



The Los Angeles County Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) serves as the official County agent to coordinate the development of services for the prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect. ICAN's Policy Committee includes 32 County, City, State and Federal agency heads, as well as, UCLA, Police Chiefs' Association and five private sector members appointed by the Board of Supervisors. ICAN's Operations Committee and ad hoc committees carry out the work of ICAN by addressing a broad spectrum of issues related to the health and safety of children and families. Twelve community-based, interdisciplinary child abuse councils interface with ICAN, providing valuable information regarding many related issues.

ICAN Associates is a private, non-profit corporation that works in partnership with ICAN. Its Board of Directors consists of business, media and community leaders. This organization addresses the important issues identified by ICAN through the provision of services and materials, including the sponsorship and coordination of media campaigns, community educational forums and projects, special events, newsletters and funding. Further, ICAN Associates provides support for direct and indirect services to prevent child abuse and enables integration and collaboration among child service agencies.

This strong, multi-level, multidisciplinary and community network provides a framework through which ICAN is able to identify those issues critical to the well-being of children and families. With limited resources available, ICAN develops strategies to implement programs that will improve the community's collective ability to meet the needs of abused, neglected and at-risk children. The work of ICAN has received national recognition as a model for inter-agency coordination for the protection of children. In 1996, ICAN was designated as the National Center on Child Fatality Review (ICAN/NCFR).





18TH ANNUAL ICAN/ICAN ASSOCIATES CONFERENCE

# CHILDHOOD GRIEF AND TRAUMATIC LOSS

*Restoring Joy to Children and Families*

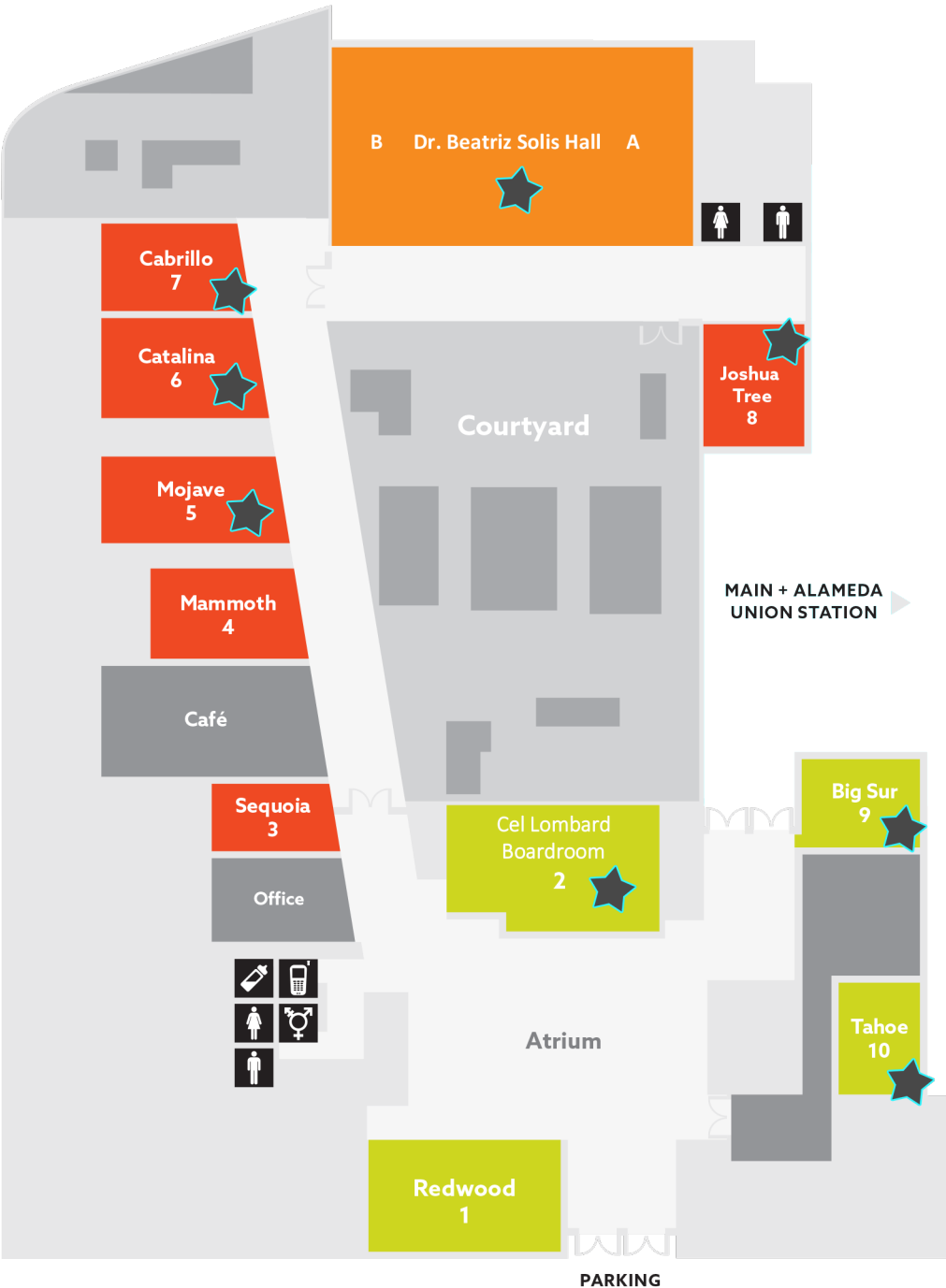


DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH  
hope. recovery. wellbeing.

Thursday, March 28, 2024

**The California Endowment**  
1000 N. Alameda Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

The California Endowment



Rooms

**Morning/Lunch Program + Workshop - Dr. Beatriz Solis Hall**  
**Workshop Sessions -**  
Cabrillo Joshua Tree  
Catalina Mojave  
Cel Lombard Big Sur  
Tahoe

## Continuing Education (CEs)

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

To receive Continuing Education Units (CEUs), you are required to sign in and out at the CEU table located in the registration area.

- Sign in must be no later than 8:45 a.m.
- Sign out will be no earlier than 4:00 p.m.
- At the time of sign out, you will need to return your completed signed Conference Evaluation form to the CE table.
- Partial credit cannot be awarded.

### There Will Be No Exceptions

**LCSWs / LMFTs:** CEUs for LCSWs and LMFTs will be provided by ICAN Associates. This course is approved for five (5) Continuing Education Units by the California Board of Behavioral Science Examiners (provider Number PC E5656). This CEU certificate (for LCSW/LMFTs) can be provided to other disciplines who require continuing education in the counseling field. Please check with your licensing bureau.

**Child Life Specialists:** To obtain professional development units for this conference, you must provide proof of conference registration along with a conference program as you will need to document the content outline as mandated by the Child Life Council. If you registered online, your email confirmation is your proof of registration. If you registered by mail or on site, please pick up your proof of attendance at the registration table on the day of the conference.

### Photograph & Video Policy

Attendance at the 16th Annual Childhood Grief and Traumatic Loss Conference constitutes an agreement by the attendee to the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN)'s use and distributions (both now or in the future) of the attendee or attendee's image or voice in photographs and videos of such events and activities.

### Conference Evaluations

Your opinion matters! Please return conference evaluations to the CEU Table at the end of the conference. Evaluations are required to receive certificates of attendance, and signed evaluations are required to receive CEUs.

### Certificate of Attendance

Certificates of attendance will be provided at the end of the day, at the CEU area once attendees turn in their completed conference evaluation. CE certificates are separate and are emailed two to four weeks after the completion of the conference, but certificates of attendance will still be provided upon request after the conference. Please see the CEU section above for more information.

### Exhibitors

We invite you to visit the breezeway during your breaks and lunchtime to see our many excellent exhibitors.

### Electronic Devices

Please have all electronic devices turned off or in silent mode during all presentations and workshops.



# Acknowledgments

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

Deanne Tilton Durfee, Doc.H.C., Executive Director, ICAN  
Michael Durfee, M.D., Adult, Adolescent, and Child Psychiatrist  
Joyce Tajuna, Conference Coordinator, ICAN  
Linda Garcia, MA, CCLS, Grossman Burn Center, West Hills Medical Center  
Lauren Schneider, LCSW, Clinical Director of Child Adolescent Programs  
Dr. Arvis Jones, MA  
Tracie Andrews, LCSW, MH Program Manager, DMH

## PARTNERS

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH)  
Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)  
First5LA Commission on Children and Families

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Jeremy Huang, Senior Secretary  
Karla Latin, Administrative Assistant  
Jose Cortez, Administrative Assistant

## SPECIAL THANKS

Luis Escalante, MSW, MPA, DMH Training  
Jamil Watkins, MSW, CSA I, DCFS Training  
Sergio Sanchez, The California Endowment

## ICAN ASSOCIATES

Judge Mary Thornton House, Chairperson  
Lindsay Wagner  
Kasim Khan, Treasurer  
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Beverly Kurtz  
Elaine Trebek-Kares  
Paul Mones  
Michele Vicencia Jondle  
Monica Hylande Latta  
Paul Click, Training Coordinator  
John Solano, IT/Event Coordinator

CONFERENCE AGENDA

REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST.....	7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.
WELCOME .....	8:30 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.
Honor Guard - Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department	
Pledge of Allegiance - Mark West Macabe, ICAN Ambassador	
Vocals - Annie Bosko	
Deanne Tilton Durfee, Doc.H.C., Executive Director, ICAN	
Robert Luna, Los Angeles County Sheriff	
Brandon Nichols, Director, Department of Children and Family Services	
Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd, Director, Department of Public Health	
MORNING KEYNOTE PRESENTATION .....	9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.
Andy McNiel, MA, CEO, The Satori Group	
BREAK .....	10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
WORKSHOP SESSION I .....	10:30 a.m. - 12:00 a.m.
LUNCH .....	12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.
WELCOME BY ICAN ASSOCIATES .....	12:30 p.m. - 12:40 p.m.
Judge Mary House, Lindsay Wagner, and Justin Chambers	
DURFEE AWARD .....	12:40 p.m. - 12:55 p.m.
Presented by Michael Durfee M.D.	
Recipients	
Stephanie Mire, Head Deputy, District Attorney's Office	
Daniel Felizzatto, Special Assistant Deputy, District Attorney's Office	
PANEL DISCUSION .....	12:55 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.
Panelists: Dr. Arvis Jones, Lauren Schneider, Linda Garcia, Tracie Andrews	
LUNCH KEYNOTE PRESENTATION .....	1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.
Dr. Alan-Michael Graves, Senior Director, Good+Foundation	
BREAK .....	2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
WORKSHOP SESSION II .....	2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
CONFERENCES CLOSES/SIGN-OUT	

# Morning Keynote Presentation

9:15 am - 10:15 am

## Understanding the Nature of Grief: Implications for Supporting Bereaved Children & Adolescents

Presented by: Andy McNiel, MA



Andy McNiel, MA, is an author, trainer, and grief support professional in the bereavement care field. Andy has many years of experience providing counseling and offering support groups to children, teenagers, and adults grieving the death of someone in their life. He has also served in non-profit leadership within the bereavement field in a variety of settings throughout his career. He is a co-founder and an executive partner with The Satori Group, LLC, a national education, management, and consulting company, providing education and consultation to bereavement support and end of life non-profit organizations. He has served as the Chief Executive Officer for The National Alliance for Grieving Children, the Executive Director for The Amelia Center at Children's of Alabama, and the Director of Grief Counseling Services and Director of Development for Hospice of Martin and St. Lucie (now Treasure Health) in South Florida. In his current work with The Satori Group, Andy serves as Senior Advisor to Youth Programs for the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), Advisor to Programs for HealGrief and Actively Moving Forward, and Consultant and Advisor for The Compassionate Friends. He is the author of *Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children: A Practical Guide for Professionals* as well as numerous book chapters. He has served as a consultant to non-profits across the United States, providing strategic planning, fundraising support, board management, and organizational development. Andy lectures extensively on support group facilitation, grief and bereavement, non-profit management, and leadership. He provides inspirational keynote presentations for professionals and the community alike. He is a trainer for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. He has served on the Board of Directors for the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC) and is a member of the International Workgroup on Death, Dying, and Bereavement. Andy holds a Bachelor of Arts in Religion from Palm Beach Atlantic University and a Master of Arts in Counseling from The University of Alabama at Birmingham.



## Afternoon Keynote Presentation

1:15 pm - 2:15 pm

### Including Fatherhood in the Grief and Loss Conversation

**Presented by: Dr. Alan-Michael S. Graves**



Dr. Alan-Michael S. Graves serves as the Senior Director of Teaching and Capacity Building with the Good Plus Foundation where he focuses on a broad range of multidisciplinary activities, from research and program development to training and advocacy for policy change. Dr. Graves has worked in the human services field, with extensive experience as a facilitator and administrator, for both public and private agencies, for the past 20 years. He has brought these diverse perspectives to his work helping agencies develop, implement and evaluate interagency systems of care, family partnerships and

community programming. Dr. Graves serves as a Community Advocate to address Disproportionality and Disparity within organizations and systems across the country. As a parent himself, he utilizes both his personal and professional knowledge and experience to strategically and positively impact the lives of children, families and communities.

### Durfee Award Recipient

**Stephanie Pearl Mire, Los Angeles County District Attorney, Bureau Director**



Stephanie Pearl Mire has been a Los Angeles County Deputy District Attorney for over thirty years. Throughout her distinguished career, she has earned a reputation for relentlessly advocating for victims of domestic violence and child abuse; and sharing this passion with younger prosecutors whom she has mentored. Her first special assignment as a trial attorney was to the Family Violence Division in 1996, where she served for eight years; and then to the Sex Crimes Division for two and a half years. She ardently prosecuted many high profile and complex cases. In 2014, she was appointed as the deputy-in-charge of the

Victim Impact Program overseeing domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and hate crimes in Alhambra and surrounding communities in the San Gabriel Valley. She was also the deputy-in-charge of the Alhambra Area Office and the Assistant Head Deputy of the Alhambra Branch Office. In 2021, Ms. Mire was promoted to Head Deputy and selected to lead the countywide Family Violence Division. She has the distinct honor of managing over 50 specially trained and seasoned trial and filing attorneys, as well as a dedicated team of over 15 office staff, paralegals, witness assistants, and victim advocates. On December 15, 2023, Ms. Mire was appointed to serve as a LADA Bureau Director. Ms. Mire co-chairs the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect's (ICAN) Child Death Review Team and the Domestic Violence Death Review Team. She is a member of ICAN's Grief Work Group and Legislative Committee and has been instrumental in proposing and advancing AB 1187, which adds Certified Child Life Specialist as authorized mental health treatment providers eligible for reimbursement from the California Victims of Crime Program.



# Morning Workshops

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

## 1A. CHILDREN EXPOSED TO SEVERE AND FATAL FAMILY VIOLENCE CASE STUDIES:

- **ATTEMPTED CHAINSAW MURDER WITH 3 CHILDREN PRESENT**
- **GUNSHOT MURDER WITNESSED BY VICTIM'S 3 YEAR OLD CHILD**

*Beatriz Solis Hall*

### Presenter(s):

**Chad Gillette**, Deputy District Attorney, Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, Family Violence Division

**Reyna Lopez Mendoza**, Victim Services Representative, Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, Bureau of Victim Services

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

This presentation will give an overview of an attempted murder and mayhem case which was prosecuted in the Norwalk Courthouse. It will provide an overview of how the case was investigated and prosecuted, as well as efforts made to minimize trauma on the victim and her three young children who witnessed the brutal attack where the victim's husband used a chainsaw. The victim will attend as well and may give insights to her struggles and the struggles of her children dealing with the court system and trauma they endured. The second case will provide information on child-centered, trauma-grief interventions supporting young children who witness fatal family violence. This presentation will provide considerations of a child focused, trauma-grief approach and how early interventions lessen emotional suffering, promote resilience and mitigate the negative effects on social, emotional, behavioral and cognitive development.

## 1B. WHAT TO SAY, WHAT TO DO WHEN COUNSELING GRIEVING KIDS

*Catalina Room*

### Presenter(s):

**Lauren Schneider**, Clinical Director of Children's Programs, Our House Grief Support Center

**Talya Schlesinger**, Senior Clinical Coordinator of Children's Programs, Our House Grief Support Center

While most clinicians feel prepared to support the myriad of social service needs clients present with in their practices, few feel comfortable and equipped to start a conversation with a child or teen who's experienced a death of a family member or friend. Even fewer know how to do on-going counseling with grieving kids. In this workshop you will have an opportunity to learn through observation of the presenters during role plays, how to start the conversation with a new grieving family, language to use to respond to children who've experienced deaths due to suicide, homicide and substance use in both individual and group modalities as well as acquiring interventions to use to deepen the expression of grief for children and teens.

## 1C. HELPING PRESCHOOLERS DEAL WITH GRIEF & LOSS

*Cel Lombard Boardroom*

**Presenter(s):**

**Karina S. Bravo**, Sole Proprietor, Bravo! Therapy & Consulting

This writer proposes a workshop concentrated around grief and loss for children who have experienced crisis, disaster, trauma, and/or loss. This session will be useful for attendees that work with children under the age of 6, to include, but not limited to: preschool educators, daycare staff/teachers, parents/caregivers, and/or childcare paraprofessionals. The presentation will be focused on helping attendees understand how trauma and loss affect young children and what they can do to help the child regain a sense of security.

## 1D. UNDERSTANDING COMPLICATED GRIEF IN CHILDREN: IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING

*Mojave Room*

**Presenter(s):**

**Yenyfer Bullock**, Education Related Mental Health Specialist, Lead, Tustin Unified School District

**Jennifer Wongyai**, Education Related Mental Health Specialist, Tustin Unified School District

This workshop will define complicated grief and highlight research on the topic and the impact on children in school. It will provide a glimpse to how mental health programs in schools serve as a resource that fosters an environment that prioritizes the emotional well-being of students leading to positive outcomes in their education and social-emotional functioning. Two case studies will be highlighted as examples of the process. The workshop will also provide an opportunity to practice two interventions used to process grief with children that is helpful in different settings for those who provide direct services. Overall, the workshop recognizes the need for greater attention and support for students experiencing complicated grief and examples of interventions and solutions.

## 1E. GRIEF CIRCLE; USING ANCESTRAL RITUALS AND EMBODIED SUPPORT FOR GRIEF AND LOSS

*Tahoe Room*

**Presenter(s):**


**Claudia Melo**, Licensed Marriage, Family, and Children Psychotherapist, Luna Nueva Holistic Therapy

Since the beginning of time, people have gathered in circles. Our ancestors sat around the fire, danced, sang, played instruments, told stories, and spoke from the heart. These practices created a sacred relationship with the seasons of nature and the community. In the present day, the daily demands and fast-moving environment prevent us from gathering and sharing our experiences vulnerably. Working from a trauma and culturally sensitive perspective, the facilitator will briefly introduce attendees to ancestral Indigenous practices used during a grieving circle. In this workshop, participants will learn how one can create and hold space for others and share their personal life



# Morning Workshops

10:30 am - 12:00 pm



experiences with loss and grief to find validation, companionship, and a sense of belonging at this most vulnerable time in a person's life.

## 1F. FROM POSTVENTION TO PREVENTION: HOW REVIEWING CHILD & ADOLESCENT SUICIDES INFORM COMMUNITY OUTREACH, THE 988 CRISIS LINE, A DEPRESSED AND DESPERATE VOICE ON THE TELEPHONE: WHAT DO YOU SAY, WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT A TRAGEDY? A PERSONAL EVOLUTION FROM PHARMACEUTICAL CHEMISTRY TO CHILD SUICIDE PREVENTION

*Cabrillo Room*

### Presenter(s):

**Sandri Kramer**, Director of Community Relations, Suicide Prevention Center, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

**Dr. Daniel Levin, Shift Supervisor**, Suicide Prevention Center, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

The loss of a child to suicide is as heartbreaking as it is unimaginable; it is crucial to carefully and thoroughly review the suicide deaths of children and adolescents, which is the mission of LA County's Child and Adolescent Suicide Review Team. A group of experienced mental health, child welfare and education representatives meet monthly to review what contributed to the deaths, and what can be done to prevent future tragedies. This challenging work has brought about practice and policy recommendations, including the need for comprehensive community education on suicide prevention, and for easy-to-access safe spaces that allow children, adolescents, and their families the opportunity to talk about their struggles with mental health and suicide.

Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention training, outreach and 988 crisis line teams are comprised of both volunteers and paid staff, many of whom are driven by a personal connection to suicide and mental illness, and some of whom transition from prior professional careers to focus on child suicide prevention. The presenters will share processes, outcomes, and their experiences of working in each of these spheres: the review team, community education, and answering calls on the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

## 1G. VISUAL JOURNALING & VICARIOUS TRAUMATIZATION. SOMATIC-BASED ACTIVITY FOR PROMOTING SELF-CARE

*Big Sur Room*

### Presenter(s):

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

The interplay between early traumatic experiences such as maltreatment, and exposure to violence can be seen in the presentation of compromised cognitive processing, disruption in emotional regulation and other mental health challenges in children and youth. When not addressed these issues may interfere with psychosocial functioning & management of grief & loss. Helping professionals who work with high risk traumatized clients may be at risk for secondary traumatic stress and vicarious traumatization. The emotional, cognitive, and physical consequences seen in clients can lead to



secondary traumatic stress and vicarious traumatization which is a negative reaction to trauma exposure with a range of psychosocial symptoms. Vicarious traumatization is a personal experience resulting from ongoing empathic engagement with a client's traumatic experiences & losses may lead to changes in the way helping professionals experience themselves. Best practices suggest that integrative methods which impact the mind-body, somatic sensory integration and neurobiology are essential in trauma recovery. Conscious use of art outlets such as Visual Journaling, provide space for reflecting on countertransference and provide initial healing and self care. Visual journaling may support stress reduction and self-regulation for trauma and provide an effective tool for developing resiliency, processing, and boundary recognition between work and personal feelings. Among creative art therapy approaches to trauma, visual journaling has been used in a variety of ways to assist with trauma distress, stress reduction, and self-regulation. Self-exploration through visual journaling is an approach to treating stress allowing for the externalization of traumatic stress. The model presented emphasizes self-assessment to understand one's cultural niche and experiences with vicarious traumatization and unresolved grief & loss.

### 1H. GRIEF, LOSS, AND COMMUNITY HEALING: A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO GRIEF, TRAUMATIC LOSS, AND MORAL INJURY

*Joshua Tree Room*

#### Presenter(s):

**Nicolle Perras**, MPH, LMFT, Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health

**Franklin Romero**, MSW, LCSW, Los Angeles County DMH-Partners in Suicide Prevention

**Tracie Andrews**, LCSW, Los Angeles County DMH

This workshop will discuss grief as a normal response to loss during or after a disaster or other traumatic event using a socioecological approach, exploring perspectives and experiences of grief, loss and healing of individuals, families, and communities. Grief can happen in response to loss of life, as well as to drastic changes to daily routines and ways of life that usually bring us comfort and feelings of safety and stability. The symptoms of grief from an individual and population level, how culture and traditional practices help promote community healing, and the impacts of moral injury that can occur during and after witnessing/surviving a traumatic incident will be presented.

Additionally, various approaches to community healing and best practices will be explored. This discussion will be rooted in raising awareness, understanding and respect for the many different paths to healing for individuals and communities; including the capacities of cultural and intergenerational approaches to grief, loss and trauma. The public health approach to healing begins with expanding attitudes about grief and loss to encompass not only the individual but various social units. With this increased understanding, and view of grief and loss as both an individual and shared experience, we can change how we engage with people and communities who are grieving, using curiosity compassion.

# Afternoon Workshops

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

## 2A. JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF – CREATING SPIRITUAL CURRENCY IN THE NAME OF THE DEPARTED

*Beatriz Solis Hall*

### Presenter(s):

**Azim Khamisa**, author, inspirational speaker, Founder of Tariq Khamisa Foundation and founding member of Peace through Forgiveness

In life, we all share a common experience: the pain of loss. Regardless of our nationality, age, religion, or race, grief is an undeniable part of the human condition. But how do we navigate this profound loss with clarity, healing, and purpose? Drawing from his own deeply moving story of the loss of his beloved son, Tariq, which led him to establish the foundation bearing Tariq's name. Later, he faced the departure of his mother, the emotional and spiritual bedrock of his life. Through his journey, Azim found a way to transform grief and loss into acts of service, turning the negative into a resounding positive, and creating purpose not only for himself but also for his community. In this workshop, he will guide you step by step on how to transform your grief into purpose as well. Azim demonstrates how grief can be channeled into a force for good. He reveals how these acts of service become a form of spiritual currency for those who have departed, allowing their souls to ascend to greater heights on the other side. Join Azim as he guides you through a grieving process that transcends sadness and loss, leading to a place of hope, action, service, and profound positive change facilitated by his unique perspective and transformative insights for navigating the complex terrain of grief. Helping you emerge with renewed purpose and compassion.

## 2B. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR SUPPORTING BEREAVED CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

*Catalina Room*

### Presenter(s):

**Andy McNiel**, MA, CEO of The Satori Group

This session will explore the four modes of supporting bereaved children and adolescents. We will discuss a variety of approaches to care including cognitive behavioral, existential, and gestalt techniques. Participants will learn helpful tools for creating a safe space for bereaved children and adolescents to express their grief, identify healthy ways to cope, and experience support.

## 2C. THE BRAIN AND THE HEALING POWER OF MUSIC FOR GRIEF, LOSS, AND TRAUMA

*Joshua Tree Room*

### Presenter(s):

**Dr. Arvis Jones**, Grief, Loss and Trauma Specialist, Damon's Center for Grief, Loss, and Trauma

Music Therapy is an allied health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, psychological, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. It has been documented how music affects the brain. Music is processed in all areas of the brain and can access and stimulate areas of the brain that may not be accessible through other modalities. Research shows that music

## Afternoon Workshops

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

enhances and optimizes the brain providing more efficient therapy. Research supports parallels between non-musical functioning and music assisted tasks which provides a scientific rationale for the use of music in therapy. This presentation will expand knowledge about how music can be used beyond being a reliever of stress. This workshop will address the healing power of music that non-musicians have access to, but many times do not understand how to use. Participants will be exposed to various music genres and how these can be used to “open the door” for clients who cannot easily express their feelings and emotions. The participants can be affected positively and negatively by such music. Sometimes when words fail music can be utilized as a “break-through” to healing. Allied professionals will be exposed to various Music Therapy techniques that non-musicians can use to help affect a positive change for mental health clients. This workshop will explore the use of these techniques as a tool to heal in the aftermath of trauma and violence. As a bonus, participants will learn how to experience “The Soul of Music.”

### 2D. LONGTERM PROFESSIONAL MENTORSHIP AS A SOLUTION FOR HEALING TRAUMATIC LOSS & GRIEF ASSOCIATED WITH FOSTER CARE AND CHILD WELFARE IMPACTED YOUTH & FAMILIES

*Big Sur Room*

#### Presenter(s):

**Lora Cofield**, Chief Family Engagement Officer/LMFT, Friends of the Children Los Angeles

**Jorie Das**, Executive Director, Friends of the Children Los Angeles

When considering the topic of traumatic loss and the grieving process, death and dying is usually the first thought to come to mind, but grief and loss comes in many forms. In Los Angeles County, there are over 25,000 children in foster care and over 72,000 suspected child abuse referrals made to the Department of Children and Family Services. Our agency, Friends of the Children – Los Angeles, uses the vehicle of long-term mentorship to prioritize supporting systems impacted children and families to reduce additional matriculation through these systems, keep families intact, and support the reduction of generational poverty (a key indicator for new case referrals/development). Our workshop will analyze how grief and loss manifest in children, parents, and whole families who have had to navigate the foster and child welfare systems as well as the generational impact systems involved families face. How does long term mentorship support systems involved children who have experienced grief and loss, including loss of parents, living in multiple residences, multiple caretakers, loss of stability, sibling separation? What comes of these children as they grow into adulthood and become parents themselves, and why is parental support critical to mitigating future children from experiencing similar instances of grief and traumatic loss? Our unique and proven model is backed by nearly 35 years of data as an indication that professional mentorship is a viable solution to address the complex PTSD and need for consistency to ensure healing and restore hope and belonging for youth who have experienced traumatic loss.



# Afternoon Workshops

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

## 2E. UNSPEAKABLE: THE DEATH OF A CHILD

*Mojave Room*

### Presenter(s):

**Dr. Michael Levittan**, T.E.A.M.

This workshop delves into the aspects of the death of a child, ranging from infanticide to evolutionary theories of grieving, to the period of antiquity, to modern approaches to child mortality. It is evident that the death of a child - whether by intentional, accidental, or afflicted means - is a devastating trauma for parents, grandparents, siblings, peers, and the immediate community. The principal causes of child death are presented, along with recent trends, with a focus on gun violence as the current primary cause of child death in the U.S. An in-depth exploration of grieving the death of a child focuses on a revision to stages of grief, emotions involved in grieving, resistances to the grieving process, and the distinction between healthy and disordered grieving. The process that children go through when grieving the death of a sibling, peer, or classmate is described in terms of denial, acceptance, ritual, commemoration, and guidelines for healthy grieving. Lastly, an overview of treatment issues in grieving is examined, with particular attention given to assessment, suicidality, working through loss, the goal of transformation, and the search for meaning in the death of a child.

## 2F. Fatal Family Violence: Considerations when Supporting Survivors, Families, and Caregivers

*Cabrillo Room*

### Presenter(s):

**Michael Durfee**, M.D., Child Psychiatrist

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

**Colleen M. Cherry**, MSCL, CCLS, CT, GCCA-C

This presentation will provide considerations of a child focused, trauma-grief approach when supporting infants, toddlers, school-age, teens, and families. Early interventions lessen emotional suffering, promote resilience and mitigate the negative effects on social, emotional, behavioral and cognitive development.

Children who witness and/or are bereaved by family violence and other violent acts deserve developmentally appropriate support and therapeutic grief-trauma focused interventions. Adverse Childhood Experiences, ACEs are well documented linking negative outcomes into adulthood, including but not limited to PTSD, perpetuating patterns of violence, chronic health problems, mental health illness, and substance abuse.

Considerations include: continued bonds, rituals, talking about death, keepsakes, support for attending funerals or visiting the grave, special peer support programs, for long-term follow up if possible and support for caregivers including foster parents, family and schools.

## 2G. THE IMPACT OF SUICIDE ON MENTAL HEALTH CLINICIANS: WHAT WE KNOW, WHAT WE CAN DO

*Tahoe Room*

### Presenter(s):

**Nina J. Gutin**, Clinical Psychologist, Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center Survivors After Suicide Program (contracted)

Within the mental health field, studies have found that one in two Psychiatrists, and one in five Psychologists, Clinical Social Workers and other mental health professionals will lose a patient to suicide during their careers; a statistic that suggests a clear occupational hazard. Despite this, most Mental Health professions continue to view suicide loss as an aberration. Consequently, there is often a lack of preparedness for such an event when it does occur. This presentation will summarize what's currently known about the personal and professional experiences of a Clinician's suicide loss (of both patients and loved ones). Dr Gutin will highlight the impact of suicide loss on clinical work and identity, as well as those factors which optimally facilitate recovery and growth. The role of stigma around the areas of suicide loss and professional vulnerability will be addressed, particularly as these may serve to exacerbate the isolation that many clinicians experience after such a loss. In addition, Dr. Gutin will review the legal and ethical issues that are likely to arise after the suicide of a client/patient, including issues pertaining to confidentiality, contact with the deceased's family after a suicide, institutional reviews, etc. Postvention guidelines, which incorporate these issues at personal, professional, and institutional levels, will be offered. Finally, she will describe the unique resources provided by the Coalition of Clinician-Survivors, which can optimally facilitate recovery and growth for clinicians (and other professional caregivers) who have experienced personal and/or professionally based losses. Interactive discussion with workshop participants about their own experiences with suicide loss will be encouraged, to enable a breakdown in the professional isolation that often accompanies such a loss, and to enhance the learning experience of all participants.

## 2H. THE MINDFULNESS EXPERIENCE: COPING WITH GRIEF AND MANAGING STRESS

*Cel Lombard Boardroom*

### Presenter(s):

**Jerome Front**, MA, LMFT, Mindfulness Trainings and Workshops

In today's world, the sources of stress are countless. When grief and violence are added to our daily stressors, the entire family, as well as the helping professionals involved, can be sent on a draining roller-coaster ride. These strong emotions can cause clinician burn-out, emotional fatigue, and shutting down at work. Occasionally, family members and professional caregivers are stretched to their limits in every way during this grief process. This workshop will discuss how to use mindfulness to build resiliency, manage stress, as well as develop clinical skills when life is compounded by grief. Through experiencing mindfulness and active learning, this workshop will review current research, and provide a clinical perspective on mindfulness when working with clients. In down-to-earth language, you will learn practical ways to use mindfulness as soon as today.



## Speaker Biographies



### **Tracie Andrews, LCSW, Los Angeles County DMH**

Tracie Andrews is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. She received her bachelor's degree from Lewis-Clark State College and her master's in social work from Aurora University. Tracie has worked in a variety of settings and has extensive knowledge of working with underserved children, adults, and families and disenfranchised communities. She has expertise in early childhood mental health, crisis services, and suicide prevention. She is currently a co-chair of LA Suicide Prevention Network.

### **Estela Andujo, Associate Professor Teaching, University of Southern California, Suzanne Dworak Peck, School of Social Work**

Dr. Andujo teaches Social Work foundation courses, and Generic and Advanced practice courses within the Suzanne Dworak Peck School of Social Work. Dr. Andujo has more than 30 years of academic and professional experience and worked as a child psychotherapist, outpatient mental health clinical supervisor, outpatient clinical director of programs, clinical consultant, and clinical licensing coach. Dr. Andujo is committed to working with diverse populations, and has focused her clinical practice on engaging nonprofit, inner-city mental health agencies. Linking social work theory and practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Dr. Andujo draws on her extensive clinical practice skills with children, adolescents, and their families and works to integrate theory with clinical practice in her teaching using expressive arts therapy and the creative process to promote clinical social work practices. Dr. Andujo utilizes interactive, real-world applications in the classroom, promoting a learning environment that enhances a variety of skills, including critical thinking, clinical awareness, evidenced-based practices, and advocacy. Dr. Andujo is a recognized consultant and trainer in child play therapy, law and ethics, group psychotherapy, clinical supervision, expressive arts, trauma-informed practices, and the California Licensing Exam.

### **Karina S. Bravo, Sole Proprietor, Bravo! Therapy & Consulting**

Dr. Karina Bravo is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Karina's entire career has been focused on helping at-risk children and their families. Her expertise was honed in a variety of different contexts to include Preschool Teacher, Group Home Treatment Support Staff, Behavioral Specialist, Volunteer for ARMY Chaplain Services, MFT in private practice providing therapy & consulting, Director of Early Intervention for Project CUIDAR, Child Custody Recommending Counselor for the Superior Court of California and most recently as a university professor. Hence, she is well rounded in her capacity to understand and explain the world through the eyes of a child. She has presented at national and international conferences on childhood mental health. In 2009 she was a 30 under 30 Latino/Native American Recognition Honoree, as awarded by California State Assembly member Wilmer Amina Carter for outstanding service to her community. She enjoys teaching graduate level university courses at Cal State San Bernardino, Northcentral University, Loma Linda University, and currently University of Massachusetts Global (formerly Brandman University) to help future professionals hone their expertise in early childhood mental health and working with children.

### **Yenyfer Bullock, Education Related Mental Health Specialist, Lead, Tustin Unified School District**

Yenyfer Bullock is a highly experienced Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist dedicated to treating children impacted by trauma. With a career spanning 14 years, she has worked extensively in a variety of settings including domestic violence, foster care, immigration, victims of crime, private practice, and the last 8 years in education. Her diverse experience has provided her with a deep understanding of the complex dynamics of grief and loss, especially as it intersects with existing trauma challenges faced by children as students and the impact on their social-emotional function. She currently leads the mental health support at Tustin Unified School



District and provides services through her private practice. She attended University of California, Los Angeles, and University of Phoenix

## **Colleen M. Cherry, MSCL, CCLS, CT, GCCA-C**

Colleen achieved her MS Child Life degree from Loma Linda University additionally attaining Certified Thanatologist and Certified Child/Adolescent Grief Counselor. After completing her internship at LLU Children's Hospital and practicum at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, Cardiac Transplant unit, she Founded 'PlayWell Child Life Services', a unique Child Life private practice, providing psychosocial support to 2-24 year old's experiencing medical events, palliative care, hospice and grief, as patients, siblings or of adult patients. Recognized by ADEC for her work in private practice, she received the 'Clinical Practice 2020 Award'. In 2023, the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences at Loma Linda University awarded her the 'Honor of Rising Star Alumna'. As an active member in the National Alliance for Children's Grief, she has contributed to the resources, "Grief Talk" and the 'Family Activities Book'. Colleen has made contributions to the Association of Child Life Professionals, White Paper, 'Creating a Child Life Private Practice'. Recognized as an essential source of support, the SBA awarded her a grant to provide bereavement interventions to children whose families lacked resources for services. Ms. Cherry has presented at numerous symposiums, workshops, conferences, webinars on psychosocial aspects of child life in medical care, end of life and coping, expressive interventions addressing grief in children, teens and young adults. She lives in Orange County CA with her husband, where she enjoys cooking for her family and playing with her grandchildren.

## **Lora Cofield, Chief Family Engagement Officer/LMFT, Friends of the Children Los Angeles**

Lora Cofield graduated from California State University, Bakersfield with a BA in History. While attending Cal State Bakersfield, Lora began working in group homes that serviced a range

of at risk/high risk and foster youth. Working with this population resulted in Lora pursuing and completing a MA from Pacific Oaks College: School of Cultural & Family Psychology in Marriage & Family Therapy with an emphasis on African American Family Studies. Lora began providing therapy to children and families throughout the greater Los Angeles area and became committed to providing culturally relevant and sensitive community-based clinical services. As a LMFT, Lora's clinical lens has been shaped to recognize that parent and/or family engagement is one of the most effective tools in promoting growth and progress in children. Lora is passionate about supporting families in maintaining functional family structure to keep families together and thriving. As a mother of two, Lora is of the firm belief that it truly does "take a village to raise a child" and thus Lora is dedicated to supporting families in building and maintaining their village to support positive family outcomes.

## **Jorie Das, Executive Director, Friends of the Children Los Angeles**

For more than ten years, Jorie Das has successfully managed and developed nonprofit organizations in the Greater Los Angeles area, emphasizing youth programming and advocacy for vulnerable communities. She is an experienced youth development specialist and Organizational Development Professional with a solid history of success in the child welfare landscape. She is committed to building strong families, delivering effective services, and significantly improving outcomes for children in the child welfare system. In 2019, Jorie joined Friends LA as Chief of Staff, overseeing all strategic initiatives and operations. Under her leadership, Jorie has strengthened organizational capacity, including doubling the number of youths served, launching a new satellite office in Antelope Valley, building relationships with private and public agencies, and expanding programs to new service planning areas. Before joining Friends LA, she served as Interim Executive Director at Inside OUT Writers and worked in executive leadership roles at Baby2Baby and Free Arts. Jorie holds a BA



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in Ethnic Studies and Art from the University of Oregon and an MA in International Affairs and Business from Chapman University. She also served in the Peace Corps as a community health agent in Niger while working on various community projects.

### **Deanne Tilton Durfee, Doc.hc, ICAN Executive Director**

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 (NCPA). 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.

### **Michael Durfee, M.D. Board Certified Adult and Child Psychiatrist 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, MA, LMFT, Mindfulness Trainings and Workshops**

Jerome Front, LMFT, a year-round Adjunct Faculty member at Pepperdine University in the Graduate School of Education & Clinical Psychology since 1999, created the first full graduate Course called "Mindfulness & Psychotherapy" countable towards Degree credit. Jerome has presented on the neuroscientific and contemplative aspects of mindful sensory meditations at the international UCLA "Mindfulness & Psychotherapy" Conference featuring Zen Master Thich Hanh. Few of the recent places Jerome has been invited to lead Mindfulness Trainings include USC Graduate School of Social Work, UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Center, CA Association of Marriage

& Family Therapists, American Association of Pediatrics, So. Cal., National Symposium on Palliative Care. His past workshops around the country included conferences in Michigan, Washington, DC, and South Carolina, and he wrote the cover story on Mindfulness for helping professionals called, “A Quiet Revolution,” for The Psychotherapy Networker. Jerome has had mindfulness meditation practice since 1987 and has trained in MBSR on three 8-day in-person Group Clinical Training Retreats with Jon Kabat-Zinn & Saki Santorelli. Jerome has taught two weekly meditation classes since 2000 and has had a therapy private practice in Studio City for 30 years. Also, for 27 years, he has led several unique, one-day local CE Mindfulness Training Retreats. More instructor Information and writings via: [www.JeromeFront.com](http://www.JeromeFront.com)

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

Linda has been a Certified Child Life Specialist for the past 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 currently practicing at the Grossman Burn Center. Her clinical private practice has extended to the community providing grief and loss support to victims of fatal family violence. Since graduating from Pacific Oaks College Linda has dedicated her career to advocate and address children's grief and loss through her clinical practice and academic education. Linda also facilitates peer support groups for burned injured surviving children and families through Children's Burn Foundation. Linda is a specialized trainer on Grief and Loss training for DMH and an Adjunct Professor at Azusa Pacific University teaching in the Master's Program for those pursuing a degree in Child Life and Psychology. Linda serves on the Executive Planning Committee for the Childhood Traumatic Grief and Loss Conference. She devotes her spare time playing with her 4-year-old grandson.

### **Nina J. Gutin, Clinical Psychologist, Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center Survivors After Suicide Program (contracted)**

Nina J. Gutin, Ph.D. is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice in Pasadena, California. She conducts training in Suicide Assessment, Intervention and Postvention, facilitates “Survivors After Suicide” groups for the Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center, and is a member of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Network. She is co-chair of the Coalition of Clinician-Survivors, which supports clinicians after personal and professional suicide losses, and has published several articles about Suicide Loss and Postvention. Since the loss of her brother to suicide in 1995, she has worked with a variety of organizations that aim to promote comprehensive community-based responses to the needs for suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.

### **Chad Gillette, Deputy District Attorney, Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, Family Violence Division**

Chad Gillette is a Deputy District Attorney with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. He has worked in the District Attorney's office for over 15 years and spent most of his career handling felony cases involving domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and sex offense against adults and children. Chad has worked in the Bellflower, Whittier, El Monte, West Covina, Pomona, Compton, Torrance, and Norwalk Courthouses as a Deputy District Attorney. Prior to working in the District Attorney's Office, Chad was a Deputy Public Defender in the Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office. As a Deputy Public Defender, he also worked in the Criminal Courts Building in Downtown Los Angeles, Central Arraignment Court on Bauchet Street, and the Inglewood and Long Beach Courthouses. Chad earned a degree in Computer Information Systems prior to attending law school and worked as a computer programmer/analyst at Experian. From 1994 to 2002 Chad served 8 years in the United States Marine Corps, working as a counterintelligence agent throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa. He was awarded







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a Joint Service Commendation medal for his service in Operation Enduring Freedom, a Navy Achievement Medal for his service in Operation Southern Watch, as well as the Expeditionary Global War on Terrorism Medal for his service in the Middle East after 9/11/2001.

### **Dr. Arvis Jones, Grief, Loss and Trauma Specialist, Damon's Center for Grief, Loss, and Trauma**

Arvis Jones received a Bachelor of Arts Degree from California State Long Beach with a Music Therapy Certificate, a master's degree in clinical psychology from National University and an Honorary Doctorate in Sacred Music. She was the first African American Music Therapist employed by Arts & Services for the Disabled. Arvis was also the first Music Therapist at the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, working with children and youth of all ages who have emotional and environmental problems where she developed a program to address the needs of children and youth ages 2½ to 22 years. Arvis directs and specializes in children and youth choirs all over the city, using Music Therapy techniques to increase attention span and concentration. Arvis has worked with children and youth with dual diagnosis. She has also practiced Music Therapy with seniors, stroke clients, Alzheimer patients and other diagnoses, not limited to but including, Cerebral Palsy, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder and Sickle Cell. Arvis was the First Assistant Director and Youth Specialist of a grief and loss program where she helped to provide a supportive environment for families who were experiencing some type of grief and loss. In honor of her son, Damon, who was killed in a mistaken Identity situation after all her years in grief and loss, she founded an organization, "Damon's Center for Grief, Loss and Trauma". She works and consults with the Los Angeles Mayor's Crises Response Team and the Los Angeles Police Department, most often lending assistance at crime scenes and the after care of victims. She is a popular keynote speaker and facilitator for workshops on Music Therapy and Grief and Loss. She was honored by Senate District 25 as a "Distinguished

Women" for her work and effectiveness in the Los Angeles Community. She was also honored as Council District 15 "Pioneer Woman" by the Commission on The Status of Women in Los Angeles and received two commendations from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. She is a national board member of The National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM), the Western Region Director of NANM, a member of Musicians in Action (MIA), a member of American Music Therapy Association (AMTA), a member of Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC), a former member of the Mayor's Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Advisory Committee, A member of Moms Demand Action.

### **Azim Khamisa**

Azim Khamisa is a renowned keynote speaker and trainer known for his transformative message of forgiveness and resilience. After his son's tragic murder, Azim chose forgiveness over anger, leading to a transformative journey that has impacted countless lives, and international recognition for his work. With over 30 years of experience, he shares insights on forgiveness, conflict resolution, emotional resiliency, and restorative justice. His powerful presentations, including a TED Talk with over 1 million views, inspire audiences worldwide to embrace healing and transformation through the power of forgiveness.

### **Sandri Kramer, Director of Community Relations, Suicide Prevention Center, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services**

Sandri Kramer, a founding member of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Network (LASPN), has over 25 years of experience in suicide prevention/intervention and crisis center work. As Didi Hirsch's Director of Community Relations, she focuses on Program Development, Community Partnerships, and Public Awareness/Training. She serves on numerous coalitions and task forces, including as president on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Crisis Organization Directors (NASCOD), as a

member of the Board of the Emergency Network Los Angeles (ENLA), and as a member of LA's Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) Community Partnership Council.

**Dr. Daniel Levin, Shift Supervisor, Suicide Prevention Center, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services**

Dr. Danny Levin, SPC Shift Supervisor, has been volunteering, counseling and subsequently also supervising trainee counselors with Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center over the past 4 years. He had previously worked 38 years in pharmaceuticals and chemicals development and manufacture in UK, Canada, India and USA but retired from industry to work part time for Didi Hirsch alongside ongoing part time pharma consulting.

**Dr. Michael Levittan, T.E.A.M.**

Dr. Michael (Levittan) is an accomplished and recognized expert on domestic violence, anger management, child abuse, trauma and PTSD. He is a licensed psychotherapist, director of T.E.A.M. - a state-certified batterers' treatment program, serves as an Expert Witness in court, teaches seminars and courses at UCLA Extension, National Alliance on Mental Illness, International Conference on Violence, Abuse, and Trauma, L.A. Superior Court, Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, U.S. Marines, Women's Shelters, etc. His media work as an expert includes the Tyra Banks Show, ABC-TV News, Starting Over, Bad Girls Club, Montel Williams, Robert Irvine Show, Politico.com, Hollywood 411, "Frangela" and radio, on-line, and print publications. Dr. Michael wrote "The History of Infanticide" – a chapter in Violence in Our Society and a chapter on Domestic Violence in "Her Story, His Story" – published earlier this year. He appears in the newly released documentary on parenting, "The Golden Opportunity of Child Development." He recently completed the soon-to-be-published "Essentials of Anger Management." As an Executive Board member of the NPEIV Think Tank (National

Partnership to End Interpersonal Violence), he launched the GLOBAL PEACE COMMITTEE in order to promote peaceful, humane solutions to societal problems. Recently, he has completed podcasts on "Fathers Raising Daughters," the "Me Too" movement, and "Gender Expectations in the 21st Century." Currently, Dr. Michael is the Chair of a committee on Gun Violence Prevention. His passion comes across in his writings, presentations, and media appearances. Andy McNiel, MA, CEO of The Satori Group Andy McNiel, MA, is an author, trainer, and grief support professional in the bereavement care field. Andy has many years of experience providing counseling and offering support groups to children, teenagers, and adults grieving the death of someone in their life. He has also served in non-profit leadership within the bereavement field in a variety of settings throughout his career. He is a co-founder and an executive partner with The Satori Group, LLC, a national education, management, and consulting company, providing education and consultation to bereavement support and end of life non-profit organizations. He has served as the Chief Executive Officer for The National Alliance for Grieving Children, the Executive Director for The Amelia Center at Children's of Alabama, and the Director of Grief Counseling Services and Director of Development for Hospice of Martin and St. Lucie (now Treasure Health) in South Florida. In his current work with The Satori Group, Andy serves as Senior Advisor to Youth Programs for the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), Advisor to Programs for HealGrief and Actively Moving Forward, and Consultant and Advisor for The Compassionate Friends. He is the author of Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children: A Practical Guide for Professionals as well as numerous book chapters. He has served as a consultant to non-profits across the United States, providing strategic planning, fundraising support, board management, and organizational development. Andy lectures extensively on support group facilitation, grief and bereavement, non-profit management, and leadership. He provides inspirational keynote presentations for





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professionals and the community alike. He is a trainer for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

### **Reyna Lopez Mendoza, Victim Services Representative**

Reyna joined the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Bureau of Victim Services (VBS) in 2006. She is a Victim Services Representative and her current assignment is at the Norwalk Courthouse. Reyna is also an active member of the Mass Victimization Advocacy Unit, which responds to assist during mass casualty events. Reyna has served as a liaison with law enforcement during her assignments at various Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Community Stations, including, Rampart Area, Southeast Area and Hollywood Area. While there, she assisted with helping bridge the gap in services to those communities, as well provided training for the LAPD Citizens' Academy. Reyna has held specialized assignments with the DA's Elder Abuse Unit, Watts Initiative, Realignment Victim Services Program, Parole Revocation, Financial/Fraud, Cyber Crimes Division, and Hate & Target Crime Divisions. Reyna has also worked at the Torrance Courthouse and Metropolitan Courthouse, where she assisted victims and survivors navigate the various complexities of the criminal system. Reyna earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology with an emphasis in Criminology and Correction from the California State University, Northridge. Reyna also obtained a Court Interpreting certification from the Southern California School of Interpretation to improve her ability to communicate with Spanish speaking victims and in helping victims gain a greater understanding of the Criminal Justice process.

### **Claudia Melo, Licensed Marriage, Family, and Children Psychotherapist, Luna Nueva Holisit Therapy**

Claudia Melo is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) Speaker, Coach, and Traditional Ancestral Medicine Practitioner in Los Angeles, California. Claudia has gained over eighteen years of experience providing mental

health services to culturally and generationally diverse populations struggling with depression, anxiety, and trauma. Her experience ranges from community and school mental health to private practice serving Latinx communities in the Los Angeles area. She is a community advocate passionate about working with first and second-generation underserved populations in and around Los Angeles and helping them reconnect to their cultural identities and traditions. She uses evidence-based therapeutic modalities and Mexica ancestral medicine to focus on life transitions, trauma, relationships, and inner child work. She is the founder of Luna Nueva Holistic Therapy and Co-Founder of Botanica Melo. She can be found facilitating healing circles and Mexica Ceremonies across Los Angeles with the aim of reconnecting Latinx people with their cultural roots and helping them find healing and peace by tapping into more than just traditional Western mental health modalities.

### **Nicolle Perras, MPH, LMFT, Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health**

Nicolle Perras has worked at the intersections of public health and mental health for 20 years. Through her work for the LA County Department of Public Health, Nicolle addresses the prevalence, prevention, and intervention of gender-based violence and their intersections with mental, physical, and behavioral health impacts at the population level. Her areas of expertise include data surveillance, research, connections between multiple forms of violence, suicide prevention, the impact of trauma on health and wellbeing, trauma informed systems of care and community and provider education. Nicolle received her BA and MPH from UCLA and is also a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Los Angeles, California.

### **Franklin Romero, MSW, LCSW, Los Angeles County DMH-Partners in Suicide Prevention**

Franklin Romero is a native Angelino who earned his B.A. in Social Work from California State University, Los Angeles and his master's in social work from the University of Southern California. Franklin currently is the supervisor



for the Partners in Suicide Prevention unit, which provides Suicide Prevention Training and Education Countywide. Franklin has experience in the areas of child welfare, providing counseling and psychotherapy services to families and children at DMH as well as conducting crisis response and mental health assessments with the Psychiatric Mobile Response Team (PMRT). Franklin also has gained medical social work experience at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles in working with patients at the end-of-life stage, working with families and children who have been recently diagnosed with an illness, conducting child abuse assessments, and helping families and individuals cope with grief and loss.

**Talya Schlesinger, Senior Clinical Coordinator of Children's Programs, Our House Grief Support Center**

Talya is a clinical social worker dedicated to supporting children, adolescents, and families. Talya completed her undergraduate studies in Biopsychology, Cognition and Neuroscience as well as Community Action and Social Change at the University of Michigan. She then received her MSW from the University of Michigan with a concentration in Children and Youth in Families and Society, and a minor in Human Services Management. During her time in the MSW program, Talya was a clinical intern at the University Center for the Child and Family providing individual and group psychotherapy. Talya's excitement for working with children and adolescents grew from her years as a camp counselor and division head. Prior to joining the Our House team, Talya worked as a medical social worker at Children's Hospital Los Angeles on the Bone Marrow Transplant team.

**Lauren Schneider, Clinical Director of Children's Programs, Our House Grief Support Center**

Lauren, a nationally recognized expert on Child & Adolescent Grief, has directed the Children's Programs for OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center for 20 years. In that role Lauren provides 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. 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. 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 trauma.

**Jennifer Wongyai, Education Related Mental Health Specialist, Tustin Unified School District**

Jennifer Wongyai is a seasoned Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over two decades of unwavering commitment to supporting children affected by trauma, loss, anxiety, and depression. My extensive experience encompasses a wide range of roles and settings, including schools, foster care, community organizations, the family court system, and healthcare facilities. I have consistently demonstrated skills in assessment, intervention, and advocacy, helping countless young individuals and their families navigate the challenges of mental health. She currently works as an education related mental health therapist at Tustin Unified School District. She also works as a foster care social worker for foster family agencies. She attended the University of California, Irvine, and University of Southern California.

