

MEET THE STAFF



Aishwarya Sreenivasan

Senior Project Manager

Meet Aishwarya Sreenivasan, an accomplished and passionate individual dedicated to making a positive impact in the field of public health and community well-being. With a master's in public health from the University of New Haven, Aishwarya combines her background in psychology with her expertise in public health, expanding her horizons to address diverse health challenges. Currently, Aishwarya is serving as the Senior Project Manager for the Transforming Children's Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee at the Tow Youth Justice Institute. In this role, she designs and implements policies to improve children's behavioral health outcomes and ensure their well-being.

Aishwarya's contributions extend beyond her professional role. She actively participates in the American Public Health Association (APHA), where she lends her expertise and passion to the Suicide Prevention - Policy and Planning Committee, contributing to the groundbreaking 988 Suicide Prevention Helpline number. She also conducted her research as a We Embodiment Research Fellow at the University of New Haven. She spent two years as a Mental Health Fellow, focusing on serving rural communities in India. This experience provided invaluable insights into the unique challenges faced by marginalized populations. Aishwarya Sreenivasan's journey exemplifies her unwavering dedication to public health, research, and advocacy, making her a dynamic force in promoting community well-being and children's behavioral health outcomes.



Erika Nowakowski

Executive Director

Erika Nowakowski, has a Master's degree from the University of CT School of Social Work with a focus on Policy and Planning. In her current role is working with the CT Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee in fostering and sustaining youth justice reform efforts. Prior to arriving at TYJI she worked for 8 ½ years for the State of CT Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division as a project manager for several statewide initiatives, Quality Assurance, implementation and ongoing adherence to Gender Responsive Services, contract compliance, and training coordination. She also worked for 4 years with the Council on Accreditation in New York City and provided Technical Assistance to private nonprofit and state agencies seeking accreditation. She also worked with Wheeler Clinic for 3 years in various roles from case manager with the Emergency Mobile Psychiatric services, managing and coordinating system of care community efforts, and developing and implementing foster care best practices for recruitment of foster parents.

Erika oversees the operations of the Tow Youth Justice Institute and its programs and projects. She has extensive experience in managing the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC), the legislatively created body that oversees reform in the Juvenile Justice system in Connecticut. She works with Senators, Representative, State Agencies, non-profit organizations and many other partners on goals to reduce recidivism, reduce incarceration and increase diversion.



Izarelli Mendieta-Martinez

Project Coordinator

Izarelli Mendieta-Martinez serves as the Project Coordinator for the Tow Youth Justice Institute. She has extensive experience providing care for children in diverse contexts, including human trafficking, immigration, crisis intervention, and chronic illness, both locally and nationally. With nine years of experience in the social service field, Izarelli combines her skills in care coordination, establishing efficient workflows, and engaging multiple stakeholders to serve vulnerable populations. She collaborates with local and national agencies to connect families with essential resources such as providers, shelters, social services, police departments, and hospitals.

Izarelli's contributions extend beyond direct care. She has played a pivotal role in running workshops for parents of first-generation college students and undocumented students, raising awareness, and facilitating educational opportunities. She has also raised public awareness about the DREAM Act and the issues unaccompanied minors face at the border. Through dialogues, education, and advocacy, Izarelli exemplifies her dedication to effecting positive change at individual and systemic levels.



Shelby Henderson

Policy Administrator

Shelby Henderson-Griffiths serves as the Policy Administrator for the Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI) at the University of New Haven. She supports the center's efforts to advance evidence-based juvenile justice and children's behavioral health policies and programming in Connecticut. She also works with municipal governments to support program performance evaluations. Shelby earned her Master's in Public Administration (MPA) from John Jay College of Criminal Justice and is pursuing a Juris Doctorate at the City University of New York School of Law.