

## **GEORGIA CASA CONFERENCE 2024**

### **WORKSHOP BLOCK I: 10:30-11:45**

#### **When Trauma Meets Brain Science: Changing the Way We See Families**

*Facilitator:* Debra Ross, Trainer, Georgia State University Child Welfare Training Collaborative

*Description:* Explore the impact of complex trauma on children and caregivers, including behavior, development, brain chemistry changes, and long-term effects on neural connections and physiological responses. Gain new ideas and actionable steps to effectively engage with families.

#### **Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth in Foster Care**

*Facilitator:* Meredith McKay, CASA Volunteer, CASA Cherokee

*Description:* Address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth in foster care, such as access to affirming homes and high rates of homelessness. Learn how CASA volunteers can best support LGBTQ+ youth and set them up for success during and after their time in foster care.

#### **Advocating for Children with Incarcerated Parents**

*Facilitators:* Melissa Carter, Executive Director, Barton Law and Policy Center; Jerry Bruce, Director, Office of the Child Advocate

*Description:* Parental incarceration is an adverse childhood experience, putting children at increased risk for a range of negative outcomes, including entering foster care. Georgia is an outlier in removals for parental incarceration, at eighth highest in the U.S. Often, the reasons for the parent's incarceration and reasons for child welfare system involvement are not connected to each other, and a child's entry into foster care may be more related to a need for placement than abuse or neglect. Moreover, research suggests that the strength and quality of the parent-child relationship and family's social support system are important factors in promoting the resilience of children with incarcerated parents. This workshop will present current research, practice and outcome trends, resources, and alternatives to removal. Come to learn about techniques that advocates can use to engage parents and extended family during separation due to incarceration.

#### **Understanding Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care**

*Facilitator:* Ebony Harris, CEO, Youth Empowerment Success Services

*Description:* Receive evidence-informed information on the challenges and needs of young adults transitioning out of foster care. Equip yourself with practical resources and strategies to support youth who are experiencing foster care, ensuring a smoother transition into adulthood and fostering their success and independence.

#### **Appointed to Advocate: Strengthening Your Courtroom Presence Through Making Effective Recommendations**

*Facilitator:* Hon. Carolyn Altman, Judge, Paulding County Juvenile Court

*Description:* Learn to strengthen in-court advocacy and presence by improving written reports and in-court testimony. This workshop includes practical tips on testifying, answering questions from judges and lawyers, introducing new information, making service and placement recommendations, and increasing credibility as a witness and advocate.

#### **"I could never ask for money!" Taking the Fear Out of the Ask (Individual Giving)**

*Facilitator:* Jessica Merriman, Director of Individual Giving, Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta

*Description:* Learn to overcome discomfort in asking for monetary support for a non-profit. Discover ways to connect people to your mission and encourage them to support you financially.

### **Reunification: The Journey There and Beyond**

*Facilitator:* Colleen Puckett, CEO and Parent Mentor, Families' Anchor, LLC

*Description:* Hear firsthand from parents who have courageously navigated the child welfare system to achieve reunification with their children. Gain valuable insights into the challenges they faced, the supports they found crucial throughout their journey, and the ongoing needs post-reunification. This workshop provides a unique opportunity to learn from those who have lived through the process, offering invaluable perspectives for advocates.

## **WORKSHOP BLOCK II: 2:00-3:15**

### **Creating an Inclusive LGBTQIA+ Culture**

*Facilitator:* Sandy Corbin, Chief Program Officer, Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC)

*Description:* Focus on creating an inclusive placement/home environment for LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing foster care. Understand SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression) and navigate the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ youth.

### **Ask the Judges**

*Panelists:* Hon. Carolyn Altman, Paulding County Juvenile Court; Hon. Joshua Earwood, Bartow County Juvenile Court; Hon. Wayne Grannis, Cobb County Juvenile Court; Hon. Renata Turner, Fulton County Juvenile Court

*Moderator:* Hon. R. Michael Key, Troup County Juvenile Court

*Description:* Engage in dialogue with a panel of judges on topics of law, process, procedure, and child welfare philosophy. Ask questions about decision-making, volunteer advocacy, CASA reports and recommendations, law interpretation, and trending issues in child welfare. Please note that specific cases will not be discussed.

### **Advocacy Opportunities for Impact**

*Facilitator:* Angela Tyner, Advocacy Director, Georgia CASA

*Description:* No matter the part of the state or the court in which you advocate, there are some key opportunities for CASA volunteers to positively influence the outcomes of a case. This workshop explores common themes identified for strengthening advocacy.

### **Educational Advocacy for Children in Foster Care Facing Exclusionary Discipline**

*Facilitator:* Tanesse Brown, Program Manager, Georgia Appleseed

*Description:* Explore the intersection of child welfare, public school, and juvenile justice systems. Learn about school disciplinary hearings, long-term removal consequences, and early advocacy. Discuss how CASA volunteers can advocate among DFCS and the child's Guardian ad Litem (GAL).

### **Leveraging Your Engagement and Assessment Skills**

*Facilitators:* Lori A. Davis and Jerry Crider, Training and Professional Development Specialists, DHS-DFCS

*Description:* Led by seasoned professionals, this highly interactive workshop aims to enhance the engagement and assessment skills necessary to advocate effectively for improved outcomes for children and families. Learn to strike a balance between gathering critical information and building trusting relationships. Don't miss this opportunity to sharpen your skills for informed and impactful advocacy.

### **The Power of One!**

*Facilitator:* Jessica L. Kole, Advocacy Coordinator, Northeast Georgia CASA

*Description:* You have the power to create positive outcomes in everyday life and in the cases you work. Hear from a CASA Advocacy Coordinator as she explores the power of positive thinking and how you can harness the energy of your own thoughts to achieve these outcomes. In the emotionally demanding field of child welfare, where challenges can often lead to negative thinking, this workshop will inspire you to cultivate positivity.

### **A Soft Place to Land: Compassionate Caregiving for Survivors of CSEC**

*Facilitators:* Naeshia McDowell, CSEC Response Team Director, Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia; Krystina Bush, Statewide CSEC Advocate, Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia

*Description:* Regardless of which role you play in the life of a CSEC survivor, you can provide compassionate, trauma informed care to that young person. Whether you have 12 minutes with the youth or 12 months, this workshop will equip you with research backed tools and best practices to enhance your caregiving capacity. By the end of this workshop, you will understand that if trauma happens within relationships, so can healing. You can be one of many safe, supportive adults CSEC survivors encounter along their healing journey.

## **WORKSHOP BLOCK III: 3:35-4:50**

### **Authentic Youth Engagement in Driving Awareness, Education, and Change**

*Facilitators:* Authentic Youth Engagement Collaborative

*Description:* The Authentic Youth Engagement Collective is a groundbreaking initiative advancing youth-driven community awareness and education. Hear directly from the youth leaders of this Collective as they share their lived experiences and innovative initiatives shaping positive change across Georgia. This workshop is your opportunity as a community champion to engage closely with these change agents, deepen partnerships, and contribute to transformative initiatives in foster care and beyond.

### **Appointed to Advocate: Strengthening Your Courtroom Presence in an Adversarial System**

*Facilitators:* Jerry Bruce, Director, Office of the Child Advocate; Bri Gee, Executive Director, Piedmont CASA

*Description:* Learn the art and practice of in-court advocacy to strengthen your courtroom presence. It's not enough to have a written report prepared before the hearing: the role of the GAL is to advocate before the court for the recommendations made in the report while also being flexible enough to incorporate what happened in the hearing. This workshop will provide an introduction to the rationale and practice of the adversary system, talk about why this system is important, and how to navigate what may seem to be a strange and hostile environment. Attendees will leave with a better understanding of what is needed effectively and zealously to advocate in the courtroom setting, including how to anticipate and address objections to the recommendations, how to testify when called to the witness stand, and how to establish and maintain that most important of advocacy tools: credibility.

### **Exploring Georgia Communicare**

*Facilitator:* Ryan Hunter, Senior Project Manager, Department of Human Services' Division of Family & Child Services; Kalpana Thirumurthy, Deputy Director, Child Welfare Modernization, Department of Human Services' Division of Family & Child Services

*Description:* Georgia Communicare, launched statewide in February 2024, is a technology project by Georgia Department of Human Services' Division of Family & Children Services. It consists of interconnected web portals tailored to support and enhance child welfare programs. Integrated with Georgia SHINES, the state's child welfare information system, Georgia Communicare ensures efficient data management and communication among CASAs, foster parents, parents, and child welfare staff. Key features include document access, chat, appointment scheduling, and case management. This workshop offers an overview of its benefits for CASA staff and volunteers, along with guidance on accessing the system, and a live demonstration and Q&A.

### **Attachment Issues in Abuse and Neglect Cases**

*Facilitator:* Dr. Priscilla Faulkner, Clinical Director, Southeastern Psychological Associates

*Description:* In an insightful exploration into attachment issues within the context of abuse and neglect cases, discover strategies to promote healthy attachments between parents and children and gain a better understanding of the impact it has on child development.

### **Engaging and Working with Fathers to Support Positive Child and Family Outcomes**

*Facilitator:* Dr. Latrice Rollins, Assistant Professor, Morehouse School of Medicine / Fathers Matter ATL

*Description:* During this interactive workshop, we will share the research demonstrating how fathers play an essential role in the lives of their children and in strengthening families. We will also share father-friendly principles and promising practices that can be adopted or implemented. Participants will be provided an opportunity to work together on an action plan to apply their learning to their own individual practice, organization, and policies. Overall, this workshop will help professionals gain knowledge to facilitate positive father engagement and improve child and family outcomes.

### **Effective Compliance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)**

*Facilitator:* Hon. Joshua Earwood, Judge, Bartow County Juvenile Court

*Description:* Understand the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)'s role in ensuring child safety and successful placement. Learn from a juvenile court judge and DFCS ICPC Director about the ICPC process and how to navigate it efficiently and effectively.

### **Reflections in the Sunset**

*Facilitator:* Hon. R. Michael Key, Judge, Troup County Juvenile Court

*Description:* After a decade advocating for children in dependency cases and over 35 years presiding over such cases as the judge of Troup County's Juvenile Court, Judge R. Michael Key reflects on his distinguished career as he prepares to retire from the full-time bench. Join us for a poignant discussion where Judge Key shares insights gained, lessons learned, and his vision for the future of child welfare. Topics will encompass the paramount importance of preserving familial bonds whenever feasible, infusing a sense of urgency into child welfare efforts, and ensuring intentionality at every pivotal decision juncture leading to permanency, and fostering a culture that prioritizes healing while maintaining accountability across individuals and systems alike.