

## Meet the 2022 CBDCE Board of Directors



Becky Sulik, RDN, LD, CDCES  
Rocky Mountain Diabetes Center,  
Idaho Falls, ID  
Chair

[Meet Becky](#)

Becky works at a busy endocrinology clinic in Southeast Idaho. As a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) and Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist® (CDCES®), she works with many types of diabetes and age groups. Most of her practice time is spent working with children, teens and young adults with type 1 diabetes. Becky was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes as a teenager and struggled with the overly restrictive lifestyle prescribed, along with the lack of information. Her experience with an RDN/CDE at the time was very empowering, as this professional helped her make diabetes livable rather than a prison. Her mission is to help reduce the burden of caring for diabetes, particularly in food and nutrition. She also has experience and training with eating disorders and aims to get rid of the "food police" mentality when discussing food, nutrition planning and eating patterns. Becky loves diabetes-related technology and considers herself a "diabetes nerd!" Her volunteer activities have included serving as a Commissioner for the Commission on Dietetic Registration and as a faculty-member for the [JDRF PEAK Program](#). She has served on various committees and task-forces, focusing on payment and reimbursement. She is a current member of the Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists (ADCES), Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and American Diabetes Association (ADA).

### **Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

I was eager to contribute my experience and insights to promoting and strengthening the CDCES credential because of the impact someone holding this credential had in my early patient experience with type 1 diabetes.

### **Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

To help others see the value of the CDCES credential and the importance of the distinction of earning the credential. Physicians, other providers, payors, legislators, and people with or at risk for diabetes can all benefit from the services of a

CDCES! I'm hoping our combined efforts will allow all stakeholders to recognize and embrace this value and use professionals who hold our certification to reduce individual and collective burdens of diabetes.



James Bernasko, MD, FACOG,  
CDCES  
Stony Brook Medicine  
Stony Brook, NY  
Chair-Elect

James is board-certified in general Obstetrics and Gynecology and Maternal-Fetal Medicine. He has been an active CDCES since 2006 to better serve women who experience diabetes during pregnancy. He is passionate about the unique opportunities to affect two generations every time he cares for a person with diabetes during her pregnancy.



Jenni Osborne, MCHES, MPH,  
CDCES, CPSTI  
Navy and Marine Corps Public  
Health Center, Portsmouth, VA  
Treasurer

[Meet Jenni](#)

Jenni retired from the Navy and currently works for the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. As the chronic condition subject matter expert, she is on a team that is creating standardized diabetes education for the Veterans Affairs (VA) and United States Department of Defense warfighters and their families. She works with the [VA](#) to create virtual, in-person, avatar-to-avatar and telephone classes, which provides many platforms for people with diabetes to find a suitable program for them. Jenni is also the program manager for the Award, given for excellence in health promotion. She finds the program very inspiring to see the sailors and marines working together around the world to keep military active duty informed on healthy behaviors.

### **Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

There are a small number of CDCESs who hold the [Master Certified Health Education Specialist](#) (MCHES) credential and I was interested in finding out more about CBDCE. The board leaves ego at the door and comes together to avoid groupthink, looks at topics from all angles, and works together to ensure we are doing the best we can for current and potential CDCESs. The staff does a great job

of keeping us focused and informed. I had never served on an organization's board, and I am grateful for the opportunity! It is an honor to be part of this entire process.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

To inspire other MCHESs and Certified Health Education Specialists (CHES®) to consider becoming part of the diabetes care and education team. It is estimated that there are 20,000 patients that have diabetes or prediabetes for every CDCES, so we need all the help we can get! I would like to assist with the potential for certifying or credentialing other levels of diabetes education. The focus of getting education out to where people with diabetes live, work, play, and pray is imperative to make a difference. Setting standards to ensure the education getting out there is evidence and science based is important.



Ben Klein, Public Member  
Flatiron Health, New York, NY  
Immediate Past Chair  
[Meet Ben](#)

Ben was elected to the CBDCE Board of Directors in 2018 and has served as both Treasurer and Chair of the Board (2021). Ben has spent the last 10 years working in various aspects of the diabetes and health care community. He began his career at the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston, implementing educational programs for industry professionals. He has spent a number of years designing and implementing patient support programs and most recently was a Director of Real-World Data at Optum. In his current role at Flatiron Health, Ben leads numerous strategic relationships within Life Sciences organizations to support cancer research.

**Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

I serve on the CBDCE board to scale my impact on the broader diabetes community. In several professional experiences, I've witnessed firsthand the significant impact that high-quality diabetes care and education have on people living with diabetes. I hope that my time spent on the board will help to increase the reach that our incredible CDCESs have across the country.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

I hope that my experience helps to drive critically important initiatives forward in order to best support

our diabetes community, such as our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility (DEIA) related efforts, as well as our support for increasing the number of professionals with the CDCES credential.



Melanie Batchelor, MHS, RD, LDN,  
CDCES  
Medtronic Diabetes, Clyde, NC  
[Meet Melanie](#)

Melanie is a master's trained dietitian nutritionist and diabetes care and education specialist. She has extensive, diverse experience in health care, including public health, acute care, outpatient, higher education, management and medical device. She currently works for Medtronic as a clinical territory manager for the Asheville, North Carolina, area.

**Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

I am passionate about diabetes professionals earning the CDCES credential. The credential shows people with diabetes and the diabetes community that we are the "experts" and are the most capable of walking with them on their diabetes journey. I am also full of strategic ideas to move the organization forward!

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

I'd like to grow the number of professionals who are credentialed, increase certificants engagement, expand cross-organizational effort and be a larger part of the diabetes community.



Dana Brackney, PhD, RN, CNS,  
CDCES, BC-ADM  
Appalachian State University,  
Boone, NC  
[Meet Dana](#)

Dana Brackney is an associate professor in the nursing department at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. She completed her doctoral dissertation on the meaning of self-monitoring blood glucose for people with diabetes learning to self-manage. Over the past decade as a faculty member, Dr. Brackney has developed a program of research grounded in her dissertation work, and achieved internal funding for collaborative projects with colleagues in nursing and exercise science that have addressed exercise and fertility for women with polycystic ovary

syndrome and diabetes prevention in school-aged students using morning dance as an exercise intervention. She incorporates current diabetes knowledge and treatment approaches into all courses that she teaches in both undergraduate and graduate programs in nursing.

**Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

I want to contribute my leadership skills to the profession that has given me so much opportunity. I have a desire to promote credentialing to support the diversity that reflects the people who live with diabetes. I believe that I have the vision, qualifications, strategic leadership experience and a unique perspective on rural health that could benefit the CBDCE board.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

Interpreting the CDCES practice requirement in an ever-changing clinical environment is a challenge for those seeking the credential. The CBDCE Board continues to adapt to changing clinical structural practices while preserving the quality of examinee preparation. Also, although the CDCES is well-respected in the diabetes community. The CDCES will not be immune to the public's general distrust of established authorities. Protecting the credential from the appearance of stereotypes, bias and corroboration for personal gain should be considered proactively. We should make efforts to focus on individualized care without assumptions about racial, cultural or religious group membership. I hope that my participation can strengthen and protect the certification process from potential loss of credibility and/or relevance. I want to support the CDCES to continue a legacy that has stood for quality and expertise and is recognized as central to support people living with diabetes.



Nancy D'Hondt, RPh, CDCES, FADCES  
Ascension Health St John Hospital  
Detroit, MI  
[Meet Nancy](#)

Nancy D'Hondt is a clinical pharmacist/diabetes specialist at Ascension Health St. John Hospital in Detroit, Michigan. She helped establish the St. John inpatient protocols and policies around glycemic management and assists in protocol implementation, revision and staff education. Nancy also contributed to glycemic initiatives and

formulary decisions for Ascension Health at a national level. Her involvement in the diabetes landscape spans 20 years where she has served on local and national committees for the ADA, JDRF and ADCES. Nancy has been involved in authoring many ADCES publications, including position statements and white papers, and is a contributing author for The Art and Science of Diabetes Care and Education. She has presented nationally on topics related to diabetes and cardiometabolic disease as well as served as an editor for ADA's Clinical Diabetes publication. She was a member of the ADCES Board of Directors and provided leadership as the President of the ADCES Board in 2017.

**Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

I have worked within the diabetes community for many years as both educator and volunteer. These activities and the leadership roles I have held at both the local and national level, as well as my involvement with the visioning work of what was then known as the American Association of Diabetes Educators (aka AADE) help me see the need for continuing to drive and promote the value of the CDCES. Being a part of this board is an important next step in solidifying the new specialist's role as part of the care team of the future.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

I hope to contribute to promoting existing programs and resources, developing new avenues for specialists (at many levels) and to promote recognition of the "value" that our CDCESs bring to an overburdened health care system. Access to our services should be included in the care plan of every person with, or at risk for cardiometabolic.



Melinda Maryniuk, MEd, RDN, CDCES  
Maryniuk and Associates  
Boston, MA  
[Meet Melinda](#)

Melinda Maryniuk is the President/Owner of Maryniuk and Associates in Boston, Massachusetts. Since becoming an RDN, Melinda has spent her entire career working as a diabetes care and education specialist, starting in 1979 at Joslin Diabetes Center. She worked in a variety of roles (in 5 different states) including direct patient care,

diabetes program coordinator, teaching (college-level), research, and program development. For the past few years, she has been providing consultative services to several diabetes-related companies. She has traveled and worked with diabetes educators in over 20 countries and has taken part as an author (lead or contributing) for a good number of important consensus/guidelines, chapters, and papers for the diabetes profession. Melinda enjoys volunteering for the ADA and ADCES, along with serving as a board member. She has chaired the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Diabetes Practice Group, ADA Education Recognition Program Committee, and served as an Associate Editor of Clinical Diabetes.

**Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

I have served in leadership roles for many professional organizations, and I've not yet contributed to CBDCE and applied! For the past three years, I was on the ADCES Board of Directors and I could see the great synergy between the two organizations. I've had many friends and colleagues serve on the CBDCE board and all have raved about the rewarding experience. I'm excited about contributing.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

At the end of my term, I hope I contributed to continued growth and retention of certificants, especially individuals that represent minority communities where diabetes is common. I look to participate in decision-making and action planning related to additional credentials and certifications to meet not only our CDCES needs - but widen our reach to others. As a board member, we promote activities that uphold the high standards already set for quality and increased recognition of our specialty practice and credential.



Chrystyne Olivieri  
DNP, FNP-BC, CDCES  
Long Island University,  
Greenlawn, NY  
[Meet Chrystyne](#)

Chrystyne became a family nurse practitioner in 2004. She initially worked with a cardiology practice, specializing in the Pacemaker Clinic. As her heart was in diabetes, she pursued diabetes certification, achieving the CDE (now the CDCES)

designation in 2010. She opened her own nurse practitioner (NP) private practice for endocrine problems including obesity and diabetes in Northport, NY. Chrystyne currently holds hospital admitting privileges with Huntington Hospital (Northwell Health), the first NP to do this in their own private practice within the Northwell System. She is also currently Professor of Graduate Nursing in Family Nurse Practitioners Master's program at Long Island University and has served on the CBDCE board since 2019.

**Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

I wanted to be involved with making the policies of such an important organization as the CBDCE. With the increasing prevalence of all forms of diabetes, it is more and more important to make sure health care providers have the expertise needed to help people with diabetes. Although there are many who claim to have these skills, it is really those with the CDCES certification that can affect the millions of lives of people living with diabetes.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

I hope to build pathways to help more health care providers to understand the possibilities open to them once CDCES certification has been achieved. Every medical practice in America has patients with some form of diabetes and the related complications. The CBDCE aims to increase the visibility of the CDCES certification, making it a "must-have" in the health care field. There is hardly a chronic medical problem that is not rooted in hyperglycemia or hyperinsulinemia. I hope the future will have CDCESs in just about every U.S. medical practice!



Tami Ross, RDN, LD, CDCES,  
MLDE, FADCES  
UK HealthCare Barnstable Brown  
Diabetes, Lexington, KY  
[Meet Tami](#)

Tami is an internationally recognized diabetes care and education specialist, dietitian, speaker, spokesperson, and health and nutrition writer with over 25 years' experience. She has counseled individuals seeking diabetes and nutrition guidance throughout her career. Tami has co-authored 11 books and has written over 100 articles for professional and consumer publications. She is a

frequent presenter for meetings of professional and community organizations. She served as 2013 President of the ADCES and is proud to serve on the CBDCE board.

Learn more about the 2022 CBDCE Board of Directors by [visiting CBDCE's leadership page.](#)



**Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

I am honored to serve on the CBDCE board and applied to share my experience and expertise to help advance the organization and its strategic priorities.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

To work in partnership with the other CBDCE board members and staff to advance the strategic plan of the organization.



Andrew Vilcinskas  
PharmD  
Rutgers Univeristy  
Hartford, CT  
[Meet Andrew](#)

Serving as a CBDCE Public Member, Andrew is in the Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at Rutgers University, Hartford, Connecticut He graduated from the University of the Connecticut School of Pharmacy in 2020, and is currently completing a 2-year Fellowship at Sanofi through the Rutgers Institute for Pharmaceutical Industry to gain experience in public affairs and patient advocacy. In this role, he is learning to build strategic partnerships on public health solutions to improve patient outcomes. Andrew's fierce passion for patient centricity drives his motivation to advance the quality of diabetes care and education.

**Q: Why did you decide to serve on the CBDCE Board?**

To give back to an organization that not only helped me, but aligns with what I believe is needed for millions of people with diabetes to not just self-manage their disease, but to thrive: quality care and education from health care providers providing care with the distinguished mark of certification.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish by being on the CBDCE Board?**

Bring a patient, clinician trained, partnership-oriented, and intense resource allocation perspective to clearly and strongly drive our mission forward with the members of the board.