

## Opening Comments



### **Nathan Hochman, Los Angeles County District Attorney, ICAN Co-Chair**

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.



### **Robert Luna, Los Angeles County Sheriff, ICAN Co-Chair**

Robert G. Luna was elected as the 34th Los Angeles County Sheriff on November 8, 2022. Sheriff Luna commands the largest Sheriff's Department in the United States, with nearly 17,000 budgeted sworn and professional staff. In 2021, Sheriff Luna completed his service as Long Beach Chief of Police, capping a 36-year career at the Long Beach Police Department, Los Angeles County's second largest police department. Growing up in unincorporated East Los Angeles, Sheriff Luna's neighborhood

was patrolled by the Sheriff's Department. He saw examples of both good and bad policing, which inspired him to become a peace officer and shaped his philosophy on relationship-based policing, specifically in communities of color.



### **Brandon Nichols, Director, Department of Children and Family Services**

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors appointed Brandon T. Nichols director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in July 2022. Director Nichols is regarded nationally as an accomplished professional with more than 20 years of expertise in child welfare, foster care, adoption, mental health and law. Director Nichols previously held

the roles of DCFS chief deputy director and acting director. Prior to that, he served as an attorney for the Los Angeles County Counsel's Office where he represented and advised DCFS for several years. Most recently, Director Nichols worked as the Executive Director of the County's Jail Closure Implementation Team that focused on decarcerating and closing the Men's Central Jail. In this role, he also led efforts to provide mental health services to inmates throughout Los Angeles County jails.

## From Traumatic Grief to Repair: Practical Interventions for Releasing Pain, Guilt, Shame, and Finding Meaning



**David Kessler**, Grief Expert and Author

### **Presentation:**

Traumatic grief is not only shaped by what happened, but by what didn't happen afterwards, protection, truth-telling, and care. When loss occurs without adequate support, grief can become entangled with guilt, shame, and unresolved trauma. Drawing on his own childhood experience of traumatic loss, David Kessler explores how grief becomes traumatic and why guilt and self-blame so often follow losses, especially for children and vulnerable populations. He clarifies the distinction between grief and traumatic grief and introduces repair as the process of restoring safety, witnessing pain, reclaiming agency, and allowing meaning to emerge without bypassing loss. This session offers practical, field-ready interventions clinicians and frontline workers can use to reduce guilt and shame, support regulation, and help individuals move from traumatic grief toward repair and meaning.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Differentiate traumatic grief from non-traumatic grief
2. Recognize common expressions of guilt and shame in traumatic grief
3. Describe the role of repair in grief work

**David Kessler** is one of the world's foremost experts of grief and loss. His decades of experience with thousands of people on the edge of life and death has taught him the secrets to living a happy and fulfilled life, even after life's tragedies. He is the author of seven books including his latest bestselling book, *Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief*, as well as a new *Finding Meaning Companion Workbook*. He co-authored two books with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *Life Lessons* and *On Grief and Grieving*. He co-wrote *You Can Heal Your Heart* with Louise Hay and wrote *Visions, Trips and Crowded Rooms: Who and What You See Before You Die*. His first book, *The Needs of The Dying*, received praise from Saint (Mother) Teresa. He also serves as Specialist Reserve for the Los Angeles Police as well as having served on the Red Cross's disaster services team. His new online model of grief support, *Tender Hearts*, offers over twenty-five groups. David leads one of the most respected Grief Educator Certification programs for clinicians. He is the founder of *Grief.com*.

## Supporting Children Through Death, Suicide, and Loss: Clinical Perspectives and Case-Based Insights



**Lauren Schneider**, LCSW, Grief therapist

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

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

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

### **Presentation:**

This panel presentation offers a clinical overview of how children experience and express grief following the death of a parent, including suicide and violent deaths. Through case-based examples, the session explores developmentally appropriate communication about death, preparation for anticipated loss, and ongoing therapeutic support for bereaved children. The presentation also addresses key assessment considerations, including how grief and trauma responses in children may overlap with or be misdiagnosed as other mental health or behavioral conditions. Emphasis is placed on trauma-informed, culturally responsive approaches to assessment and intervention.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify developmentally appropriate strategies for communicating with children about death, including anticipated loss and suicide.
2. Recognize common grief and trauma responses in children and differentiate them from other mental health or behavioral diagnoses.
3. Apply case-based clinical insights to inform trauma-informed assessment and intervention with bereaved children and families.

**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.

**Linda Garcia** 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. She has worked at UCLA Medical Center, Child Life Director at Children's Hospital Los Angeles and for 12 years practicing at UCLA West Hills Burn Center. Currently, Children's Burn Foundation Psychosocial Coordinator and Support Group Lead Facilitator for children, teens, young adult burn survivors and their families. Her clinical private practice has extended to the community providing trauma-grief support to victims of fatal family violence. She is a specialized trainer in Grief and Loss. Co-Founder and President of the California Association for Child Life Professionals. In her spare time, she plays with her 6-year-old grandson.

**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.

**Lauren Schneider**, a nationally recognized expert on Child & Adolescent Grief, directed the Children's Program for OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center for 24 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. Since her retirement, Lauren has been overseeing the training of staff and volunteers as well as program design for the NYC branch of OUR HOUSE. 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 as well as "One Last Hug...12 years later", soon to be released. Lauren is the recipient of the 2017 Dr. Michael Durfee Award and the 2014 H.U.G. award; and is a member of J William Worden's study group. Lauren maintains a private practice in Los Angeles specializing in grief and loss.

## Mending the Invisible Tear: Healing Childhood Loss Through Connection



**Fr. Stan Bosch, Psy. D., LMFT, Director Mental Health Soledad Enrichment Action**

### **Presentation:**

This conference explores how children experience grief and traumatic loss, and how trusted adults can help restore safety, coherence, and joy. This training examines the developmental nature of grief, the neurobiological impact of traumatic loss, and the unique ways children express distress through behavior, play, and their bodies. Participants will learn how relational attunement, co-regulation, and trauma-informed witnessing form the foundation of healing—drawing on Alice Miller’s concept of the “enlightened witness,” from *The Drama of the Gifted Child*. The workshop emphasizes practical, evidence-based approaches that support children in naming, organizing, and integrating their grief without overwhelming them. Attention is given to the vital role of caregivers as primary healers and the specific skills professionals can teach to strengthen caregiver-child connection. Through clinical frameworks, examples, and applied techniques, attendees will develop tools to differentiate non-traumatic grief from traumatic grief and respond with sensitivity and precision. The session concludes with strategies for helping families reclaim moments of play, creativity, and meaning, allowing joy to re-emerge as part of the healing process.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Participants will be able to identify and describe at least three behavioral or physiological indicators that distinguish traumatic loss from non-traumatic childhood grief.
2. Participants will demonstrate the ability to apply two or more trauma-informed strategies for co-regulation and emotional witnessing with grieving children and caregivers.
3. Participants will be able to distinguish between Grief and Trauma and how they overlap.
4. Participants will be able to articulate the role of the “enlightened witness” and explain how relational attunement supports neurobiological integration and reduces shame-based responses

### **Biography**

**Father Stan Bosch**, S.T., Psy. D., LMFT has worked with Los Angeles's gang involved youth and adults for more than 35 years. His work with inner city youth was featured in the National Geographic documentary “Inside LA Gang Wars”, as well as in the Los Angeles Times August 2009: “Let’s Talk About It!” <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-southla-therapy16> 2006 aug16,0, 522160.story; and The LA Archdiocesan Tidings:

"Creating Communities of Care!" [www.the-tidings.com/2008/101708/gangs.htm](http://www.the-tidings.com/2008/101708/gangs.htm). Fr. Stan holds a doctoral degree in psychology with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. He is a psychotherapist, Director of Mental Health, Personnel Development and Clinical Supervisor for gang intervention with Soledad Enrichment Action (SEA) and the City of Los Angeles' Gang Reduction and Youth Development Project (GRYD). He also maintains private practice in psychotherapy in South Los Angeles specializing in psychodynamic group and individual psychotherapy treating early trauma/abuse, depression, addictions and gang related issues. He is pastor of St. Raphael's Catholic Church in South LA. He is bi-lingual in English and Spanish.

## From Empathy to Action



**David Ambroz, Author**

### **Presentation:**

This keynote challenges child welfare leaders, policymakers, and practitioners to reject cynicism and reclaim their power to produce real, measurable change for children. Drawing from lived experience in foster care and years of policy advocacy, David Ambroz argues that progress is not blocked by a lack of ideas—but by learned helplessness, bureaucratic inertia, and the false belief that meaningful change is impossible. This talk is a call to action for the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect and its partners: to fully use the tools of policy, data, technology, and cross-agency coordination to deliver outcomes—not just services—for children and families. The message is clear: we can get things done, and children cannot afford our hesitation.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify how institutional cynicism and fragmentation undermine outcomes for children, and articulate strategies to counter learned helplessness within public systems.
2. Apply a mindset of choice and accountability to child welfare policy and practice, reframing constraints as design challenges rather than immovable barriers.
3. Recognize their individual and collective power to drive cross-system change, using existing tools—data, policy levers, technology, and collaboration—to improve safety, permanency, and well-being for children.

**David Ambroz** is a nationally recognized child welfare advocate, Emmy-nominated producer, bestselling author, and executive at Amazon. Named a Champion of Change by President Obama, David's passion for improving systems of care is deeply personal: he grew up homeless and in foster care, experiences he shares in his acclaimed memoir, *A Place Called Home*. A graduate of Vassar College and UCLA School of Law, David has dedicated his career to advancing the wellbeing of vulnerable children and families. He has helped champion transformative policies including the first state tuition waivers for foster youth pursuing higher education, the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, extending foster care to age 21, and expanding protections and support for LGBTQ+ youth in care. David also helped found one of the first Guardian Scholars programs at a community college—an effort that has now been replicated at more than 50 colleges across California to support foster youth in higher education. He co-founded the national awareness campaign *Foster More*, helped establish the National Foster Youth Advisory Council at CWLA, and has served on numerous boards, commissions, and nonprofit leadership roles focused on equity, education, and child welfare reform. David has been

recognized by Casey Family Program, the American Bar Association, Lambda Legal, First Star, CASA/GAL, and was recently honored with Vassar College's prestigious Spirit of Vassar Award for his leadership and lifelong commitment to creating meaningful change for children. He lives in Los Angeles, works in corporate philanthropy, and is the proud father of a very happy toddler.