

FOSTER KINSHIP CARE ED-SCC

The Power of Gratitude

CONFERENCE 2026

MARCH 17-20, 2026

SUNRISE EVENT CENTER
620 ORANGE DRIVE
VACAVILLE, CA 95687



Hotel

SCAN TO REGISTER
NOW!



Register

<http://www.FosterLuv.com>

REGISTRATION FEES:

SOLANO/NAPA RESIDENTS CONFERENCE FEE - \$45 PER DAY
SOLANO/NAPA RESIDENTS CONFERENCE FEE ALL 4 DAYS - \$110
OUT-OF-COUNTY PARTICIPANTS - \$75 PER DAY
OUT-OF-COUNTY PARTICIPANTS ALL 4 DAYS - \$150

HOTEL INFORMATION: HYATT PLACE DISCOUNT CODE: G-KIN2

WEBSITE: WWW.HYATT.COM/EVENTS/EN-US/GROUP-BOOKING/OAKZV/G-KIN2

TELEPHONE: 1-800-233-1234

◆ MENTION "FOSTER LUV DOTTIE NICHOLSON BLOCK" ◆

RATE: \$119 PER NIGHT- KING BED (PLUS SOFA BED)

\$129 PER NIGHT- SPECIALTY KING BED (PLUS SOFA BED)

CONFERENCE - DAY 1

TUESDAY - MAR. 17, 2026

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM: **Registration**

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM: **Opening Session**

Welcome Solano & Napa County - Neely McElroy & Veronica Piper-Jefferson

10:30 AM - 10:40 AM: **Morning Break**

10:40 AM - 12:40 PM: **Session A Workshops**

A-1: No Such Thing as a Bad Kid (Part 1) - Charlie Appelstein

A-2: Regulation is Contagious - Michael Sanders

A-3: Parenting Strategies for Youth with ADHD & Complex Trauma - Alma Woodard, M.S.

Note: Spanish Course see J-1

A-4: Strengthening Bonds: 10 Powerful Ways to Foster Attachment with Children from Hard Places - Helene Timpone

12:40 PM - 12:50 PM: **Break**

12:50 PM - 2:20 PM: **Luncheon Keynote**

Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others - Helene Timpone

2:20 PM - 2:30 PM: **Afternoon Break**

2:30 PM - 4:30 PM: **Session B Workshops**

B-1: No Such Thing as a Bad Kid (Part 2) - Charlie Appelstein

B-2: Connection Before Correction - Michael Sanders

B-3: The First Five Years: Guiding Growth and Healing in Foster Care - Alma Woodard, M.S.

Note: Spanish Course see K-1

B-4: Understanding Emotional Expression: How Suppressed Moments Become Lasting Trauma - Helene Timpone

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM: **Dinner on Your Own**

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM: **Session C Workshops**

C-1: Use the Force Luke - Charlie Appelstein

C-2: New Foster Care Rate Structure Is On Its Way - Jenn Rexroad

C-3: Resource Parent Orientation - Solano RFA & FKCE

C-4: They May Not Like What You Say - But They Defiantly Watch What You Do - Greg Begin



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CONFERENCE - DAY 2

WEDNESDAY - MAR. 18, 2026

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM: **Registration**

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM: **Resource Sharing**

10:30 AM - 10:40 AM: **Morning Break**

10:40 AM - 12:40 PM: **Session D Workshops**

D-1: Use the Force Luke - Charlie Appelstein

D-2: The Relationship Remix - Michael Sanders

D-3: Caring for Children from Hard Places: Trauma Informed Parenting Across ALL Ages - Nola Brantley

D-4: Social Worker Priorities vs. Resource Parent Priorities - Iyeshia Miller & Tyffany Wanberg

12:40 PM - 12:50 PM: **Break**

12:50 PM - 2:20 PM: **Luncheon Keynote**

Caring for Them Starts with Caring for You - Nola Brantley

2:20 PM - 2:30 PM: **Afternoon Break**

2:30 PM - 4:30 PM: **Session E Workshops**

E-1: No Such Thing as a Bad Kid (Part 1) - Charlie Appelstein

E-2: Parenting the Hormonally Gifted - Michael Sanders

E-3: Preparing for Higher Education - Sacramento State Guardian Scholar Program

E-4: When Behavior is Communication: Responding to Big Emotions - Nola Brantley

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM: **Dinner on Your Own**

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM: **Session F Workshops**

F-1: No Such Thing as a Bad Kid (Part 2) - Charlie Appelstein

F-2: The Soundtrack of Care - Michael Sanders

F-3: Kinship Support & Information Group - FKCE

◆ 4:45 PM - 8:30 PM ◆ F-4: CPR/First Aid - Pamela Graham



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CONFERENCE - DAY 3

THURSDAY - MAR. 19, 2026

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM: **Registration**

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM: **Resource Sharing**

10:30 AM - 10:40 AM: **Morning Break**

10:40 AM - 12:40 PM: **Session G Workshops**

G-1: Foster Faith: Pastor Group - Scott Tuttle

G-2: Before I Let Go - Michael Sanders

G-3: The Power of Healthy Boundaries - Dr. John Harris

G-4: From "I Have To" to "I Get To" - Jen Jones

12:40 PM - 12:50 PM: **Break**

12:50 PM - 2:20 PM: **Luncheon Keynote**

Faith, Hope & Healing - Dr. John Harris

2:20 PM - 2:30 PM: **Afternoon Break**

2:30 PM - 4:30 PM: **Session H Workshops**

H-1: Human Trafficking Awareness - Detective Michael Hernandez, Vacaville PD

H-2: Remix the Moment - Michael Sanders

H-3: From Defensiveness to Dialogue - Dr. John Harris

H-4: Dependency A-Z - Kim Alexander-Yarbor

4:30 PM - 6:00 PM: **Evening Break**

6:00 PM - 6:30 PM: **Dinner**

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM: **Session I Family Night Workshops**

I-1: Wellness & Self Care - Solano County RFA & FKCE

I-2: Loving the Skin I'm In: Hair, Skin, Beauty and Self-Esteem for Black Children in Foster Care (Family Night) - Essence Webb

I-3: Press Pause, Then Play - Michael Sanders

I-4: The Power of Gratitude Through Yoga & Meditation (Child Style) - Audrey Reyes & Mayra Montano



SCAN TO REGISTER
NOW!



CONFERENCE - DAY 4

FRIDAY - MAR. 20, 2026

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM: **Registration**

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM: **Resource Sharing**

10:30 AM - 10:40 AM: **Morning Break**

10:40 AM - 12:40 PM: **Session J Workshops**

J-1(Spanish): Estrategias de Crianza para Jóvenes con TDAH y Trauma Complejo -
Samuel Cruz, M.S. & Claudia Seemster

Note: English Course see A-3

J-2: Connection Before Correction - Michael Sanders

J-3: Sustaining Yourself in Foster and Kinship Care: Preventing Burnout & Compassion Fatigue -
Nola Brantley

J-4: RFA+ The Role of the Resource Parent - FKCE Team

12:40 PM - 12:50 PM: **Break**

12:50 PM - 2:20 PM: **Luncheon Keynote**

Community Gratitude

2:20 PM - 2:30 PM: **Afternoon Break**

2:30 PM - 4:30 PM: **Session K Workshops**

K-1(Spanish): Los Primeros Cinco Años: Guiando el Crecimiento y la Sanación en el Cuidado de
Crianza - Samuel Cruz, M.S. & Claudia Seemster

Note: English Course see B-3

K-2: Regulation is Contagious - Michael Sanders

K-3: Building Trust & Connection with Youth in Care: From Survival to Relationship -
Nola Brantley

K-4: Communication Through Storytelling - Greg Begin

4:30 PM - 4:45 PM: **Evening Break**

4:45 PM - 6:15 PM: **Session L Workshops**

L-1: Loving the Skin Their In: Hair, Skin, Beauty and Fostering Self-Esteem of Black Children in
Foster Care (Adults Only) - Essence Webb

L-2: The Power of Gratitude Through Yoga and Meditation - Audrey Reyes & Mayra Montano

L-3: Wellness & Selfcare: Relax and Enjoy - Interactive and Fun!

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM: **Closing Banquet**

The Gratitude Remix, This Work Matters and so DO YOU! - Michael Sanders

THE POWER OF GRATITUDE

Meet The Presenters

Solano Conference 2026 - Trainer Bios & Training Summaries

Neely McElroy & Veronica Piper-Jefferson

Opening Session - Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 9:30 am

Workshop Title: Welcome to "The Power of Gratitude" FKCE Conference 2026

Charlie Appelstein

Charlie is a nationally prominent youth care specialist whose primary focus is on training parents and professionals to use positive, strength-based theories and techniques with at-risk kids. He has authored three youth care books that are widely used within the field, including "No Such Thing as a Bad Kid: Understanding and Responding to Kids with Emotional & Behavioral Challenges Using a Positive, Strength-Based Approach".



No Such Thing as a Bad Kid: Parts 1 & 2

Sessions: Part 1 - A-1 & E-1

Part 2 - B-1 & F-1

Strength-based practice is an emerging approach to guiding kids and in particular - those with emotional and behavioral challenges - that is exceptionally positive and inspiring. This two-part engaging workshop will highlight many of the key principles and techniques of this transforming way of guiding kids at -risk.

Use the Force Luke

Sessions: C-1 & D-1

Raising kids with emotional and behavioral challenges can elicit difficult feelings that can compromise a caregiver's well-being and actions. This uplifting, motivational presentation provides insights and strategies that help caregivers to better respond instead of reacting to difficult behaviors and feel good about what they're doing. Focal points include how to manage when personalizing difficult events, the pivotal role of support and how to function appropriately when it's lacking, and a new definition for success in working with at-risk kids.



Michael Sanders



Michael Sanders is the Managing Partner of the 220 Experience, a youth engagement solutions-based company; who provides exclusive experiential learning environments for youth, families, and professional audiences through podcasts, keynote presentations, workshops, coaching, and consulting experiences.

Michael is an optimist who believes that every teen has potential. He has been referred to as an Edutainer... successfully blending education and entertainment for maximum learning and fun. He has spent 30 years working with teens and their families and brings his enthusiasm for these groups in a humorous and exciting presentation.

As a national speaker, Michael travels extensively motivating teens, inspiring families, and educating professional to be and do their best. Michael's mission is simple, "help every adult become a FAN of youth, and every youth become a FAN of themselves. As a former juvenile probation officer, child welfare supervisor and adolescent therapist, Michael's career has focused on teen issues. He completed his formal education in Illinois, VA from Bradley University and MSW from the University of Illinois. While Michael is considered a national expert on youth issues and participates on several panels and workgroups focusing on youth concerns, he simply considers himself a "FAN" of teenagers!

Regulation is Contagious

Sessions: A-2 & K-2

An eye-opening look at how adult calm (or chaos) sets the tone, with practical tools to help caregivers and staff model regulation and reduce stress for everyone.

Connection Before Correction

Sessions: B-2 & J-2

This session flips the script on discipline, showing how connection and regulation can reduce power struggles and lead to better outcomes with teens.

The Relationship Remix

Sessions: D-2

A fresh take on challenging relationships that helps caregivers and staff rethink how small shifts in approach can lead to stronger connection, trust, and fewer power struggles.

Parenting the Hormonally Gifted

Sessions: E-2

A re-talk session for caregivers navigating teens, hormones, and everything in between - offering tools to support healthy conversations about sex, relationships and media without awkwardness.

The Soundtrack of Care

Sessions: F-2

An energetic session that taps into the power of music to build connection, spark conversation, and help caregivers tune in to what really matters to youth.

Before I Let Go

Sessions: G-2

Inspired by the classic song, this session explores how to help youth transition to adulthood by strengthening relationships, building social capital, and staying connected when it matters most.

Remix the Moment

Sessions: H-2

A hands-on session focused on those "right here, right now" moments, offering simple ways to pause, resent, and change the direction of tough interactions.

Press Pause, The Play

Sessions: I-3

A youth workshop.

Alma M. Woodard, M.S.

Alma M Woodard, MS is dedicated and resourceful in the field of social work for 40 years – 32 years in foster care and 8 years in mental health. In the past 32 years, she has worked in various positions for mainly two non-profit agencies as Adoption Coordinator, home approver/certifier, trainer, site manager, recruiter, district administrator, case manager, and social worker. Early career worked 8 years in mental health as a psychiatric technician and director of a Day Treatment Program. Accustomed to handling sensitive and confidential information. Proactive in meeting the goals of the agency by using necessary tools and skills to provide services to clients and staff. Possess MS in Guidance and Counseling, BS in Sociology with Minor in Social Work. Alma graduated from Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, AL, and has a special gift in facilitating training and working with families and children.

Parenting Strategies for Youth with ADHD and Complex Trauma

Session: A-3 (Spanish Session: J-1)

In this training, resource parents are introduced to Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a neurodevelopmental condition that can show up as inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. While ADHD can affect people of all ages, it's especially important to understand in the context of foster care, where trauma, neglect, and instability can increase the likelihood of a diagnosis - or even lead to misdiagnosis, as trauma-related behaviors often look similar. The outdated term "ADD" is now recognized as ADHD, Predominantly Inattentive Type. This training helps parents recognize the signs of ADHD and provides practical, compassionate strategies for supporting children with these challenges. With a deeper understanding and the right tools, resource parents can create stability and help children thrive.

The First Five Years: Guiding Growth and Healing in Foster Care

Session: B-3 (Spanish Session: K1)

The first five years of life lay the foundation for a child's future growth and well-being. For children in foster care, these years are especially important in supporting healing after early trauma. This training will help foster parents understand age-appropriate developmental milestones, practice trauma-informed parenting strategies, and learn how to create safe and nurturing environments for children ages 0–5. Participants will walk away with practical tools to build secure connections, support emotional and physical development, and foster resilience in the little ones they care for.



Jenn Rexroad

Jenn Rexroad's training was in teaching and technology. She has over 29 years of K-12 & adult classroom teaching experience. She has experience in educational programming, leadership, training, curriculum, and staff development. She has developed, implemented, and managed educational technology programs; and has a proven ability to envision, plan and execute innovative and complex programs and activities. Jennifer has experience in local and statewide advocacy on youth and child welfare issues; and was a founder of California Alliance of Caregivers in 2016. Jenn has been the Executive Director of California Alliance of Caregivers since 2016 and has worked to grow and develop the organization and its many programs. She has been a Yolo County First 5 Commissioner since October 2013. The Rexroad family was a foster family for 8 years.

New Foster Care Rate Structure Is On Its Way

Session: C-2

Foster, kinship, guardian, and adoptive families are invited to a virtual meeting to ask questions about Foster Care Rates, the Level of Care Assessment, Intensive Services Foster Care, Due Process, and more. Child welfare policy expert, Jennifer Rexroad, will answer questions about the Level of Care Protocol Assessment, how foster care rates are determined, and give technical assistance on issues that caregivers have.

Helene Timpone, LCSW

Helene Timpone LCSW, is an internationally recognized therapist, trainer, coach, and consultant, especially noted for her work with Adopted children displaying the most severe behaviors.

Specializing in the areas of attachment, grief, and trauma, Helene's expertise is in empowering parents with information and techniques focused on understanding and identifying the trauma that lies beneath the child's severe behaviors, thus creating long-term healing and enhancing close, healthy relationships.



Strengthening Bonds: 10 Powerful Ways to Foster Attachment with Children from Hard Places

Session: A-4

This training explores 10 practical, trauma-informed strategies to nurture trust, promote connection, and support healthy attachment — even when children seem unreachable. We'll focus on real-life tools that go beyond traditional parenting methods and speak to the heart of what these children truly need.

Whether you're a parent, caregiver, educator, or mental health professional, this session will offer insights that help you connect in meaningful, healing ways. Join us for this powerful conversation — because relationships are the foundation of healing.

Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others

Luncheon Keynote - Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 12:50 PM

Understanding Emotional Expression: How Suppressed Moments Become Lasting Trauma

Session: B-4

Emotions are meant to move - but what happens when they don't? In this powerful session, we'll explore the three core pathways of emotional expression and what occurs when those pathways are blocked. You'll gain insights into how seemingly brief moments can evolve into long-term trauma when they remain unexpressed, unprocessed, or misunderstood - especially in children and individuals with a history of adversity. This training is ideal for parents, caregivers, educators, and professionals who want to better understand the emotional world of those they support — and learn how to help them move from survival to healing.

Solano RFA & FKCE

Resource Parent Orientation

Session: C-3

Do you ever get asked things like: How do I become a Resource Parent? What if I want to Adopt? What is the process? Where do I start? How long does it take? Maybe you have some of these questions too. Bring a friend, prizes will be given. Invite your friends, family and anyone interested in being a resource parent to learn the answers to these questions and more. This is a relaxed, no pressure workshop and an introduction to the Resource Family Approval Process.

Tyffany Wanberg

Tyffany Wanberg has an MA in Psychology with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy. She has more than 25 years of social service experience in Solano County, with the last 21 years serving children and families involved in the Child Welfare System. From Child Support to Child Welfare to Housing, she has worked with families and children in our community in a variety of capacities. Tyffany and her husband Peter are current resource parents and are the adoptive parents of three amazing boys. In her “spare time” she is an active trainer for Solano College FKCE Program, a Triple P parent coach with Main Street Youth & Family Services and President of the Solano County Resource Family Association. Tyffany and Peter firmly believe that the greatest success in life comes from helping children heal and thrive!

Iyeisha Miller

Iyeisha Miller is a current social work supervisor with Solano County Child Welfare Services with over 24 years of experience working with children in a variety of areas (child care, teaching, coaching, counselor, etc.). Iyeisha has a BA in Sociology and a Masters in Social Work with an emphasis in child welfare. Iyeisha has more than 16 years of experience working within social services, 10 of which have been in child welfare. She has also worked 8 years with at risk youth who were involved with probation. Iyeisha is a trainer for the Solano Community College Foster Kinship Care Education Program for the last 7 years.

When not serving the families of Solano County she works with her church doing various community events (feeding the homeless, clothes giveaways, Day of Hope). Iyeisha has served as the chairperson for the community outreach department of her church for the past 9 years.

Social Worker Priorities vs. Resource Parent Priorities

Session: D-4

Why don't social workers return my calls? Why do caregivers call so much? Does this sound familiar? The focus of this workshop is to facilitate conversation between caregivers & social workers about how our priorities may differ, how to balance conflicting priorities while supporting relationships, and how to improve communication. For all of us the primary focus is the child and we all need each other to do our best on behalf of the children in our care. Come share your thoughts & feedback.



Sac State Guardian Scholar Program

Preparing for Higher Education

Session: E-3

Encouraging youth to reach their full potential can be exhausting, yet very rewarding. Watching our youth succeed is such an amazing part of caregiving. This discussion will include: How do we encourage youth to dream up a future? How can we support that dream? What resources are available? How are they accessed? And more.

FKCE - Training Team

Kinship Support & Information Group

Session: F-3

A safe space for Relative (Kin) and those who have kin-like relationships with the kids they're caring for (Non-related Extended Family Members-NRFEM). This workshop is an interactive discussion about the unique issues Kin Caregivers have when raising children through the Child Welfare System. Informal relatives (non Child Welfare) invited as well. This workgroup will also brainstorm ways Solano County can help build a Kin-First culture throughout the entire Child Welfare System.

Solano RFA & FKCE

Family Night - Wellness & Self Care (for all ages)

Session: I-1

Welcome to Family Night! We are excited to offer a variety of information and activities for the whole family. Yes, for teens too. Join us for dinner at 6pm and then join one of our workshops that are designed to promote Wellness & Self-Care for all members of the family. Dress casually or dress up, but whatever you do make sure you're comfortable and (ready to learn as a family. Adults must attend workshops with the youth; there is no child- care provided. These are family centered classes and designed for all of you to enjoy!

FKCE Team

RFA+ The Role of the Resource Parent

Session: J-4

This workshop will help define the role of the resource parent. Rules, Regulations, supervision and helpful "need to knows".

Greg Begin

Greg Begin was a social worker for Sonoma County Human Services for 44 years. He worked in all areas of the department including running the independent Living Skills Program for the department and the Santa Rosa Junior College for over 20 years. Greg is currently retired and volunteering as a CASA. Greg is also a professional Storyteller and musician.



They May Not Like What You Say - But They Defiantly Watch What You Do

Session: C-4

They may not listen to what you say, but they will definitely watch what you do. We will talk about the power of teaching by example with your youth

Communication Through Storytelling

Session: K-4

We will look at how and why using storytelling with foster youth can be a powerful tool. We will also spend a lounged time learning how to tell a good story and how to choose stories to teach life Lessons

Nola Brantley

Nola Brantley is a nationally recognized speaker, trainer, and advocate with more than two decades of experience supporting children, families, and the caregivers who serve them. Her work focuses on trauma-informed care, resilience, and sustainable caregiving for those working with youth impacted by complex trauma. Nola began her career in nonprofit leadership as a Program Director overseeing parenting and youth enrichment services, where she expanded a single program into multiple initiatives serving parents, youth, and girls at risk. Throughout her career, she has partnered with child welfare, behavioral health, and community systems to promote compassionate, trauma-



responsive practices that support both children and the adults who care for them. In 2014, Nola founded Nola Brantley Speaks, a consulting and training firm that has reached more than half a million professionals nationwide. Through keynote presentations, workshops, and curriculum development, she equips caregivers, foster parents, and helping professionals with practical tools to recognize burnout, establish healthy boundaries, and build rhythms of care that are sustainable over time. Her work also addresses the impact of secondary trauma and the importance of community and support in long-term caregiving. As a survivor of child sex trafficking, Nola brings a powerful blend of professional expertise and lived experience. Her voice resonates deeply with foster care and resource parents, offering encouragement, insight, and permission to care for themselves as a vital part of caring well for the children entrusted to them.

Caring for Children from Hard Places: Trauma Informed Parenting Across ALL Ages

Session: D-3

This workshop provides caregivers with a clear understanding of how trauma impacts children's behavior, development, and relationships from early childhood through adolescence. Participants will learn how trauma shows up differently at various ages and how to respond with connection-based strategies rather than punishment. Gratitude is introduced as a reflective tool that helps caregivers notice growth, resilience, and small moments of connection, even on difficult days.

Caring for Them Starts with Caring for You Luncheon Keynote - Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at 12:50 PM

Session: E-4 **When Behavior is Communication: Responding to Big Emotions**

Children in foster and kinship care often communicate their needs through behavior rather than words. This workshop helps caregivers understand the underlying needs behind challenging behaviors and respond in ways that reduce escalation and build trust. Participants will practice strategies for staying regulated themselves and learn how gratitude can serve as a grounding practice to reset after difficult moments.

Sustaining Yourself in Foster and Kinship Care: Preventing Burnout & Compassion Fatigue

Session: J-3

Foster and kinship caregiving requires emotional endurance, often with limited control and high uncertainty. This workshop helps caregivers recognize signs of burnout and compassion fatigue while offering realistic strategies for sustainability. Gratitude is explored as one of several protective practices that support meaning, perspective, and emotional replenishment without dismissing real hardship.

Building Trust & Connection with Youth in Care: From Survival to Relationship

Session: K-3

This workshop focuses on the foundational role of trust and connection in foster and kinship care. Participants will explore why children in care may resist closeness and how caregivers can create relational safety over time. Gratitude is integrated as a relational practice that helps caregivers notice moments of trust, effort, and progress, especially when connection feels slow or inconsistent.

Pamela Graham

CPR/First Aid

Session: F-4 ♦ 4:45 pm - 8:30 PM ♦

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Scott Tuttle

Scott Tuttle serves churches and families through foster care ministry. Alongside his wife Heather, Scott leads Foster Hope, a ministry born from both personal loss and a deep conviction shaped by years of local church leadership and hands-on work with vulnerable children. Scott pastored for many years in Santa Cruz and Vacaville, CA. Since 2022, their family has fostered eleven children, adopted 3, and continue to provide an open home to children who need a safe place to thrive. Today, Scott partners with churches to engage in foster care ministry and works to support local foster families in his community.

Foster Faith: Pastor Group

Session: G-1

Faith Hope & Healing is a big part of Foster Care. Let's discover together the role of the Church. Discussing the importance of creating and sustaining the Faith Village.

Dr. John Harris

He currently serves executive teams and non-profits full-time as a consultant, leadership coach, and corporate trainer. Specializing in health and human services and school district leadership, he's known for his transformational workshops that build positive work environments through emotional intelligence and transformational leadership.



The Power of Healthy Boundaries

Session: G-3

Healthy boundaries are essential for maintaining balance, reducing stress, and fostering strong relationships. This workshop will help participants recognize where boundaries are lacking and provide practical strategies for setting and enforcing them with confidence. Attendees will learn strategies for communicating limits with clarity and confidence and explore how boundaries support mental and emotional well-being. Participants will leave with practical steps to create boundaries that support both personal growth and respectful relationships.

Faith, Hope & Healing

Luncheon Keynote - Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 12:50 PM

From Defensiveness to Dialogue

Session: H-3

This workshop helps social workers recognize how defensiveness shows up in themselves and others - and how it quietly shuts down connection, learning and collaboration. Participants learn practical strategies to lower tension in difficult conversations, especially when emotions, power dynamics, or high stakes are involved. Using real-world examples, the session equips attendees with language and tools that turn reactive exchanges into productive dialogue while preserving dignity, safety and trust.

Vice Detective Michael Hernandez

Detective Hernandez is a law enforcement professional with 18 years of experience, including four years with the Vacaville Police Department. Currently assigned as a Vice Detective, Detective Hernandez specializes in investigations related to human trafficking and exploitation. Detective Hernandez has completed extensive training focused on human trafficking identification, investigation, and victim-centered response, and works closely with partner agencies to protect vulnerable populations

Human Trafficking Awareness

Session: H-1

This practical, skills-based workshop is designed to help foster parents and caregivers recognize and respond to potential human trafficking involving foster youth. Participants will learn the fundamentals of human trafficking and understand why children in the foster care system are at increased risk. The training will focus on real-world grooming and recruitment tactics used by traffickers, common red flags, and behavioral indicators seen in exploited youth. Emphasis will be placed on what foster parents can realistically observe in daily interactions, how to respond appropriately, and when and where to seek help to protect youth in their care.



Kim Alexander-Yarbor

Kim grew up near Chicago, IL but has spent the last 40 years as a Californian. She graduated from Mills College in Oakland, CA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Economics and a minor in Hispanic Studies. She studied law in a non-traditional way, working as an apprentice and studying through the State Bar of California's Law Office Study Program. She earned her license to practice law in 1998. After a short time in private practice, she made the Office of the Solano County Counsel her home, where she represented many county departments. She spent the last 13 years of her County career representing Child Welfare Services in Juvenile Dependency cases. She has conducted workshops on countless topics in the area of Juvenile Dependency, including annual legal updates, permanency, dependency court processes, courtroom etiquette, CWA and witness preparation. After 23 years, Kim retired from the County in 2023 in order to support her two children. When she isn't taxiing teenagers, she does consulting work and conducts workshops for several local non-profit organizations.

Dependency A-Z

Session: H-4

Have you ever wondered about what goes on in dependency court? What are your foster child's rights? What are your rights? Why does the process take so long? What can you expect in the courtroom? In this course you will learn about the dependency court process from start to finish, from the initial filing to the final hearing. We will discuss your rights and responsibilities, as well as those of the children in your care, the parents, attorneys, social workers and courtroom staff. We will talk about each type of hearing throughout the court process, including the reason for the hearing, burdens of proof, timelines and appeals. At the end of the course you will have a thorough understanding of the Dependency Court process and feel calm and confident when faced with court-related issues.

Claudia Seemster



Claudia Seemster has worked in the foster care field for 12 years in a variety of positions. Working in the industry has opened her eyes to the idea and the importance of adoption through foster care and has adopted 3 children together with her husband. As a Resource / Adoptive Parent, she understands the importance of educating others in the community and providing them with the resources they need to become successful parents. She currently joins a nonprofit agency (Alternative Family Services) in providing various parenting-related topics in English and in Spanish. Through her work she fully embraces the agency's mission statement: to support vulnerable children and families in need of stability, safety, and well-being in communities.

Spanish Biografía

Claudia Seemster ha trabajado en el campo del cuidado de crianza durante 12 años en una variedad de situaciones. Trabajando en la industria le ha abierto los ojos a la idea y la importancia de la adopción a través del cuidado de crianza y ha adoptado 3 niños junto con su esposo. Como madre de crianza y adoptiva, entiende la importancia de educar a otros en la comunidad y proporcionarles los recursos que necesitan para convertirse en padres exitosos. Actualmente se une a una agencia sin fines de lucro (Alternative Family Services) para proporcionar varios temas relacionados con la crianza de los hijos en inglés y en español. A través de su trabajo, ella adopta plenamente la declaración de la misión de la agencia: apoyar a los niños y familias vulnerables que necesitan estabilidad, seguridad y bienestar en las comunidades.

Samuel Cruz, M.S.



Samuel Cruz has worked in the foster care field for 9 years in a variety of positions. Samuel completed his higher education at the University of Berkeley and Sacramento with a master's degree in Sociology with specialization in family structures and education. Samuel has dedicated many years to family wellness, non-profits, community work, and school mentoring. Since he joined Alternative Family Services (AFS), Samuel has worked in the areas of social worker, adoptions, advance trauma training, resource family approvals, and currently as a bilingual service coordinator and Assistant Program Director. Samuel understands the cultural needs in foster care in relation to the Latinx community. For that reason, he advocates to increase the number of trainings presented to Latinx families in their own language.

Spanish Biografía

Samuel Cruz ha trabajado en el campo del cuidado de crianza durante 9 años en una variedad de puestos. Samuel completó su educación superior en la Universidad de Berkeley y Sacramento con una maestría en Sociología con especialización en estructuras familiares y educación. Samuel ha dedicado muchos años al bienestar familiar, organizaciones sin fines de lucro, trabajo comunitario y tutoría escolar. Desde que se unió a Alternative Family Services (AFS), Samuel ha trabajado en las áreas de trabajador social, adopciones, capacitación avanzada en trauma, aprobaciones familiares de recursos, y actualmente como coordinador de servicios bilingüe y Director Asistente del Programa. Samuel entiende las necesidades culturales en el cuidado de crianza en relación con la comunidad latina. Por esa razón, aboga por aumentar el número de capacitaciones presentadas a las familias latinas en su propio idioma.



Estrategias de Crianza Para Jóvenes con TDAH y Trauma Complejo

Session: J-1 (English Session - A-3)

En esta capacitación, se presenta a los padres de crianza el Trastorno por Déficit de Atención e Hiperactividad (TDAH), una condición del neurodesarrollo que puede manifestarse como falta de atención, hiperactividad e impulsividad. Aunque el TDAH puede afectar a personas de todas las edades, es especialmente importante comprenderlo en el contexto del cuidado de crianza, donde el trauma, la negligencia y la inestabilidad pueden aumentar la probabilidad de un diagnóstico, o incluso llevar a un diagnóstico erróneo, ya que los comportamientos relacionados con el trauma a menudo se parecen. El término "ADD" que se usaba anteriormente, ahora se reconoce como TDAH, Tipo Predominantemente Inatento. Esta capacitación ayuda a los padres a reconocer las señales del TDAH y ofrece estrategias prácticas y compasivas para apoyar a niños con estos desafíos. Con una comprensión más profunda y las herramientas adecuadas, los padres de crianza pueden crear estabilidad y ayudar a que los niños prosperen.

Parenting Strategies for Youth with ADHD and Complex Trauma

Session: A-3 (Spanish Session: J-1)

In this training, resource parents are introduced to Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a neurodevelopmental condition that can show up as inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. While ADHD can affect people of all ages, it's especially important to understand in the context of foster care, where trauma, neglect, and instability can increase the likelihood of a diagnosis - or even lead to misdiagnosis, as trauma-related behaviors often look similar. The outdated term "ADD" is now recognized as ADHD, Predominantly Inattentive Type. This training helps parents recognize the signs of ADHD and provides practical, compassionate strategies for supporting children with these challenges. With a deeper understanding and the right tools, resource parents can create stability and help children thrive.

Los Primeros Cinco Años: Guiando el Crecimiento y la Sanación en el Cuidado de Crianza

Session: K-1 (English Session B-3)

Los primeros cinco años de vida sientan las bases para el crecimiento y el bienestar futuros del niño. Para los niños en cuidado de crianza temporal, estos años son especialmente importantes para ayudarles a superar los traumas sufridos en su infancia. Esta capacitación ayudará a los padres de crianza temporal a comprender los hitos del desarrollo apropiados para cada edad, a poner en práctica estrategias de crianza basadas en el trauma y a aprender a crear entornos seguros y propicios para el desarrollo de los niños de 0 a 5 años. Los participantes saldrán de la capacitación con herramientas prácticas para crear vínculos seguros, apoyar el desarrollo emocional y físico y fomentar la resiliencia en los pequeños a su cargo.

The First Five Years: Guiding Growth and Healing in Foster Care

Session: B-3 (Spanish Session: K1)

The first five years of life lay the foundation for a child's future growth and well-being. For children in foster care, these years are especially important in supporting healing after early trauma. This training will help foster parents understand age-appropriate developmental milestones, practice trauma-informed parenting strategies, and learn how to create safe and nurturing environments for children ages 0-5. Participants will walk away with practical tools to build secure connections, support emotional and physical development, and foster resilience in the little ones they care for.

Essence Webb

Mrs. Essence Webb is a highly accomplished social services professional with over 23 years of experience dedicated to child welfare, family support, and community advocacy. She currently serves as a Social Services Manager for Solano County Child Welfare Services (CWS), a role she assumed in February 2024. Prior to this, Essence worked as a Social Services Supervisor and Emergency Response Investigating Social Worker within Solano County since 2021.

Essence's career reflects a deep commitment to child protection and family well-being. Before joining Solano County, she spent three years as a Case Review Program Analyst with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). Her extensive experience also includes 16 years with Sacramento County Child Protective Services (CPS), where she served in multiple capacities. For eight years, she was a Social Services Supervisor in the Emergency Response/Intake Weekend Program, and for another eight years, she worked as an African American Special Skills Social Worker, specializing in programs such as Family Reunification (FR), Family Maintenance (FM), Dependency Investigations (DI), and Permanency Planning/Dependency.

Essence is deeply committed to empowering African American youth and fostering educational success. She frequently speaks at community events and mentors students, encouraging them to pursue excellence and "reach for the stars."



Loving the Skin I'm In: Hair, Skin, Beauty & Self-Esteem for Black Children in Foster Care

Session: I-2 (Family Night) & L-1 (Adults Only)

Join us for an empowering and interactive workshop designed to educate, uplift, and strengthen caregivers, professionals, and youth in the foster care system. This session focuses on **hair care for Black children**, while exploring the deeper connection between **identity, beauty, and self-esteem** during challenging times.

Through **hands-on activities, live demonstrations, and open discussions**, participants will learn practical hair care techniques, product knowledge, and cultural insights that honor and celebrate Black beauty. Together, we will confront both **positive and negative portrayals of Black beauty**, fostering confidence and resilience in children who deserve to feel proud of who they are inside and out.



Jen Jones

"I Have To" to "I Get To"

Session: G-4

Parenting and caregiving can be beautiful, yet exhausting, full of moments that leave us feeling stretched thin, overlooked, or running on autopilot. What if you could shift just one perspective and begin to notice the magic in the everyday moments with the children in your care? In this interactive, heart-centered workshop, you will discover how gratitude can transform not only your mindset, but the atmosphere and energy of your home. Through storytelling, guided reflection, and practical tools like journaling, affirmations, and family rituals, you will learn how to turn "I have to" moments into "I get to" experiences.



Audrey Reyes, LCSW

Audrey Reyes is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 15 years of experience in Child Welfare. Her career began in Solano County, where she worked directly with foster youth, birth families, and resource families. Audrey has extensive experience supporting individuals impacted by trauma, grief, and chronic stress. In addition to her clinical work, she is a certified yoga instructor and Trauma Conscious Yoga Method practitioner. Audrey integrates trauma-informed yoga, mindfulness, and psychotherapy to support nervous system regulation, resilience, and emotional well-being for caregivers and children alike.

Mayra Montano, LCSW

Mayra Montano is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Registered Yoga Teacher with over a decade of experience serving children and families. She specializes in mental health services and parenting education, with a strong focus on supporting vulnerable populations within the foster care and child welfare systems. Mayra integrates yoga and mindfulness practices into her work to help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression while promoting emotional regulation and overall wellness. Her approach is compassionate, practical, and culturally responsive.

The Power of Gratitude Through Yoga & Meditation

Session: I-4 (Child Style) & L-2

This interactive, trauma-informed workshop explores the role of gratitude as a powerful tool for emotional regulation, resilience, and caregiver well-being. Foster and kinship caregivers often experience high levels of stress, secondary trauma, and emotional fatigue. Through gentle yoga, guided meditation, and reflective discussion, participants will learn how gratitude practices can support nervous system balance, reduce burnout, and foster greater emotional connection with themselves and the children in their care.

The workshop is experiential and accessible, requiring no prior yoga or meditation experience. Participants will leave with practical tools they can immediately apply in daily life and within their caregiving roles.



THE POWER OF GRATITUDE

Thank you