

# **Commission on Community Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention**

## **Commission Member Bios**

### **Manisha Juthani, MD**

Manisha Juthani, MD, is the commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Commissioner Juthani comes to DPH from the Yale School of Medicine where she has served as an associate professor of medicine, and director of the Infectious Diseases Fellowship Program. Additionally, she has served as the associate program director for career development in the Internal Medicine Residency Program there since 2017.

Commissioner Juthani attended Edgemont High School in Scarsdale, NY, and received her bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1994 and her medical degree from Cornell University Medical College in 1998. She completed her internal medicine residency training at New-York Presbyterian Hospital-Weill Cornell where she served as an assistant chief resident. She also was a chief medical resident at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center from 2001-2002.

Commissioner Juthani came to the Yale School of Medicine as a fellow in infectious diseases in 2002. Her research focused on the diagnosis, management, and prevention of infections in older adults, specifically urinary tract infection and pneumonia in nursing home residents. She has more than 50 peer-reviewed publications in this field.

Additionally, Commissioner Juthani was the principal investigator of an R01-funded research project that resulted in the 2016 JAMA publication entitled, "Effect of Cranberry Capsules on Bacteriuria Plus Pyuria Among Older Women in Nursing Homes: A Randomized Clinical Trial." This publication received widespread attention in numerous news media outlets including the New York Times and CNN. She also achieved an Altmetric Attention Score that placed it in the top 5 percent of all research outputs scored by Altmetric in 2016. In December 2016, the New Yorker identified this research as one of the most notable medical findings of 2016. Additionally, in her parallel work with pneumonia prevention, she was the first author on the 2015 Clinical Infectious Diseases publication entitled, "A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial of a Multicomponent Intervention Protocol for Pneumonia Prevention Among Nursing Home Elders." Her investigative expertise has made her a sought-after editorialist in high impact journals such as JAMA, JAMA Internal Medicine, and the British Medical Journal.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Commissioner Juthani was a leader in the response at Yale. She was a voice to help educate the public and was featured on CNN, WTNH News 8, ABC's 20/20, Connecticut Public Radio/NPR, BBC's News Hour, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, USA Today, and the Washington Post to name a few. Throughout her career, she has been inspired to protect our most vulnerable citizens and advocate for the ideal of health as a human right. This vision and passion is what she now brings to the role of Commissioner of the Department of Public Health.

### **James Dodington, MD, CPST, FAAP**

James Dodington, MD, is the Medical Director of the Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH) Center for Injury and Violence Prevention and an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine at the Yale

School of Medicine. He attended Medical School and Pediatrics Residency at the University of Pennsylvania and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He came to Yale New Haven Hospital in 2013 for Pediatric Emergency Medicine Fellowship and joined the faculty at the Yale School of Medicine in 2016. In 2019, he became the Medical Director of the Center for Injury and Violence Prevention at YNHH. Throughout his career he has been involved in injury and violence prevention program development and research and has expertise in the development of violence intervention programs. He is the Medical Director of the Yale New Haven Hospital-based Violence Intervention program and serves as an Executive Leader of the CT Violence Intervention Program Collaborative. He is also a member of the national Executive Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention.

### **Kerri Raissian, PhD**

Kerri M. Raissian is an Associate Professor of Public Policy and the Director of UConn's [Advancing, Research, Methods and Scholarship in Gun Injury Prevention Center \(ARMS\)](#). ARMS (established in 2021) is dedicated to forging partnerships throughout the state and nation to advance interdisciplinary gun injury and violence prevention policy (GVP) scholarship. In April 2022, they convened a conference of the nation's leading gun researchers. The researchers worked on emerging GVP research which will be featured in a special issue of the [ANNALS](#) of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (publication is expected in February 2023). ARMS is also building a national research Clearinghouse, working to create interactive maps to visually depict Connecticut's gun related mortality, and working to disseminate knowledge about secure firearm storage options in Connecticut.

Dr. Raissian's own research involves using quantitative techniques to analyze the causal effects of policies and interventions. Her paper, "Hold Your Fire: Did the 1996 Federal Gun Control Act Expansion Reduce Domestic Homicides?" is the only analysis to ever evaluate the Gun Control Act successfully, and it was awarded the 2016 Vernon Memorial Prize for the best paper in *JPAM*. Her current research seeks to understand how gun owners and non-gun owners perceive gun policies (funded by the [National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research](#) and the [Missouri Foundation For Health](#)). She is also working to understand the facilitators and barriers to physician-initiated conversations around secure firearm storage.

### **Chief Karl Jacobson**

Chief Karl Jacobson is the Chief of the NHPD. He oversees the implementation and innovations of the New Haven Police Department's strategies to reduce violence, execute target enforcement, enhance legitimacy, and strengthen relationships between law enforcement and communities. This strategy derived from the [National Network for Safe Communities](#), is called Project Longevity. During his three years as an Assistant Chief, Chief Jacobson also worked with the [National Network for Safe Communities](#), by teaching strategies such as custom notifications. Chief Jacobson and ATF RAC Michael Zeppieri started the daily Intel meetings at the New Haven Police Department, which uses the collaboration of Local Police, State Police, Parole, Probation, and Federal Partners with Project Longevity tactics to combat violent crime in New Haven, Connecticut.

Chief Karl Jacobson has worked as a police officer for 24 years, he started his career with the East Providence, Rhode Island Police Department, where he worked for 9 years and was a Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force Officer for 5 years. In New Haven, he worked on the Connecticut State Police

Statewide Narcotics Task Force and the FBI Safe Streets Gang Task Force before being promoted to Sergeant 9 years ago Lieutenant 5 years ago and heading the efforts of Project Longevity for the past 9 years. Chief Jacobson has a Bachelor's Degree from Rhode Island College in Justice Studies and Sociology and a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of New Haven.

### **Kyle Fischer, MD, MPH**

Kyle Fischer, MD, MPH, serves as the policy director for the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention. He leads the organization in coordinating, developing, and advocating for evidence-informed policy to end community violence. In addition to this role, he continues to practice as an emergency physician and fellowship director in health policy with the University of Maryland School of Medicine. His interest in violence prevention stems from his emergency medicine residency in Philadelphia, where he volunteered with the Healing Hurt People program. Dr. Fischer possesses health policy experience with both non-profit organizations and state and federal legislatures, including in Wisconsin, Maryland, and the United States House of Representatives. He received a combined MD-MPH from the University of Wisconsin. Currently, he works clinically at University of Maryland Medical Center and University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center.

### **Andrew Woods, MSW, VPP**

*Executive Director of Hartford Communities That Care*

*Director, CT-Hospital Violence Intervention Program Collaborative*

In 1998, Mr. Woods founded Hartford Communities That Care. He is a graduate of Springfield College (B.S) and UCONN School of Social Work (MSW) and a national trainer for Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (The HAVI)

In 2004, Mr. Woods established the Hartford Care Response Team (HCRT), one of 40+ nationally recognized Hospital Violence Intervention Programs (HVIP), in partnership with Trinity-Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford, Connecticut. In 2019, the HCRT became the first HVIP in Connecticut to secure Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds.

In recent years, the HCRT established a Clinical Group Practice to meet mental health/ trauma needs of gunshot victims and their families and partnered with a physicians and a skilled nursing agency that provides in-home wound care for shooting victims released from the hospital, while coordinating their care with behavioral health out-patient primary care physicians.

Between 2013-2015, Governor Dannel P. Malloy appointed Mr. Woods to serve on three commissions in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook School shootings in Newtown, Connecticut: one related to victims' rights, another related to the enforcement of victims' rights and the third focused on Youth and Urban Violence.

In 2020, Mr. Woods Co-Founded the Connecticut Hospital Violence Intervention Program (CT-HVIP) Collaborative consisting of membership from Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Connecticut Hospital Association, Hartford Healthcare, Trinity/ Saint Francis Hospital, the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention, Yale/ New Haven Hospital, and several policy, community foundations, and advocacy groups.

### **Pina Violano, PhD, MSPH, RN, PMGT-BC, CCRN**

Dr. Pina Violano is the newly appointed Visiting Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement at Quinnipiac University's School of Nursing. She previously served as Manager for the Center of Injury & Violence Prevention Program at Yale New Haven Hospital. Her longstanding leadership and expertise in reducing unintentional and intentional injuries through the development and implementation of effective evidenced-based injury prevention strategies on a local, state, and national level led to the designation of Injury Free Coalition for Kids of New Haven at Yale's Children's Hospital for which she served as the Program Director and Principal Investigator for over 12 years. And, in 2019, she received the Principal Investigator of the Year Award. Her collaboration with street-based outreach worker programs and victim service providers to reduce gun and community violence within Connecticut's highest violent communities, culminated in the creation of Connecticut's first hospital-based violence intervention program (HVIP).

Dr. Violano has extensive experience in leading community-based participatory research efforts. In particular, the reduction of gun related injuries and death through local, statewide, and national gun buy-back programs and promotion of safe storage of firearms events. In 2017, she Co-Founded Swords to Plowshares Northeast, a non-profit organization that repurposes guns from gun buybacks into jewelry and gardening tools, which are distributed to community gardens and agricultural schools to cultivate food for the communities they are in as well as homeless shelters and soup kitchens. In August 2021, she was sought out by The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO) of the Connecticut General Assembly and appointed as the Advisory Fellow and Primary Administrator for CT's Gun Violence Intervention & Prevention Advisory Committee, of which she continues to serve.

She is a registered nurse with over 40 years' experience in critical care, emergency & trauma care, nursing education and research and hold a PhD in Public Health. She is the recipient of numerous awards including CT Nurses Association's Virginia A. Henderson-Diamond Jubilee Award for Outstanding Contribution to Nursing Research. She is also an appointed member of CT's Child Fatality Review Panel and an elected member of the American Trauma Society's Board of Directors.

### **Ebony Epps**

A native of Bridgeport, Ebony Epps began working at RYASAP through their AmeriCorps program twenty-six years ago. She graduated magna cum laude from the University of Bridgeport with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. She is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Marriage & Family Counseling at Liberty University. Ebony is the Program Director of StreetSafe Bridgeport, a non-law enforcement-based program aimed at reducing violence amongst youth and young adults while providing them resources such as educational and employment opportunities to help change their lives. Ebony believes that it is our duty to contribute our time, talent & resources to help edify the youth and families in our communities.

### **Susan Logan, MS, MPH**

Susan Logan is Supervising Epidemiologist in the Injury and Violence Surveillance Unit at the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Ms. Logan leads a team of epidemiologists and collaborates with public health practitioners on prevention of injury and violence-related morbidity and mortality. She is Principal Investigator for the CDC's Comprehensive Suicide Prevention cooperative agreement and the Connecticut Violent Death Reporting System. She also manages the DPH EpiCenter Syndromic Surveillance System that provides near real-time emergency department data from all hospitals in

Connecticut. Ms. Logan has a MS in Biology from Boston College and a MPH from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and over 25 years-experience in public and community health.

### **Commissioner Vennessa Dorantes, LMSW**

Dorantes has worked for DCF since 1992. She holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Teikyo Post University and an MSW from UCONN School of Social Work.

From 2004 until appointment as commissioner, she was an adjunct faculty member at Central CT State University where she taught elective and core competency Social Work courses. Dorantes is certified in Social Work field instruction from Southern CT State University.

She has served on the SW Advisory Boards of Central and Western CT State Universities during their CSWE (Council on Social Work Education) re-accreditation and currently on the UCONN School of Social Work Board of Advocates.

In 2019, Dorantes was appointed DCF Commissioner as the first African American to serve in that role for the state of Connecticut. Commissioner Dorantes cochairs Connecticut's Alcohol & Drug Policy Council, the Governor's Council on Women & Girls. Among the myriad of state legislative board and commission appointments she is also an inaugural member of CT's Racial Equity & Public Health Commission.

With an annual operating budget over \$850M (plus management of an additional \$35M in American Rescue Plan Allocation —ARPA), Commissioner Dorantes oversees a workforce of 3200 across 2 children's psychiatric facilities, 14 Field Offices, Central Office divisions and an adventure-based, clinically-supported Wilderness School.

Commissioner Dorantes has had the distinct privilege of participating in several roundtable discussions on topics including the rippling impacts of child poverty, gun violence, emerging trends in child welfare and children's mental health alongside various stakeholders which have included: The Vice President of the United States Kamala Harris, US Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, US Health & Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra and other HHS Sr Leaders as well as with CT Gov Ned Lamont, and members of CT's Congressional delegation throughout her tenure in this role.

In July 2022, Commissioner Dorantes and her Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly were featured in a Casey Family Programs Q&A Article [How is Connecticut's Department of Children and Families Working Towards Racial Justice?](#)

Dorantes espouses a deliberately transparent, collaborative, and relational leadership approach which resulted in her successful ushering the state of Connecticut out of three decades of federal oversight. Dorantes characterizes exiting of the 32 year Juan F. Consent Decree as the evolution of consistent practice standards, continuous quality improvement and system accountability.

Connecticut's work in strategic planning in racial justice, workforce development, elevating voices of persons with lived expertise, sustained reduction in non-therapeutic congregate care placements through a kinship & family engagement emphasis, best practice in child fatality review development incorporated in a safety science model and effective crisis communication are often highlighted in national webinars and conferences.

Commissioner Dorantes serves on The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) Executive Governing Board.

Dorantes is a proud member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc and The Links, Inc which is one of the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations.

### **Carl Schiessl**

[Carl Schiessl, Senior Director, Regulatory Advocacy, Connecticut Hospital Association](#): An accomplished attorney, advocate and author, with rich and diverse experience as legal and compliance counselor to healthcare, insurance, financial services, and manufacturing companies, a former elected state official, a volunteer in public service, and an instructor in legislative process.

At the Connecticut Hospital Association, Carl advises hospitals and other healthcare institutions on all legislative, judicial, and regulatory matters, with special emphasis on patient care regulation, emergency medicine, workplace safety, taxation, children's health, mental health, substance use, and community violence prevention issues. He has been a principal spokesperson for the hospital industry with state and federal agencies and other oversight entities on an array of healthcare issues.

Carl was elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives six times, serving as chairman of the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee, as Deputy Majority Leader, and Vice Chairman of the Public Health Committee. He also worked in the Connecticut State Senate for six years. Carl has been a member of the adjunct faculty at the University of Connecticut School of Law since 2013, teaching legislative process and instructing a legislative field placement program.

Carl is a chair of the Connecticut Children's Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, and a Founding Volunteer of the Pro Bono Partnership. He is also a certified CPI instructor in nonviolent crisis intervention. In 2017, Carl became a James W. Cooper Fellow, recognizing outstanding Connecticut lawyers, judges, and teachers of law.

### **Colleen Violette, MSW**

Colleen Violette is the Director of Department of Public Health (DPH) Office of Injury and Violence Prevention. She has been with DPH since January 2021 working on overdose and suicide prevention. Colleen has a master's degree in Social Work with a concentration in public policy for the University of Connecticut and has worked in the field of prevention since 2014.

### **Jacquelyn Santiago, MBA**

Jacquelyn Santiago is Chief Executive Officer of COMPASS Youth Collaborative and a Human Relations Commissioner for the City of Hartford. As CEO, Jackie provides the vision for COMPASS and is responsible for aligning programming with the agency's mission and long-term strategy.

Jackie has built a high-performance team to meet the needs of Hartford's highest-risk youth. She supports the team by ensuring they have the resources they need to deliver impactful programming. Since becoming CEO in 2019, Jackie has secured more than \$7 million in new funding for COMPASS.

On behalf of the agency, Jackie communicates with shareholders, government entities, and the public. She is the link between the Board of Directors and the COMPASS team.

Jackie is a champion for youth equity, a dynamic youth development trainer, and an advocate for youth at risk.

She began her career as a youth organizer at Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART). Previously, Jackie worked as a Partnership Coach for National Center for Time and Learning. She assisted school districts in the Hartford region in developing relationships with the community, families, and businesses to support student success.

Jackie received her Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Trinity College in 2000 and her Master's degree from Quinnipiac University's School of Business in 2014. Jackie is a national trainer in youth development practices and 7 Executive Functions for providers, parents, and community-based organizations.

A native of Lawrence, MA, Jackie had the same early experiences as many of the young people who inspire her today. An excellent student in public school, Jackie received a scholarship to attend a prep school where she struggled to maintain decent grades. "I failed. It was then that I realized the schools in Lawrence hadn't prepared me well academically." Jackie decided that if she were lucky enough to go on to college, she would do something to help children, their families, and schools. Pingree School prepared her for her career at Trinity College, and she wants to ensure others have the same opportunity.

#### **Charles W. Johndro, D.O.**

Dr. Charles Johndro is a native of Bristol and is the System EMS Medical Director for Hartford Healthcare & an Attending Physician in the Emergency Department at Hartford Hospital. He holds an academic appointment as Assistant Professor at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and is a member of the core faculty for the University of Connecticut's Integrated Residency in Emergency Medicine.

Dr. Johndro has over twenty-five years of experience in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as a paramedic and physician. He is heavily involved with EMS on the state level, currently serving as the Chair of Region III Medical Advisory Council (MAC) and a voting member of the Connecticut Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council (CEMSMAC). Dr. Johndro's academic interests include resuscitative medicine, human factors in medical education, provider wellness and pharmacology.

Dr. Johndro has also enjoyed a long career of service in the United States Air Force. He enlisted into active duty in 1997, transitioned into the Air National Guard (ANG) in 2001 and is currently serving as a member of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Medical Group in Connecticut ANG in the rank of Lt. Colonel. His current military role is as a physician and an integral member of the Ground Surgical Team (GST), a forward operating, modular response force trained to operate in an austere environment in support of military operations.

#### **Jeremy Stein**

Jeremy Stein is the Executive Director of Ct Against Gun Violence (CAGV), whose mission is to end gun violence in CT. CAGV has been a leader on legislative advocacy in CT and throughout the country for the last 30 years, helping to pass some of the nation's strongest gun laws. Mr. Stein is a seasoned litigator with over 23 years of experience, graduating from Emory University School of Law in 1994. His interest in fighting gun violence began early in his career, when he served as a prosecutor with the criminal division of the Attorney General's Office of the District of Columbia. Mr. Stein handled many gun related cases, working closely with the ATF, FBI, Secret Service, Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police.

Additionally, he served as judicial law clerk for the Honorable Patricia A. Broderick in the DC Superior CT. He also served as an assistant public defender with the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, in its Baltimore City felony trial division. He has served on Governor Lamont's transition team as well as the Biden-Harris Gun Violence Prevention Committee (1st 100 day team), where he chaired the suicide prevention subcommittee. Mr. Stein is also a survivor of gun violence.

### **Bradley Richards, MD**

I am passionate about health equity, population health, healthcare payment reform, primary care, and doing my best to make meaningful connections with other people. As a clinician I believe in Dr. Francis Peabody's quote that..." the secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient." While I didn't learn this quote until I was in medical school, I had already learned this truth from watching my mother center herself by giving to others before she died from ovarian cancer when I was in high school. By truly caring about others and making them feel that care, we can heal and comfort others.

I live with my partner and our two young children outside of New Haven. We try to prioritize spending time with our extended families and enjoy exploring the world around us. I was born in upstate New York but grew up in Simpsonville, South Carolina. I attended Furman University majoring in sociology which sparked a deep and ongoing interest in the drivers of health and wellness. I went to medical school at Georgetown University School of Medicine and at the same time I had the privilege of working with the Robert Graham Center, which focuses on primary care health policy research. I did my residency training in the Yale Primary Care Internal Medicine program where I did a chief resident year before joining the Yale Medical School faculty and becoming the assistant director of the residency clinic.

During my time on faculty, I was able to mentor, teach, and advise numerous residents, be a primary care provider to a small panel of patients mostly on Medicaid and Medicare, attend the Yale School of Management and obtain an MBA with a healthcare focus, be the medical director for the HAVEN free clinic in New Haven serving mostly undocumented individuals, and co-instruct a course on population health and health equity at the Yale School of Management.

I'm currently the Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Social Services and came to Connecticut state service in January 2021 to work on policy to improve the health and wellbeing of Medicaid/CHIP members and the communities that they live with.

### **Leonard Jahad**

Leonard Jahad is a lifelong resident of the greater New Haven community, He is a veteran of over 24 years of law enforcement including stints in the Connecticut Department of Corrections and community corrections before retiring as Chief Probation Officer in 2015 where he specialized in supervising youthful offenders as well as violent offenders, Jahad currently leads the Connecticut Violence Intervention Program as Executive Director. CTVIP currently manages the Hamden Juvenile review board as well as the Violence Prevention Programs in both Hamden and New Haven, supervising youth engaged in the riskiest activity, including perpetrators and victims of community violence Jahad also works with the New Haven Board of Education as an Intervention Specialist utilizing restorative practices and mediation techniques to restore relationships between students, staff and families. Jahad is a strong advocate for mentoring serving as Past President of the New Haven My Brother's Keeper Program. He



has coached in Pop Warner Football since 1992 and currently serves as vice president of the New Haven Steelers of the Southern Connecticut\ to pop warner association. Along with being the proud dad of 2 biological daughters, Jahad has also been a foster parent to over 12 young men and women since 1996. When not working or volunteering with the Prince Hall Shriners and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity he also serves on several Boards and statewide committees.

**Michael Makowski**

BS- Medicinal Chemistry; MPH from UCONN. He has been with DPH since 2015 as an epidemiologist on the CTVDRS grant. In 2017, I became program manager for CTVDRS.