

# Hearts of Practice Convening: Leadership Team



## Meet the Leaders

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**Pam Breaux** joined the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) in 2015. As president and CEO, she works with the association's board of directors and staff to advance NASAA's policy and programmatic mission to strengthen America's state and jurisdictional arts agencies. A native of Lafayette, Louisiana, Breaux has held leadership positions at the local, state and national levels. While in Louisiana state government, she was secretary of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (CRT), assistant secretary of CRT (overseeing its cultural development portfolio), and executive director of its state arts agency (the Louisiana Division of the Arts). During her time at CRT, Breaux developed and led Louisiana's cultural economy initiative and spearheaded the successful UNESCO inscription of Poverty Point State Historic Site (an ancient Indian site) as a World Heritage site.

Before working in state government, Breaux was executive director of the Arts and Humanities Council of Southwest Louisiana and managed southwest Louisiana's Decentralized Arts Funding Program. She has served on the boards of the U.S. Travel Association, the U.S. National Commission on UNESCO, NASAA, South Arts and the Louisiana Board of International Commerce. Breaux is currently a member of the Grantmakers in the Arts board. She graduated from McNeese State University with a BA in English and earned an MA in English and folklore from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.



**David J. Skorton, MD**, is president and CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), representing medical schools, academic health systems, teaching hospitals and academic societies. He has led the AAMC since 2019, guiding a strategic plan that aligns the organization’s work across education, clinical care, research and community collaboration to address persistent health challenges and improve access to care.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Skorton contributed to the national response through ongoing engagement with government and media and helped develop a Road Map to Reset the Nation’s Approach to the Pandemic.

Previously, Skorton served as the 13th secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and as president of Cornell University and the University of Iowa. A cardiologist and pioneer in cardiac imaging, he is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine and a nationally recognized supporter of the arts, as a jazz musician and composer.



**Mary Anne Carter** was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on December 18, 2025, to serve as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), leading with a commitment to making the arts accessible to all Americans. Carter previously served as NEA chairman during President Donald J. Trump’s first term, expanding Creative Forces to support service members and veterans, and strengthening national programs including Shakespeare in American Communities, NEA Big Read and Poetry Out Loud. She also brought National Council on the Arts meetings to cities beyond Washington, D.C.—an approach not taken in nearly three decades.

Under Carter’s leadership, the agency emphasized the economic value of the arts and its growing role in health and healing, including new research such as the NEA’s first report on the arts in opioid recovery.

Carter prioritized communities long underserved by federal resources—engaging historically Black colleges and universities; Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities; and folk and traditional artists—helping launch the National Folklife Network. She deepened partnerships across federal agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and strengthened engagement with civic, business

and health leaders. Her dedication is informed by personal experience, including her daughter's early learning difference. Looking ahead, she is focused on national reach, research on the arts in healing and guiding NEA work during the 2026 semiquincentennial.



**Aaron Myers** is a D.C. based artist with a deep understanding of the city's cultural landscape and its diverse communities. He has been an active member of the D.C. arts community for more than a decade, serving as the artist in residence at the Black Fox Lounge, Mr. Henry's Restaurant and The Eaton and performing at venues across the city. Myers is the founding board chair of the Capitol Hill Jazz Foundation, serves on the board of governors of the D.C. Recording Academy and has been recognized for his work in arts education.

In addition to his extensive background in the arts, Myers is known for his advocacy for social justice and community engagement.

Myers has served as a community organizer and principal organizer of the DMV Music Stakeholders, a grassroots effort to center relief and resources for members of the music community impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and has served on the Executive Committee of the D.C. Branch of the NAACP.

As executive director of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Myers oversees the agency's efforts to support and promote the arts in the District of Columbia. This includes managing grant programs, public art installations and cultural events that celebrate the city's vibrant arts scene.

# The Arts on Prescription: Bringing Strategies to Scale



Proponents of arts prescribing maintain that the practice can improve public health at minimal cost. Arts funders and arts organizations are critical partners in this growing model of care delivery. This session explores the idea of building a larger cohort of states participating in arts-on-prescription models. What are the health and economic benefits and, if such programs are feasible and effective, what would it take to expand them nationwide, state by state? What kinds of relationships, if any, should state arts agencies build with physicians and clinics, Medicaid carriers, and health insurance companies? What would be required from a capacity perspective, and how can more state arts agencies and their communities be engaged?

## Meet the Panelists

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**Emily Devlin, LCSW**, is an independently licensed social worker specializing in helping children, youth, and families. She is the head of strategic partnerships and clinical innovation at Art Pharmacy, a health care company providing social prescribing to address mental health and loneliness crises in the United States.

Devlin earned her bachelor's degrees in social work and psychology from the University of New Hampshire, followed by a master of social work degree from Boston College. She has experience working with children, teens and families in home based, inpatient and school settings.

For the past nine years, Devlin has been active in the health care startup sector, using her clinical expertise to develop and implement innovative solutions. Her passion is creating new mental health care models to improve access and outcomes. She focuses on collaborating with various health care system areas to expand access to mental health services while ensuring scalability, equity and effectiveness.

- **Presentation:** [Arts on Prescription](#)



**Aly Maier Lokuta, MA** (she/her), is the assistant vice president of arts & well-being at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), where she leads innovative research, evaluation, education and programming at the intersection of arts and health, serving communities in Newark and throughout New Jersey. Lokuta is a cofounder of the NJPAC-Rutgers Arts in Health Research Lab and created ArtsRx, the first arts prescribing program in New Jersey, in collaboration with Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey. Lokuta also oversees Arts in Healthcare programs across the RWJ Barnabas Health System; community initiatives including Ritual4Return, the Lullaby Project, and Photovoice; and ACCESS: Arts & Culture for Community health Education & Skill building Series, online courses designed to build capacity for artists and arts organizations working in the arts-in-health field.

Prior to this role, Lokuta served as the inaugural assistant director of arts in medicine and as arts program manager for NYC Health + Hospitals, contributed to the advisory task force for the first U.S. social prescribing pilot—CultureRx in Massachusetts—and coauthored *The Arts on Prescription Field Guide*.

Learn more about NJPAC Arts & Well-Being at [www.njpac.org/well](http://www.njpac.org/well), Lokuta's art and consulting work at [www.alysonmaier.com](http://www.alysonmaier.com), and her Arts in Health blog at <https://alymaier.substack.com/>.

- **Continuing the Connection:** [Home](#) | [Arts in Health Consulting](#)



**Andrea (Andi) Macone, (she/her)** serves as director of the Office of Community Health and Equity for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Bureau of Substance Addiction Services and is an independent researcher with the RESPOND team at Boston Medical Center's Syndemics Modeling Lab. Prior to these roles, Macone worked at University of Massachusetts Boston, most recently as special assistant for diversity, equity and inclusion, and in the nonprofit sector at The Phoenix managing community engagement for the New England region.

Macone received her BA in communications from Boston University, her MA in American Studies from UMass Boston, and completed UMass Boston's

Emerging Leaders Fellowship in the College of Management. Her research and professional work center on equity and the role of identity in relation to substance use. As a woman in recovery and a member of the Harm Reduction movement, Macone's professional and lived experiences inform her efforts to effect meaningful systems change. She believes wholeheartedly in the healing power of art and human connection

in reducing the negative impacts of substance use in individuals and communities.



**Dr. Erik Holmgren (he/him/his)** has overseen the development and scaling of Mass Cultural Council's groundbreaking work in arts prescriptions, in addition to his work on the executive team building cross-sector partnerships that expand the impact of the arts sector across the commonwealth. His work is driven by the belief that sustainable funding for the arts will not come from the arts sector. Instead, it will come from the sectors we have outcomes in. Prior to his work at the Council, Holmgren was a concert saxophonist, performing with a diverse group of organizations from the United States Military Academy Band at West Point to the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

He holds five degrees in music and education and was on faculty at Columbia University and Frostburg State University. He has spoken at more than three dozen conferences and his writing has been published in magazines, journals and, most recently, by Routledge.



**Adrienne Hundley (she/her)** is the head of community strategy and founding team member at Art Pharmacy, where she works to develop robust, scalable social prescribing ecosystems. Hundley specializes in integrating arts and culture into health care, community development and education settings. Her previous work includes facilitating community based theatre workshops and trainings across the U.S. and internationally. Hundley holds a BA in theatre arts, political science and Spanish with a minor in social justice from the University of Portland, and an M.A. in theatre and global development from the University of Leeds. An avid traveler, backpacker and yoga practitioner, Hundley is passionate about building vibrant, inclusive communities.

# Healing for our Veterans & Military: Targeted Arts & Health Strategies



Creative arts therapies and other arts and health interventions can help improve health and quality of life for military and veteran populations and their families. This session reviews lessons learned about serving military-connected populations through programs managed by state arts agencies and through NEA Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants. How have participants found success in communicating the value of their programs, and what opportunities lie ahead for other organizations and communities to partake of such work?

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**CAPT (ret) Moira G. McGuire** is a retired nurse officer with the U.S. Public Health Service who has more than three decades of leadership across federal health care systems, national public health initiatives and integrative wellness programs. She has developed and scaled pioneering programs addressing chronic disease, behavioral health and the care of wounded, ill and injured service members. McGuire led the creation of nationally recognized arts and health initiatives, authored operational and evaluation frameworks adopted across federal and civilian platforms, and advised on strategic policy for multiple federal agencies. She established the Arts in Health Program at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the first of its kind across the Defense Health Agency, and is a passionate advocate for the use of creativity and self-expression as tools for health, prevention and well-being.

McGuire is an adjunct lecturer at the University of Florida's Center for Arts in Medicine and George Mason University's Arts Management Program. She serves as the co-executive director of the U.S. Public Health Service Music Ensemble, is a member of the editorial board for *Perspectives on Arts in Health* journal and is a board member of the National Organization for Arts in Health.



**Bryan Bales** joined ArtsWA (Washington State Arts Commission) in July 2022 as the Wellness, Arts and the Military (WAM) program manager. Bales is a Marine Corps veteran with a BA in social science from WSU and a master of science in management and organizational leadership from Warner Pacific University. He is a Washington State Certified Peer Counselor.

Bales has a deep understanding and appreciation of the arts and looks forward to connecting service members and veterans to the arts to be able to learn new skills, find a new passion and/or purpose, and discover the healing benefits that the arts can provide.



**Bill O'Brien** is the senior advisor for innovation and director of Creative Forces for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). He has served the NEA as deputy chairman for grants and awards, director of theater and musical theater, and since 2011, as project director for Creative Forces®: National Endowment for the Arts' Military Healing Arts Network. Creative Forces is a national initiative of the NEA, in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, that seeks to improve the health, well-being and quality of life for military and veteran populations exposed to trauma, including families and caregivers, through placing creative arts therapies at the core of patient-centered care at clinical sites and increasing access to community arts activities that promote health and well-being.

Previously, O'Brien was the lead producer on Broadway for the Tony-honored sign-language musical production of *Big River*, and was featured in an ensemble role on all seven seasons as Kenny (Marlee Matlin's voice/interpreter) on NBC's Emmy and Peabody Award-winning *The West Wing*.

- **Continuing the Connection:** <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bill-o-brien-74b87613/>
- **Exploring the Work:** <https://www.arts.gov/advancing-creative-arts-therapies-research-military-connected-populations>
  - Creative Forces: <https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/creative-forces/creative-forces-research>



**Christine Bial** is the director of Arts and Humanities Grant Programs for Mid-America Arts Alliance. She brings to her work nearly 25 years of state arts agency and nonprofit arts experience as a grant program manager and theatrical production stage manager while being the mother of two daughters.

Bial earned her master of arts degree in performance studies from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and is a member of Actors' Equity Association.

**Exploring the Work:** Mid-America Arts Alliance website: <https://www.maaa.org/>

# Sustaining Investments in Healthy Aging through the Arts



Many studies suggest that integrating the arts with routine activities and programming for older adults can yield positive health outcomes. This session considers how state programs support lifelong learning through the arts, but also arts interventions that address aging related conditions such as dementia and other cognitive and neurological disorders. In particular, the session examines the role of public-private partnerships for creative aging.

## Meet the Panelists

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**Anne Basting, PhD**, is a writer, artist and advocate for the power of creativity to transform lives. Emerita professor of English at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Basting is founder of TimeSlips.org, which trains caregivers to unlock the meaning and joy in eldercare. Her speaking, writing and large-scale public performances have helped shape an international movement to extend creative and meaningful expression from childhood, where it is expected, through late life, where it has been too long withheld.

Basting is author of numerous articles and four books, including *Creative Care: A Revolutionary Approach to Elder and Dementia Care* (Harper). Internationally recognized for her speaking and innovative work, She is the recipient of a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship.

Basting is currently at work on the Memory Cafe Alliance, an effort to sustainably grow the memory cafe infrastructure across the United States. Her new writing can be found on Substack: @LittleCaregiverRepairShop.

- **Presentation:** [Timeslips](#)



**Kim Johnson** has been at the Tennessee Arts Commission for over 10 years and is currently the director of arts & health. At the Commission, Johnson has managed several areas, including the agency's creative aging work, Tennessee Person-Centered Music Program, access grants, Title VI coordination and compliance, and increased arts opportunities for people with disabilities. She now heads the agency's new arts & health initiatives. Through Johnson's leadership, the agency has expanded its work with older adults and partnerships throughout the state and has successfully become a national leader in these areas. She has worked for over 35 years in nonprofit management and acquired a wealth of knowledge from both the funding and implementation side of this work.

Prior to coming to the Tennessee Arts Commission, Johnson worked as the first director of programs for the National Museum of African American Music and as vice president of programs at the Scarritt-Bennett Center, both nonprofit organizations located in Nashville, where she developed inaugural programs for these organizations.

- **Continuing the Connection:** [kim.johnson@tn.gov](mailto:kim.johnson@tn.gov) or 615-532-9797
  - Tennessee Arts Commission, [tnartscommission.org](http://tnartscommission.org)



**Samantha Clarke (she/her)** is a multifaceted arts administrator, educator and storyteller with over a decade of experience in the Greater Philadelphia creative industry. Clarke holds a BFA in acting from the University of the Arts and an MA in text and performance from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and Birkbeck, University of London. Her background includes five years of teaching and directing at Montgomery County Community College and Penn State Berks. Currently, Clarke is the program officer for arts education and lifelong learning at the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. In this role, she has codeveloped key initiatives such as the Creative Aging Initiative, the Business of Being an Artist professional development series, and

communities of practices for arts education administrators, teaching artists, and arts and health practitioners.



**Troy Hickman** is the arts education program manager at the Vermont Arts Council. Leveraging collaborations with artists, teachers and statewide partners, Hickman advocates for learning in, about and through the arts for Vermonters of all ages. He manages the Arts Council's education related grant programs, teaching artist rosters and education related professional development programs. Hickman's arts and health related work began in 2021 through the Arts Council's Creative Aging Initiative, an entry into the Council's efforts to increase the state's capacity to support older adults and Vermont communities through creative programming. Since this time, the Council has sought to build creative partnerships across the state, trained more than 50 teaching artists and launched an evolving grant program.



**Meghan McFerrin** coordinates NASAA's Creative Aging and Creative Futures work, as well as professional development services for state and jurisdictional arts agency arts education staff. McFerrin is an arts educator with experience teaching in K-12 classrooms as well as in higher education, museum and community arts settings. From 2017 to 2022, she worked for the Georgia Department of Education, where she oversaw the state's STEAM certification program and built a statewide community arts network to support arts integration in schools. As a museum educator at the High Museum of Art, McFerrin developed and facilitated programs for K-12 students and teachers, including overseeing a Kennedy Center Museum Access for Kids grant project focused on accessibility and differentiated instruction.

Later, returning as a teaching artist at the museum, McFerrin expanded her work to include creative aging, designing programs for adult and senior audiences. She teaches preservice art educators as an adjunct instructor at Capital University and is a graduate associate and PhD student in the Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy specializing in museum education and administration at The Ohio State University.

# Tracking the Impact of the Arts & Health: Research & Evaluation



To support the effective promotion of statewide strategies in the arts and health, research and evaluation are essential. This session discusses measuring and communicating the value and impact of arts and health strategies, including through program evaluation. What are key capacity constraints and how might they be resolved? How can state arts agencies and regional arts organizations begin to develop metrics to monitor progress with their arts and health strategies, and what kinds of partnerships should be created to promote research and data sharing?

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**Dr. Tasha Golden** is a singer/songwriter turned health scientist and a leading expert in arts and health. With clients ranging from state arts agencies to Google to universities, Golden helps arts organizations, health care leaders and change makers across sectors discover untapped opportunities, measure what matters and communicate their value to diverse audiences.

Golden was the first director of research at Johns Hopkins Medicine's International Arts + Mind Lab, and is adjunct faculty at the University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine. She is lead author of [Arts on Prescription: A Field Guide for US Communities](#) and recently published [The Co-Creation Effect: The Value of Shifting from Designing FOR to Designing WITH.](#)

Golden has published extensively on the health impacts of the arts in peer-reviewed journals, and is a regular contributor to [Psychology Today](#). Named one of Fierce Healthcare's "Fierce 50" for her innovative work in arts and health, she has presented for SXSW, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Mayo Clinic, POLITICO and many others.

Golden's work is shaped by her career as a musician and teaching artist. After years touring internationally as a singer-songwriter with the band Ellery—with music featured on Netflix, Showtime, FOX and ABC—Golden's experience with career-ending burnout led her to explore intersections of arts, well-being and change. This

work led to her PhD and to the development of tools and frameworks that translate research into real-world practice.

Golden is the founder of Project Uncaged, a trauma-informed arts program for justice-involved girls, and How We Human, a training in mental health and trauma-informed practice designed especially for arts professionals.

A sought-after consultant, advisor and speaker, Golden brings a rare blend of lived artistic experience and scientific expertise to help arts organizations reimagine their role in community well-being, unlock hidden opportunities and expand their impact in the arts and health movement.

- **New Book:** *[The Co-Creation Effect: The Value of Shifting from Designing For to Designing With](#)*
- **Continuing the Connection:** [www.tashagolden.com/nasaa2026](http://www.tashagolden.com/nasaa2026)



**Jeff Niblack** is the research and evaluation director for the Minnesota State Arts Board, a role he's had since 2021. He works to understand the impacts of arts funding in Minnesota and build evaluation capacity among grantees.

Prior to working at the Arts Board, Niblack had research and evaluation roles at Minnesota Management and Budget and the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Niblack is a graduate of the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs and the University of Missouri.



**Eric Ashby** serves as the director of programs for the Indiana Arts Commission (IAC), ensuring IAC programs and services provide demonstrable public benefit to Indiana’s people and communities. In his previous role at IAC as grants and research manager, Ashby was responsible for overseeing the agency’s granting programs and processes, data and research priorities, and state and federal reporting.

Ashby previously worked at the Indiana University Center for Rural Engagement, building engagement frameworks and programs to improve quality of place through arts and creativity. Additionally, he worked as a project manager for the Arts Administration Program and Dean’s Office at the O’Neill School at Indiana University, and served as a project specialist with Bridgeway Capital, supporting efforts to track and support small creative business development.

Ashby holds a BS in arts management, an MA in arts administration and a master of public affairs degree from the O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University, Bloomington.

- **Continuing the Connection: [Lifelong Arts Indiana Research](#)**



**Sunil Iyengar** is director of research & analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Under his leadership, the NEA has produced dozens of reports, webinars, blog posts and podcast episodes about research on the value and impact of the arts. He has also established research and data partnerships with multiple federal agencies.

Iyengar and his team designed and implemented three long-term research agendas, founded a national data repository for arts and culture and a statistical reporting center for the arts, and launched two research grant programs, including the NEA Research Labs initiative.

Iyengar chaired a federal Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development (2011-2023) and cocreated the Sound Health Network (2020-2025). He and his team consistently lead strategic planning for the agency, and they provide research and evaluation support to Creative Forces: NEA Military Arts Healing Network.

# Bridge Building in the Arts & Health: Connecting the Sectors



Cross-sector collaboration is vital to the longevity of arts and health programming. Several states have sustained successful long-term partnerships with departments of health and other relevant state organizations. This session explores how such alliances are fostered and nourished. What can we learn from each other, what is the most effective use of federal support in this conversation, and are there statewide or national networks that can be organized for mutual benefit?

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**Steven Boudreau** is the director of equity, engagement and communications at the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging, where he works at the intersection of public health, aging and disability services, and community engagement. Boudreau is a board member for the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and the Rhode Island STAR Cobre Center for Stress, Trauma and Resilience.

In these roles, Boudreau leads initiatives that center connection, belonging and well-being. His approach is shaped by experience design as a transformational practice.

Drawing from his background in the arts, public health and collaborative facilitation, Boudreau designs participatory, immersive environments where diverse voices come together to explore shared challenges and possibilities.

Boudreau's work emphasizes relationship building, reflective engagement and the belief that meaningful progress happens when people are invited into the process, not positioned as recipients of it.



**Kate Van Steenhuyse (she/her)** received her MFA (fine arts) from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco, and a BFA (painting and women's studies) from Washington University in St. Louis, and is currently pursuing a graduate certificate in economic development from Wichita State University. Van Steenhuyse maintains an active studio practice exhibiting nationally and internationally. In 2014 she cofounded Harvester Arts, an experimental residency, public art and artist capacity-building program in Wichita, Kansas, and served as its executive director for seven years. She served as Ulrich Museum of Art Alliance board president (2014-2017), graduate faculty at Wichita State University (2011-2017) and board member of the Mid-America Arts Alliance (2017-2020). Van Steenhuyse currently serves on the boards of Harvester Arts and Groover Labs in Wichita and is a fellow of the Kansas Future Fellows program at the Center for Public Partnerships and Research at the University of Kansas.

Van Steenhuyse worked as the program manager at Arts Partners Wichita (2017-2019), and since 2019 has held numerous positions with the Kansas Arts Commission within the Kansas Department of Commerce, currently serving as assistant director.

- Exploring the work: [KAC Arts in Medicine program](#)



**Anisa Raof** is director of arts and health programming and grants manager for the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA) as well as co-lead of the Rhode Island Arts and Health Network. In her role at RISCA and through the Network, Raof oversees the arts and health grant program, builds partnerships, and facilitates convenings to amplify and support integrating the arts into health-based initiatives. She enjoys working with her colleagues and across sectors in the community to ensure all Rhode Islanders have access to the arts.

With a passion for design, film and finding innovative ways to connect, Raof has partnered with numerous individuals and organizations over the years to build and support programming for all ages.

Raof's work includes serving as executive director of the Providence Children's Film Festival and founding and publishing the family website Kidoinfo (2007-2017). She holds a degree in psychology with a minor in painting from the University of Rochester and is fascinated by how we see and interact with the world. After college, Raof was part of a research team focused on child resilience and adaptability before launching her own design company, creating jewelry and metal home accessories, and cofounding the Providence Craft Show.

- **Exploring the Work:** RISCA Arts & Health <https://arts.ri.gov/programs/arts-health>
  - Framework for Public Health Artist in Residence Programs: [https://arts.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur946/files/2024-10/RISCA\\_Art-Health\\_Artist%20in%20Residence%20Framework\\_2024\\_FINAL.pdf](https://arts.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur946/files/2024-10/RISCA_Art-Health_Artist%20in%20Residence%20Framework_2024_FINAL.pdf)



**Katie Clark Wheeler** is policy advisor, Administration for Community Living (ACL), at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Wheeler serves as ACL's subject-matter expert on social connection as a key part of chronic disease prevention and health promotion for older adults and people with disabilities. She coordinates efforts across the agency and with federal partners and supports the aging and disability networks with strengthening social connection in their delivery of supportive services. Wheeler also leads Commit to Connect, ACL's cross-sector initiative addressing social isolation and loneliness in older adults and people with disabilities. Prior to her work at ACL, she worked at the National Institutes for Health in extramural research grants.

Wheeler served as a community health advisor in Madagascar from 2017-2020 with the U.S. Peace Corps, where she focused on community capacity building, maternal/child health and youth development. She holds a BA in American history from Kalamazoo College and a master of public health policy from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.