

# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

## 28th Annual National Foster Care Conference

### “Footsteps to the Future”



DANIEL MEMORIAL



INSTITUTE

May 31-June 2, 2023 ~ Orlando, Florida  
**Exploring Best Practices and Innovations in Foster Care and Adoption**

# FOOTSTEPS TO THE FUTURE

## Welcome from the President/CEO

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to welcome each of you to the 28th Annual National Foster Care Conference hosted by the Daniel Memorial Institute in exciting Orlando, Florida. Once again, we have gathered the most knowledgeable and compelling speakers and educators from around the country.

Over the course of the conference, you will learn valuable information that will help you improve outcomes for children for your respective foster care programs or for your own individual foster homes.

Conference workshops will address the critical issues that affect the children and families that we serve as well as provide solutions to assist them in becoming resilient, motivated members of their communities.

We are pleased that you have joined us in Orlando, FL, for "Footsteps to the Future."

*Lesley Wells*



## Conference Hotel

### Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek

14651 Chelonia Pkwy, Orlando, FL 32821  
407-390-2300

Discounted self parking available for \$12.00 per day.



## Pre-Conference Institute

### Wednesday - May 31

**9:00am - 3:00pm**

**Registration/Info Booth Open  
(Refreshments Provided)**

**Location: Grand Foyer Prefunction Area**

**10:00am**

**Pre-Conference Begins**

**Location: Journey B**

**Noon - 1:00pm**

**Lunch (on your own)**

**3:00pm**

**Pre-Conference concludes**

## Supporting Children With Oppositional Behaviors

Are you a parent or professional who helps children who have oppositional behaviors? Is mainstream behavior management not working well? Trauma, anxiety, and chemical imbalances can all factor into this complex issue. Mainstream behavior management strategies may not be effective for those with oppositional behavior patterns. During this presentation, you will learn strategies to assist with preventing meltdowns and aid in de-escalation of big emotions. You will also learn ways to prevent miscommunications, how to foster a diverse and inclusive environment, and how to encourage participation in self-advocacy and problem-solving.

*Presented by: Melissa Packwood, Eustis, FL*

**Travel tip:**  
Please bring a  
sweater or jacket to  
ensure your comfort.  
Room temperatures  
vary greatly and  
typically run cold.

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## Foster Care Conference

**Thursday - June 1**

**8:00am - 3:30pm  
Information Booth Open**

(Light breakfast and coffee service provided)

Location: Grand Foyer Prefunction Area

**9:00am - 10:15am**

**Opening General  
Session**

Location: Ponce de Leon 3-7 (III-VII)

Keynote

Speaker:

Justin Black  
Kalamazoo,  
Michigan



**Redefining, Rethinking,  
Reflecting: Developing  
an Intentional  
Community  
Environment for Those  
Who Have Experienced  
Trauma**

Justin is a graduate from Western Michigan University from Detroit, Michigan. As an author and business owner with his wife Alexis, they joined the Forbes Next 1000 class in 2021. Together, they've published an award-winning, bestselling book titled *Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat The Odds and Discovered Healing, Happiness and Love* that has impacted over 25,000 individuals and families.

Discussion will include strategies and techniques developed by foster care alumni, Justin and Alexis, as they combined the information they've learned from healthy foster parents, counselors, advocates, and ultimately their lived experience. By sharing their personal story of overcoming, they discuss the role of a foster parent and advocate as well as the necessary resources to surround themselves with in order to be a positive partner in the lives of the youth themselves.

**10:30am - 12:00pm  
Workshop Sessions A  
(Concurrent Sessions)**

**A-1 Making A  
Difference One Story  
At A Time**

(This will be offered a  
second time in E-2 session)

Location: Ponce de Leon 4-7 (IV-VII)

This workshop features a panel of speakers who were incarcerated as youth but have turned their lives around and are currently motivational speakers and consultants for youth facilities nationwide. The Messengers will share their experiences/insights and facilitate discussions about how to make impacts on issues in the juvenile justice systems and society.

Presented by: Andy Broughton, Director, Gordan Brown, Messenger, Chris Thompson, Messenger and Quantavis Coe, Messenger - *The Messengers*, Columbia, SC

**A-2 Black Girls Rock: A  
Look Into The  
Stereotypes  
Surrounding The "Hard  
To Reach" And Ways  
To Build Healthy  
Relationships**

Location: Voyage

In this session we will explore the stereotypes surrounding the African American female along with reviewing statistics showing the drastic increase in discipline writeups in the school setting for AA girls. Finally, we will explore traumas prevalent in the AA community and explore ways to build therapeutic relationships with those "hard to reach" youth.

Presented by: Tammyria Jennings, MS - *Hephzibah*, GA



**A-3 Collaboration is  
Key When Managing a  
Client With Mental  
Health Needs While  
Balancing Your Own**

Location: Discovery

The unique experiences and stressors from working in the Child Welfare Legal System are exacerbated when dealing with clients with mental health issues. Clients may run hot or cold, high and low, call often or not at all. They may seem difficult, argumentative, even hostile or be passive aggressive, withdrawn, dishonest. Some are in treatment, on medication; some are not. This level of work stress is difficult to manage under normal circumstances; but dealing with a client that has mental health needs that may not be being properly managed takes extra time, professionalism, patience, and will often throw off your sense of balance and calm. This seminar explores the legal requirements under Chapter 39 to identify/determine when mental health is in controversy and offers effective stress management tools & techniques to maintain your balance while advising clients on how to effectively navigate the dependency process and maintain positive relationships case managers, social workers, Child Protective Investigators, Guardians ad Litem, the Court, caregivers, and their children. After all, isn't the goal a safe reunification?

Presented by: Ita Neymotin, Regional Counsel, 2nd & 6th DCA, Daphney Branham, Assistant Regional Counsel and Laguerra Champagne, Assistant Regional Counsel-Co-Circuit Chief - Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel, Fort Myers, FL

**A-4 Fosterpower- A  
Movement To Improve  
The Lives Of Youth In  
Foster Care**

Location: Expedition

Are kids in foster care entitled to an allowance? Do they have to change schools every time they

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move? What happens if they are placed apart from their siblings? Do you ever wish you could find information on the law for kids in foster care all in one place? Now you can. You'll hear from the attorney who created FosterPower –and learn how being able to access information on benefits, protections, and legal rights of kids in foster care will reform child welfare. Want to be a part of the change? Find out how in this interactive workshop.

*Presented by: Taylor Sartor, Attorney and Creator of FosterPower and Jennifer Robinson, Attorney - L. David Shear Children's Law Center of Bay Area Legal Services, Tampa, FL*

**12:00pm - 1:00pm**

**Lunch (Provided)**

**Location: Deep Blu Seafood Grille**

Enjoy this time to relax, network with other attendees and share your ideas and successes with your colleagues.

**1:00pm - 2:30pm**  
**Workshop Sessions B**

**(Concurrent Sessions)**

**B-1 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders From A Trauma Lens (Part 1 of 2)**

**Location: Discovery**

We 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 individual's brain development. Although Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are twice as common as autism, this disorder often goes undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. Children, adolescents and adults with an FASD have invisible brain injuries and typical parenting, teaching and

therapeutic strategies are often ineffective. It is vital for anyone parenting, teaching or working with these individuals to understand the reasons behind the learning and behavioral challenges and to have an in-depth understanding of the strategies which are more effective with these neuro-behavioral differences.

*Presented by: Barb Clark, Training Specialist - North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), St Paul, MN*

**B-2 Mental Illness Within The Foster Care System**

**Location: Expedition**

This session will explore the culture of foster care and the impact of mental illness upon children in the foster care system with an eye towards strategies and tips to provide person-centered, trauma-informed, strengths-based and culturally appropriate services and supports.

*Presented by: Danielle Jones, Homeless & Foster Care Liaison, Angela Soloman, Coordinator of Social Work and Sabrena Wilson, Homeless & Foster Care Liaison Assistant - Bibb County School District, Macon, GA*

**B-3 Mentorship - Four Ways to Boost Confidence in Foster Children**

**Location: Ponce de Leon 4-7 (IV-VII)**

The ability to help foster children develop their confidence and self-esteem is one of the most valuable gifts you can share with them. Foster children that develop inner strength and a positive self-image over time through mentorship are better equipped to face life's challenges and grow up to be a happy, grateful, and responsible adults. This session will share 4 effective ways to boost confidence in foster children when done consistently over time.

*Presented by: Christopher Salem, CEO - Empowered Fathers in Action, Inc., Danbury, CT*

**B-4 Authentic Involvement with Youth Voice**

**Location: Voyage**

Authentically Involving Youth Voice is a workshop that will help audience members understand the importance of authentically listening to youth voice, and how to involve it within their specific practices. It will involve personal testimonies for individuals who have been advocates and how they were able to make change for their communities by working with agencies within it. It will discuss the Engagement Ladder and how to reach the top level of youth voice and engagement. It will involve roles that youth can take and roles that agencies can take.

*Presented by: Tamara Vest, MSW - Kentucky Youth Advocates, KY*

**2:45pm - 4:15pm**  
**Workshop Sessions C**  
**(Concurrent Sessions)**

**C-1 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders From A Trauma Lens (Part 2 of 2)**

**Location: Discovery**

Continuation of workshop B-1.

*Presented by: Barb Clark, Training Specialist - North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), St Paul, MN*

**C-2 College Resources for Students Coming from Texas Foster Care**

**Location: Voyage**

The Texas Education and Training Voucher is a Federal fund put in place to help aged-out youth from foster care with living expenses while attending postsecondary school. House Bill 2537 went into effect 6/9/2017 and it requires high school counselors in Texas to inform students in foster care about their postsecondary school benefits every year. This workshop will outline post-

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secondary benefits and help attendees understand the unique challenges foster care alumni face when aging out of care.

*Presented by: Drew Melton, ETV Specialist and Krystal Lopez - San Antonio, TX*

## **C-3 Showing Up as your Authentic Self for Youth Workers**

**Location: Expedition**

The Youth Support Partner Unit (YSP Unit) in Allegheny County pairs peer mentors with lived system experience with young adults currently involved in child-serving systems. Using the expertise and experience of our staff, this presentation will focus on how youth workers are capable of building strong, authentic relationships with youth by simply showing up as their authentic selves. This presentation will start with an icebreaker activity focused on being authentic. The presentation will then feature different barriers and stigmas that exist for youth in care and how these factors can hinder the development of strong relationships between caregivers and the youth. We will then share 8 ways youth workers are damaging their relationships with youth at their first meeting. Next, we will dive into how the average youth worker is able to promote healing practices through relationship building. The presentation will also consider what it means to be authentic and why authenticity is so important to youth in care. The presentation will end with a discussion on how youth workers can help empower youth to create their own healthy and authentic relationships,

including setting boundaries with others.

*Presented by: Talitha Cox, Unit Director of the Youth Support Partner Unit, Precious Bey-Lewis, Senior Youth Support Partner and Jaslyn Cuff, Youth Support Partner - Youth Support Partner Unit, Pittsburgh, PA*

## **C-4 SOAR In The Possibilities**

**Location: Ponce de Leon 4-7 (IV-VII)**

This workshop/presentation is a vivid walkthrough the life of a successful and thriving child advocate who was once right where many of the youth in foster care are today. A child born into an abusive home riddled with violence, abuse and neglect. Trauma, grief, an ACE score of 10! How does one overcome? I have the lived experience of both angles, the children in care and now the adult that cares for the children in care or trying to prevent them from coming into care.

*Presented by: Amanda Wilson, LLC., Founder/CEO - Be Like Ike Foundation Bartow, FL*

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## **Friday - June 2**

### **8:00am - 2:30pm Information Booth Open**

**(Light breakfast and coffee service Provided)**

**Location: Ponce de Leon 3-7 (III-VII)**

### **9:00am - 10:30am Workshop Sessions D**

**(Concurrent Sessions)**

## **D-1 Empower The Caregiver: Services That Are Critical To Placement Health And Stability**

**Location: Expedition**

Foster Source serves foster & kinship caregivers with parenting education, relief services, therapeutic services & the Ambassador Project. Foster Source's leadership will share best practices for designing &

running programming, collaborating with other agencies & stakeholders, and leaning in to policy & advocacy on behalf of caregivers. Attendees will leave with new ideas for services, inspiration for change and a renewed passion for serving this important yet chronically underserved population.

*Presented by: Renee Bernhard, Founder/Executive Director and Jody Britton, Service Coordinator - Foster Source, Thornton, CO*

## **D-2 From Start to Finish: Program Support that Begins from the Start of Care to Adulthood**

**Location: Ponce de Leon 4-7 (IV-VII)**

Promises2Kids has supported current and former foster youth in San Diego County for 40 years. Promises2Kids has always worked to create a community for our youth through direct service, financial support, and community connections. Using strong community collaboratives and strategic partnerships to ensure youth leave care with educational support, individual and personal community connection, and a forward progression is to self-sufficiency.

*Presented by: Rashida Elimu, Director of Programs - Promises2Kids, San Diego, CA*

## **D-3 Promoting Healing and Understanding in Adoption and Foster Care, Seven Core Issues for Permanency**

**Location: Voyage**

The workshop will explore the seven core issues that impact a child's perceptions of self, birth family and the foster/adoptive family. It is imperative that everyone be trauma sensitive and informed when working with or being a part of a complex family system. The seven core issues include loss, rejection, shame & guilt, grief, identity, intimacy, and mastery & control. The seven core issues can be utilized by a



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foster/adoptive parent to guide a child to self-awareness and resiliency.

*Presented by: Graham Perkovich BS, CTP, CATP, Child Welfare Trainer - Sunshine Health, Fort Lauderdale, FL*

## **D-4 Express Your Self**

**Location: Discovery**

Express Your Self is a supercharged platform where participants get to speak from the heart. There will be creative writing, performances, challenges, and prizes. This high-energy workshop is led by conference veteran Mr. Mike Guinn. This is guaranteed to be a fun and highly engaging workshop.

*Presented by: Michael Guinn, Spoken word Artist, Author, Actor and Activist - Uplift Your Life, Irving, TX*

## **10:45am - 12:15pm Workshop Sessions E**

**(Concurrent Sessions)**

## **E-1 Connection Is Not Optional**

**Location: Expedition**

Connection is not an option. It is primal, and necessary for our survival. Unfortunately, we have automated our lives to the degree that we have automated our parenting and caregiving. This workshop will present participants with an overview of the research that supports attachment theory. Participants will explore connection and attachment strategies that promote a neuro-relational framework.

*Presented by: Connie Pierre-Antoine, Founder & CEO - Genesis Family Enrichment Center, Inc., Gainesville, FL*

## **E-2 Making A Difference One Story At A Time**

**(This is a repeat of A-1 session)**

**Location: Discovery**

This workshop features a panel of speakers who were incarcerated as youth but have turned their lives around and are currently motivational speakers and consultants for youth facilities nationwide. The Messengers will share their experiences/insights and facilitate discussions about how to make impacts on issues in the juvenile justice systems and society.

*Presented by: Andy Broughton, Director, Gordan Brown, Messenger, Chris Thompson, Messenger and Quantavis Coe, Messenger - The Messengers, Columbia, SC*

## **E-3 Inclusive Permanency Planning: Improving Equitable Access To Family For Children With International Connections**

**Location: Voyage**

Prioritizing reunification with family is widely recognized as best practice and the responsibility of state child welfare agencies. One in four children in the U.S. has a foreign-born parent; however, few agencies have policies in place to engage families in other countries. This workshop will encourage reflection around international family finding to improve equity and inclusion in permanency planning. It will explore policies that improve access to family, and positive outcomes for children.

*Presented by: Elaine Weisman, Program and Training Manager - International Social Service, USA, Baltimore, MD*

## **E-4 How Can I Help A Child With A Specific Learning Disability?**

**Location: Ponce de Leon 4-7 (IV-VII)**

Many special needs fall under the Specific Learning Disability umbrella. Social workers and caregivers often wonder how they can effectively help children with SLDs. This presentation teaches participants about assistive technology (low- and high-tech), visual supports, movement breaks, homemade and store bought tools, and strategies which assist children in learning. Make-and-take projects will be included.

*Presented by: Melissa Packwood, Eustis, FL*

**12:15pm - 1:00pm**

**Lunch (Provided)**

**Location: Ponce de Leon 3-7 (III-VII)**

**1:00pm - 2:00pm**

**Closing Session**

## **Engage The Stage**

**Location: Ponce de Leon 3-7 (III-VII)**

An interactive performance featuring YOU! If you joined in the workshop "Express Yourself" offered in D4, you will be primed for this session. If you were not able to, you will be inspired along the way.

*Presented by: Michael Guinn, Spoken word Artist, Author, Actor and Activist - Uplift Your Life, Irving, TX*

**Wrap up, evaluations, CEU's**

ORLANDO | SKYLINE





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## conferencepartners

Exhibitors scheduled to date:

### Florida's Adoption Information Center

Jacksonville, FL

[adoptflorida.org](http://adoptflorida.org)

### Daniel Memorial, Inc and Daniel Memorial Institute

Jacksonville, FL

[danielkids.org](http://danielkids.org)

### Foster Source

Thornton, CO

[fostersource.org](http://fostersource.org)

### Keys to Independence

Orlando, FL

[keystoIndependencefl.com](http://keystoIndependencefl.com)

### Konnect Apps

Charlottesville, VA

[konnectapps.com](http://konnectapps.com)

## authors

### Justin Black

[re-definingnormal.com](http://re-definingnormal.com)

## conference sponsors

### Sunshine Health

Tampa, FL

[sunshinehealth.com](http://sunshinehealth.com)

Bronze  
Level  
Sponsor

# Meeting Space Map

