

SURG Working Group Member Bios

Chelsi Cheatom

Chelsi earned a Masters degree in Health Promotion from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2010. Chelsi Cheatom has been working with Trac-B Exchange, Southern Nevada's only syringe service program, since 2016 as the Program Manager. She has helped to support Trac-B Exchange opening the first storefront syringe exchange in Clark County, NV as well as supporting the roll out of the Impact Exchange vending machine project which now has 8 public health/ syringe vending machines placed into the Las Vegas community. Prior to working at Trac-B Exchange, Chelsi oversaw the STD and Adult Viral Hepatitis grant programs for the State of Nevada's Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Office of Public Health Informatics and Epidemiology and prior to that she was a Disease Investigation and Intervention Specialist with the Southern Nevada Health District.

Barbara Collins

Barbara Collins has been a distinguished educator for 23 years in the Clark County School District and is the founding principal of Las Vegas' first publicly funded recovery high school.

Prior to her appointment to Mission High School, Ms. Collins served as the principal at College of Southern Nevada High School where she maintained a 100% graduation rate. In just two short years, she doubled the number of students receiving their Associate Degrees, prior to graduating from high school.

Ms. Collins' vision is to incorporate high academic expectations while integrating the principles of recovery through collaborative community partnerships.

Ms. Collins worked as a middle school resource room teacher, co-op teacher and spent several years as a special education facilitator prior to being appointed as an administrator in 2007.

Ms. Collins believes the school's success will be built on a supportive community that understands these are not bad kids trying to act better but in reality, sick kids trying to get well.

Dr. Lesley Dickson

Lesley Dickson, MD, FACLP, LFAPA, is ABPN board certified in general psychiatry and addiction psychiatry. She is presently Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Touro University and Southern Hills/Sunrise Health GME Consortium and Medical Director for the Center for Behavioral Health which operates Medication Assisted Treatment programs. Dr. Dickson is a Past President of the Nevada Psychiatric Association and was the Executive Director for several years. She also serves as the State Legislative Representative of the Nevada Psychiatric Association and is on the Committee to Review Suicide Fatalities and the Clark County Regional Behavioral Health Policy Board.

Senator Fabian Doñate

Senator Doñate represents Senate District 10 and serves on the Senate Legislative Operations and Elections Committee. He holds a Master's Degree in Health Administration from the University of Maryland, College Park and received his Bachelor's Degree in Public Health from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He was inducted into the Delta Omega Honorary Society in Public Health in 2018.

Senator Doñate's legislative bio can be accessed [here](#).

Attorney General Aaron Ford

Attorney General Aaron D. Ford, Nevada's 34th Attorney General, took office on January 7, 2019, making him the first African American to hold statewide constitutional office in Nevada.

A former State Senator, AG Ford previously served as both the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader in the Nevada State Legislature and held leadership roles on several legislative committees. He also spent many years in private practice as a partner at both Snell & Wilmer LLP and Eglet Adams in Las Vegas. Before practicing law, AG Ford served as a public school math teacher, shaping hundreds of lives.

During his term as a State Senator, AG Ford led the passage of significant legislation that required police officers to wear body cameras. AG Ford was also the impetus for a local district attorney to create a "Conviction Integrity Unit" to review cases that allege wrongful conviction.

As the chief law enforcement officer for the state, AG Ford's goal continues to be helping to protect Nevada families. AG Ford believes there is no task greater than the pursuit of justice and has adopted the office motto of "Our Job is Justice." His priority areas include what he refers to as the "Five Cs": constitutional rights, criminal justice reform, consumer protection, client service, and community engagement. AG Ford has held several town hall forums to talk directly with Nevadans on relevant topics such as racial injustice, law enforcement policies, hate crimes, and identity theft.

Under his direction, AG Ford's office has made protecting consumers from fraud, scams, and anti-competitive activity a top priority. During his tenure in office, AG Ford's Bureau of Consumer Protection secured over \$85 million in recoveries on behalf of Nevada consumers. Consistent with his commitment to help Nevada families, AG Ford has aggressively pursued those responsible for fueling Nevada's opioid crisis. He is proud to have obtained the State's first settlement of \$45 million on behalf of countless Nevada families who have lost relatives to opioid abuse.

AG Ford always strives to help those around him, particularly our most vulnerable communities. He has held two statewide law enforcement summits with local and national experts to fight human trafficking; he helps lead Nevada's sexual assault kit initiative and is proud to have completed the State's initiative to test nearly 8,000 previously untested sexual assault kits; and he worked with his prosecutors to revive a cold case and bring justice for a Nevada mother who lost her daughter to a brutal murder more than 40 years ago.

AG Ford is proud to have earned five degrees, which include his law degree and Ph.D. in Educational Administration from The Ohio State University, as well as degrees in interdisciplinary studies, international education, and educational administration. AG Ford married his college sweetheart, Berna Rhodes-Ford, who is also an attorney. Together, they raised four children, Avery, Devin, Aaron II, and Alexander.

Shayla Holmes

Shayla Holmes is the Director of Human Services and Public Guardian for Lyon County. It is the mission of Lyon County Human Services to enhance the well-being of individuals and families across the lifespan within Lyon County. As the Director she is blessed to lead a team of professionals that are innovative and passionate about addressing the needs of the communities they serve in a variety of topics such as aging and preventing institutional long-term care, preventing adverse childhood events, reducing parental stress, housing and homelessness, increasing financial stability, and enhancing behavioral

health response across the lifespan. She earned her Bachelors of Science from University of Nevada, Reno in Human Development and Family Studies, her Masters of Arts in Grant Management and Program Evaluation from Concordia University of Chicago, and is currently working on her Doctorate in Public Administration through West Chester University, Pennsylvania. Her focus is on social equity and building socially just communities.

Jeffrey B. Iverson

Jeffrey B. Iverson currently serves as a Managing Partner of Las Vegas-based Bell Solar and Electrical Systems.

Previously, Iverson served 14 years as general Manager for of Presidential Limousine, a division of Whittlesea-Bell Transportation, comprising a staff of more than 230 employees. The company offers a variety of fleet vehicles, premium limousine services and professional chauffeurs.

Iverson gained valuable administrative management experience while working at Lawrence/Kreeft & Associates as Administrator, where he oversaw the daily operations of the insurance firm. While there, he held Securities Series 6/63 licenses and a life insurance license. Prior to this, he served as executive assistant to the Vice Chairman of WMA Securities, assisting in planning company events and processing new agents. Iverson also performed branch compliance audits and collaborated with branch managers to train new financial services representatives.

A native Las Vegas, Iverson graduated from Las Vegas High School in 1992. Currently, he is focusing his attention on helping recovering drug users through his work as Founder of CrossRoads of Southern Nevada. CrossRoads of Southern Nevada was founded in 2017 and provides medical detox, comprehensive care medical services, education and mental health treatment, housing and supportive services to members of the community struggling with alcohol and drug abuse, in an attempt to strengthen communities and lessen the burdens on government within the State of Nevada. In addition to his involvement with the CrossRoads, Iverson founded and serves as CEO for Freedom House Sober Living, a not-for profit agency dedicated to assisting individuals recovering from drug and alcohol addiction secure stable housing in a structured environment. During its 11 years in operation, Iverson has overseen the organization's growth from a sober living facility to programs with 150 beds, a licensed 40 bed residential drug treatment center and a transitional center with educational programs, food programs, peer to peer recovery support programs, MRT Therapy and a full service vocational assistance program.

Iverson himself is a person in long term recovery, having been abstinent from all drugs and alcohol since March 28, 2006.

Iverson is a past board member for HELP of Southern Nevada, HOPE For Prisoners, and currently serves as a director on the Shine A Light Foundation Board.

Iverson is a Leadership Las Vegas program Alumni and is always looking for ways to be more involved in his community.

Jessica Johnson

Jessica Johnson is a Sr Health Educator at the Southern Nevada Health District in Las Vegas, NV. In this role, she works to coordinate stakeholders and coalition groups to build capacity and develop programming impacting harm reduction, overdose prevention, and injury prevention. She shapes these

initiatives on over a decade of experience in substance use prevention and behavioral health working in Nevada and Oregon. Jessica is an IC&RC Certified Prevention Specialist (CPS) through the Nevada Behavioral Health Association, a nationally Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES), and a certified instructor for SAMHSA's Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist Skills Training. She holds a Master of Public Health from Oregon State University, a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, OR, and is currently pursuing her doctorate in public health in Implementation Science at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. She is the President for the Nevada Public Health Association. In her personal time, Jessica enjoys playing at the park with her daughter Georgia (3 years) and cheering for the Vegas Golden Knights with her husband Tim.

Terry Kerns *Attorney General Ford's delegate in his absence

Terry Kerns has a Masters of Science in Nursing and a PhD concentrated in emergency management. Kerns worked in a variety of disciplines in nursing; medical/surgical, ICU, nursing staff development, and as an organ procurement specialist. After her nursing career, Kerns entered duty as a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Kerns worked a variety of programs in the FBI, health care fraud, weapons of mass destruction, hazardous materials/bombing, and terrorism investigations. Most recently, Kerns was the supervisor on the Joint Terrorism Task Force in Las Vegas, focusing on domestic terrorism investigations. Kerns retired from her 21-year FBI career to begin her latest journey as the Nevada Office of the Attorney General's statewide substance abuse/law enforcement coordinator. In this position, Kerns blends her background, experience, and education to emphasis a holistic, multidisciplinary approach focused on law enforcement/first responders, healthcare, and public health professionals. The primary focus of this position is to address the drug crisis. Kerns enjoys the engagement and collaboration of the dedicated stakeholders involved in this interdisciplinary mission.

Lisa Lee

My name is Lisa Lee and I have worked in the health care field since 2004 in a variety of positions ranging from bodywork, medical billing, harm reduction, HIV and hepatitis C testing and counseling, case management, housing programs (HOPWA and Ryan White Part B), outreach, assertive community treatment (ACT) case management for people experiencing homelessness, psychiatric case management, drug and alcohol counseling, program development and implementation, grant writing and management, and I am a certified peer recovery support specialist. I completed my Master of Arts in anthropology (with a focus on medical anthropology) at the University of Nevada, Reno. My graduate research focused on the ways in which harm reduction as a counter discourse helped to frame and maintain the radically inclusive social space of a local syringe services program for people marginalized and excluded elsewhere.

I have been in recovery from heroin addiction and homelessness since February 2002 and am a former methadone patient and consumer of harm reduction services. I am passionate about peer recovery, overdose prevention, harm reduction, and helping others achieve their full potential of living a purposeful life. I am a program specialist for Washoe County Human Services Agency, serve as the chair for the Interagency Council on Homelessness to Housing and the board of directors for the Nevada Certification Board, conduct harm reduction outreach in my community, and engage in collaborative research. I am currently working on completing a doctorate in public health (DrPH) to advance my knowledge and skill set in this field and enhance the ability for people without a voice to engage in participation in public health dialogue.

I live in Reno, Nevada with my partner, two children ages 9 and 15, and our two dogs. In my free time, I enjoy traveling, volunteering, reading, camping, hiking, playing music, performance art, activism, writing, and being a wife and mom. I also run writing group called Voices of Inspiration, Courage, and Empowerment (VOICE) for people experiencing or recovering from homelessness.

Debi Nadler

My name is Debi Nadler. I lost my son Brett Nadler May 14, 2018 to a drug toxicity overdose.

He fought hard for sobriety for 8 years prior to his death. I never gave up helping him help himself. His drug use began after a traumatic experience in college that led him to the prescription drug OxyContin. After a few months' time, he came crying to me for help and together we found a treatment center. It was there that another patient turned him onto Heroin. From there, he went to 8 more rehabs across the country, trying hard to find recovery. He kept journals of all his experiences.

Brett's Story

When Brett first approached me asking for help, he told me he was taking 30 pills a day. I asked him HOW this was possible. He told me how easy it was to go to one doctor and get a prescription, and fill it at one pharmacy, and continue doing this with different doctors and pharmacies. I went to my pharmacist and asked him why there was not a red flag that alerts every pharmacy in our state when a patient receives an opioid. There was not. I researched other states and found a few that did this. I then emailed every legislator in our state begging for the same protection. This was 11 years ago. I do believe that we now have these network safeguards set up within our pharmacies. Brett shared every experience with me and was actually in a rehab when he passed away.

I am the Founding President of the Drug Epidemic Awareness Walk Across America (DEAWAA). The mission is to help grieving family members take an actionable step to ensure that their child did not die in vain while regaining their balance. We organize walk events across the country to reduce the stigma of the disease of addiction that keeps people who use drugs from reaching out for help and leaves families suffering in silence and pain.

DEAWAA events let everyone know the three most dangerous words to say are, "Not My Child". We believe that education and prevention are very key instruments to change our current trajectory of drug dependency and death. We need to stop this Epidemic before it starts. There are so many parents, children, teachers, and officials who have no clue what fentanyl is, what it does, and how it is mixed into almost every street drug. We inform the public and our legislators that the time to stop addiction is before it starts. Mental health education instruction and access to support must be provided from kindergarten through the senior year of high school. There are over 5,000 members and there have been over 50 events.

I have been working with Assistant AG Terry Kerns for quite a while now on bringing mental health and drug education to all our classrooms. I even spoke with program directors across the country. I have even volunteered to speak in classrooms. I also took an online program through Nevada DEA 360.

I will never forget when Brett was detoxing at my house. I could not get one place here in this city to take him. It was a nightmare. My brother, who has two teenagers, brought them to my house to see Brett. Brett knew exactly why he brought them. He told my brother "Smart move Uncle Bruce," and then he looked at his cousins and told them to stay away from all drugs. This was in 2016. To this day,

my niece and nephew will not even touch drugs and not only that, they also do reports and projects on the drug epidemic.

After working with thousands of grieving family members across our country, I have realized that we all wish we KNEW MORE, we all wished our children had proper social emotional instruction to deal with trauma. We all know that in order to make a difference, we need billboards, media attention, school involvement, and parent education. I have many great ideas and am passionately dedicated to help our state reduce the overdoses and save our future generation.

My degree is a BS degree in early childhood education, and I believe big changes start small. Safe and accessible treatment options are required but they are not the answer. Prevention is the answer and through my collaboration with hundreds of groups across the country, I have a broad understanding of where we are and I know where we need to go. Now is the time to start.

Christine Payson

Christine Payson grew up in Wisconsin, where she attended the University of Wisconsin, and earned a BA in Sociology. She moved to Las Vegas in 1994, to begin her career in Law Enforcement with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. During her 21 years with the LVMPD, Christine worked as a Patrol Officer, Investigative and Undercover Detective in Vice, Gangs, DEA/HIDTA Task Force, and Criminal Intelligence. After the attacks on 9-11, she became one of the original members of the newly formed Counter Terrorism Section, where she and her team earned the Unit Meritorious Service Award. In 2007 Christine was promoted to sergeant and led patrol squads, a Saturation Team, Tourist Crime Team, and a Special Investigations Team.

In 2015 Christine retired from LVMPD and took the position of Training and Prevention Coordinator with Nevada High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). She enjoyed her nearly 4 years in Training and Prevention until being given the opportunity to take the position of Nevada HIDTA's Drug Intelligence Officer and Co-Manager of the Investigative Support & Intelligence Center in December of 2019. She is partnered with Public Health Analyst Lacey Alderson, and they are part of the Overdose Response Strategy or ORS. The ORS is funded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP). The mission of the Overdose Response Strategy is to help communities reduce fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses by connecting public health and public safety agencies, sharing information, and supporting evidence-based interventions.

This unprecedented and unique collaboration between public health and public safety created by the ORS, is nationwide and implemented by state teams made up of Drug Intelligence Officers and Public Health Analysts, who work together on drug overdose issues within and across sectors and states. By sharing information across sectors, the ORS is growing the body of evidence related to early warning signs and prevention strategies. With the information shared, and programs inspired by the ORS, we are helping communities and individuals make healthier, safer choices.

Erik Schoen

Erik's responsibilities as Executive Director of Community Chest, Inc. include: providing leadership, direction, and management of overall agency functions and services; providing direct services in assessment, information, and referral, advocacy and counseling to families and individuals; developing and conducting prevention-oriented community education and family support programs and workshops; working collaboratively with volunteers and program staff to integrate and coordinate services for

families in areas of food and clothing distribution, development and provision of community-based health services, youth and school advocacy, child care and youth recreation, family and parenting education, and more. Other responsibilities include collaborating and partnering with various governmental and non-governmental agencies and entities around a variety of priority areas including the minimization of domestic violence, increasing access to health care and mental health, and strategizing how to better meet the needs of our constituents. Specific projects include leading the annual Social Justice Institute in both Reno and Las Vegas to help providers better understand and impact systemic issues as relates to the work in which they are engaged.

Steve Shell

Hailing from Memphis, Tennessee, Steve Shell moved to Reno, Nevada in 2010. He has 30 years of experience in healthcare from both the medical and behavioral sides and has dedicated his career to advocating for mental health and addiction awareness and treatment.

Steve joined Renown Health in 2020 to oversee the operations and continued growth of the Stacie Mathewson Behavioral Health & Addiction Institute. He has held various facility and corporate roles around the country throughout the years, including serving as chief executive officer of several behavioral health hospitals. Since 2013 he has opened Nevada's two newest full-service behavioral health hospitals, a behavioral health hospital in California and an addiction treatment facility in Texas.

Steve was a key resource in the creation of Reno Behavioral Healthcare Hospital in 2016 and spearheaded the construction and development of the facility. He worked with a variety of community partners to make the 124-bed hospital a reality. Reno Behavioral is the first of its kind in the region in 35 years.

Steve also launched the new 83-bed Desert Parkway Behavioral Healthcare Hospital in Las Vegas in 2013 and led an expansion to 152 beds in 2017 with a separate outpatient facility.

In addition to being recognized as Nevada Business Magazine's Healthcare Administrator of the Year in 2019, Steve has been active in Nevada to promote wellness and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and addiction.

Assemblywoman Clara "Claire" Thomas

I am Assemblywoman Clara Thomas was born in Tifton, Georgia. I graduated from Hillcrest High School in Queens, NY. I served in the U.S. Air Force from 1978 to 1996. I am an honorably retired United States Air Force military veteran.

I have lived in Las Vegas, Nevada for the past 38 years and after retiring from the Air Force, while working two jobs at times, attending school full-time and being a divorced single mom, I earned a master's degree in public administration; BA in Psychology from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and an associate degree in Social Services from the College of Southern Nevada, (CSN).

After twenty years working at Clark County Regional Justice Center, in the District Attorney's Office as a District/Justice Court Clerk I recently retired. I was a member of SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 1107 for twenty years and serves as a union steward and member of the 2017-2019 Bargaining Team.

I was elected to the Nevada State Assembly in 2020 representing Assembly District 17, in Beautiful North Las Vegas! My Assembly committee assignments are the following hard-working committees: Government Affairs, Health and Human Services and Legislative Operations and Elections.

Little known about me:

I love to laugh out loud. I love to smile inside. I love to love all people especially the “little darlings” as they want to learn and tell you all YOU don’t know.

My favorite Quotes:

“You’re braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.” –A.A. Milne

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I’ll try again tomorrow.” -Mary Anne Radmacher

Assemblywoman Thomas’ legislative bio can be accessed [here](#).

Dani Tillman

Dani Tillman is a Nevada licensed social worker and substance use counselor who has been with Ridge House, Inc. since 2011. She has received bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Social Work from the University of Nevada, minoring in addiction treatment services. She is also a part-time instructor of Social Work at Truckee Meadows Community College and the University of Nevada-Reno. Additionally, she provides training and education for community partners on a variety of treatment related topics. Dani is dedicated to the Northern Nevada community in Ridge House’s efforts to provide comprehensive and compassionate behavioral health and re-entry services.

Assemblywoman Jill Tolles

Assemblywoman Tolles’ legislative bio can be accessed [here](#).

Jill has lived, learned and worked in Nevada since 1994 and proudly calls the Silver State her home. She attended the University of Nevada, Reno where she earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Speech Communication. In 1998 she married her husband, Par Tolles, and began working for a Fortune 200 company as the Regional Manager of Northern Nevada and Lake Tahoe. She worked with hundreds of small business owners to find payroll and human resource solutions which gave her unique insight into our local economy, our job creators, and the challenges they face.

In 2001, Jill and Par welcomed their first child and she began her master’s degree program at the University of Nevada, Reno. By 2005, she began teaching at TMCC and soon after at UNR where she has taught Communication Studies for the past 15 years.

In 2013, she also joined the faculty of the National Judicial College. Jill instructs students and judges to think critically, ask questions, listen, resolve conflict and collaborate to find solutions to challenging problems. This led her to open her own small business leading trainings and consulting with companies and individuals on effective communication strategies.

Throughout her life Jill has been passionately engaged in giving back to her community and serving others. She has been actively involved in ministry and volunteering through church and numerous organizations. Over the years she has served as a leader, speaker, facilitator, mentor, and volunteer to a broad variety of populations.

Jill is an outspoken and staunch advocate for the safety of one of our most vulnerable populations, our children. She served on the Task Force for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, established by the 2013 legislature, and developed and lobbied for the successful passage of SB394 which established statewide curriculum standards to teach personal safety to children. SB 394 passed unanimously out of both houses and was signed into law by Governor Sandoval during the 2015 legislative session.

Jill is passionate about high quality education to ensure a sound economic and socially stable future in Nevada. Her advocacy is evidenced by her work as a member of the St. Albert's School Board, as a board member of the Education Alliance, as well as her work with other organizations aimed at improving the state of public education in Nevada. Jill advocated, as a citizen, for high quality education at the legislature from 2011-2015 and as an Assemblywoman in the 2017 and 2019. She will continue to support efforts to improve our education system and ensure that future generations of Nevadans are able to meet the needs of the state's growing and diversifying economy.

During the 2019 legislative session Jill served on the on the Commerce and Labor Committee, the Education Committee and the Judiciary Committee. Jill sponsored six bills which were signed into law: AB166, AB194, AB216, AB316, AB319, and SB208. During the 2021 legislative session, Jill sponsored AB374, which established the Statewide Substance Use Response Working Group (SURG).

Jill and her husband, Par, have been joyfully married for 23 years. They are the proud parents of two wonderful daughters. Jill loves to spend time with her family, run, hike, and fly fish.

Dr. Stephanie Woodard

Stephanie Woodard, PsyD serves as the Behavioral Health Authority for Nevada's Department of Health and Human Services and is a licensed psychologist. She received her doctoral degree in clinical psychology from the Stanford University-Palo Alto University Psy.D. Consortium in Palo Alto, California. Over the past 15 years, much of her work has included integration of behavioral health care within health care settings, effective treatment for individuals with complex, co-occurring behavioral health issues and training clinicians in evidence-based practices. She works across the Department of Health and Human Services to develop sustainable systems of care that support the implementation of best practices for the delivery of effective, integrated health services. She is the primary investigator/project director on a multitude of federal grants and has contributed to state and national policy efforts. Dr. Woodard is on the Board for the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Research Institute (NRI), and the Nevada Board of Psychological Examiners.