



# Nebraska Court Improvement Project 2020 Regional Conference

UNL Innovation Campus | Lincoln • September 28

9:00-9:30	Welcome and Introduction	Chief Justice Michael Heavican, <i>Nebraska Supreme Court</i> Judge Larry Gendler, <i>Sarpy County Juvenile Court</i>
9:30-10:00	What Nebraskans Want for their Kids	Commissioner Matthew Blomstedt, <i>Nebraska Department of Education</i>
10:00-10:45	Our Role as Gatekeepers	Greg Gonzalez, <i>Omaha Police Department</i>
10:45-11:00	BREAK	
11:00-12:00	Key Features of the Teen Brain - And Resulting Behaviors	Dr. Sarah Griess, <i>Psychologist</i>
12:00-12:15	Putting into Practice: An Exercise	
12:15-1:15	LUNCH - on your own	
1:15-2:15	Recognizing and Responding Effectively to Traumatized Youth	Jessica Kroeker, <i>Project Harmony</i>
2:15-3:15	Risk and Protective Factors in Nebraska	Lisa Thurau, <i>Strategies for Youth</i>
3:15-3:30	BREAK	
3:30-4:30	What I Wish You Knew	Young Adult Panels
4:30-4:45	Closing Thoughts: The Next Youth I See, I Will...	



# Speaker Biographies

## Judge Larry Gendler – Separate Juvenile County Judge, Sarpy County:

Lawrence D. Gendler is a judge on the Sarpy County Separate Juvenile Court in Nebraska. He joined the court in 1992. Gendler received his undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri at Columbia in 1975 and his J.D. from Creighton University School of Law in 1978. Prior to joining the court, Gendler was an attorney for Sarpy County from 1978 to 1992.

## Dr. Matthew Blomstedt – Nebraska Commissioner of Education:

Dr. Blomstedt is a native Nebraskan whose career focuses on local, regional and statewide education issues. Blomstedt's experience includes education finance and organization, assessment and accountability, professional development, and the development of systems to enhance blended and distance learning opportunities across the state. Dr. Blomstedt earned a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Higher Education and a Master's Degree in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

## Greg Gonzalez – Deputy Chief, Omaha Police Department:

Greg Gonzalez is an Omaha native whose 24-year (and counting) professional law enforcement career has led him to the deputy chief position of the 900+ sworn officer Omaha Police Department. He serves on numerous policing and community governing boards.

Greg launched his law enforcement career in 1993 with the Douglas County Sheriff's Department, where he worked uniformed patrol and on a federal narcotics task force. He transferred to the Omaha Police Department in 1995 and has worked in two of the police department's most high profile units, the gang unit and undercover narcotics unit.

In addition to attaining a Bachelor of Science Degree in criminal justice and a Master's Degree in Public Administration, Greg is an adjunct police academy instructor and has taught over 300 Omaha police recruits Command Spanish. Greg is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and the Major

City Chiefs of Police Executive Leadership Institute (PELI). Greg is also an adjunct instructor at his alma mater, the University of Nebraska at Omaha where he teaches criminal justice courses. Greg was recognized by his alma mater as a distinguished alumnus.

## Jessica Kroeker – Mental Health Therapist:

Jessica Kroeker is a Training Specialist and Mental Health Therapist at Project Harmony. Her work is focused on trauma in both therapeutic interventions with victims of abuse and training throughout the community on recognizing trauma and its symptoms. She is currently coordinating Omaha's Trauma Informed Community initiative. Additionally, Jessica provides therapy in rural Nebraska and previously worked several years in foster child adoption and permanency services. Jessica earned her Master's in Public Administration and Master's in Social Work from the University of Nebraska at Omaha

### **Dr. Sarah Griess – Psychologist:**

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Dr. Griess has taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Northern Colorado for Masters level students pursuing careers in the counseling field and held the position of Assistant Director and Director of Training at the University of Northern Colorado where she coordinated an American Psychological Association Accredited training program for Doctoral Interns in Psychology, while also continuing her clinical work. She is an Instructor for Mental Health First Aid, an internationally recognized certification course that provides education around mental health and challenges stigma and an instructor for QPR, a program for suicide intervention. She has conducted group therapy for female survivors of sexual abuse and sexual assault since 2007 through the WINGS Foundation, the University of Washington, and through the University of Northern Colorado Counseling Center. Working with sexual trauma survivors continues to be an area of special interest. She has also been a volunteer for local youth programs including Royal Family Kids Inc. and Teen Reach Adventure Camp (T.R.A.C.), both of which are programs that serve children in central Nebraska who have been abused, neglected, and/or have been displaced from their biological homes.

### **Lisa Thurau – Executive Director, Strategies for Youth:**

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In 2009, Lisa founded Strategies for Youth, Inc., a nonprofit advocacy and training organization dedicated to improving police/youth interactions and reducing disproportionate minority contact. Prior to forming Strategies for Youth, from 1999 to 2008, Lisa served as policy specialist and then as Managing Director of the Juvenile Justice Center of Suffolk Law School. There, Lisa focused on public policy advocacy on behalf of court-involved teens. She monitored juveniles' civil rights issues regarding police treatment, tracked trends in the Center's cases, and also monitored and challenged legislation affecting youth in the juvenile justice system.

Lisa is a graduate of Barnard College and holds a Master's degree in Anthropology from Columbia University. She graduated from Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University in 1991. Before becoming an attorney, Lisa worked as a researcher and advocate for reform and improvement of the public education system in New York City. She also worked as an Associate in the litigation department of Coudert Brothers, an international law firm, focusing on copyright and commercial litigation matters.