

Sara Benning Bio

Sara Benning currently directs the Center for Leadership Education in Maternal and Child Health (MCH)—one of twelve national university-based [Centers of Excellence](#) funded by [the Health Services and Resources Administration \(HRSA\)](#)—which is housed within the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (UMTC) School of Public Health (SPH). The aims of Center are to train diverse leaders in MCH through an MPH program; provide continuing education and technical assistance to health professionals; and serve as a national educational resource on the latest MCH research, best practices, and emerging issues for public health professionals, including Title V agency staff, serving the health needs of mothers, children, youth, and their families.

Prior to her role in the Center, Ms. Benning was the Assistant Director at the [Aurora Center for Advocacy and Education](#), the UMTC's sexual violence crisis center. In other roles, Benning served as the Policy Director at the [UMTC's Children, Youth and Family Consortium \(CYFC\)](#) where she worked to connect University members, practitioners, and policymakers with resources on children, youth, and family-related sciences. She was the Associate Director for the national [University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium \(CFPC\)](#), as well as the Co-chair for the CFPC's Careers Interest Group. Benning was also selected as a 2008-2009 Fellow in [Minnesota's Education Policy Fellowship Program \(EPFP\)](#), a program of the DC-based [Institute for Education Leadership](#). She has been a co-PI on several policy-relevant qualitative research projects funded by W.T. Grant, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at the National Institute of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and other private foundations.

Ms. Benning is passionate about translating research for policymakers and professionals. She has co-authored policy-focused articles appearing in the *American Journal of Public Health (AJPH)*, the *American Journal of Health Promotion (AJHP)*, the *Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)*, and *Family Relations*. She co-wrote the chapter "Building Family-Focused Policy: The Family Impact Lens Toolkit" featured in the book *Family Policy Matters: How Policymaking Affects Families and What Professionals Can Do* (Routledge, 2014), which is currently being translated into Italian. Benning coordinated Minnesota's non-partisan [Family Impact Seminars](#) for state legislators, and has recently worked on policy issues around the care of [incarcerated women](#), which includes serving on the Minnesota [Legislative Advisory Committee](#) on the Care of Pregnant Incarcerated Women (SF2423/HF2833).

Ms. Benning is also an active member of the UMTC SPH's [Health Equity Work Group](#), the [Cultural Providers Network](#) (a diverse group of UMTC and community mental health professionals providing services or support to culturally-diverse children and families), the [Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Symposium](#) planning committee, and other interesting interdisciplinary endeavors. Most recently she was selected to be a member of Minnesota's three-person leadership team participating in the [2017 Diversity in Maternal and Child Health Training Peer Learning Collaborative](#). Supported by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) HRSA [Maternal and Child Health Bureau \(MCHB\)](#), the goal of this multi-state collaborative is to facilitate the sharing and use of information, and highlight successes, challenges, and solutions to more effectively address diversity and health equity within MCH training programs.

Benning received her BS in Family Social Sciences and Masters of Liberal Studies (MLS) from the UMTC.