

Health Equity Team Bios

January 2022



[Melissa Barnes](#) is an Administrative Assistant for Environmental Health at the Gaston County Department of Health & Human Services. She has worked in the Public Health field for almost 10 years now. Melissa was drawn to this field because her mother was uninsured for a lot of her adult life and she saw how that really took its toll on her health during her later years. Melissa wanted to work for an organization that did its best to provide medical care for the underinsured/uninsured members of her community. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, listening to music while doing most anything but especially walking around Rankin Lake, and exploring as many NC waterfalls as she can.



[Lisa Clement-Bryant](#), a registered nurse, is the Director of Employer Clinical Services at CaroMont Health. In her role, she is charged with partnering with clinical leadership teams to create innovative, collaborative and sustainable employer programming to the community at large. At the heart of her desire to increase the self-efficacy of those dealing with chronic conditions is her background as a certified diabetes educator, which exposed her to health inequities suffered by those she served. Her mantra is “a woman passionate about family, friends and the health of the whole world.” Lisa received her Master’s Degree in Nursing- Leadership and Management from Walden University and holds various chronic care certifications.



Karen Creech is the Program Supervisor for The Center, Day Care Services for Adults and has been in the position since May 2017.

Karen has 23 years of experience working in human services with adults. She has worked as a Social Service Director in a nursing home setting, and as a Case Manager for individuals in assisted living facilities. Karen also has experience in the behavioral health field as a supervisor, a System of Care Liaison, and a Quality Management Training Director.

Karen holds a Master’s in Public Health from Walden University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Radford University. Karen is the Health and Wellness Ministry President at her church. She always showed an interest in exercise and wellness but became more passionate about helping others live a healthy lifestyle after watching her father suffer from complications of Diabetes. She believes that you show love to others through giving them strategies that improve their overall well-being.

In her position at the Center, Karen focuses on making the lives of individuals served as enjoyable as possible regardless of limitations. She believes in using person centered approaches that focus on the individuals remaining abilities, life experiences, and relationships that are important to them.



[Tiffany Donnelly](#) is a Lead Worker for the Gaston County Adult Medicaid Department. She has 16 years of experience with Economic Services in Medicaid and Food & Nutrition Services. Tiffany is a member of the Gaston Controlled Substance Coalition on the Education and Prevention Team. She also works as a mentor with Gaston County Schools at Woodhill Elementary. Tiffany is married with 5 adult children and 9 grandchildren. Tiffany is a native of Gaston County and passionate about the wellbeing of all members. Being a part of the Health Equity Team is an honor and a privilege for Tiffany. She looks forward to sharing an educating her coworkers, clients, friends and neighbors. In her spare time, Tiffany enjoys reading, photography, crafting, and playing my pups, Jersey and Jasper.



Steve Eaton is the Public Health Director for the Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services. Steve is from Hickory, North Carolina and holds a Master of Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from East Carolina University, a graduate certificate in Public Health Leadership from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a certificate in Non-Profit Management from Duke University. He joined the former Gaston County Health Department in 2011 as the Assistant Health Director. Earlier in his career, Steve was the executive director for two North Carolina Smart Start agencies and for the Early Head Start program of Alexander County. He has experience in government accounting, community assessment, strategic planning, board development, appreciative inquiry, and collective impact. He serves on the UNCC School of Public Health Advisory board, the Gaston County Alliance for Children and Youth board, the Gaston County School Health Advisory Council, the HealthNet Gaston board, and serves on the executive committee for the North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors as a regional chairman.



Donna Elliott has been the Executive Director of Health Net Gaston since 2010. She has spent the majority of her career working with others to make communities equitable places for all. Health Net Gaston is a collaborative care network providing healthcare access and resources to low-income uninsured people in Gaston County, NC. Additionally, Ms. Elliott oversees development, outreach, enrollment, and community engagement activities for Gaston Family Health Services, a federally qualified health center whose service area encompasses six counties in central North Carolina. The combination of these roles gives her a unique perspective on community needs and resources. Previously, Ms. Elliott served low-income communities through her work at a job readiness center and at a summer learning enrichment organization. Ms. Elliott has a B.A. in English from Meredith College and certification as a Facilitative Leader. She serves as Board Chair of Care Share Health Alliance and is a Board Member of The Gastonia Rotary Club and the Rotary Community Garden. She lives in Gastonia, NC with her husband Claudio Fuente.



Helen Gonzalez has been with Gaston County for a little over a year as a Communicable Disease nurse. She has been a nurse for 26 years. Helen was born in New York and raised in Chicago and Miami. She has been happily married for 29 years, has 2 boys and a beautiful granddaughter. In her spare time Helen enjoys spending time with her granddaughter, dancing, gardening and running. She has participated in a full and half marathon.



Chloe Gordon is a Public Health Nurse II for the Gaston County Department of Health & Human Services. As a nurse in One Clinic, she helps to provide contraception, STI testing / treatment, and immunizations to the community. Before transitioning to public health, she worked in the inpatient setting as a nurse on post-surgical and trauma units. After seeing the barriers to care that her patients experience, she is dedicated to improving the equitability and accessibility of healthcare.

In her free time Chloe likes to hike and bake. She was also recently accepted into the Master of Public Health program at UNC Chapel Hill.



Daughtry Hopper is the Director of Resource Development with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Gaston. She has extensive experience in fund development, public relations and marketing along with a vast understanding of the nonprofit sector. Previously, Daughtry worked as the Director of Community Impact and Resource Development for the United Way of Gaston County, spent more than eight years in various leadership roles with the American Red Cross and seven years as the Director of Marketing and Public Relations with the North Carolina Center for Applied Textile Technology. Daughtry is active as a member of the Altrusa Club of Gastonia, currently serving as past president. She has also served on the Steering Committee for the Community Foundation's RUN since 2005. Daughtry completed the Duke University Certificate Program in Nonprofit Management in 2008. She received her bachelor's in Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.



Trevolia F. Hill is a former Credit/Collection Manager with Sears Company for 19 years and retired Credit/Collection Manager for Belk/GE companies for a total of 16 years. She graduated from Hunter Huss High School. She studied Business Administration at Gaston College, Dallas, NC. She is known for being a motivator, trainer and a team player. She is a former member of Credit Professionals of America. She is currently a member of the Highland Neighborhood Association.

Since retiring, Trevolia has devoted a large amount of her time to community work. She is currently in the Gastonia School System as a mentor at Wood Hill Elementary School. She also will be helping with their after school program. She serves on a committee that is responsible for planning, scheduling and implementing Women's Spiritual Retreats at church. She has volunteered at the local Cancer Center office in Gastonia. Trevolia's experience in these different areas has brought her in contact with many people of diverse groups. She continues to display her passion to help and inform people of any known resources.



Brittain Kenney Assistant Public Health Director for the Gaston County Department of Health & Human Services. Brittain is originally from Statesville, NC and has her B.A. in Journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her Master of Public Health degree through the Public Health Leadership Program at UNC's Gillings School of Global Public Health. She has worked for the Gaston County Department of Health & Human Services (and previously for Gaston County Health Department) since 2007, primarily as a Health Education Coordinator. Most of her work has focused on HIV and STD prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, and increasing access to health services for young people.



Tara Knight is a Child Care Health Consultant with Gaston County Health and Human Services, where she partners with Gaston County childcare providers to ensure a safe, healthy and equitable environment for children and their families along with childcare staff. She received her Bachelors of Science in Health Promotion from Appalachian State University in 2011. Tara is a resident of Charlotte, North Carolina but is native to Gaston County. Tara is excited and passionate about being back to serve the community in which she was raised. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her husband, daughter and two dogs, traveling, camping and home improvement projects.



Carol Cecus McManus is a Chief Court Counselor with the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice for Judicial District 27 [serving Gaston, Lincoln and Cleveland County]. She received two (2) Bachelor of Science degrees in Criminal Justice and Social Work from East Carolina University. While working with the Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice she earned a Masters in Human Resource Management from Keller Graduate School of Management. Ms. McManus began her career of serving the youth of North Carolina in 1985. Her professional experience includes work with Cumberland Psychiatric Hospital, Lutheran Family Services, North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts, North Carolina Division of Youth Services and the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice. Outside of work Ms. McManus is a member of the North State Law Enforcement Officers Association and vice-chair of the Gaston County Juvenile Crime Prevention Council. She also serves as Director of the Christian Education Department of Mount Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, Gastonia, North Carolina. In her spare time, Ms. McManus enjoys singing on the church choir and interior decorating. She currently resides in Ranlo, North Carolina.



Carrie Meier is the Administrator over the Community Health Education Section of DHHS. Carrie is from Asheboro, NC and holds a BS in Public Health Education from UNC Greensboro and an MPH from UNC Chapel Hill. She previously served as the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Supervisor. Prior to coming to Gaston County, Carrie coordinated H1N1 vaccine clinics at the Randolph County Health Department and taught first grade as a Teach for America Corps Member. Carrie currently Co-Chairs the Gaston Clergy and Citizens Coalition (GC3) and is active in NC SOPHE. In her free time, you can find Carrie gardening, working on jigsaw puzzles, traveling, or doing yoga... often with her partner and fur babies nearby. Carrie is honored to be a part of this team and believes that equity and inclusion should be at the core of all public health initiatives.



Brittany Norwood is the Laboratory and CHA Supervisor. Brittany has a Bachelor of Science in Public Health from UNC Charlotte and an MBA from UNC Pembroke. Brittany has four children whose ages range from ten to 8 months old. Brittany's passion is to provide all members of the community with equal access to all available healthcare resources.



Joyce Robinson-Nash was born in Hopkins, South Carolina and attended Lower Richland High. She was an honor college graduate from Claflin University in Education. While at Claflin, she received a full ride on a volleyball scholarship for 4 years. She received numerous awards for volleyball, field events in track and field, and academic success. Joyce is very spiritual and loves to sing. She currently attends Destiny Church in Gastonia, NC. Joyce works at Gaston County Social Services as a Case Manager. Her passion is to make a difference for Gaston County youth and families one step at a time. Working with families has opened her eyes to the many different circumstances that families in Gaston County experience. Her motto is "Life is too short to worry about the unexpected, but to make a difference in what you can change".



Stephanie Stevenson received a double major Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services & Psychology with a minor in Sociology from Wingate College, Wingate, North Carolina in 1986. She began her employment with Anson County DSS as an Adult Services Social Worker III. While working full time, Stephanie received her Master of Science degree in Adult Education from North Carolina A & T State University, Greensboro, North Carolina in 1997. In 1999, Stephanie was employed at Mecklenburg County DSS as the lead Adult Home Specialist. There, she won the prestigious Beverly Wheeler Award which recognizes top Adult Home Specialists in the state of North Carolina on an annual basis.

Stephanie joined Gaston County DSS in 2005 as supervisor of the Adult Group Care Unit. This position responsibility includes the supervision of Adult Protective Services-Afterhours Staff, Adult Guardianship Services, Adult Placement Services, and Adult Individual & Family Adjustment Case Management Services. In addition, the supervision of the Adult Foster Care Division which oversees licensure compliance of a combination of 1160 adult care home beds/adult day care participant slots. Stephanie became a social worker for two reasons; she has the natural ability to talk to individuals about the most sensitive aspects of their lives and believe individuals need the knowledge of public services available to them that offers assistance to support their attempts to restructure their lives. Stephanie truly believes in Sir Francis Bacon’s statement, “Knowledge is power”. Simply put, the more knowledge you have, the more you can do, which leads, in a sense, to having power.

Stephanie has over 25 years of experience in the Adult & Aging Services field. Stephanie is often known as one of the leading “gurus” in the North Carolina Adult Care licensure field. She currently lives in Charlotte, North Carolina (in the same town she grew up in — how weird is that?) with her husband. Stephanie has a daughter, a son, two grandchildren and three dogs.



Vilmania (Villy) Vargas is an Administrative Assistant Support Specialist for Gaston County Health and Human Services. She works in the WIC program (Women, Infant & Children), helping to provide nutritional and lactation services to pregnant and postpartum women, and children under 5 years of age. Villy was born in Dominican Republic, but grew up in Chicago and lived in Miami for 20 years. Prior to working with Gaston County, she worked with a Hispanic Marketing agency in Miami. She is excited to be a part of the Health Equity team hoping to make a difference in our community. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and spending time with her husband, children and grandson.



Krystle White is the Manager of Health Equity Outcomes with DHHS Gaston County Public Health and the Manager of the DHHS Gaston County Health Equity Team. A native of Charlotte, NC, a graduate of the very first BSPH (Bachelor of Science in Public Health) cohort at UNC-Charlotte in 2009 and over 10 years of public health education, training and promotion, Krystle White started her journey of investing in the health of her community well over a decade ago. After obtaining her undergraduate degree, Krystle began working within the non-profit sector with The American Red Cross while also simultaneously obtaining a Master’s in Public Administration (MPA) from Keller Graduate School of Management in 2014. In an effort to work closer within her field of Public Health, Krystle accepted the role as the Child Care Health Consultant for Gaston County in 2017. During her tenure here, she has enthusiastically served as a resource and active committee member of over ten professional organizations including our county’s Epidemiology team. In addition, she has also developed and launched a number of health education and promotion initiatives and campaigns for educators and those within our local community. Krystle was promoted to the role of Manager of Health Equity Outcomes in January 2021. She has made it her mission to invest in our community and empower the citizens through equitable and fair systemic practices that will in return yield a healthier and more productive society.

“Obtaining justice in health is a true investment in the justice of humanity.”-Krystle White



Christie Williams is the Administrative Assistant to the Public Health Director of Gaston County Health & Human Services. In this position, Christie provides administrative assistance for the Public Health Director and members of Public Health Management Team. She serves as the primary contact for external offices and assists on special projects such as onboarding new staff, Accreditation, Leadership Academy, EpiTeam, Wellness and Culture Committees. Christie provides technical and logistical support for multiple projects, meetings, and conferences. Christie joined Gaston County DHHS in 2013. Prior to her position at DHHS she served as an administrative assistant at a local nonprofit and as a Team Assistant at McKinsey and Company Consulting Firm.



Diana Willman is the Latinx Outreach Coordinator/ Coordinadora de Asistencia a la Comunidad latinx for Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), where she has worked over a decade. In her previous work as Teen Parenting Program Coordinator, she encouraged and supported teen parents to reach their goals and connected them with local resources. Diana has also facilitated the Parents Matter! Program in the Latinx community. This program raises parents' awareness about the sexual risks teens face and highlights the importance of parent involvement and open communication. Diana is currently a member of the DHHS Cultural committee, which strives to maintain and improve the culture of the Gaston County Health and Human Services. Prior to working with the county she was a Spanish liaison for Caldwell County and Gaston County Schools. Outside of work, Diana has a passion for working with families to strengthen their communication and interactions and is working to become a certified family coach.

Diana is originally from Colombia, South America and her first language is Spanish. She has enjoyed living in the US for 18 years. Diana loves to spend her free time with her two kids, and their many sports and activities. When she is not at the soccer field with the family, she enjoys crafting and decorating.



Vincent C. Wong has over fourteen years of service in State and Local government. He currently serves as the Director of Community Services for the City of Gastonia. In this position he oversees, Gastonia Sister Cities, Keep Gastonia Beautiful, HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME programs, Transit Operations, Airport Operations and the newly created Neighborhood Program for the City.

In 2019, Vincent was selected as Gaston County's Department of Health and Human Services Hero Award and named to the Inaugural Gaston County Top 10 Under 40 list. Vincent graduated Brevard College, NC in 2005 and received his Master of Public Administration degree from West Virginia University in 2007. Following graduation, he was selected as Public Management Institute (PMI) fellow with New York State Government in conjunction with the Rockefeller Institute of Government. After leaving that position in 2008 he came back North Carolina to get involved in local government. He has served as a Transportation Planner, Customer Service Manager and Senior Budget Analyst during his career with the City of Gastonia. Vincent has also completed the UNC School of Government's Municipal Administration Course, UNC's Leading for Results Course, Third Sector Leadership program, Leadership Gaston and Civic Engagement Leadership programs.

Vincent resides in Gastonia with his wife Samantha who teaches second grade at Carr Elementary in Dallas, NC.

	Juan Garcia
	Jeff Ross