The Training Team

Charles Bliss, Ed.S., M.A., served as the State PATH Contact and a planning and policy development specialist for the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Division of Mental Health Services since 2000. He is responsible for writing and managing the PATH grant and the Mental Health Block Grant, as well as interfacing with advocates, consumers, families, and providers Statewide in the development of the public mental health delivery system. From 1985 to 2000, Mr. Bliss served as a social service coordinator in a State-operated 130-bed acute care inpatient psychiatric facility.

Melissa Cogswell is a project assistant with the PATH Technical Assistance Center. A Massachusetts Department of Education certified teacher, and certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor, Ms. Cogswell now uses her skills as an educator to help people in ways that extend beyond the bounds of the classroom. She provides daily support to the PATH Grantees around data collection and reporting, online webcast training, and onsite technical assistance. She also coordinates an online course, PATH to Housing, for providers who work with clients experiencing homelessness with Serious Mental Illness. Ms. Cogswell is a mental health services consumer, giving her extensive insight into the struggles of those who suffer with mental illness.

Deborah Dennis is the SOAR Project Director and Vice President of Policy Research Associates, Inc. where she conducted research and provided technical assistance on federal, state, and local homelessness policy and practice since 1988. She has written extensively on the housing, treatment, and support service needs of persons who are homeless, particularly those who have behavioral health disorders. Since 2001, she has been developing a variety of training and technical materials for SAMHSA and other related to enhancing access to SSI and SSDI for people who are homeless, including SAMHSA’s Stepping Stones to Recovery (SSR) training curriculum. Deb is responsible for the overall direction of the Center and provides TA to the states of Michigan and New Jersey.

Rachael Kenney is the deputy project director of the PATH Technical Assistance Center and she has expertise in youth, data collection and analysis, and project management. She oversees editorial development for the PATH website, supervises PATH data activities, and provides onsite and online training and technical assistance. She also works on issues related to sexual and gender minority youth. Rachael holds a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Massachusetts and an M.A. in Sociology from Boston College.
James McNemar is a data specialist with expertise in Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data requirements and reporting, as well as more than 20 years’ experience in enterprise information technology. He is an integral member of the PATH Technical Assistance Center and works to identify operational needs, analyze existing systems, and deliver training for the transition of PATH data collection to HMIS. James is an HMIS consultant in areas of data integration, client intake workflow, and technology hardware/software evaluations. He volunteers to help small nonprofit organizations install and maintain their computer systems.

Steven Samra spent more than 30 years in and out of homelessness while battling addiction. Since stabilizing his life in 2000, he has dedicated himself to serving those who are still on the street. He worked in street outreach assisting veterans who were homeless in and around Nashville, Tennessee, as the Veteran’s Services Coordinator with Operation Stand Down. He serves on the board of the Nashville Coalition for the Homeless, and co-founded and writes for The Contributor. Steven received a B.A. in Sociology and M.P.A. from California State University, Chico, a street newspaper produced and sold by people who are homeless.

Kimberly Wimberly has served as the State Fiscal Liaison for the PATH grant and the Mental Health Block Grant for the California Department of Mental Health since 2005. She is responsible for reviewing fiscal documents from all PATH and Mental Health Block Grant recipients to ensure that programs funded by the PATH grant and Mental Health Block Grant are in compliance with Federal and State policies. She provides technical assistance and support to local governments within California on fiscal policy and guidelines relating to the PATH grant and the Mental Health Block Grant and is dedicated in maintaining cooperative working relationships with her county fiscal contacts. Kimberly obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Human Development from the University of California Davis.

Ristyn Woolley has served as the State PATH Contact for the Department of Mental Health for the last year. She is responsible for the oversight of the California PATH program to ensure that programs funded by the PATH grant comply with Federal and State policies. She provides technical assistance and support to local governments within California on program policy and guidelines relating to the PATH grant and is dedicated in maintaining cooperative working relationships with her county contacts. Her other duties with the department include oversight of the Olmstead grant, co-lead of the Mental Health Block Grant, and assists with the Departments Veteran Representative Team. Ristyn obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, Ca, and is a Credentialed Early Childhood Education Site Supervisor.