

CWLA 2025 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Inspiring Change, Igniting Progress

April 9 – 11, 2025 • Washington, DC

Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill

<https://www.cwla.org/cwla-conference-2025>

This list of workshops is subject to change without notice.

Workshops A

2:20 pm – 3:50 pm

A2 - Leadership Touchstone: Effective Leaders Develop an Opportunity-Driven Workplace

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced many innovations to the delivery of care. In a continued environment experiencing workforce shortages, many organizations have developed creative ways to recruit and retain talent. Creating ways to develop a flexible work environment while providing opportunities for professional development and advancement is an important aspect of supporting the workforce. This workshop will examine strategies utilized to develop a more agile, effective, and opportunity-driven workforce.

Presenters: Julie Springwater, CWLA Senior Fellow

A4 - Sharing Power Differently Within High-Powered Spaces: Implementation of a Service Equity Council and Community-Driven Governance

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), in partnership with the Office of Equity & Multicultural Services (OEMS), used implementation science, innovation, change management, and equity-centered processes to establish a Child Welfare Service Equity Council (SEC). This process demonstrated actionable ways to share power and center the voices of people with lived experiences to develop strategies for system change. Additionally, ODHS continued to strengthen this approach by creating formalized guidance for child welfare professionals on collaboration and community engagement, advising how to push through discomfort, fear, and even apathy that might otherwise reduce willingness to fully participate in community-driven forums regarding the work of child welfare.

Presenters: Aprille Flint-Gerner & Ashley Wortman & Jennifer Sorenson, Oregon Department of Human Services

A5 - Effective Change Management: Practical Strategies to Support Change Initiatives within Child Welfare

Key to realizing true and lasting change for the people we serve and within the systems we work is the need to leverage our ability to effectively manage change. In this workshop, we will explore approaches for ensuring success in effecting change. Together we'll discover types of change

initiatives, five components for assuring success, two easily understood models for moving change forward, and strategies for managing resistance. Participants in this interactive workshop will come away with a fuller understanding of how change at the individual, team, and organizational level can be realized; strategies to apply what they have learned; the ability to analyze and improve current change management strategies; and the capacity to develop new strategies to affect successful change.

Presenter: Paul Dann, North American Family Institute

A6 - Using the Casey Community Opportunity Map to Strengthen Communities

This session will focus on how participants can use the Casey Family Programs Community Opportunity Map—recently relaunched in December 2024—to support communities and prevent the need for foster care. The Community Opportunity Map is an interactive tool that highlights the aspects of communities that are associated with safe children and strong families. The tool allows anyone to find child and family well-being data for any neighborhood across the nation in order to analyze, plan, and act alongside others to build Communities of Hope. We will detail several examples from different organizations around the country who have successfully used the tool. We will demonstrate how to use the map tool and invite participants to try it themselves using a hands-on activity.

Presenters: Luke Gerber & Raquel Pfeifer & Tecoria Jones, Casey Family Programs

A7 - Strategies for Promoting Equity: Lessons Learned from Child Welfare Community Collaborations

In this interactive workshop session, we will discuss strategies for promoting equity in efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect. We will share lessons learned from a national cross-site process evaluation of the Children's Bureau's Child Welfare Community Collaborations (CWCC) initiative. Lessons learned are based on 244 interviews with CWCC grantees and their partners in 13 states. We'll share real-world examples of how CWCC projects worked to promote equity and unpack areas where growth is needed to achieve more equitable systems and outcomes. Workshop participants will have time to reflect on these lessons learned, ask CWCC grantees questions about their experiences, and discuss how these strategies could be applied to their own work in small groups.

Presenters: Rebecca Schachtner & Michelle Blocklin, Abt Global; Karlee Naylor, Child Trends

A8 - Building the Evidence Base for Fathers for Change: An Intervention to Reduce Intimate Partner Violence and Child Maltreatment

Fathers for Change (F4C) is a novel, individual clinical intervention for fathers who have used violence with their partners. In 60-minute individual therapy sessions over 18-24 weeks, F4C focuses on improving reflective functioning and emotion regulation skills. Improvement in these

targets in turn leads to reduced intimate partner violence and child maltreatment. F4C motivates the father to change by promoting his desire to be a better parent. This workshop will include: an overview of F4C intervention; findings from the program evaluation of F4C with families involved with child welfare; an outline of the methods and results from a propensity score match study of F4C compared to treatment as usual with families involved with child welfare; and results from a study comparing F4C delivered via telehealth compared with in-person delivery.

Presenters: Rebecca Beebe & Susie DiVietro, Connecticut Children's Medical Center; Carla Stover, Yale University Child Study Center

A9 - Partnering to Provide Legal Services for Kinship Families: Tips and Tools

Join us to explore tips and tools that kinship service professionals can use to partner with legal providers to offer necessary legal supports to kinship families. Learn about partnerships from around the country that support these families in a variety of ways, such as creating legal resource guides, staffing legal helplines or courthouse help desks, or providing full legal representation. The ABA Center on Children and the Law, in collaboration with the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network, surveyed kinship navigators nationwide to identify promising practices of collaborating with legal providers. We will elevate what we learned through this process and share exciting news about federal funding for kinship legal services. Walk away with tips and tools that you can use to replicate one or more of these practices in your community.

Presenters: Ana Beltran, Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network; Heidi Redlich Epstein, ABA Center on Children and the Law

A10 - When to Be Concerned About Psychiatric Reports and their Recommendations

Child welfare professionals and the judges, attorneys, advocates, and therapists involved in the system frequently accept the conclusions of psychiatric evaluations even when they might wonder if the recommendations are truly in the best interest of the child. They simply do not feel that they have the expertise to question the medical findings. This workshop will cover how non-physician professionals can assess the quality of reports, the accuracy of the diagnosis, the evidenced base support of the recommendations, and will focus on the red flags that may alert professionals that the recommended treatments—both medication and therapy—and placement recommendations might be problematic.

Presenters: Martin Irwin & Eric Whitney, NYU Grossman School of Medicine

A11 - Minnesota's Compliance Processes with the Indian Child Welfare Act and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act

This presentation will outline Minnesota's comprehensive Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) compliance framework, including monitoring systems, guidance documents, and training programs designed to ensure counties fully adhere to

compliance standards. By empowering children and families who are American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN), these systems promote accountability among county agencies. Our team is dedicated to supporting Tribes, county agencies, child welfare workers, and children and families who are AI/AN through technical assistance, fiscal support, and guidance. This collaborative approach fosters ICWA/MIFPA compliance and strengthens tribal self-governance in child welfare matters.

Presenters: Kim Gulbrandson & Sommer Dey Rosette & Holly Schmitt, Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families

A12 - An Innovative Approach to Strengthening Families and Communities: Rethinking Front-End Access to Economic and Concrete Supports

Hotline systems serve as a crucial point of contact for mandated reporters and the general public to report child maltreatment. However, children and families who are Black/African American and American Indian/Alaska Native are more likely to be reported to child abuse hotlines, be investigated, and have their children removed from their homes. This results in disparate outcomes. To better support families, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) created a statewide Help, Empower, Advocate, Reassure, Support (HEARS) Line as a universal, primary prevention strategy to promote family well-being and reduce calls to the CPS Hotline for non-safety concerns. The HEARS Line was carefully planned to balance the needs for CPS reporting alongside offering families referrals for economic and concrete supports. To align with this approach, OCFS also redesigned its mandated reporter training.

Presenters: Kristin Gleeson & Jeri Guidry & Carolyn May, New York State Office of Children and Family Services; Naquanda Jordan & Cynthia Peterson, Child Welfare Information Gateway

A13 - How to Work Together to Foster Sibling Connections

There is no other issue that comes up as frequently among people with lived experience in foster care than the importance of sibling connections. Too often children are separated from their siblings and given infrequent visitation. This interactive session will explore the importance of sibling connections from a lived experience and research perspective, as well as the policy and practice landscape relating to the rights of siblings in foster care. We will cover literature, federal and state laws that address the rights of siblings, and, most importantly, what we can do to foster sibling connections as professionals.

Presenters: Lily Colby, Person with Lived Experience; Erica Hickey, Hickey Consulting

Workshops B
4:10 pm – 5:40 pm

B2 - Leadership Touchstone: Effective Leaders Are Driven by Client Needs

The social determinants of health and well-being serve as the principal context for all the services provided in the child and family caring field. Being responsive to client needs, including the perspectives of constituents, utilizing best practice, and working to develop safe and healthy communities are imperatives for all leaders. This workshop will examine how effective leaders develop systems of care that meaningfully address the needs of clients.

Presenters: Julie Springwater, CWLA Senior Fellow

B4 - It Takes More Than a Village: Enhancing Child Welfare Systems and Outcomes Through Managed Care

We've all heard "it takes a village," but the reality is that it takes even larger systems to truly support the health care needs of children in care and their families. This interactive presentation will discuss how managed care can innovate and improve service delivery and multiple outcomes. Presenters will describe how Centene's foster care program leverages innovative service delivery through evidence-based youth services and frontline training for providers, child welfare, caregivers, parents, and community partners. We'll describe how our unique local approach supports an array of successful and collaborative efforts with our state health plans to bring a special focus on population and individual health and mental health benefits for children, adolescents, and youth. Content will be followed by a group participant discussion of their lived experience to identify state and local successes, service gaps, and other needs for youth and families.

Presenters: Karen Rogers & Roy Van Tassell, Centene

B5 - Permanency for Youth who are Marginalized

This presentation will delve into the challenges and strategies for securing legal permanency for youth who are marginalized and in foster care, focusing particularly on children of color and youth who are LGBTQ+. We will discuss the disparities that these groups face and present culturally competent, evidence-based approaches for engaging biological families and building connections to achieve permanency. Attendees will learn about innovative recruitment models, family and community engagement strategies, and the importance of policy advocacy in promoting equity within the foster care system. The session aims to equip child welfare professionals with the tools necessary to enhance legal permanency outcomes, ensuring better futures for all children in foster care.

Presenters: Adrienne Kennedy & Danielle DiMatteo, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

B6 – Adaptive Leadership: Creating Meaningful Growth Opportunities for Emerging Leaders

The staffing challenge in child welfare/human services has been persistent and longstanding. Creating a leadership pipeline in organizations that are still feeling the impact of the "great resignation" and "silent quitting" is needed to inspire change and fuel progress but can seem

challenging at first glance. Organizations must intentionally lay new tracks for emerging leaders to run on so they can be developed and fully equipped to lead. This session will focus on the 4 As of Adaptive Leadership skills needed for developing, equipping, and mentoring emerging leaders: Anticipation, Articulation, Adaptation and Accountability. Join members of CWLA's Emerging Leaders Committee to learn how to support the next generation of child welfare leaders.

Presenters: Jacqueline Martin, New York City Administration for Children's Services; Dimple Patel, Casey Family Programs; Bacall Hincks, University of Utah, College of Social Work

B7 - Implementing Family Preservation Within Child Protection Amid Opioid Addiction

This presentation will describe the creation of a new unit within Ongoing Child Protection Case Management at Hennepin County to serve families with a substance use disorder specific to opioid use. The Family Preservation Unit focuses on the safe discharge of newborns to the home while mothers receive intensive in-home services, preserving and maintaining the connection between mother and newborn, and promoting sobriety. Presenters will discuss how Children and Family Services staff successfully collaborated across departments to create and support the unit, processes, practices, and the case management model utilized; plans for measuring the unit's impact on families; and how services will continue to be improved upon.

Presenters: JuTone Lajoie & Joey Glassman, Hennepin County

B9 - Strategies to Advance Anti-Racist Systems: Lessons Learned from Philadelphia's Department of Human Services

The child welfare system is failing children and families, specifically Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other children and families of color. Data consistently illustrates disproportionate involvement and disparate outcomes for children and families of color, pushing systems and communities to explore strategies to transform current policy, practice, and structure. In response, Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS), with support from the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), has been working to center a commitment to anti-racism and anti-racist strategies. In this session, CSSP and DHS will share strategies and lessons learned, including building capacity of leadership and staff; revising DHS's mission and vision; revising policies including for issuing contracts, kinship placements, and supporting community-based organizations; and eliminating surveillance of families served in the community.

Presenters: Alexandra Citrin, Center for the Study of Social Policy; Kimberly Ali & Robin Chapolini, Philadelphia Department of Human Services

B10 - Building Formal Partnerships for Enhanced Services and Interventions for Military Families

In 2024, the National Children's Alliance and Department of Defense branches of service established memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to improve interventions for adult-initiated

child abuse and neglect and child-initiated problematic sexual behavior. This session will share the journey of building these historic formalized partnerships, starting with the initial recognition of the need for standardized collaboration across all branches of the military. Presenters will discuss the strategic steps taken to initiate and develop these MOUs, including key stakeholder engagement, negotiation processes, and the alignment of organizational goals. Presenters will illustrate the positive impact of these MOUs on services to military families and highlight lessons learned that can be utilized by participants to inform their own efforts to strengthen services through formalized partnerships.

Presenters: Heather Provencher, National Children's Alliance; Monette Green, Office of the Secretary of Defense

B11 - Evaluation of Kinship Navigator Case Management in Washington State

The presenters will give an overview of a Kinship Navigator Case Management model of service delivery piloted in seven counties across Washington state. In the pilot sites, navigators complete a needs assessment, establish goals, and check in with kinship caregivers over a three-to-six-month period. The program was adapted for Tribal and monolingual Spanish-speaking kinship caregivers. An evaluation was conducted, and the results suggest that the Case Management model shows promise as a means of connecting kinship families to ongoing, sustainable resources and services, while the service-as-usual Kinship Navigator program is more oriented toward meeting families' immediate needs. The presenters discuss why investment in both levels of service are necessary to meet the full range of caregiver needs.

Presenters: Geene Delaplaine & Rosalyn Alber, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services; John Fowler, University of Washington School of Social Work

B12 - Inclusive Well-Being: A Holistic Approach to Supporting Children with Disabilities and Their Caregivers

As professionals and parents, we recognize that children with disabilities face unique challenges that impact their mental health and overall well-being. Providing robust mental health support benefits these children, their families, and the broader community. Our proposal emphasizes collaboration among pediatricians, educators, therapists, and parents. Each role is important. The pediatrician is there from birth and begins the process of screening, assessing, counseling, and referring children with disabilities. School-based counselors help navigate academic environments and develop individualized accommodations. Parents receive stress management support, and respite care ensures temporary relief from caregiving responsibilities. Investing in mental health support fosters a more inclusive and supportive environment. These services are case-specific, with school students accessing support from K-12 through young adulthood.

Presenters: Michelle Boone-Thornton & Katrina Maxwell, Regent University

B13 - YES! Impacting Tomorrow's Workforce with Today's Youth!

Join us for an open discussion on how a community-based provider in Harrisburg is working with the Pennsylvania Academic, Career, and Technical Training Alliance and county Juvenile Probation to change the lives of youth in Harrisburg City by providing workforce development training, life skills, and access to invaluable post-secondary programs and certifications. We will explore the development of Youth Employment Services (YES), and how this group is not just providing integral instruction and skills to youth but also a safe space where youth from various backgrounds, affiliations, and social groups are harmoniously working together to gain the necessary tools to achieve a prosperous professional identity.

Presenters: Jaclyn Conklin & Nicole Tate & Tnika Lewis, JusticeWorks YouthCare

Workshops C

10:20 am – 11:50 am

C3 - It's Not as Easy as We Make It Seem: Experiences of Black Female Caseworkers

All child welfare professionals (CWPs) are exposed to emotional demands at work, however, Black female CWPs must also contend with gendered racial microaggressions. In response, they may rely on coping mechanisms consistent with the Superwoman Schema, which, although rooted in resilience, contributes to poor physical and mental health outcomes. In this workshop, presenters will share findings from a study focused on understanding how elements of emotional health, racial identity, and the Superwoman Schema manifest in a sample of Black CWPs and how they relate to daily experiences of gendered racial microaggressions, as well as commitment to child welfare. Workshop participants will engage in small and large group discussion about the implications of study findings and brainstorm possible mechanisms for agency- and individual-level supports for Black female CWPs.

Presenters: Deborah Wilson Gadsden, CWLA; Marlo Perry, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work

C4 - Strategies to Improve Services for Expectant and Parenting Youth in Foster Care

Child Welfare Information Gateway is committed to kin-first culture, a values system that puts our belief in families and their right to remain together in their communities. Believing in all families must include belief in young parents. Expectant and parenting youth have unique needs that require specialized support. Young parents involved with child welfare are at risk for additional family separation due to systemic biases, racism, and oversurveillance. In this session, professionals from the Child Welfare Information Gateway will partner with lived experience leaders from FosterClub to share strategies for supporting expectant and parenting youth in foster care. The session will highlight best practices and innovative approaches for providing that support, including direct practice approaches with individuals and families, interagency collaboration, and systems-focused solutions.

Presenters: Missy Boylan, Child Welfare Information Gateway; Jordan Otero, Lived Experience Leader; Lanitta Berry, Child Welfare Consultant

C5 - Centering Individuals with Lived Expertise in System Improvement Efforts: Oregon Systems Mapping for Father Engagement

The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), Child Welfare, facilitated Safe Systems Mapping (AcciMap) to address the need for improved father engagement in child welfare practice, with support from the National Partnership for Child Safety. Analysis of Oregon child death data from 2019 to 2022 identified gaps in engaging noncustodial fathers, who had important insights into family functioning but were minimally engaged prior to the tragic outcomes. A multidisciplinary team, including fathers with lived experience, explored contributing systemic factors at multiple levels and developed robust recommendations to address the broad system barriers. This session will highlight biases toward fathers, outline the Systems Mapping process, and offer strategies for involving individuals with lived expertise in decision-making. Participants are invited to practice Systems Mapping and take tenets from the exercise to address systemic improvement opportunities in their communities.

Presenters: Eddie McDonald, Oregon Department of Human Services; Tiffany Lindsey, University of Kentucky; Matthew Porter, Morrison Child and Family Services

C6 - From Chaos to Connection: Unlocking the Potential in Challenging Behaviors

Individuals who have experienced trauma have unique brain wiring and are often at a mixture of developmental ages. Typical consequence-based behavioral strategies are often not effective and can lead to further trauma and impact the relationship between individuals and their support team members. In this workshop, participants will learn new approaches to use with individuals who have trauma histories which will help providers to understand them better and improve communication and relationships. We will cover concrete strategies for responding to big behaviors including raging, lying, and stealing.

Presenter: Barb Clark, Families Rising

C7 - Staffing the Qualified Individual Role: Early Lessons Learned and Emerging Best Practice

This session will focus on the role of the Qualified Individual (QI) when implementing the Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) requirements under Family First. Chapin Hall and QI/QRTP professionals will engage attendees in a panel discussion, facilitate small group strategy sessions, and introduce a recent policy brief focused on staffing this critical role. Participants will leave with an increased understanding of the QI requirements, how staffing this role can improve outcomes for youth who experience residential care, and strategies to improve their implementation.

Presenters: Ashleigh Brunsink & Larry Small, Chapin Hall

C8 - Collaborative Strategies to Support Youth in Care Academically and Social-Emotionally

This session will explore effective partnerships between New York City Public Schools and Administration for Children's Services/Foster Care Agencies, aiming to address the unique needs of youth in care. We will delve into practical strategies for improving academic support and fostering social-emotional well-being through structured check-ins, timely interventions, and targeted professional development. Participants will gain insights into best practices for collaboration, learn how to implement supportive frameworks, and discover tools for monitoring and evaluating progress. Whether you are a school counselor, social worker, or educator, this workshop will equip you with actionable strategies to better support and empower foster care students.

Presenters: Rebekha Morris & Samantha Howard, New York City Public Schools; ACS??

C9 - Be There for ME: Partnering with Parents and Caregivers in Maine on a Primary Prevention Campaign

The Maine Child Welfare Action Network and Maine Department of Health and Human Services recently launched Be There for ME, a new campaign for parents and caregivers in Maine and the people who support them. The campaign is part of a larger movement in Maine to keep children safe by keeping families strong as identified in Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan. The campaign aims to strengthen families by reducing the stigma of asking for help while providing a judgement-free place for parents and caregivers to start to find support. The campaign is a direct result of partnership with a diverse group of parents and caregivers and community organizations and reflects the support parents and caregivers of children of all ages said they needed.

Presenter: Christine Theriault, Maine Office of Child and Family Services; Melissa Harding, Maine Children's Alliance

C10 - Building a Families First Recovery Home Network Model

At Maryville Academy, we had a vision to provide newly sober mothers with top-notch holistic addiction and recovery treatment in a safe sober living environment that would also support and house their children. We knew that keeping families together during the earliest stages of recovery would provide the best chances for positive outcomes, hope, and resiliency. From this vision, the first Maryville Recovery Home was born, and has now grown into the Maryville Recovery Home Network. Our presentation will highlight the full spectrum of our Recovery Home network which includes two locations for our Mom's Recovery Homes, robust outpatient substance abuse programs, fentanyl overdose prevention and Narcan trainings, juvenile justice prevention services, community outreach education and trainings, DUI classes, and more.

Presenters: Sarah Melgarejo & James Eaglin, Maryville Academy

C11 - Improving Maternal and Child Health Services for Immigrants in New Jersey and Pregnant Teens in Puerto Rico Through Community-Based Doula Services

This workshop will focus on maternal and child health efforts aimed at improving services for specific populations, including immigrants in New Jersey and pregnant teens in Puerto Rico. The presenters will discuss the unique challenges faced by immigrants in New Jersey and pregnant teens in Puerto Rico and explain the significance of community-based doula services in addressing these challenges. Participants will explore ways to foster partnerships and community involvement in maternal and child health efforts and leave with actionable recommendations for replicating successful models in different contexts.

Presenters: Maritza Raimundi-Petroski & Silvia Corado, The Children's Home Society of NJ; Anayra Tua, Proyecto Nacer; Julie Blumenfeld, Rutgers University

C12 - Preserving Safety and Family Bonds: A Survivor's Perspective on the Relevance of Supervised Visitation

This workshop explores the critical role of supervised visitation, also known as Parenting/Family Time, in ensuring the safety and well-being of children, particularly in high-risk situations. Despite a trend toward minimizing structured supervision, the session emphasizes its ongoing relevance through evidence-based strategies and personal narratives, including Hera McLeod's tragic experience after supervision was discontinued. Participants will gain practical tools to enhance their Parenting/Family Time programs, promote equity and cultural responsiveness, and understand the vital importance of maintaining these services to protect children who are vulnerable and support family reunification.

Presenters: Hera McLeod, Advocate; Joe Nullet, Supervised Visitation Network

C13 – South Carolina is Making the Evidence of Economic and Concrete Supports Actionable

As new efforts emerge to move child welfare upstream toward prevention, jurisdictions are exploring strategies to partner across programs to create an enabling policy context that expands availability of economic and concrete supports (ECS), increases innovation with available resources, and reduces restrictive policies and administrative barriers. This session will highlight how South Carolina's Department of Social Services leadership used a tool co-developed by Chapin Hall and the American Public Human Services Association, "Evidence to Impact: State Policy Options to Increase Access to Economic & Concrete Supports as a Child Welfare Prevention Strategy," to assess their current policy landscape and explore opportunities to expand ECS for South Carolina families. We will share considerations, lessons learned, and future directions.

Presenters: Steven Ferrufino & Amber Gillum, South Carolina Department of Social Services; Yasmin Grewal-Kok, Chapin Hall

Workshops D

1:15 pm – 2:45 pm

D1 – Virginia’s Medicaid and Social Services Partnership: Collaborating to Enhance Child and Family Health and Well-Being

This presentation will provide several examples of how state social services and Medicaid systems can partner to meet the needs of children and families. The Virginia Department of Social Services and Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services have a longstanding partnership leading to successful strategies to redesign the state’s behavioral health services with a focus on community-based services; providing greater care coordination for youth who are temporarily displaced from family and congregate care settings and are sleeping in offices and hotels; meeting the needs of the foster care population through a single managed care organization; and managing the renewal process for nearly 2.2 million Medicaid members whose redeterminations were paused during the Public Health Emergency.

Presenters: Carl Ayers, Virginia Department of Social Services; Sarah Hatton, Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services

D3 - The Entrepreneurial Operating System: Not Just for Fortune 500 Companies

Join us for an insightful presentation on how Shelter Inc. has successfully collaborated with the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) to transform our operations and achieve significant growth. By utilizing EOS, traditionally used by Fortune 500 companies, we've enhanced our strategic planning, streamlined processes, and improved team alignment. Discover how these changes have positively impacted the services we provide to individuals and families in need. This session will demonstrate how the EOS framework can be effectively implemented across nonprofits, driving success and sustainable growth. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to apply EOS principles within their own organizations, fostering improved efficiency and mission fulfillment.

Presenters: Carina Santa Maria, Shelter, Inc.; Paul Detlefs, Trellis Works

D4 - How to Succeed Against Compassion Fatigue

Many of us are armed with the task of wearing many hats—personally and professionally. Without a healthy balance, this can turn into poor work performance, neglectful parenting, and can even fracture relationships. This workshop will highlight some of the causes of compassion fatigue and provide tips and suggestions on how to combat it. This session will be ideal for supervisors, direct service providers, and resource parents. We will discuss ways to create a positive work environment, boost staff morale, and highlight the importance of working as a member of a professional team.

Presenter: Marcus Stallworth, CWLA

D5 - Creating Pathways, Incentives, and Sustainability of a Mental Health Workforce

This workshop will be hosted by CWLA's Mental Health Advisory Board (MHAB) to address the ongoing mental health workforce challenges. Drawing on their own expertise and that of their organizations, panelists will provide participants with workable solutions to build, nurture, and empower this specialized workforce that can be utilized in your agencies and communities. We will share strategies to engage policy makers, administrators, and advocates in implementing innovation for change. Panelists will also touch on system-level creativity to help develop and sustain innovative solutions. Time will be allotted for discussion and exploration of how these recommendations might work in your own agencies and inform future work of the MHAB.

Presenters: Debbie Riley & Laura Ornelas, Center for Adoption Support and Education; Alan Vietze, CWLA Senior Fellow; Cheryl Fisher, Centene; Wendy Perlmutter Finkel, JCCA; Bonni Goodwin, University of Oklahoma

D6 - Gen AI: Transforming Workforce and Services in Child Welfare

Explore how Generative AI is set to revolutionize health and human services by enhancing workforce capabilities and improving citizen experiences. This session will highlight the need for reskilling and upskilling public sector employees as AI automates routine tasks, leading to the evolution of job roles. Attendees will learn about the benefits of data-driven decision-making and personalized services, which result in more effective governance and improved customer satisfaction. Additionally, the session will address the ethical considerations of implementing AI, ensuring responsible and equitable use in the public sector. Participants will learn key strategies for integrating Gen AI into their organizations.

Presenters: Eyal Darmon & Molly Tierney, Accenture

D7 - Collaboration to Advance Permanency

This session follows the collaboration of five child-serving organizations who have joined together to advance permanency practice alongside the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families. Presenters will discuss inclusive efforts across all levels to ensure that permanency practice is "everyone's job." Efforts include expanding our training and consultation both within our own organizations and with our state partner. We will share updated results from our evaluation that demonstrate improved permanency outcomes for youth. We have achieved this by collecting data to share at the executive level and, more recently, through case consultations at the local level.

Presenters: Kara Sabalauskas, The Home for Little Wanderers; Meredith Rapoza, Justice Resource Institute; Dawn Jewett, Plummer Youth Promise

D8 - Well-being in the Workforce: Initial Lessons Learned from the Center for Workforce Excellence & Leadership

It's no secret that the child welfare workforce faces steep challenges. Talented professionals are burning out and leaving in droves. Agency leaders are searching for better ways to recruit and retain child welfare staff and improve their organizational cultures. The federally funded Center for Workforce Excellence & Leadership (CWEL) offers concrete solutions to do things differently in workforce recruitment, retention, and well-being. This session will offer a first look at lessons learned from CWEL's site-specific strategies that address the child welfare workforce crisis. This will include information on building pathways to recruit more young professionals into careers in child welfare (especially those with lived experience), leadership development cohorts for child welfare professionals, culture keeper cohorts for Tribal child welfare agencies that prioritize cultural healing, coaching cohorts to help managers move from transactional leadership to relational leadership, and more.

Presenters: Britt Cloudsdale & Indi LaBellarte, Center for Workforce Excellence & Leadership

D9 - Turning Crisis Moments into Successful Outcomes

We work with individuals and families who have experienced trauma in a variety of ways—many with a list of failed interventions, lack of resources, and numerous systemic barriers and challenges. There is learned helplessness that can become inherent with individuals and families who have experienced trauma. Crisis and chaos are often learned behaviors to seek and obtain help. What if we could use crises as a means to positively change outcomes? What if there were real-time solutions in a crisis? What if we could manage parenting “mistakes” safely and provide encouragement rather than judgment? We know children do best in families, but we also know that safety risks to be addressed. Let's learn to use a crisis as a teachable moment rather than a detriment.

Presenter: Anne Cornell, CHRIS 180

D10 - Understanding and Responding to Cases Involving Youth and Children that Exhibit Problematic Sexual Behaviors

Sexual behaviors between children can range from experimentation and exploration that are developmentally normal to interactions that are unwanted, exploitive, and abusive in nature. Distinguishing between appropriate and problematic sexual behavior can be difficult and warrants a comprehensive and holistic approach. Over the past 5-10 years, studies continue to find that the most common drivers and amplifiers for Problematic Sexual Behaviors (PSB) are connected to adverse and traumatic experiences. We need to recognize that these sexualized behaviors are symptoms of a larger issue of dysregulation rather than problems to be managed or controlled. While these behaviors have historically been labeled problematic, they are more commonly symptomatic of past trauma experienced by the child. Therefore, we must look at PSB through a trauma lens to develop appropriate strategies. This workshop will include opportunities for discussion and interactive exercises to help attendees understand PSB and assimilate new approaches.

Presenter: Geoff Sidoli, National Children's Alliance

D11 - Understanding the New Designated Placement Requirements Under Titles IV-E and IV-B for LGBTQI+ Children

Youth who are LGBTQI+ are overrepresented in foster care, making up one in three youth in care and reporting higher rates of mistreatment and worse outcomes than their non-LGBTQI+ counterparts. The new federal regulation Designated Placement Requirements Under Title IV-E and IV-B for LGBTQI+ Children, which has an implementation date of October 1, 2026, will help ensure that all kids have access to safe and affirming placements. The presentation will cover the rule's major requirements as well as insights and suggestions on how agencies can go beyond the rule to ensure they are best supporting LGBTQI+ youth in care.

Presenters: Luce Remy, Family Equality; Currey Cook, Lambda Legal

D12 – Child Welfare’s Role in Trafficking & Running Prevention: The Power of Relationships

Your relationship with youth can be the key to reducing running behavior and child sex trafficking. In this presentation, a lived experience expert in child sex trafficking and foster care and a program manager from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children will dive into practical strategies for building supportive relationships with youth. Each time you engage with a young person is an opportunity for rebuilding trust with healthy adults, which can serve as the strongest form of trafficking prevention. This presentation will cover “The Power of Unlikely Relationships” and the importance of targeted interventions to prevent and address running behavior. Child welfare is often on the front lines of coordinating care and emergency response for these youth. YOU can make a difference.

Presenters: Samantha Sahl, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children; Oree Freeman, Lived Experience Expert

D13 - Empowering Families: Enhancing Child Welfare Services for Parents with Intellectual Disabilities

The Association for Successful Parenting (TASP) will highlight a collaborative initiative with state child welfare agencies to enhance services for families headed by parents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). TASP, a national nonprofit focused on supporting parents with IDD, has developed specialized training for child welfare staff that aims to support system improvements to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for parents with IDD. We'll discuss the development and implementation of our training programs, share success stories, and provide practical strategies for engaging and empowering families. Attendees will gain insights into the unique challenges faced by parents with intellectual disabilities and learn effective approaches to support their parenting abilities. This session will emphasize the importance of tailored services and the positive impact of our partnership on child welfare outcomes.

Presenter: Chelsea Tighe, The Association for Successful Parenting

D14 - Thinking Differently: The Next Frontier in Permanency and Family Well-Being

In the social services field, we strongly support reunification. However, we often overlook multigenerational trauma influences within the family, and families are set up to repeat problematic behaviors and relationships, creating another cycle of social service and court interventions. Only when we identify and offer some resolution for the trauma triggers that underlie problematic behaviors of the youth and caregivers can the family achieve lasting reunification and reconciliation. In this workshop, we will provide a background of some historical, cultural, and societal tenets of reconciliation. We will also present three Family Centered Treatment interventions for enhancing clinicians' opportunities to preserve and create stability and well-being for families struggling at home or returning from out-of-home placements.

Presenters: Laura Boyd & Jon McDuffie, Family Centered Treatment Foundation

Workshops E

3:05 pm – 4:35 pm

E2 – Power-Shifting Strategies: Leveraging Capacity and Resources to Improve Client Engagement

This workshop is designed to help professionals understand and implement power-shifting techniques to empower their clients. By focusing on strategies that foster client autonomy and agency, participants will learn how to create more equitable and effective client-professional relationships. In this workshop, participants will: explore the theoretical frameworks behind power dynamics in professional settings, identify how power imbalances can affect client outcomes, practice techniques to foster a more collaborative and client-centered approach, and create actionable plans to integrate power-shifting strategies into daily practice.

Presenters: Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, The Children's Home Society of New Jersey; Anayra Tua, Proyecto Nacer

E3 - Thriving Families, Safer Children: How Two Sites Are Implementing a Movement for Family Well-Being

Thriving Families, Safer Children (TFSC) is a national movement to support communities and lived experts who are developing approaches for community well-being that help families avoid child welfare involvement. This session introduces TFSC and dives deep with two sites, including recommended best practices, lessons learned, and what's next for the community-based approaches to system change in Los Angeles County and Virginia. Leaders from Los Angeles will highlight their novel approaches to participatory budgeting and participatory research. Leaders from Virginia will discuss their strategy for leveraging Family Resource Centers to meet the needs of

local communities. Attendees will be invited to consider how these strategies can be employed in their own communities.

Presenters: Justin Lee, Casey Family Programs; Ronald Brown, Families Forward Virginia; Tiffany Boyd, Advocate

E4 - Promoting a Child Welfare Workforce of Hope: Implications for Supervision

Research indicates that one of the essential reasons for high child welfare workforce turnover relates to various aspects of supervision. Burnout, job dissatisfaction, lack of work efficacy, and lack of effective leadership are some of the causes of turnover. This workshop aims to bring research to practice using what we know to promote resilience, stability, and continuity. It's an understatement to assert that child welfare work is complex and culturally influenced. This work calls on a high degree of cultural humility in caring—counter to the notion that child welfare workers are expected to be competent in everything. We are far more competent with our own cultural influences and should be encouraged to acknowledge our limitations while seeking the knowledge, wisdom, and experience of our colleagues. This workshop will aim to help us rediscover our reason for working in child welfare and emphasize the importance of demonstrating cultural humility and doing so in a safe, trusting, supportive, and hopeful work environment.

Presenter: Robert Ortega, University of Michigan School of Social Work

E5 - Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender Diverse Youth in the Child Welfare System: A Call to Action

This session will give provide everyone working with transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse (TNGD) youth who are system-involved information and strategies to promote their safety, well-being, and permanency and prevent system involvement. In response to the recent onslaught of state action targeting TNGD youth, Unicorn Solutions, Children's Rights, Lambda Legal, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy recently published Safe Havens II: We Must Affirm and Support Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender Diverse Youth in Out-of-Home Systems. Safe Havens II includes an overview of current law and policy at the state and federal level and a call to action from TNGD youth with lived experience. Seven TNGD youth with lived experience in child welfare and juvenile legal systems and with homelessness were interviewed for the report. The lived experience contributors shared their experiences and recommendations for systemic improvement. The report and their recommendations also center three critical areas: lack of efforts to prevent system involvement of TNGD youth; the needs of nonbinary youth; and system accountability measures. In this workshop, presenters will share their findings, advocacy strategies, and recommendations.

Presenters: Currey Cook, Lambda Legal; Elliott Hinkle, Unicorn Solutions; Alexandra Citrin, Center for the Study of Social Policy

E6 - The Recipe for Connecticut's Innovative Approach to CAPTA Mandates for Infants with Substance Exposure

Connecticut's blind notification approach to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act's (CAPTA) prenatal substance exposure (PSE) provisions is held up as a national model. Research indicates that Connecticut's notification policy is diverting over 50% of infants with PSE and has reduced rates of CPS reports and foster care placements. With input from state leaders in child welfare and substance use treatment, the state hospital association, local researchers, and individuals with lived expertise, this workshop will clarify the process that resulted in Connecticut's ambitious and innovative approach. More importantly, this workshop will engage participants in outlining immediate next steps and a long-term strategy to bring this groundbreaking model to their state. By the end of the workshop, participants will: evaluate Connecticut's blind notification approach, including supporting evidence; construct a framework for developing and implementing novel policies at the intersection of substance use, child welfare, and hospital practice; and propose clear steps toward achieving these preferred outcomes in their state.

Presenters: Kris Robles, Connecticut Department of Children and Families; Margaret Lloyd Sieger, KUMC; Bridget Aliaga, Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

E8 – Family-Based Treatment for Co-Occurring Child Maltreatment and Intimate Partner Violence: Five-Year Outcomes

Intimate partner violence is a global issue that carries a high lethality risk and can impact children's health and mental health throughout their lifespans. Few treatments exist that treat the entire family, including the complex needs of the partners that require intervention to eliminate violence. To address the increasing cases of co-occurring physical abuse and/or neglect and intimate partner violence, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) commissioned researchers to work with them to develop and evaluate a family-based treatment. The treatment model, Multisystemic Therapy for Intimate Partner Violence, has been implemented for six years. In this presentation we review how the treatment model was developed, how DCF works closely and collaboratively with the treatment team, and five-year clinical outcomes.

Presenters: Cynthia Cupit Swenson, Medical University of South Carolina; Elisabeth Cannata, Wheeler Clinic; Margaret Desena, Connecticut Department of Children and Families

E9 - Enhancing Post-Adoption Support with a Community Responsive Lens

The Nation Center for Enhanced Post-Adoption Support introduces the post-permanency program model, which will highlight the focus on culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible services in underserved communities. Facilitators will walk through the eight components of the model and offer strategies for ensuring that all services are responsive to the needs of all communities. We will offer examples of where components are being done well and how to adapt strategies in current services to improve cultural responsiveness and linguistic accessibility. We will take the

participants through an interactive process to model the use of focus and affinity groups in developing an array of services tailored to each population's unique needs.

Presenters: Michelle Seymore & Kathleen Bush, National Center for Enhanced Post-Adoption Support

E10 - Approaching CQI from the Inside Out: A Holistic Approach to Continuous Quality Improvement

This workshop will focus on addressing emotional reactions to data discussions. We will explore approaches to engage staff who have varying reactions to data while creating a supportive learning environment, utilizing the five emotion characters of the movie “Inside Out”—joy, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust—providing approaches to handle each. Through this collaborative workshop, our team will guide all participants to develop strategies to improve their methods and create a culture that promotes empathy driven data. Handouts will include emotion-specific strategy guides, a universal approaches overview, and session slides. Open to all skills and experience levels.

Presenters: Arleny Henriquez & Rosemary Collazo, The New York Foundling

E11 - Understanding and Addressing Urban Trauma® in Child Welfare with the Urban Trauma® Framework

This workshop will offer an in-depth exploration of the urban trauma framework and the profound impact of racial and intergenerational trauma on children and families within the child welfare system. The session will examine how systemic inequities and social determinants of health exacerbate trauma responses for marginalized populations. Participants will gain practical tools for identifying characteristics of racial trauma and strategies to foster resilience and healing within their practice. The session is designed for child welfare professionals, including social workers, educators, and administrators, and will blend interactive discussion, case studies, and evidence-based approaches to help attendees better understand and respond to the complexities of trauma in urban settings.

Presenter: Jessica Mommens, Urban Trauma

E13 - Emergency Response Child Safety and Workload: The Innovative Way a California County Improved Practice

This session will introduce participants to an innovative approach to Emergency Response Investigations that Sacramento County has implemented using systems thinking. During this workshop, participants will learn to: understand systems thinking skills to see their current practice through a systems and process lens; identify bottlenecks, batches, and backlog that are often hidden in the work and how they can be addressed through process redesign; and reproduce a new teaming mindset, changing from the viewpoint of only managing practice and people to first fixing processes, allowing people and practice to shine.

Presenters: Natalie Davey & Niku Mohanty, Sacramento County Child Protective Services; Andi West, Change and Innovation Agency

Workshops F

8:45 am – 10:15 am

F2 - Leadership Touchstone: Effective Leaders Integrate JEDI

Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) are essential values that all leaders must embrace and effectively express. In this workshop, we will examine strategies that integrate these core values into the operations of organizations and the delivery of care.

Presenters: Julie Springwater, CWLA Senior Fellow

F3 - Lessons Learned from Building and Carrying out a Transformative Research Agenda for Child Welfare with People with Lived Experience

Since 2020, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, and the William T. Grant Foundation have partnered with a broad array of experts, stakeholders, national associations, and people with lived experience to craft a transformative research agenda comprised of pressing gaps that span community-based maltreatment prevention, child protective services, out-of-home care and workforce. This presentation will focus on three areas: development of the research agenda, effective strategies for engaging people with experience, and lessons learned from carrying out the research agenda.

Presenters: Alishia Agee-Cooper, Birth Parent National Network; Norma Hatfield, Generations United Grand Voice Network; Sandra Killett, Social Justice Organizer Consultant; Alexandria Maldonado; Brittany Mihalec-Adkins, Child Trends; Robyn Robbins, Children's Trust Fund

F6 – The PRIDE Model of Practice is Back!

The *PRIDE Model of Practice* has provided a comprehensive approach to the preparation, development, and support of potential foster/resource families for the past three decades. This competency-based approach is used throughout the United States and in over 20 countries around the world. The Child Welfare League of America is happy to announce its latest iteration of the training curriculum which now includes person-first language, strength-based words and expressions, and the lived experience perspective. This workshop will highlight the topical areas that have been enhanced in this version such as: the impact adverse childhood experiences have on trust and attachment, how compassion fatigue affects household stability, and the importance of safeguarding children who use social media and technology. This workshop will also provide real scenarios on how the *PRIDE Model of Practice* can be used to make positive connections for children and reduce disruptions.

Presenter: Marcus Stallworth, CWLA

F7 - From Crisis to Thriving: How a Community's Child Protection System was Transformed in Three Years

With the highest child removal rate and the most children in out-of-home care for many years, Circuit Six of Florida's Community-Based Child Welfare system had long been viewed as the circuit that progress left behind. The situation reached a crisis when the Lead Agency made headlines when children being housed in offices fell off the roof, which led the state to seek a new partner under emergency procurement. Family Support Services, the longtime agency serving the Jacksonville community, was asked to step into Tampa Bay within 30 days and overhaul the system. Starting with culture change and a proven family preservation model, they cut removals in half, stabilized the workforce, set a record for the number of adoptions finalized, and reduced the number of children in foster care by 50%, surpassing the 20-year low for the circuit.

Presenters: Jenn Petion & Carlos Cruz, Family Support Services

F8 - What Parents Say About Supporting Families Rather than Reporting Them: Changing Mandated Reporting Practices

Mandated reporting can cause unnecessary trauma to children and families. There are extensive examples of reports submitted to child welfare agencies when the real issue was poverty. Fear of mandated reporting is a barrier that stops many families from seeking help. Join us to learn from parents who were reported to child welfare systems and are now working to improve policies and practices nationally and in their states by: promoting laws and policies that provide support for families without a child welfare referral; ensuring that poverty is not considered neglect and that economic supports can be provided; expanding community-based supports for families; training mandated reporters to help families access economic and other supports; and developing a call to action to support families rather than report them.

Presenters: Meryl Levine, Children's Trust Fund Alliance; Dee Bonnick, Alliance's Birth Parent National Network

F9 - Lessons Learned and Promising Practices to Locate and Prevent Victimization of Youth Missing from Care

"We've tried everything and we don't know what else to do!" "The only tool we have is to take away privileges." Does this sound familiar? It can be extremely difficult for caseworkers and placement staff when youth run away, and none of the tools in our toolbox are working to prevent or reduce this behavior. This panel discussion will dive into practical and innovative approaches to preventing and addressing missing incidents and victimization that may occur when youth leave care. Learn promising practices and lessons learned from a lived experience expert, a congregate care provider, a missing child locator program, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMCEC). Each respective panelist will discuss their own transformative work around serving youth who go missing from care. They will cover the aspects of their work that have proven to be

successful, the aspects that continue to be challenging, and the advocacy strategies needed to continue to improve outcomes for youth.

Presenters: Kim Parks-Bourn, The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; Erin Mason, The La Salle School; Hannah Taverna, Massachusetts Department of Children and Families; Oree Freeman, Lived Experience Expert

F10 - Building Capacity for Suicide Prevention in Child Welfare

Youth involved with the child welfare (CW) system are at a substantially higher risk for suicide than the general population, making social work students and CW staff an optimal audience for suicide prevention training. This workshop will focus on the trauma-informed and evidence-based online course Suicide Prevention for Child Welfare Involved Youth and the long-standing partnership between the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and University of Michigan through the SAMHSA-funded Transforming Youth Suicide Prevention in Michigan program. Participants will learn the unique risks that youth in the CW system have for suicide as well as techniques to express concern, ask directly about suicide, and respond to suicide risk. Presenters will also discuss the evaluation of the course and share preliminary results that demonstrate its effectiveness.

Presenters: Christina Magness & Cynthia Ewell Foster, University of Michigan; Jamielah Jenkins, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

F11 - Family Success Centers: Promoting Equity, Cultural Humility, and Strong Racial and Ethnic Identity for Families in New Jersey

This workshop will explore how Family Success Centers (FSCs) in New Jersey can be effective tools in promoting equity, cultural humility, and strong racial, cultural, and ethnic identity among Caribbean, Central, and South American families. Participants will gain insights into best practices, engage in discussions, and develop strategies for implementation. This workshop is designed to be interactive and reflective, encouraging participants to actively engage with the material and consider how they can implement these strategies in their work.

Presenters: Maritza Raimundi-Petroski & Agata Dziekonska, The Children's Home Society of New Jersey; Socorro Garcia & Edwin Simon, Heritage North Family Success Center

F12 - Virginia's Trauma-Informed Model of Service Delivery: Screening for Experiences and Strengths (SEAS) and other Toolkit Resources

Developed as part of the Linking Systems of Care state demonstration project, the Virginia HEALS Trauma-Informed Model of Service Delivery and supporting toolkit was designed to support the community and state-level implementation of strategies to better link systems of care for children, youth, and families impacted by trauma. A key part of the toolkit is the Screening for Experiences and Strengths (SEAS), which is an evidence-informed brief screening tool to identify trauma,

reactions to trauma, and protective factors in children, youth, and transitioning young adults. This workshop will provide an overview of the Model of Service Delivery and all components of the supporting toolkit, with particular emphasis on SEAS and discussion as to how it might be implemented by child- and family-serving providers across systems.

Presenters: Laurie Crawford & Stacie Vecchietti, Virginia Department of Social Services

F13 - National Collaborative for Transition-Age Youth: A Co-Designed Playbook for Improved Child Welfare Policies, Services, and Supports

The National Collaborative for Transition-Age Youth (TAY) included public agencies and young people with lived experience to elevate consensus on best practices and model standards of care for TAY in child welfare. Through a youth-centered approach, this project generated a playbook for actionable changes that is equitable, inclusive, and transforms the way TAY experience child welfare. Through a series of virtual meetings and in-person convenings, the Collaborative took insight from the project collaborators, including youth with lived experience, state and local child welfare leadership, and national stakeholders, to bring these insights to life in a playbook for actionable changes, mobilizing and equipping child welfare systems with resources needed to implement solutions led by youth with lived experience. This playbook will offer state and local-level child welfare agencies practical solutions to approach support for TAY.

Presenters: Shaquita Ogletree, Youth Villages; Ivy-Marie Washington, APHSA

F14 - Safety Culture in Child Welfare Practice: Effective Communication with Attorneys to Improve Services for Families

Have you ever struggled to communicate with attorneys and judges in the court process? If so, you are not alone. All too often in child welfare, social workers, attorneys, and judges don't have a shared understanding of the issues and challenges presented. In this session, we will focus on methods of cultivating safety culture and supporting mindful organizing. Through interactive discussions, we will explore ways to better communicate with a wide variety of perspectives through a safety culture framework. Participants will have a roadmap to take back to their work to improve ways to problem solve by listening to understand the meaning behind the language.

Presenters: Brooke Silverthorn, Casey Family Programs; Heather Kestian, ABA Center on Children and the Law; Tiffany Lindsey, University of Kentucky

10:35 am – 12:05 pm

Workshops G

G2 - Leadership Touchstone: Effective Leaders Are Purposeful and Strategic

In an operating environment that is driven by practice trends and funding sources, it is important for leaders to have a clear sense of mission, a strategic vision, and a detailed and flexible

implementation plan. In this workshop, leaders will discuss the importance of being purposeful, intentional, and comprehensive in directing the multifaceted nature of their organizations.

Presenters: Julie Springwater, CWLA Senior Fellow

G3 - Advocacy Unleashed: Empowering Change in Child Welfare

Unlock the power of advocacy in your role within the child welfare system! This dynamic workshop will dive deep into essential strategies and insights that will help you champion meaningful change in your community. Discover the do's and don'ts of engaging with your state government, and learn how to navigate the unique challenges of advocacy in both public and private sectors. Together, we'll explore practical tips that will empower you to turn your passion into action. Whether you're looking to influence policy or amplify the voices of those you serve, this session will equip you with the tools you need to make a lasting impact, right where it matters most: at home. Join us to transform your advocacy efforts and help shape a brighter future for our children and families!

Presenters: Kati Mapa, CWLA; Cassie Baudeán Plevelich, Children's Home Society of Virginia

G4 - Equity in Action: From Talk to Practice

This workshop will explore actionable strategies to transform diversity and/or racial equity discussions into concrete, measurable practices within child welfare systems. It will highlight real-world examples of how organizations have moved beyond conceptual conversations to embed equity into policies, procedures, and decision-making processes. Participants will engage in dynamic discussions and activities aimed at identifying key barriers to equity, the important voice of lived experience, role of allyship, developing tools to promote inclusion, and methods of measuring success. The session will emphasize approaches that ensure equitable outcomes for children and families—particularly those from communities that are marginalized.

Presenters: CWLA Member Equity Committee

G5 - Using Lessons Learned to Accelerate Prevention and Address Social Determinants of Health for Family Well-Being

Although every state has a well-established home visiting service network capable of providing supported in-home parent skill-based services, this service category is seriously underutilized. This is due, in part, to historical differences in approaching family support as well as misaligned reimbursement frameworks. This discrepancy is truly unfortunate when nearly 40% of children that come to the attention of protective services are under the age of five and almost 75% of the cases involve neglect, making these children likely candidates under the Family First Prevention Services Act. Our session will provide lessons learned from the field on how to build partnerships across systems and eliminate barriers that prevent robust implementation of in-home parent skill-based services that keep more families together and improve child, family, and community well-being.

Presenters: Benjamin Hazelton, Parents as Teachers National Center; Catriona Macdonald, The Association of State and Tribal Home Visiting Initiatives

G6 - A Child-Centered Approach to SSA Benefits Management through Achieving a Better Life Experience Savings Accounts

In this session we will discuss how child welfare organizations are rethinking and redesigning their Social Security benefits management practices to create comprehensive, child-centered Social Security benefits management programs. We will discuss program development and implementation processes including creating policy, engaging internal and external stakeholders, developing highly transparent processes and communications strategies, and the mechanics of leveraging financial tools that help conserve and protect Social Security benefits like Personal Needs Accounts and Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts. Attendees will learn about potential challenges and decisions an organization must consider, including decisions about equity, transparency, and the financial impact to the organization and to youth in foster care. Conserving SSA benefits and utilizing ABLE accounts is unfamiliar territory for child welfare organizations. This workshop will offer an opportunity to hear how this work has been done in other states and what lessons have been learned along the way.

Presenters: Jennifer Cunningham & Leslie Lyons, Public Consulting Group; Alex Ong, Arizona Department of Child Safety

G7 - Non-Stigmatizing and Trauma-Informed Approaches for Working with Parents Affected by Substance Misuse

Over one third of child maltreatment cases reported to child welfare systems nationwide involve parental alcohol or drug use. Developing non-stigmatizing and trauma-informed approaches for working with this population is instrumental for child welfare staff. In this presentation, we will review common misconceptions regarding substance misuse and its effects on families, and discuss evidence-informed approaches for working with parents affected by substance misuse in child welfare settings. The strategies discussed have been informed by in-depth interviews with parents who received treatment for a substance use disorder and had a history of child welfare involvement. Specific approaches include the use of non-stigmatizing and trauma-informed language, avoidance of overly punitive policies and practices, and recognizing the importance of harm reduction-focused interventions.

Presenters: Svetlana Shpiegel & Agnes Kontoh, Montclair State University

G8 - Co-Design: Balancing Outcomes and Processes with a Circle Mindset

In this interactive workshop, participants will explore the principles of co-design, emphasizing the importance of balancing outcomes and processes through a circle mindset. Drawing on the rich tradition of circle practices, we will engage in collaborative discussions and hands-on activities that foster inclusive decision-making and innovative problem-solving. Through a series of guided exercises, participants will learn how to create environments that encourage open dialogue, mutual

respect, and shared ownership of the design process. We will examine real-world scenarios and challenges faced in various fields, enabling participants to apply co-design principles to their own work.

Presenters: Rodney Solomon and Jackie Edwards

G9 - Underdogs, Inc.: How a Small Agency Bought a Mall and Put Their Youth to Work

Parents by Choice is a small provider in Stockton, California, that has taken an innovative approach to supporting the youth in their community. Starting out as an organization with a single program (Foster Care) in 2006, the agency has grown to a staff of 90 professionals with the following programs: Foster Care, Adoption, Mental Health, Transitional Housing, Prevention and Youth Workforce Development. This workshop will specifically focus on the agency's work to find creative solutions to support their transition aged youth with housing and employment support.

Presenters: Tony Yadon & Andrea Rodriguez & Alyssa Castellanos, Parents by Choice

G10 - The Attuned School Approach: Optimizing Our Brains to Create Well-Regulated and Resilient School Communities

The Attuned School Approach (ASA) is a set of social emotional learning tools, strategies, and mindsets to help teachers, administrators, staff, students, and parents learn to regulate their emotions to optimize critical thinking skills. This leads to calmer staff, students, and school communities and more effective learning environments. This training will provide an overview of the 4 Domains of the ASA: understanding the impact of chronic stress; becoming emotionally well-regulated; setting and maintaining clear expectations and limits; and adopting resilient mindsets. Participants will receive a workbook filled with staff training activities including: critical brain functions diminished by chronic stress; tracing back the origin of a person's trauma survival skills; creating motivating meanings; and reset strategy plans for adults and youth.

Presenter: Frank Picone, The Institute of the Center for Great Expectations

G11 - How Predators Groom Children, Schools, and Communities

The Beau Biden Foundation's presentation on grooming will provide child welfare professionals with critical insights and strategies to identify, prevent, and address grooming behaviors within organizational and community settings. The session will cover the development of robust policies and protocols, along with the implementation of targeted training programs for professionals, organizations, and families. Emphasizing the importance of continuous evaluation and collaboration between organizations and communities, this presentation will empower professionals to create safe environments that protect the well-being of every child.

Presenters: Patricia Dailey Lewis & Kristin Pidgeon, The Beau Biden Foundation

G12 – Kin-First Now: When Policy and Training Aren’t Enough to Change Practice

Developing a kin-first culture in child welfare begins with deliberate action and commitment to prioritizing family driven decisions to preserve family relationships even when children experience foster care. Through targeted efforts to disrupt business practices that lead to children being placed with non-relative foster families, after years with only small improvements, Virginia has significantly increased our rate of kinship placements without investing additional resources. In this presentation, the Virginia Department of Social Services, in partnership with a Local Department Director, will share how the collaborative Kin First Now process, using data and investing in workforce development, has created urgency and refocused Virginia’s child welfare system on placing children in foster care with kin, resulting in changed practice and movement toward a kin-first culture.

Presenters: Em Parente, Virginia Department of Social Services; Denise Gallop, Norfolk Department of Human Services; Garrett Jones, Child Welfare Information Gateway

G13 - Innovative Assessment Practices and Cross-Sectional Collaborations for Youth Entering Care: The RAPID Program in Oregon

Complex presentations, inherent societal biases, and siloed community systems create significant oversights and delayed supports for youth in foster care. We asked the question: How can we better serve these youth from the onset? In the tri-county region of northwest Oregon, community players built an innovative program for youth entering state custody. All youth ages 1-18 years receive an evaluation by a psychologist that is set up in a trauma-/neurodiversity-informed and data-driven manner. The resulting assessment reports not only outline the child’s individual needs but also serve as a platform for services to align. The focus of this workshop is a framework on how to engage youth entering care across developmental stages, more accurately identify functional strengths and challenges early on, and rally multi-system support. Additionally, the discussion will cover how to use screening data to advocate and build a more supportive path ahead.

Presenters: Roxanne Edwinson, MindSights; Holly Hermes, Legacy Medical Group; Lorena Campbell, Advocate

G14 - Live Respect: A Healthy Masculinity and Life Skills Program for Boys and Young Men

Preventing violence against girls and women requires shared commitments within communities and across systems. This workshop will examine Live Respect, an evidence-based healthy masculinity and life skills program for boys and young men. The curriculum has been implemented with youth in schools, youth sports teams, juvenile detention centers, and youth wellness retreats. An evaluation of the curriculum conducted with 300 boys and young men, found at baseline 19% of participants understood the meaning of consent. At completion, this figure rose to 75%. Attendees will learn about the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum, review the 12 sessions, and hear lessons learned from implementation of the program with youth ages 12-18, across 15 states. Implications for youth, family, and community well-being will be discussed.

*Presenters: Qiana Cryer-Coupet, Georgia State University; Paul Mulbah Jr. & Jesus “Chucho” Ruiz
Vai Sevoi – Eudeve (Opata) Tlamanalcah, A Call to Men*