

# Professional Bios

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American  
Society  
**on Aging**

COHORT 5



THE UNIFIERS

# Karah Alexander

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Dr. Karah Alexander is a Clinical Research Coordinator with the Emory Roybal Center for Dementia Caregiving Mastery at the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing. Through the Emory Caregiver Bootcamp Program, she supports new caregivers during their first 100 days and collaborates with an interprofessional team to develop a primary care screening tool that initiates conversations about brain health and dementia.

She is deeply committed to advancing racial equity and community empowerment by dismantling myths about health literacy and dementia. Her work focuses on increasing brain health knowledge and dementia literacy in faith-based and community settings and equipping older Black adults and their families with culturally grounded resources to navigate healthcare.

Dr. Alexander is also developing a health literacy “clinic” designed to help community members better understand health information, communicate effectively with providers, advocate for themselves in clinical settings, and navigate health insurance.

She earned her PhD in Nursing from Emory University as the second non-nurse in the program’s history and holds a BA from Spelman College, an MPH, and a graduate certificate in health literacy from Georgia State University. Her research centers on health literacy and medical discrimination among Black dementia caregivers.

An active scholar, Dr. Alexander has authored more than 10 peer-reviewed publications and serves as a manuscript reviewer for *The Gerontologist*, *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, and *Alzheimer’s & Dementia: Behavior & Socioeconomics of Aging*.

As an ASA RISE Cohort 5 Fellow, she seeks to strengthen her leadership skills to drive systems-level change in aging services and translate research into actionable, equity-centered healthcare policy.

# Adrienne Bridges

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Dr. Adrienne Bridges is the Owner and CEO of Excel Consultant Pharmacist Services, a consulting firm which provides clinical and regulatory pharmacy services for long-term care facilities in Texas. She is a geriatric pharmacy expert specializing in medication regimen reviews focusing on appropriateness, effectiveness, omissions in care, and safety.

Her mission is to increase the accessibility and quality of clinical pharmacy services to older adult patients regardless of their care setting. Over the years, she has witnessed care disparities amongst older adult patients as both a personal caregiver and as a healthcare professional. The death of an older adult loved-one, due to a medication error during a transition in care, inspired her to become part of the solution.

She holds a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Texas Southern University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, a Master of Management in Health Care from Vanderbilt University Owen Graduate School of Management and a Master of Public Health from George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health.

Dr. Bridges believes the ASA RISE Fellowship will equip her to transform her passion for geriatric care into a platform she can use to promote industry and governmental changes, as well as lead philanthropic efforts to advocate for older adult care. She is pleased to be a Cohort 5 ASA RISE Fellow.

# Liz Cantillo

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Ms. Liz Cantillo is Director of Operations for Citymeals on Wheels in Bronx, New York. She manages the day-to-day operations of the meal distribution center. During her tenure as Operations Manager, Ms. Cantillo has spearheaded the transition of the current Mobile Food Pantry model by cultivating partnerships with community organizations to bring pantry items directly into the homes of older adults who cannot stand in a traditional pantry line.

In addition to improving and expanding the Fresh Produce program at Citymeals on Wheels, she seeks to ensure that those without access, can have a variety of fruit and vegetables throughout the year. With her extensive experience and unwavering commitment to the organization's mission, Ms. Cantillo has played a pivotal role in transforming the productivity and efficiency of the operations, including helping to launch a bulk purchasing model and a second meal program.

With a BA in psychology from Queens College, Ms. Cantillo is the visionary behind several strategic initiatives that have allowed Citymeals to expand its operations and enhance the overall quality of its programs. She assisted in the emergency response of the COVID pandemic and developed comprehensive emergency protocols to ensure the well-being of the staff while securing the delivery of meals to older adults throughout New York City.

She is delighted to be a Cohort 5 ASA RISE Fellow and envisions ASA Rise helping her to strengthen her voice to enable her to advocate for older adults who have fewer resources. Further, she is looking to grow her network within the aging sector to build collaborative relationships.

# Ricquetta Carpenter

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Dr. Ricquetta Carpenter is the Community Outreach Manager at the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging in Cleveland Ohio, where she brings over five years of experience in aging services. In her current role, she has spent the past two years developing programs that address the emotional and practical needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities. Most recently, she led a year-long assessment of isolation and loneliness in her service area and formed a task force to design responsive programming that fosters connection and community.

Dr. Carpenter also created a hands-on financial literacy workshop that empowers seniors to take control of their finances with confidence and clarity. Her work reflects a deep commitment to equity, dignity, and inclusion in aging. Her desire to make things better for older adults is deeply rooted in both her personal life and professional journey.

She works to ensure older adults are not only served but truly seen—by creating opportunities for engagement, advocating for inclusive practices, and amplifying their voices in decision-making spaces. Her experiences have shown her that aging is not a decline, but a stage of life that deserves celebration, support, and respect.

She has a Doctorate of Chiropractic from Life University in Marietta, GA and a Bachelor of Science from Stillman College. She has several certifications including Matter of Balance, LEAN Sigma Six - Green Belt and Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.

Excited to be a Cohort 5 ASA RISE Fellow, she wants to refine her voice as an advocate and elevate the work she is doing in her community. In addition, she wants to open doors to leadership roles, policy influence, and broader platforms where she can champion equity in aging.

# Yessenia Hafeezah Cervantes

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Ms. Yessenia Hafeezah Cervantes is a bilingual Lead Community Health Worker, CHW, in the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention team (Rush Generations) within the Social Work and Community Health Department at Rush University Medical Center. Rush Generations serves older adults and adults with chronic conditions. She is responsible for facilitating, supporting, recruiting for and scheduling various models of chronic disease self-management and evidence-based workshops in both Spanish and English.

As a certified master trainer, and a Mental Health First Aid Instructor, she recruits, guides, and trains new facilitators of the programs. Additionally, she establishes new partnerships with local organizations and sustains existing collaborations to support ongoing programs across multiple areas of the city. In her work, Ms. Cervantes provides direct patient and community member chronic disease self-management, health education and social support resource connection. She also collaborates with various community partners to implement evidence-based programs (EBP) in their community and train other CHWs to become workshop facilitators.

She also plays a role with the Medicaid Breast Cancer Quality Improvement Initiative through Equal Hope, an entity that supports women with breast and reproductive cancers. She is also a CHW trainer with the Center for Health and Social Care Integration (CHaSCI) at Rush and a member of the Rush Immigrant Health Working Group.

Ms. Cervantes' professional and personal journey have been dedicated to expanding opportunities in our society, with a particular focus on equitable access to health and wellness. Her work has been shaped by the belief that everyone, regardless of their background, deserves the chance to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

She holds a degree in Liberal Arts. She is pleased to be a member of Cohort 5 of ASA RISE. As a Fellow she hopes to translate her experiences into scalable, transformative changes within the aging sector.

# Mariama Chisolm

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Ms. Mariama Chisolm is an accomplished healthcare leader specializing in gerontology, dementia care, and case management, with a career dedicated to empowering older adults and their families through education, advocacy, and person-centered support. She serves as Case Management Supervisor at the Coastal Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging, where she supports case managers and leads staff training in dementia care and best practices.

She partners with local organizations across the Coastal Georgia region to improve service delivery, reduce barriers to care, analyze service trends, and develop innovative solutions for older adults and caregivers.

In addition to her role at the AAA, Ms. Chisolm is a Movement Disorder Program Case Manager at St. Joseph's/Candler Hospital System, where she helps patients and families navigate neurological conditions. She also oversees the Neurology Resource Center, connecting patients and caregivers with educational resources and clinical trial information.

Ms. Chisolm holds a Master of Science in Applied Gerontology from Brenau University and a Bachelor of Health Science in Health Services Administration from Armstrong State University. Her credentials include CCMC, CDP, Certified Positive Approach to Care Trainer, AFA Memory Screener, Certified Virtual Dementia Tour Trainer, and NACCM certification.

A dedicated leader in aging services, she has served as Secretary of the Case Management Society of America and currently serves as Treasurer of the Greater Savannah Coalition on Aging, Service Delivery Chair for Georgia Alzheimer's and Related Dementias, and Board Member of the Georgia Gerontology Society.

As an ASA RISE Cohort 5 Fellow, Ms. Chisolm is committed to breaking down silos and advancing collaborative approaches that strengthen aging services statewide.

# Tiffany Favers

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Ms. Tiffany M. Favers, MSW, is a proud Black queer woman. She is the Cultural and Community Engagement Manager with AgeOptions in Oak Park, Il. and a lead consultant and facilitator with Chicago based Praxis Group. As the Cultural and Community Engagement Manager she oversees the diversity, racial equity and inclusion (DREI) initiatives, both internally and externally for AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging for suburban Cook County, Illinois. This includes working closely with the organization's three DREI committees to ensure the group's goals and work are in line with building a cohesive and inclusive working environment. Ms. Favers also collaborates with external partners of the organization to assist with bringing in an equity lens to the work they are doing and ensuring they are supporting the diverse population of their service area.

She was raised in a multigenerational family and has a passion for lifespan development. She found a great fit working with older adults and has been working with older adults since 2014 in varying capacities. She has worked extensively with LGBTQ+ older adult groups, helping to increase outreach and programming and decrease health disparities experienced by these groups. She is a proud alum of Flashback Sunday, an LGBT Elders of Color group based in Boston.

Ms. Favers has an MSW from the Boston College School of Social Work. She holds an MA in Higher Education and Student Affairs and a BS in Human Development and Family Science, both from The Ohio State University.

She is very passionate about her work in aging services and desires to continue to work to be a leader in this field, ensuring that older adults are able to age with grace, dignity, and the care they deserve. Pleased to be a Cohort 5 ASA RISE Fellow, she believes ASA Rise will help her connect with other leaders and help her take steps forward to position herself as a leader in the field of aging.

# Andrea Garcia

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Ms. Andrea Garcia is Director of Programs, Home Care at the Center for Caregiver Advancement (CCA) in Southern California, where she leads the design, implementation, and management of education and training programs for In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) caregivers. Her work ensures high-quality care for older adults while advancing equity and dignity for the caregiving workforce.

In her role, Ms. Garcia oversees curriculum development, professional and leadership training, program evaluation, and regulatory alignment. She coordinates cross-functional teams, manages program budgets, and builds partnerships with community organizations, research partners, and labor unions.

Over the past seven years, she has designed and led training programs that have reached thousands of caregivers—many of whom are women, immigrants, and people of color—expanding access to education, professional development, and career advancement. Her work elevates caregivers as essential members of the healthcare team, strengthens their advocacy for older adults, and improves quality of life for both caregivers and care recipients.

Ms. Garcia is particularly focused on bridging gaps between caregivers and healthcare providers and expanding access to training for caregivers with limited digital literacy or those living in rural communities. Her commitment is deeply personal, inspired by witnessing the critical role a caregiver played in supporting her grandmother through late-stage kidney failure.

She holds a B.A. in Linguistics and Psychology from UCLA and a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification. As an ASA RISE Cohort 5 Fellow, Ms. Garcia seeks to deepen her skills in inclusive leadership, policy advocacy, and systems change to continue advancing recognition, value, and support for caregivers.

# Jessica C. Guthrie

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Ms. Jessica C. Guthrie, M.Ed., is a nationally recognized thought leader advancing how organizations understand and support family caregivers navigating dementia. She is the founder of Jessica C. Guthrie Caregiving Consultancy, where she bridges lived caregiving experience with institutional policy and practice.

As a current caregiver for her mother with Alzheimer's disease, Ms. Guthrie brings real-time insight to her work as a strategic consultant, keynote speaker, and policy advocate. Her platform, *When Career & Caregiving Collide*, is a trusted resource for working caregivers, and her consulting practice helps employers, healthcare institutions, and organizations implement evidence-based, caregiver-centered solutions.

Previously, Ms. Guthrie served as Vice President and Chief Program Officer for Teach For America in Dallas-Fort Worth and began her career as a high school social studies teacher. Drawing on this executive leadership background, she developed the CARE Connection Framework and signature corporate programs that help organizations shift from transactional approaches to collaborative partnerships with family caregivers.

Ms. Guthrie holds a B.A. in Sociology and Education Policy from Dartmouth College and an M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and Policy from Southern Methodist University. A 2023 Care Catalyst Award recipient, she has been featured in the PBS documentary *Caregiving* produced by Bradley Cooper, participated in policy roundtables with CMS administrators, and provided expert testimony to the National Academies. Her work has also been highlighted by Katie Couric, the Associated Press, and multiple podcast platforms.

As an ASA RISE Cohort 5 Fellow, Ms. Guthrie looks forward to deepening her capacity to guide organizations toward authentic, equity-centered transformation and to centering family caregiver voices—particularly from marginalized communities—in organizational decision-making.

# Tiffany Oscar

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Ms. Tiffany Oscar is a Program Director with The Washington Home Foundation located in Washington, DC. The Washington Home Foundation strives to better the human condition by funding nonprofits delivering innovative programs and services that give people tools to enhance the quality of their lives and to benefit society as a whole. She manages the full grant life cycle for a multimillion dollar portfolio focused on older adults and people with serious illnesses.

Her focus is removing barriers that limit access to education, healthcare, and resources. Her role includes building the healthcare workforce pipeline, expanding access to hospice care, and supporting programs that reduce isolation. She also serves as system administrator streamlining processes, managing data, and providing technical support to grantees.

Ms. Oscar has expanded opportunities for the community through workforce development and education access. At The Washington Home Foundation, she is creating a five-year grant strategy to strengthen the healthcare workforce pipeline to meet the needs of older adults residents. By funding scholarships, fellowships, and training programs, doors were opened for nursing and medical students, many of whom are immigrants or first-generation college students. These investments are advancing equality in higher education while addressing critical shortages in the healthcare field.

With a BA in Psychology and Spanish, a MS in Social Work and an MPA, her path from case management to hospice care to philanthropy has provided her with a strong foundation to advance equity and justice in aging. As a Cohort 5 ASA RISE Fellow, she looks to embrace the valuable opportunity to gain leadership tools, mentorship, and community.

# Anita Randolph

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Ms. Anita Randolph is an Assistant Program Manager at the State Health Insurance Assistance Program for the Howard County Governments Office on Aging and Independence, in Columbia Maryland. In this role she provides counseling, education, outreach, and assistance to Medicare beneficiaries of any age, as well as their families and caregivers. She also develops partnerships with key community partners to ensure program expansion. Additionally, she conducts volunteer training to ensure fulfillment of program requirements and quality customer service. She is a Certified Dementia Practitioner.

Since 2013, her career path has led her to work addressing the aging community. She recognizes that, although older adults contribute to society, their efforts are often overlooked. She hopes to provide opportunities for older adults to feel empowered in their healthcare. She wants to create an environment where everyone feels like they matter.

Excited to be a member of Cohort 5 of ASA RISE, Ms. Randolph's long term goal is to obtain a leadership role where her skills, knowledge and empathy for older adults are valued and trusted to make decisions that will positively impact the aging community. She believes that the ASA RISE Fellowship will help her broaden her knowledge on ways to create long lasting change, which will uplift aging communities and develop cross-generational communication skills.

# Michelle Rios

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Ms. Michelle Rios is a Family Consultant with Cottage Health in Santa Barbara, CA. In her role, she provides client centered consultation, support and connection to resources to unpaid family caregivers caring for loved ones with neurological/cognitive disorders to promote self-care and care recipient well-being. As a Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives, (PEARLS), coach, she works with older adults to identify challenges and implement practices that promote activity and build resilience to the challenges of aging. Additionally, she and a colleague translated forms and adapted program content for the PEARLS program to bring the benefits of the program and deliver it in a meaningful way to the Spanish speaking community.

Her work includes development of a Spanish language support group and exercise program as well as public speaking on the challenges of living with Parkinson's. As a family caregiver, she is an advocate for improved patient care, quality of life, and caregiver health, especially for the Hispanic community and people living with Parkinson's, dementia, and Alzheimer's Disease.

Ms. Rios graduated from UCLA with a BS in Psychobiology and an MSHA from Saint Joseph's University. She also holds certifications in Public Health and Diagnostic Medical Sonography. She has served as a Sonographer providing direct patient care, Hospital Supervisor, Health Center Manager, and Family Consultant for caregivers. She has recently begun collaborating with the Ventura County Area Agency on Aging and the Ventura County Community Health Improvement Strategies initiative.

Passionate about health and advocacy, she is pleased to be a member of Cohort 5 of ASA RISE. She is looking forward to gaining skills to make impactful and lasting changes in aging programs. She wants to see the possibilities culture inclusive programs could have on brain health in older adults and their caregivers. It is important to her to gain the ability to improve the lives of older adults within the communities which she serves.

# Andrea Williams

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Ms. Andrea Williams currently serves as Chief Program Officer at CarePartners, where she leads strategic efforts to support individuals living with dementia and their family caregivers through innovative, community-based programs. She has over a decade of experience in dementia care, caregiver support, and public health, with a strong focus on translating the best national practices into meaningful local interventions. Ms. Williams joined CarePartners in 2022, as Director of the Dementia Day Center, where she oversaw person-centered programming designed to enhance quality of life and promote social engagement.

Prior to current role, she served at BakerRipley, where she implemented high-quality programs rooted in evidence-based approaches for families affected by dementia. As Assistant Director of Dementia and Caregiver Support Services, Ms. Williams managed a portfolio that included the Dementia Day Center, Caregiver Support Services, and Dementia Case Management. Her earlier experience includes several years with the Alzheimer's Association, Houston and Southeast Texas Chapter, where she deepened her expertise in education, outreach, and advocacy.

Ms. Williams holds a Master of Public Health in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from Louisiana State University. She is passionate about advancing equity in aging and creating systems that honor the dignity and resilience of caregivers and older adults.

She is delighted to be a Cohort 5 ASA RISE Fellow. As part of the fellowship, she hopes to grow as a leader, expand her perspective and strengthen her ability to lead with vision and integrity. In essence, she sees herself becoming a difference-maker in the aging space and having meaningful impact.

# Zyaire Xamaica

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Ms. Zyaire Xamaica is the founder of Age Active, a holistic initiative supporting older adults in aging in place through exercise physiology, cognitive health programming, and in-home care services. Age Active bridges prevention and care, offering culturally responsive solutions that promote independence, wellness, and dignity for diverse aging populations.

Previously, Ms. Xamaica served as Traditional Care Director at Benchmark Senior Living, where she oversaw daily resident care operations, managed and trained care staff, coordinated across departments, and led quality improvement initiatives to support resident and staff well-being while ensuring regulatory compliance.

Her advocacy extends to the global stage through Eloise Hylton Inc., a United Nations Economic and Social Council-certified non-governmental organization, where she has advanced international conversations on aging. She has presented at the Commission for Social Development, promoting policies that protect and empower older adults.

Guided by a deep respect for the wisdom of elders, Ms. Xamaica is committed to reimagining aging services. Her research interests focus on the neuroprotective effects of diet and exercise on Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and she is pursuing PhD studies to further this work.

She holds a Master of Science in Sport Science and Pedagogy from Gardner-Webb University and a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology from Liberty University. Her credentials include Licensed Assisted Living Administrator, Alzheimer's & Dementia Practitioner, and Balance & Stability Coach certifications.

As an ASA RISE Cohort 5 Fellow, Ms. Xamaica aims to strengthen her leadership in team building and advocacy, refine Age Active's framework, and expand partnerships committed to equity in aging.