



**BEST PRACTICES
CLEARINGHOUSE**

- Lessons from the Field -

The Facts About Student Vaping and Approaches to Prevention

Wednesday, December 14, 2022 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET
SPEAKER BIOS

Helen Hernandez

Assistant Director, Drug Free Communities, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)



Ms. Helen Hernandez currently serves as the Assistant Director of the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program in the Executive Office of the President (EOP) at the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). Ms. Hernandez oversees the Nation's leading effort to mobilize communities to prevent youth substance use. The philosophy behind the DFC Program is that local drug problems require local solutions. The DFC Program provides funding to community-based coalitions that organize to prevent youth substance use. The DFC program serves approximately 67 million individuals to include 2.7 million middle school youth and 3.8 million high school youth.

As the Administrator of the DFC Program, Ms. Hernandez, manages the program's \$101 million dollar budget, manages the grant making process, oversees the National Cross site Evaluation of this program, and is responsible for key trainings and events for the DFC Program. In 2010, Ms. Hernandez enlisted in the U.S. Public Health Service and was stationed at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention as a Public Health Advisor for the DFC Program until 2013.

Prior to joining the Federal government, Ms. Hernandez served as a Health Educator with the Miami-Dade Area Health Education Center as a breast cancer awareness and prevention advocate, where she delivered over 300 bilingual trainings to a primarily youth-based audience. Ms. Hernandez earned her Bachelor of Science degree in

Health Education, from the University of Florida, and received her Master's in Public Health with a concentration in Community Health from Florida International University.

Lee Anne Dodge

Program Director, SoPo Unite (Drug Free Communities Coalition), ME



Ms. Lee Anne Dodge has the field of substance use prevention for over 20 years. She is a certified prevention specialist and is a Prime For Life instructor and teaches the program for those under twenty one who have been arrested for Operating Under the Influence. She began her prevention career at the University of New Hampshire as a residence hall director and then worked at the New Hampshire Teen Institute and focused on underage drinking and tobacco prevention for middle and high school students. She moved to Maine in 2001 and worked at AdCare Educational Institute on a grant on underage drinking and worked with nine community coalitions. She then worked with the Office of Substance Abuse on the One Me State Incentive Grant with twenty-three coalitions. She then worked at the University of Southern Maine as the Assistant Director of Student Life (substance use prevention/intervention/ and wellness). She has been the Program Director of SoPo Unite, a Drug Free Communities Coalition in South Portland Maine for the past six years. In 2018, South Portland School District adopted a restorative approach to substance use violations, one of the only districts in the country that uses this approach.

Randi Tolstyk

Public Health Analyst, Office on Smoking and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



Ms. Randi Tolstyk, MEd has over 12 years of experience in tobacco prevention and control at the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). She joined CDC's Office on Smoking and Health in 2013 and works as a public health analyst with a focus on youth and e-cigarette use. Previously, Ms. Tolstyk collaborated with states and partners and provided technical assistance on evidence-based tobacco control policy, systems, and environmental strategies. Ms. Tolstyk received her Masters in Health, Human Performance, and Recreation from Baylor University and Bachelor of Science from Texas Tech University.

Dr. Ruben Baler

Health Scientist, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIH/NIDA)



Dr. Ruben Baler received his Ph.D. in Microbiology and Molecular Biology from the University of Miami in 1993. He carried out his postdoctoral training at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development where he specialized in Molecular Studies of the Biological Clock. He then moved to the National Institute of Mental Health, where he conducted basic research on the regulation of circadian gene expression in vertebrates. In October 2004 he joined the Science Policy Branch in the Office of Science Policy and Communications at the National Institute on Drug Abuse as a Health Scientist. His early publications were focused on the temporal regulation of gene expression in the brain's clock. Since joining NIDA, he has written and lectured about the Neurobiology of Drug Abuse and Addiction. Dr. Baler has gathered critical insight from diverse disciplines, which he combines to advance NIDA's scientific mission. These include cellular and molecular biology, genetics, bioinformatics, neuroscience, and neuroethics.

Dr. Thomas Ylioja

Clinical Director, Health Initiatives, National Jewish Health, CO



Dr. Thomas Ylioja, PhD, is the Clinical Director for Health Initiatives at National Jewish Health. He is a licensed social worker with years of health care practice and research experience, and expertise working with individuals who use tobacco and other substances. Dr. Ylioja focuses his work with people who have health disparities or who have social disadvantage. Nationally, he collaborates with researchers, clinicians, and state health departments to build strong connections between health systems and the tobacco cessation programs of National Jewish Health. He is a thought leader in the area of youth vaping cessation and led the development of the My Life, My Quit™ program. Operated by National Jewish Health, My Life, My Quit is the first program to offer a comprehensive quitline – including text, online and phone coaching – designed to help youth stop vaping and using other tobacco products. The program has garnered national and international attention, having been included in hundreds of media stories since its launch on July 1, 2019.

Alexandra Parks

Vice President, Strategic Partnerships and Programs, Truth Initiative, DC



Ms. Alexandra Parks has twenty years of public health experience and working with local, state, and national organizations to develop and implement numerous programs and initiatives. As the Vice President for Strategic Partnerships and Programs at Truth Initiative, Ms. Parks is responsible for cultivating and establishing partnerships across different sectors including national stakeholders, youth serving organizations, community based organizations, and other nonprofits that reach youth and priority populations. Through this position, Ms. Parks oversees a robust portfolio of national partners who are working on education and youth leadership programs, curriculum development, and advocacy campaigns on tobacco/vaping prevention.

Robert Ostbye

Statewide Policy Coordinator, Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida, Florida Department of Health, FL



Mr. Robert Ostbye serves as a statewide policy coordinator with the Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida (TFF), responsible for managing Tobacco Free Florida's school-focused policy initiatives. Under his leadership, TFF's community-based providers are gaining traction in the effort to establish comprehensive tobacco free school policies across the state. As a policy coordinator, he provides training, strategic direction, and technical support for TFF's community-based tobacco prevention programs statewide. Mr. Ostbye particularly enjoys establishing collaborative partnerships across agencies, sectors, and state lines to advance key tobacco prevention objectives. Most recently, he successfully coordinates with an educational consulting firm to disseminate comprehensive tobacco free school policy models to 29 of Florida's 67 school districts.

Kara Tierney

Social Worker, South Portland School District (ME)



Ms. Kara Tierney, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker who has worked in the prevention field for the past fifteen years and as a clinician for the past twenty two years primarily working with adolescents. She currently works in Maine at South Portland High School as a school based social worker. In this role, she is frequently conducting substance use assessments on students who have been caught vaping. She also works alongside Lee Anne Dodge, Director of SoPo Unite, in engaging youth and the community in prevention efforts.