

the new normal is

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26th Annual CAFAF Conference
“Foster Care: The New Normal”
April 30- May 1, 2021

ABNORMAL



CAFAF

**CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE OF
FOSTER & ADOPTIVE FAMILIES**

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY and SATURDAY
APRIL 30- MAY 1, 2021

WELCOME
9:00 AM

PLENARY
9:15 AM- 10:45 AM

WORKSHOP A
11:00 AM- 12:30PM

LUNCH PLENARY
12:45PM- 2:15PM

WORKSHOP B
2:30PM- 4:00PM

ADJOURN
4:00 PM

CAFAF STAFF

Margaret Doherty

Executive Director

Diane Orlando

Program Director-Support and Advocacy

Vanessa Williamson

Program Director-Intake, Outreach and Training

Jennifer Bellamy **Torrington Area Liaison**

Sheree Breeden **Bridgeport Area Liaison**

Rochelle Callender **Kid Hero Program Assistant**

Brian Candelora **Middletown Area Liaison**

Debra Candelora **Meriden Area Liaison**

Emily Churchill **Willimantic Area Liaison**

Catherine Davis **Outreach Coordinator**

Jinnel D'Hereaux **Training Program Coordinator**

Schelita Fleming **Norwalk/Stamford Area Liaison**

Melissa Lombardo **Executive Administrative Assistant**

Renee Lavallee **Norwich Area Liaison**

Joseph Montalvo **Milford Area Liaison**

Kyle Ohlund **Manchester Area Liaison**

Lisa Ortiz **Hartford Area Liaison**

Raymond Ortiz **Kid Hero Program Assistant**

Sheyla Ortiz-Caraballo **New Britain Area Liaison**

Dora Poma **Danbury Area Liaison**

Jennifer Rivera **Retention Specialist**

Marian Russo **New Haven Area Liaison**

Wendy Sander **Peer Network Coordinator**

Emilio Vargas **Waterbury Area Liaison**



CAFAF Board

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Mike Burns **Secretary**

Jeffrey Cheney **Treasurer**

Latisha Douglas **Director**

Friday April 30, 2021

Less is More - Minimal Facts for Discoverers

Opening Plenary

**9:15 AM- 10:45
AM**

Child maltreatment and sexual abuse are disturbing, complex, and extremely difficult to investigate. How caregivers and professionals react and respond to a suspected child abuse allegation will have a direct impact on the child's recovery from the traumatic act and on the integrity of the subsequent investigation.

This training is designed to give foster parents, caregivers, school and childcare personnel, along with medical, mental health, school and other therapeutic providers the tools needed to optimally respond when a child discloses or indicates that he or she may be a victim of abuse or maltreatment.

**Kristen M. Clark-Coordinator, Governor's Task Force on Justice For Abused Children
(Crisis Intervention/Trauma)**

The Role of Post Adoption Agreements in Child Protection Matters

Lunch Plenary

12:45PM- 2:15PM

The decision to have an agreement maintaining a connection between a biological parent and a child after an adoption is unique in every case. Among the factors influencing that decision are the relationships between the parties, the age and connection of a child with a biological parent, safety, trauma history, as well as personal beliefs and philosophies regarding parenting. Ultimately the question is whether some form of contact is beneficial to a child and the adoptive parent. In the background of these cases are court proceedings which are not always understood by foster parents. This presentation will first provide an overview of the court procedures from the initial filing of a neglect petition to final judgment of termination of parental rights. The balance of the session will focus on explaining post adoption agreements including their components, legal development, and other considerations when evaluating if a post adoption agreement is an appropriate solution for the child and adoptive parent.

**Attorney Rene Rosado
(Crisis Intervention)**

Saturday May 1, 2021

Opening Plenary

**9:15 AM- 10:45
AM**

SUN Scholars Inc: Alumni Representation in Organizations

SUN Scholars Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization based in Connecticut that is committed to supporting foster and adopted youth throughout their post-secondary educational careers. Uniquely, SUN's staff consists entirely of professionals who hold a lived experience in foster care, with the intention of being representative of the community we are serving. This workshop will discuss the importance of diversity, representation, and relationship building in child welfare. Additionally, SUN will share deliverable ideas and supports that foster parents and child welfare practitioners can take away to utilize in their day to day life within child welfare.

**Christopher Scott-SUN Scholars Executive Director
(Crisis Intervention)**

Lunch Plenary

12:45PM- 2:15PM

Managing Adult/Parent/Grandparent Stress

This workshop explores the science of stress and how adults can view stress in ways that help them manage stressful times and events in ways that don't become toxic and debilitating. Our children need us to be available to them in all ways, so it is imperative that we "put the masks on ourselves first" and provide critical self-care so that we can be available to them. The science of stress teaches us that how we view stress impacts our ability to deal with it. When we can view stress as positive...our bodies energizing us to meet stressful challenges, we get through stressful times without harming our health and well-being. Unfortunately, all too many adults perceive stress as harmful to health and well-being and that's when we struggle. The key element to managing stress is to understand how important relationships are in our lives; reaching out to others when we need help and support as well as reaching out to help others in need is what transforms the negativity of stress into a positive force that allows us to rise to any stressful challenges we may experience and thus make meaning in our lives.

**Patricia A. Ciccone, C.A.G.S., L.P.C. and Jo Ann Freiberg, Ph.D. of School Climate Consultants, LLC
(Crisis Intervention/Trauma)**

Friday April 30, 2021

Workshop A

11:00AM-12:30PM

Sex Ed and Healthy Relationships for Parents: Real Life. Real Talk. ®

RLRT® provides valuable information, ideas, opportunities for dialogue, and tools/skills parents can use to help their children make responsible and sexually healthy decisions. The program highlights the important role that parents play as the primary sexuality educators of their own children and emphasizes that honest, open communication in families has important benefits. Many parents and guardians need assistance to build their comfort and skill level to open and maintain positive communication with their children and they aren't always comfortable providing that information. As the primary sexuality educator of your child, it's important to remember that communication about sexuality and relationships is an ongoing process that can support your child's health. Participants will learn ways to increase open, honest, age-appropriate and balanced talk about sexuality and relationships.

Sarah Gannon, MAAT, Planned Parenthood (Crisis Intervention)

Courage to Speak© - How do you keep your kids safe during COVID: A mother's story of losing her son to addiction.

In a riveting presentation, Ginger Katz tells the story of losing her son, Ian, to substance misuse and how parents, now more than ever, need the tools and skills to keep their children safe from the dangers of drugs. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, substance misuse and overdose rate have increased significantly, especially amongst our teens. Isolation and stress are two key factors that have not only increased due to the pandemic but are also key reasons why youth will turn towards drug use. This program begins with a mother's promise to her son to do everything in her power to prevent another family from using their child to drug addiction. Ginger will help parents navigate these challenges of raising youth during the Opioid Crisis and COVID-19 pandemic.

Ginger Katz, CEO and Founder, The Courage to Speak Foundation, Inc. (Crisis Intervention/Trauma)

What do Children Want? Healthy Homes! When Do They Want It? Now! : Fostering Lead Safe and Healthy Housing

In this session, we will be addressing poor housing conditions that are directly linked to poor health outcomes such as lead poisoning, unintentional injury and potentially asthma. You'll also learn about strategies for protecting children from lead such as testing, reduction, and mitigation. Providers will be able to identify home trigger management, understand Connecticut lead screening requirements, and recognize when and how to recommend a home assessment.

Maria Guzman, Relocation and Education Coordinator, CT Children's Healthy Homes

Alba Cruz, LMSW (Crisis Intervention)

Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning/Gender Non-Conforming and Transgender (LGBQ/GNCT) Youth

This presentation will provide an introduction and overview of some of the definitions & pronouns adults working with youth who identify on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning/Gender Non-conforming, Transgender (LGBQ/GNCT) spectrums may use. Focus will be given to the discussion of the SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression) Data Collection initiative CT participates in, which will include an explanation of the data collected within the state and nationwide. An overview of risk factors bringing LGBQ/GNCT youth into the juvenile system will be outlined along with pathways into foster care and homelessness. Best practices to increase inclusivity, along with CT resources available, will also be discussed.

Nicole Kowal, M.S. Court Planner Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division (Crisis Intervention)

Developing a Positive Racial Identity

Mother and son co-present their individual and family journeys over the course of their lives together, exploring the intersection of race, gender, and family membership. Strategies for growing together through loss, facing both privilege and racism, and having difficult conversations about who we are at our core are woven throughout.

Justice Stevens

Barb Clark, Parent Support & Training Specialist, North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)

(Crisis Intervention)

Becoming Your Child's Best Advocate: Advocating During Challenging Times

Learn how to effectively communicate with your child's school and advocate for your child's appropriate education. Participants will learn tips on preparing for meetings with teachers, clearly communicating questions and goals, and how to foster positive relationships with your child's teachers even during challenging times. Information will also be shared about CPAC as Connecticut's federally-funded Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) and how CPAC can help you navigate the special education system.

Beth Reel, Co-Executive Director, CT Parent Advocacy Center (Crisis Intervention/Trauma)

Friday April 30, 2021
Workshop B
2:30PM– 4:00PM

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Nicole Kowal, M.S. Court Planner Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division (Crisis Intervention)

Coping with Racism and Current Events

This training will teach caregivers, educators, and counselor's techniques that will encourage them to provide safe places for children to talk about feelings, concerns, and racism. Participants will learn ways to support and address racial concerns and discuss current events with youth. The beneficial outcomes will help students improve self-esteem, explore their racial identity, and learn about diversity.

Candycy Scott, MA, LPC Insight of New England, LLC, Director of Counseling Services (Crisis Intervention/Trauma)

The Missing ACE: FASD & In-utero Trauma

Adoptive, foster and kinship families are seeing high rates of children who have been prenatally exposed to alcohol, drugs and high levels of in-utero stress which can have a significant impact on the child's brain development. Traditional parenting strategies generally are ineffective with this population and can lead to turmoil in the family. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are twice as common as Autism, yet this disorder often goes undiagnosed (or is misdiagnosed). It is vital for these families and the professionals who support them to understand the reasons behind the learning and behavioral challenges and to learn some strategies that are more effective with these children.

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Holding Space

Marco will share his personal story of being uprooted from his home early in life and how the power of peer support helped introduce the healing concept of holding space. Navigating mental health as a young adult is far less difficult when those around us embrace and implement this concept early in life. He will elaborate on what this looked like for him and how it can look for others.

Marco Stanley, Join Rise Be, Warmline Operator, Former Foster Care Youth (Trauma)

Infant - Toddler Development & Behavior: It All has Meaning, and it is All About Relationships!!!

This workshop will examine infant toddler development and the impact of early attachment relationships on the social and emotional health and well-being of infants and toddlers. Additionally, this session will explore the potential triggers that could escalate behaviors in very young children; particularly those children who may have experienced early trauma. The session will additionally include a discussion about the impact of challenging behaviors on caregivers, along with useful strategies to promote emotional regulation and positive behavior in young children.

Anne Giordano, MA, IMH-E® & Heidi Maderia, MS, IMH-E® (Crisis Intervention)

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Candyce Scott, MA, LPC Insight of New England, LLC, Director of Counseling Services (Crisis Intervention/Trauma)

Got Support? Parents Need to Lean on & Learn from Each Other

Foster, adoptive and kinship parents can often feel very isolated and struggle with understanding their children's behaviors and how to respond to them. Support groups can help parents find new tools to deal with behaviors, alleviate isolation, bring hope and allow parents to find humor in some of the challenging moments. Parents and professionals are invited to learn effective ways to provide families with information and support through in-person and virtual groups. Come learn some of the basics on how to start up support groups, how to keep them going and how to find and give support on this journey.

**Barb Clark, Parent Support & Training Specialist, North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)
(Crisis Intervention/Trauma)**

¿Qué quieren los niños? ¡Hogares Saludables! ¿Cuándo lo quieren? ¡Ahora!: Fomentando viviendas saludables y seguras para el plomo

En esta sesión, abordaremos el tema de las malas condiciones de vivienda que están directamente relacionadas con resultados de salud deficientes, como envenenamiento por plomo, lesiones no intencionales y potencialmente asma. También aprenderá estrategias para proteger a los niños del plomo, como pruebas, reducción y mitigación. Los proveedores podrán identificar el manejo de los desencadenantes en el hogar, comprender los requisitos de detección de plomo de Connecticut y reconocer cuándo y cómo recomendar una evaluación del hogar.

**Maria Guzman, Relocation and Education Coordinator, CT Children's Healthy Homes
Alba Cruz, LMSW (Crisis Intervention)**

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The Impact of Home & School Transitions, Rules and Family Routines, Rituals & Chores

All children thrive in safe and secure environments where daily and life changing transitions are predictable and managed appropriately. In both homes and schools, especially for children that have experienced a lot of change, hardship and trauma, healing will take place when the settings in which they live, learn and socialize are secure and predictable. Such environments are those that have clear boundaries, rules and expectations. Being able to contribute to both home and school communities helps foster a sense of belonging and personal worth. And even the youngest of children are capable and benefit from having chores. In this workshop participants will learn the elements, practices and strategies that will help them both understand and create settings that have the appropriate amount of structure, routines, expectations, rules and boundaries for children at all levels from pre-school through adolescence.

**Patricia A. Ciccone, C.A.G.S., L.P.C. and Jo Ann Freiberg, Ph.D. of School Climate Consultants, LLC
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