

Tracie M. Gardner, Senior Vice President of Policy Advocacy at the Legal Action Center, has worked for more than three decades in the public health, public policy, and not-for-profit fields. With a focus on substance use and the impact of the War on Drugs and incarceration on Black communities in the United States, Ms. Gardner is a nationally recognized expert on health and communities of color. As a highly requested speaker on these issues, she is often quoted in the media and contributes to various research and journal articles on institutional racism's impact on the health and criminal legal systems.

Beginning as an AIDS policy advocate in 1989 at the NYC Minority Task Force on AIDS (now called FACES), Ms. Gardner led budget and legislative advocacy campaigns that won key health and criminal-legal reforms in New York State at organizations such as the National Minority AIDS Council, GMHC, the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. Her work with these organizations, and with LAC, has contributed to substantial increases in funding and legislative reforms for alternatives to incarceration and reentry, substance use, and HIV services. This work was always done through the lens of race and gender equity.

From 2013-2015, Ms. Gardner worked closely with the NYS Department of Health (DOH) and the Division of Criminal Justice Services to facilitate a working group aiming to leverage Medicaid-funded health homes to improve transitions from incarceration to community-based care. During this time, she was also appointed to the NYS End the Epidemic Task Force which was established to support the State's goal to achieve the first-ever decrease in HIV prevalence in New York State by the end of 2020.

From 2015-2017, Ms. Gardner served as the NYS Assistant Secretary of Health in the Office of the Governor, where she oversaw the state's mental hygiene agencies, including the Office of Addiction Services and Supports, the Office of Mental Health, the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities, and the Justice Center, a state enforcement agency established to protect vulnerable individuals. Following her time in the Governor's office, she returned to the Legal Action Center as the organization's first Associate Director, inaugurating LAC's work on Racial Justice and Equity and continuing policy advocacy work on LAC priorities. This included advising New York State officials as they prepared and filed an 1115 waiver application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to use federal Medicaid dollars to pay for transitional care in the state's prisons and jails.

She is the primary author of LAC's 2018 report, "Health and Justice: Bridging the Gap", which details New York's efforts to enroll incarcerated individuals in Medicaid and connect them to community-based care upon release. She was a co-author on LAC's 2022 report, "Transforming Criminal Legal System Outcomes in New York City: A Blueprint for NYC's Next Generation of Political Leaders". Gardner has contributed to or co-authored numerous publications, including "Case Studies from Three States: Breaking Down Silos Between Health Care and Criminal Justice" in *Health Affairs* (Vol. 33, No. 3, 2014); and "Methadone Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder: Improving Access Through Regulatory and Legal Change: Proceedings of a Workshop" by the *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine* in 2022.

In 2021, the NYC Public Advocate appointed Ms. Gardner to the NYC Community Reinvestment and Closure of Rikers Island Commission, where she headed the Health Committee. Ms. Gardner has been involved in several advisory bodies overseeing research on the national overdose crisis and the impact of COVID on people involved with the criminal legal system, especially those with substance use and mental disorders. Ms. Gardner was the inaugural co-chair of the Black Communities Workgroup of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Agency initiative—the Opioid Response Network. She was most recently appointed to the Health Equity Task Force of the New York State Behavioral Advisory Council.

Ms. Gardner has been interviewed by a number of media outlets, and has authored several op-eds for media outlets such as The Hill, The Nation, NBCnews.com, Yahoo Finance News among many others.

In 2023 she was awarded the Faces & Voices of Recovery 2023 Excellence in Equity and Justice Award in recognition of her national leadership and focus on issues related to substance use, harm reduction, and criminal legal system reform. This award, created in honor of Dr. Calvin Trent Jr., recognizes transformational leadership in creating authentic, diverse, equitable, just, and inclusive recovery communities.

In 2022, Ms. Gardner's alma mater recognized her career with the Mount Holyoke Alumnae Association Achievement Award. She also received the 2022 Mount Holyoke Black Alumnae Conference Award.

Her proudest achievement is as a parent to her two sons, Caleb and Elijah Wright.