

Dignity of Risk
Disability-Competent Care Webinar Roundtable Series: Training in Disability-Competent Care and Supports
Presenter Biographies



Kathy Thurston has over 30 years of experience in health care including home care, assisted living, school health, care coordination and case management across the age continuum. The primary focus of her professional experience has been to promote public health, care coordination and program development to address the needs of populations with special needs. Her most recent experience includes developing and fostering partnerships with health plans, long-term care providers, and other community based providers and public programs to meet the needs of people with disabilities. She has a BS in Nursing, St Olaf College; an MA in Nursing and Health Systems Leadership, Bethel University; and a Public Health Nurse Certification.



Mary Lou Breslin has been a disability civil rights lawyer and policy advocate for over 35 years. In 1979 she co-founded the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), a leading national disability rights law and policy center, and presently serves as senior policy advisor with DREDF directing the organization's healthcare initiative. During her career she has served as a policy consultant, researcher, trainer and lecturer on disability and related civil rights topics. Ms. Breslin taught graduate courses at the University of San Francisco, Masagung Graduate School of Management and an undergraduate research seminar at the University of California at Berkeley. For eight years she served as editor and researcher with the Disability Rights and Independent Living Project of the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley. She has written and published on various disability rights topics, most recently on health care and disability. In 2009, Ms. Breslin received the community leadership award from the San Francisco Foundation. She received the prestigious Henry B. Betts award in 2002 for improving the lives of people with disabilities and the Paul A. Hearne Award from the Physical and Mental Disability Rights Committee of the American Bar Association in 2000.



Christopher Duff, M. Div., has thirty years of experience in the design and development of community-based rehabilitation and waiver services for adults with disabilities. He is currently Executive Director of the Disability Practice Institute, developing and advocating disability-competent practices in the delivery of health care services and supports, and promoting the dissemination of an integrated, team-based model of disability care practice. He was lead author in the development of the Disability-Competent Care Assessment Tool with Resources for Integrated Care. Most recently, he was President/CEO of AXIS

Healthcare, the care management component of the Minnesota Disability Health Options and other waiver and health plan initiatives. AXIS Healthcare was a leader in the development of disability care coordination, utilizing clinical guidelines and practice standards to ensure persons with disabilities receive timely and appropriate care and support. He has been active in public policy and advocacy efforts at both the state and Federal levels. He has a Bachelors of Arts in Social Services Administration from the University of Minnesota and a Masters of Divinity from United Theological Seminary.