



ICAN

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.



20TH ANNUAL ICAN/ICAN ASSOCIATES CONFERENCE

CHILDHOOD GRIEF AND TRAUMATIC LOSS

Restoring Joy to Children and Families



1ST LA
first 5 la
Giving kids the best start

DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH
hope. recovery. wellbeing.

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

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



On behalf of ICAN, I am pleased to welcome you to the 20th annual Conference on Childhood Traumatic Grief and Loss Conference. We sincerely appreciate each one of you for sharing your valuable time with us.

Today we again address critical issues often unrecognized as we respond to tragic events. This is a day to focus on the impact of trauma and loss on children who may not be a primary victim, but experience events that could result in unresolved grief throughout their life's journey. We hope you leave this conference with confidence that you can make a positive difference in the lives of these children, and a realization of the importance of your response to them.

Our program today features nationally renowned childhood grief experts and local heroes, and is intended to help us in our work with bereaved children, - to bring hope and joy into their lives.

With many thanks to our sponsors, ICAN Associates, DCFS, Keynotes and Workshop presenters, ICAN staff, and Volunteers who made this conference possible again this year.

With appreciation,
Deanne Tilton Durfee, Doc.hc
ICAN Executive Director



Pledge of Allegiance - Neil Robertson, ICAN 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.

Continuing Education (CEs)

IMPORTANT NOTICE

To receive Continuing Education Units (CEs), 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: CEs 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 CE 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 20th 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 CE Table at the end of the conference. Evaluations are required to receive certificates of attendance, and signed evaluations are required to receive CEs.

Certificate of Attendance

Certificates of attendance will be provided at the end of the day, at the CE 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.



Rooms

Morning/Lunch Program + Workshop - Dr. Beatriz Solis Hall

Workshop Sessions -

Cabrillo
Catalina
Big Sur
Tahoe

Joshua Tree
Mojave

Thank You to Our Exhibitors This Year!

We are proud to welcome an outstanding group of exhibitors to this year's conference. Your commitment to serving children, families, and communities plays a vital role in the mission and impact of this event. By sharing your expertise, resources, and passion, you help create a space where meaningful collaboration and learning can thrive. We are grateful for your participation and look forward to the connections and conversations your presence will inspire.

2026 Exhibitors

- Matthews Family Counseling-A Place to Grow
- LA County Office of Education Head Start and Early Learning Division
- LA County Department of Mental Health
- Fosterall
- El Centro De Amistad
- LA County Public Health SAPC
- Colunga & Associates LLC
- Comfort Zone Camp
- Fosterall
- Brightlife Kids
- Tessie Cleveland Community Services
- Healing Informed Art Center
- District Attorney/Bureau of Victim Services
- Matthews Family Counseling-A Place To Grow
- CASA Of Los Angeles
- Institute On Violence, Abuse, And Trauma
- Allies For Every Child
- LA County Department Of Children And Family Services



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
Susana Montanez, Program Administrator
Linda Garcia, MA, CCLS
Dr. Arvis Jones, MA
Tracie Andrews, LCSW, DMH
Lauren Schneider, MSW, LCSW

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Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH)
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ICAN

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Kasim Khan, Treasurer
Justin Chambers
Keisha Chambers
Beverly Kurtz
Elaine Trebek-Kares
Paul Mones
Monica Hylande-Latta
Paul Click, Training Coordinator
John Solano, IT/Event Coordinator

REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

CONFERENCE OPENING 8:30 a.m. – 9:15 a.m

Honor guard - Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Pledge of Allegiance - Neil Robertson, ICAN Ambassador
American the Beautiful - Annie Bosko

WELCOME

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

OPENING COMMENTS

Nathan Hochman, Los Angeles County District Attorney, ICAN Co-Chair
Sheriff Robert Luna, ICAN Co-Chair
Brandon Nichols, Director, Department of Children and Family Services

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION: Addressing Family Trauma and Grief..... 9:15 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Dr. Alan-Michael S. Graves, Senior Director, Good+Foundation

BREAK..... 10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

GRIEF SPECIALIST PANEL: Supporting Children Through Loss 10:15 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Panelists: Dr. Arvis Jones, Lauren Schneider, Linda Garcia, Tracie Andrews

PLENARY PRESENTATION: Mending the Invisible Tear..... 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Fr. Stan Bosch, S.T., Psy.D., LMFT, Director of Mental Health, Soledad Enrichment Action & City of Los Angeles' Gang Reduction and Youth Development Program

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

LUNCH PROGRAM 12:30 p.m. - 12:55 p.m.

Poem "A Seat at the Table" by Dakota Agatol

WELCOME by ICAN ASSOCIATES: Judge Mary House, Lindsay Wagner, and Justin Chambers

Special Presentation: Maria Quiban, Morning Meteorologist/Author

DURFEE AWARD 12:55 p.m. - 1:10 p.m.

Presented by Michael Durfee M.D.

Recipient: Dr. Alan-Michael S. Graves

LUNCHEON KEYNOTE PRESENTATION 1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

David Ambroz, Child Welfare Advocate, Author and Speaker

BREAK..... 2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

WORKSHOP SESSIONS..... 2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

CONFERENCES CLOSES/SIGN-OUT



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, adoptions, 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 a number of years.

9:15 am - 10:00 am



Addressing Childhood Trauma and Grief Through Support of Protective Factors

**Presented by: Dr. Alan-Michael S. Graves,
Senior Director, Good+Foundation**

Dr. Graves will highlight the support children and families need to safely navigate traumatic experiences and the grieving process through a cultural lens. He will explore how family dynamics, attachment, and environment shape a child's grieving process, and emphasize the role of embodied grief work in helping clients maintain and deepen relationships while honoring their losses.

Biography: 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.

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



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.



Linda Garcia, MA, Certified Child Life Specialist

She 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 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 on 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.



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.



Lauren Schneider, MSW, LCSW, Senior Advisor of Programs & Training, OUR HOUSE New York City

Lauren, 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

**Presented by: Stan Bosch, Psy. D., LMFT,
Director Mental Health Soledad Enrichment
Action**

This presentation 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*. Father Bosch 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 presentation concludes with strategies for helping families reclaim moments of play, creativity, and meaning, allowing joy to re-emerge as part of the healing process.

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. 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.



Judge Mary Thornton House, Chairperson

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. In 2004, Los Angeles County honored her as one of its 'Women of the Year' and named Judge of the Year by the Pasadena Bar Association. In 2008, the California Judges Association awarded her the Bernard F. Jefferson's Award for Excellence in Judicial Education. In 2011, the San Fernando Valley Bar Association awarded her the Excellence in Judicial Administration

award for her leadership in getting California's Expedited Jury Trials legislation passed, the development of the current universal judgment form, and simplification of small claims pleadings. In 2013, the San Fernando Valley Bar Association named her their Judge of the Year. Judge House was Dean of the California B.E. Witkin Judicial College which provides for education of all judicial officers in California. The college is a nationally recognized institution and exemplar for judicial education where she has been an instructor and seminar leader since 1997. In 2007, Yale Law School selected her to teach at their China Law Center in Beijing, China, courses on small claims and limited civil procedures to selected judges from throughout China. 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, Actress

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. Throughout her career, Lindsay has worked in advocacy and public education in the areas of human rights, family violence, animal welfare, and the environment and Teen Talking Circles. Lindsay is passionate about awakening human potential and has combined 45 years of experience and study of Western and Eastern modalities to develop her "Quiet the Mind & Open the Heart" experiential workshops and retreats for the public and special interest groups, sharing techniques and realizations that have greatly impacted her life, inspiring others to realize how amazing they truly are. Lindsay has presented her programs in the US,



Canada, Mexico, Europe and the Caribbean, working with world owned organizations such as the UK National Health Service, Saint Lucia Tourist Board, Kalani Eco community in Hawaii and the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, New York. She has co-authored two books. 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

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. Justin's acting career is vast, starring in numerous films, such as, The Wedding Planner opposite Jennifer Lopez, Hysterical Blindness with Uma Thurman, The Zodiac with Rory Caulkin, Leo with Dennis Hopper & Sam Shepherd, Liberty Heights with Adrien Brody and Ben Foster, including many other film and tv projects. Prior to acting, he lived in Europe and appeared in a multitude of fashion

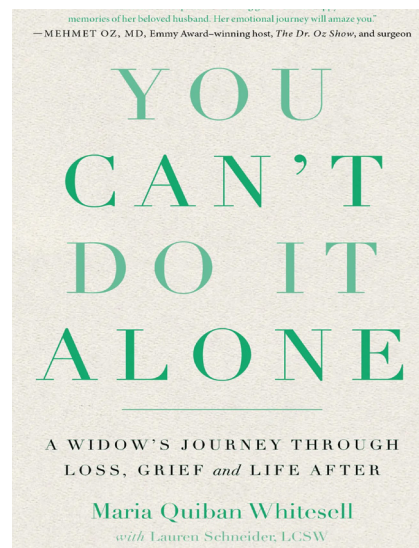
campaigns including Calvin Klein, Giorgio Armani, Dolce & Gabbana. Currently, he can be seen in the upcoming project, The Offer, playing the role of Marlon Brando. Most importantly, Justin is a devoted husband to Keisha and dedicated father to their five children.



Maria Quiban Morning Meteorologist/Author

KTTV News Los Angeles

You can see Maria every day giving Los Angeles its daily weather forecast on Good Day LA/FOX 11 Morning News 7am-10:30am. Before joining the FOX11 news team in May of 2000, Maria spent two years as the weather anchor for the daily 5, 6, 9, and 11 p.m. newscasts for OCN (Orange County News Channel). She also built and produced weather graphics for the station's nightly broadcasts. Before that, she was the evening meteorologist for NBC Hawaii News 8 in Honolulu, HI. Born in Cebu City, Philippines, Maria, her brother and mother immigrated to Hawaii when she was 10 years old. In Honolulu, she studied Journalism at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In 2005, she earned her Meteorology degree from Mississippi State University. When she can, Maria volunteers her time speaking to young single mothers about her own experience as a single mom in her teens. Having a baby while still in high school left her with very early responsibilities. She enjoys sharing her experience of struggle and success in hopes of inspiring another teen mom to achieve her dreams. Twenty-three years after the birth of her first son Desmond, she remarried and then embarked on a new journey of being mom for the second time. In December 2015, after an 18 month long battle Maria's husband Sean, passed away from Glioblastoma, a rare Brain Cancer Disease. Since then, she has been raising their son Gus, and is now an advocate for Glioblastoma and Brain Cancer Awareness. Maria brings her unique life experience and passion to help tell meaningful and memorable stories.



1:15 pm - 2:15 pm



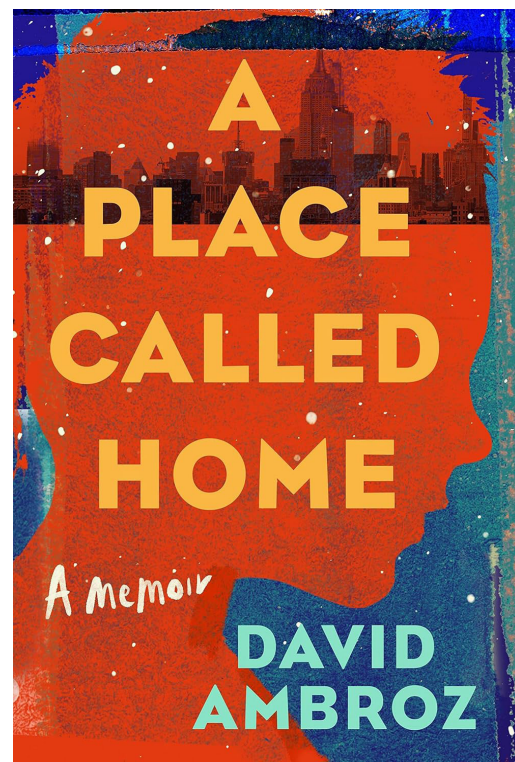
From Empathy to Action

Presented by: David Ambroz, Author

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.

Biography: 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 FosterMore, 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.





**2026 Recipient:
Dr. Alan-Michael Graves**



Student: Lahini Walpita, Age 10

The Student Poster Art Contest emphasizes the importance of child abuse prevention and gives children the ability to convey it to others through their art. Physical and emotional abuse can be reduced with education and awareness and the ICAN/ ICAN Associates Poster Contest is a public awareness campaign that addresses this critical need for protecting and educating our children.

1A. ADOPTION GRIEF & HIDDEN LOSSES - FROM MY PERSPECTIVE AS AN ADOPTIVE PARENT

Workshop Location: Catalina

Presenter(s):

Virginia Olivas, Assistant Professor, Practicum Education Faculty LADCFS + UCLA Academy of Workforce Excellence, Program Coordinator, Azusa Pacific University

The presenter, both an adoption professional and an adoptive parent, will discuss adoption grief and loss as well as helpful interventions that promote healing based on lived experience as well as over 25 years as a professional in the field of adoption. Concepts from the presentation will be based on *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew* by Sherrie Eldridge as well as *Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency* by Sharon Kaplan Roszia and Allison Davis Maxon.

1B. FROM TEXT MESSAGES TO GRIEFBOTS: HOW TO NAVIGATE THE GRIEF-TECH LANDSCAPE WITH YOUTH

Workshop Location: Cabrillo

Presenter(s):

Melissa Lunardini, Chief Clinical Officer, Help Texts

Technology is fundamentally reshaping how young people experience, process, and seek grief support. As digital natives, today's youth naturally turn to technology-based tools before or instead of traditional support like therapy or groups, making it essential for bereavement providers to understand this evolving landscape. This presentation explores the full spectrum of grief-tech, from established, evidence-informed text-based interventions, AR/VR, Gaming, to emerging AI applications like grief bots that enable ongoing conversations with deceased loved ones. Participants will begin by examining the current barriers to accessing bereavement support and how technology-based tools fit within the public health model for grief care. We'll then trace the evolution from simple digital memorials to sophisticated AI-powered "grief-tech" applications, touching on how these tools intersect with core thanatological theories including continuing bonds, meaning-making, the dual-process model, and attachment theory. Throughout, we'll analyze both the opportunities and risks these technologies present for young people. We will conclude by offering guidance on how to evaluate digital grief tools and simple ways to increase online safety, preparing attendees to guide young people through digital grief spaces with thoughtful engagement rather than restriction or avoidance.

1C. A GRIEF & LOSS PROGRAM UTILIZED BY LAUSD MIDDLE SCHOOLS USING MUSIC THERAPY TECHNIQUES

Workshop Location: Joshua Tree

Presenter(s):

Arvis Jones, Founder, Damon's Center for Grief, Loss and Trauma

This workshop will focus on a 2-year program that the presenter developed for Los Angeles Unified School District Middle Schools. When grief occurs, there are some communities who resist any type of mental health services. Some reasons for this resistance is caused by the beliefs that you have to be "crazy" to get counseling; the family does not share anything that happens at home; males who cry and show feelings are weak; or there is nothing wrong and if you just ignore your feelings the

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

pain will automatically go away over time. These are just some of the reasons that families do not reach out to receive counseling services. As a result of this resistance, children, youth and teens may be unable to move past the grief and/or trauma experience. This lack of help can lead to behaviors such as depression, low self-esteem, anger, low grades, drug use and involvement with the justice system as in gang involvement. This workshop will help to address how, by offering a Grief, Loss and Trauma groups during the school day, children and adolescents get much needed help to address these issues. This will be an experiential and “hands-on” presentation; with heavy influence placed on how Music therapy interventions along with journaling and art can offer ways to connect with youth. The program’s success was determined using various tools, i.e., Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS), The Youth Outcome Questionnaire (YOQ), and The Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC). When grief or trauma occurs, there are communities who resist any type of mental health service. This workshop will explore how by offering support groups during the school day, students receive much needed help with the issues that “avoidance” of grief and trauma issues may cause. The presentation also focusses on the social aspect of a support group vs. one-on-one counseling.

1D. YOUTH MAKING MEANING AFTER GRIEF AND LOSS

Workshop Location: Beatriz Solis

Presenter(s):

Claire Towle, LCSW, Clinical Director, Taking Time: South Bay

Sophia Donald, Founder, Lemons to Lemonade

Hugh Saetia, Founder, Eternat Canvas Foundation

Lily Farber, College Student, Student/volunteer

Heidi Ambrose

Meaning making refers to the process by which a person tries to understand, integrate, and live with a loss in a way that restores a sense of purpose, identity, and coherence in life. The workshop will highlight three youth who have made significant contributions to helping children and families find joy after loss and have found meaning after their personal losses. The workshop will begin with an overview of making meaning, the definition, theories to support the value and key concepts will be identified. The speaker will discuss the application of meaning-making principles to support individuals experiencing loss. Then, three youth will be introduced, and they will share their inspiring stories.

- Sophia Donald, Founder, Lemons to Lemonade, Age 17 (www.lemonstolemonadefoundation.com)
- Hugh Saetia, Founder, the Eternal Canvas Foundation, Age 16 (www.eternalcanvas.org)
- Lily Farber, Age 22, Bereavement volunteer and founder of a bereavement support group when in high school.

After the youth share there will be:

- Time for questions and answers.
- A group discussion of how professionals can help their clients find meaning and purpose and restore joy to children and families. Members will have the opportunity to share how they have been able to apply meaning principles to support others.
- There will also be time for participants to share how they find meaning and joy for themselves as

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

they help the others navigate grief and loss.

1E. WHAT DO YOU MEAN MOMMY WON'T BE AT MY BIRTHDAY? HOW TO PREPARE CHILDREN WHEN THEIR PARENT IS DYING OF A TERMINAL ILLNESS

Workshop Location: Mojave

Presenter(s):

Lauren Schneider, MSW, LCSW, Senior Advisor of Programs & Training, OUR HOUSE New York City

In the event that treatments have failed to stem the course of a life-threatening illness and a parent or someone close is at End-of-Life few clinicians feel prepared to advise clients how to prepare their young children and teens for their person's inevitable death. In many families' children are allowed to maintain hope until that person dies because adults are reluctant or ill-equipped to break the news that their special person is dying. Then the children are shocked, and angry when they draw their final breath, feeling that they didn't know it was going to happen or didn't get to say good-bye. In this workshop, participants will gain an understanding of the importance of sharing, in age-appropriate language, the real name of the illness, when and if the patient enters hospice, or chooses a medically assisted death and when their death is imminent, how to break the news that their person is dying. Participants will gain tools including films, books and games to use to facilitate this process with toddlers as well as school-aged children and how to help the family with anticipatory grief. The impact of the clinicians' own feelings about death will also be explored.

1F. EASING THE WEIGHT OF CARRYING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

Workshop Location: Big Sur

Presenter(s):

Karina Bravo, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, University of Massachusetts Global

Martha Morgan Gobert, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, University of Massachusetts Global

Sara Lee, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, University of Massachusetts Global

Nakisha Castillo, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, University of Massachusetts Global

This interactive/experiential workshop addresses the profound toll that continuous exposure to others' trauma takes on helping professionals. Participants will explore how intense stress uniquely impacts those in caregiving roles, examining the neurobiological and psychological effects of bearing witness to suffering as part of daily work. The session reviews how to recognize the warning signs of compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization in themselves and colleagues. Participants will learn to identify and establish healthy boundaries that protect their emotional wellbeing without compromising the quality of care they provide. The workshop emphasizes that self-care is not selfish indulgence but professional necessity. Participants will engage directly in experiential self-care activities designed for immediate stress relief and long-term resilience building. This workshop is designed for all helpers, including (but not limited to), educators, social workers, healthcare providers, counselors, and first responders. By the end of this session, attendees will leave with a personalized action plan for preventing burnout while maintaining their capacity for compassionate and effective service.

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm

1G. SUICIDE PREVENTION AND POSTVENTION IN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES: BALANCING SAFETY AND SENSITIVITY***Workshop Location: Tahoe*****Presenter(s):****Emily Cummins-Polk, MSW****Jocelyn Meza, PHD, Assistant Professor In-Residence & Licensed Clinical Psychologist****Stephanie Murray, MA, PPS, LEP, School Psychologist, Whittier Union High School District****Franklin Romero, MSW, LCSW, Los Angeles County DMH-Partners in Suicide Prevention**

Grief following a suicide is often complex and layered. In school settings, this complexity requires a careful balance between honoring family wishes, cultural sensitivity, supporting individual and collective grief, and maintaining student safety. This panel presentation uses a facilitated discussion format to explore real-world challenges and collaborative strategies for prevention and postvention, with a focus on how school communities can respectfully navigate family preferences while protecting the well-being of students and staff.



Hedi Ambrose

I lost my mother when I was 17 from suicide back in 1976. There were no indications or signs of severe depression. It was incredibly sudden. And no note. At that time, therapy or grief support groups were not prevalent or mainstream to provide support from such a horrible loss. I was on my own. It was incredibly isolating and I had no idea how to deal with this loss. I had to move from New York to Los Angeles and start my college life as I continued to stuff the feelings from this loss and then moved further down so I would not have to feel anything. It took decades for me to finally find help in grieving this loss. Many years after graduating college, I decided to get my MSW because I wanted to become a therapist and help individuals 12-25 years of age deal with loss. I did not finish my education, but it was the best year of my life as I was around like-minded people who were compassionate, empathetic and wanted to help others. During the past decade, I have been interviewed by several authors who have written books on loss and suicide and in some small way, I felt that if I could just help one person feel supported and understood I have helped someone. Fast forward to now...I am retired from a long career in owning a successful TV advertising business. In my retirement, I am working with Taking Time and support groups in my Church helping others feel supported while going through grief and loss. This is my way of giving back and using my gifts and what I have gone through to be of service. I am thrilled to see the abundance of grief and loss support that is available to everyone now as no one should have to go through this alone.

Tracie Andrews

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.

Karina Bravo

Dr. Bravo is a Licensed Marital and Family Therapist who earned her doctorate degree from Loma Linda University. Her career has been focused on helping at-risk children and their families. Her extensive training and experience make her well-rounded in her understanding of children and their needs. She is currently a full-time faculty member for the University of Massachusetts Global (formerly Brandman University) and teaches at the graduate level to help future professionals hone their expertise in early childhood mental health.

Nakisha Castillo

Dr. Nakisha Castillo's roots stem from her Jamaican and Filipino heritage. She is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) and a dedicated educator, currently serving as an Associate Professor of Psychology and Clinical Director within the MFT program at UMass Global. With over a decade of experience in mental health, Dr. Castillo has worked extensively with underserved and unserved families, particularly within the homeless population. She is a published author and co-author, frequently sharing her expertise at conferences, webinars, and workshops both nationally and internationally. Beyond her professional roles, Dr. Castillo is deeply committed to mentoring young adults and students, guiding them in discovering and achieving their personal and professional goals. Her work is fueled by a passion for reducing suffering and cultivating hope in the lives of others.

Sophia Donald

Sophia Donald, Founder, Lemons to Lemonade | Age 17 | Dana Hills High School When I was five, my dad died of a sudden heart attack. A few years later, I moved from Memphis to Orange County, leaving behind not just my childhood home, but the community that had helped me through my grief. As an only child raised by an

only parent, that move felt like a second loss — and I quickly realized how isolating grief can be without support. In Memphis, I had the Center for Good Grief, a place where I could talk, connect, and feel understood. In Orange County, I found nothing for kids like me. So, I decided to change that. I wrote a grief workbook launched Lemons to Lemonade, and now I have lead-free summer camps, monthly meetups, and a soon-to-launch mobile app to support grieving kids. The response has been inspiring — over 20 volunteers from Hoag Hospital joined us to serve our first camp, proving what I knew all along: Orange County needed this. 1 in 11 kids will lose a parent or sibling before age 18. I'm advocating to make sure those kids have the support I was lucky to receive — because no child should have to grieve alone.

Deanne Tilton Durfee

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. ICAN was designated the National Center on Child Fatality Review. Served 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. Ms. Tilton served as a Federal Commissioner on the U.S. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, Chairing the Committee on Child Pornography. She was appointed by the Governor to the California Child Victim Witness Judicial Advisory Committee. She was appointed

by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. 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

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.

Lily Farber

Lily Farber, University of Wisconsin-Madison Loss: Father/Date of death: February 18, 2009/ Age at time: 5 years old/illness: Glioblastoma (brain tumor) After losing my dad at five years





old, my family and I frequently attended a local grief organization called Brooks Place for support services. Despite being so young, I explicitly remember the supportive environment and various activities they facilitated. I remember feeling like no matter what I felt - whether it was sadness, rage, confusion, etc., there was a place for me to express it there. Early on in high school I became aware of a local program called The Gathering Place that offered support groups for various age groups for those experiencing loss. My mom had introduced me to the program and mentioned she was interested in working with the adult/parent-aged group. I learned that they had a group for 5–9-year-olds and were instantly interested in helping and supporting them however possible. I was able to assist in facilitating the weekly meetings for the little ones. We'd do various activities to encourage them to express themselves such as drawing, having guided discussions, playing time, etc. I totally fell in love with this role and helping these kids.

Linda Garcia

She 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 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 on 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.

Martha L. Morgan Gobert

Martha L. Morgan Gobert, PhD, is an Associate Professor and Psychology Assistant Clinical Director in Marriage & Family Therapy program

at University of Massachusetts Global. Dr. Morgan is an American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) Clinical Fellow and an AAMFT Approved Supervisor. She is committed to engaging her students in developing the knowledge and skills needed to provide therapeutic services for the clients they serve. Dr. Morgan Gobert's clinical experience includes treating individuals, couples, and families via telehealth. Her current research focus is on social location and clinical supervision. She has presented her work at national and international conferences.

Arvis L Jones

Arvis Jones received a BA Degree from California State Long Beach with a Music Therapy Certificate and a MA Degree in Clinical Psychology from National University and an Honorary Doctorate in Music from Emmanuel Bible College. She was the first African American Music Therapist employed by Arts & Services for the Disabled and the first Music Therapist at the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, where she developed a program to address the emotional and environmental needs of children and youth ages 2½ to 22 years. Arvis has worked with children and youths with dual diagnosis and has 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. After her son, Damon Jones Sir's death in 2008 by mistaken identity, she developed a grief and loss program that was used in nine middle schools of LAUSD and is currently facilitating a Grief and Loss program for adults and working on a book about her experiences. She collaborated with the Los Angeles Police department at crime scenes, lending support to families. She is a national board member of The National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM), a member of Musicians-In- Action, a member of American Music Therapy Association, a member of Moms Demand Action, a former member of ADEC, a member of the Watts Gang Task Force, Cease Fire, a member of the Top Ladies of Distinction

(TLOD) and a former Top Teens Advisor. Arvis has been honored by Senate District 25 as a “Distinguished Women” for her effective work in the Los Angeles Community. She was honored as Council District 15 “Pioneer Woman” by the Commission on The Status of Women in Los Angeles, she received a Resolution from The California 25th Senatorial District, she was a 2018 Sherone for Council District 9, in 2019, received a commendation from LA District Attorney’s Bureau of Victim Services, a commendation from LA County Board of Supervisors in 2022 for her community work with families, an award from the NAACP Youth Council for her work with children. She is a member of Moms Demand Action and Everytown USA. And is the Founder of Damon’s Center for Grief, Loss and Trauma.

Jocelyn Meza

Dr. Meza is an Assistant Professor In-Residence in the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences and a bilingual licensed clinical psychologist at UCLA. Currently, she is the Director of the Youth Stress and Mood (YSAM) Program and the Principal Investigator and Founder of the Health Equity & Access Research & Treatment (HEART) lab at UCLA. Her research interests include studying socio-ecological risk and protective factors for suicide and self-harming behaviors among youth (including children, adolescents, and young adults). Dr. Meza’s work aims to integrate psychological, cognitive, and sociocultural influences to predict suicide and self-harm behaviors and, importantly, to identify therapeutic targets for culturally responsive interventions for youth. In addition, Dr. Meza is expanding her research to adapt evidence-based psychosocial interventions for diverse youth, particularly youth that are impacted by the child welfare and juvenile justice system.

Stephanie Murray

Stephanie Murray has been a practicing school psychologist for over 30 years with the Whittier Union High School District and is a Licensed Educational Psychologist. She serves as a Co-Chair of the Mental Wellness Committee for the

California Association of School Psychologists, and a Co-Chair of the LA County Child and Adolescent Suicide Review Team, active in the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Network, and has been very active in suicide prevention in Los Angeles County for over 25 years, providing trainings and consultation for school districts throughout the county and the state. Stephanie contracts with LA County Office of Education on their Suicide Prevention Ongoing Resiliency Training to provide expertise and training. Stephanie also serves on the Student Mental Health Policy Workgroup through the California Department of Education. Stephanie received her bachelor’s degree in Sociology from UCLA, and both Masters’ degrees, in School Counseling, and in Educational Psychology from Loyola Marymount University. In October of 2025, she was awarded the Nadine Lambert Outstanding School Psychologist award by the California Association of School Psychologists.

Sara Lee

Dr. Lee is the Assistant Professor of Psychology and Assistant Field Director in the Marriage & Family Therapy program at the University of Massachusetts Global. Dr. Lee is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in California. She has been serving the community as a therapist, clinical supervisor, and trainer/consultant in the greater Los Angeles area. Dr. Lee is a clinical fellow at American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and an AAMFT Approved Supervisor. Dr. Lee has taught the Masters and Doctoral programs in an adjunct capacity at different MFT programs.

Melissa Lunardini

Melissa has focused expertise on grief and loss with over 20 years of experience across various mental health settings. She holds a Ph.D. in International Psychology with a focus on trauma, as well as an MBA and a master’s degree in psychology with a concentration in Marriage and Family Therapy. With a clinically trained background, Melissa specializes in childhood bereavement, hospice and palliative care,



grief and AI technology, and trauma. She has developed innovative programs and evidence-based interventions across various industries, including healthcare, education, and non-profit. As Chief Clinical Officer at Help Texts, Melissa oversees the delivery of global mental health and grief support via text message. She ensures all content is clinically sound and culturally sensitive; she also leads subscriber support and research initiatives and plays a key role in AI and product development. A Fellow in Thanatology, Melissa is a sought-after presenter and researcher. Her work on text-based grief support has been published in preeminent journals and presented at international conferences.

Virginia Olivas

Virginia Olivas, MSW, is in her tenth year as a member of the Azusa Pacific University practicum faculty in the MSW program. She serves as the program coordinator of the LA DCFS/UCLA Academy of Workforce Excellence Child Welfare Stipend Program. Virginia primarily teaches in the APU MSW program where she teaches Generalist Practicum I & II and the DCFS Child Welfare Supplemental Seminar class. Virginia also teaches child welfare class in the APU BSW program. As a bilingual and bicultural social worker, Virginia has over twenty-five years of experience in child welfare, with a specialization in adoptions and working with the Latino community. Virginia served as the Program Manager at Latino Family Institute for twelve years. She continues to work as a permanency-planning mediator where she mediates post-adoption contact agreements, which serve to honor connections for adoptees with their birth/first families. Virginia is passionate about child welfare both as a professional and an adoptive parent. In 2006, Virginia and her husband adopted a sibling set of three children, and she integrates her experiences into her presentations.

Emily Cummins Polk

Emily Cummins Polk, M.S.W. 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 master's in social Welfare from UCLA in 2002.

Franklin Romero

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.

Hugh Saetia

Hugh Saetia, 16 years old, 11th grade. Mira Costa High School I lost my mother to gastrointestinal cancer when I was 6 years old. Her passing shaped my childhood and became the beginning of my understanding of grief. After her death, my babysitter Marylin MacAlister became a maternal figure for five years, and when her son passed away, seeing her grief helped me understand how universal loss is. I have managed my loss by trying to create meaning from it. I learned to let my grief guide me toward helping others who are going through similar experiences. This led me to create the Eternal Canvas Foundation, where I paint memorial portraits for families, especially in underrepresented communities. My goal is to offer comfort and give people something permanent to hold onto. My experiences have taught me compassion, purpose, and the importance of supporting others through their hardest moments.

Lauren Schneider

Lauren, 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.

Claire Towle

Claire Towle is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has over 30 years of experience combining direct clinical care, supervision, teaching, and management responsibilities. She has been certified in trauma, bereavement and Thanatology. Claire has worked in outpatient medical settings and is experienced in working with children, youth, adults and families. Ms. Towle was the Director of The Gathering Place, a center for loss and life transitions, and was the Associate Director of Bereavement Services for Providence Trinity Care Hospice. She had a private psychotherapy practice specializing in grief and loss. Claire has provided multiple presentations on grief and loss, health and mental health topics. As a lecturer with the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, she taught graduate MSW students. In 2022, Claire co-founded Taking Time: South Bay (Taking Time), a non-profit bereavement center, serving the South Bay of Los Angeles. She is CEO and Clinical Director of the program. Taking Time (takingtime.org) provides one-one bereavement counseling, bereavement support groups and information and referrals. The program is also contracted to provide bereavement services for Alcove Beach Cities, an innovative youth wellness center serving youth ages 12-25.

