s Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect</i> <i>Demetrius Starling, Executive Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services</i> <i>Children’s Services Agency</i>
9:15 – 9:30 a.m.	<b>Presentation of the Steve Yager Lifetime Achievement Award</b> <i>Presented by Det. Annie Harrison, Chair, Governor’s Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect</i> <i>and Scott Orr, Kent County Child Welfare District Manager</i> <i>Presented to, Savator Selden-Johnson, Kent County Director of Child Welfare</i>
9:30 – 9:45 a.m.	15 Minute Break
9:45 – 11:15 a.m.	<b>Viewing of Emmy nominated film <i>Rewind</i></b> <i>Digging through the vast collection of his father’s home videos, a young man reconstructs the unthinkable story of his boyhood and exposes a dark secret passed through generations.</i> Sasha Joseph Neulinger
11:15 – 11:30 a.m.	15 Minute Break
11:30 – 12:00 p.m.	<b>Conversation</b> With Sasha Joseph Neulinger moderated by Alex Brace
DAY TWO: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2021	
9:00 – 10:15 a.m.	<b>Opening Keynote: Rediscovering the Beauty Within</b> <i>An autobiographical story about Sasha Joseph Neulinger’s journey surviving multigenerational child sexual abuse. In this presentation, Sasha utilizes photos, childhood drawings, home video and archival news footage as immersive aids to invite the audience on his journey from child victim to adult survivor. Covering the abuse, family dynamics, childhood therapy, the prosecution process, and how he got to where he currently is today, “Rediscovering the Beauty Within” is as educational as it is inspirational.</i> Sasha Joseph Neulinger
10:15 – 10:30 a.m.	15 Minute Break
10:30 – 12:00 p.m.	Youth with Problematic Sexual Behaviors in the Child Welfare System: Best practices to support investigation, safety planning, and treatment Amelia Siders, Ph.D.
DAY THREE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2021	
9:00 – 10:15 a.m.	Transforming Michigan’s Child Welfare System Through Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Alaina Dobkowski, Mona Guyton, Demetrius Starling & Selene Wadhawan Weiss
10:15 - 10:30 a.m.	15 Minute Break

10:30 – 11:55 a.m.	<b>Closing Keynote: Superhero Leadership in Uncertain Times</b> <i>Brett Culp is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose work inspires audiences to embrace and accept change, empower others, and spark innovation.</i>
11:55 – 12:00 p.m.	<b>Closing remarks and Adjournment</b>



# The Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

The Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect is designed as a multidisciplinary task force committed to creating positive change in the child welfare system. The Task Force encourages innovative programs, develops protocols, sponsors trainings, and proposes legislation to enhance Michigan's response to child abuse and neglect. The Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect consists of at least 18 members appointed by the Governor, each with knowledge and experience relating to the criminal justice system and issues of child physical abuse, child neglect, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and child maltreatment-related fatalities.

The Children's Justice Act (CJA) provides grants to states to improve the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child victim. CJA grantees are responsible for implementing the requirements of the CJA grant program to reform state processes for responding to child abuse and neglect. The Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect is funded through the CJA grant program.

## **Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Members:**

**Det. Annie Harrison (Chairperson)**  
Represents Law Enforcement

**Det. Joseph Merritt (Vice-chairperson)**  
Represents Law Enforcement

**Paula Aylward**  
Represents judges and attorneys

**Alex Brace**  
Represents mental health professionals

**Dr. Tana Bridge, LMSW, Ph.D.**  
Represents mental health professionals

**Kimberly Clemons**  
Represent adult former victims of child abuse and neglect

**Jackie Igafote'o**  
Represents individuals experienced in working with children with disabilities

**Dr. Alane Laws-Barker**  
Represents health professionals

**Hon. Cheryl Lohmeyer**  
Represents judges and attorneys

**Dr. Bethany Mohr, M.D., FAAP**  
Represents health professionals

**Egypt Otis**  
Represents parents and parent groups

**Demetrius Starling**  
Designee of MDHHS Director Elizabeth Hertel

# Thank You to the Summit Subcommittee:

**Det. Annie Harrison (Chairperson)**

Ingham County Sheriff's Office

**Veronica Flores**

Governor's Task Force Coordinator

MDHHS Prevention, Preservation & Protection Analyst

**Kimberly Clemons**

Community-Youth Advocate

**Lisa Davis**

MDHHS Director, Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac County

**Maggie Devlin Wright**

Children's Advocacy Center/Quality Assurance Project Manager

**Jessica Holtrop**

MDHHS Children's Services Program Manager, Sanilac County

**Amanda Jansen**

MDHHS Departmental Analyst

**Det. Joseph Merritt (Vice-chairperson)**

Blackman-Leoni Township Department of Public Safety

**Scott Orr, MSW**

MDHHS Child Welfare District Manager, Kent County

**Kimberly Reese**

MDHHS Training Delivery Division Manager

**Karin Schultz**

MDHHS Services Specialist, Marquette County

**Demetrius Starling**

Executive Director, MDHHS Children's Services Agency

**Brianna Strach**

MDHHS Services Specialist, Wexford/Missaukee Counties

