

New Jersey Caregiver Task Force – Members

Louise Rush, Division Director, New Jersey Division of Aging Services

In her role as Director of the Division of Aging Services (DoAS), Louise Rush manages a staff of approximately 300 people and a budget of about \$330 million to administer a variety of state and federal programs, services, and supports that are designed to maximize the independence of New Jersey's aged population as well as to protect its most vulnerable seniors.

Throughout her entire career of over 40 years with the State of New Jersey, her passion has been ensuring that seniors and the disabled have access to the services and programs they need to remain in their own communities with loved ones and friends and to avoid placement in a nursing facility for as long as possible.

877-222-3737
doas@dhs.nj.gov
aging.nj.gov
adrcnj.org

Nancy Fitterer, President & CEO, Home Care & Hospice Association of New Jersey

Nancy Fitterer is the President & CEO of the Home Care & Hospice Association of NJ. The Association represents Medicare certified home health agencies, hospices and health care service firms. The Association's mission is to inform, educate, assist and advocate for home care and hospice providers and the patients and families they serve throughout New Jersey. Prior to joining the Association, Nancy served as Chief of Staff to two New Jersey Attorneys General. Nancy also served in various other capacities during her eight-year tenure in the Office of the Attorney General, including Chief of Staff of the Division of Consumer Affairs. She is a graduate of both The College of New Jersey with a B.A. in political science and Seton Hall University with an M.A. in international relations and diplomacy.

732-877-1100
homecarenj.org

Celine Fortin, MSW, LSW, Associate Executive Director, The Arc of New Jersey

Céline Fortin has played several roles with The Arc for more than 30 years, focused on advocacy and support for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. She is also the caregiver of an adult child with Autism and mental health conditions.

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Brandon Eldershaw, LeadingAge New Jersey

Brandon Eldershaw develops and coordinates wellness programs to meet the needs of the Aging population, including specialized educational services that focus on the caregiver population.

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Meredith Masin Blount, Executive Director, NAMI NJ

Meredith Masin Blount is the Executive Director of NAMI NJ, a leading voice on mental illness in New Jersey. NAMI New Jersey (NAMI NJ) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. NAMI NJ, in conjunction with its 19 affiliates across the state, held more than 600 support groups, 310 education classes and provided more than 260 presentations in 2019.

Prior to NAMI NJ, Ms. Blount was the Senior Director of Youth Services for New Brunswick Tomorrow. Through this role, Ms. Blount managed the state's largest School Based Youth Services Program – providing mental health counseling and youth development services to students in New Brunswick Schools. The program had steadily grown over her seven-year tenure and expanded to seven schools, serving more than 1,000 New Brunswick students yearly. Prior to joining New Brunswick Tomorrow, Ms. Blount worked at the New Brunswick Housing Authority; creating the Social Services Department within the agency. She also was an AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer with the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance in Boston.

Meredith is also a proud wife to a very patient husband and mother to 3 soccer boys: 15, 12, 7. If you do not see her in the office, you can probably hear her cheering on the soccer fields every weekend. Every weekend.

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Liza Gundell, Chief Executive Officer, Caregivers of New Jersey

Liza Gundell is the Chief Executive Officer of The Family Resource Network and its affiliate organizations Autism Family Services of NJ; Caregivers of NJ and Epilepsy Services of NJ. The Network provides services and supports to people of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities and chronic illnesses and their caregivers. She has worked for the organization for 27 years. Liza is also the primary caregiver for her mother who just turned 90 and lives with her

Crystal McDonald, Associate State Director of Advocacy, AARP New Jersey

Crystal McDonald is the Associate State Director of Advocacy for AARP New Jersey where she helps to plan and execute campaigns to support family caregivers, improve health care access and affordability, promote retirement security and ensure access to affordable utilities. Crystal brings over ten years of experience in community organizing, health policy, and coalition building. Prior to her role at AARP, she worked on Medicaid policy and advocacy for NJ Health Care Quality Institute, Faith in New Jersey, and NJ Citizen Action. She is a graduate of the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

866-542-8165
aarpnj@aarp.org
aarp.org/nj

Cheryl Ricci- Francione, Executive Director, Alzheimer's Association of Greater New Jersey

Cheryl Ricci-Francione has served as the Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association's Greater New Jersey Chapter since 2017. She has been a nonprofit business professional for over 20 years. She is a graduate of Rutgers University, and holds a Master of Science degree in Human Services and Not for Profit Executive Management and Leadership from Springfield College. She is committed to providing resources and support to dementia caregivers. Her focus is on inclusion, equity and access for all residents of New Jersey, especially our older adult population.

800-272-3900
alz.org/nj

Susan McAndrews, Caregiver to an individual with mental illness

Susan McAndrews has extensive personal experience caring for both of her parents at the end of their lives, as well as the ongoing responsibility for her disabled sibling. Over the last 15 years, Susan and her family have utilized almost every aspect of home care available. They started with Home Helpers and progressed to 24 hour live-in Home Health Aides and, eventually, Hospice Care. Susan managed the groceries, the medications, the doctor's visits and unfortunately, visits to the hospital and Emergency Department. Susan has experienced the challenges of paying for care ...the bills, the inaccurate billing, the insurance, and the cash outlays. She appreciates how challenging and stressful it can be to deal with the many different agencies, insurance companies, pharmacies, physicians and therapists that are involved in the care of just one person. She understands how difficult it can be for caregivers to maintain their own health, meet the obligations of their families and maintain their employment in the midst of caring for a family member whose illness requires Home Health Care. Susan is currently Program Developer and Clinical Nurse Educator for Bayada Home Health Care. She is responsible for orienting and training nurses new to Bayada in the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are needed to be successful in the care of clients with chronic illness and their families.

Kathi Lolla, Caregiver to an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Kathleen Lolla is a dentist, a mother of four and full-time caregiver for her adult son with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Given her 27 years as caregiver to her special needs son, as well as having a parent with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, she is uniquely qualified for the task force. In light of her

particular experience, Kathleen possesses the ability to both address and illuminate the distinct challenges of caregivers.