

# CONFERENCE AGENDA

**7:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.**

## **REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST**

**8:15 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.**

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY & OPENING**

Honor guard - Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Pledge of Allegiance- Neil Robertson, ICAN Junior Ambassador

America the Beautiful: Annie Bosko

**8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.**

## **WELCOME**

Deanne Tilton Durfee, Doc.h.c., Executive Director, ICAN

## **Opening Comments:**

Nathan Hochman, Los Angeles County District Attorney

Jim McDonnell, Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department

April Tardy, Undersheriff, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department

**8:45 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.**

## **MORNING PLENARY PRESENTATIONS**

**PANEL: PROTECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ~ 8:45 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.**

Edward Liao, M.D., Medical Director, Department of Children and Family Services

Commander Richard Ruiz, LASD

Clayton Kazan, M.D., Medical Director, Los Angeles County Fire Department

Carol Berkowitz, M.D., Chief, Division of General Pediatrics, Harbor UCLA Medical Center

Claudia Wang, M.D., Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

Janis Johnson, Head Deputy DA, Family Violence Division, Los Angeles District Attorney

Bernita Walker, CEO Project Peacemakers, Inc ~ **9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

Courtney Kiehl, Advocate, Partner, Paul Mones, PC ~ **10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

Astrid Heger, MD ~ **10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

*Executive Director, Violence Intervention Program, LAC+USC Medical Center*

Richard Krugman, MD ~ **11:00 am – 11:30 a.m.**

*Distinguished Professor, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine*

**11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

## **TRANSITION TO LUNCH/NETWORKING BREAK**

**12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m. ~ LUNCH**

# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## LUNCH PROGRAM

### WELCOME BY ICAN ASSOCIATES

**12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

Judge Mary Thornton House, Lindsay Wagner, Justin Chambers, France Nuyen  
Musical Performance by Freda Payne

**1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.**

**ANGELO AWARD** ~ Lindsay Wagner

**CHAMPION FOR CHILDREN AWARD** ~

Commander Richard Ruiz, LASD Detective Division  
Jennifer Lopez, DCFS Regional Administrator

**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT**~ Bernita Walker, CEO Project Peacemakers, Inc

**LUNCHEON KEYNOTE** ~ 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Donna L. Schuurman, EdD, FT

*Senior Director of Advocacy & Education, Dougy Center*

**BREAK** ~ 2:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.

**2:45 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.**

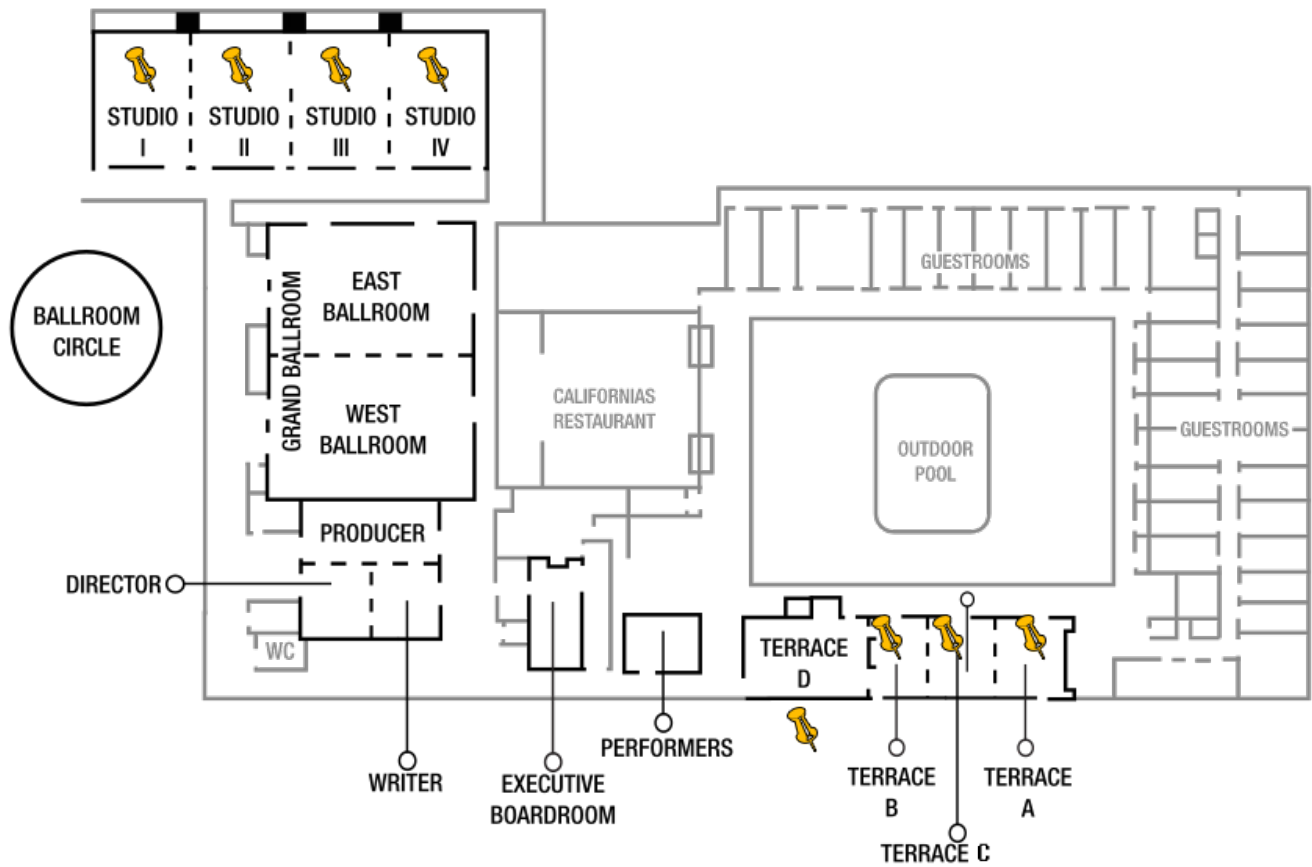
### WORKSHOP SESSIONS

### CONFERENCES CLOSES/SIGN-OUT



# WORKSHOP LOCATIONS

## FIRST FLOOR





## **Deanne Tilton Durfee, Doc.hc, Executive Director, Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN)**

Deanne Tilton Durfee is Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN). ICAN is one of the largest county-based child abuse councils in the Country. She also developed ICAN Associates, a private non-profit charity comprised of corporate and media representatives. This partnership promotes the development and networking of comprehensive multi-disciplinary and community-based child abuse programs. She served as a Child Welfare Worker, a Juvenile Court Liaison Supervisor, a Supervising Children's Services Worker, and a Regional Services Administrator before being selected to administer ICAN. In 1996, ICAN was designated the National Center on Child Fatality Review. She served from 1984-1990 as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse (NCPCA). She also served as a Commissioner on the California Attorney General's Commission on the Enforcement of Child Abuse Laws. From June 1, 1985 to May 31, 1986, Ms. Tilton served as a Federal Commissioner on the U.S. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, Chairing the Committee on Child Pornography. In January, 1987 she was appointed by the Governor to the California Child Victim Witness Judicial Advisory Committee. In 1989, she was appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. In 1993, she was elected Chairperson of the Advisory Board. She previously served as a member of the California Children's Justice Act Task Force and the California State Child Death Review Council. In October 2011, she became a member of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence. She currently serves as a Commissioner on the First 5 LA Commission on Children and Families. She holds a Doctorate in Humanities, honoris causa, from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.



## **Pledge of Allegiance Lead by Neil Robertson, ICAN Junior Ambassador**

Neil Robertson, following in the footsteps of his brother Mark West Macabe, proudly serves as the new Ambassador for ICAN. We are honored to welcome Neil as he leads this year's Pledge of Allegiance at this year's Nexus XXVIII conference.



## **America the Beautiful performed by Annie Bosko**

With a voice that beams like a ray of California sunshine, singer-songwriter Annie Bosko is channeling fresh inspiration into a new chapter of music with her debut album *California Cowgirl* via QHMG/Stone Country Records on October 3. Writing alongside David 'Messy' Mescon, Jeffrey Steele, Bridgette Tatum, and more, and collaborating with producer Trent Willmon, Bosko is crafting songs that reflect her upbringing as a farmer's

daughter. With fresh releases such as "Tequila Time," "Country Girls! (Who Runs the World)," "God Winks" and "California Cowgirl," her forthcoming debut album on QHMG/Stone Country Records showcases a sound shaped by '90s country twang and raw, heartfelt storytelling.



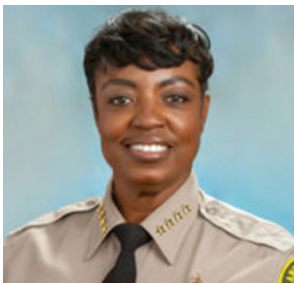
## **Nathan Hochman, Los Angeles County District Attorney**

On Dec. 3, 2024, Nathan J. Hochman was sworn in as the 44th District Attorney of Los Angeles County, vowing to improve public safety by pursuing appropriate sentences for violent and serious offenders, while offering counseling and rehabilitation to those whose crimes were motivated by addiction or mental illness. A lifelong Angeleno, DA Hochman served as Assistant U.S. Attorney General for the Tax Division of the Department of Justice in 2008. Prior to that, he was an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California from 1990 to 1997, serving in the Criminal Division. He also had an extensive career in the private sector, as a partner of several nationwide law firms and as a leading expert in tax law, criminal defense and environmental law. DA Hochman previously served as President of the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission. He graduated magna cum laude from Brown University and earned his law degree from Stanford Law School.



## **Jim McDonnell, Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department**

Chief of Police Jim McDonnell brings over 40 years of dedicated service to law enforcement. He began his career with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) in 1981, steadily rising through the ranks to become First Assistant Chief. A nationally recognized leader in Community Policing, Chief McDonnell was instrumental in transforming the LAPD by prioritizing de-escalation techniques and strengthening community relationships, helping to position the Department as a model for modern policing nationwide. In 2010, Chief McDonnell was appointed Chief of the Long Beach Police Department, where his leadership led to significant reductions in crime. His efforts earned Long Beach national recognition for its work in community engagement, counter-terrorism, gang enforcement, and human trafficking investigations. In 2014, he was elected Sheriff of Los Angeles County, where he focused on accountability by establishing key oversight mechanisms, increasing transparency, and launching initiatives to build community trust. Chief McDonnell holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Southern California and has completed executive education programs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and the FBI National Executive Institute. A devoted family man, married with two children, Chief McDonnell's commitment to public safety is deeply informed by his belief that strong communities are built on the well-being and security of families. His vision for the Los Angeles Police Department emphasizes strengthening community ties, enhancing officer wellness, and ensuring a safer, more resilient Los Angeles for all.



## **April Tardy, Undersheriff, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department**

Undersheriff April L. Tardy began her LASD career in 1994 and rose through the ranks to become the first woman appointed Undersheriff. She has held leadership roles across custody and patrol operations, including Captain, Commander, and Chief of Central Patrol Division. Committed to community engagement, she has organized peace marches, built partnerships, and developed internship and crisis intervention programs. She holds a bachelor's degree from Cal State San Bernardino, serves on the Board of Trustees for the Black Peace Officers Association, and enjoys family, mentoring, and community service.



## PANEL: PROTECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



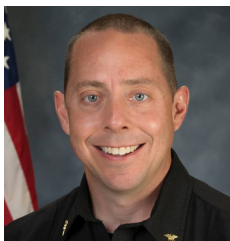
**Edward Liao, M.D.,  
Medical Director, Department of Children and Family Services**

Dr. Edward Liao is the Medical Director at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services since 2023. He has been in medical administration and leadership for the past 9 years, last serving as the Chief Medical Officer at a federally qualified health center. He is a board certified pediatrician and a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics. His passion is improving systems to increase safety and for better health outcomes. He also enjoys teaching medical students and was a clinical instructor at Keck School of Medicine at University of Southern California.



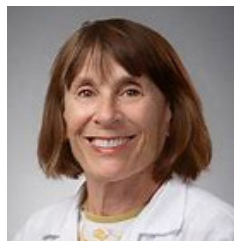
**Commander Richard Ruiz,  
Los Angeles County Sheriff**

Commander Richard Ruiz has been with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) for more than 35 years. He has worked a variety of custody, patrol, and specialized assignments. Commander Ruiz is currently assigned as a Commander for the Department's Detective Division, overseeing and managing seven highly specialized Bureaus, including; Homicide Bureau, Special Victims Bureau, Major Crimes Bureau, Narcotics Bureau, Fraud and Cyber Crimes Bureau, Operation Safe Streets Bureau, and the Taskforce for Regional Auto Theft Prevention (TRAP).



**Clayton Kazan, M.D.,  
Medical Director, Los Angeles County Fire Department**

Since starting in healthcare as an EMT while an undergraduate student at UCLA, Dr. Kazan has spent more than 31 years serving in virtually every role imaginable in EMS and Emergency Medicine. He is passionate about education and is proud to have taught at every level from laypeople and EMT students to medical students and physicians. Since 2015, Dr. Kazan has served as the Medical Director of the Los Angeles County Fire Department where he has led countless innovative programs all with the goal of improving the outcomes of patients in their moments of greatest need. He continues to practice clinical emergency medicine at Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center in Torrance, and he is a fellow of both the American College of Emergency Physicians and the Academy of EMS.



**Carol Berkowitz, M.D.,  
Chief, Division of General Pediatrics, Harbor UCLA Medical Center**

Carol Berkowitz, M.D. FAAP, FACEP, Division Chief of General Pediatrics, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and Distinguished Professor of Pediatrics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, was graduated from Barnard College and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and then completed a pediatric residency at the Roosevelt Hospital in New York. A board-certified general pediatrician, Dr. Berkowitz has been board-certified in Pediatric Emergency Medicine as well as in Child Abuse Pediatrics. She is a delegate from the AAP to the AMA and served on the AMA's Council on Medical Education where she was Chair. She is currently on the Board of

# MORNING PLENARY PRESENTATIONS

Directors of the Accreditation Council on Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the National Resident Match Program (NRMP), and the Stakeholder Council of the American Board of Medical Specialties. In 2006, she was the recipient of the Joseph W. St. Geme Jr. Leadership Award, and in 2007, she received the Abraham Jacobi Memorial Award. She is the author of several hundred articles and book chapters and is the editor of Berkowitz's *Pediatrics: A Primary Care Approach*, a textbook now in its 6th edition.



**Claudia Wang, M.D., Clinical Professor of Pediatrics,  
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA**

Claudia Wang is a Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at the Ronald Reagan UCLA, Santa Monica UCLA, and West Valley UCLA Medical Centers, and Mattel Children's Hospital. She is board-certified in Pediatrics and Child Abuse Pediatrics, and serves as the Medical Director of the UCLA SCAN (Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect) team. She is the Pediatric Consultant for the UCLA TIES (Training, Intervention, Education and Services) for Families program, which is an interdisciplinary program in LA County dedicated to optimizing the growth and development of youth in foster care, kinship care, or adopted through foster care from birth to age 25, and their families. Dr. Wang has been honored to be the recipient of the UCLA Exceptional Physician Award, the Westside Anti-Violence Authority Child Abuse Prevention Advocate Award, and the Patrick Award presented by the LA County Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Team in collaboration with the District Attorney's office, Sheriff's Department, and the LA Police Department. She has been involved in training the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services workers on the topic of Advanced Physical Abuse for over 30 years, and presents at local, regional and national conferences. Dr. Wang has been involved in the development of National Guidelines used for the evaluation of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy cases. Dr. Wang is an active member of the Ray E. Helfer Society as well as the LA County ICAN (Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect) Policy Committee.



**Janis Johnson, Head Deputy District Attorney,  
Family Violence Division, Los Angeles District Attorney**

Janis Johnson is the Head Deputy of the Family Violence Division for the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office. She is co-chair of both Los Angeles County's Child Death Review and Los Angeles County's Domestic Violence Death Review. She has prosecuted domestic violence and child abuse cases for 30 years and was a victim advocate for LACAAW during her first few years with the LADA. She has trained social workers, forensic nurses, law enforcement, victim advocates, and prosecutors on various topics related to domestic violence including Child Advocacy Centers and maximizing multidisciplinary teams. She helped create the 1st Long Beach Youth Safety Symposium and the Long Beach Human Trafficking Task Force's Community Speaker's Bureau. She was the author of AB 2907, a bill that recently became law which strengthened and filled gaps in firearm relinquishment laws related to domestic violence criminal cases. Before becoming a prosecutor, she was a research assistant for Karen Saywitz, who studied child witness suggestibility and volunteered as a Victim/Witness Assistant Intern for the LADA.



## **The Conception of Family Violence: A Deep Dive into Its Beginning, Its Middle, and Its Ending**

**Presented by Bernita Walker, CEO Project Peacemakers, Inc**

Bernita R. Walker, a Woman of Faith, member of Holy Tabernacle of God MBC, and Native Angeleno, is the Asst. Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of Project: PeaceMakers, Inc., in South Los Angeles, established in 1995. As a Violence Prevention Practitioner, an IPV survivor, graduate of USC, School of Public Administration, and a retired Deputy Sheriff for the County of Los Angeles, she has been in the field of DV/IPV since 1979 when she and four of her friends, co-founded Jenesse Center for Battered Women and their children. Presently, she serves as the Representative of the New 9th Council District for Councilman Curren Price on the City of Los Angeles Domestic Violence Alliance where she has been a member since its inception in 1994 and the co-chair of the Interfaith Committee on Intimate Partner Violence for the Los Angeles County DV Council. Since 1995 Project: PeaceMakers, Inc., under the direction of Ms. Walker, has trained approximately 1,380 individuals in the mandated 40hr DV/IPV advocates. In 2021, she was chosen to serve on the LA County District Attorney's African American Advisory Board during the term of DA George Gascon and serves as the Moderator for the Justice Equity Committee of CRSSLA (Community Response System of South LA).



## **The Power of Validation in Survivor Advocacy: Transforming Individual Interactions into Healing Opportunities**

**Presented by Courtney Kiehl, Advocate, Partner, Paul Mones, PC**

Courtney Kiehl is a tireless advocate for victim-survivors of sexual abuse. Now working for sexual abuse attorney Paul Mones of Los Angeles, she has spent over 20 years dedicated to this cause. Courtney is committed to fighting for victims of sexual abuse. As a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse herself, she brings to her work a keen understanding of the psychological and emotional consequences of sexual abuse. Years ago as a young teen, she was sexually abused by her gymnastics coach. Evidence of her strength and resilience can be found in the fact that she put her own tragic experience into outreach, founding Abused Children Heard Everywhere (A.C.H.E.), continuing to fight for a cause she deeply believes in. The focus and determination necessary for pursuing excellence in gymnastics have stood Courtney in good stead in her law career. After receiving her college degree from UCLA and her law degree from Penn State University, she has served as a fellow for CHILD USA's Game Over Commission to Protect Youth Athletes, an investigatory body designed to uncover the systemic failures that enabled Larry Nassar to continue his serial abuse. Like others who devote themselves to one primary cause, Courtney is always looking for new ways to approach the subject of sexual abuse in ways that will be beneficial to those who have been victimized. A strong example of this is her experience as part of an interdisciplinary research team, based at Penn State, that developed an art-based therapy program for victims-survivors of sexual violence. The research also involves investigating the impact of sexual trauma on the human body. Her work as a healer parallels her work as a sexual abuse attorney; she is also a member of the National Crime Victim Bar Association's Young Lawyers Council and the National Crime Victim Law Institute's Advisory Council.





## **Evolution of Child-Focused Clinical Services as a Partnership with DCFS, the Legal System, Mental Health, and Community Partners in Los Angeles: A Personal Journey**

**Presented by Astrid Heger, MD, Executive Director, Violence Intervention Program, LAC+USC Medical Center**

Astrid Heppenstall Heger, M.D. is the Executive Director of the Violence Intervention Program (VIP) and a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the University of Southern California. In 1984, Dr. Heger founded the first medically-based Child Advocacy Center that has grown into a medical/mental health center with services for all victims, all ages of family violence and sexual assault with an emphasis on prevention, family support and healing. The VIP clinic was the signature HUB clinic model that incorporates 24/7 urgent care and forensic and medical assessments with an ongoing medical home with built-in mental health services as well as support services that include dental care, plastic surgery, mentoring, tutoring and children exposed to alcohol during pregnancy (FASD). Dr. Heger is the pre-eminent expert in the field of child sexual abuse and assault, physical abuse, domestic violence and abuse of the elderly. She is the author of numerous articles in this field as well as the definite textbook "Evaluation of the Sexually Abused Child," now in its second edition. But above all else she remains a powerful advocate for women, children and all vulnerable families who struggle with poverty and violence. She is the recipient of numerous awards including the U. S. Presidential Award for her work for victims of all ages.



## **55 Years Into Our Work, It's Time to Reboot!**

**Presented by Richard Krugman, MD, Distinguished Professor, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine**

Richard D. Krugman, MD, is Distinguished Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Colorado. He was Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and Dean of the University of Colorado School of Medicine, serving in those roles from 1990-2015. He directed the C. Henry Kempe National Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect from 1981-1992 and gained international prominence in the field of child abuse. Dr. Krugman received his BA from Princeton University and earned his MD at New York University School of Medicine. He is board-certified in Pediatrics; he did his internship and residency training at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. He served in the US Public Health Service at the National Institutes of Health and Food and Drug Administration 1971-1973, and then joined the CU faculty in 1973. He was a 1980-1981 Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow serving as a legislative assistant in the office of U.S. Senator Dave Durenberger of Minnesota. He earned many honors in the field of child abuse and neglect and headed the U.S. Advisory Board of Child Abuse and neglect from 1988-1991. Dr. Krugman is a member of the National Academy of Medicine and has authored over 150 original papers, chapters, editorials and thirteen books. He was Editor-in-Chief of Child Abuse and Neglect: the International Journal from 1986-2001. He was the 2018 Co-Founder and Chair of the Board of the National Foundation to End Child Abuse and Neglect.



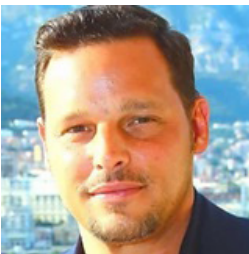
## **Judge Mary Thornton House** **Chairperson, ICAN Associates**

Judge Mary Thornton House retired from the Los Angeles Superior Court in September 2018 after serving for 22 years. Prior to that, she was an Assistant City Attorney and civil litigator for the City of Los Angeles where she also was a member of ICAN for many years. She has started her third legal career as a private neutral for Alternative Resolution Centers (ARC). In retirement, she has also authored Thomson Reuter's California Civil Jury Instructions Companion Handbook. Judge House has been honored throughout her career by many organizations. Judge House graduated from UCLA and received her Juris Doctorate from the University of San Diego. During that time, she worked her way through school by playing her viola at local concert venues. She continues to play with the Pasadena Community Orchestra.



## **Lindsay Wagner** **Chair Emeritus, ICAN Associates**

Lindsay Wagner, ICAN Associates Chair Emeritus, is best known for her Emmy award winning role as The Bionic Woman, has over 60 TV movies and 12 feature films to her name. For four decades, while working as one of the nation's most popular television and screen actors, starring in films such as The Paper Chase, Shattered Dreams, The Taking of Flight 846, and A Child's Cry, Lindsay was also pursuing vigorous studies in holistic healing modalities, integrating mind, body and spirit. Lindsay served as Honorary Chairperson of ICAN Associates for over 3 decades before being elected Chairperson of the Board of Directors. She has elevated the profile and effectiveness of ICAN and ICAN Associates through her participation in events, conferences, Public Service Announcements and social media, and remains an active Board Member as Chair Emeritus.



## **Justin Chambers** **Actor/Entrepreneur, ICAN Associates**

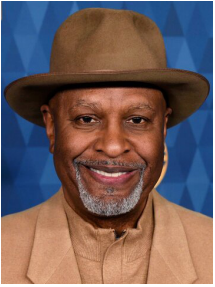
Justin Chambers is a child abuse and prevention advocate for ICAN. He has donated his time and dedication to ICAN conferences for several years. Additionally, he also lends time to the Disabled Veteran Business Alliance supporting entrepreneurship. Justin is best known for his role as Dr. Alex Karev on the ABC hit show Grey's Anatomy, where for the past 16 seasons, he played a pediatrician dedicated to the health and survival of children. For his role, he received the People's Choice Award for Favorite Actor in TV Drama, Prism Award for Best Male Performance In a Drama Series, Screen Actors Guild Award and Satellite Award for Best Television Ensemble. Currently, he can be seen in the upcoming project, The Offer, playing the role of Marlon Brando. Most importantly, Justin is a devoted husband to Keisha and dedicated father to their five children.



## **France Nuyen** **Actor, ICAN Associates**

France Nuyen is a French-American actress, model, and psychological counselor. She is known to film audiences for playing romantic leads in South Pacific, Satan Never Sleeps, and A Girl Named Tamiko, and for playing Ying-Ying St. Clair in The Joy Luck Club. She received a Woman of the Year award in 1989 for her psychology work. In the Life cover story on Nuyen, she is quoted as saying a proverb she also repeated in character as a spy in the I Spy episode "Magic Mirror": "I am Chinese. I am a stone. I go where I am kicked."

# HONORED GUESTS



**James Pickens Jr.**  
**Actor**

James Pickens Jr. was born in Cleveland, Ohio. While attending college at Bowling Green State University, Pickens began pursuing an interest in acting. He graduated from BGSU with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1976. Afterwards, Pickens began work on the stage at the Roundabout Theatre in New York City. During his time on the stage, he starred in the Negro Ensemble Company's production of "A Soldier's Play" with famous Black American actors Denzel Washington and Samuel L. Jackson. Ten years since graduating and beginning his career in acting, Pickens first came to the screen as an ambulance driver in F/X (1986). In that same year, he appeared on the soap opera Another World (1964) from 1986-1990. Pickens also made several appearances on the popular romance drama Beverly Hills, 90210 (1990), and the comedy series Roseanne (1988) among a steady line-up of work during the 1990s.



**Freda Payne**  
**Vocalist**

Singer and actress Freda Charcelia Payne was born in Detroit, Michigan, to Frederick and Charsilee Payne. Payne attended Palmer Elementary School and Crossman Elementary School; she also modeled and took ballet and Afro-Cuban dance. In 1956, while at Hutchins Middle School, Payne appeared on the nationally televised Ted Mack's The Original Amateur Hour; singing jingles, she was featured on WJR radio's Make Way for Youth, in addition to many other local television and radio shows. Payne's mother spurned a contract from the then unknown Barry Gordy. When she graduated from Central High School in 1959, Payne began touring with Pearl Bailey's musical review and sang with the Duke Ellington Band. Payne's first album was After the Lights Go Down for ABC's Impulse Records in 1962.

# AWARD CEREMONY

## ANGELO AWARD



**Lindsay Wagner**  
**Chair Emeritus, ICAN Associates**

## CHAMPION FOR CHILDREN AWARD



**Commander Richard Ruiz**  
**LASD**



**Jennifer Lopez**  
**Regional Administrator, DCFS**

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT



**Bernita Walker**  
**CEO Project Peacemakers, Inc**



## **Why Did You Kill My Family Member? Supporting Children After A Violent Death**

**Presented by Donna L. Schuurman, EdD, FT**

**Senior Director of Advocacy & Education, Dougy Center**

Donna L. Schuurman, EdD, FT, is Sr. Director of Advocacy & Education at Dougy Center: The National Grief Center for Children & Families in Portland, Oregon, where she has served in various roles since 1986, including 25 years as Executive Director. She writes and trains internationally on bereavement issues, and has authored numerous articles, book chapters, and the book, *Never the Same: Coming to Terms with the Death of a Parent*. Dr. Schuurman served as President of the Board of Directors for the Association for Death Education & Counseling and received their Annual Service Award in 2003 and their Clinical Practice Award in 2013. She is a member of the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement, and a founding board member of the National Alliance for Children's Grief. She has been invited to assist communities following tragic school shootings and natural disasters; is regularly sought out by national media for interviews related to understanding and supporting children, teens, and adults when someone in their life dies; and provides expert witness testimony in wrongful death legal cases.

### **Presentation:**

How do you support a child whose family member has been murdered by another family member? In this session, Dr. Donna Schuurman will draw upon real-world examples to discuss the needs of children who are grieving, the complicating factors that need to be considered when a family member is murdered by another family member, and ways to support children and families who are grieving after someone has died from interfamily violence.



## **1A. MINDFULNESS COOLS THE FIRE: WAYS TO RELAX, REDUCE YOUR STRESS AND BUILD RESILIENCE**

**LOCATION: TERRACE A**

### **PRESENTER:**

**Jerome Front**, M.A., LMFT, Mindfulness Trainings for Agencies

### **WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:**

The inner fire of all these stressors combined can contribute to family violence and trauma, creating an emotional roller coaster for the entire family, as well as helping professionals involved. These strong emotions can cause clinicians burn-out, emotional fatigue, and shutting down at work. Occasionally, there are even moments when family members and professional caregivers are stretched to their limits in every way. This workshop will discuss how to use mindfulness and compassion practices to build resiliency, relax, and manage stress, as well as develop clinical skills through experiential, active learning. The workshop will review current research and provide a clinical perspective on three facets of mindfulness for working with clients. In down-to-earth language, you will learn practical ways to use mindfulness as soon as today.

## **1B. WHEN FAMILY VIOLENCE ENDS IN DEATH: PROMOTING HEALING IN GRIEVING CHILDEN AND TEENS**

**LOCATION: TERRACE B**

### **PRESENTERS:**

**Lauren Schneider**, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Clinical Director of OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center NYC and Grief Therapist

**Talya Bloch**, OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center, Clinical Director of Child and Adolescent Programs

### **WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:**

When family violence ends in death, the child's natural grief reactions may be compounded due to exposure to this adverse childhood experience. Social service professionals who work with survivors of family violence are often ill-equipped to deal with traumatic reactions that may occur alongside natural grief responses. In this workshop, participants will gain an understanding of the DSM-5-TR diagnosis Prolonged Grief Disorder for children including the physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses of grieving children and teens who have experienced a death due to family violence. Participants will acquire effective intervention strategies to use with both individuals, families, and groups in agency, school, or private practice settings.

## **1C. LA COUNTY'S CHILD ABDUCTION HAGUE UNIT - A GROUP OF DEDICATED SOCIAL WORKERS THAT TRAVEL TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO SEEK RETURN OF ABDUCTED FOSTER CHILDREN THROUGH THE HAGUE PROCESS**

**LOCATION: TERRACE C**

### **PRESENTERS:**

**Alyssa Skolnick**, Principal Deputy, County Counsel

### **WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:**

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Los Angeles Office of County Counsel, has the only dedicated Child Abduction Hague Unit in the State of California. This is a group of social workers and County Counsel attorney's that are trained in all aspects of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. When a Hague hearing is set in the foreign country a member of the DCFS Hague Unit travels to that country to participate in the hearing and argue for the return of the child.

## **1D. WHAT JUST HAPPENED? GASLIGHTING, NARCISSISTIC PARENTING, AND THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE ON CHILDREN**

**LOCATION: TERRACE D**

### **PRESENTERS:**

**Gregory Canillas**, Ph.D., CEO/Adjunct Professor, Graduate School of Education & Psychology, Soul 2 Soul Global/Pepperdine University

### **WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:**

Gaslighting is a manipulative form of psychological abuse that distorts a victim's sense of reality, leading them to question their own memory, judgment, and even sanity. While often discussed in adult relationships, gaslighting is alarmingly prevalent in parent-child dynamics, especially in homes led by narcissistic or emotionally abusive caregivers. This workshop explores gaslighting as a form of verbal and emotional abuse within the home, with an emphasis on its long-term developmental effects on children. We will examine how narcissistic parenting and chronic invalidation shape a child's self-concept, undermine their confidence, and lay the foundation for lifelong struggles with anxiety, self-doubt, people-pleasing, and poor boundary-setting.

## **1E. NARRATIVE THERAPY: A TRAUMA-INFORMED METHOD FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IMPACTED BY VIOLENCE**

**LOCATION: STUDIO I**

### **PRESENTERS:**

**Estela Andujo**, Ph.D. LCSW, Associate Teaching Professor, University of Southern California  
Suzanne Dworak Peck School of Social Work

### **WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:**

Best practices suggest that integrative methods which impact the mind-body, somatic sensory integration and neurobiology are essential in treating children and youth who have experienced violence in their homes. Narrative Therapy has been proven to be effective in treating trauma by encouraging the externalization of inner trauma and facilitating the development of affect regulation. Narrative therapy empowers individuals to reshape their experiences and redefine self as needed. By reframing their stories, children and youth can be guided towards understanding the influence of personal and societal narratives and begin fostering personal resilience. Participation in this session will present core practice concepts of Narrative Therapy and demonstrate the value of Narrative Therapy via several case examples.

## **1F. BEHIND CLOSED DOORS: THE HIDDEN IMPACT OF FAMILY VIOLENCE ON MOTHERS, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH AT RISK**

**LOCATION: STUDIO II**

### **PRESENTERS:**

**Rihana Acklin**, Therapist, Truly Passionate Counseling Services  
**LaShanda Ransom**, Therapist, Truly Passionate Counseling Services  
**D'Asha Leonard**, Children's Services Administrator, Student  
**Belinda Reser**, LMFT, CADC III, Disaster Well, Inc.

### **WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:**

This workshop explores the intersection of domestic violence, maternal health, and child well-being, with a focus on reducing infant and maternal mortality. Participants will examine how family violence not only places mothers and infants at greater health risk but also contributes to children running away, experiencing commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC), and developing trauma that may manifest in violent behaviors. The session will provide social workers with practical tools to assess family violence, engage parents in non-confrontational and supportive conversations, and strengthen protective factors for children and families. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how environmental and systemic conditions shape patterns of violence in the home, while equipping practitioners with strategies to intervene effectively and promote resilience.

## 1G. EFFECTS OF COERCIVE CONTROL ON CHILDREN: LEGAL AND PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

LOCATION: STUDIO III

### PRESENTERS:

**Gail Pincus**, LCSW

**Pallavi Dhawan**, Director of Family Violence Legislation, Los Angeles City Attorney's Office

**Raymundo Zacarias**, MSW

### WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:

Children's trauma from Domestic Abuse does not just result from exposure to physical violence, but more often is the product of the coercive control tactics of the abuser. This workshop will discuss the importance of recognizing coercive behaviors to understand fully the trauma and dangerous impacts on children and their protective parents. We will explore the legal framework of coercive control in CA law, how children experience coercive control, and how coercive control impacts child custody cases. During this workshop, we will hear from an adult survivor who witnessed gun violence against his mother and sister and how his father's controlling behavior prior to this incident negatively affected his choices in his adolescence and young adulthood. We also will share case examples and discuss best practices to address current challenges for victims seeking protection from abuse. Participants will learn how coercive control is fundamental to childhood trauma, how the law has evolved, ongoing challenges, and effective responses to cases of domestic abuse when children are involved.

## 1H. LESSONS FROM CHILD DEATH REVIEWS: RISK FACTORS, IMPACT, AND HEALING APPROACHES

LOCATION: STUDIO IV

### PRESENTERS:

**Michael Durfee, M.D.**, Founder, Child Death Review Teams

**Jonathan Hatami**, Assistant Head Deputy of the Complex Child Abuse Section, District Attorney

**Linda Garcia, MA**, Certified Child Life Specialist

**Emily Cummins Polk**, MSW

**Peter Sabado**, MSW, ICAN

### WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:

The Los Angeles County Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) created the world's first Child Death Review Team (CDRT) in 1978. Over the past four decades, these reviews have reduced child homicides, exposed critical risk factors in family systems, and fostered new approaches to prevention through inter-agency collaboration. The Child and Adolescent Suicide Review Team (CASRT) further expanded this work by examining the unique risks and protective factors in youth suicide. This workshop will share insights from child homicide and suicide cases, underscoring the common red flags that, if recognized earlier, might prevent future deaths. It will also reflect on the lasting impact of these tragedies on children, families, communities, and professionals. Case experiences will highlight the urgent need for child-centered, trauma-grief interventions that lessen suffering, promote resilience, and mitigate long-term social, emotional, and developmental harm for surviving children. The session will also provide an update on the California Statewide CDRT Network, highlighting key trends and prevention strategies from across counties.

**Rihana Acklin**

Rihana Acklin is a Children Services Administrator 1 at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and a current Doctor of Social Work Student at the University of Southern California, with a research focus on Black maternal mortality. She has over 25 years of experience in child welfare, where she has dedicated her career to advocating for the health, safety, and well-being of children and families. As a licensed practitioner, she integrates her clinical expertise with a deep understanding of systemic issues to promote equity and transformative change in maternal health and social services.

**Estela Andujo**

Dr. Andujo is a Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Southern California, Suzanne Dworak- Peck, School of Social Work. She is a member of the USC Children Youth and Family Department where she teaches behavioral mental health theory and clinical practice courses. Dr. Andujo is a widely recognized expert, consultant, and trainer on child and family psychotherapy and regularly speaks, coaches, and trains on topics related to clinical practice such as DSM 5 TR, Clinical Supervision, LCSW Licensure, Clinical practice with children and families, Narrative therapy, and Trauma-informed Practices via the use of Creative and Expressive Arts based techniques. Dr. Andujo maintains a clinical affiliation with varied mental health facilities in Los Angeles County, having worked in a variety of capacities with children, adolescents and their families involved in the mental health system, as clinical therapist, clinical supervisor, and clinical program director. She is a consultant and trainer for LADCFS+UCLA Academy of Workforce Excellence, training Child Welfare Workers and Supervisors on continuing education topics.

**Talya Bloch**

Talya is a licensed clinical social worker

dedicated to supporting grieving children and families in the Los Angeles area. Talya is the Clinical Director of Child and Adolescent Programs at OUR HOUSE Grief Support center and Director of Camp Erin L.A., a bereavement camp for grieving children ages 4-17. Talya meets with prospective campers and group members to complete assessments prior to them joining an OUR HOUSE program and provides ongoing support throughout their time receiving services. Talya trains and supervises OUR HOUSE volunteers as well as Master of Social Work students. Additionally, Talya provides grief support trainings to a variety of providers in the community, including mental health professionals, clergy, graduate students, and school personnel. Talya received a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Michigan.

**Gregory Canillas**

Dr. Gregory Canillas is the CEO of Soul 2 Soul Global, a relationship coaching and education company dedicated to helping both LGBTQ+ and BIPOC heterosexual couples create healthy, fulfilling, and lasting partnerships. A clinical psychologist and sought-after speaker, Dr. Canillas has worked with couples for over two decades, blending research-based strategies with real-world wisdom. He is the creator of Love Wins! Weekend LGBTQ+ Couples Retreats and the developer of the PRIDE Model of Relationship Satisfaction, which guides couples in building strong foundations rooted in partnership, reciprocity, intimacy, daily devotion, and egalitarianism. A published poet and author in academic journals, Dr. Canillas was one of only eight psychologists who co-authored the American Psychological Association's Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons. He has been featured as a subject matter expert in the documentary Beyond Ed Buck and created and performed the solo theatrical work The Monkey Chronicles as part of Son of Semele's Solo Creation



Festival. A dynamic educator, Dr. Canillas is an adjunct professor at Pepperdine University and a frequent presenter at national and international conferences, including American Psychological Association, Association of Black Psychologists, IVAT, Society for Cross Cultural Research, and the ICAN Childhood Grief & Traumatic Loss Conference. His research has focused on relationship and parenting issues and the treatment of intrafamilial violence. His work reflects a lifelong mission: to help people love deeply, live authentically, and celebrate connection.

## **Pallavi Dhawan**

Pallavi Dhawan currently serves as the Director of Family Violence Legislation. She spent 13 years in the L.A. County District Attorney's Office specializing in domestic violence and child abuse prosecutions, for which she received the 2019 LACBA prosecutor of the year award. She has written and trained extensively on domestic violence policy and law and is the Associate Editor of the Domestic Violence Report, a nationally recognized publication. She works to develop best practices in the domestic violence field, including drafting California Senate Bill 1141, 2021 legislation that added the definition of coercive control to the Family Code definition of domestic violence and Senate Bill 910, 2014 legislation which expanded the scope of criminal protective orders for child abuse victims. She also contributed to the development of SB 331, Piqui's Law: Keeping Children Safe from Family Violence Act (2024). She is the 2023 recipient of the city of L.A.'s Dr. Marjorie Braude award for innovative collaboration in the domestic violence field. Pallavi received her J.D. and B.A. from UCLA.

## **Michael Durfee**

Michael Durfee, M.D. is a Board-Certified Adult and Child Psychiatrist and is the Chief Consultant for the LA County Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN). He was Chief Resident in Child Psychiatry for

USC LA County Hospital where he finished his training. He built child abuse prevention programs in the Department of Health, Public Health, Mental Health and DCFS. He created a drug abuse program in the U.S. Army Korea. Dr. Durfee was psychiatrist and later medical director at McLaren Hall. He has provided expert testimony in courts throughout the state. His model for Multiagency Review of Child Deaths in 1978 has spread to all states and multiple countries. He provided on site consultation in multiple states and several countries. His work includes special programs for treatment of children including those who survive severe abuse. His present project involves a system to systematically serve over 1000 newborns a year reported at risk of child abuse. Dr. Durfee's work with fatal abuse includes addressing the trauma and grief of survivors of fatal family violence, including young children who witnessed their parent or sibling killed.

## **Jerome Front**

Jerome Front, LMFT, is a year-round Adjunct Faculty in the Graduate School of Clinical Psychology at Pepperdine University since 1999, creating a Graduate Course called "Mindfulness & Psychotherapy." He has been an invited Mindfulness Presenter at many clinical forums including UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Center, LA County Psychologists, American Assoc of Pediatrics So Cal, USC Graduate School of Social Work, National Institute for Clinical Behavioral Medicine, and the UCLA Mindfulness & Psychotherapy Conference featuring Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. Since 1994, Jerome has had a private practice. He also teaches two weekly Zoom meditation classes with opportunities for helping professionals to sit-in, for free. For 29 years he has led One-day CE Mindfulness Training Retreats in Los Angeles. For more information on these innovative CE Mindfulness Trainings and Mindfulness Retreats: [www.JeromeFront.com](http://www.JeromeFront.com)

## **Linda Garcia**

Linda Garcia, MA, Certified Child Life Specialist Linda has been a Certified Child Life Specialist for more than 25 years with extensive clinical practice working with chronically ill, injured, and suspected child abuse and neglect children and families. Linda worked at UCLA Medical Center, Child Life Director at Children's Hospital Los Angeles and is currently practicing at the Grossman Burn Center. Her clinical private practice has extended to the community providing trauma-grief support to victims of fatal family violence. Since graduating from Pacific Oaks College Linda has dedicated her career to advocating and addressing children's grief and loss through her clinical practice and academic education. Linda is a specialized trainer on Grief and Loss training for Dept. of Mental Health and an Adjunct Professor at Azusa Pacific University teaching in the Master's Program for those pursuing a degree in Child Life/Psychology. Co-Founder and President of the California Association for Child Life Professionals. She devotes her spare time playing with her 5 year old grandson

## **Jonathan Hatami**

As a member of the United States Army and a 19-year veteran prosecutor in the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office, Jonathan Hatami has devoted his entire adult life to protecting our nation and our community. Jonathan began his career in public service by enrolling in the U.S. Army after high school in 1989. He served in the Light Infantry and Military Police for seven years, finishing as a Staff Sergeant before receiving his Honorable Discharge. Following his military service, Jonathan earned his B.A. degree (Cum Laude) from California State University Northridge and J.D. (with Distinction) from the University of Nebraska. He has passed bar exams in California, Nebraska, New York, and New Jersey. In 2024, Hatami was promoted to Assistant Head Deputy of the Complex Child Abuse section.

## **D'Asha Leonard-Johnson**

D'Asha Leonard-Johnson is a Children's Services Administrator with a master's degree in social work and more than 20 years of experience serving children, youth, and families. Her work has centered on understanding the ways home and school environments shape the educational outcomes of school-age children, with a focus on addressing barriers and strengthening protective factors. She is deeply committed to improving the lives of young children by promoting strong family values, fostering supportive environments, and advocating for systems that uplift families and communities. Guided by both research and practice, Ms. Leonard-Johnson brings a passion for equity, resilience, and the belief that thriving homes create thriving children.

## **Jennifer Lopez**

Jennifer Lopez was born and raised in Los Angeles and later on moved to West Covina, California to complete junior high school and high school. She is a 36-year veteran with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Regional Administrator (RA) for the Santa Fe Springs Office. As the RA for the Santa Fe Springs Office, Ms. Lopez has oversight and responsibility, through her subordinate staff to provide services to 20 zip codes in SPA 7 in Los Angeles County. Multi-talented and very knowledgeable with all aspects of DCFS, Ms. Lopez has worked as a Children's Social Worker, Supervising Children's Social Worker, and Assistant Regional Administrator. She has also served as a Division Chief over the Emergency Response Command Post, which is a 24/7 countywide operation for the entire Los Angeles County. She served as the Division Chief over the Adoption Safe Family Act and Kinship Support Division, Child Protection Hotline, and the Risk Management Division, which includes the Child Fatality Unit, CACI appeals, Litigation and Internal Affairs of DCFS. Ms. Lopez is known to be hard-working, dependable, and

most of all, a strong advocate for children and families, including fathers. She is a firm believer that father's play a very important role in their children's lives. Ms. Lopez is fully committed to improving father engagement, placing children with Kin and reuniting children with their families whenever it is safe to do so. Ms. Lopez also teaches new supervisors at the DCFS Academy, sharing her knowledge and expertise. Ms. Lopez has been a proud member of ICAN for over 15 years. Ms. Lopez has a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Cal State University Los Angeles and a Masters Degree from the University of Redlands. Her interests include shopping, travelling and spending time with her grandchildren Lucas, Peter and Sofia.

## **Gail Pincus**

Gail Pincus has been working in the field of domestic violence since 1984. She began her work while a graduate student at USC School of Social Work where she was tutored by two professors above and beyond her regular course work for her MSW. She has worked with men who batter their female partners, female victims of domestic violence, children who have witnessed and been subjected to the on going emotional abuse and control of their mothers abusive partner. She designed and implemented an emergency response team with LAPD for victims of domestic violence in 1994 and continues this program to this day. This is an on scene immediate crisis intervention at the time of the abuse. Gail has worked as an expert witness since 1989 in the field of domestic violence for both prosecution and the defense as well as in Dependency Court and Family law and civil suit arena.

## **Emily Cummins Polk**

Emily Cummins Polk, MSW Currently in a newer role as Social Emotional Wellness Coordinator, Emily is a social worker in Lennox School District with over two decades of experience providing school-based services to children and families as well as professional development to staff. Responding to a clear need for more comprehensive services, Emily co-founded

Juntos, a thriving district-embedded non-profit serving students, families, community members and staff with a Focus on trauma informed care. Emily was a founding member of the Trauma Informed Task Force of Greater Los Angeles and currently serves as one of the co-chairs of CASRT (Child Adolescent Suicide Review Team). Emily was awarded Counselor of the year in 2017 by Lennox District, School Mental Health Professional of the year in 2024 by LACOE, and proudly accepted the Albert Rodriguez Civic Leadership Award awarded to Juntos by Community Partners in December of 2016. Emily is a native of LA and received her B.A. from Northwestern University in 1998 and her Masters in Social Welfare from UCLA in 2002.

## **LaShanda Ransom**

LaShanda Ransom is a Supervising Children's Social Worker with the Department of Children and Family Services, where she has dedicated the past nine years to serving children, youth, and families. She holds a master's degree in counseling and has over 10 years of experience working with school-age and middle school children, with a strong focus on mental health and military science. For five of her years with DCFS, she served in the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children's unit, where she deepened her commitment to promoting self-care—both for the vulnerable youth she supported and for herself as a professional. In her current supervisory role, LaShanda continues to champion the importance of self-care, encouraging her team to prioritize their well-being while navigating the challenges of the field. Guided by her personal motto, "You cannot pour from an empty cup... so put you first because you are irreplaceable," she strives to model balance, resilience, and compassion in social work practice.

## **Belinda Reser**

Belinda Reser is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with more than ten years of dedicated service in the health care field. She earned her master's degree in Marriage and

Family Counseling from Pepperdine University and is currently pursuing her doctorate at the University of Southern California, focusing on climate change and natural disaster recovery. Belinda's purpose has always been to help individuals and communities find balance in their social, emotional, and economic lives interpersonally and within the larger community context. Belinda specializes in Community-based, trauma-informed care and draws from a wide range of evidence-based modalities including Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) theory, Play Therapy for children and adults, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), psychedelic-assisted healing, and narrative therapies. She believes every client's story is a unique map—marked by challenges, transitions, joys, and losses—and works alongside clients to help them uncover meaning, build resilience, and move toward thriving. Over the years, she has supported children, youth, adults, families, seniors, and LGBTQIA+ clients, addressing issues such as trauma (PTSD and cPTSD), grief and loss, addiction, anxiety, depression, and life transitions. Her own life experiences, including her background in athletics as a form of self-care and escape, shape her therapeutic approach and interventions. Belinda is deeply attuned to cultural sensitivity, recognizing how marginalized individuals and communities experience trauma differently and often carry additional layers of emotional and behavioral burdens. With compassion and skill, she helps individuals identify and overcome barriers, empowering them to live with freedom, purpose, and connection.

## **Peter Sabado**

Peter Sabado has worked with Los Angeles County DCFS since 2002. He began his career as a Child Welfare Worker and spent the majority of his time as an Emergency Response/Multi-Agency Response Team and Transitional Housing Program (for Emancipated Youth) caseworker. In 2009, he began working as a supervisor where he

implemented various projects for the Team Decision Making section and worked as a backup for the Child Protection Hotline. In 2011, he became an administrator and worked in various capacities in the Risk Management, Family and Community Partnership, and Continuous Quality Improvement sections of DCFS. He holds a Masters' degree in Social Work from USC, Los Angeles with an emphasis in Community Organizing, Planning, and Administration. In 2023, he joined ICAN, where his current roles include administration of the Safely Surrendered and Abandoned Infants Program, coordination of the Child Death Review Team Networks, and assisting with ICAN Data.

## **Lauren Schneider**

Lauren, a nationally recognized expert on Child & Adolescent Grief, has directed the Children's Programs for OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center in her previous role for 23 years. In that role Lauren provided trainings for mental health clinicians, educators, clergy, health care providers and graduate students throughout the community empowering them to work with grieving clients. Lauren is the author of "Children Grieve Too: A Handbook for Parents of Grieving Children" and contributing author of "You Can't Do It Alone: A Widow's Journey through Grief and Life After". She also created "My Memory Book...for grieving children". Lauren is an Associate Producer of "One Last Hug...and a few smooches" an Emmy award winning HBO documentary about Children's Grief and One Last Hug 2- soon to be released. Lauren is the recipient of the 2017 Dr. Michael Durfee Award and the 2014 H.U.G. award; sits on the Eluna Resource Center Advisory Board as well as being a member of J William Worden's study group. Currently Lauren is guiding the launch of OUR HOUSE NYC. In her free time Lauren enjoys playing with her grandsons, cooking and nature walks. Lauren maintains a private practice in Los Angeles specializing in grief and loss for adults and children.



## **Alyssa Skolnick**

Alyssa Skolnick began working for County Counsel in 1999 where she was a trial attorney in the Dependency Division. In 2019, Ms. Skolnick transferred to her current position in Social Services. Ms. Skolnick's current responsibilities include providing legal advice to various county agencies, including the Department of Children and Family Services, the Office of Child Protection, and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. Ms. Skolnick is the lead attorney for the County Counsel Child Abduction Unit, a position she has held since 2001. Ms. Skolnick is a contributing author to Seiser & Kumli on California Juvenile Court Practice and Procedure, an authoritative analysis of California Dependency and Delinquency Law that is frequently cited by the California Supreme Court and the Courts of Appeal. Ms. Skolnick currently teaches Children and Law at Southwestern Law School.

## **Raymundo Zacarias**

Raymundo Zacarias after having served 5 yrs in prison received his Masters in Social Work from the University of Southern California and has worked with both high-risk youth and reentry adults for the past 19 years. He has held the following positions: Executive VP of Programs for Communities In Schools of the San Fernando Valley Greater Los Angeles Area from 2010-18, in charge of supervising case management and providing service to the largest Gang Reduction & Youth Development contract for the city of Los Angeles, co-supervised/trained MSW interns from five California Universities: UCLA, USC, CSULA, CSUDH, and CSUN on case management, counseling gang youth/reentry adults. He has lead a Domestic Violence/Gang Nexus training committee regarding the co-relationship of gang violence and domestic violence. Mr. Zacarias worked at Project 180 a forensic services agency as the Program Manager for a prop 47 diversion pilot program out of the Los Angeles city attorneys' office that was featured in Los Angeles

Times as one of the most effective prop 47 programs. This program helped Justice Impacted unhoused people with Mental health and Substance Abuse issues find housing. He was the Director of Programs of the Coalition for Engaged Education that provide intensive mobile case management to justice impacted and foster youth throughout the Los Angeles County. He taught 4 1/2 years as a part-time Lecturer at the University of Southern California teaching about adolescent gang intervention work. Currently he is the Project Manager for the American Rescue Act Plan for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Office of Violence Prevention.



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