

Improving Labor Standards for the Human Services Workforce

Speaker Biographies

Terri P. Ricks was appointed Secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services in December 2022, after serving the agency as Deputy Secretary since 2016 and Undersecretary from 2004 to 2008. Ricks brings legal, financial, human resources, policy and management experience to DCFS, and her distinguished career has positioned her as an influential figure in child and family welfare. Ricks spearheaded multiple transformative initiatives at DCFS, emphasizing family-centered child support, enhanced customer service, and expanded workforce strategies. Under her leadership, the department established a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Unit, boosted staff training in poverty competencies, and fortified community partnerships. She was pivotal in shaping Louisiana's disaster recovery in health and social services, securing federal backing and providing broader public access to benefits. Ricks implemented the "No Wrong Door" service delivery model, incorporating 211 and Unite Us as referral systems. Ricks has been a key force in expanding DCFS's use of digital solutions. Working with Code for America (CfA), she led the department's efforts to use technology to increase community access to benefits, leading CfA to honor DCFS with its 2023 Governmental Changemaker Award. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ricks managed DCFS's internal response, including policy changes, communication with leadership, establishing the staff online COVID reporting system, and driving telework efforts. Ricks earned a bachelor's in Psychology and a master's in Leadership and Human Resource Development (LHRD) from Louisiana State University and a Juris Doctor from Tulane University Law School. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Leadership and Human Resource Development at LSU.

Jennie Romich is Professor of Social Welfare at the University of Washington School of Social Work and faculty director of the West Coast Poverty Center. Her research has examined state and local policy topics including child welfare, paid sick and safe time, paid family leave, and the minimum wage. She and colleagues recently completed a study on wage equity for non-profit human services workers.

Megan Tackney is director of strategic partnerships and engagement for WorkRise, a research-to-action network on jobs, workers, and mobility hosted by the Urban Institute. Before joining Urban, Tackney was in the New York City Mayor's Office, helping oversee the city's public health care, social services, child welfare, and homelessness programs for low-income families. She joined that office after working with the foundation Humanity United to advance and fund new solutions to

labor and sexual exploitation in major US cities. Previously, Tackney served in the Obama administration as special advisor to the acting assistant secretary of the Administration for Children and Families at the US Department of Health and Human Services. She also spent six years with the National Women's Law Center helping lead their advocacy campaigns on employment discrimination, reproductive health care, and family economic security. Tackney's work has been featured and published in Vanity Fair, the Center for Advanced Studies for Child Welfare, and National Public Radio's WBEZ Chicago, among other outlets. She holds a bachelor's degree in international affairs from the George Washington University and a master of public administration degree in human rights from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

Tracy Wareing-Evans is the President and CEO of the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), a bi-partisan national membership organization representing the cabinet level leadership of state and local health and human services agencies, and the subject matter experts that help execute their mission to improve outcomes for people nationwide. In coordination with its governing board of directors, Wareing Evans sets the strategic direction for the Association and spearheads delivery on its mission "to advance the well-being of all people by influencing modern approaches to sound policy, building the capacity of public agencies to enable healthy families and communities, and connecting leaders to accelerate learning and generate practical solutions together." In support of APHSA's bold strategic plan, Wareing Evans is mobilizing strategic partnerships with connected sectors integral to thriving communities, including education, justice, housing, and health as well as community-based organizations. Wareing Evans has a long history in high-level policy development and public administration. She served as a senior advisor to U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and, before moving to Washington D.C. in 2009, as the Director of the Arizona Department of Economic Security, an integrated human services agency. She has also served as policy adviser for human services under then Arizona Gov. Napolitano and as director of the state's child welfare division. Wareing Evans began her career as a litigator. Wareing Evans has served on more than 25 boards and advisory committees over the course of her career, including several national appointments. Her current board service includes the Alliance for Strong Families & Communities and WorkRise (a research-to-action network on jobs, workers, and mobility). In 2019, she was selected as a fellow to the National Academy of Public Administration.