

## Speaker Bios

### **Jean Synodinos, Synodinos Consulting**

With 17 years' experience in health communication, social marketing, and advocacy, Jean Synodinos helps federal, state and local agencies, community coalitions, and nonprofits learn to tell their story well and strategically communicate their successes to the wider world. Believing that it's never enough to simply educate audiences, her work is grounded in the principles and practices of social marketing to drive positive change.

Her passion for training has garnered her invitations to present at national conferences for the U.S. Department of Education, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the National Dropout Prevention Center, and CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America). A graduate of Duke University, Jean lives in Austin, TX where she also works as an artist, musician, and writer.

### **Dr. Kimberly J. Rask, Alliant Health Solutions**

Dr. Kimberly J. Rask is Chief Data Officer at Alliant Health Solutions, a nonprofit company supporting quality improvement across public sector health care programs such as a Medicare QIN-QIO and state Medicaid programs across the Southeastern US. Dr. Rask leads data analytic and evaluation services at Alliant. She provides direct support and education on CMS quality measures and effective quality reporting strategies to hospitals, physicians, dialysis units and skilled nursing facilities. A primary care physician and health economist, she also holds joint appointments in Health Policy and Management and Medicine at Emory University. She has published book chapters and peer-reviewed articles on primary care practice, quality improvement and outcomes measurement. With more than 20 years of experience in quality research and practice, she also serves on national expert panels on value-based purchasing programs and quality measurement.

### **Kathy Alkire, Hi-Desert Healthcare District**

Kathy Alkire, BSN, MA, is the Director of Quality and Education at Hi-Desert (Morongo Basin) Healthcare District. With her extensive 25+ years of nursing experience in cardiology, oncology, critical care, emergency medicine, surgery and recovery, labor/delivery/recovery/postpartum, neonates, pediatrics, geriatrics, home health, education, case management, administration, chronic care management, and quality improvement, she guides the organization to consistently deliver high quality, customer-oriented, culturally competent healthcare in all areas to the underserved in the rural desert of southern California. Ms. Alkire has been an instructor with American Heart Association and Crisis Prevention Institute, teaching employees and community residents in life-saving and de-escalation techniques for the past 11 years. Her instructing, coaching, and managing of providers, staff, students, and patients in many quality and quality of life improving initiatives have yielded impressive results.

### **Theresa Knowles, Penobscot Community Health Center**

Theresa Knowles, FNP-C, the Chief Quality Officer at PCHC, has been a nurse in several settings including home health and hospice, emergency care and primary care for the past 16 years. Prior to working at PCHC, Ms. Knowles was the Operations and Quality Improvement

Director for a health center in Maine. Ms. Knowles works very closely with the Chief Operations Officer and the Chief Medical Officer at PCHC on performance improvement with the hope to improve patient experience and quality of care. In addition to overseeing the quality of the organization, Ms. Knowles is also responsible for the lab, medical assistants, and medical records, referrals and care management departments. She is also the Chief Quality Officer for Community Care Partnership of Maine, an Accountable Care Organization comprised of 14 FQHCs and rural hospitals all across the state of Maine.

**Lauren Fields, BSN, RN, ARCare**

Lauren Fields is the chief coordinated care officer at ARCare where she has been employed since 2015. She received her bachelor of science in nursing at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, AR. Lauren's goal for her healthcare team is to focus on overall patient care by offering nutritional therapy, pharmacy consults, diabetes education, preventive visits, and chronic care management. Currently, she is involved in introducing telehealth to rural clinics allowing those patients all of the same services that are available in more urban areas. Being a lifelong resident of a small, rural community in Arkansas herself, she is passionate about providing quality care to patients in those areas.

**Chelsea Watkins, RD, KentuckyCare**

Chelsea Watkins is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian Nutritionist who works at KentuckyCare. She was born and raised in Paducah and feels very fortunate to be able to practice dietetics at KentuckyCare. Chelsea knew at a young age that her calling was to serve others through healthcare. She is blessed to work for an organization whose Mission is "Health for all". After graduating from Murray State University and receiving her Bachelor's in Science, Chelsea completed her dietetic internship at the University of Louisiana. As a dietitian, Chelsea enjoys meeting with patients to provide services that assists them in improving their overall health and well-being. She individualizes diet plans for patients in order to help them achieve success. Chelsea's goal is to help patients change their lifestyle, behavior, and eating habits in order to help prevent, or delay, the onset of chronic diseases.

**Katy Lloyd, Health Resources and Services Administration**

Katy serves as a public health analyst for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Health Resources and Services Administration's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. A Program Coordinator and Project Officer with the office's Community-Based Division, Katy leads the Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement Program and works across several additional community-based grant programs. She holds a Bachelors of Health Science from Townson University and a Masters of Public Health from Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine with a concentration in Medicine and Global Community Health. She has worked widely across various efforts addressing access to health care both domestically and internationally, and is passionate about the importance of health and wellness for individuals and populations.

**Deana Farmer, Georgia Health Policy Center**

Deana Farmer is a co-leader of the Georgia Health Policy Center's Community Health Systems Development team. She brings with her experience in market research, communications planning, qualitative research, strategic planning, board and partnership development, and community conversation facilitation. Her community collaborative experience includes support for communities focused on improving access to health care and family-provider communication at the end of life.

In her position with the Community Health Systems Development team, she provides technical assistance to funded grantees in rural communities across the country as they work to develop strategic vision, build organizational capacity, and increase their potential for long-term sustainability. This work includes emphasis on quality improvement, partnership and board development, health network development and growth, and school-based mental health care.

**Karla Weng, Stratis Health**

Karla Weng, MPH, CPHA, is a Senior Program Manager for Stratis Health, and the Rural Program lead for the organization. In that role, she provides expertise to Stratis Health initiatives focused on rural providers and communities. Karla has worked on a wide variety of projects supporting rural hospitals and clinicians to improve quality and patient safety, including developing palliative care services, implementing quality management methods, preventing readmissions, and clinical quality efforts on topics such as heart failure, pneumonia, and diabetes. Karla currently leads HRSA Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) funded Rural Quality Improvement Technical Assistance program which assists rural providers with quality reporting and improvement. Karla has a master's degree in public health administration from the University of Minnesota, an undergraduate degree in community health education from Minnesota State University – Moorhead, and is a certified professional in health care quality. She is past-president of the Minnesota Rural Health Association, and was a 2008 National Rural Health Association Fellow.

**Sarah Brinkman, Stratis Health,**

Sarah Brinkman, MBA, MA, CPHQ, has more than twelve years of experience working in health care quality, ranging from the community to the national level. As a certified professional in health care quality (CPHQ) she supports projects that focus on quality reporting and improvement, as well as addressing health equity. Through these projects she supports a variety of health care settings in understanding their respective quality reporting programs, making sense of their quality data, identifying opportunities for improvement, and implementing improvement strategies. Sarah received her M.A. in management and a master of business administration from the College of St. Scholastica – Duluth, with focuses in health care leadership and organization development