

Keynote Address:



Walter S. Gilliam began serving as the executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute in 2023, succeeding Founding Executive Director Samuel J. Meisels. Gilliam, who holds the Richard D. Holland Presidential Chair in Early Childhood Development, also holds a primary academic appointment at the Munroe-Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center at a rank of tenured professor.

Gilliam came to the Institute from Yale University, where he was Elizabeth Mears & House Jameson Professor of Child Psychiatry and Psychology at the Yale Child Study Center and director of Yale's Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy.

He is board president of ZERO TO THREE, a past president of Child Care Aware of America, board treasurer for the Irving Harris Foundation, and a director for First Children's Finance, All Our Kin, and the National Workforce Registry Alliance, and a former senior advisor to the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In 2023, he was named a senior fellow working with the Bipartisan Policy Center's Early Childhood Initiative. Gilliam is co-recipient of the prestigious 2008 Grawemeyer Award in Education for the coauthored book, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*. His research involves early childhood education and intervention policy analysis (specifically how policies translate into effective services), ways to improve the quality of PreKindergarten and child care services, the impact of early childhood education programs on children's school readiness, and effective methods for reducing classroom behavior problems and preschool expulsion, as well as issues of COVID-19 transmission, vaccination, and health and safety promotion in early childhood settings. His scholarly writing addresses early childhood care and education programs, school readiness, and developmental assessment of young children.

Gilliam has led national analyses of state-funded PreKindergarten policies and mandates, how PreKindergarten programs are being implemented across the range of policy contexts, and the effectiveness of these programs at improving school readiness and educational achievement, as well as experimental and quasi-experimental studies on methods to improve early education quality. His work frequently has been covered in major national and international news outlets for print (e.g., New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Chicago Tribune, LA Times), radio (e.g., NPR), and television (e.g., CNN Headline News, NBC TODAY Show, CBS Early Show, ABC Good Morning America, ABC World News Tonight, FOX News). Gilliam has actively provided consultation to state and federal decision-makers in the United States and other countries (such as the People's Republic of China and the United Arab Emirates) and frequently provides testimony and briefings before Congress on issues related to early care and education.

Gilliam is a graduate of the University of Kentucky, where he earned a master's degree in educational psychology and a Ph.D. in school psychology. He grew up in Pikeville, Kentucky.

Integrating Reflection, Trauma-Informed Practice, and IECMH Principles to Transform a Statewide System

Across the country, the early care and education workforce is in crisis, with teachers of our youngest children consistently overworked, underpaid and undervalued, and lacking health and wellness support structures. As early educators manage their professional development, safeguard the wellbeing and mental health of the children in their care, and connect with families from a wide range of backgrounds, they can become depleted by chronic stress and secondary trauma. The NC Birth-to-Three Quality Initiative's (B-3QI's) team of regional Birth-to-Three Specialists provides coaching and consultation to birth-to-three teachers and child care administrators facing these challenges, compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a team, the B-3QI has collaborated with Duke's Infant Toddler Trauma-Informed (ITTI) Care Project to integrate and advance innovative, responsive, relationship-based and resilience-focused practices across the state. This workshop will highlight some of these practices, discuss the strengths and challenges of sustaining a reflective, trauma-informed and mental health-centered approach in coaching, and provide space for participants to reflect on the wellbeing of their own organizations and personal and professional networks. Participants will learn how these projects continue to partner to build and fortify a team of early childhood coaching professionals who address their own mental and physical health first. By crafting and embracing a culture of self-awareness and reflection, Specialists plan for and act on individualized self-care and wellness in a parallel process to the providers they support. Throughout the session, presenters will discuss the choices B-3QI made—and continues to make—in service of the team's transformation and demonstrated commitment to cultural responsiveness, opening healing pathways for providers, families, and their children. During the pandemic, B-3QI assessed regional birth-to-three workforce needs and seized opportunities for team members to receive training and professional development to address those needs. The McCormick Center's Directors' Toolbox, Circle of Security Parenting Classroom Approach, Conscious Discipline, the Abecedarian Approach, and book studies on Trauma-Informed Practices for Early Childhood Educators: Relationship-Based Approaches that Support Healing and Build Resilience in Young Children and Culturally

Robin Warfield, Ed.D., Birth-to-Three Coaching Manager



Robin received her Bachelor's degree in Spanish from UNC-Chapel Hill, her Master's in Early Childhood Education Leadership from UNC-Greensboro, and her Doctorate in Adult Education and Community College Leadership from NC State. While at NC State, her research focused on community college faculty perceptions of trauma-informed principles in early childhood educator preparation programming. Robin has served as an infant toddler teacher, preschool teacher, child care administrator, adjunct early childhood faculty at Alamance Community College, and technical assistance specialist. Currently, Robin is a trained Circle of Security Parenting facilitator, Duke-Certified Health & Well-Being Coach, and a Level 13 NC Early Childhood Educator.

Jennifer Anderson M. Ed., Birth-to-Three Professional Development Manager



Jennifer has a Bachelor's degree in Child and Family Development with a minor in Psychology from UNC-Charlotte. She has a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Capella University and a post-baccalaureate certificate in Leadership in Infant and Toddler Learning from UNC-Greensboro. Jennifer has had many roles with the early

childhood world and worked with all ages. She spent over 10 years as a two-year-old classroom teacher. She is a trained CLASS Observer, Circle of Security Parenting facilitator and Classroom facilitator and coach. She is also an Infant Toddler Trauma Informed (ITTI) Care coach. Jennifer is endorsed by the Infant Mental Health Association. She has a level 12 Early Educator certification with Professional Development Endorsement. Jennifer is also an adjunct instructor at Guilford Technical community College (GTCC).

HOPE: Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experience

The proposed workshop for the 2024 NCIMHA conference is designed to address the pressing challenges in early childhood mental health, particularly the lack of early intervention services for expectant families and children aged birth to five. The workshop will focus on prevention services, creating positive experiences for infants, toddlers, and pre-school children, and engaging families in early childhood education. A key component of the workshop will be the utilization of the HOPE framework to address systemic racism and unconscious bias. The HOPE framework is built on four building blocks: Relationships, Safe and Equitable Environments, Social and Civic Engagement, and Emotional Growth. These building blocks will serve as the foundation for our discussions and activities. The workshop will provide participants with the opportunity to delve into how these four building blocks can be incorporated into their organizations, communities, policies, advocacy efforts, and parent education programs. Through interactive sessions, participants will gain practical knowledge and strategies to implement the HOPE framework in their work. The ideal participants for this workshop are those who are willing to think differently about prenatal and early childhood practices, strengthen systems, and build strong relationships with all stakeholders involved in early childhood mental health. This includes educators, healthcare professionals, policymakers, advocates, and parents. In conclusion, this workshop aims to inspire a shift in perspective and approach towards early childhood mental health, fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and hopeful future for our children.

Jessica Supik—With a 15-year tenure in the mental health field in Western North Carolina, I have dedicated my career to working with children and youth. My extensive background in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) has equipped me with the necessary skills and knowledge to make a significant impact. Currently, I serve as a System of Care Coordinator, focusing on instigating system change through the voices of youth, families, and communities. Outside of my professional life, I find solace in gardening and hiking, activities that keep me grounded. I reside in Asheville, sharing my home with my teenage son.

Christelle Marsh brings 20 years of early intervention, early childhood education, and Applied Behavioral Analysis experience to team. She obtained her M.Ed. from UNCG in 2019. Christelle has been an action-oriented member of the Watauga Compassionate Community Initiative and serves on the leadership team.

Reducing the Stress of Group Care: Implementing Emotionally Responsive Practice in Small Groups for Toddlers and Twos

The prevalence of early childhood trauma represents a pressing public health concern with far-reaching developmental implications. Early childhood education settings are increasingly portrayed as critical intervention contexts for mitigating the detrimental effects of trauma. However, group care can be overwhelming and stressful for children, especially those with traumatic experiences. This presentation will discuss the benefits of providing small group pull-out sessions for toddlers and twos using Emotionally Responsive Practice (ERP). ERP supports adults in understanding children through the lens of child development as well as life experience. Presenters will share specific

ERP concepts, focusing on the Inviting and Containing techniques, which help in creating emotionally supportive environments for young children. This presentation is intended for early childhood educators, early interventionists, therapists (speech, physical, occupational), infant mental health specialists, pediatricians, and other professionals involved in early childhood care and development.



Laura Martin, LCSWA, LCASA

Laura is the Vice President of Clinical Services at Verner Center for Early Learning in Asheville, North Carolina. She has spent her entire career working in early childhood mental health, utilizing a trauma-informed care lens while implementing developmentally appropriate practices in early education. For the last fifteen years, her work has focused intensively on training early childhood educators about the importance of mental health and its impacts on children, families, and coworkers. Her past research explores the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on early childhood educators and learning environments.

Additionally, she is a resiliency educator with Resources for Resilience and a Circle of Security Parenting and Classroom facilitator. She completed a Master of Social Work degree from Western Carolina University and

specialized in Addiction. Currently, Laura and her team are building the “Center for Resilience,” which will specifically focus on developing a clinical program and providing therapeutic services to early educators, children and families at Verner and in the community.



Mo Duckett is a recent graduate from Appalachian State University where she earned her Master’s in Social Work. She is pursuing full clinical licensure working with the 0-5 population. Mo is passionate about strengthening infant-caregiver attachment and breaking cycles of intergenerational trauma. She combines brain architecture and human development with client lived experience to inform her practice. Mo has lived in Asheville, NC for the last 5 years and is grateful to call the Blue Ridge Mountains home.



After growing up in New York for most of her life, Lauren Angararo decided to take a chance and move to Asheville. She has been there for about eight years and absolutely loves it! Embracing the natural beauty of Asheville has allowed Lauren to become more in tune with herself and the environment.

Lauren is a cousin, a dog mom, and an auntie to some amazing nibblings. Her career began as a preschool teacher, where her passion for learning was reignited alongside an ever-curious group of four-year-olds. She experienced firsthand the struggles faced by neurodivergent young children and their families, noticing the expansive lack of effective emotional and educational support. This realization sparked her journey as an advocate, advocating alongside families to help them access the resources needed to support their child’s individual needs, all while navigating the complex educational system.

Lauren is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker Associate (LCSWA) working towards full licensure. Lauren is a Trained facilitator of Circle of Security- Parenting and Circle of Security-Classroom, focusing on individual therapy with children, as well as caregiver/child dyad therapy. Her work is driven by her passion for early relational health. She focuses on the critical importance of nurturing healthy emotional connections and relationships between very young children and their caregivers from a young age.

Building Strong Foundations: The Importance of Perinatal Care on Early Childhood Development

Join us for an insightful workshop on the profound impact of doula support on child development from birth through age five. Designed for non-profit or corporate professionals, policy makers, healthcare workers, early childhood educators, and expectant or new parents, this workshop will explore how doulas positively influence infant development during the critical early childhood years. We'll begin with an introduction to doula work, covering the emotional and physical benefits of doula support during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. Participants will learn how nurturing families from the beginning creates an environment crucial for improving child development. Discover how intentional care enhances cognitive outcomes for children, contributing to improved development, stronger family systems, and increased quality of life. Following the workshop, participants will be encouraged to take action in collaborating with other professionals in the state to enhance perinatal care across North Carolina. Workshop elements will include an interactive group exercise where participants will discuss strategies to improve access to doula care, and a Q&A session following a short informative presentation that provides real-life examples of the impact of birth and childcare workers. The workshop will also highlight the long-term benefits that doula services have on forming early attachment and parenting confidence. Understanding how to foster secure attachment empowers parents to engage in positive parenting practices, which are essential for nurturing child development through preschool.



Caroline Bracey (she/her) is a Full Spectrum Doula and owner of The Swearing Doula, a name that reflects her candid and unmasked approach to birth work. Navigating the realities of pregnancy, childbirth, and early parenthood can be extremely challenging. She began advocating for maternal and infant care after struggling with her own perinatal mental health. These experiences helped her recognize a significant gap in the support system available to birthing people, new parents and infants, especially in rural North Carolina communities. After her own traumatic birth experience, she witnessed the invaluable importance of Doula services firsthand when she was gifted service hours from a Postpartum Doula by a close friend and mother. Through her relatable and compassionate presence, Caroline has become a trusted ally for individuals and families navigating the transformative journey of pregnancy and postpartum. Her goal is to ensure that no one faces the challenges of childbirth and early parenthood without adequate information, unbiased support and sincere encouragement.



Cassandra Jeffers holds over a decade of dedicated experience in early childhood care in her professional journey. Her passion for this work ignited from direct interactions with infants, where she observed and celebrated their developmental milestones firsthand.

Out of Our Minds: Body-based approaches to supporting children with challenging behaviors

The early childhood mental health field has come a long way. Professionals are moving away from behaviorism, towards attachment-based approaches. Conscious Discipline, Circle of Security, and other social-emotional curricula have become mainstream. Trauma theory and books like Dr. Dan Siegel's "The Whole-Brain Child" inform our understanding of regulation as a nervous system process. Our awareness of racism, ableism, sexism, and other structural inequalities pushes inclusion work forward.

However, when dealing with significant challenging behaviors, we often get triggered ourselves, falling back into old paradigms - no matter our experience or skill level. As an educator and parent of an autistic/ADHD/anxious child, I've seen that it is particularly hard to embody the "new" way with a child who is "different". Multiple professionals have slid from connection- to compliance-focused approaches with my child, trying to control behavior without curiosity about her "deep why". I have witnessed the same story play out with other neurodivergent children, especially those with multiple marginalized identities. It is hard to stay committed to best practices in the face of challenging behaviors. Only by cultivating deep awareness of my own nervous system have I been able to continually approach my own child and others with curiosity and compassion. Without that, my co-regulation efforts fail. Children can tell when we are reciting a calming script, or wearing a mask of serenity, but actually have a racing heart, tense stomach, and desperation for control. However, when we truly embody calm and acceptance, we build trust, secure attachment, and foster resilience in children. When we connect with our bodily experience, it also allows us to clearly sense another's nervous system. We see "Beyond Behaviors" (as Dr. Mona Delahooke says) to the child's core self and what they need. But even if we've read all the books, we need our own regulation practice to support our most struggling children.

My workshop will review nervous system regulation and its relationship to learning. We will discuss the way a child's identity - racial, (dis)ability, etc. - may impact their threat response. We will practice somatic techniques to foster awareness of our own internal state, reflection to identify our triggers, and body-based strategies to regulate ourselves. We will also practice embodied approaches to cultivating connection with others. We will discuss how these approaches support learning when children are regulated, and de-escalate them when they are activated. We'll close by discussing any "sticky" cases from our own practice.

This workshop will catalyze conversation about challenging behaviors in young children, and how we respond to them. How might fear cause children to do things that appear deliberate, but are actually survival instincts? How might a behavior trigger me, diminishing my capacity? How can we support ourselves as early childhood professionals? How does a body-based approach shift our focus from "be safe with your body" to "I want to help you feel safe in your body"?

This workshop is for any early childhood professional, especially those working with neurodivergent children and/or children with trauma.



Laura Grant (she/her) holds a MEd from Bank Street College of Education (NYC), and certifications in adult and youth yoga, and infant developmental movement. Her graduate thesis focused on early childhood social-emotional development, caregiver wellness, and mind-body practices. She has taught in schools and studios since 2003, and has led professional development and teacher trainings since 2007. Laura presented at the Bank Street College Infancy Institute ('17, '18) and the ETSU Early Childhood Conference ('18, '19). She has completed diversity and trauma trainings in education and yoga.

Laura has also danced professionally in NYC, Minneapolis, and Durham. Most recently, she has been the primary caregiver for her own children, one of whom is neurodivergent with a complex nervous system disability. Laura's passionate work supporting young children and the people who care for them is deeply informed by her own experiences as an early childhood educator, yoga and mindfulness instructor, dancer, person with chronic pain and anxiety, and mom to a neurodivergent 5yo and (so far) neurotypical 2.5yo. She brings curiosity, compassion, sensitivity, and a joyful sense of play to her teaching, and she strives to make her learning environments as inclusive as possible.



Skylar Belt (They/She) is an early childhood educator and one-on-one support specialist dedicated to creating inclusive and emotionally responsive learning environments. Skylar holds a BA in Theatre and is pursuing a Master's in Early Childhood Education. Skylar has worked with infants to four-year-olds and served as a lead mentor teacher at the Verner Center for Early Learning, advising new teachers on best practices for emotionally responsive classrooms and curricula. Skylar's expertise includes providing one-on-one support for autistic children and creating autism-supportive classroom environments. Trained in Emotionally Responsive Practice, Infant Mental Health, TEACCH, and the PLAY Project approaches, Skylar currently works as a one-on-one support specialist for autistic children at Key Autism.

Skylar has presented at the Bank Street Infancy Institute on Emotionally Responsive Practice through Block Play and creating autism-supportive classrooms through Shoebox Tasks and Object Schedules. Additionally, Skylar has presented at the Emotionally Responsive Schools Conference on supporting young children's mental health.

Motivated by a passion for creating safe and inclusive classroom environments, Skylar is dedicated to supporting children's mental health and emotional well-being, with a focus on autistic and neurodiverse individuals. Skylar's approach combines empathy, creativity, and a commitment to best practices in early childhood education.

"Seek First to Understand": Cultural Considerations when working with Appalachian Families

This workshop is intended to introduce participants of multiple sectors to both the historical roots and current lives of children and families of the Appalachian culture. This culture, deeply rooted in tradition, kinship ties, self-reliance and independence, may present with specific challenges for engagement of services when warranted. We will discuss the various challenges, barriers and discrimination often experienced by Appalachian families, as well as strategies to address some of these in our work and advocacy efforts.

Oftentimes Appalachian families are so held by community and kinship ties that they do not seek services. Appalachian families also have a strong sense of independence which further discourages them from seeking help, and when they do, they frequently experience judgment by outsiders and feel out-of-sync with the helping fields. Tenets of the helping field often may be experienced as clashing with values and ideals of the Appalachian culture.

As direct care providers working within this general region of Western North Carolina, it is important to recognize not only the thoughts and beliefs that we ourselves may hold, but also challenge any internal biases that may present. We hope to create increased cultural awareness and self-reflective capacity for the participants of the workshop through the utilization of the RIOS framework to explore Appalachian culture in the context of working with children and families. The ideal participants for this workshop will

be anyone who works with Appalachian families who wishes to reflect on the interplay between their professional use of self and the complexities of Appalachian culture including the barriers and stigmas these families face. This workshop will also provide participants with a greater understanding of the RIOS framework and will expand their self-reflective capacity as they practice the essential components and collaborative tasks. The essential components of RIOS are understanding the family story, keeping the baby in mind, professional use of self, and the parallel process. The collaborative tasks of RIOS are describing, responding, exploring, linking, and integrating. Additionally, this workshop will interweave the underlying CPP principles.

This workshop will also create conversations exploring one's own biases when interacting with individuals and families of the Appalachian culture and how to address identified barriers to improve access and effectiveness of services. We hope that our participants will be able to generalize aspects of this conversation to other cultures as well.



Xia has over fifteen years of experience working with children and families impacted by trauma. She

specializes in working with young children, ages 0-6 and their caregivers. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Virginia Tech and her Master's Degree in Community Counseling, Counseling Psychology from Lewis and Clark College. She is rostered in a range of evidenced-based therapies, including, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT), Alternatives for Families Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (AF-CBT), and Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP). She holds endorsement as Infant Mental Health Mentor, Clinical through NCIMHA. She also is a facilitator of Circles of Security Parenting and Resource Parenting Curriculum. Xia is a reflective consultant and a clinical supervisor. She is a

consultation for Child-Parent Psychotherapy. Xia is honored by the opportunity to witness children and families heal.



Angela has over twenty years of experience working with children and families impacted by trauma. She has a specific specialization in working with young children, ages 0-6, and their caregivers. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from UNC-Asheville and her Master's Degree in Community Counseling from Western Carolina University. She is rostered in a range of evidence-based therapies, including Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT), Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), and Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP), and recently became the first applicant in North Carolina to hold dual endorsement as an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist through NCIMHA. She is currently being trained in Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTSI). She provides parenting support through Circles of Security and Resource Parenting Curriculum. Angela strongly believes in the resiliency of children and families and that the past does not have to define the future.

Boosting Baby Brains: How Systems of Higher Education Empower Early Childhood Professionals with Infant Mental Health Skills

According to Think Babies (2020), 10-16% of young children suffer from severe mental health conditions like PTSD and anxiety. Since family members and early childhood professionals (working with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) spend significant time with these children, they need to understand infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH). This understanding helps them provide appropriate learning experiences along the IECMH continuum, including promotion, prevention, and intervention referral. Despite this need, many early childhood professionals feel unprepared to incorporate IECMH into their work. The Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health (2023) is addressing this gap by supporting these efforts globally.

The Alliance comprises professionals from fields such as counseling, social work, and pediatrics, aiming to foster young children's and their families' development through IECMH. They stress the importance of "relationship-focused" care, emphasizing the caregiver-infant/toddler relationship. The Alliance collaborates with state and international associations to offer training and education in IECMH. For instance, the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MA-IMH) has created detailed Competency Guidelines® covering eight IECMH focus areas: Theoretical Foundations, Law and Policy, Systems Expertise, Direct Service Skills, Working with Others, Communicating, Thinking, and Reflection. In North Carolina, to ensure early childhood education (ECE) professionals understand these areas, several Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) (UNC Greensboro, Charlotte, and the early care and education faculty association at the community colleges) partnered with the North Carolina Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Association (NCIMHA). Together, they integrated IECMH knowledge into higher education programs by developing crosswalks between these programs and the Competency Guidelines®, thus enhancing course content.

At the NCIMHA annual conference, these initiatives will be discussed. The session invites participants interested in supporting the early childhood workforce. The presentation will cover the process IHE faculty used to develop crosswalks and modify course content to ensure early childhood professionals gain IECMH knowledge. The goal is to support these professionals in obtaining the NCIMHA Endorsement. Additionally, the session will address how to promote this Endorsement effectively. Despite having relevant knowledge and strategies, many early educators do not identify as "mental health specialists." Thus, the session will also explore defining "early childhood mental health" in more workforce-compatible language.



Heather Coleman, Ph.D. worked as an Early Childhood Special Educator before pursuing a doctoral degree. Dr. Coleman completed the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities program and earned her Special Education doctoral degree at Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Coleman is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Specialized Education Services at University of North Carolina Greensboro. Dr. Coleman's focuses on improving services for toddlers and young children with autism and improving professionals' early childhood mental health knowledge. She currently teaches classes related to infant and toddler development, assessment, and family partnerships.



Mrs. Melissa Cleary earned an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education in 2007 from Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute. Her career began at Tri-City Baptist Church as the Pre-K Classroom Assistant in 1998 where she obtained her Early Childhood

Credentials from Catawba Valley Community College. From there, Mrs. Cleary has been the Lead Teacher in a preschool classroom, a BASC Coordinator, worked as a TA/Bus Driver for Head Start, and a Teacher's Assistant/Bus Driver in the Catawba County School System. She is now an In-Home Educator for The Enola Group at Alexander County Early Head Start. Currently, Mrs. Cleary is in her final year of school at the University of North Carolina –Greensboro pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Human Development and Family Studies. She also works as a student researcher for UNCG on Infant and Toddler Mental Health Awareness. As a registered COSP Facilitator, Mrs. Cleary is passionate about working with young children and their families to make sure that they are building their capacity as well as creating that secure attachment with one another.



Cyndie Osborne earned a Bachelor's in Child and Family Development in 1991 and a Master's in Child and Family Studies from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2004. Her career began as a Training and Curriculum Specialist at Robins Air Force Base Child Development Center in 1991. She then served as Program Coordinator at Bright Horizons in 1994 and Director at Alexander's Children's Center in 1995. From 2000 to 2005, she worked as a licensing consultant for the North Carolina Division of Child Development. In 2006, she became the Online and Practicum Coordinator in the Early Childhood Education Department at Stanly Community College, where she has led the department as program head since 2019.

A recognized authority in childhood development, Ms. Osborne is dedicated to supporting children, families, students, and teachers by offering essential services and finding solutions to the childcare crisis. She is an active member of the North Carolina Early Education Coalition Board and serves as president of the North Carolina ACCESS of the North Carolina Early Childhood Faculty Association. Motivated by a passion for education, Ms. Osborne aims to continue her impactful work at Stanly Community College and further establish herself as a community leader and advocate for early childhood education.



Sharon Little, Ed.D Higher Education Liaison with CCSA has thirty-eight years of experience in the field of early education and adult learning. Sharon is a former Program Lead and Community College Faculty in Early Childhood Education, an Early Childhood Mental Health endorsed Infant Family Specialist/Reflective Supervision Specialist, and ITTI Care Project Coach with Duke's Center for Child and Family Policy. Sharon started her career as a preschool teacher with Head Start, and has worked a variety of roles in the early childhood profession. She has served as a center director, childcare social worker, subsidy policy consultant, licensing consultant, and a childcare consultant for early childhood organizations. Sharon has worked in collaborative partnerships with childcare providers, public school after school programs, exceptional children's programs, and community action organizations. Sharon has provided training in early childhood and higher education levels

on various topics, including developmentally appropriate and trauma informed practices, collaboration, professionalism, equity, and practicum settings for early childhood professionals.

The Intersection of Safe Babies Court and Infant Mental Health



Josie Sawyer, MSW, LCSW



Dr. Mackenzie Soniak, PsyD



Polly Handrahan is the North Carolina Safe Babies Court State Director. She holds a bachelor's degree in religion and a master's degree in social work. She has dedicated her career to working with children and families in both nonprofit and government agencies in several states throughout the southeast. She began her career working with teenagers in residential treatment centers, psychiatric hospitals, juvenile court, and community mental health. During this time, she developed an after-care program to assist children with their transition from group settings to their families and communities. She was a co-presenter at the National Association of Peer Group Agencies on the topic of developing individualized treatment plans in peer group settings. She has 15 years of experience working in child welfare which included supervising a

specialty unit that provided services to parents with cognitive challenges and assisted with developing a continuous quality improvement plan to improve services to families. Most recently her focus has been on the recruitment, retention, and well-being of social workers for child welfare positions. As part of this work, she developed a comprehensive group training program for BSW and MSW interns to enhance their classroom education and increase their confidence so they could begin working with clients on their first day of employment. Throughout her career she has been committed to learning from people with lived experience to improve systems that were created to serve them.



Kristin Stout is the North Carolina Safe Babies Court State Coordinator. She holds a bachelor's degree in social work and a master's degree in peace & conflict studies with a concentration in conflict management. With 30 years of experience as a dedicated social worker, she has devoted her career to advocating for vulnerable populations and promoting positive change within the community. Her journey involves supporting families and individuals in various challenging circumstances, from child welfare to creating programs that serve survivors of human trafficking. She is an expert trainer of the Resource Parent Curriculum, coaching future facilitators to provide workshops for resource parents

across the state. As the court coordinator for the Juvenile Court Infant Toddler Initiative (JCITI) in Guilford County North Carolina, she focused on affecting systems change to ensure the safety and well-being of young children and their families involved in the child welfare system. Kristin has developed a deep understanding of child development and trauma-informed practices. Collaborating with stakeholders, incorporating data-driven approaches, identifying, and utilizing evidence-based programs, and providing comprehensive support are key practices in her work. Throughout her career, she has remained committed to fostering resilience, promoting social justice, and championing the rights of those who are marginalized or oppressed. Kristin has developed a unique perspective and a passion for creating lasting change!

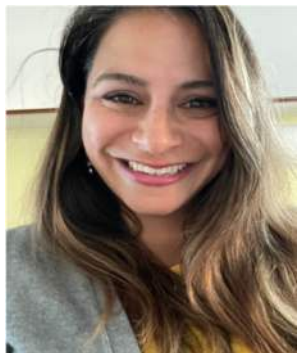
From Policy to Action: Mental Health Efforts within DCFW Programs

This workshop will share key strategies undertaken within NC DHHS' Division for Child and Family Wellbeing (DCFWD) programs for supporting the broad early childhood workforce to address infant and early childhood mental health. Presenters from the Home Visiting and Early Intervention programs will share information about their efforts to build a system of support for children and families in NC around mental health and social-emotional well-being through workforce development and mental health endorsement for staff. These efforts will be discussed in terms of local implementation and impact, and will be framed in the larger context of state DHHS and DCFWD policy recommendations and strategies. The workshop will feature the activities of the following projects: specialized training from NC PAL to prepare CDSA Early Intervention Service Coordinators to address social-emotional development and mental health, targeted support for more Home Visitors to become endorsed in infant/early childhood mental health competencies through NCIMHA, and the system structures within DCFWD that support programs that serve young children and their families. This conversation will highlight and bring awareness to social-emotional trainings, SE technical assistance, reflective supervision, and IECMH Endorsement efforts across DCFWD programs. It will connect these efforts with the state-level policy recommendations

and strategic planning, and give participants the opportunity to discuss progress being made and where additional work needs to be done to equitably meet strategic goals. The Nurse-Family Partnership program will share its considerations for mental health endorsement for qualified nurse home visitors and nurse supervisors across the state. April Baur, an NFP supervisor, will share strategies that other individuals or teams who provide home visiting services can use in pursuing endorsement. CDSA Supervisor Melissa Fleming will share the impacts of NC-PAL training for CDSA providers, as well its piloting of mental health endorsement for CDSA providers, and plans for rolling out Reflective Supervision. The presentation will include information about DCFW's programs and services for young children and families, and DHHS policy strategies that affect these. It will also touch upon national and state policy recommendations from Zero to Three, the EarlyWell Initiative and the NC Early Childhood Foundation's Pathways to Grade-Level Reading. Presenters were intentionally identified to represent a variety of service sectors and areas of expertise. The Diversity-Informed Tenets will be referenced and represented through emphasis on all children's right to positive social emotional experiences and access to mental health supports, no matter their background or demographic, and through reflection on equitable policies, systems, and proactive implementation.



Alexandra Morris, MSW is the Early Childhood Behavioral Health Programs Specialist supporting the NC Division of Child and Family Wellbeing through the UNC-CH School of Social Work Behavioral Health Springboard. She has led and supported initiatives to support birth-five social-emotional health and family support in North Carolina for 17 years. As an early childhood systems leader, she brings expertise in early childhood mental health policy, research and programming, early relational health, early intervention, parenting supports, and health equity. She is also the parent of an exuberant 9-year-old.



Melissa is an Early Intervention Service Coordinator Supervisor at the Shelby Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA), one of the 16 Part C Early Intervention (EI) offices of the North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program (NC ITP) in the Division of Child and Family Well-Being (DCFW). She supports a multi-disciplinary team of staff including service coordinators and clinicians, that provide services for families and their children, birth to three who have special needs. Melissa has worked in EI for 15 years. Melissa holds her Bachelors Degree in Psychology with a Concentration in Communication Disorders and Special Education from Appalachian State University. Melissa is an Early Intervention Mentor Coach, a Circle of Security Facilitator, and holds her Infant-Toddler and Family Specialist Certification through the NC ITP. Melissa is a current participant in the Reflective Supervision Learning Collaborative through the

NCIMHA, a participant in the pilot

group for endorsement for the Shelby CDSA, serves as a member of the Shelby CDSA Social-Emotional Workgroup, and serves on other community committees that support families and children in North Carolina.



April Baur is a Public Health Nurse Supervisor with Nurse-Family Partnership at Buncombe County Health and Human Services in Asheville, NC. She has over 16 years of nursing experience, specializing in pediatrics and public health. April obtained a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Clemson University and a Master of Science in Nursing, with a concentration in Nursing Administration, from UNC Greensboro. April serves on the Executive Committee for the Boost Blue Ridge immunization coalition, Steering Committee for the North Carolina Immunization Coalition, and is a member of the Buncombe Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team. Past roles include Board positions for the Western Region SNANC (School Nurse Association of North Carolina) and the Partnership for Substance-Free Youth in Buncombe County. She has presented on childhood trauma, resilience, and gender support, and has co-authored articles on school nurse research and the impact of COVID-19 on nurse well-being.

Nurturing EmpowerED Classrooms: Creating Spaces for Safety, Love, and Authenticity

We aim to emphasize the essential foundation of infant-toddler spaces as emotionally, psychologically, and physically safe educational environments where children and families feel seen and valued. In our exploration of learning, we prioritize social-emotional learning, recognizing the significance of racial identity, multiculturalism, and the power of relationships. Social-emotional learning empowers individuals to embrace their entirety, encompassing emotions, cultural backgrounds, and languages. By prioritizing a sense of belonging, safety, and nurturing we cultivate positive learning environments and promote mental wellness. Join us as we envision early education classrooms as sanctuaries of safety, love, and joy, nurturing the holistic development of young minds through an understanding of child development, emotionally responsive practices, and fostering curiosity among educators. In our session, we'll infuse our heartfelt selves and diverse lived experiences, fostering a parallel process that mirrors the inclusive environments we aspire to cultivate. Through a blend of examples and strategies, we'll share the art of creating spaces where children, families, and educators feel empowered to bring their whole selves, embracing their authenticity within the classroom. This can be brining there emotions, their language, their culture, and their identity to a space where they feel they belong. Drawing from the rich tapestry of attachment theory, Bank Street emotionally responsive practices, translanguange approaches, and Ghodly Muhammad's transformative guidance on education. Together, we'll uncover the power of weaving emotional responsiveness, cultural inclusivity, and family engagement into the very fabric of the classroom. Approaching this workshop as both learners and educators, we'll share examples of co-created explorations that demonstrate the transformative impact of our collective efforts. with practical strategies and valuable tools, participants will leave equipped to begin to cultivate EmpowerED spaces where everyone feels seen, valued, and celebrated for their true selves. This workshop is ideal for educators, mental health professionals, and childcare providers committed to emotionally and culturally responsive practices and trauma-informed care.



Gabriel Guyton is an early childhood specialist with over two decades of experience working with children and families. She is the co-director of the Bank Street Center for Emotionally Responsive Practice and the founder of ConnectEd Circles, a consulting business dedicated to child development, early multicultural and emotionally responsive education, and reflective supervision.

Gabriel's career is driven by a passion for inclusion and equity, principles she deeply believes in and strives to integrate into all her work.

Gabriel previously taught at the Bank Street Family Center in a mixed-age, inclusive classroom with children aged 6 months to 5 years. Her tenure at Bank Street also included her role as a faculty member in the Infant, Family, and Early Intervention Program. Additionally, as Vice President of Children and Family Services, she supervised the directors of an Early Head Start and mixed-funding program. She provides reflective supervision groups and training in the field, grounded in relationships, trauma-informed principles, and a stance of curiosity. Gabriel holds a master's degree in general and special education from Bank Street College, with a focus on 0-3-year-olds, and a master's degree in psychology of counseling, with a focus on marriage and family therapy. She also holds an Infant Mental Health endorsement in reflective supervision.



Turkessa Baten is a social worker at heart, with several years of experience working with children and families. She graduated from UNC Charlotte in May 2024 with a master's degree in social work and aims to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker Associate (LCSWA) and Licensed Clinical Addictions Specialist Associate (LCASA). Since her training in Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) in 2019, Turkessa has facilitated COSP groups in her local community, with Early Head Start families, and one-on-one with parents and caregivers. She is an advocate for equity and inclusion, often participating in workgroups and initiatives that promote justice and equity within her professional environment.

Turkessa's career is driven by a passion for inclusion and equity, principles she integrates into all her work. She utilizes reflective practice daily at home, in the community, and in her professional roles, leveraging her experiences as a mother, grandmother, and auntie. Dedicated to professional growth, Turkessa is focused on expanding her expertise in social work and substance abuse treatment, aiming to create a significant impact in these fields. She is committed to supporting families and individuals through her professional and personal experiences.



Marcela Cuadra graduated with a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education in 2010 and has over a decade of experience fostering the development of children from birth to Kindergarten. She is an advocate and Anti-Bias Curriculum Coordinator for Verner Center for Early Learning, where she collaborates with educators, directors, and senior leadership to co-create diverse and inclusive curriculum practices. These practices are designed to nurture developmental milestones and create an emotionally supportive environment for children and families. In her role, Marcela has facilitated Circle of Security Parenting since her early years in the field, highlighting her commitment to secure and supportive caregiving. Her experience includes significant contributions to the Latinx community, providing a

secure base and safe haven for families.

Marcela's passion for diversity, equity, and inclusive practices radiates throughout her work. She is an active collaborator within all communities, empowering BIPOC individuals and promoting a sense of belonging and equity. As a leader in her field, Marcela has also taken on various leadership roles and actively participates in professional development to further her expertise.

Reflective Supervision/Consultation IRL: Specific frameworks we use and how it shapes our work

According to the 2023 Landscape Analysis of RSC in North Carolina initiated by NCIMHA, 32% of respondents did not receive any form of reflective supervision or consultation, another 20% of respondents were providing RSC without receiving it themselves, and of those who reported providing RSC only 68% of them had engaged in any training to do so. While this data snapshot is alarming, it is not surprising. North Carolina is just cutting our baby teeth in the awareness of and practice of reflective supervision and consultation.

Our workshop aims to address this challenge within the field in a way that moves those new to the concepts and practice of RSC from shame or ignorance ("What is RSC anyway?") toward curiosity, inspiration, and next-step action ("I want that for myself and my staff/workplace! What would it look like in real life?" or "I've been trying to provide RSC best I can to my staff but how will I get this for myself too?") Some of the specific challenges that are current barriers to RSC in varied workforce contexts in NC include: Lack of awareness. Many professionals in NC don't yet know what RSC is; Misconceptions. How does RSC differ from administrative (or clinical) supervision? Workforce burnout; Fear/lack of experience engaging brave conversations around power, privilege, racism, historical and ongoing trauma in the lives of families we serve and in our own lives and work as providers; Belief that there isn't enough time for RSC; Many RSC providers don't receive it themselves.

How will we address these challenges through our conference workshop? First, through offering basic education about what RSC is, how it looks and feels, why it matters (noting increased skill, client retention, decreased burnout, optimized self-reflection, and the welcoming and scaffolding of brave conversations--distributing the NCIMHA-created RSC infographic).

Then, we will give participants some IRL examples of how we provide and receive RSC utilizing the RIOS (Reflective Interaction Observation Scale), the Supervisor's Circle of Security, and several simple somatic mindfulness practices that can optimize reflective practice.



Susanne Walker Wilson, LCSW, LCAS-A, ITFS, IMH-E™ partners with parents, caregivers, early educators, administrators and policy makers to build a wide table, to center infant and young child mental health, to invite all adults toward reflective practice, and to invest in public health prevention by supporting the adults that raise young children. In addition to being a therapist, and a trainer, fidelity coach, and consultant for Circle of Security International, Susanne continues to facilitate Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) groups in Buncombe County where she lives. She is a senior trainer in the Reconnect model and works through Circle Together to anchor and elevate attachment-informed parenting and early educator practices across North Carolina. Susanne was in the first Leadership Cohort to be endorsed as an Infant Mental Health professional

(Clinical Mentor) through the NC Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Association. She offers reflective consultation and RSC training through NCIMHA ongoing. Partnering with families and other early childhood professionals (rather than over or around them) is Susanne's joy; addressing unjust systemic inequities that too often burden families is her North Star.



Victor Jones is the Family Services and Community Engagement Manager for HeadStart of NEWCA. He is part of the current year-long NCIMHA Reflective Supervision Cohort. He is a Licensed Clinical Social

Worker (LCSW), Licensed Clinical Addictions Specialist (LCAS), Senior Certified Resilience Educator of Reconnect for Resilience™ and Neuro-Somatic Intelligence Coach and Registered Circle of Security

Parenting™ Facilitator. Victor has designed, co-designed and supervised programs to assist people

suffering traumatic experiences, chemical dependence, intimate partner violence and anger management. Victor has practiced psychotherapy for over 25 years. He has a passion for

community-centered resilience education and practices. He is a native of Raleigh, NC, and lives in Rocky Mount with his wife and two

children. Victor loves history, art, nature and intentionally reclaiming the wisdom and beauty of humanity.

Using MH Competencies to Support the Art of Parallel Process

Using the HealthySteps model as a springboard this workshop will explore, reveal, and reflect on ways that professionals across all sectors can learn the art of Parallel Process to support infant mental health within their scope of work. We will examine the Zero to Three's HealthySteps competencies, The Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health's competencies and The Diversity Informed Tenants for Working with Infants, Families, and Children, then explore how individuals can use one or more of these bodies of work to build their practice of supporting Infant Mental Health.



Sara is a member of Children's Home Society of NC team, serving Guilford County as the HealthySteps Specialist in the Atrium Wake Forest Baptist Health Pediatric clinic in Greensboro. She received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Carlow University, her graduate degree in Early Childhood Studies from Walden University, and her certificate in Early Childhood Mental Health from University of North Carolina-Charlotte.

Sara grew up in rural Northwest Ohio playing outside every day, even in the Blizzard of 1976! Now, Sara plays outside everyday with her two labradors, Martie & Ellie. She and her husband of 35 years have lived and worked across the U.S., Japan, and Russia. Sara has three adult children, and one daughter in-law who all love to play outside too.



Margaret McGaw is a HealthySteps Specialist, working for Children's Home Society of North Carolina. Margaret works out of a pediatric medical office to provide parent support/education and community resources to families during their children's well child visits for ages birth to three. As a HealthySteps Specialist Margaret can offer her knowledge in child development, early intervention, infant mental health and

maternal mental health to the children's caregivers and families in a medical setting. Margaret has a degree in Child and Family Studies as well as a master's in early intervention with a Specialization in Autism. She is certified as a Child Life Specialist and an accredited Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) Provider. Margaret's passion for full family dyad support shows in her work with infants, children, and their families.

Integrating Reflective Supervision in Early Childcare Settings

Early childhood educators are under a tremendous amount of stress. When stressful moments arrive in the classroom, many educators go to problem solving without having time to step back and reflect on the child's, caregiver's, and their own experiences and impact. One way to mitigate stress, build relationships, and shift mindsets and practice, is through reflective supervision. Presenters have varying experiences and backgrounds using reflective supervision and will share how they came to know this practice and their experiences being supervised and supervising others. Both presenters have been fortunate to work in early childhood programs that embrace the practice of reflective supervision. Presenters will share their experiences with receiving and providing reflective supervision and the shifts they have seen in their mindsets and practice as a result of consistent and responsive reflective supervision. Presenters will also present some ongoing challenges with incorporating reflective supervision as a center wide practice, including creating and integrating a system to prioritize this practice of reflective supervision, and supporting an understanding of what reflective supervision is and how important it is.



Alex Martinez holds a Masters in Education in Infant and Family Development and Early Intervention from Bank Street College and a Masters in Social Work with a specialization in Infant Mental Health and Early Childhood Trauma from The Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. They have worked in a variety of settings including private, public, and charter schools, playgroups, clinics, and homes. For the past two years, AI has worked as a member of the Child Development Team at Verner Center For Early Learning in Asheville, NC where they mentor teachers, partner with families, and provide individualized support in the classroom for children with developmental delays and variations. They are transitioning to a new role as a clinician with RHA where they will be trained in Child Parent Psychotherapy. AI developed and facilitated the Early Childhood AntiBias Working Group at the Bank Street Family Center in New York City and has led parent groups on topics including infant/toddler

identity development and inviting conversations about race with infants and toddlers. They are passionate about advocating for very young children and their families, supporting positive identity development in infancy and toddlerhood, and educating families and teachers on the Developmental Interaction Approach.



Ashley has been in the Early childhood field for 30 years and still feels passionately about learning more. Ashley has a B.S in Human Development (Radford University) and a M.A in Early Childhood Education. (ETSU) She also has a Master's certificate in Emergent Inquiry in Early Childhood Education (ETSU) and a Certificate in Early Childhood Leadership from Harvard University

This past year she shifted gears and moved from being a Center Director in Asheville to developing an Early childhood teacher residency program at Verner Center for Early Learning. Ashley has been an adjunct at Warren Wilson College and East Tennessee State University and she enjoys teaching child development for adult learners. Ashley lives near Asheville NC on a small farm where she is learning how to speak Chicken, goat, pig, donkey and bee. Ashley has raised 3 children who are now young adults and that is much harder to practice reflective supervision with.

The Brain Architecture Game: Exploring the Science of Early Brain Development

The most rapid growth and development occurs during the first five years of life. During this time, childhood experiences—positive and negative—influence the architecture (i.e., the shape and wiring) of the brain. Children's social-emotional health, reaction to stimuli, and cognitive abilities result from interactions between genetic and environmental factors. In this workshop, participants will become oriented with the underlying mechanisms of brain development as affected by genes, adverse childhood experiences, and protective factors while working in small groups. Participants will work together to build models of brains through the facilitation of the Harvard Brain Game. One of the prevalent challenges in the early childhood education field is persistent challenging behaviors. This workshop would catalyze conversations about physiological and emotional factors contributing to those behaviors and highlight the importance of early intervention. Ideal participants are early childhood educators and coaches, mental health consultants, community stakeholders, policy makers, and health service providers. Brain development is of cross-sector importance and will be reflected in the discussion of implications for the aforementioned range of participants.



Winter Graham is a dedicated Healthy Social Behaviors Coach based in Western NC, serving with Child Care Connections of Cleveland County. With a rich background in education, Winter has seamlessly transitioned from being a classroom teacher to a vital advocate for social-emotional health in early childhood settings. For the past five years, Winter has been an integral part of the Healthy Social Behaviors Project, where her passion for fostering healthy interactions and emotional well-being in children has

flourished. Recently endorsed as an Early Childhood Family Specialist through the NCIMHA

mental health program, Winter brings a deep understanding of the intricate dynamics of child development and family dynamics.

Winter's journey began at Appalachian State University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in child development, laying a solid foundation for her career path. Her enthusiasm for empowering educators shines through as she equips teachers with effective strategies and training to promote social-emotional health within their classrooms.

A firm believer in the power of communication, Winter emphasizes that every behavior is a message waiting to be understood. Through her guidance and expertise, Winter strives to create nurturing environments where children can thrive emotionally and socially, setting them up for a lifetime of success.



Joshua Byrd is the Healthy Social Behavior (HSB) Assistant Project Manager with Child Care Resources Inc. He earned his B.S. in Early Childhood Education from the University of Mount Olive and his M.S. in Child, Youth, and Family Studies and Ph.D. in Human Sciences from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His background includes research, publication, and presentation on effects of Pyramid Model practices on school readiness and relations between food insecurity and early childhood developmental outcomes. He and his wife, Nikki, live with their two daughters in Washington, North Carolina.

Nurturing the Nurturers: The Crucial Role of Culturally Responsive Self-Care for Professionals Serving Children and Their Families

Self-care practices are not one-size-fits-all. Professionals who have been marginalized because of their cultural backgrounds have unique needs and preferences that are often overlooked. We will highlight the importance of culturally responsive self-care, providing tools that respect and integrate diverse cultural practices. Recognizing the high levels of stress and emotional labor inherent in this work, our session aims to provide you with practical solutions and foster meaningful discussions around self-care, equity, and cultural responsiveness. By equipping you with effective self-care strategies, we hope to enhance your well-being, thereby improving the quality of care you provide.



Lauren grew up in Charlotte, but has lived in the Raleigh/Durham area since 2002. She is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor specializing in early childhood mental health, adoption/foster care. While beginning as an

outpatient therapist, she transitioned into working with Learning Together, a developmental day center, and Head Start in Wake County as a Mental Health Consultant. She also provided in-home therapy to families living in motels while they were rehomed to more stable living situations in the More than A Roof

project. Lauren is trained in all levels of Triple P, theraplay, and Attachment Biobehavioral Catch-up. She is a vetted Reflective Supervision supervisor for I/ECMH Endorsement in North Carolina. Lauren began working with the ITTI Care Project as a coach in February 2020. Lauren an NC certificate in Trauma & Resilience with an added focus on racial trauma. She has a passion for young children and promoting healthy attachment. She has a new niece and enjoys singing a cappella and hiking in her spare time.



Whitney is a native of and resides in High Point, North Carolina. She has a PhD in educational psychology and is an equity and inclusion specialist. Her work focuses on culturally responsive interventions to increase engagement to empower educators and students. In addition to her work with the ITTI Care Project, she supports trauma-informed education through the Resilience and Learning Project for K-12 schools. Whitney began working with the ITTI Care Project in December of 2021. Whitney holds a K-6 NC teacher license and is a former Kindergarten, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade teacher. She enjoys collaborating with educators and families regarding pedagogical practices, identity development, socialization, and racial equity. Whitney is the aunt of 4 boys and 2 girls and loves traveling in her free time.