

2024 AAUW-IL Convention Speakers



Dr. Suzanne M. Chod (she/her) is Professor of Political Science, Coordinator of Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Coordinator for Interdisciplinary Connections at North Central College in Naperville.

Dr. Chod received her B.S. in Political Science from Bowling Green State University in 2002 and her PhD in the same field from Michigan State University in 2007. Dr. Chod joined the NCC faculty as an Assistant Professor in 2010. She

teaches classes in American political institutions, parties, campaigns and elections, as well as courses focused on women in American politics and research methods. Her current research examines pedagogy, the use of technology in college classrooms to foster civic engagement, and how to increase political efficacy of young people.



Meghan Kissell (she/her) is the Senior Director of Policy and Membership Advocacy at the American Association of University Women (AAUW). She leads AAUW's non-partisan and mission-driven public policy at the federal level and supports the grassroots advocacy work of AAUW's membership network.

Meghan has more than 20 years of nonprofit policy and issue developing and implementing targeted social impact strategies designed to engage key stakeholders and policy makers to advocate for positive policy outcomes.

Prior to joining AAUW, Meghan worked on state and local health policy with the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and led efforts to expand LGBTQ equality in the Deep South with the Human Rights Campaign. She also worked for the Conservation Lands Foundation to help lead local and national campaigns in the Western United States resulting in the successful protection of more than 5 million acres of public land. She was also previously AAUW's Field Director, supporting local advocacy engagement and volunteer get out the vote efforts.

Meghan has a Master's degree in Social Work with a focus on community organizing from Howard University and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Allegheny College in Pennsylvania.

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Ahlam Jbara (she/her/hers) Chief of Staff, Division of Family and Community Services, Illinois Department of Human Services

Ahlam was born in Palestine and immigrated with her family to Chicago in 1974. Ahlam joined the Illinois Department of Human Services in August 2019 as the Chief of Staff for the Division of Family and Community Services. Ahlam returned to Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) as the Deputy Director after serving as the Interim Executive Director at the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC) a 28-year-old community organization that brings together the Illinois

Muslim community.

Before joining CIOGC, Ahlam was the Immigrant Family Resource Program (IFRP) Director at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR). From 2002 – 2006 Ahlam was the Family Empowerment Program Director at the Arab American Action Network. Ahlam has worked for over 29 years on creating and administering programs that help women and children become self-sufficient and independent; programs that will make change in the lives of women and children and that will empower them to use their voice and find their inner power.

Ahlam received her BA in Criminal Justice from the University of IL Chicago.