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**April 9-11 • Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill  
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# SIBLINGS BELONG TOGETHER

Thank you for sharing our belief that a permanent family is possible for **all siblings** waiting in foster care ...  
no matter their story.

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I am honored to join the CWLA Board of Directors and staff in welcoming you to Washington, DC, for the 2025 CWLA National Conference: *Inspiring Change, Igniting Progress.*

Today, children, families, and those who serve them face unprecedented uncertainty, with rapidly shifting federal policies and funding changes. For over a century, CWLA has remained committed to evolving our response to meet the ever-changing needs of children and families. To meet this moment, CWLA has launched a new strategic plan—a roadmap for the years ahead. At its core is the creation of a bold, comprehensive national policy agenda designed to support all families.

The children we serve need champions at every level—federal, state, and local. That’s why your voice matters more than ever. We hope you will join us on Thursday, April 10 for Advocacy Day, when we’ll take our collective knowledge and experience to Capitol Hill to educate members of Congress on the real-world impact of federal policy decisions.

How we rise to navigate this moment will shape the future of child well-being. Over the next three days, we will focus on innovative yet practical and actionable strategies to effect change for those who need it most. Together, we can build a future where every child grows up in a safe, stable, and supportive family and community.



*Linda S. Spears, CWLA President and CEO*



## CWLA Conference Planning Committee

*A warm thank you to the following individuals for their contributions and assistance:*

Committee Chair:

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*Juvenile Welfare Board  
of Pinellas County*

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and Family Services*

**Gary Taylor**  
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**Krystal Thompson**  
*Children’s Home  
Society of Virginia*



# Schedule-at-a-Glance

## Wednesday, April 9

8:00 am – 6:00 pm	Registration
10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Members-Only Pre-Conference Event
12:15 pm – 2:00 pm	Opening Plenary & Lunch
2:20 pm – 3:50 pm	Workshops A
4:10 pm – 5:40 pm	Workshops B
5:45 pm – 6:45 pm	Reception in Exhibit Hall



## Thursday, April 10

### Advocacy Day!

8:00 am – 6:00 pm	Registration and CWLA Bookstore
8:00 am – 8:30 am	Coffee and Snacks in Exhibit Hall
8:30 am – 10:00 am	Advocacy Day Plenary
10:20 am – 11:50 am	Workshops C
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Social Lunch

## Thursday, April 10 continued

1:15 pm – 2:45 pm	Workshops D
3:05 pm – 4:35 pm	Workshops E
4:55 pm – 5:55 pm	Roundtable Rooms
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Reception in Exhibit Hall

## Friday, April 11

8:15 am – 2:30 pm	Registration and CWLA Bookstore
8:15 am – 8:45 am	Coffee
8:45 am – 10:15 am	Workshops F
10:35 am – 12:05 pm	Workshops G
12:20 pm – 2:00 pm	Closing Plenary & Lunch
2:30 pm – 5:30 pm	Training Institute

## Saturday, April 12

9:00 am – 9:30 am	Coffee
9:30 am – 12:30 pm	Training Institute

## CWLA Conference App

Make sure to download CWLA's conference event app for easy access to the schedule, workshop handouts, and session evaluation forms. For every evaluation form you fill out, your name will be **entered into a drawing to win a free conference ticket** for next year!

How to join: Scan the QR code and download the Whova app. Create an account with the email you registered with.

*Having trouble joining? Speak to the registration desk!*



A young girl with light brown hair is blowing a large cloud of colorful confetti. The confetti consists of small, irregular pieces in shades of blue, pink, white, and yellow. She is wearing a light-colored, lace-trimmed dress. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of colors, suggesting an indoor celebration.

# Kids can't wait and families are worth it

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## Conference Schedule

### Registration

8:00 am – 6:00 pm

*Location: Ballroom Level*

### CWLA Members-Only Session on Permanency for Children and Youth

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

*Location: Congressional A – Lobby Level*

We are pleased to partner with the Dave Thomas Foundation to host this special session exclusively for CWLA members to explore ways to ensure that permanency can be threaded across child welfare to strengthen the well-being of children, youth, parents, and families. During this session, we will identify the major challenges for permanency practice, what is missing in the research, and policy recommendations to members of Congress, their staff, and the administration regarding work with children, youth, parents, and families to achieve permanency. Participants will help us explore whether and how a special focus of the *CWLA Standards of Excellence in Child Welfare Services* can help drive stronger permanency outcomes. Join us to discuss the strategies for applying this reframing to our practice, policy, and research and share your insights into the best approach for addressing child, youth, and family permanency.

**Presenters:** Rita Soronen, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption; Darlene Allen, Adoption Rhode Island; Rebecca Jones-Gaston, Consultant; Debbie Riley, Center for Adoption Support and Education; Anne Cornell, Cornell Consulting



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### Opening Plenary and Lunch

12:15 am – 2:00 pm

*Location: Regency ABCD – Ballroom Level*



**Linda S. Spears**

*CWLA President & CEO*

As the landscape of child and family well-being continues to evolve, CWLA remains committed to leading with vision, strategy, and action. This opening plenary will set the stage for the conference with remarks from CWLA President and CEO Linda Spears, followed by an engaging panel discussion

featuring CWLA board members and leaders from the field. Together, they will explore how CWLA is responding to today's challenges and charting a path forward to support children and families in a rapidly changing world. Join us as we kick off the conference with insight, inspiration, and a shared commitment to shaping the future.



Several members of the CWLA board, as well as staff, enjoyed a productive time together at the February 2025 board meeting.

## Workshops A

2:20 pm – 3:50 pm

### A1 Hot Topics in Child Welfare Policy: Keeping up with Capitol Hill

*Location: Regency Foyer – Ballroom Level*

In this workshop, participants will dive into two critical components of the current federal child welfare policy discussion: Medicaid and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). As Congress navigates budget reconciliation, understanding the potential impacts of these programs is essential for child welfare professionals and advocates. We will explore the current legislative landscape, key proposals affecting Medicaid and SSBG funding, and how changes could reshape services for children and families. Attendees will gain insights into the ongoing policy debates and learn strategies for staying informed and engaged in advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill.

**Presenters:** Elisabeth Wright Burak, Georgetown University Center for Children and Families; John Sciamanna, CWLA; Marielle Kress, Senate Finance Committee (invited)

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

*Location: Congressional B – Lobby Level*

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; Jodi Hill Lilly, Connecticut Department of Children and Families; David Caprio, Children's Friend Rhode Island

### A3 Navigating Challenges in Implementing Best Practices in Culturally Sensitive Contexts

*Location: Yosemite – 2nd Floor*

The challenges in implementing best practices in culturally sensitive contexts can be diverse and complex. These include cultural differences, resistance to change, a lack of cultural understanding, and ineffective communication. Additionally, measuring the impact of new practices in culturally sensitive settings can be challenging, particularly when success indicators are not well-defined or are difficult to quantify. In many culturally sensitive areas, economic, human, and technological resources may be scarce, making it difficult to implement new practices. Conflicting interests among different groups within the community can further complicate the adoption of new practices. Join the former Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of the Family to examine innovative approaches to tackling these challenges and enhancing cultural sensitivity in practice.

**Presenter:** Ciení Rodríguez Troche, 100i Solutions, LLC

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

*Location: Glacier – 2nd Floor*

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

**Location:** Congressional A – Lobby Level

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 levels 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

**Location:** Bryce – 2nd Floor

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 How to Identify and Engage Community Partners: Lessons Learned from Child Welfare Community Collaborations

**Location:** Yellowstone – 2nd Floor

In this interactive workshop session, we will discuss strategies for identifying and engaging community partners and forming multi-system collaboratives 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 more than 1,300 surveys and 244 interviews with CWCC grantees and their partners in 13 states. We'll share real-world examples of how CWCC projects worked to identify which organizations to partner with, how and when to identify those partners, and what factors may influence success in building and maintaining partnerships. Workshop participants will have time to reflect on these lessons learned 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



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

*Location: Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*

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.

*Presenter: Carla Stover, Yale University Child Study Center*

## A9 Partnering to Provide Legal Services for Families Providing Kinship Care: Tips and Tools

*Location: Grand Teton – 2nd Floor*

Join us to explore tips and tools that kinship service professionals can use to partner with legal providers to offer necessary legal supports to families providing kinship care. 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 &

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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**

**Location:** Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level

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 evidence-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**

**Location:** Sequoia – 2nd Floor

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**

**Location:** Concord – Ballroom Level

Hotline systems serve as a crucial point of contact for mandated reporters and the general public to report child maltreatment. However, 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*

## A13 How to Work Together to Foster Sibling Connections

*Location: Everglades – 2nd Floor*

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**

### B1 Putting the Practice Back in Best Practices: CWLA Standards of Excellence – Part 1

*Location: Congressional A – Lobby Level*

This interactive 90-minute session will provide background to CWLA's *Standards of Excellence for Child Welfare Services* and their purpose, the cross-cutting themes across the various programmatic areas, and how they are used to help agencies improve their practices. Participants will have an opportunity to hear about CWLA's efforts to modernize its aspirational *Standards of Excellence* to meet the future direction of the field and drive the needed changes while building on what we know works. Participants will have opportunity to explore and inform the future direction of CWLA's *Standards of Excellence*, and discuss the implementation tools and support needed to effectively embed them in the operation and

practices of the organization for improved outcomes for children and families.

*Presenters: Julie Collins, CWLA; TBD*

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

*Location: Congressional B – Lobby Level*

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; Yaridis Garcia, Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County; Carl Ayers, Virginia Department of Social Services*

### B3 Civics for Child Welfare: Navigating Government and Shaping Policy for Kids

*Location: Regency Foyer – Ballroom Level*

This workshop provides an essential overview of how the U.S. government functions, focusing on the legislative process, the roles of the three branches of government, and the process for passing laws. Participants will learn how these systems impact child welfare policies and how they can influence decision-makers to advocate for the well-being of children and families. Whether you are a child welfare professional, advocate, or lived expert with a story to tell, this session will equip you with the knowledge and tools to engage with government effectively and work towards meaningful change in child welfare policy.

*Presenters: Kati Mapa, CWLA; Tim Briceland-Betts, CWLA Senior Fellow*



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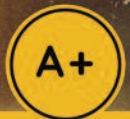
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## B4 It Takes More Than a Village: Enhancing Child Welfare Systems and Outcomes Through Managed Care

*Location: Yellowstone – 2nd Floor*

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

*Location: Yosemite – 2nd Floor*

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

*Location: Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level*

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

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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**

**Location:** *Everglades – 2nd Floor*

This presentation will describe the creation of a new unit within Ongoing Child Protection Case Management at Hennepin County, Minnesota, 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*

## **B8 Housing as a Key to Family Stability: Transforming Systems through Cross-Sector Collaboration**

**Location:** *Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*

The homelessness and child welfare systems share common goals, to keep families safe and stable, and to keep families together. This session will allow

participants to explore how cross-sector partnerships and approaches can transform systems to effectively serve families who are at the intersection of the homelessness and child welfare systems. Through data-sharing agreements and subsequent efforts, we understand that families involved with the child welfare system are often interacting with multiple systems, such as the homelessness system, and that quality affordable and supportive housing is critical to family stability, well-being, and positive outcomes. This session will provide an overview of data sharing efforts in local jurisdictions and how findings from these efforts have informed the implementation and expansion of a cross-sector program, Keeping Families Together, which brings the homelessness and child welfare systems together to provide housing opportunities for families.

**Presenters:** *Andrew Johnson & Maya Saxena, CSH*

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

**Location:** *Concord – Ballroom Level*

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

*Location: Sequoia – 2nd Floor*

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 Greene, Office of the Secretary of Defense

## B11 Evaluation of Kinship Navigator Case Management in Washington State

*Location: Glacier – 2nd Floor*

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:** 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

*Location: Lexington – Ballroom Level*

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



### Play Booth Bingo!

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

**Location:** *Grand Teton – 2nd Floor*

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 work-force 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 & Calvin Gilchrist, JusticeWorks YouthCare*

## B14 Child Sexual Abuse within the Family: A Focus on Fathers and Father Figures

**Location:** *Bryce – 2nd Floor*

Child sexual abuse continues to be a problem in our society despite research claiming that it is decreasing. Professionals from many disciplines touch these cases and intersect with families where it is occurring and there is no child disclosure and a lack of physical evidence. In this workshop, we seek to draw attention to the assessment that can be offered which includes and invites contribution from the whole family unit. Special attention will be focused on cultivating opportunities for child disclosure, focusing on enhanced understanding of psycho somatic symptomology, family environments and potential overlapping abuse issues that can present in families. Engagement with caregivers who were not the offending person is expanded on as the role of mothers is crucial to child safety and recovery.

Lastly, cooperation with those suspected of offending is discussed as the use of empathy, engagement strategy and technique ensures that a wholistic assessment is completed. This interactive session will also provide resources that participants can use in their work.

**Presenter:** *Gerald Walsh, Child Abuse Investigator, Trainer and Writer*

## Welcome Reception in Exhibit Hall

**5:45 pm – 6:45 pm**

**Location:** *Columbia ABC – Ballroom Level*

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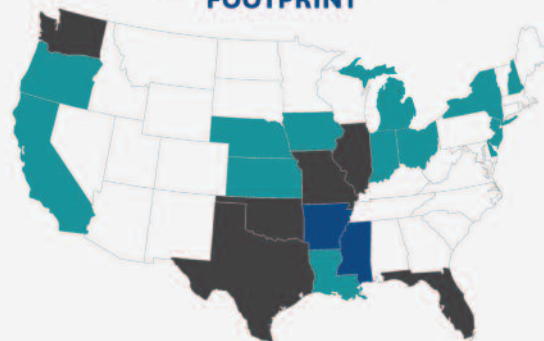
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## Coffee & Snacks in Exhibit Hall

8:00 am – 8:30 am

*Location: Columbia ABC – Ballroom Level*

## Registration and CWLA Bookstore

8:00 am – 6:00 pm

*Location: Ballroom Level*



**Congresswoman**  
**Gwen Moore (D-WI)**



**Congressman**  
**Jason Smith (R-MO)**  
*invited*



**Senator**  
**Susan Collins (R-ME)**  
*invited*

## ADVOCACY DAY PLENARY

### Envisioning a National Family Policy Agenda

8:30 am – 10:00 am

*Location: Regency ABCD – Ballroom Level*

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting political priorities, it has become increasingly clear that the current social safety net is inadequate to meet the needs of children and families in our communities. Now is the right time for us to envision a better way. This plenary session will explore the concept of a national family policy agenda, focusing on the key elements that should be prioritized to support the well-being of children and families across the country. A panel of child and family policy experts will join CWLA President and CEO Linda S. Spears to discuss the policy advancements needed to address the evolving challenges families face and how we can collectively work towards shaping policies that foster healthier, more resilient families and communities.

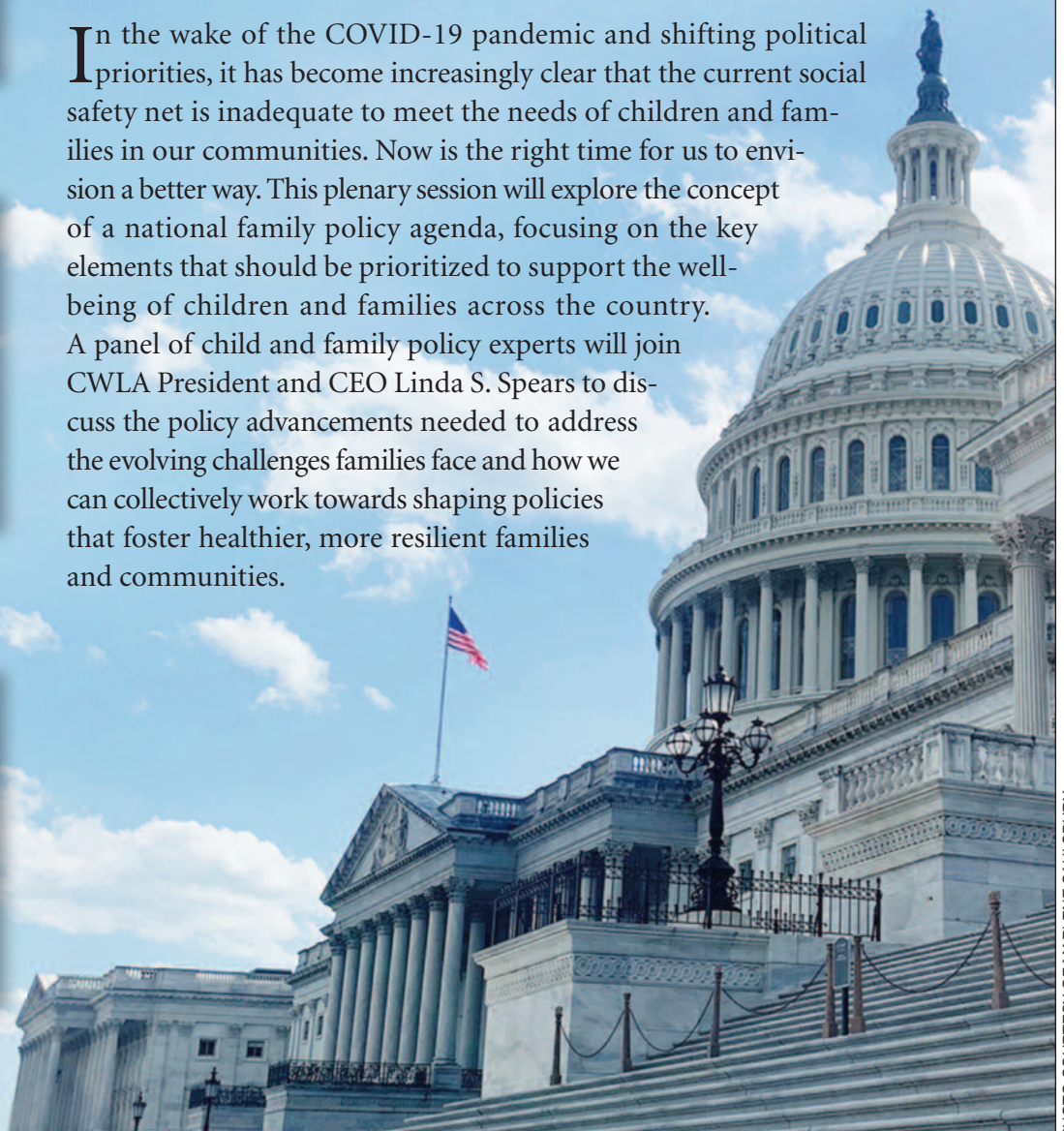


PHOTO COURTESY OF MARLENE SAULSBURY

## Workshops C

10:20 am – 11:50 am

### C1 Putting the Practice Back in Best Practices: CWLA Standards of Excellence – Part 2

*Location: Congressional A – Lobby Level*

This interactive 90-minute session will build on the information shared in the first part (AX) but take a deeper dive into the new practices that will be required while acknowledging the importance of strengthening the ones that we know work. Participants will have an opportunity to share what these practices look like on the ground for their frontline staff and the challenges that staff and agencies are experiencing in making these practice shifts. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the practice challenges created by key policies and discuss how the implementation of the *Standards of Excellence* can be used to address these challenges.

*Presenters: Julie Collins, CWLA; TBD*

### C2 Building the Capacity to Conduct Equitable Research by Working with Community Representatives and People with Lived Experience

*Location: Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level*

This presentation will focus on planning and payment strategies for working with Community Representatives and People with Lived Experience based on our work with the national research agenda initiative. For nearly five years teams of people with lived experience, agency leaders, policy experts and researchers have been working to develop and apply a DEI framework and authentic engagement strategies to build a Research Agenda for a 21st Century Child & Family Well-Being System. We have learned a lot through this national initiative and will share some practical resources and tools we have built in doing this work in a cost-effective way.

*Presenters: Jessica Elm, Like the Tree Consulting; Sandra Killett, Social Justice Organizer Consultant; Robyn Robbins, Children's Trust Fund; Peter Pecora, Casey Family Programs*

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

*Location: Congressional B – Lobby Level*

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. 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*



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## C4 Coaching for Leadership Development: Understanding the Intangible Benefits of Coaching

**Location: Grand Teton – 2nd Floor**

This workshop will explore the intangible benefits of coaching in Health and Human Service Organization as well as nonprofits. This interactive workshop will explore the benefits of coaching in situations where the Return on Investment is not measured by increased sales, net profit or increased tangible product. Participants will walk away with materials to explore embedding coaching into their leadership development approach.

**Presenter:** Gary Taylor, CWLA Senior Fellow

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

**Location: Yosemite – 2nd Floor**

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

*Location: Regency Foyer – Ballroom Level*

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, can lead to further trauma, and can 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

*Location: Glacier – 2nd Floor*

This session will focus on the role of the Qualified Individual (QI) when implementing the Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTTP) requirements under Family First. Chapin Hall and QI/QRTTP 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; Yunqi Zhang, New York City Administration for Children's Services*

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

*Location: Everglades – 2nd Floor*

This session will explore effective partnerships between New York City Public Schools and Administration for Children's Services (ACS)/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; Chris Tan, ACS Education Office*

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

*Location: Bryce – 2nd Floor*

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 judgment-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.

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

## C10 Building a Families First Recovery Home Network Model

*Location: Concord – Ballroom Level*

At Maryville Academy, we had a vision to provide mothers who are newly sober 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

*Location: Sequoia – 2nd Floor*

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

*Location: Yellowstone – 2nd Floor*

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

*Location: Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*

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 Ferruffino & Amber Gillum, South Carolina Department of Social Services; Yasmin Grewal-Kök, Chapin Hall



## C14 Better Support for Children with Complex Behavioral Needs: A Systems & Practices Approach

*Location: Lexington – Ballroom Level*

Many state agencies struggle to provide community services and support to children with “complex conditions.” Children are living in hotels, emergency rooms, child welfare offices, and are sent to facilities out of state. Public officials and providers are challenged to meet the needs of children who also have both mental and cognitive disabilities such as autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, and/or intellectual disabilities. States report that there are few practitioners who know how to treat children with complex needs. This session will describe a project led by the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS), National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NAMHPD), The NADD, and the National Association of State Head Injury

Administrators (NASHIA) funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) and Administration for Community Living (ACL). Specifically, this project aims to expand our understanding of children whose needs are described as complex and to explore how their needs can be met. We look at the reasons for their complexities, strategies to help them recover and learn, and system approaches to implementing successful strategies.

*Presenters: Mary Sowers, Stacy Nonnemacher & Nancy Thaler, NASDDDS*

### Social Lunch

**12:00 pm – 1:00 pm**

*Location: Regency ABCD – Ballroom Level*

Join your colleagues for a mix-and-mingle social lunch in the ballroom. No programming is scheduled, so you can relax and refresh before heading to Capitol Hill for congressional visits or to the next set of workshops.

## CWLA Membership

At CWLA, we know that collaboration is key to improving the lives of children and families. That’s why we foster and connect a diverse coalition of child-serving professionals who partner with us to fulfill our mission of advancing policies, strategies, and best practices that result in better outcomes for children, youth, and families.

CWLA provides members with the guidance and resources necessary to build on what works and invent what’s needed. Members influence the direction of child welfare by connecting with federal lawmakers, serving on national committees, and sharing ideas with peers around the country. Staff at all levels of member organizations can fully participate in membership benefits, helping to ensure that the families they serve have a national voice.

CWLA invites everyone entrusted with the well-being of children to join us and create change that matters for those who need it most. Conference attendees can take advantage of a special membership sale: **30% off all new organizational memberships through the end of May!** Speak with a CWLA staff member or board member to learn more.



## 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

*Location: Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*

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*

### D2 Putting the Practice Back in Best Practices: Simulation Training

*Location: Regency Foyer – Ballroom Level*

This interactive workshop will demonstrate how simulation training best practices for the protection of children can help enhance child and family well-being. We will begin with a discussion of best practices based on the new CWLA *Standards of Excellence* focused on protecting children: establishing psychological safety, cultural humility, problem-based learning, the importance

of maintaining small training cohorts, strength-based debriefing, and worker wellness. The presenters will share simulation videos that show worker interactions assessing family wellness, using the NCTSN critical thinking framework followed by trauma responsive debriefing practices. Discussions will highlight the importance of practicing skills in psychologically safe environments to promote skill integration and retention of a more prepared workforce. The workshop will conclude with a question-and-answer session.

*Presenters: Betsy Goulet & Amy Wheeler, University of Illinois Springfield*

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

*Location: Glacier – 2nd Floor*

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

*Location: Concord – Ballroom Level*

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

**Location:** Everglades – 2nd Floor

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.

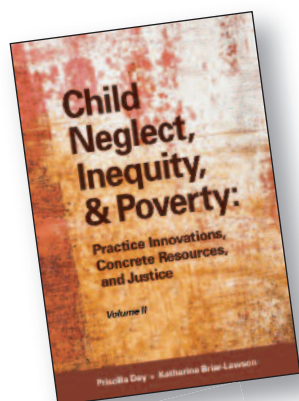
**Presenters:** Debbie Riley and Laura Ornelas, Center for Adoption Support and Education; Alan Vietze, CWLA Senior Fellow; Cheryl Fisher, Centene; Wendy Perlmutter Finkel, JCCA; Bonni Goodwin, University of Oklahoma

## D6 Gen AI: Transforming Work force and Services in Child Welfare

**Location:** Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level

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.

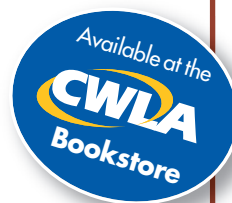
**Presenters:** Eyal Darmon & Molly Tierney, Accenture



## Child Neglect, Inequity, & Poverty: Practice Innovations, Concrete Resources, and Justice

**Volume II** Edited by Priscilla Day and Katharine Briar-Lawson

*Child Neglect, Inequity, & Poverty: Practice Innovations, Concrete Resources, and Justice* brings to light the critical needs of families who are vulnerable and their economic and concrete resource challenges. Solid arguments, along with research, showcase the need for more investments in families—especially families in poverty—who are at risk of being reported for child neglect. Innovative models of practice in both public and Tribal child welfare are featured, as are integrative approaches involving behavioral health and economic supports.



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## D7 Collaboration to Advance Permanency

*Location: Sequoia – 2nd Floor*

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

*Location: Lexington – Ballroom Level*

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

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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**

**Location:** Yosemite – 2nd Floor

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. 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 need to be addressed. Let’s learn to use a crisis as a teachable moment rather than a detriment.

**Presenter:** Anne Cornell, Cornell Consulting

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

**Location:** Congressional B – Lobby Level

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 five to ten years, studies have found 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**

**Location:** Bryce – 2nd Floor

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

**Location:** Yellowstone – 2nd Floor

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 specified 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

**Location:** Grand Teton – 2nd Floor

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

**Location:** Congressional A – Lobby Level

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

### CWLA Conference Survey



Can you spare a few minutes to take our conference survey? Your insights on conference topics, speakers, and pathways to move the field forward will help CWLA shape its direction over the next year.



## Workshops E

3:05 pm – 4:35 pm

### E1 The Nuts and Bolts: Building Children's Systems of Care that Reduce Child Welfare System Involvement

*Location: Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*

This session will explore how New Jersey's Children's System of Care was designed, built, and integrated in critical ways with its child welfare system to support the child welfare system in achieving and, over time, sustaining the lowest foster care entry rates and per capita child welfare group care rates in the nation.

**Presenters:** Joseph Ribsam, Annie E. Casey Foundation; Elizabeth Manley, Innovations Institute at UConn School of Social Work; De Lacy Davis, New Jersey Alliance of Family Support Organizations

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

*Location: Yellowstone – 2nd Floor*

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



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

*Location: Regency Foyer – Ballroom Level*

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

*Location: Congressional A – Lobby Level*

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

*Location: Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level*

This session will give provide everyone working with transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse (TNGD)

## ACCREDITATION MATTERS

*Best practices in quality improvement involves reevaluating actions that measure performance of business and service delivery—especially in these changing times.*

#### Guiding Principles of CYS Standards:

Child/Youth and family-driven services

Promotes wellness and resiliency

Cultural and Linguistic focused

Strengths based

Trauma informed

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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**

**Location:** Bryce – 2nd Floor

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

## **E7 How Can the System of Care Approach Improve Outcomes for Children and Families Involved with Child Welfare?**

**Location:** Yosemite – 2nd Floor

There is increasing interest among states to engage in cross-system, comprehensive solutions amid the rising policy attention to addressing the behavioral health crisis of children and youth. Systems of Care, when implemented well, can prevent involvement in child welfare and juvenile justice systems, reduce entries into foster care, eliminate custody relinquishment, and boarding at psychiatric hospitals. This workshop will provide an overview of the System of Care approach, clarifying what it is and the benefits of implementation, as seen in jurisdictions like Ohio, Oklahoma, New Jersey, and New Hampshire. These states worked to ensure coordinated, effective service delivery that included expanding the availability of home- and community-based services to meet families where they are, and blending and braiding funding streams effectively, including Medicaid.

**Presenters:** Ruby Goyal-Carkeek & Jordan Carl, Center for Health Care Strategies

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

*Location: Glacier – 2nd Floor*

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 Racial Wellness: A Guide to Liberatory Healing

*Location: Everglades – 2nd Floor*

Racial wellness is both a personal and collective journey. It empowers individuals and communities to move beyond survival and into spaces of thriving, joy, and liberation, despite the constraints of systemic oppression. It is deeply tied to the broader vision of racial equity and justice. This discussion-heavy session will focus on healing from racial trauma, building resilience, and fostering liberatory practices that support collective and individual empowerment. Participants will leave with tools to navigate racial dynamics, embrace their identities, and create supportive environments for healing and growth.

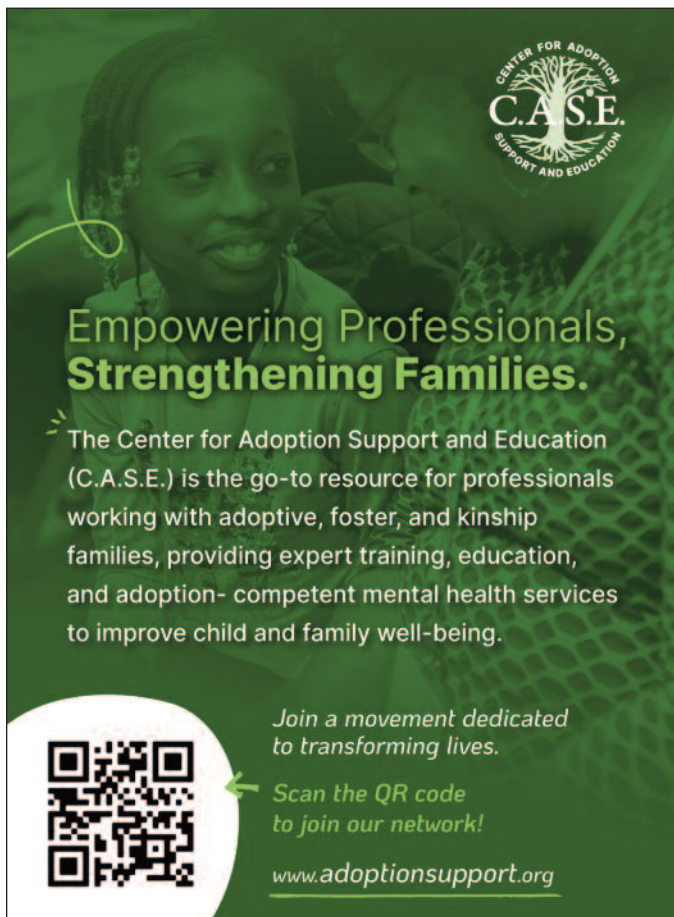
**Presenter:** Deborah Wilson Gadsden, CWLA

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

*Location: Congressional B – Lobby Level*

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



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## E11 Understanding & Addressing Urban Trauma® in Child Welfare with the Urban Trauma® Framework

*Location: Concord – Ballroom Level*

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

## E12 Collaboration, Cooperation, & Communication: Living the Spirit of ICWA

*Location: Sequoia – 2nd Floor*

Collaborative relationships between the State and Tribes within its borders are key to improving the services and outcomes to all American Indian/Alaska Native families served. While the Supreme Court has upheld ICWA, a key strategy to ensuring effective implementation of ICWA at the state level are these relationships. Communication by frontline staff, both state and Tribal, sustains these relationships that are the foundation of embodying the spirit of ICWA. This session will discuss the strategies Nebraska CFS is using as part of their federal Tribal/state grant to improve the collaborative relationships between the State and Tribes within its borders and provide participants with strategies and tools they can use within their states.

**Presenters:** Lucille Echohawk, CWLA Senior Fellow; Angi Cavaliere, Casey Family Programs Indian Child & Family Well-Being Program; Amanda Docter, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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

*Location: Grand Teton – 2nd Floor*

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

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## ROUNDTABLE ROOMS

4:55 pm – 5:55 pm

Intimate group conversations facilitated by CWLA partners

### Rebuilding the Plane While Flying It: How Will Public Agency Leaders Continue to Move the Work Forward Given Funding Cuts?

**Location:** Congressional B – Lobby Level

What do current and future federal funding cuts mean for public agencies, their partners, and most importantly for the children and families they serve? Experience teaches us the impact policy and budget decisions have on the systems that support programs, resources, and services for children, youth, young adults, and families. How can agencies prepare for and manage changes in ways that sustain essential services to support the communities, children and families they and their partners serve? This session offers participants an opportunity to share ideas and strategies with colleagues for dealing with current and potential funding shifts while effectively engaging and supporting children, families and communities.

**Facilitator:** Julie Springwater, CWLA Senior Fellow

### Finding Our Way in the Dark: How Will Nonprofit Leaders Continue to Move the Work Forward Given Funding Cuts?

**Location:** Congressional A – Lobby Level

With the prospect of massive cuts in federal spending, and seismic shifts in public policy that threaten the social contract between government and communities that are vulnerable, what are nonprofit and public child welfare agencies to do? How will the relationship between child welfare agencies, and the families they serve, be impacted by a shrinking pool of resources, and will the reductions in services lead to increased incidents of maltreatment? Safe children, strong families, and supportive communities are dependent on a fragile combination of public and private resources. What lies ahead for the next couple of years as it relates to those partnerships? This session will provide a forum for sharing ideas and innovations for maintaining the profession's commitment to high-quality, accessible, and supportive services for children and their families.

**Facilitator:** Paul DiLorenzo, CWLA Senior Fellow

### Optimizing Care: A Roundtable on Systems Strategies for Children with Complex Needs

**Location:** Grand Teton – 2nd Floor

This roundtable brings together key players in policy development, program design, and service provision for children with complex support needs. Our discussion aims to learn from participants about effective systems strategies and practices—including collaboration methods, financing approaches, and clinical treatments—that can help states develop functional and comprehensive Systems of Care for children who are vulnerable.

**Facilitators:** Mary Sowers, Stacy Nonnemacher & Nancy Thaler, NASDDDS



### Exploring the Beliefs and Barriers Impacting Permanency for Children in Foster Care

**Location:** Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level

Every year, thousands of youth age out of foster care in the United States without a permanent family. As child welfare professionals, what barriers do you face in achieving legal permanency for the children you serve? How have you worked to overcome those barriers? Join your peers for an engaging roundtable discussion as we unpack these barriers as well as explore promising strategies for finding permanent homes for every child—no matter their story. Participants will also get a preview of research conducted by The Harris Poll, on behalf of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, which surveyed child welfare professionals across the United States about the issues impacting permanency for children in foster care.

**Facilitators:** Julianne Nichols & Tim Kelso, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption



## Building Resilient Systems: Evidence-Based Practice Scaling in a Challenging Workforce Landscape

**Location:** *Glacier – 2nd Floor*

We've all felt burnout, times when we feel overwhelmed and struggle to maintain a healthy emotional or physical balance. Often, our main goal of supporting families gets overshadowed by struggles with staff retention, resource shortages, and sustainable implementation of EBPs practices. This roundtable will be a space for child welfare staff to share their experiences, innovative solutions, and hard-earned insights. Join us for an honest, supportive discussion where we break down real challenges, share practical strategies, explore new innovations to support the workforce, and connect with colleagues who truly understand the complexities of our work.

**Facilitator:** *Emily Smith Goering, Lyssn*

## Addressing the Challenges of Out-of-State Placements

**Location:** *Yosemite – 2nd Floor*

Please join us for a roundtable discussion focused on how states are addressing increased placements out of state. We'll discuss how these placements are tracked, strategies for keeping youth in state, and how to bring home those placed out of state—with a focus on specialized placements across the continuum of care. Participants are invited to share techniques that have been successful for their organizations and where they are facing challenges. Together, we'll learn new approaches, best practices, and innovative ideas from peers and industry experts.

**Facilitators:** *Kristi Plotner & Daniel Harlan, Alvarez and Marsal Public Sector*

## Child Welfare and Medicaid: How Two Systems Can Reinforce Each Other

**Location:** *Yellowstone – 2nd Floor*

This interactive roundtable will focus on Medicaid rules and funding as they relate to children and families. We will discuss critical topics, including Medicaid and Managed Care, specialty health plans, behavioral health innovations, the Medicaid funding landscape, and key funding streams such as waivers. Participants will explore actionable strategies for fostering collaboration between

child welfare system partners and Medicaid health plans to improve outcomes for children and families. Additionally, we will discuss upcoming changes and emerging opportunities within Medicaid, equipping attendees with insights to navigate and leverage the evolving landscape effectively.

**Facilitators:** *Katie Olse & Rachel Marsh, Sellers Dorsey*

## Trauma-informed Drug Testing: Key Considerations for Child Welfare

**Location:** *Everglades – 2nd Floor*

Trauma is known to disproportionately affect individuals with substance use disorders (SUD) and those who are involved in the child welfare system. While many child welfare agencies have adopted trauma-informed approaches that address language, environment, and treatment services, traditional drug testing practices often remain unchanged and risk being re-traumatizing. This roundtable discussion will explore the challenges and opportunities for integrating trauma-informed principles into drug testing practices. Participants will share their current drug-testing protocols and discuss the feasibility of incorporating a more compassionate and supportive environment for individuals and families navigating substance use challenges. Participants will help rethink traditional approaches in child welfare agencies that can reduce harm, enhance engagement, and ultimately improve outcomes.

**Facilitator:** *Philip Breitenbucher, California Baptist University*

## Amplifying Public Progress through Private Sector Partnerships

**Location:** *Lexington – Ballroom Level*

This session will feature an interactive discussion about the ways that private providers, funders, and other stakeholders can partner with public agencies to catalyze needed improvements. Join us to hear about unique ways that jurisdictions have leveraged private sector support to implement system changes that weren't possible through public resources alone. Attendees will have the opportunity to share their insights and experiences in developing effective partnerships to improve systems.

**Facilitators:** *Britany Binkowski & Katja Russell, Youth Villages*

## ROUNDTABLE ROOMS *continued*

### Leveraging AI-Powered Intake Tools: Enhancing Client Services and Community Impact

**Location:** Bryce – 2nd Floor

This roundtable will explore the potential of AI-powered intake tools to improve client services and community impact within human services. RedMane will facilitate an open discussion around the challenges and opportunities presented by these technologies, using the experience of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) as a springboard. We will consider the practical considerations of implementing AI tools, moving beyond the hype to examine real-world experiences. RedMane representatives will share data, processes, and lessons learned, prompting a broader conversation with attendees and encouraging participants to share their own experiences, challenges, and insights related to the use of technology in human services. We will work together to explore the potential of AI-powered tools to strengthen our work and improve outcomes for the communities we serve.

**Facilitators:** Nicole Fuller & Jeremy Gwin, RedMane Technologies

### Collegiality as a Key Aspect of Infrastructure and System Change

**Location:** Concord – Ballroom Level

To provide the best services for children, youth, and families, system partners must collaborate closely. Building strong partnerships requires a collegial approach—setting aside territorial boundaries, sharing funding, resources, and programs, and fostering cooperation between governmental agencies, private organizations, and families. By recognizing shared goals and creating a supportive environment, we can drive effective program and system development, elevate discourse, and improve outcomes. This session will highlight successes in collaboration while encouraging participants to generate new ideas.

**Facilitator:** Alan Vietze, CWLA Senior Fellow

### Unpredictability: Fostering a Positive Environment During Times of Ambiguity

**Location:** Regency Foyer – Ballroom Level

This interactive roundtable will invite participants to exchange ideas on choosing positivity in challenging times. The group discussion will explore four key aspects of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management—and how they foster connection, empathy, and compassion within organizations and beyond.

**Facilitator:** Gary Taylor, CWLA Senior Fellow

### Braiding Relationships to Preserve ICWA: How to Practice ICWA's Spirit Daily

**Location:** Sequoia – 2nd Floor

ICWA arises from the trust responsibility from the federal government to the Indigenous peoples of what is now the United States of America. In order to preserve the protections of ICWA, the relationships at its heart require cultivation and sustainment by those tasked with its implementation and ideal goals. Join us as we continue the conversation of how you can live your workday practicing ICWA's spirit.

**Facilitators:** Lucille Echohawk, CWLA Senior Fellow; Angi Cavaliere, Casey Family Programs Indian Child and Family Well-Being Program; Amanda Docter, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

### Using Appreciative Inquiry to Engage Community Stakeholders

**Location:** Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level

Appreciative Inquiry is an energizing and inclusive process that fosters creativity through the art of positive inquiry. It builds new skills in individuals and groups, develops new leaders, encourages a culture of inquiry, and helps create shared vision and purpose by building on an organization's core values and strengths. As child- and family-serving organizations struggle with widespread uncertainty and disruptions in funding, continued engagement with community stakeholders, including individuals and families with lived experience, is more important than ever. Utilizing the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, the 5-D design (Define, Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny) roundtable participants will share strategies for continuing to build these critical relationships and maintain the community-based connections necessary for their organizations to continue providing relevant and responsive services.

**Facilitators:** Betsy Goulet & Lenette Azzi-Lessing, CWLA Senior Fellows

## Reception in Exhibit Hall

**6:00 pm – 7:00 pm**

**Location:** Columbia ABC – Ballroom Level

Last chance to connect with our vendors! Be sure you don't miss the announcement of the lucky winners of our fabulous Booth Bingo prizes!



## Registration & CWLA Bookstore

**8:15 am – 2:30 pm**

*Location: Ballroom Level*

## Coffee

**8:15 am – 8:45 am**

*Location: Hall of Battles – Ballroom Level*

## Workshops F

**8:45 am – 10:15 am**

### F1 Addressing Workforce Challenges: Best Practices

*Location: Congressional A – Lobby Level*

Workforce challenges in child welfare continue to push public and private agencies to rethink how they attract and retain staff. While research has shaped best practices, leaders still find themselves navigating new, evolving demands that require fresh approaches to workforce development. This interactive session will explore creative, real-world strategies agencies are using to address these challenges. Participants will have ample opportunity for discussion, sharing experiences, and exchanging ideas on what's working—and what's next.

**Presenters:** Julie Collins, CWLA; Rachael Maconachy, Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services; Tammy Mello, The Key Program Inc.; Jacqueline Martin, New York City Administration for Children's Services

### F2 Leadership Touchstone: Effective Leaders Integrate JEDI

*Location: Congressional B – Lobby Level*

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:** Michael Becketts & Alycia Blackwell, Fairfax County Department of Family Services; Hope Bland, Lucas County Children's Services; Christina Cagle, Stanford Sierra Youth & Families

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

*Location: Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level*

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, FosterClub; Brittany Mihalec-Adkins, Child Trends; Robyn Robbins, Children's Trust Fund

### F4 Advocacy Unleashed: Empowering Change in Child Welfare

*Location: Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*

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

## F5 Creative Solutions to Providing Preventative Support to Families in Rural Communities

**Location: Yellowstone – 2nd Floor**

Rural communities face significant challenges in delivering preventative support to families, children, and youth due to isolation, limited resources, and workforce shortages. This workshop will explore innovative solutions to overcome these barriers and improve access to services. Key strategies will include workforce recruitment and retention initiatives, practice models effective for rural health and building on the power of community partnerships for collaborating with local organizations, schools, and volunteers to provide early intervention and ongoing support. We will discuss the interwoven funding streams needed to support these diverse services such as peer-led support groups, mentorship programs, and collaborative care models that integrate health care, child welfare, and social services. Delivered in a panel format, experts will discuss successful (and unsuccessful) implementations within a rural health setting while engaging the audience to discuss their experience and hope for change. By fostering community-driven solutions, this

session will provide actionable ideas to strengthen rural families and improve outcomes for children and youth.

**Presenters:** Kimberly Case, *Elevance Health*; Carl Ayers, *Virginia Department of Social Services*; Nicole McCauley, *Saint Francis Ministries*; Carla Zaportez, *Victor Community Support Services*

## F6 The *PRIDE Model of Practice* is Back!

**Location: Sequoia – 2nd Floor**

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

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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.

**Presenters:** Marcus Stallworth, CWLA; Lynn Fraipont, *Children & Families First*

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

**Location:** Lexington – Ballroom Level

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**

**Location:** Regency Foyer – Ballroom Level

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 & Promising Practices to Locate and Prevent Victimization of Youth Missing from Care**

**Location:** Bryce – 2nd Floor

"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

*Location: Concord – Ballroom Level*

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

*Location: Glacier – 2nd Floor*

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

*Location: Grand Teton – 2nd Floor*

Developed as part of the Linking Systems of Care state demonstration project, the Virginia HEALS Trauma-Informed Model of Service Delivery and supporting

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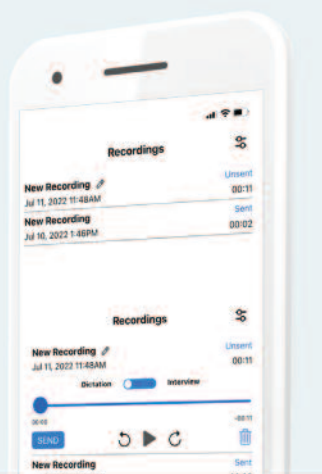
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toolkit was designed to support the community and state-level implementation of strategies to better link systems of care for children, youth, and families impacted by trauma. A key part of the toolkit is the Screening for Experiences and Strengths (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, & Supports

**Location:** Yosemite – 2nd Floor

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; Meg Dygert & Julia Mueller, APHSA

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

**Location:** Everglades – 2nd Floor

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



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## Workshops G

10:35 am – 12:05 pm

### G1 Addressing Workforce Challenges: Legislative Strategies

*Location: Congressional A – Lobby Level*

The child welfare workforce is in crisis, and Congress can help. This workshop will explore innovative legislative strategies to support and empower the child welfare workforce, addressing the challenges they face in providing crucial services to children and families. Participants will learn about key policies and reforms recently enacted in the Supporting America's Children and Families Act that can enhance workforce retention, reduce burnout, and improve overall effectiveness in the field, and discuss further policy advancements needed to address these issues. Together, we'll explore how thoughtful policy decisions can strengthen the backbone of our child welfare system: the people who make a difference every day.

**Presenters:** Kati Mapa, CWLA; Staff from the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means Committee

### G2 Leadership Touchstone: Effective Leaders Are Purposeful and Strategic

*Location: Congressional B – Lobby Level*

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; Vanessa Dorantes, Casey Family Programs; Anayra Túa-López, Proyecto Nacer

### G3 Recruitment & Retention Through the Lens of Foster Parent Rights

*Location: Concord – Ballroom Level*

Family-based placement is a priority of the child welfare system. Despite this, foster parent recruitment

and retention is one of the most challenging aspects. The National Foster Parent Association partnered with University of Pittsburgh to look into this issue. This study engaged 19 foster parents in focus groups to explore their perspectives on their rights within the child welfare system. Transcripts were analyzed using a qualitative approach grounded in David Androff's (2017) social work human rights framework, which includes six key constructs: human dignity, transparency, accountability, participation, non-discrimination, and well-being. Findings highlight the need for a stronger human rights-based approach in child welfare, not only in supporting foster parents but also in serving birth parents and children. Professionals must engage with foster parents in ways that foster respect, collaboration, and adequate support. This includes providing high-quality training, sufficient resources, and recognition of foster parents' critical role in child welfare. In this session, we will go over findings from the study and provide concrete ideas to help with recruitment and retention.

**Presenters:** Arnold Eby & Amanda Cruce, National Foster Parent Association

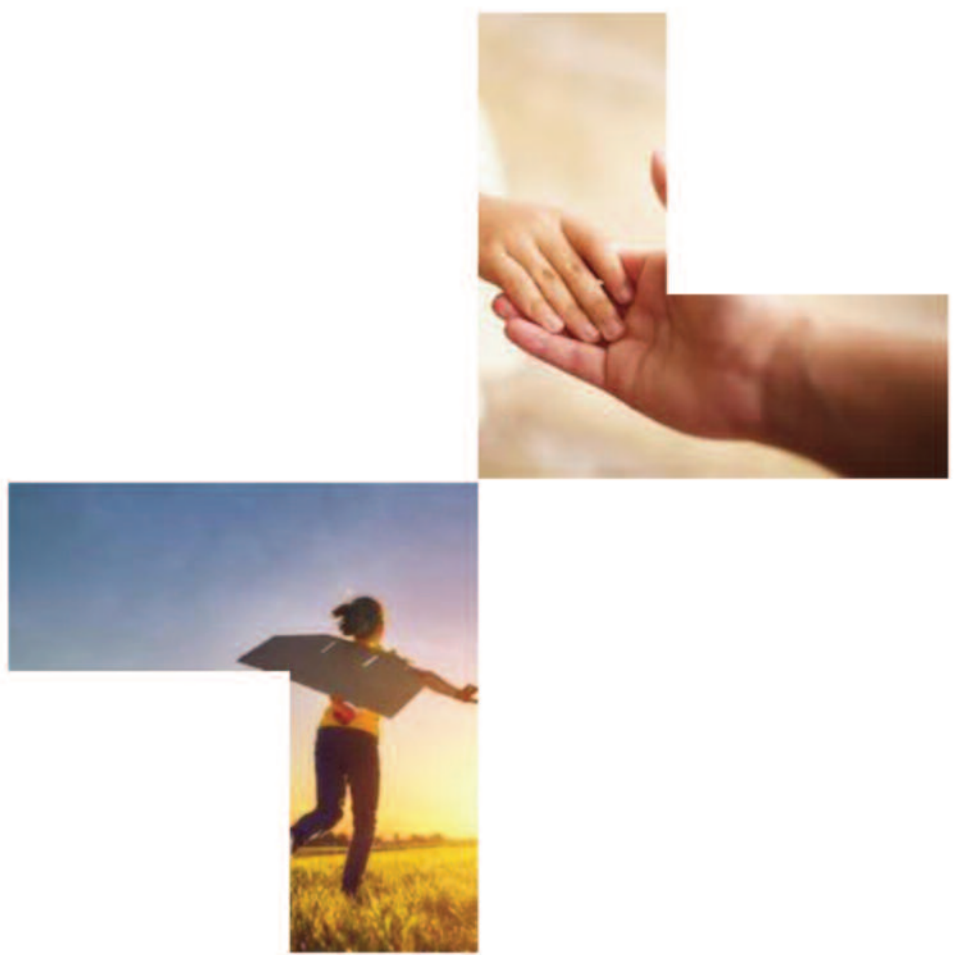
### G4 Equity in Action: From Talk to Practice

*Location: Yellowstone – 2nd Floor*

Join CWLA's Member Equity Committee for a workshop that 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:** Antonia Rios, Parents Anonymous; Hope Bland, Lucas County Children Services





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

*Location: Yosemite – 2nd Floor*

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

*Location: Bryce – 2nd Floor*


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

*Location: Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*


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



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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 & Processes with a Circle Mindset**

**Location:** Glacier – 2nd Floor

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:** Jackie Edwards, Parents Inc; Rodney Solomon & Mychal Mills, KYDS; Jamie Baxter, Allies for Children; L'Tesha Gamble-Pettis, Cayuga Centers

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

**Location:** Sequoia – 2nd Floor

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**

**Location:** Everglades – 2nd Floor

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**

**Location:** Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level

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

**Location: Regency Foyer – Ballroom Level**

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 re-focused 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

**Location: Lexington – Ballroom Level**

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 one to 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 Edwinston, MindSights; Holly Hermes, Legacy Medical Group; Lorena Campbell, Advocate

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

**Location: Grand Teton – 2nd Floor**

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

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## Closing Plenary and Lunch

**12:20 am – 2:00 pm**

*Location: Regency ABCD – Ballroom Level*



Tiffany Manuel

Keynote speaker, Tiffany Manuel (DrT) is the founder and CEO of TheCaseMade. In her role at TheCaseMade, DrT has worked with thousands of passionate social changemakers, innovators, and adaptive leaders around the United States who are building better, stronger communities that are diverse, equitable, and inclusive. By aligning their community stakeholders around the kind of deep systems changes that can improve population outcomes, these leaders are able to grow their impact, scale their programs, and harness the investments they need to improve their communities. She is the author of *Case Made! 10 Powerful Leadership Principles that Win Hearts, Change Minds, and Grow Impact*, as well as many reports, journal articles, and scholarly papers.

### The New York Times

The Anna Quindlen Award for Excellence in Journalism on Behalf of Children and Families will be awarded to Erica Green of the *New York Times* in recognition of her reporting, which has advanced awareness, understanding, and action to meet the needs of children and families who are vulnerable.



Erica Green

## Training Institute Sessions

**2:30 pm – 5:30 pm**

*(“Premium” Full Conference  
Registration Required)*

### Supervising for Excellence and Success (Part 1)

*Location: Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*

Quality supervision is recognized as a significant factor in an organization’s overall ability to provide resources that achieve operational goals and desired outcomes for children, youth, and families. Supervision is also an important factor associated with creating a positive

work environment, maintaining staff retention, and promoting professional development. CWLA’s revised edition of *Supervising for Excellence and Success* focuses on the essential practice elements and functions that are foundational to successful supervision. This two-part training will share an overview of the essential practice elements and functions of supervision—Leading, Planning, Organizing, Teaching, Supporting, and Evaluating—framed through discussion, self-reflection, and group exercises. These components are critical to supporting professional engagement, partnership, and team building in supervision and will be highlighted along with research and best practices. Discussion will also touch on supporting theoretical concepts related to the supervisory role and related skills and competencies.

**Facilitator:** Dr. Jorge Velázquez, Eastern Florida State College

## Assessing Our Capacity for Family Support and Prevention Programming

**Location:** Congressional B – Lobby Level

There are myriad unique challenges and opportunities related to the development of family support and primary prevention programming for non-profit child welfare agencies. Driven largely by the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018, jurisdictions have been exploring a variety of approaches that prioritize more accessible, non-stigmatizing, and common-sense approaches to service delivery. There is a renewed emphasis on family engagement and involvement as agencies are being encouraged to collaborate with a wider range of community partners. The session will focus on the 7 P's Exercise, developed by CWLA Senior Fellow Paul DiLorenzo during his 30-plus years of planning, developing, implementing, and managing community and neighborhood-based family support programming. Participants can use the framework to organize their agency redesign journey. Though not meant to be an all-inclusive process, The 7 P's Exercise will help an agency team create a to-do list for transformation while at the same time highlighting existing strengths and opportunities that a provider might not have considered in their desire to become more primary prevention-oriented. We recommend registering as a team to participate in this session.

**Facilitator:** Paul DiLorenzo, CWLA Senior Fellow

## Allyship: Understanding Race Relationships and Ways to Mitigate Social Inequities

**Location:** Concord – Ballroom Level

Effective allyship is characterized as exploring the complexities of race relations and the role of privilege in maintaining societal inequities. In this training, participants will examine the historical impact of slavery and its enduring influence on race dynamics in the United States, with a particular focus on white privilege and how it shapes both societal structures and



personal interactions. The session will provide tools for recognizing and addressing the trust issues that people of color may have with white individuals and institutions, helping participants see ways to build authentic relationships grounded in empathy and respect.

Through reflective exercises, participants will also explore the distinction between intent and impact, ensuring their actions contribute positively to racial equity. Practical strategies for effective allyship will be emphasized, including continuous education, meaningful self-reflection, and action-oriented advocacy that prioritizes the voices and experiences of marginalized communities.

**Facilitator:** Deborah Wilson Gadsden, CWLA Director of Inclusion & Belonging

## Traditions of Caring and Collaborating Kinship Model of Practice (Part 1)

**Location:** Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level

CWLA's evidence-informed model of practice, *Traditions of Caring and Collaborating*, addresses the unique strengths and needs of kinship caregivers who are formally involved through child protective services or through informal family arrangements. This model of practice has guiding principles grounded in a caring and collaborating approach to protect and nurture children and strengthen families. The model is responsive to the needs and experiences of kinship caregivers, recognizing the dynamics unique to the inherited role of being someone's grandparent, other relative, or a non-related extended family member and the acquired role of volunteering to foster. This two-part training opportunity provides an overview for identifying areas of concern for kinship families and agency staff with whom they work, including legal, financial, family relationships, health and mental health, child behavior, fair and equal treatment, satisfaction, and recommendations. It will highlight the competencies needed to support kinship caregivers through phases of collaboration aimed at achieving the three federally mandated outcomes for all children: safety, well-being, and permanence.

**Facilitator:** Marcus Stallworth, CWLA Director of Training and Implementation



## Coffee

9:00 am – 9:30 am

*Location: Hall of Battles – Ballroom Level*

## Training Institute

9:30 am – 12:30 pm

### Supervising for Excellence and Success (Part 2)

*Location: Bunker Hill – Ballroom Level*

Quality supervision is recognized as a significant factor in an organization's overall ability to provide resources that achieve operational goals and desired outcomes for children, youth, and families. Supervision is also an important factor associated with creating a positive work environment, maintaining staff retention, and promoting professional development. CWLA's revised edition of *Supervising for Excellence and Success* focuses on the essential practice elements and functions that are foundational to successful supervision. This two-part training will share an overview of the essential practice elements and functions of supervision—Leading, Planning, Organizing, Teaching, Supporting, and Evaluating—framed through discussion, self-reflection, and group exercises. These components are critical to supporting professional engagement, partnership, and team building in supervision and will be highlighted along with research and best practices. Discussion will also touch on supporting theoretical concepts related to the supervisory role and related skills and competencies.

*Facilitator: Dr. Jorge Velázquez, Eastern Florida State College*

### Building Inclusive Spaces to Promote Psychological Safety

*Location: Concord – Ballroom Level*

Building inclusive spaces within our environment is key to helping everyone find and feel emotional safety in a changing world. We all bring our personal histories of trauma, isolation, and feeling like we don't belong to the environments in which we work and live. Creating an inclusive environment requires a commitment to

understanding and addressing the needs of diverse groups. This training will focus on creating inclusive and psychologically safe environments in the workplace, especially for discussing sensitive issues like racialized trauma. Participants will learn key tactics for fostering open dialogue, including establishing ground rules for respectful and empathetic communication. Special emphasis will be placed on how these strategies can be applied within the child welfare sector, where staff often confront deeply emotional and complex cases. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to build supportive environments that honor both workers' and clients' diverse backgrounds and experiences, fostering resilience and a sense of belonging in the workplace.

*Facilitator: Deborah Wilson Gadsden, CWLA Director of Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging*

### Traditions of Caring and Collaborating Kinship Model of Practice (Part 2)

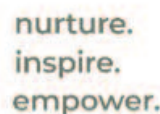
*Location: Columbia Foyer – Ballroom Level*

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*Facilitator: Marcus Stallworth, CWLA Director of Training & Implementation*

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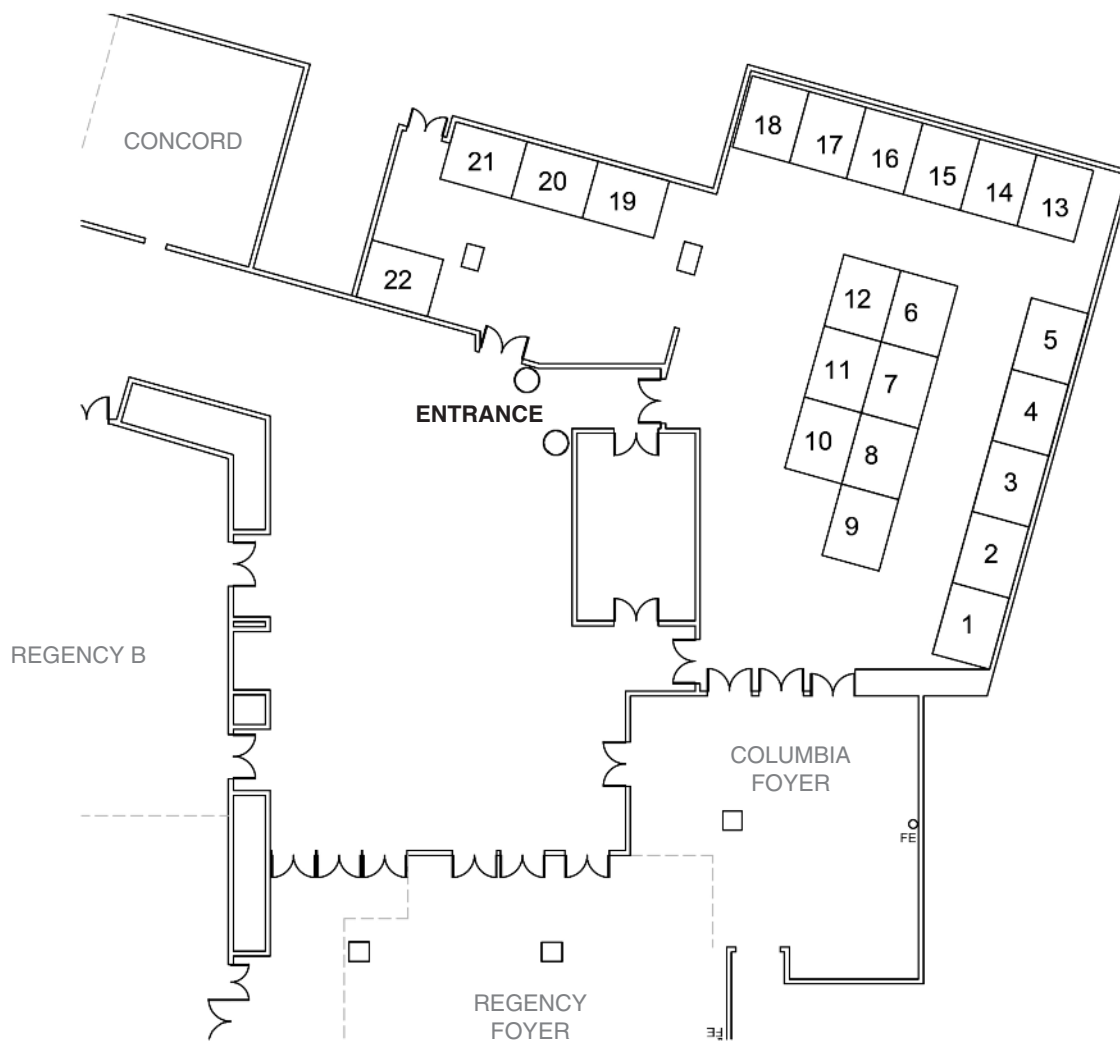


# Conference Exhibitors & Floorplan

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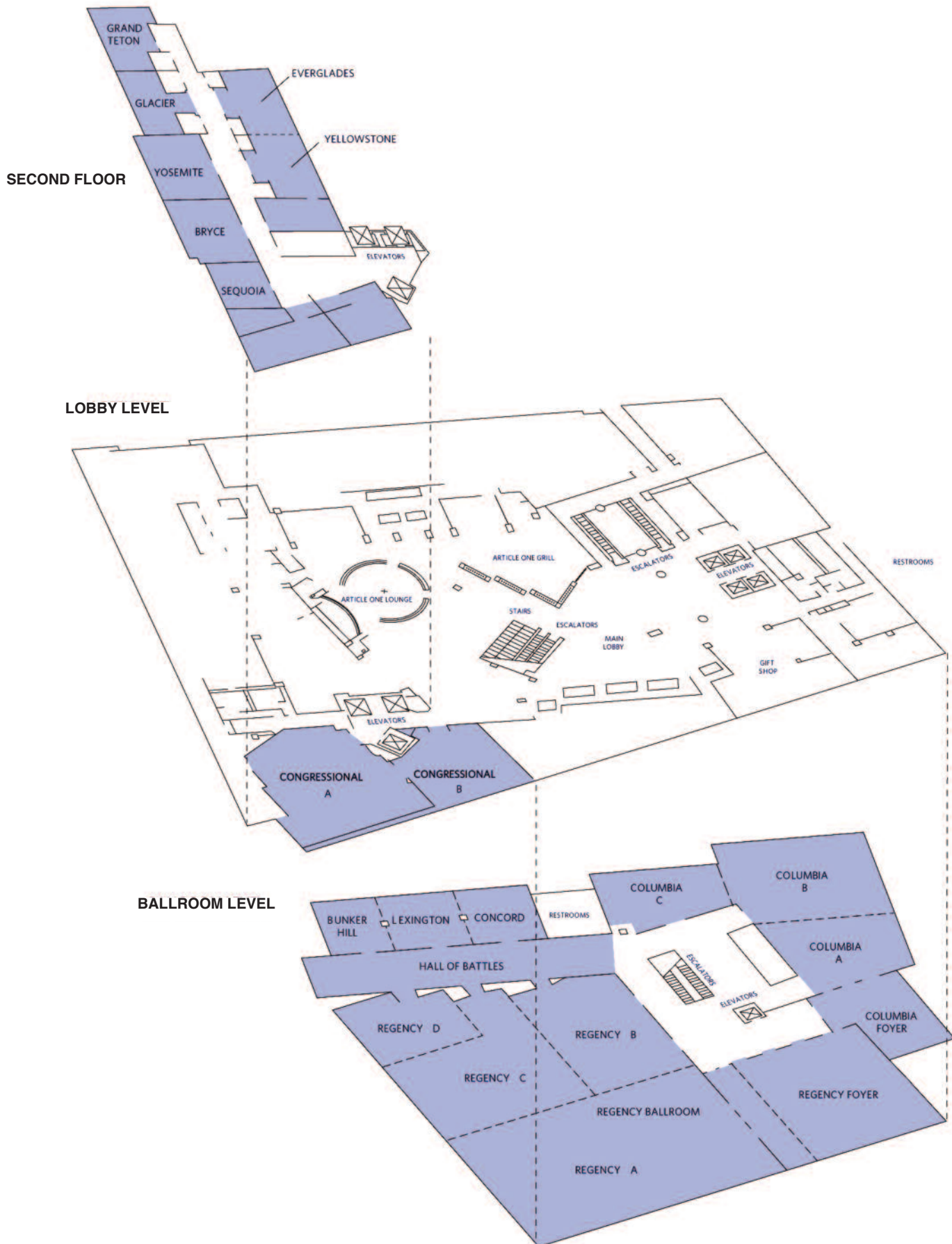
Exhibitor	Booth Number	Exhibitor	Booth Number
Change & Innovation Agency	1	Centene	12
Florida Institute for Child Welfare	2	Sellers Dorsey	13
Huntington Learning Center	3	Social Current	14
Center for Adoption Support & Education (C.A.S.E.)	4	Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot	15
RedMane Technology	5	Action 4 Child Protection	16
Youth Villages	6	CARF International	17
Alvarez & Marsal	7	Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network	18
Lyssn	8	eScribers	19
Omnitox	9	Augintel	20
Accenture	10	Alia	21
Casey Family Programs	11	Families Rising	22

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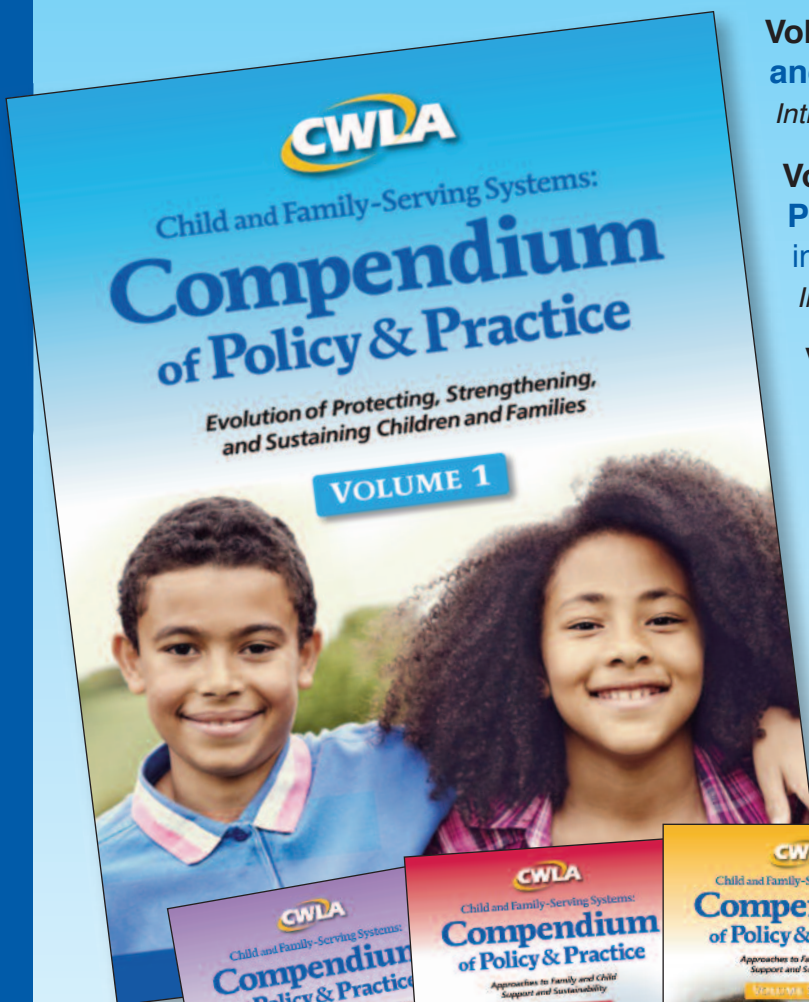
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# SAFE STRONG SUPPORTIVE

Safe Children

**Strong Families**

Supportive  
Communities

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Together we can safely reduce the need for foster care and build Communities of Hope, supporting the safety and success of all children and families across the nation.

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