



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

S&PAA welcomes 5 new members to its Board of Directors

Alexandria, VA, July 22, 2024 – The Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance this week welcomed [five new members to its Board of Directors](#), broadening its expertise and deepening representation of those who are diagnosed with schizophrenia, care for and/or work with people who live with the severe brain disease.

The new Board members include a health advocate who lives with schizophrenia, two psychiatric clinicians, an educator and a state district court judge – each of whom plays a critical role in the lives of people with schizophrenia.

“We could not have asked for more seasoned, insightful experts to inform S&PAA’s work as we work to advance systemic change and promote recovery for people living with this disease,” said S&PAA Board Chair Angela Babaev, DNP, CNS, MSN. “The passion they bring to the Board will fuel our efforts and provide important new perspectives.”

The new Board members assume their roles as S&PAA advances key initiatives in the areas of Research, Education & Care and Advocacy & Public Policy, and will join planning efforts underway for the organization’s 2nd annual Schizophrenia Policy and Research Institute NextGen (SPRING) Summit, a multi-stakeholder initiative that is creating a roadmap for transforming the siloed system of care for people with schizophrenia into a path toward recovery.

“People with schizophrenia face enormous barriers to treatment, survival and recovery in all parts of our society – from healthcare to housing to the criminal justice system,” said S&PAA CEO Gordon Lavigne. “To shatter those barriers, our Board must represent the full spectrum of stakeholders who play a role in the diagnosis, treatment and support of people living with this debilitating disease. We’re honored to work with this impressive and deeply committed group.”

The new Board members will begin their terms this month. They are:

Chad Koyanagi, M.D.

Chad Koyanagi is Medical Director of the Crisis Continuum and Medicaid Services in the Hawaii Department of Health’s Adult Mental Health Division. In that role, he oversees the division’s crisis continuum of care services; oversees and directs the behavioral health services provided to

Medicaid beneficiaries; and serves as a liaison between the AMHD and the Department of Human Services (DHS) Med-QUEST Division. He is a community psychiatrist whose professional mission is to improve the entire mental health system, but especially the care of vulnerable populations such as the chronically homeless.

Dr. Koyanagi earned his undergraduate degree from Harvard College and his medical education at the University of Hawai'i's John A. Burns School of Medicine.

Patrick McElyea, J.D.

Patrick McElyea serves as district court judge in the Seventh Judicial District in Iowa and is the presiding judge for the Seventh Judicial Mental Health Court. He received his law degree from Drake University Law School and his undergraduate degree from Central College. He formerly served as a special assistant U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of Iowa and was an assistant attorney in Scott County. Judge McElyea has been committed to volunteering with several civic and service organizations to promote mental wellness, education and civic engagement.

Eric Smith, MSW

Eric Smith is a nationally recognized mental health advocate, public speaker and consultant. He is the founder and owner of Eric W. T. Smith Consulting, LLC. Through lived experience, Eric offers consultation to families and individuals who are impacted by serious mental illness. Eric serves as commissioner with the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health, appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas and Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. He has given multiple educational presentations to Stanford law students, and has been featured widely in major media, including *People* magazine, *The Wall Street Journal*, Oprah Daily, National Public Radio, Dr. Drew's podcast and live show, *The New York Daily News* and Yahoo! News.

Eric's speaking engagements include the 2022 Judicial Summit on Mental Health in Texas and the first-ever Kentucky Judicial Commission on Mental Health Summit in 2023. Part of his journey is featured in the book *You Are Not Alone*, written by National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ken Duckworth. Eric wrote a chapter about being incarcerated without treatment for mental illness in *Navigating Bipolar Country*, a book that reached #1 in Amazon's New Releases in five categories. Eric also authored a section in *Awakenings: Stories of Recovery and Emergence from Schizophrenia*, a #1 New Release book on Amazon. Eric is a member of the NAMI Texas Public Policy Committee.

Donna Taylor, MSN, RN, CCM

Donna Taylor has more than 30 years of experience in the healthcare industry and brings a unique perspective to the S&PAA Board, having worked in community, clinic, hospital and managed care settings. She currently serves as the Clinical Director of Behavioral Health at Healthfirst, a not-for-profit health insurance company. A dedicated clinical leader and passionate advocate, Donna collaborates with hospital and community partners to develop and

implement innovative programs and policies to improve quality, integration and accessibility of care for individuals and families living with serious mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

Donna has a strong background in nursing, with a master's degree in psychiatric/mental health nursing and a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Pennsylvania. She also volunteers with Team Daniel, a nonprofit 501(c)3 charitable organization that advocates for research, engagement and meaningful recovery from psychosis.

Tanya Trevett, M.Ed.

Tanya Trevett is an educator, family partner and mental health advocate with a background in special education. She supports families navigating the complexities of mental illness, particularly focused on young adults and adolescents facing serious mental illness during their college or high school years. Her dedication to mental health advocacy is demonstrated through her former roles at organizations such as OPLM, MPATH and NAMI, where she supported caregivers and helped improve mental health policies and practice.

Tanya is involved in two family advisory councils in Massachusetts. She also leads a monthly support group for the National Shattering Silence Coalition for caregivers of those living with schizophrenia or psychotic disorders. She continues to advocate for mental health awareness and better support systems, leveraging her vast experience to influence policy and create impactful educational content. Tanya is the author of the book *Help, I'm Failing as a Mom: The Survival Guide to Raising a Child with a Mood Disorder*, a compassionate and insightful resource for parents grappling with similar challenges.

About the Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance

The Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance works to shatter the barriers to treatment, survival and recovery for people living with schizophrenia. Every day without treatment can mean the difference between life and death. Our mission is to advance systemic change and promote recovery through Research, Education & Care and Advocacy & Public Policy. We envision a day when the understanding of schizophrenia as a brain disease allows every person living with it to be treated with respect, access appropriate treatment and have the opportunity to live a meaningful, satisfying life. To learn more, please visit www.sczaction.org.

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