

McKnights Feature Pinnacle Award Winners Jessica Fear and Esther Kamara-Conteh

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Recognition & Awards

Jessica Fear, SVP of Behavioral Health and Esther Kamara-Conteh, VP of care management were recently featured on McKnights for their Pinnacle Awards. Jessica received her Thought-Leadership award and Esther received her Inspiration award back in March 2024. Jessica and Esther are both integral to helping vulnerable New Yorkers, communities, and families get the care they need.

Jessica's main priority for more than twenty-five years has been building and delivering quality [behavioral health care](#). In 2011, she launched the [Health Home program](#), which provides support for low income New Yorkers with chronic mental health conditions. The program aims to help those in need live independently, avoid unnecessary hospitalizations, and have better health outcomes. Since 2012, the program has served thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers and consists of more than 250 community partners and organizations. The program provides in-home visits, holistic care plans, connections to community resources like food banks, social services, housing services, etc.

How can behavioral health care be more accessible for all?

— Jessica Fear, SVP of behavioral health

Jessica worked for VNS Health from 2004 – 2014, starting as a division manager of community health services to director of children's services. She then went to Healthfirst as a director of business operation and rose to VP of behavioral health services. She returned to VNS Health as SVP of Behavioral Health, leading new expansions of care for individuals

with behavioral health conditions and building new programs.

Last year, Jessica testified before the New York City Council's Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addictions advocating for the expansion of new and existing mental health programs. Thanks to her testimony, VNS Health secured additional funding for mental health programs. She also helped secure a [\\$4 million federal grant](#) to open a certified community behavioral health clinic in the South Bronx.

Esther got her passion for caregiving from her parents who were health care workers and educators. She immigrated to New York City when she was 16 years old and started out as a [home health aide](#) (HHA) using her parents approach to caregiving as a model for her own. Working as a HHA taught Esther the value they can bring to care teams when developing patient plans and providing quality home care.

After becoming a HHA, she entered nursing school and graduated as an advanced practice nurse from New York University. She continued advancing her career, reaching her current position as VP of care management for [health plans](#). As VP, she oversees teams of clinicians and care managers that serve 35,000 members. Esther is focused on helping Medicare Advantage Plus and Managed Long Term Care health plans members get the care they need for daily living activities in the comfort of their home. She manages care for individuals with multiple illnesses who struggle with access to food or housing.

She is also a mentor for the next generation of caregivers, teaching them to see the big picture of home care, past their day-to-day tasks and duties.

It's important to look beyond the daily demands and challenges, because the reward over time will be so much more than you put in.

— *Esther Kamara-Conteh, VP of care management*

Read the full profiles for [Jessica](#) and [Esther](#).

When anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues interfere with your recovery at home, behavioral health support can help.

[Behavioral Health Services](#)

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