



Faculty Bios

Simmie Baer recently retired from her post as the juvenile defender with the Cowlitz County Office of Public Defense, a role she held from 2018 – 2021. Previously, she was a Supervising Attorney and Clinical Professor in the Children and Family Justice Center, Bluhm Legal Clinic at Northwestern University School of Law. Prior to this appointment, she was the Supervising Attorney for the Juvenile Division of The Defender Association in Seattle for over 16 years and practiced with the office for 20 years. She came to Washington State in 1983 on a Reginald Heber Smith Poverty Law Fellowship and worked in Legal Services until 1985. Ms. Baer is the co-creator of the TeamChild project which successfully blends criminal and civil legal services in the representation of juvenile offenders. In 1995 Ms. Baer received the ABA Livingston Hall Juvenile Justice Award. In 2000 she was presented with the Paul Robeson Peace and Justice Award from the Mothers for Police Accountability. In 2002 she was awarded the William O. Douglas Freedom and Justice Award from the Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, an award that had never been given to someone who only represents children in juvenile and criminal court.

Maren Willins, LCSW is a criminal defense-based forensic social worker and psychotherapist in the Denver-metro area. She is a licensed clinical social worker and has been working in the public and private criminal justice field for over 15 years. Maren has been a forensic social worker with the Alternate Defense Counsel in Colorado for five years and had worked with the Public Defender's Office for five years. Maren passionately works on criminal defense-based teams to tell her clients' stories, to advocate for alternative and appropriate sentencing, and to advocate for mental health treatment. She is the co-editor and author of *Criminal Defense-Based Forensic Social Work*. She has had her own psychotherapy private practice for over 12 years in which she provides solution-focused and client-centered therapy for individuals as well as supervision to new social workers. Maren provides trainings on self-care, mental health and criminal defense-based forensic social work on a national level for graduate schools, law offices and parents. Maren earned her graduate degree in social work and her undergraduate degree in psychology at Washington University in St. Louis.

Molly Hennessey is Washington native and a licensed independent clinical social worker and mitigation specialist/social worker in the Seattle area. She has worked on defense based legal teams for the past 10 years, first beginning her career in Colorado and now has been working with the King County Department of Public Defense for seven years. Her passion and area of focus has been working with adolescents, youth charged in adult court, and re-sentencing cases based on youthfulness. Molly is a contributing author to the textbook *Criminal Defense-Based Forensic Social Work*. She earned her graduate degree in social work from the University of Denver.



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Defense**

My name is **Connie Lopez**, I'm an OPD Social Worker with the background in working with youth at risk and juvenile justice systems. I have over 15 years of experience in this industry. My work is centered around making a difference in youth livelihood.

Paola Herrera, MSW, LSWAIC, is a dedicated professional and proud native of the Tri-Cities. She is deeply passionate about community work and has extensive experience supporting families from diverse backgrounds. Paola has worked closely with individuals and families involved with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), as well as those navigating the court system, impacted by gang involvement, or dealing with substance use challenges. Her compassionate approach is centered on empowering individuals and fostering resilience in the communities she serves.

NOTICE: This project was supported by Grant #2020-ZE-BX-0004 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.