Draft Workshops for CWLA's 2026 Conference

These workshop descriptions are not finalized. CWLA reserves the right to change workshop order, descriptions, and presenters without notice.

A1 - CWLA Policy Workshop – topic TBA

A2 - CWLA Leadership Touchstones Series – topic TBA

A3 - Poverty and Practice: How Engaging with Staff Perspectives Can Impact Families' Access to Economic Resources

Economic and concrete supports are increasingly incorporated into services for child welfare involved families, but rarely are caseworker beliefs and attitudes incorporated into the implementation of these practices. Through the collaboration of research, policy, and practice institutions, this workshop will present practical strategies to examine and address staff perspectives that impact equitable distribution of economic assistance within family preservation services in Illinois. Strategies were shaped by implementing the EmPwR Study, a large-scale cash assistance pilot, including staff and family focus groups. Attendees will learn about implementing a CQI process to review discretionary funds (e.g., flex fund), engage in activities designed for staff to reflect on data and assumptions about providing economic assistance to families, and view demonstrations of coaching support to reduce risk by providing both services and economic support.

Presenters: Ashley Trosper & Ella Henry & Jaime Schmitz, Brightpoint; Alexis Krones, Children & Family Research Center, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

A4 - Fatherhood Engagement Defined: Fathers Cultivating Stronger Connections with Their Children

This workshop will provide participants with a better understanding of what it means to be committed, responsible, and involved fathers. The presenters will provide a working definition of fatherhood engagement, list the barriers to fatherhood engagement, and describe the paternal traits and duties that enable fathers to overcome these barriers. The presenters will also share insights gleaned from their in-person and virtual facilitation of the National Fatherhood Initiative's 24:7 Dad (for community fathers) and Inside Out Dad (for incarcerated/formerly incarcerated fathers) curricula.

Presenters: Jeffery Faulkerson, Prince William County; Bennie Herron, Fairfax County Government; Chuck Dubbe, Harrisonburg Rockingham Social Services

A5 - Cracking the Organizational Culture Code: Disrupting with Neuroscience to Build Teams That Trust, Belong, and Deliver

This session introduces a neuroscience-informed leadership capacity-building model designed to disrupt status quo systems and cultivate high-trust, high-performing teams. Grounded in neuroscience research on trust, psychological safety, emotional regulation, and belonging, the model equips leaders to navigate complexity, foster engagement, and lead with both courage and compassion. By integrating brain science with practical leadership practices, it challenges traditional compliance-driven approaches and instead centers trust as the engine of sustainable culture change. Designed for the "Now and Next" generation of leaders, this model transforms organizational dynamics through trust-building, disruption, and intentional cultural design.

Presenters: Angela Pittman-Vanderweide & Gregory Grier & Katie Swanson, Allies4Outcomes

A6 - Strengthening Parent-Child Bonds: Training Caregivers to Foster Healthy Relationships and Prevent Psychological Maltreatment

This workshop will present information about a new, free curriculum for family service professionals to implement with parents/resource parents on the topic of psychological maltreatment and positive parenting. Individual, family, and community-level stress often increases in challenging socio-cultural-political times. Unfortunately, caregiver stress significantly predicts problematic parenting behaviors such as yelling, humiliating, and threatening. These behaviors, when severe or persistent, may escalate into psychological maltreatment, placing children at increased risk of negative outcomes. Family service agencies can interrupt this trajectory by providing enhanced knowledge and support to caregivers, especially resource parents who are caring for children with challenging behavioral issues. The presenters will review the topics covered in the training curriculum, the evidence base for them, and provide a script, tips, and strategies for successful implementation.

Presenters: Amy Baker & Brittany Morris, The New York Foundling

A7 - Dual-Diagnosis: Mental Health in Children and Youth Who Are Neurodivergent

Children who are neurodivergent are overrepresented in child welfare systems, with autism and related conditions appearing two to six times more frequently than in the general population, and with higher rates of referral and substantiated maltreatment. With 55–70% having co-occurring mental health conditions, they face psychiatric hospitalization rates six times higher than neurotypical peers. Yet specialized services remain critically limited, leading to prolonged emergency department boarding, missed treatment opportunities, and unnecessary medication or restraint use. This presentation provides a best-practices framework for delivering appropriate mental health care to children who are neurodivergent and in child welfare. Topics include

transdiagnostic treatment planning, key components of neurodiversity-tailored care, and wraparound/crisis aftercare. Participants will learn evidence-based strategies to enhance care experiences and improve long-term outcomes for this population, addressing both their unique developmental needs and complex trauma histories.

Presenters: Steven Merahn & Shyanne Anthony, Perimeter Healthcare

A8 - National Collaborative for Transition-Age Youth Playbook

This workshop will explore strategies to improve outcomes for young adults transitioning from foster care. It will feature the newly released *Improving Outcomes for Young Adults and the Systems that Serve Them: A Playbook of Best Practices from the National Collaborative for Transition-Age Youth* – a partnership among the American Public Human Services Association, FosterClub, and Youth Villages. Co-developed by young people, child welfare leaders, and policymakers, the Playbook offers a roadmap to strengthen services for youth turning 18 in foster care. It provides best practices and strategies to improve outcomes in housing, health, education, employment, and permanency. Centering the voices of young people, the Playbook concludes with eight key priorities for state and federal policymakers, including expanding high-quality, federally reimbursable Extended Foster Care programs. Participants will explore actionable insights and system-level approaches to support young adults as they transition from foster care to independence.

Presenters: Shaquita Ogletree, Youth Villages; Jennifer Kerr, American Public Human Services Association

A9 - Building Trauma-informed Organizations to Support Effective Interventions for Children and Families

An increasing number of Americans experience severe weather events each year, yet they often lack the support necessary to fully recover. Extreme weather events leave more than physical destruction in their wake. Survivors face the painful task of putting the pieces of their lives back together, worrying about meeting their basic needs and keeping businesses going while enduring stress and trauma. Those impacted by a disaster often struggle to comprehend the enormity of what has been lost – the tangible resources of food, shelter, and power, and the intangible sense of psychological safety. For front-line staff and their community partners, the experience is also complex. Tasked with helping communities in crisis through a system designed for efficiency rather than empathy, staff (and their families) may also suffer loss during such events. Repeated exposure leads to additional collective trauma and secondary traumatic stress – a cumulative emotional toll that results in fatigue, emotional detachment, and a reduced ability to connect, empathize, and support others effectively. This workshop will present a trauma-informed model and approach to response and recovery designed to create organizations that can respond to severe weather events and crises effectively, with compassion, empathy, and humanity.

Presenter: Melinda Baldwin, Maryland Department of Human Services

A10 - Strategies for Utilizing Research Findings in Child and Family Social Services

There is a need to analyze and utilize the literature on strategies for research utilization in child and family social services. This workshop will use conceptual models and summarize ten strategies for maximizing the likelihood that research findings will be used to inform policy, program design, and practice. After reviewing these strategies, participants will gain tools to increase the likelihood that research findings are used to inform decision-making. The presenters will describe ten strategies to improve the use of research findings in decision-making and will engage participants in a discussion about which of these strategies have been used and with what kinds of success. Workshop handouts will be derived from a new journal article, *Strategies for Utilizing Research Findings for Policy, Program Design, and Practice in Child and Family Social Services: A Synthesis of the Literature*, published by the *Journal of Public Child Welfare*.

Presenters: Alexandria Maldonado, Foster Club; Peter Pecora, Casey Family Programs; Kim DuMont, William T. Grant Foundation

A11 - Systems Partnerships Advancing Whole Family Housing and Services

Housing instability is a key driver of family involvement in the child welfare system and a barrier to reunification. Yet when families receive housing support alongside whole-family services, the results can be transformative. This session will explore strategies to strengthen and sustain policies, practices, and funding to prevent unnecessary family separation and promote child and family stability. Learn how cross-system collaborative approaches can create more responsive and efficient systems that prevent homelessness and support family well-being. Presenters will share real-world examples of state, local, and Tribal partnerships that center families' needs flexibly and holistically to advance housing solutions for those at risk or involved with child welfare.

Presenters: Andrew Johnson & Leah Lindstrom Rhea, Corporation for Supportive Housing; Cheryl Detrick, CCAP

A12 - Hope as a Strategy: Building a Future-Focused Workforce in Child Welfare

This session will introduce the Science of Hope as an evidence-based framework for strengthening child welfare systems through workforce well-being, organizational resilience, and service innovation. Drawing on Hope Theory and applied research, this workshop will emphasize how hope – defined as the ability to set goals, develop pathways, and sustain motivation – serves as a protective factor for both staff and families. Leaders will examine how the Oklahoma Department of Human Services has integrated hope into policy, leadership, and culture to enhance retention and impact. Participants will engage in small-group discussions and leave with flexible strategies and

tools to incorporate hope-centered practices into their organizations, fostering capacity for meaningful, strengths-based, and sustainable change in child welfare.

Presenters: Angela Pharris, University of Oklahoma; Debroah Shropshire, Human Services Group

A13 - Co-Designing Data-Driven Residential Quality Improvement Strategies with Family Members and Youth

Family members and youth with lived experience worked with providers, researchers, and policymakers to co-design a Theory of Change framework for residential programs, consisting of seven intersecting logic models aligned with System of Care principles and values. The logic models comprise a menu of research- and evidence-supported inputs, activities/programming, outputs, outcomes, and impacts from which programs can strategically develop and apply quality improvement initiatives aligned with measurement. The Principles to Outcomes Driven Practices demonstration project, with family and youth voice at all levels, is testing the framework's usability through a collaborative public-private partnership. This presentation, inclusive of provider, family, youth, and research voices, will review the project co-design, baseline assessment data, and preliminary results. Attendees will participate in an interactive exercise to experience working with the framework.

Presenters: Robert Lieberman, ACRC/Building Bridges Initiative; Margaret McGladrey, University of Kentucky College of Public Health; Paulette Mader, Rutgers University

A14 - Bridge Builders: Advancing Youth Restorative Justice Circles and Practices to Improve Police-Youth Relations

This workshop will explore how restorative justice practices improve police-youth relations in D.C. and Maryland, focusing on nonprofits like the National Center for Children and Families. Participants will learn how restorative justice – through initiatives like youth advisory councils, community events, and therapeutic art and self-expression – fosters mutual understanding, reduces racial disparities, and promotes healing and accountability between law enforcement and youth.

Presenters: Omoré Okhomina & Kameko Johnson-Styles, National Center for Children and Families

A15 - Growing Strong Starts: Partnering for Young Children's Well-being in Child Welfare

Young children involved in the child welfare system have a unique opportunity to receive the care and support they need to thrive. While child welfare agencies across the U.S. share a core mission to keep children safe and support lasting family connections, they vary in how they identify needs, promote well-being, and connect families to vital services. Across the country, many agencies are making important strides in prioritizing the well-being of children ages 0-5. Yet families and

providers still face ongoing challenges. In response, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families is expanding and testing several promising strategies such as enhanced staff training, clearer and more supportive policies, increased access to services, and deeper partnerships with families, communities, and sister agencies to better meet the needs of our youngest children.

Presenters: Inés Eaton, Connecticut Department of Children and Families; Karen Hensley, Advanced Behavioral Health; Heidi Maderia, Connecticut Association of Infant Mental Health

B1 - CWLA Policy Workshop – topic TBA

B2 - CWLA Navigating Funding Challenges Series – topic TBA

B3 - Improving Child Well-being Through Health System Partnerships

Children impacted by the child welfare system deserve timely, coordinated, and trauma-informed healthcare. However, providers often face challenges such as limited medical history and a lack of specialized training. This panel presentation will explore the Foster Care Center of Excellence (FCCOE) model, developed by Centene and grounded in American Academy of Pediatrics standards of care. First launched in Texas in 2017, the model has expanded across multiple Medicaid managed care markets through partnerships with local providers. Panelists, including health plan leaders and provider partners, will discuss how the FCCOE model bridges Medicaid managed care and child welfare systems to improve outcomes. Attendees will learn how criteria for FCCOE designation are established, how partners are selected, and how collaboration across sectors leads to measurable improvements in care. Real-world outcomes will be shared to demonstrate the model's effectiveness.

Presenters: Karen Rogers, Centene Corporation; Nathan Hoover, Superior Health Plan; Craig Stevenson, Home State Health; Maureen Sorenson, Coordinated Care of Washington; Tessa Chesher, Oklahoma Complete Health; Valerie Smith, University of Texas at Tyler School of Medicine

B4 - Parent Partner Programs: The Evolution

This interactive session will explore the lessons learned through the growth and sustainability of Parent Partner Programs. Designed for agencies looking to launch or enhance their programs, the presentation will highlight real-world lessons learned, practical strategies for implementation, and insights into long-term viability. Participants will be introduced to essential tools and resources that support successful program development, including funding strategies such as braiding options and key findings from a recent cost-benefit analysis. The session will also cover technical assistance avenues to guide implementation efforts and improve outcomes. Participants will gain an understanding of the foundational components of Parent Partner Programs, learn from implementation experiences shared by the Parent Partner Learning Collaborative, and explore

sustainability models and funding mechanisms. Attendees will leave empowered with actionable strategies, financial insights, and a toolkit to strengthen their parent engagement initiatives.

Presenters: Kris Isom, Casey Family Programs; Meryl Levine, Children's Trust Fund Alliance; Christina Cagle, Stanford Sierra Youth & Families

B5 - Addressing Vicarious Trauma in the Child Welfare Workers: Strategies for Supporting the Workforce

Too few social services workers receive the support services they need to remain in the workforce after experiencing vicarious trauma. In Virginia, the annual turnover rate for entry-level child welfare workers is 40%, and research suggests that these rates are even higher in rural areas. This turnover rate is well above the 10–12% rate agreed healthy and optimal by researchers. Over the last several years, the Office of Trauma and Resilience Policy (OTRP) at the Virginia Department of Social Services has led research projects linking vicarious trauma to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover among social services staff. This workshop will provide an overview of the research findings and recommendations and will describe the evidence-informed components of a statewide program that the OTRP will implement to better support the workforce in Virginia.

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

B6 - A New Capacity Building Tool for Teams Engaged in Transformative Research, Evaluation, and Program Development

With the help of staff from APHSA and CWLA, the National Research Agenda Steering Committee has modified the original Equity Assessment and Improvement Tool for Research Teams to ensure relevance across all sectors. The new tool includes language that is appropriate for an array of organizations and governments and allows teams to ask questions with clarity, openness, honesty, and accountability. The tool is designed to equip program planning, research, and evaluation teams as they drive transformative systems change through the enhancement of invaluable knowledge from a multi-faceted approach. It encourages discussion among all team members, especially at key decision-making points. This tool will be offered at no cost, and users will be encouraged to customize it for their organizations or projects.

Presenters: Jessica Elm, Like the Tree Consulting; Sandra Killett, We All Rise; Julie Collins, CWLA

B7 - Uncovering Bias in Child Welfare Case Notes: Leveraging Natural Language Processing to Transform Practice

Drawing on real-world examples from Illinois DCFS data, this session will examine why identifying bias is vital to promoting justice and equity. Participants will explore how natural language processing tools enable agencies to review case notes systematically, highlight problematic

language, and implement corrective measures. The presenters will discuss actionable steps agencies can take to foster fairer practices and ensure that case notes better reflect the realities and needs of families. This workshop will demonstrate how technology can drive meaningful change, helping child welfare agencies recognize and mitigate bias in real time for more equitable outcomes.

Presenters: Dagené Brown, Illinois Department of Child and Family Services; Tracy Rohrdanz, Augintel

B8 - Family First in Action: Rhode Island's Kinship Care Strategy to Achieve Over 70% Family-Based Placements

Rhode Island has maintained over 70% kinship placements for more than three years, reflecting DCYF's commitment to family-centered care. This session will highlight Rhode Island's innovative kinship strategy aligned with the Family First Prevention Services Act, emphasizing kin as the preferred placement. Attendees will learn how DCYF has embraced a customer-service approach that manages emotions first and recognizes the unique needs of kin caregivers. Key components include kinship navigator services, peer mentor supports, flexible licensing, and the work of the Family Search and Engagement team in strengthening connections. Participants will leave with actionable strategies to advance kin-first practices and promote relational permanency for children and families.

Presenters: Brandi DiDino & Lori D'Alessio & Allie Detonnancourt, Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

B9 - Together We Thrive: Supporting Migrant Families through Partnerships and Evidence-Based Services

This workshop will explore the experiences of immigrant families as influenced by the current political and social climate in the U.S., highlighting the impact on family relationships and child well-being. Presenters will share strategies for creating effective collaborations between child welfare systems, service providers, and community-based organizations. Drawing from frontline experience in New York City's child welfare system, the session will feature insights from clinical experts, including the Functional Family Therapy–Child Welfare (FFT-CW) model purveyor and preventive service providers implementing the model. Attendees will learn how this short-term, evidence-based intervention supports sustainable family change. The presentation will highlight how treatment providers can partner effectively with stakeholders to meet the unique needs of migrant families.

Presenters: Maris Schwartz, Children's Aid; Annie Niermann, FFT LLC

B10 - Shared Power, Shared Purpose: Reimagining Child Welfare Practice through True Collaborative Leadership

In a time when trust in systems is strained and the call for equity is urgent, this interactive workshop will highlight how a county child welfare agency and its community-based partners are leading with courage, connection, and co-creation. Together, they have embedded lived experience and cultural knowledge into core functions – creating new roles, challenging power dynamics, and transforming outcomes for families. Participants will gain practical tools, engage in interactive activities, and hear real-life reflections on how shared leadership elevates practice, deepens family engagement, and shapes system-level change. Whether you're starting this journey or already deep in the work, this session will offer energy, structure, and strategy for the work ahead.

Presenters: Christina Cagle, Stanford Sierra Youth & Families; Rhonda Smith, Child Welfare Services Solano County

B11 - Changing Practice Through Data: A Measurement-Informed Strategy for What's Next in Mental Health Care

This presentation will highlight how a child- and family-serving mental health agency implemented a forward-looking, measurement-informed strategy to support therapists in their clinical practice and improve service quality. Attendees will learn about practical tools to help therapists incorporate outcome data into their daily work. These tools include training, supervision, data monitoring systems, and key performance indicators that not only increase therapist engagement but also foster a culture of data use that informs clinical decision-making and continuous quality improvement. Drawing from lessons learned during the implementation process, this presentation will offer strategies that agencies can adapt to support a culture of data use that is responsive to the evolving needs of systems, staff, and families by aligning clinical work with continuous quality improvement efforts.

Presenters: Carmen Rickman, Center for Adoption Support and Education; Sarah Sullivan, Center for Adoption Support and Education

B12 - Youth who are High-Risk, Missing, and Exploited: A Multidisciplinary Response

Youth who go missing are particularly vulnerable to individuals who seek to exploit their isolation and lack of resources. With 20 years of experience, the Support to End Exploitation Now (SEEN) program has pioneered efforts to recover and support young people experiencing exploitation, leading countless teams to locate missing youth across the country and bring them home. This training will strengthen responders' ability to recognize and respond to young people at risk of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Participants will explore the intersection between the internet, missing youth, and exploitation, and learn about the composition of the

CSEC Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) when a young person is missing. They will gain strategies for trauma-informed engagement, planning recoveries, and preventing youth from going missing.

Presenters: Sheelah Gobar & Sophie Jordan, Children's Advocacy Center of Suffolk County

B13 - Challenging the Mandate: Redesigning Reporting Through Equity, Lived Expertise, and Co-Creation

What if mandated reporting started not with a hotline call, but with a conversation rooted in support, context, and community? Mandated reporting often triggers a system response that is disproportionately harmful to the very families it seeks to protect. This interactive workshop will offer a prevention-first roadmap to transform practice. Participants will be introduced to a framework driven by data, equity, lived expertise, and collaboration. They will explore the Community Prevention Coordinator model, which embeds cross-sector support before a report is made. Co-developed with parents and youth with lived experience, this session will provide replicable, data-backed tools (including action plan templates, job descriptions, and surveys) that participants can adapt for their jurisdictions. Attendees will leave with the momentum to shift from compliance to connection.

Presenters: Michelle Samuels & Amber Blak & Allison Schild, Citrus Family Care Network

B14 - Developing a Service Paradigm for Children with Complex Behavioral Conditions

The Link Center, a national resource hub funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and managed by the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, has published a report that analyzes the complexities of serving children with neurodevelopmental, genetic conditions who may have also experienced trauma. The report examines how children exhibit behaviors stemming from emotional dysregulation. Using neuroscience as a lens to understand the children, the report proposes a service paradigm that recognizes both the brain and body components of dysregulation. This workshop will review the report and offer strategies to help children gain greater control over their feelings and responses, including successful recovery from trauma.

Presenters: Nancy Thaler & Stacy Nonnemacher, National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services

B15 - Family Matters: Strategies to Improve Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults

Each year, thousands of foster youth in Maryland age out of care, facing the daunting task of navigating adulthood without the traditional support systems many of their peers rely on. Research shows that without a stable network, these young adults are at higher risk of housing instability, unemployment, and poor mental health. Maryland Department of Human Services' (DHS) Family

Matters initiative is a department-wide effort to ensure every young person leaves care with lifelong well-being and lasting connections. In collaboration with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, we conducted a landscape analysis that revealed Maryland ages out young people – especially Black teenage girls – at a higher rate than the national average and neighboring states. In response, DHS launched a five-pronged strategy focused on leadership development, kinship, communications, emerging adults, data and performance, and legal engagement. This workshop will review the ways DHS is challenging policies, processes, and engagement at every level to create systemic change that fosters stability, resilience, and opportunity for all young people leaving care.

Presenters: Angelique Salizan & Alger Studstill, Jr, Maryland Department of Human Services

C1 - CWLA Policy Workshop – topic TBA

C2 - CWLA Leadership Touchstones Series – topic TBA

C3 - CWLA Standards of Excellence Workshop

C4 - The Power of the Normative Community: The Secret Sauce for Ensuring Team and Organizational Success

This high-energy workshop will explore organizational and team culture. Culture is ever-present, and the strength of the culture that surrounds a team will define its capacity for success. Participants will examine the foundational elements for creating and sustaining a positive normative community that becomes the "secret sauce" for success. Throughout the session, participants will learn about the core elements and strategies for ensuring the presence of a positive organizational culture, which in turn will support successful outcomes for team members and, most importantly, for the people they serve.

Presenters: Paul Dann, North American Family Institute

C5 - Creating Beloved Communities: How the Texas Family Well-being Initiative (TFWI) is Leading through Practice, Policy, and Possibility

By rewriting the narrative of families caught in cycles of systemic failure, TFWI has become a beacon of proactive change across four Texas cities (Houston, Dallas, Tyler, and Austin). Dedicated to community-led and -centered prevention to improve child and family well-being, TFWI empowers communities through innovative strategies and resource structures, including frameworks for forging strategic alliances with diverse partners – from mutual aid and family healing to youth skill development, housing, employment, and civic engagement. This flexible, replicable model for national change is fueled by a belief in community power, embodies the transformative potential of grassroots action, and leverages business-driven solutions.

Presenters: LaKeidru Blaylock, Texas Family Well-Being Initiative; Veola Green, Annie E. Casey Foundation

C6 - Supporting Young People Transitioning from Foster Care through Relational Permanency and Interdependent Living

Each year, thousands of young people transition from foster care without permanent, supportive relationships, often confronting homelessness, unemployment, and social isolation. This session will offer a powerful paradigm shift from independence to interdependence, emphasizing the transformative role of caring adult connections in building resilience. Participants will explore the C.A.R.E. Program (Caring Adults "R" Everywhere), a trauma-informed, evidence-informed intervention that facilitates natural mentoring relationships. Through compelling narrative, practitioner insights, and applied research, attendees will learn to foster relational permanency in their professional contexts. This session will equip frontline workers, administrators, and advocates with tangible tools to improve outcomes for youth in transition and become the consistent, caring presence every young person deserves.

Presenter: Johanna Greeson, University of Pennsylvania

C7 - Connected for Safety: Enhancing Child Protection Through Timely Data Sharing Across Systems

Nationally, more than half of all concerns reported to Child Protective Services are screened out. Mandated reporters are trained to report concerns to Child Protective Services, but many families still fall through the cracks despite the best intentions of professionals trying to connect them. We may believe we are successfully passing the baton, but what if that baton is inadvertently dropped at the handoff? This session will present a data-driven, innovative partnership strategy between educators and child protection professionals that ensures the baton is picked up and families are connected to the support they need to keep children safer, sooner.

Presenters: Lara LaRoche & Tanya McClanahan & Tanina Seagraves, Franklin County Children Services

C8 - Poverty, Adaptation, and Resilience: Insights from A Simulation-Based Training for Advancing Child Welfare Practice

This workshop will present insights from a research-supported Child Welfare Poverty Simulation designed to strengthen reflective capacity, cultural humility, and resilience-based thinking among child welfare professionals. As part of Title IV-E training, the simulation includes pre- and post-evaluation data to assess growth in empathy and understanding of family adaptation and resilience. Participants will engage in immersive role-play, experiencing the daily challenges faced by families dealing with housing insecurity, food scarcity, and systemic barriers. The simulation will

highlight the resilient strategies families use to survive and thrive amid poverty, structural racism, and limited opportunity. Attendees will receive tools to adapt the simulation for their own workforce, fostering equity-informed, family-centered practices.

Presenters: Robert Louis & Leticia Villarreal Sosa & Griselda Vasquez, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

C9 - The Best Kept EBT Secret: How AF-CBT is the Solution for Creating Safety for Families Experiencing Physical Abuse and Harsh Discipline

Child welfare workers and mental health clinicians must partner to combat the generational cycle of violence and abuse in families demonstrating physical abuse and harsh discipline. Alternatives for Families: a Cognitive Behavioral Treatment (AF-CBT) has been shown to lead to better outcomes than routine community services for children, parents, and families, including less child-to-parent aggression, fewer externalizing behaviors in children, decreased child abuse potential, less psychological distress and drug use in parents, less overall family conflict, and increased family cohesion. Unfortunately, few communities across the country offer this treatment model, leaving families without access to this powerful intervention. Participants in this training will take part in an experiential activity to examine beliefs, discover ways to start an AF-CBT program, and leave equipped with resources to chart a new course for families in their communities, including a powerful engagement technique they can apply immediately.

Presenter: Ashley Fiore, National Children's Alliance

C10 - IMPACT: When Community Partners and Research Partners Come Together

Drawing on insights from the Quality Improvement Center on Helplines and Hotlines, presenters will share practical strategies for building trust, sharing power, and sustaining momentum in complex, equity-centered partnerships. They will discuss how shared values, psychological safety, and effective use of technical tools positively influence collaboration. The session's central theme – "before the data comes the people" – will challenge community partners, researchers, and systems-level changemakers to rethink how partnerships form and thrive. Participants will acquire tools and strategies for managing complexity, conflict, and communication, along with insights to improve collaboration. This interactive session will guide attendees in moving beyond check-the-box partnerships toward true co-creation.

Presenters: Dee Bonnick, Children's Trust Fund Alliance; Diego Quezada & Kisha Freeman, Evident Change

C11 - Reducing Out-of-Home Placements for Children Impacted by Parental Substance Use through the Family-Based Recovery Model

Parenting is a powerful motivator for substance use recovery. For children, remaining in the family home while a parent engages in treatment can reduce exposure to adverse childhood events associated with out-of-home placement. Family-Based Recovery (FBR) builds on a parent's motivation to maintain custody of their child to engage them in treatment. Participants will learn about the foundational principles of FBR, an in-home, intensive treatment model that provides reinforcement-based substance use treatment, psychotherapy, parent-child dyadic therapy, and assistance to build recovery capital. Benefits of FBR will be demonstrated through discussion of a randomized control trial comparing out-of-home placements for children whose parents with substance use disorders were assigned to FBR versus treatment as usual.

Presenters: Karen Hanson, Yale Child Study Center; Maria Restrepo-Ruiz, UCONN Health

C12 - Caring for the Caregivers: Grandparents Raising Grandkids

This presentation will help participants apply lessons learned from caregiver supports provided to grandparents raising grandchildren to caring for other caregivers in the child welfare community. Featuring a gerontologist with deep expertise in providing support to grandparents, and an expert in applying Medicaid and Older Americans Act–funded strategies to supporting family caregivers, this presentation will share data and trends from the Grandparents Raising Grandkids program and examine how that information can be leveraged to improve collaboration between providers and public agencies. The TCARE caregiver supports model discussed in this presentation will include lessons learned from serving caregivers across populations, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and children with special health needs.

Presenters: Katie Olse, Sellers Dorsey; Cheryl Fisher, Centene Corporation; Chelsea Gilchrist, TCARE

C13 - Creating a Community of Hope: Fueling the Next Generation through Creative Collaboration

Hope is believing that the future will be brighter than today. Turbo Babies, an early childhood awareness campaign created by the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County, fuels hope by investing in the future of the youngest learners, ages zero to three. This session will explore how Turbo Babies creates a community of hope while educating the public on the complex topic of early brain science with an engaging and easy-to-understand message. Participants will learn how to promote awareness of their own missions and build their own "Pit Crew" through creative collaboration with parents, caregivers, partner organizations, health centers, and community stakeholders.

Presenters: Elicia Hinson, Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County; Sarah Kelley, Evara Health

C14 - Beyond Inclusion: Elevating Lived Experience in Policy and Practice

As child welfare systems confront unprecedented change and uncertainty, the question is no longer if lived experience should be centered but how it can become embedded in every level of decision-making and organizational culture. Involving lived experience builds trust within communities and promotes meaningful reform. This interactive session will bring together young adults and parents with lived experience in foster care, adoption, and kinship care.. The panelists will explore how they have partnered with agencies, influenced policy, and redesigned mental health and permanency supports to reflect real family needs. The session will equip participants with replicable strategies to embed lived expertise into workforce development and program implementation. It will also highlight how the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) has advanced its longstanding commitment to centering lived experience not only in direct mental health services but also across training, technical assistance, and workforce development. Through candid discussion and practical examples, participants will leave with strategies to inspire similar transformation within their own work.

Presenters: Ashley Garcia Rivera, LaShawnda Kilgore & Betty Rivers, C.A.S.E; Robert Parsons, Oakland Thrives; Arnie Eby, NFPA

C15 - Alan

D1 - Coping with Gun Violence and Work-Related Stress: Integrating Organizational Wellness and the Person of the Professional

Rampant and incessant gun violence is devastating students, their families, and educational faculty daily. The soaring pressure and extraordinary demands confronting educational, healthcare, and human services workers are having a profound impact on all levels of the workforce, leaving many well-meaning professionals feeling overwhelmed, under-supervised, and highly susceptible to primary and secondary traumatic stress. CWLA and Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence will use this workshop to cultivate a safe and structured climate for interdisciplinary professionals and emphasize effective, respectful methods that reduce and minimize the harmful impact of gun violence and workforce stress, increase morale and productivity, and enhance professional alliances. The workshop will offer a Five-Step Approach that addresses the emotional labor educational and human services workers encounter every day by strengthening organizational resilience and school safety, establishing cohesive interdisciplinary teams within and across helping systems, and fostering trustworthy spaces for self-preservation and wellness on personal and professional dimensions.

Presenters: Abbey Clements, Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence; Michael Schultz, CWLA Senior Fellow

D2 - CWLA Navigating Funding Challenges Series – topic TBA

D3 - CWLA Workshop – topic TBA <mark>(real world strategies)</mark>

D4 - Immersive Learning for Recruiting, Preparing, and Retaining the Child Welfare Workforce

This presentation will be an interactive session led by experts who have developed an award-winning immersive learning method. The discussion will focus on the major impacts observed: measurable reduction in turnover and lessons learned in implementation. The session will also turn a lens to how immersive learning is being used to improve partnership with families, reduce bias in decision-making, and increase empathy in case work. Preparing the child welfare workforce is one of today's most challenging needs. Most training is compliance-based, and most learning happens on the job, which means caseworkers are learning their craft while serving families. This new immersive learning method provides caseworkers and supervisors an opportunity to practice the complex interpersonal skills needed when working with complex families.

Presenter: Molly Tierney, Accenture

D5 - How Families in Child Welfare Improved Well-being by Adding a $1,000 Unconditional Monthly Cash Transfer

Can $1,000 per month in supplemental income prove helpful to families involved in the child welfare system? A program at Forestdale in New York City has provided more than 30 families, mostly Preventive Program participants, with $1,000 monthly. An interim evaluation by a team from the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College indicates that families used this additional income to help with housing, clothing, food, and family outings. This workshop will describe the program, the population, the evaluation design, the interim report outcomes, and provide an up-to-date overview. After the initial presentation, the panel will engage attendees in small-group discussion on policy questions (e.g., how government policies that require living wages or workplace protections can help improve the income children need in a household for healthy development), evaluation design questions (e.g., how participants can help design the parameters of program evaluation), and practice questions (e.g., what methods casework practice can use to embrace and address client financial sustainability).

Presenters: Lorraine Stephens & Monique Francis, Forestdale Inc.; Ryan Savino, CUNY

D6 - Transforming Foster Care: One Hope United's Hope House Model

This interactive session will explore the Hope House Model, a trauma-informed, community-based alternative to traditional foster care and residential treatment, designed specifically for youth with high-acuity needs. These youth often have complex mental health needs, histories of trauma, disrupted placements, and crossover involvement with juvenile justice. Participants will learn how the Hope House Model stabilizes these youth by offering consistent caregiving in a home setting, integrated clinical supports, and evidence-based strategies like Trust-Based Relational

Intervention. The session will highlight promising outcomes and provide actionable strategies for implementing similar programs. Through real-world case studies and voices with lived experience, attendees will gain insight into how the model meets the urgent needs of youth too often underserved in current systems.

Presenters: Damon Cates & Chuck Metellus & Sarah Tunning, One Hope United

D7 - Innovation and Equity in Systematically Addressing Developmental and Behavioral Health Needs of Children

Early identification of developmental and behavioral needs, coupled with family-centered case management, is essential for child and family well-being. This workshop will highlight the breadth and depth of the Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP) at Rady Children's Hospital. DSEP is a successful, collaborative, community-responsive program that addresses developmental and behavioral health needs of children who enter child welfare services. DSEP has reached over 10,000 children and families, conducted over 14,000 screenings, and equitably linked children to needed services at a rate of more than 90%. In this interactive session, the presenters will highlight learnings (i.e., unique challenges and needs) from DSEP's recent expansion to school-aged children. Participants will examine lessons learned, discuss implementation challenges, and consider how similar programs can be implemented and sustained in their service systems.

Presenters: Danielle Fettes, UC San Diego; Julie McCormack, Rady Children's Health

D8 - Building a Kin-First Culture: Practice, Policy, and Possibilities

Embracing the kin-first movement requires courage and clarity, with a willingness to challenge entrenched systems and champion family-centered solutions. This session will highlight effective strategies for ensuring children remain with their families. The presenters, who represent both the public and private sectors, will share best practices from successful programs, focusing on how kin-first mindsets create positive outcomes for children, families, and communities. Attendees will learn how policy and practice reforms can dismantle obstacles and promote equity, stability, and permanency for kinship families. The presentation will also examine innovative possibilities for reimagining child welfare systems where kin are prioritized, voices are centered, and sustainable support is the norm. Practical tools and actionable ideas will empower participants to advance a kin-first culture within their roles and organizations.

Presenters: Jed Dews, HALOS; Mike Leach, Think of Us

D9 - When the System Says 'No': How Peer Engagement Is Transforming Permanency and Challenging System Norms

This session will highlight how Citrus Family Care Network embeds parents with lived child welfare experience at critical decision points to disrupt harmful practices and improve outcomes for families. Presenters will explore how peer specialists who are trained, supported, and strategically placed are challenging punitive norms, reversing termination of parental rights filings, and reconnecting families even after systems have moved toward permanent separation. Rather than reinforce the illusion that the current system is working, this session will acknowledge that it is actively causing harm and will focus on actionable strategies that support families in real time. Participants will experience an engaging, interactive session that centers lived expertise, elevates family voice, and provides a replicable model for integrating peer roles that protect families, shift power, and challenge the status quo.

Presenters: Allison Schild & Classi McDonald & Ronnita Waters, Citrus Family Care Network

D10 - Fast Track to Reunification: Empowering Parents as Partners in Child Welfare

Too often, parents involved in the child welfare system feel unseen, overwhelmed, and powerless in the very process designed to reunify their families. Be Strong Families' Fast Track Workshops (FTW) are a trauma-responsive, experiential learning series that center parents as active partners in the reunification journey. This workshop will begin with an overview and sample activities from the foundational four-hour Get on the Fast Track session – a psychodynamic experience that surfaces and validates the deep emotional impact of system involvement, helps parents process emotions, and equips them with practical tools to transform stress into action. Participants will also explore the 3-S Model (Strategy, Strength, Support), an empowering framework that helps parents claim agency in the reunification process.

Presenters: Robyn Harvey, Be Strong Families; Gregory Cox, Cox Consulting

D11 - Connecticut Alliance for Substance Exposed Children: Empowering Communities to Respond to Substance Exposure in Childhood

This session will introduce the work of the Connecticut Alliance for Substance Exposed Children (CT SEC), an affiliate of National Drug Endangered Children. CT SEC is a multidisciplinary coalition committed to improving outcomes for children impacted by caregiver substance use and environmental exposure to substances. Participants will explore how substance exposure affects children from birth through adolescence and into emerging adulthood. The session will emphasize trauma-informed, cross-system collaboration to enhance prevention, identification, and intervention efforts. Attendees will learn about the Alliance's mission, statewide initiatives, and practical resources available to professionals across sectors. The presentation will also highlight the importance of person-first language, coordinated care, and actionable strategies to support families and protect children. Participants will leave with tools to strengthen their community's response to SEC and promote safe, healthy, and substance-free environments for all children and families.

Presenters: Kris Robles, Connecticut Department of Children and Families; Pamela Mautte, BHcare

D12 - Strategies to Combat Family Separations for Immigrants in Child Welfare

Recent updates to immigration processes and policy threaten the integrity of immigrant families and increase the likelihood that families will become involved in child welfare due to detention and deportation. The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights operates a Technical Assistance Program for stakeholders, and Casey Family Programs provides strategic consulting to jurisdictions nationwide. This session will educate attendees on recent developments and their impacts on families, as well as lessons learned from real-life cases helping families at the intersection of immigration and child welfare. Participants will explore strategies for intervention that support safety, reunification, cultural connection, and permanency.

Presenters: Rachel Konrad, Casey Family Programs; Kelly Kribs & Shaina Simenas, The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

D13 - Beyond Family First: Utilizing Backbone Organizations to Build Cross-System Collaboration to Support Well-being

Kentucky's Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) was an early implementer of the Family First Prevention Services Act. Despite successful implementation, barriers to improving child and family well-being in meaningful ways remained. DCBS and CHES Solutions Group will share how engaging a nonprofit to lead initiatives can foster inclusive approaches and support collaboration in a way that builds community trust and partner engagement – from early lessons learned to ultimately successful strategies to overcome fragmentation and apathy. Utilizing a nonprofit backbone organization to facilitate collaboration among public agencies, nonprofits, communities, and those with lived experience has resulted in significant strides toward the well-being of families and communities, especially in early childhood. Participants will have an opportunity to share their own successes and challenges for discussion.

Presenters: Christa Bell & Rashmi Adi-Brown, CHES Solutions Group; Jennifer Thornhill, Kentucky Department for Community Based Services

D14 - Building Hope: Achieving Better Outcomes for Vermont's Children and Families through Restorative Transformation

Moving decision making closer to those impacted by the decisions is a proven strategy to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families and increase staff satisfaction. Vermont child welfare is undertaking a system-wide transformation to redefine itself as a restorative system. We are certain that engaging with children, youth, families, community partners, staff, and leadership in an authentic, relational way is the path forward to improving the lives of those we serve. This session

will share how safety culture and racial justice work are foundational elements of the restorative approach, the research that supports it, the structures that have been built, and the progress made.

Presenters: Heather McLain & Lindy Boudreau & Dan Evans, Vermont Department for Children and Families

D15 - Maximizing Housing and Services for Youth/Young Adult Transitions

Too many young people aging out of foster care face homelessness – but it doesn't have to be this way. This session will highlight policy and program opportunities to align and maximize housing vouchers as a powerful tool to support youth and young adults as they exit foster care. Participants will explore ideal timing and sequencing and how to align several key federal funding sources and programs that support youth transitions. This session will also review new federal flexibilities and examples for utilizing targeted housing vouchers and practical strategies for engaging housing authorities and other housing partners. Participants will leave this workshop with actionable insights to help young people achieve stable housing and successful transitions from care.

Presenters: Leah Lindstrom Rhea & Andrew Johnson, Corporation for Supportive Housing

E1 - Working with Traumatized Children

E2 - CWLA Leadership Touchstones Series – topic TBA

E3 - CWLA Workshop – topic TBA (Vicky and Steve)

E4 - Best Practices for Enhancing Child Welfare's Response to Perinatal Mental Health Conditions

In 2022, a New York City mother with a history of child welfare involvement and mental illness was accused of drowning her three children. In response, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) sought ways to prevent similar incidents by educating and equipping frontline staff, supervisors, trainers, and parents with best practices for maternal mental health, specifically addressing Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs). This session will highlight the importance of recognizing and treating maternal and paternal mental health conditions to protect children from harm and ensure that new parents have the support they need and deserve to recover. Participants will learn about a partnership that provides NYC ACS and direct service staff with PMAD awareness, education, and resources. They will also hear from individuals with lived experiences of PMAD and SUD, as well as direct service providers who specialize in supporting and treating these conditions.

Presenters: Jacqueline Martin, NYC Administration for Children's Services; Paige Bellenbaum, Perinatal Mental Health Consultant

E5 - Using Organizational Assessment to Address Secondary Trauma in Child Welfare Settings

Trauma exposure experienced by child welfare staff has been closely linked to engagement with clients, risk- and safety-related decision-making, and staff turnover. Child welfare agencies often identify secondary trauma (ST) as an occupational hazard for staff but struggle with how to intervene. This workshop will review how the Washington County (Maryland) Department of Social Services (WCDSS) used the Child Welfare Traumameter (CWT) organizational assessment process to identify and address secondary trauma experienced by its staff. Workshop participants will learn about the CWT process, the benefits of using organizational assessment to support trauma-informed practice, and approaches used by WCDSS to both identify and address secondary trauma. Participants will also have the opportunity to brainstorm ST-related strategies they can bring back to their agencies.

Presenters: Erika Tullberg, NYU Langone School of Medicine; Amanda Bishop Burdick, Washington County Department of Social Services

E6 - Creating and Sustaining Systemic Change in Child Protection Through New and Innovative Policies and Partnerships

This session will provide an overview of the design, development, and delivery of new and innovative policies through an inclusive, collaborative, multi-institutional academic partnership between all seven accredited, state-supported institutions of higher learning and the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services. It will also illustrate a six-component model for creating and sustaining systemic change. This model includes: vision, data-driven decision-making, implementation and leadership, leveraging of resources, building capacity, and assessment and accountability. Data indicating significant shifts in the provision of services to children and families over a two-year span will be reviewed as evidence of systemic change.

Presenters: Andrea Sanders & Devon Loggins, Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services; Jerome Kolbo, The University of Southern Mississippi; Kay Casey, Kay Casey Consulting LLC; Liz Edwards, Integrated Solutions

E7 - Virginia's Approach to Addressing Placement Crises and Permanency Planning for Youth with High Acuity Needs

Challenged by severe emotional, behavioral, and psychological barriers, youth with high acuity needs in foster care are at risk of chronic placement disruption and instability. Yet, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) envisions a future in which these youth never spend a night displaced in an office or hotel. Targeted efforts to create this new reality began in early 2021. In just five years, VDSS's specialized High Acuity Team has developed successful, data-driven displacement prevention practices and unique pilot programs incorporating collaboration with

public and private organizations. This presentation will showcase VDSS's "What Would It Take?" framework, the High Acuity Team's expertise in providing technical and direct placement assistance, valuable lessons learned, and transferrable ideas that may help other states and practitioners address similar issues.

Presenters: Samantha Brooks & Lora Smith Hughes, Virginia Department of Social Services

E8 - Together We Change: The PACT model for Child Protection With Heart

The PACT (Practice in Action Together) model is a values-based child protection approach that centers collaboration between families with lived experience and caseworkers. Through authentic partnership, Local Advisory Groups function not as passive consultants, but as active architects of change, bringing the insights of lived experience and professional wisdom into alignment. Group members co-design practice improvements, bringing together insight, accountability, and authentic engagement. This session will introduce the PACT model and highlight how embedding lived experience in decision-making drives more equitable, responsive, and human-centered child protection systems. Participants will explore strategies for forming advisory groups, building trust, and sustaining shared leadership. By shifting from doing to families to doing with them, PACT offers a path toward lasting systemic change – one grounded in partnership, not just policy.

Presenters: Lara LaRoche. Franklin County Children Services; Whitney King, ; Ashley Roy, PCSAO

E9 - Blueprint to Scaling Up Statewide: Expanding Statewide Access to Behavioral Health Treatments in Record Time

Are you struggling to implement evidence-based programs that meet the needs of children and youth due to FFPSA funding criteria? This session will explore how the Family Centered Treatment (FCT) Foundation worked with the Arkansas Department of Human Services and its regional managed care organizations to expand the FCT service model to benefit children and youth, including those not traditionally served within the child welfare system, and to transition from a Title IV-E to a Medicaid funding model. Participants will hear what worked and lessons learned from expanding a growing behavioral health treatment model across multiple providers concurrently and engaging agencies, community partners, and families for successful implementation of this in-home service model.

Presenters: Tim Wood, Family Centered Treatment Foundation, Inc.; Paula Stone, Arkansas Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health; Karen Hallenbeck, Public Consulting Group LLC

E10 - There's No "I" In Team: A New Staffing Blueprint to Rebuilt Michigan's Child Welfare System

Children in child welfare face staggering odds. In foster care alone, 80% experience behavioral health challenges, 50% report substance use, and children with multiple placements are 90% more likely to enter the justice system. In response, Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) developed and piloted the Children Services Administration Teaming Model — a bold redesign of the child welfare workforce that centers both families and the frontline staff who support them. It replaces siloed casework with proactive, multidisciplinary teams that emphasize coordination, timely access to supports, and continuity. Early results show better outcomes for families and a more sustainable experience for staff. This session will explore how Michigan reimagined its staffing model to meet today's challenges and built a blueprint to support families and the frontline.

Presenters: Demetrius Starling & Emily Skrzypczak, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

E11 - How the Parents as Teachers Home Visiting Program Helps Families Navigate the Child Welfare System

Parents as Teachers (PAT), an early childhood home visiting program, provides parenting supports to families with young children. In recent years, the PAT National Center (PATNC) has worked to tailor services for families involved in the child welfare system (CWS), including those experiencing custody loss. To support these efforts, Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research (TIER) has conducted a multi-year project to understand the experiences of families involved with CWS and enrolled in PAT, and to co-develop and evaluate PAT policy and practice revisions to better support this unique population and enhance PAT–CWS collaborations. In this session, TIER and PATNC representatives will describe key project findings, program improvements tailored to families involved with CWS, and implications for child welfare agencies.

Presenters: Jessica Goldberg, Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research; Emma Posner, Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research; Sondra Horowitz, Parents as Teachers

E12 - Quantifying Screening Precision in Child Protection: A Statistical Review

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) in child welfare is a structured, ongoing approach agencies use to ensure services for children and families are effective, consistent, and aligned with best practices. In healthcare, sensitivity and specificity are widely recognized measures for evaluating how well a test, tool, or screening method performs. In child welfare, these measures can be applied to evaluate the effectiveness of screening processes. At Peel CAS, these measures are being used to assess how accurately staff identify children at risk of abuse and neglect, as well as those who are not at risk. High sensitivity (true positive) and high specificity (true negative) results are ideal, ensuring children in need of protection are accurately identified while reducing unnecessary investigations.

Presenters: Jolanta Rasteniene & Alyssa Burch & Simon Meng, Peel Children's Aid Society

E13 - Systemic Change Driven by Youth in Foster Care Through a Public-Private-University Partnership

For almost 20 years, Illinois' Statewide Youth Advisory Board and the ChildLaw Policy Institute at Loyola University Chicago's School of Law have partnered with youth in care and law students under faculty supervision to build policy agendas and advance legislative initiatives driven by the goals of youth in care. More recently, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has joined this partnership. Presenters representing these three entities will describe how they collaborate, challenges they have faced, and success stories. In addition to discussion, workshop attendees will participate in at least one of the interactive exercises the law students use with members of the Youth Advisory Board to introduce them to the legislative process.

Presenters: Heidi Mueller, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services; Anita Weinberg, Loyola University Chicago School of Law; Kshawn Moore, Illinois Statewide Youth Advisory Board

E14 - The ICWA Family Preservation Model: Strengthening Families and Centering Tribal Sovereignty in Prevention Services

This workshop will introduce North Dakota's ICWA Family Preservation (IFP) Program — an innovative, culturally grounded prevention model designed in partnership with Tribal Nations. The IFP program, which has recently expanded statewide, centers Tribal sovereignty, early family engagement, and holistic support to prevent family separation and uphold the spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act. Presenters will share implementation lessons, measurable outcomes, and practical tools. Participants will engage in a facilitated Prevention Mapping exercise using a Liberating Structure activity (1-2-4-All) to reflect on how their own systems align with the IFP model's core principles. Led by an interdisciplinary team including a former IFP, a state-Tribal systems facilitator, and an academic partner, this session will offer transferable practices for culturally responsive, family-led prevention.

Presenters: Carenlee Barkdull & Harmony Bercier, University of North Dakota; Sloan Henry, Native American Training Institute

E15 - Minnesota DEI

F1 - CWLA Workshop – topic TBA

F2 - CWLA Navigating Funding Challenges Series – topic TBA

F3 - Compassion Satisfaction: Finding Joy in Service of Children and Youth

Social services have appropriately focused on the devastating impacts of trauma on children, youth, and families. Helpers who are determined to offer support may experience vicarious trauma as they confront the unmitigated challenges and barriers faced by children, youth, and families. This presentation will acknowledge these common experiences while introducing compassion satisfaction and vicarious resilience. Research indicates that vicarious resilience can serve as a protective factor against compassion fatigue and burnout. It is a positive phenomenon that highlights the reciprocal benefit of helping relationships. Witnessing families overcome adversity – often through helpers' positive interventions – creates opportunities for professionals to cultivate an optimistic outlook.

Presenter: Kelli McKnight, CWLA Member

F4 - Sacred Child through Lived Experiences: 25 Years of Wrap-Around Services in Turtle Mountains

The Sacred Child Project is a wraparound service that provides individualized support to high-risk youth and their families. This session will share the origins of the Sacred Child Project, an overview of its timeline, and how state funding was secured to sustain the program. Multiple youth who previously participated in the program will share their stories and lived experiences, offering a firsthand look at the project's lasting impact.

Presenters: Janice Birkland, Turtle Mountain Child Welfare and Family Services; Tanna Beston & Shodiah LaVallie, Sacred Child Project

F5 - Will this Marriage Work? MCOs and EBP Models

This session will use the analogy of marriage to describe cross-system partnerships between private providers, managed care organizations (MCOs), and state agencies that have successfully removed barriers to build sustainable, high-quality, evidence-based care. In this "marriage", presenters will identify keys to successful collaboration, including assessing readiness, understanding competing goals, recognizing communication styles, and celebrating shared achievements that advance child and family well-being. Participants will explore strategies for creating partnerships, navigating differences, building on collective strengths, and achieving shared missions. Reflections will be shared from providers, community supporters, and managed care leaders.

Presenters: Laura Boyd, Family Centered Treatment Foundation; Mark Washington, Healthy Blue NC; Kimberly Young, Pressley Ridge

F6 - Supporting Adoptee Identity, Permanency, and Post-Adoption Belonging

Adoption is not a single event – it is a lifelong process that shapes identity, belonging, and connection. This workshop will invite participants to explore practical, trauma-informed strategies to support adoptees beyond placement. Drawing from the Adoptee Consciousness Model and current research, Angela Tucker, author of You Should Be Grateful and founder of the Adoptee Mentoring Society, will share evidence-based practices to strengthen permanency and post-adoption well-being. Participants will learn how to center adoptee identity in family, educational, and professional settings, identify gaps between therapy and mentorship, and foster authentic, lasting belonging. Through real-world examples and reflective activities, attendees will leave with actionable tools to better support adoptees and their families across their lifespans.

Presenter: Angela Tucker, Adoptee Mentoring Society

F7 - Strategic Innovation in Foster Care: Building a Family-Centered System of Support

This presentation will highlight Heartland for Children's (HFC) strategic redesign of Florida's Circuit 10 Foster Care system. By partnering with the North American Family Institute and implementing the evidence-based Functional Family Therapy Foster Care model, HFC has developed a family-centered systems approach to support youth in current placements while simultaneously advancing permanency planning and managing costs. The effort extended beyond model implementation – it required deep organizational collaboration among funders, providers, model developers, and foster parent networks. Together, partners created a unified, data-driven strategy emphasizing relational care, cross-system alignment, and fiscal accountability. Participants will learn how strategic planning, shared leadership, and family-centered design can transform outcomes for youth in care and drive measurable improvements in permanency, stability, and cost-efficiency.

Presenters: Thomas Sexton & Marta Anderson, Functional Family Therapy; Fawn Moore, Heartland for Children

F8 - Creativity and Complexity: Creating a Cutting-Edge Psychological Evaluation Service for Child Welfare Agencies

This session will present a unique public-private partnership model that uses private funding to provide specialized psychological evaluations for children in or entering foster care who exhibit high-risk behaviors, such as firesetting or sexually harmful behaviors. Presenters will outline tailored evaluation methods, describe relationships with community partners, and share strategies for replicating this model in other jurisdictions. Case studies and data will illustrate how these evaluations improve placement and treatment outcomes for youth with complex mental health needs and high-risk behaviors involved in the child welfare system.

Presenters: Victoria Phillips & Michael Feder, NYC Administration for Children's Services

F9 - Performance and Quality Improvement (QI) Made Simple: What is QI Really, and How Does it Improve Performance?

Human service professionals are often expected to wear many hats and deliver high-quality services with limited resources. While quality assurance and improvement are essential to operational success, most providers lack formal training or access to professional evaluators. This interactive session will introduce core Quality Improvement (QI) principles through engaging discussion and exercises designed to demystify the process. Participants will learn how to implement practical QI tools within their teams, inspire staff engagement, and cultivate a culture of learning and accountability that leads to measurable improvement.

Presenters: Mairin Schreiber & Melissa Petrone & Ben Orzechowski, NAFI

F10 - Foster Parents as Mentors: A Transformative Approach to Strengthen Families

This session will introduce an innovative model that empowers foster parents to serve as mentors to biological parents. While co-care focuses on collaboration, mentoring goes further by intentionally modeling parenting skills, building confidence, and fostering growth in biological parents. This approach emphasizes relationship-building, skill transfer, and mutual respect to support reunification and improve outcomes for children. Using case studies, group discussions, and interactive exercises, participants will learn how to address safety and boundary concerns, implement mentoring in home and neutral settings, and collaborate effectively with stakeholders. Attendees will leave with actionable tools, including training templates and program guidelines, to develop mentoring programs in their agencies.

Presenters: Nicolette Love & Julie Villarreal, The Villages of Indiana

F11 - From Innovation to Impact: Scaling the START Model in Child Welfare

Child welfare leaders often say that START should be the standard of practice in the field. This session will explore why – and how. Participants will be introduced to Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START), an evidence-based service delivery model proven to enhance child safety and parental recovery. Presenters will share strategies for increasing family-centered collaboration and systems-level change among child welfare, behavioral health, and judicial partners; highlight the benefits of integrating peer recovery support into service delivery; and discuss lessons from large-scale implementations. Participants will gain insights into how START can strengthen engagement, retention, and outcomes for families affected by substance use.

Presenters: Tina Willauer, Children and Family Futures; Fawn Gadel, Public Children Services Association of Ohio; Aimee Clemson-Rich, Ashtabula County Children Service

F12 - Rooted in Connection: Advancing Early Relational Health in Child Welfare

This session will explore how early relational health – defined by the quality of emotional connections between infants, young children, and their caregivers – can transform child welfare practice. Drawing from research and real-world examples, presenters will highlight how nurturing relationships from the start can buffer trauma, promote resilience, and support long-term well-being. When relational health is woven into assessment, planning, and daily engagement, it can shift the trajectory for children and families. Participants will leave with practical tools and a deeper appreciation for how relationship-centered approaches can improve outcomes across systems.

Presenters: Amy Kendal & Joanne Deuter, Maryville Academy

F13 - From Insight to Action: The "My Journey" Experience for Youth in Foster Care

This session will explore *My Journey*, an evidence-informed group curriculum designed to support youth aging out of foster care. Grounded in Parenting Journey's NEST philosophy – non-didactic, evidence-based, strengths-focused, and trauma-informed – the model uses experiential activities to help participants connect past experiences with current behaviors. Through guided reflection, youth build insight, nurture relationships, and prioritize self-care. Evaluation results will highlight youth perspectives, lived experiences, and feedback that inform program growth and direction. Attendees will gain an understanding of the curriculum's structure, outcomes, and transformative impact on participants' emotional growth, interpersonal skills, and overall well-being.

Presenters: Monica Zeno-Martin & Kathryn Wilson, Parenting Journey

F14 - Community Collaboration within Child Welfare: Navigating Challenging Times for Our Immigrant Community

This workshop will highlight current efforts underway in Santa Clara County to address institutional racism and race-based disparities within child welfare—particularly as they affect immigrant families. Panelists will share strategies used to confront inequities through both internal initiatives with staff and external collaborations that strengthen service delivery for families. The work focuses on coalition-building, trust, inclusion, and comprehensive support for staff, the families served, and the broader community. This complex effort takes place amid a national climate of hostility toward immigrant populations. Presenters will discuss intentional steps to examine and revise policies while remaining mindful of institutionalized oppression and the lasting impacts of white supremacy systems. The session will showcase how connecting community members, staff, administrators, and the Board of Supervisors can drive systemic change and improve outcomes for all families.

Presenters: Carla Torres, Santa Clara County; Teresa Castellanos, Office of Immigrant Relations; Rebecca Armendariz, CARAS/Rapid Response Network; Ruby Ramirez, People Acting in Community Together

F15 - Developing the Next Generation: Distributive Leadership for a Stronger Child Welfare Workforce

The future child welfare workforce will require flexible, modern approaches to talent development. CWLA's Emerging Leaders Committee is committed to helping organizations identify, cultivate, and support emerging leaders by creating environments where new and existing talent can thrive. Distributive Leadership offers a powerful framework for this work, replacing a scarcity mindset with intentional investment in individuals across all levels of proximity to children and families. This leadership model emphasizes that leadership is not confined to formal titles but can function as a collective process shared across teams. By elevating diverse voices and supporting shared decision-making, organizations can strengthen recruitment, retention, effectiveness, and staff engagement. A distributive approach helps build a workforce that is passionate, effective, and appreciated. This session will explore the principles of Distributive Leadership for workforce development, collaborative practice, accountability, and goal setting. Participants will learn how the model works, identify key opportunities and challenges, and gain practical strategies teams can use to implement Distributive Leadership and support the next generation of child welfare leaders.

Presenters: Jacqueline Martin, NYC Administration for Children's Services; Grey Hilliard-Koshinsky, The Advocacy Bridge; Dimple Patel, Casey Family Programs; Bacall Hincks, University of Utah; Kristyn "KT" Sherrod, Florida Institute for Child Welfare