

ACLI Rising Leader Program Class of 2025



Brice Ballard

*Vice President, Head of Individual Life Sales & Marketing
Gen Re*

Brice Ballard is Vice President, Head of Individual Life Sales & Marketing at Gen Re. He has responsibility for client management as well as sales and marketing initiatives for the Individual Life products. Prior to joining Gen Re, he spent over 25 years with two direct insurance companies on a variety of life, health and retirement insurance products including responsibilities for product development and management, pricing, strategic initiatives, marketing, sales, risk management and operations. Brice graduated from the University of Iowa with a B.S. in Actuarial Science. In addition, he is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries, a Member of the American Academy of Actuaries and is a CFA charterholder. In addition, he is a member of the Society of Actuaries Product Development and Reinsurance sections.



Melissa Behne

*Corporate Vice President, Absence Strategy
New York Life*

Melissa Behne, Corporate Vice President, Head of Absence Strategy for New York Life Group Benefit Solutions (NYL GBS.) In this role, Melissa owns the strategy for all Absence as well as definition of the NYL GBS strategy, how NYL GBS wins in the market, building products, and enhancing our capabilities that drive differentiation. Melissa has 15+ years of Absence experience and has held various leadership roles responsible for Implementation, Operational Efficiency/User Experience, Training, Project Management, Product Management, RPA/AI, and Product/Strategy. Melissa has unparalleled experience in leading high-profile Fortune 100 and 500 client implementations with proven excellence in heading product development life cycle from initial concept through next-generation product delivery. Known for creating incredible user experience, sustainable change, market analysis, product launch and expansion, year-over-year growth, project prioritization, and exemplary customer service. Melissa has proven success in building, leading and growing high performing teams, developing strategies to win in the market, creating innovative solutioning, and leading through change. Melissa resides in Dubuque, IA and in her free time, enjoys spending time with her dogs, friends and family and traveling.



Nicholas Cayetano

*Associate General Counsel
OneAmerica Financial Partners, Inc.*

Nick Cayetano is an Assistant General Counsel at OneAmerica Financial Partners, Inc. (OneAmerica Financial). With more than 13 years of experience, his legal career encompasses both transactional and litigation experience, highlighted by extensive trial work. At OneAmerica Financial, he collaborates closely with management on projects across multiple departments, providing legal guidance and assisting the company achieve business objectives. He advises on a variety of matters that include individual and group insurance products, reinsurance, employee benefits, data privacy, and cybersecurity, among others. He also serves as the anti-money laundering officer for OneAmerica Financial companies. Before joining OneAmerica Financial, he served as a major felony prosecutor with notable assignments in the Special Victims Unit and Major Felony Division. Outside OneAmerica Financial, he and his wife are involved in community organizations, including animal shelters, Pitbull rescues, and neighborhood cleanup initiatives. Nick also volunteers annually at OneAmerica Financial's community outreach program, OneAmerica Week of Caring.



Kamesh Chilukuri

*Managing Director, Head of Derivatives
Symetra Investment Management Company*

Kamesh Chilukuri is currently Managing Director, Head of Derivatives at Symetra Investment Management Company where he leads a team of Traders, Quantitative Analysts, Strategists and Application Developers to manage a multi-asset derivatives portfolio. Kamesh partners with enterprise-wide functional units, including Product, Pricing, Operations, Legal and Accounting to oversee the successful development, administration, and execution of the derivatives program at Symetra. Kamesh has prior experience at Lincoln Financial group and UBS Investment Bank in trading strategy, mutual fund analytics, modeling and risk management. Kamesh is an active member of the ACLI Derivatives subcommittee and also serves on the Board of Symetra's Military Enterprise Resource Group. Kamesh holds a degree in Electrical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, a Master of Science from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an MBA from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania where he graduated a Palmer Scholar. In his spare time Kamesh enjoys teaching and volunteering.



Ryan Cole

*Assistant Vice President, Deputy General Counsel
Wellabe, Inc.*

Ryan Cole is Deputy General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer with Wellabe, Inc. He has 17 years of experience in the insurance industry, including 15 years of compliance and legal experience with Wellabe. He works closely with executive leadership and business units to advance the organization's business development initiatives, including providing legal support for key strategic, reinsurance, and M&A efforts. He also leads Wellabe's compliance team and chairs the AI Governance Committee. Ryan stays active in the industry as a board member with the Nebraska Life & Health Guaranty Association. Prior to joining Wellabe, he was an intern with the Nebraska Department of Insurance. Outside of the office, he helps coach his children's sports teams and supports Wellabe's volunteer efforts. He holds a B.A. in Psychology from Creighton University and a J.D. from the University of Nebraska College of Law.



Tiffany Davis

*Senior Underwriting Strategist
American Family Life Insurance Company*

Tiffany Davis is a seasoned Senior Underwriting Strategist specializing in underwriting strategies within the industry with over 10 years of experience. Over the last 10 years she has cultivated deep expertise in life insurance case management and underwriting, product enhancements, and operational effectiveness. Currently pursuing her FLMI certification, Tiffany is dedicated to advancing professional growth. Her work is characterized by innovation, strategic planning and driving transformation in the industry. Beyond the professional realm, Tiffany is committed to her family and community participating in educational advocacy at the local PTA level and supporting health and wellness coaching youth sports. Tiffany holds a B.A. in Health Sciences Administration from the University of Incarnate Word.



Lauren Giudice

*Vice President, Deputy General Counsel and
Assistant Secretary
Boston Mutual Life Insurance Company*

Lauren Giudice is Vice President, Deputy General Counsel and Assistant Secretary at Boston Mutual Life Insurance Company. Ms. Giudice is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Legal department. In this role, she provides legal advice and support to departments throughout Boston Mutual Life, including Claims, Distribution, Underwriting, and Human Resources. She is also responsible for corporate governance matters. Ms. Giudice joined the company as Assistant Counsel in 2013 and was promoted to Associate Counsel in 2015, to Counsel in 2017, to Senior Counsel in January 2023, and to Deputy General Counsel in August 2023. Prior to Boston Mutual, she served as a Graduate Fellow at the Legal Assistant Bureau run by Boston College Law School. During law school, she served as a legal intern at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing. She is active with the American Council of Life Insurers and Life Insurance Association of Massachusetts. Ms. Giudice holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and a doctor of law degree from Boston College Law School in Newton, Massachusetts. She is admitted to the Massachusetts bar.



Hazel Gooding

*Senior Government Relations Manager
Genworth*

Hazel Gooding joined Genworth in 2018 and serves as a Senior Government Relations Manager. In her role, she covers developments relating to long-term care financing reform, caregiver support, data privacy and security, risk classification, algorithmic accountability, and more. Hazel also ensures that Genworth's perspectives are heard as policy positions are developed. Most recently, she led the return of Genworth's Long-Term Care Symposium in Washington, DC. Prior to Genworth, Hazel worked at a Michigan-based personal injury law firm. Hazel earned her Juris Doctor from Michigan State University, where she served as a Managing Editor of the Michigan State International Law Review. She obtained her B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, double majoring in Political Science and International Studies. Outside of work, Hazel supports organizations focused on hunger alleviation, cancer screenings and awareness, and making the arts accessible to all. She also enjoys reading, cooking, and photography.



Emily Heinlein

*Chief of Staff
AAA Life Insurance Company*

Emily Heinlein is a Senior Director and the Chief of Staff for the CEO at AAA Life Insurance Company. Trained as an actuary (previously held ASA and CERA designations), she has almost 15 years of experience in the insurance industry as an actuary, risk manager and data scientist. As Chief of Staff to the CEO, she is responsible for cross-collaborative projects and ensuring governance processes are running smoothly. In addition to chairing several of these committees, she is responsible for working directly with C-Suite executives and their teams to establish appropriate governance and controls at the executive level. In addition, she has direct contact with AAA Life's Board of Directors and Shareholders on a quarterly basis and is the lead executive responsible for the development of board and shareholder materials. Prior to AAA Life Insurance Emily worked at Genworth Financial as an Actuary. She holds a BS in Mathematics from the University of Michigan.



Crystal Hughes

*Vice President, Business Outcomes Management
Prudential Financial*

Crystal Hughes has been at Prudential for five years and is the Vice President of Business Outcomes Management in the US Business Service organization. In this role, she leads a cross-business empowered team that delivers Intelligent Service Automation, Business Growth, Business and Operational Reporting & Insights, Service Transformation Management, Digital Adoption, and Targeted Quality and Proficiency programs. Prior to US Business Service, Crystal served as Head of Partnerships, Sales Enablement, Lead Management, and Marketing Operations Strategy in the Customer Office. Crystal came to Prudential from American Express, where she spent 10 years in various roles, including Business Development, Strategic Planning, Partnership Management, New Product Development, Cross-Channel Acquisition Strategy, Tele Acquisition Channel Management and Sales Enablement. In these roles Crystal launched first-of-their-kind innovations, built new foundations for growth, and delivered record-breaking performance across the business. Prior to American Express, Crystal owned and operated her own small business for several years. Crystal holds an MBA in Marketing from the University of Minnesota and a BA in Political Science with a focus in International Business from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. She hails from California but considers herself a native Minnesotan where she was raised. She currently lives in Fredon, New Jersey.



Sarah Jarvis

*Vice President & Associate General Counsel
Pacific Life*

Sarah Jarvis is Vice President and Associate General Counsel for Pacific Life Insurance Company where she supports the two newest Divisions, Institutional and Workforce Benefits. She has a seat on both Division's Senior Leadership Teams and advises on a broad array of strategic, operational, product, financial, compliance, and legal issues. She has also held roles in and provided counsel to Pacific Life's retail life insurance, retail annuities, broker-dealer, and investment teams. Prior to joining Pacific Life, Sarah was an associate at Carlton Fields where she concentrated in legal services for the financial services industry. Sarah received her J.D./M.B.A. from the University of Miami and her B.S. in Finance and Multinational Business from Florida State University. Outside of work, Sarah enjoys being outdoors with her husband and three young children.



Trish Jenness

*Assistant General Counsel
Northwestern Mutual*

Trish Jenness is an Assistant General Counsel at Northwestern Mutual. She spent nearly a decade in private practice with a focus on insurance coverage litigation before joining Northwestern Mutual's Law Department in 2022. Since joining NM, she has focused her practice on providing legal advice to internal business clients related to life insurance products and operations, spanning from product development and filings to servicing and claims. She also closely monitors developments in the insurance industry and takes every opportunity to collaborate with others to innovate and improve life products and processes. Outside of the office, she enjoys spending time with her husband and four children and is actively involved in the community, with many efforts focused on supporting the local school district. Trish holds a B.A. in Legal Studies and Communication Arts from the University of Wisconsin – Madison and a J.D. from Case Western Reserve University Law School.



Samera Kadry

*Assistant Vice President, Senior Counsel
Lincoln Financial Group*

Samera Kadry is the lead Product Tax Attorney at Lincoln Financial. She holds an LL.M in Taxation, a J.D., an M.B.A., as well as an Engineering Degree. She has been with Lincoln for over 10 years and is seen as not only a leader within Lincoln, but also a leader within the insurance tax industry. Prior to joining Lincoln, Samera worked at law firms in a tax legal capacity.



Venkat Kannan

*Assistant Vice President, Corporate Accounting Policy
& Group Operations
MetLife*

Venkat Kannan is an experienced technical accountant currently focusing on M&A/Divestitures, ESG, Corporate and Other accounting topics at MetLife. He has a proven track record of successfully leading large and complex financial accounting and reporting, ESG/sustainability, accounting policy, M&A/divestitures, internal audits, and financial and operational risk transformation engagements both in the United States and globally. Before joining MetLife, Venkat led the accounting policy team and demonstrated exceptional performance as a participant in the Talent Acceleration Program for high-performing and high-potential associates at Broadridge. During his tenure at Deloitte, Venkat's commitment to excellence led to numerous accolades, including the Outstanding award, Excellence in client service, and 'You make us proud' awards, as well as a multitude of client success stories. His academic background includes a Bachelor of Commerce degree, a Master's in Financial Management, and Certified Public Accountant (licensed in NJ), he possesses a comprehensive skill set to address complex financial challenges.



Kate McCown

*Vice President, Compliance
Ameritas*

Kate McCown is Vice President and Compliance Officer for the Ameritas and Ameritas of New York Group Dental, Vision, and Hearing Division in Lincoln, Nebraska. In 2012 she was appointed as Director of Health Care Reform and responsible for analysis, advocacy, strategy, and implementation related to the Affordable Care Act on state and Federal levels, presenting on the Affordable Care Act and its implications to dental benefits across the country. In 2014, she was elected as Second Vice President of Compliance for Ameritas and in 2018, Vice President and Compliance Officer. In 2014, she was elected to the Board of Directors for the National Association of Dental Plans (NADP) and served two consecutive terms until 2020. She is Certified in Healthcare Compliance (CHC) by the Healthcare Compliance Certification Association and is a LIMRA Leadership Institute Fellow. In her community, she currently serves as a Teammates youth mentor, a steering committee member of Women in Philanthropy for the United Way of Lincoln/Lancaster County, a board member of the Members Own Credit Union in Lincoln, and a board member of the Museum of Nebraska Arts (MONA) in Kearney. She holds a B.A. in Legal Studies from Doane University.



Liz Millard

*Head of Risk and Reinsurance
Resolution Life US*

Liz Millard is Head of Risk and Reinsurance at Resolution Life US. In her role, she is responsible for reinsurance relationships and strategy, reinsurance deal management, and enterprise risk management, including risk governance, analysis and reporting. Liz has played an integral role in several large reinsurance transactions, including transaction structuring and negotiation, and risk review. Previously, Liz was Head of Reinsurance and M&A at Resolution Life US, leading the pricing analysis for acquisition opportunities. Prior to joining Resolution Life, Liz held a variety of roles since 2007 at ING and Voya, most recently as Head of Reinsurance. Liz has over 20 years of experience in the industry and is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries and a Member of the American Academy of Actuaries. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematical Sciences and Economics from Carnegie Mellon University. Liz lives in Pennsylvania with her husband Mike and their two children, Bridget and Benjamin.



Emmett Nelson

*Director, Corporate Strategy
Physicians Mutual Insurance Company*

Emmett Nelson is the Director of Strategy and Corporate Development for Physicians Mutual Insurance Company. Over a 10+ year career in insurance and financial services, he has developed expertise as a strategist and investment professional who has earned the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation.

At Physicians Mutual, he is responsible for corporate strategy, market and competitive intelligence, business development, and inorganic growth initiatives. Prior to joining the company in 2022, he served as a management consultant with a Big 4 advisory firm, collaborating with Fortune 500 companies to architect enterprise-wide transformations and support multi-billion dollar M&A transactions.

Emmett is an Omaha-native who is actively involved with the United Way of the Midlands. He holds an MBA from Washington University in St. Louis.



Jessica Neves

*Vice President, Asset Liability Management (ALM)
Fortitude Re*

Jessica Neves is a Vice President, Asset Liability Management (ALM) on the Investments team at Fortitude Re. She is a CFA charter holder with 14 years of industry experience primarily focused on insurance asset management. At Fortitude, Jessica is responsible for managing Japanese portfolios and leading pricing efforts for ALM. She works closely with Corporate Development, Investments and Treasury to execute strategic asset allocations, opportunistically deploy capital, and enhance the team's investment capabilities. Prior to joining Fortitude, she was a Vice President on the Insurance Fixed Income Portfolio Management team at Goldman Sachs Asset Management. Outside of the office, Jessica enjoys time with her husband and two children. She holds a B.S. in Finance from Villanova University.



Ethan Olson

*Senior Director, Financial Reporting
Protective Life*

Ethan Olson is a Certified Public Accountant with over ten years of experience in the insurance industry. He currently works as the Senior Director of Financial Reporting at Protective Life in Birmingham, Alabama.

Ethan is primarily responsible for reporting financial results to Protective's parent company, Dai-ichi Life. He also helps manage operations and reporting for the company's Stable Value Products segment and oversees various accounting functions, including goodwill, offshore reinsurance, and new acquisitions.

Ethan started his career in public accounting in 2013 and has been recognized for his contributions to the accounting profession. He was named to the Birmingham Business Journal's list of NextGen Accountants in 2023.

Ethan graduated from the University of Alabama with a B.S. and an M.S. in Accounting. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his family, coaching his daughter's soccer team, and volunteering with the Greater Birmingham Humane Society and the United Way.



Shawn Parry

*Managing Counsel
Nationwide Financial Services*

Shawn Parry serves as a Managing Counsel, where he currently focusses on the company's private placement variable life insurance and securities-backed lending business lines. With over 13 years of experience in the insurance-based financial services industry, Shawn has gained a breadth of knowledge through his support of Nationwide's wide array of financial products and services. His prior roles include legal leadership positions, where he oversaw market conduct examinations for Nationwide's life companies, led state and federal advocacy initiatives, and played a key role in launching the company's pension risk transfer business. Beyond his professional endeavors, Shawn is committed to community service, demonstrated by his involvement with the Life Care Alliance's Meals-on-Wheels Program, Nationwide's Street Law Program, and his coaching roles with multiple youth soccer teams. Shawn resides in Columbus, Ohio, and is married father of two children who are avid club soccer players. He holds a B.S. in Business Administration from the State University of New York at Albany and earned his J.D. from Capital University Law School.



Rebecca Rodgers

*Assistant Vice President, Accounting Policy
Voya Financial*

Rebecca Rodgers is an accomplished CPA with extensive experience in accounting policy, financial reporting, and assurance services. Currently serving as AVP, Accounting Policy at Voya Financial, Inc., Rebecca leads a team of experts in US GAAP and Statutory technical guidance. She is renowned for her ability to research, interpret, and implement complex accounting standards. Rebecca has played a key role in significant projects, including the implementation of ASU 2018-12 Long-Duration Targeted Improvements and the NAIC's Principles-Based Bond Project. Prior to her current role, Rebecca was the AVP, Director of Financial Reporting at Voya Financial, where she managed SEC and Statutory filings. Her earlier career includes a tenure at Ernst & Young, LLP. Rebecca holds a Bachelor of Science in Commerce from the University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce and is a Certified Public Accountant licensed in Georgia and Virginia. She also holds the Fellow, Life Management Institute designation awarded by LOMA.



Alyssa Schlander

*Senior Director, Public Affairs and Assistant General Counsel
Securian Financial*

Alyssa Schlander is Senior Director, Public Affairs and Assistant General Counsel at Securian Financial in St. Paul, Minnesota. Alyssa has honed her expertise in public affairs through 25 years of experience collaborating with public policymakers and providing strategic communications and legal counsel in both the public and private sectors in Minnesota. Alyssa is an executive board member of the Minnesota Insurance and Financial Services Council and the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce as well as a past president of the Minnesota Governmental Relations Council. Outside of work, she is actively involved in fundraising and promotion for the Blaine High School Band Boosters 501(c)(3) organization. She received her law degree from William Mitchell School of Law (now Mitchell Hamline) and undergraduate degree from the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University.



Teddy Schlanger

*Director, Financial Reporting and Accounting
Venerable*

Teddy Schlanger is a Director of Financial Reporting and Accounting. He is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a member of the AICPA and PICPA. He leads Venerable's Accounting Policy and Investment Accounting teams. In those roles, he determines accounting for unique and complex transactions including ones requiring state commissioner approval such as reinsurance, derivatives, reserve basis changes, financing, RSATs, and affiliate transactions. He also manages special projects like NAIC Bond Project, new systems implementations, first-time financial statement audits, and new guidance implementation. Prior to joining Venerable in 2019, he worked for the Tokio Marine Group in P&C financial reporting and at Deloitte auditing insurance and healthcare clients. He volunteers as a Little League coach, at his children's school, and as a regular Red Cross blood donor. He holds a B.A. in History from Davidson College, a Masters of Accountancy from Vanderbilt University, and an MBA from Villanova University.



Jaclyn Strube

*Director, Workplace Benefits Advocacy
Principal Financial Group*

Jaci Strube is the Director of Workplace Benefits Advocacy at Principal Financial Group and lives in Des Moines, Iowa. Jaci has over 15 years of industry experience at Principal; including roles in claims, operations, and project management. Jaci serves on ACLI's Supplemental Benefits Committee, DI committee, Dental Working Group, and PFML subgroups. She also serves on the California Association of Dental Plans board of directors as well as the Legislative and Regulatory Committee. Additionally, Jaci is also a National Association of Dental Plans volunteer, sitting on the Commission on Advocacy and Policy, Government Relations Group, and is the Advocacy Work Group Chair. An active member of the Des Moines community, Jaci was named to the Des Moines Business Record's 40 Under 40 list. She has also been recognized as Principal's Working Mother of the Year. Jaci served on the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Iowa Chapter Board for 9 years. She also was the CFF's National Advocacy Co-Chair for 4 years. Jaci is a graduate of the University of South Dakota, with a Bachelor of Science in Media and Journalism.



Crystal Trepanier

*Associate Vice President, After Issue & Agent Services
National Life Group*

Crystal Trepanier is originally from Eden, Vermont but spent a fair amount of her life growing up in Plattsburgh, NY. Crystal started her career as an intern with IBM and spent seven years at IBM before joining National Life Group in 2007. With National Life Group, Crystal was able to return to Vermont and be near her parents. Crystal has held various positions within National Life and is the current Associate Vice President of After Issue Services.

Crystal lives in Graniteville VT with her husband Albert, another National Life Group employee, and her nine-year-old son, Lucas. In her spare time Crystal enjoys all the seasons of New England by being on the shores of Lake Champlain in the summer, spending time at their hunting camp or riding the back roads of New Hampshire in the fall and sitting by a fire after a day of snowshoeing in the winter. Crystal also enjoys exercising, reading, and playing games with the family.