

# Child Welfare Leaders Elected to National Partnership for Child Safety Advisory Group to Foster Learning & Collaboration

*Leaders from MI, MD, RI, IL, and Spirit Lake Nation will help guide a national movement focused on safety science, prevention, and systems improvement*

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, November 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [National Partnership for Child Safety](#) (NPCS), a national, member-led quality improvement collaborative with

a mission to improve child safety and prevent child maltreatment fatalities, today announced that Demetrius Starling, Senior Deputy Director of the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services' Children's Services Administration, has been elected as the new Co-Chair of the Partnership. Starling will serve alongside current Co-Chair Chip Spinning, Executive Director of Franklin County Children Services (Ohio).

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The National Partnership for Child Safety is about working together to drive innovation in how we protect children and support families.”

*Demetrius Starling, NPCS Co-Chair*



The National Partnership for Child Safety (NPCS) is a national quality improvement collaborative of state, county, and tribal child welfare agencies dedicated to preventing child maltreatment fatalities and serious injuries.

The Partnership also welcomed four distinguished leaders to its nine-member Executive Advisory Group:

- Dr. Alger M. Studstill, Jr., Executive Director of the Social Services Administration, Maryland Department of Human Services
- Ashley Deckert, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families
- Donald Charboneau, Director of Spirit Lake Tribal Social Services, North Dakota (elected to the Executive Advisory

Group in May 2025)

- Heidi E. Mueller, Director of the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

Together, these leaders—elected by their peers within the Partnership—will help guide NPCS in advancing its mission to improve child safety, strengthen systems of support for families, and promote learning and collaboration across jurisdictions. The Co-Chairs provide strategic

oversight to the Partnership and its Executive Committee, while the Executive Advisory Group serves as a smaller body of senior leaders that advises on priorities, ensures alignment across jurisdictions, and responds quickly to emerging opportunities.

“Demetrius has been a steadfast champion of building systems that both support families and protect children,” said Chip Spinning, Executive Director of Franklin County Children Services and current Co-Chair of the National Partnership for Child Safety. “His leadership, along with the depth of experience represented in our new Executive Advisory Group, will help deepen our collective impact as we continue learning from one another and from data to make every jurisdiction safer for children.”

“Our Executive Advisory Group brings together some of the nation’s most respected child welfare leaders,” Spinning added. “Their expertise and commitment to safety science and prevention will help the Partnership move beyond crisis response toward proactive, sustainable improvement.”

NPCS includes more than 40 state, county, tribal, and private child-serving agencies dedicated to improving child safety and preventing maltreatment fatalities. Its member agencies represent more than half of the families engaged with the child welfare system nationally.

The Partnership applies safety science to child welfare practice, helping jurisdictions build safer systems through data collaboration, peer learning, and workforce strengthening.

Through its quality improvement model, NPCS equips jurisdictions with practical tools to turn learning into action. The Safe Systems Improvement Tool (SSIT) supports retrospective reviews of critical incidents to identify system-level factors and opportunities for improvement, while aggregated data from these reviews inform evidence-based changes across jurisdictions.

NPCS also promotes workforce well-being through the TeamFirst Assessment of Safety Culture (TASC), which measures factors such as psychological safety, stress recognition, and workplace connectedness that influence decision-making and frontline practice.

By fostering a culture of learning rather than blame, the Partnership helps agencies act earlier, learn from critical incidents, and strengthen families before a crisis occurs.

“The National Partnership for Child Safety is about working together to drive innovation in how we protect children and support families,” said Demetrius Starling, incoming NPCS Co-Chair. “Our collective strength comes from collaboration, learning, and a shared commitment to continuous improvement. I’m honored to work alongside colleagues from across the country who are deeply committed to strengthening systems that are not only safer, but also more supportive and responsive to the children and families they serve.”

Through this shared leadership, NPCS continues to foster a national learning system that improves practice, strengthens the workforce, and drives upstream solutions that prevent harm

before it happens.

#### About the National Partnership for Child Safety (NPCS)

The National Partnership for Child Safety (NPCS) is a national quality improvement collaborative of state, county, and tribal child welfare agencies dedicated to preventing child maltreatment fatalities and serious injuries. NPCS applies safety science to build a culture of learning and continuous improvement across jurisdictions, advancing data-driven collaboration, peer learning, and workforce strengthening to improve outcomes for children and families. The Partnership is staffed by the [Center for the Helping Professions](#), which provides administrative and technical support to its member jurisdictions. To learn more, visit [www.nationalpartnershipchildsafety.org](http://www.nationalpartnershipchildsafety.org).

Manny Rivera

Rivera Communications

+1 626-864-7467

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

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