



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE HEAD INJURY ADMINISTRATORS

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Speaker Bios

Jennifer Braun, Chair Public Policy Committee

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Jennifer Braun is the Brain Injury Manager for the Bureau of Special Health Care Needs within the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. In this position, Jennifer is responsible for providing development, implementation, day-to-day management, monitoring and continuous improvement of all Adult Brain Injury Program and Brain Injury Waiver components in order to ensure appropriate services for individuals living with brain injuries are delivered and received. She also serves as the Project Director for the Administration for Community Living (ACL) Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) State Partnership Grant, as well as the Public Health Workforce Grant. In addition, she is responsible for facilitating the functions of the Missouri Brain Injury Advisory Council, a state-wide Governor appointed council that studies and promotes interventions and systems that improve outcomes related to traumatic brain injury.

In addition, she is Treasurer and Chair of the Public Policy Committee for the National Association of Head Injury Administrators.

Rebecca Wolfkiel, Executive Director

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Rebecca Wolfkiel joined NASHIA as Executive Director in January 2018. She brings over fifteen years of experience in promoting policies that provide resources for individuals with brain injury, and their families. In her role as Executive Director, Rebecca is committed to representing the interests of State governments and supporting the unique and integral role they play within the service delivery system.

Rebecca has also worked with former Pennsylvania Governor, Tom Ridge, at the Ridge Policy Group, for ten years, where she formerly represented NASHIA as a government affairs advisor.

She played an integral role in the successful reauthorization of the Traumatic Brain Injury in 2014, paving the way for the federal TBI program's move to the Administration for Community Living. Prior to her time at the Ridge Policy Group, Rebecca worked on Capitol Hill for over six years where she served as Legislative Director to Congressman Todd R. Platts, Co-Chair of the Traumatic Brain Injury Taskforce. Managing the Congressman's legislative agenda, she learned how to effectively navigate the lawmaking process and develop successful strategies. During her tenure on the Hill, Rebecca became keenly aware of the importance of bipartisanship and developed strong Congressional relationships with Republicans and Democrats alike. She often bridged partisan gaps and facilitated communication between contrasting viewpoints.

In her free time, Rebecca enjoys traveling and spending time with her family, husband Ryan, daughter Anna (13) and son Jack (6).

Rebecca received a Bachelor of Arts (BA) from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and a Master of Public Policy (MPP) degree from George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia.

Susan L. Vaughn

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Susan L. Vaughn is the Director of Public Policy for the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA), of which she is the founder and was the Association's first president. Since retirement from state government, she has provided technical assistance and consultative to states with regard to service delivery, including technical assistance through the current Traumatic Brain Injury Technical Assistance and Resource Center (TBI TARC) funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Susan is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Lifespan Respite Technical Assistance and Resource Center (TARC) funded by the ACL.

Susan contributes to national publications. She is the lead author for the chapter on "Health Policy: United States and International Perspectives" in the textbook *Brain Injury Medicine*, published in 2022. She co-authored the chapter on "Systems of Care" in the second edition of the *Textbook on Traumatic Brain Injury*, authored by Drs. Jonathan Silver, Thomas McAllister and Stuart Yodofsky, and is the primary author for the same chapter for the third edition (2019), edited by Jonathan M. Silver, M.D., Thomas W. McAllister, M.D., and David B. Arciniegas, M.D. She co-authored two articles on public policy featured in the 1994 and 2001 editions of *The Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation*; and co-editor of the *Guide to State Government Brain Injury Policies, Funding and Services* (2003 and 2005) produced by NASHIA. In 2010, she wrote the article, "Evolution of State Service Delivery Systems" for the 30th anniversary edition of the BIAA publication, *THE Challenge!*.

In 2002, she retired from the State of Missouri after nearly 29 years of experience in the field of disabilities. In 1985, she was hired as the first director of the Missouri Head Injury Advisory Council within the Missouri Office of Administration where she worked for seventeen years. Under her direction, the council advocated for legislation and funding to create a service delivery system, including, the brain and spinal cord injury registry; a

statewide and regional coordinated trauma system; Medicaid coverage for post-acute services; designated state agency for TBI services; expanded eligibility for developmental disabilities services to include TBI; state funding for long-term supported employment, community support, and service coordination; and the brain injury trust fund legislation. For five years, she administered state funding for community services until transferred back to the MO Department of Health and Senior Services. In 1997, she was co-program director of the first of four U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Federal TBI Implementation and Post Demonstration grants to improve access to service systems. At the time of her retirement, she was the chair of the State Injury Control Advisory Committee and was a member of several state committees, including the Secondary Injury Prevention Committee, Missouri Transition Alliance Partnership State Advisory Council, and the Missouri Home of Your Own Advisory Board.

Prior to 1985, she was the Assistant to the Director of the Missouri Department of Mental Health serving as the agency's lobbyist for the department and the three operational divisions (psychiatric services, alcohol and drug abuse, and developmental disabilities) and, in that capacity, she represented the department on the legislative Joint Interim Committee on Head Injury in 1984. From 1979 to 1984 she served as staff to the Missouri Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities; from 1976-1979 she was the Regional Coordinator to the Region IX Council on Developmental Disabilities to plan and develop services in a nine-county region, Sikeston, Missouri, and prior to that, she was a speech therapist at B.W. Sheperd State School for the Severely Handicapped in Kansas City, Missouri.

Susan received a B.S. in Education in 1972 from Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, majoring in speech pathology, and a Masters of Arts in Education, majoring in special education, in 1980 from the same institution.