



STAFF

Spotlight

Kera Sutherland, Supervisor

Kera Sutherland is a Case Management Supervisor for Northeast Indiana. Kera provides case management for FSW and CIH Waivers.



What led you to the social services field?

Growing up, I wanted to be a nurse because I enjoy caring for and helping others. In high school, I learned that biology and chemistry were not my strong suits. I took a career test and scored high in the social work portion. After my freshmen year of college, I worked at a church summer camp that offered a week of camp for individuals with developmental disabilities. My heart was so full after that week that I knew this field was where I needed to be!

What is a random fact about yourself?

In 2012, I won two different radio contests from different stations and had the privilege of attending both the Grammy Awards and the MTV Video Music Awards in Los Angeles.

What do you love most about your job?

I love working with teams to brainstorm how to help our individuals live their best life and seeing those services/plans put into action to help the individual be successful in whatever it is they enjoy to live their best life. I also love being able to interact with such a wide array of individuals with all different abilities.

Tell us a favorite pastime you enjoy?

I enjoy reading and doing puzzles. I love all things outdoors – swimming, camping, campfires, running, playing in the snow, sledding, gardening, bike rides.

Do you have a career success story to share?

At my previous job, we offered a financial assistance program through church referrals to help families dealing with short-term, financially stressful situations. I worked with a family who was struggling to pay their bills in a very inefficient home during the winter months. The mother was referred to me a 2nd time, this time as a single mother who was expecting her 2nd child. Along with other assistance, I referred her to a Christmas program, which provided her and her toddler son with food and gifts for Christmas. She was so grateful! She is now living in North Carolina, closer to family, and working a successful job, while raising her two boys.

~ Kera



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Spotlight

Silena Kester, Case Manager

Silena serves DeKalb and surrounding counties for the Aged & Disabled, Traumatic Brain Injury, FSW, and CIH Waivers.



What led you to the social services field?

I have a passion for advocating for others who either cannot or do not know how to best advocate for themselves, as well as teaching and empowering them to do so. I firmly believe that everyone has a right to live as independently as they possibly can and pursue their desired happy life.

What is a random fact about yourself?

My husband and I are licensed foster parents with DCS. After our first four children grew up and left the nest, we decided that we still had a lot of love and parenting left to do. Each child that comes into our home is treated like another one of our kids from day one. We strive to give them a family setting that is as normal as possible. We work alongside parents to achieve reunification. We have adopted two teen girls, as well, from DCS.

What do you love most about your job?

I would have to say that what I love most about my job is helping others find their voice. Making sure that what they want is heard and listened to, and if it is safe to obtain it as well. Being able to assist others in achieving their goals the way they want to is serving others in a meaningful way to me.

Do you have kids or pets?

My family has many pets. We currently breed snakes (30), mice, rats, and rabbits (23). We also have 13 egg laying chickens, 2 dogs, and a bearded dragon. We have 6 children, 5 girls and 1 boy. We are also blessed to have 8 grandkids.

~ Silena



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Spotlight

Sarah Lillo, Case Manager

Sarah serves Allen and surrounding counties for the FSW and CIH Waivers.



What led you to the social services field?

I worked in the private sector for many years, but always felt something was missing. I am very passionate about making a difference in the community we live in. I feel most satisfied with my job when I can make a positive impact in others' lives. I am also very social and enjoy meeting and connecting with new people.

What is a random fact about yourself?

I lived in Japan for a month in high school as a foreign exchange student.

What do you love most about your job?

I like getting to know the individuals on my caseload and hearing what they want for their lives from their perspective. If I can show individuals that their input and voice matters in their team meetings, I feel like I have done a good job. This job is very satisfying when I can see that the services the team was so persistent in finding are making a positive impact towards the individuals' goals. I really love Connections as a company and the flexibility it offers.

What is a favorite pastime you enjoy?

I really enjoy being outdoors in the summer. I like to ride bikes with my kids, go camping, and swim. I love to read when I have the time!

Do you have kids or pets?

I am a mom to 2 energetic boys and a pet tortoise! We enjoy spending time with friends and extended family.

~ Sarah



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Spotlight

Carrie Ann McClure, Case Manager

Carrie Ann serves Allen and surrounding counties for the FSW and CIH Waivers.



What led you to the social services field?

I have always cared about people and “worn my heart on my sleeve.” In high school, I worked in the kitchen of a facility for people who had severe and profound disabilities. Little did I know God was working to lead me to a life of love and advocacy for people with differences. I quickly developed a love for those people through our interactions and hope for a more fulfilling life for them. That encouraged me to pursue the education I needed to serve and advocate for people. Nothing could ever top the day I walked through a workshop and heard “hey girl!” in a voice I recognized; finding out it was one of the people I first encountered at that teenage job. Among the many success stories of the people I serve, I savor that voice as a reminder of what can be a much more beautiful world for everyone!

What is a random fact about yourself?

I can tell you about every ‘Little House On The Prairie’ episode by the title of that episode.

What is a favorite pastime you enjoy?

I enjoy nature and hiking, learning about edible plants, and foraging. I also love to curl up with a cup of tea and get lost in a good book!

Do you have kids or pets?

I have a daughter who just started her freshman year at BSU and a son in the 8th grade. We also have a very large pit bull named Gus (who loves to be part of every virtual meeting) and a cat named Aurora (after Sleeping Beauty).

Do you have a career success story to share?

The people I have served over the years have had many success stories. The one that stands out the most was a woman who secured a community job, saved her money to hire a lawyer, earned her emancipation from guardianship and then got married. It took time and so much effort and learning on her part and I am honored that she allowed me to be part of that experience.

~Carrie Ann



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Spotlight

Amber Mellott, Case Manager

Amber serves Allen and surrounding counties for the FSW and CIH Waivers.

What led you to the social services field?

I was drawn to this field because I was able to grow up with my cousin who has Cerebral Palsy. Throughout her life I got to see her face many challenges where she was defined by her disability and not her abilities and the beautiful person she is. It isn't easy for her, just like it isn't easy for many of the individuals and families we serve. Growing up I always wanted her to feel included and to be treated with dignity and respect. She led my heart to a world of individuals in need and by going through different experiences with her, I knew I wanted to help other people. The social services field is such a rewarding career and I'm so thankful for it.

What do you love most about your job?

What I love most about my job is seeing the people I serve reach their goals. I love being greeted with excitement and success stories. I do also enjoy working through tough situations and seeing positive end results. I love encouraging individuals to be the best versions of themselves. Everyone I serve has changed my life in some way, and I'm so fortunate to be able to work with each one of them.

What is a favorite pastime you enjoy?

My favorite pastimes include hanging out with my husband, my family, gardening, watching birds (I have 15 birdhouses), and collecting vinyl records. I have collected over 400 of them and I just love hearing the crackle of a vinyl being played.

Do you have kids or pets?

I am absolutely obsessed with all my fur babes. I have an elder dog named Everett. I have four crazy-cute cats named Titus, Achilles, Nero and Ivar. I also have a rabbit named Petey. All of them were rescues and they bring me so much joy!



~ Amber



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Chris Tennant, Case Manager

Chris serves Allen and surrounding counties for the FSW and CIH Waivers.

What led you to the social services field?

A recruiter at a college job fair and multiple people in my family with disabilities.

What is a random fact about yourself?

I collect vintage cameras.

What do you love most about your job?

Building relationships, seeing individuals be their best selves, and being a strong advocate

What is a favorite pastime you enjoy?

Tabletop games and disc golf.

Do you have kids?

Twins in high school.



~ Chris