

- ADVOCACY
IN
ACTION -



CASA & CRB
Volunteer Conference

FREE
VIRTUAL EVENT
[REGISTER HERE](#)

Friday,
October 10
9am - 1pm

&

Saturday,
October 11
8:30am - 1pm

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About US



The Citizen Review Board (CRB) is a program of Oregon's state court system. The CRB has a dual legislative mandate to 1) review the cases of children in foster care, and 2) make recommendations to ODHS and the Court concerning child welfare services, procedures, and laws. Boards of citizen volunteers from local communities conduct our reviews. CRB saves taxpayer money, brings transparency and public oversight to foster care cases, and provides a path for citizens to shape public policy affecting Oregon's most vulnerable children and families.

Oregon CASA Network (OCN), an affiliate of the National CASA Association, is the statewide organization supporting Oregon's 19 local CASA programs. The local programs recruit, screen, train and support CASA volunteers.

This conference includes a total of 8.5 continuing education hours that can be applied to the annual 8-hour requirement for CRB Board Members and the 12-hour requirement for CASA Volunteers. Additionally, the course hours are pending CLE-approval.

You can pre-register for your breakout sessions by clicking the underlined items in the morning and afternoon sections of the schedule.

- ADVOCACY IN ACTION -

Friday, October 10

The SCHEDULE

Time	Plenary
9:00-9:10	Welcome & Announcements (Stephanie Brown, Jayne Cooper)
9:10-10:10	Interview with a Foster Kid: Connecting with the "Problem Child" (Amira Therese)

Time	Morning Breakout Sessions
10:15-11:30	<u>Domestic Violence and Child Welfare: Optimal Practices for Engaging Families Experiencing DV</u> (Sarah Greenwood) <u>Mind the Gap: The Rights of Youth & Parents with Disabilities</u> (Emily Cooper) <u>Safety: Maltreatment in Care</u> (Leslie LaNier) <u>Federal & State Laws for K-12 Special Education</u> (Chris Shank)

Time	Afternoon Breakout Sessions
11:45-1:00	<u>Education: Resources and Guidance for Child Welfare Cases</u> (Catherine Stelzer) <u>Considerations for Adoptions and Guardianships in ODHS Permanency Planning</u> (Marc Bass, Heather Schatz) <u>Understanding Safety Planning and Conditions for Return: Partnering for Safety</u> (Leslie LaNier, Tricia Swallow) <u>Youth Transitions Programming 2025</u> (Hayley Smith, Carrie Van Dijk)

- ADVOCACY IN ACTION -

Saturday, October 11

Time	Plenary
8:30-8:40	Welcome & Announcements (Stephanie Brown, Jayne Cooper)
8:40-9:10	The Lenses We Use (Anna Abraham, Keith O'Brien, Kristina Elliott, Jackie Hastings, Michael Heaton, Monica Gillooly)
9:10-10:10	Judges Panel: The Impact of Citizen Advocacy in Oregon's Foster Care System Judge Amanda Benjamin, Judge Norm Hill, Judge Bethany Flint, Judge Valeri Love

Time	Morning Breakout Sessions
10:15-11:30	<u>Attorney Panel: Child Representation</u> (Annette Smith, Simone Weyand, Kevin Hupy, Sarah Robbins) <u>Early Intervention (EI) & Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)</u> (Kevin Anderson, Ashleigh Walters) <u>Administrative Law 101: Tools for Turning Advocacy Into Action</u> (Robin Maril, Tricia Swallow)

Time	Afternoon Breakout Sessions
11:45-1:00	<u>Institutional Placements: Creating Space for Youth Voice</u> (Annette Smith, Senator Gelser Blouin, Kayla Muzquiz, Chelsea Maldonado) <u>Change Happens Here: Understanding the Stages of Change and the Process of Recovery</u> (Teri Morgan-Urie) <u>Beyond Placement: Integrating Mental Health into the Core of Child Welfare</u> (Mikayla Avery)

The
SCHEDULE

Workshop DETAILS

Interview with a Foster Kid: Connecting with the “Problem Child”



Drawing from 15 years in foster care and more than 30 placements, Amira brings the perspective of a child who was labeled difficult yet carried an unrelenting will to be seen. Her keynote invites advocates to move beyond labels, connect authentically with youth, and strengthen the system together by supporting both children and their parents so healing and reunification are possible.

Domestic Violence and Child Welfare: Optimal Practices for Engaging Families Experiencing DV



This training is designed to enhance attendees understanding of how Child Welfare engages families experiencing DV through application of the Safe & Together Model's Core Principles. The S&T Model emphasizes keeping children safe and together with non-offending caregivers, or the survivor, whenever possible by primarily using a perpetrator pattern-based approach rather than focusing on the survivors "failure to protect."

Mind the Gap: The Rights of Youth & Parents with Disabilities



Individuals with disabilities must receive meaningful access to all Child Welfare administered programs to the same extent as individuals who do not have disabilities. In this workshop, attendees will learn about who qualifies as individuals with disabilities, required notifications, rules for identifying necessary modifications, and worker responsibilities to provide reasonable modifications, remove barriers, and provide auxiliary aids and services.

Safety: Maltreatment in Care

Ensuring the safety of children in care is not only the priority, but also a critical performance measure for ODHS Child Welfare in state and federal reviews. Too many children experience maltreatment while in care and we all have a role in prevention and promoting child safety. In this session, attendees will learn about this performance measure and the efforts being made to reduce maltreatment in care. We will discuss how abuse of a child in care is defined, how maltreatment investigations are conducted, how decisions are made, and how information is shared. We will discuss how a child in care may experience maltreatment, what to look for during home observations and face-to-face contacts, and questions to ask to gather relevant information.

A photograph showing three students from behind as they walk up a set of concrete steps towards a school entrance. The student on the left is a girl with long brown hair, wearing a white shirt, black pants, and a black backpack. The student in the middle is a boy with short dark hair, wearing a white shirt, red shorts, and a black backpack. The student on the right is a boy with short brown hair, wearing a white shirt, dark pants, and a colorful patterned backpack. The school entrance has a white door with a colorful patterned screen and a sign that says '1223'. There are white columns on either side of the entrance and a green bush to the left.

A photograph showing three people—two men and one woman—seated around a white table in a library setting. They are all looking at a laptop screen, which is open in front of them. The man on the left is smiling and looking towards the laptop. The woman in the center is also smiling and looking at the screen. The man on the right is gesturing with his hand while looking at the laptop. The background is filled with bookshelves containing many books. On the table, there is a brown folder or envelope, a pen, and some papers.

The presentation will advise adult supporters on how and where to find Youth Transitions and Child Welfare resources while providing an overview of all the Youth Transitions (YT) supports and services available to eligible young people (ages 14-23) that experienced the foster care system.

Workshop DETAILS

The Lenses We Use



This session will examine the overlapping role of CRBs and CASAs within the child welfare system, including our similarities and distinct differences. While both programs are committed to ensuring child safety and well-being, we approach cases through different lenses that reflect our unique mandates. This session will highlight how CRB and CASA can work together to promote better outcomes for children and families.

Judges Panel

A panel of judges will share what they appreciate most about presiding over dependency cases, areas they see as system strengths, areas we need to collectively do better, how CASA and CRB volunteers can best use their roles to effectively advocate, and their hopes for the future.

Attorney Panel: Child Representation

Representation of the interests of children is at the core of the dependency system. CASAs advocate on behalf of the best interests of the children in dependency cases, but Oregon law also includes direct representation of children during the court process through an attorney. Attorneys must follow specific standards of professional conduct when representing children, which are more complex than representation of adult clients. Our panel of dependency attorneys will explore the nuances of advocating for a child's "express interests" and/or their best interests when considering the child's ability to adequately express their interests.



Early Intervention (EI) & Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Oregon's EI/ECSE system is a partnership between the Oregon Department of Education and nine local service areas across the state. The system exists to partner with families and caregivers to provide free, equitable, timely, individualized services that enhance learning and development through everyday opportunities for all infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities. In this workshop, attendees will learn about what types of services are provided through EI/ECSE, the referral and evaluation process, and what happens after a child qualifies for services.



Administrative Law 101: Tools for Turning Advocacy Into Action

Have you ever felt like you're not being heard? Tying your advocacy or request to a law, rule or procedure that requires it to be fulfilled may be just what you need. In this workshop, Professor Robin Maril, a podcaster, writer, activist, and law professor, will share with you her passion for engaging in human rights advocacy through the use of administrative law principles. Tricia Swallow, CRB Trainer and 23-year-veteran of Oregon child welfare, will join in to show us how to connect the principles shared by Professor Maril to your own advocacy work in our state's foster care system.

Workshop DETAILS



Institutional Placements: Creating Space for Youth Voice

In this session, learners will hear from a state senator, an attorney for children, a former foster youth, and a researcher/survivor of institutional child abuse about how institutional placements for foster youth can cause lifelong harm, and how advocates for children can play a critical role in addressing the risks head on. These advocates will deliver practical ideas for system partners that will empower them to ask critical questions, evaluate placements for the safety, health and wellbeing of kids, and to take action against harmful placements. Learners will gain valuable insight into program red-flags and what laws exist to protect children.



Change Happens Here: Understanding the Stages of Change and the Process of Recovery

We've all seen a parent in our cases struggling to get clean from drugs, and we've wondered why they can't just get it together. After all, connection with their child is on the line! Well, maybe we're failing to grasp the full difficulty and complexity of achieving sobriety. Come hear Teri Morgan-Urie explain it all for you in "Change Happens Here," a look at the stages of change and recovery. Teri is the Program Director at the Springfield Treatment Center and is a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor II. Additionally, she has her own amazing journey through addiction, criminality and homelessness, and removal of her youngest daughter into foster care. Come hear how Teri got her daughter back.



Beyond Placement: Integrating Mental Health into the Core of Child Welfare

This session explores the critical intersection of mental health and child welfare, emphasizing the prevalence of trauma and behavioral health needs among system-involved youth. Participants will examine barriers to care, legal and ethical responsibilities, strategies for cross-system coordination, and the importance of elevating youth and family voice in mental health planning.

The KEYNOTE



Amira Therese

Amira Therese is an author, speaker, and former foster youth who spent nearly 15 years in over 30 placements. Labeled as a “problem child”, she survived a system that often chose placement over family and left her with the unanswered questions of whether her parents could have been helped. Her debut book, *DISAPPOINTED: The Sacred Act of Reappointing Yourself*, is the result of a decade-long journey to reclaim her story, a manuscript that almost never left the top drawer of her desk. Through her project, *Interview with a Foster Kid*, she steps into her voice as the child, the interviewer, and the author, transforming survival into testimony and calling others to courage, connection, and change.

Speaker BIOS

Sarah Greenwood, Oregon Department of Human Services

Sarah Greenwood currently serves as the statewide Domestic Violence Intervention Coordinator with the Child Safety Program in the Child Welfare (CW) Division of the Oregon Dept. of Human Services (ODHS). In this role, Sarah focuses on enhancing all CW program practices when engaging a family experiencing domestic violence, which ultimately advances Oregon CW to become a more DV-informed child safety agency. Sarah facilitates DV-specific trainings both internally and externally; participates in staffing and case consults with local offices, legal and community partners; and joins in Critical Incident Review Teams (CIRTs) when domestic violence has been a family stress factor in the critical incident. Sarah also supports the Child Welfare Division in ODHS cross-program initiatives as a member of the DV Point Program Core Team and works closely with the Self-Sufficiency Program’s (SSP) DV Survivor Programs policy analyst team.

Emily Cooper, Disability Rights Oregon

Emily leads a team of attorneys and advocates who work to uphold the rights of Oregonians with disabilities. She spearheads DRO’s class-action litigation, including the *Wyatt v. Kotek* lawsuit that recently resulted in a settlement agreement aimed at seeking a safer foster care system that provides children the services they need to thrive. In addition to working on class-action litigation, Emily monitored facilities that serve people with disabilities, investigated abuse and neglect, and testified in front of the legislature. Emily was also an Adjunct Law Professor at Seattle University School of Law from 2014 to 2017 and graduated from Seattle University School of Law in 2003.

Leslie LaNier, Oregon Department of Human Services

Leslie LaNier has worked for the Oregon Department of Human Services' Office of Child Welfare for almost 20 years with experience in casework, supervision, and consultation extending over multiple program areas including child protective services, permanency, and certification. For the last six years, Leslie has served as a Child Safety Program Coordinator where she is the statewide expert and principal policy advisor on child protective services (CPS) statutes, rules, and procedures. As a CPS subject matter expert, she provides guidance to Child Welfare, ODHS staff, managers, administrators, state and local agencies, the legislature, and stakeholders from public and private sectors. Her educational background includes graduating from Ashland High School, associate's degrees in science and the arts from Cottey College, a bachelor's degree in criminology from Southern Oregon University, and a master's degree in criminal justice from Indiana State University. She currently lives in Jacksonville, Oregon with her husband, with whom she has raised six children and welcomed four grandchildren.

Chris Shank, Youth, Rights, and Justice

Chris Shank has practiced education law for 25 years. The first 20 years of her career were devoted to child advocacy at Disability Rights Oregon before moving to Youth, Rights and Justice to join their Schoolworks program team in June 2020. In both positions, Chris has advocated to ensure all children had access to community-based services and an education to allow them to reach their full potential.

Catherine Stelzer, Oregon Department of Human Services

Catherine Stelzer, MSW has worked for the Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare for 28 years in variety of positions. Currently, as the Child Welfare Education Program Coordinator, for the past 13 years. Catherine works collaboratively with Oregon Department of Education, school districts, ODHS staff, and community partners to promote education stability and academic success for students experiencing foster care.

Marc Bass Oregon Department of Human Services

Marc Bass worked in child and adolescent residential treatment programs and adult substance abuse treatment, prior to being hired by the Klamath County branch of the State of Oregon's Children's Services Division in 1994 as a part time foster home certifier/part time C.P.S. worker. Within a year he was the ICWA worker in the Klamath Branch. Marc additionally worked in Polk and Marion Counties as a permanency case worker, a CET (now called CT's), and a supervisor. For the last 21 years he has been a Legal Assistance Specialist in the Adoptions Program. Over the years he has provided consultation in two-thirds of Oregon's counties, but currently covers Yamhill, Polk, Marion, Josephine, Jackson, Lake, and Klamath counties.

Heather Schatz, Oregon Department of Human Services

Marc Bass worked in child and adolescent residential treatment programs and adult substance abuse treatment, prior to being hired by the Klamath County branch of the State of Oregon's Children's Services Division in 1994 as a part time foster home certifier/part time C.P.S. worker. Within a year he was the ICWA worker in the Klamath Branch. Marc additionally worked in Polk and Marion Counties as a permanency case worker, a CET (now called CT's), and a supervisor. For the last 21 years he has been a Legal Assistance Specialist in the Adoptions Program. Over the years he has provided consultation in two-thirds of Oregon's counties, but currently covers Yamhill, Polk, Marion, Josephine, Jackson, Lake, and Klamath counties.

Hayley Smith, Youth Transitions Program

Hayley Smith has been serving as the Youth Transitions Post Secondary Program Analyst for the last three years. She has worked within Child Welfare for over nineteen years, in a variety of capacities, previously serving as Youth Transitions Housing Specialist for fifteen years, and as a Case Management Coordinator in Marion County. She also holds a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts from Oregon State University. Hayley enjoys serving young people that have experienced foster care and their adult supporters, promoting post-secondary resources and options and supporting those with a desire to access to post-secondary education or training. Given her extensive experience with this population and her passion to support their adult supporters, she facilitates trainings to educate all those interested in supporting young people to navigate the system and to benefit from all the available resources and supports.

Carrie Van Dijk, Youth Transitions Program

Carrie van Dijk has been serving as the Youth Transitions Operations and Policy Analyst, often referred to as the Youth Transitions Specialist, for the last sixteen years. She has been an Oregon State employee for over thirty years, in a variety of capacities, previously serving as a Child Welfare Certifier and as a Trainer within the Portland State University Child Welfare Partnership. She also holds a Bachelor's Degree in Communications from the University of Oregon and participated in ongoing continuing education courses. Carrie enjoys serving young people that have experienced foster care and their adult supporters, promoting their safety, protection, and well-being through contract administration, policy, procedure, trainings, workshops, workgroups, and a variety of other mediums. Through training and mentorship, she continues to educate our foster care community, on the age-appropriate needs of young people in foster care and those transitioning to independence.

The Lenses We Use Panelists

Anna Abraham, CRB Field Manager and former CASA Case Supervisor

Keith O'Brien, CASA of Clackamas County, Executive Director

Kristina Elliott, CRB Field Manager/Trainer and former CRB Board Member

Jackie Hastings, CASA Volunteer Advocate

Michael Heaton, CRB Board Member and former West Coast Regional Director for the National CASA Association

Monica Gillooly, CRB Board Member and CASA Volunteer Advocate

Judges Panel

The Honorable Valeri Love was appointed to the Lane County Circuit Court in Eugene, Oregon in 2011. Born and raised in Hawaii, she graduated from Punahou School and moved to Oregon to attend Linfield College and later Willamette University Atkinson Graduate School of Management and College of Law. Before her appointment to the bench, she practiced law in both the criminal and civil arenas. As a judge she has handled civil and criminal cases as well as served as the judge for the Lane County Adult Treatment Court, Veterans Court and Mental Health Court. Judge Love currently serves as the Chief Juvenile Judge and hears dependency and delinquency matters as well as presides over Lane County's RAP-JTC (Recovery and Progress - Juvenile Treatment Court) Court program. Outside of the courtroom, she devotes her time to various groups and organizations including the Tribal, State and Federal Court Forum, Department of Justice Trafficking Intervention Advisory Committee, National CASA Judicial Leadership Council, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Juvenile Law Advisory and Military committees, JCIP Advisory Committee, JDIP Advisory Committee and serves as the Co-Chair for the JELI Education Subcommittee and Vice Chair of the Judicial Conference Judicial Leadership and Education Committee. In her free time, Judge Love enjoys spending time with family and friends, cooking for others, dancing hula and spoiling her dogs.

The Honorable Norman R. Hill is the presiding judge for the Polk County Circuit Court, which he was appointed to in 2012. Since his appointment, Judge Hill has served as the primary juvenile court judge for the 12th Judicial District handling both delinquency and dependency dockets. Before joining the bench, Judge Hill was in private practice specializing in civil litigation, with an emphasis on real estate, business law and land use matters. Judge Hill is an active member of his community and also teaches at the Willamette University College of Law.

The Hon. Bethany Flint has served the Deschutes County Circuit Court since 2016. Prior to her work on the bench, Judge Flint practiced family law litigation and mediation for nearly 13 years. Judge Flint presided over Deschutes County's Family Drug Treatment Court throughout 2018, and in January 2019 transitioned to presiding over the Court's dependency docket with her general docket responsibilities. She transitioned to a full-time dependency docket in 2024.

Judges Panel (continued)

Amanda Benjamin is a Circuit Court Judge in Lincoln County. She was born and raised near Asheville, North Carolina and earned her Juris Doctor from the University of Tennessee College of Law. She began her legal career practicing family law in Medford before relocating to Newport where she became a prosecutor with the Lincoln County District Attorney's Office. As a prosecutor, she specialized in the prosecution of child abuse and sexual abuse cases and led the juvenile dependency team prior to the transition to AG representation. She joined the bench in January 2019 as a Pro Tem Judge for Lincoln County and was appointed as a Circuit Court Judge in 2021. She has served as the juvenile dependency judge for Lincoln County since 2019 and established Lincoln County's Family Treatment Court in 2022.

Attorney Panel

Annette Smith is a family defender appointed to represent children and parents in dependency proceedings at Public Defender Services of Lane County. For more than a decade, Annette has advocated for the safety of children in the custody of the state. Annette is also a national advocate against institutional child abuse and promotes State and Federal legislation aimed at bringing accountability to the troubled teen industry. She has also taught Children and the Law at the University of Oregon School of Law. She lives in Eugene with her husband and two teenage children.

Kevin Hupy is an attorney with the Juvenile Advocates of Clackamas, practicing primarily in Dependency law representing parents and children. Kevin previously practiced in Douglas County at Umpqua Valley Public Defender, and for several years was Resource Counsel for the Oregon Public Defense Commission, providing the agency with subject-matter expertise in juvenile and civil commitment practice.

Sarah Robbins has worked for the past eighteen years at Southern Oregon Public Defenders, Inc., the last seventeen years of which practicing exclusively in juvenile law. Sarah represents parents and children in juvenile dependency cases, and youth in juvenile delinquency cases. In her spare time, Sarah enjoys volunteering at her church, traveling the world, spending time with her friends and family and walking 10,000 steps a day. Sarah is passionate about advocating for children and is determined to be a voice for the voiceless, to speak up for the rights of all who are vulnerable and to defend the disadvantaged.

Simonne Weyand is currently an attorney at Weyand Law where she focuses on representing vulnerable individuals – children and families, victims of crime, and victims of elder abuse – navigate the justice system and pursue civil actions. She strives to hold agencies accountable and litigates cases against administrative agencies. She began her legal career in Washington D.C. after graduating from University of Oregon's School of Law in 2001. She returned to Oregon in 2004 and began a long-term public service career. In 2009, she became an Assistant Attorney General for the Oregon Department of Justice. For more than a decade, she advised the ODHS Child Welfare Division on the statutes and administrative rules governing the child abuse reporting process and other agency duties.

Kevin Anderson, Multnomah Early Childhood Program

Kevin: I have lived and worked in Oregon since 1996 throughout the greater Portland metro area in multiple school districts and educational service districts. In my 29 years here I have worked across ages in both general and special education. I am the current Director of the Multnomah Early Childhood Program (MECP) and have been an Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education administrator for the past 13 years with MECP in Portland.

Ashleigh Walters, Multnomah Early Childhood Program

Ashleigh: I have worked in special education since 2012, starting as an Early Intervention and school-age physical therapist in Washington State and then working as an Early Intervention physical therapist with the Multnomah Early Childhood Program (MECP) in Portland, OR. In 2022, I joined the MECP administration team as a program administrator, supporting a team of itinerant special education providers within Multnomah County, and as of July 2025 I am now the new Associate Director for MECP.

Robin Maril, Willamette University

Professor Maril is a writer, podcaster and law professor based in Portland. She teaches Constitutional and Administrative Law at Willamette University. As Associate Legal Director at the Human Rights Campaign, she worked directly with Congress and the Executive Branch on federal programs and policies impacting the LGBTQ community. She also focused extensively on issues impacting the federal judiciary and federal judicial nominations including the U.S. Supreme Court. Robin began her legal career as a Presidential Management Fellow at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She and her wife have two sons, two dogs, and an unknown number of snails. She is a proud graduate of the University of Oklahoma and Temple University Beasley School of Law.

Tricia Swallow, Citizen Review Board

Tricia Swallow is a CRB Trainer and Field Manager, where she has served for over seven years. She brings more than 22 years of prior experience in Oregon child welfare, where she worked to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. Tricia's career reflects a deep and ongoing commitment to social equality, fairness, and compassionate support for all individuals involved in the child welfare and judicial systems. A lifelong Oregonian, Tricia is also a proud mother of four children, ages 17 to 24. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, attending concerts with her husband, and spending time with animals — especially dogs. One of her personal dreams is to one day open a dog rescue. Her dedication to service, community, and equity continues to shape both her professional path and personal passions.

Annette Smith, Public Defender Services of Lane County

Annette Smith is a family defender appointed to represent children and parents in dependency proceedings at Public Defender Services of Lane County. For more than a decade, Annette has advocated for the safety of children in the custody of the state. Annette is also a national advocate against institutional child abuse and promotes State and Federal legislation aimed at bringing accountability to the troubled teen industry, including helping to pass the Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act. She has also taught Children and the Law at the University of Oregon School of Law. She lives in Eugene with her husband and two teenage children.

Chelsea Maldonado, 11:11 Media Impact

Chelsea Maldonado is a survivor of the "troubled teen industry" and accomplished lived experience advocate working to eliminate Institutional child abuse and neglect in youth residential programs. Chelsea currently works as a consultant for Paris Hilton's nonprofit, 11:11 Media Impact, as well as the Lead Researcher for the podcast Trapped in Treatment. Chelsea has been writing and researching abuse in residential programs for youth for over 15+ years. She currently lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

Kayla Muzquiz, Parent and Foster Care Alum

Kayla Muzquiz is a former foster youth. She entered foster care around the age of 10 after losing her parents and remained in foster care until aging out at 18. She experienced neglect in multiple institutional placements in several states and is now an outspoken advocate against institutional child abuse and in support of foster youth rights. She has testified in Washington DC about her experiences and helped pass the Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act. She is a current college student and a new mom.

Senator Gelser Blouin, District 8

Senator Sara Gelser Blouin (D-Oregon) has served in the Oregon Legislature since 2005. She currently chairs the Senate Committee on Human Services and serves as the National Co-Chair for the National Council on State Legislature's "Children, Family and Human Services Committee."

In 2009, Sara was appointed by President Barack Obama to the National Council on Disability. Sara successfully spearheaded efforts to strengthen Oregon's child welfare system, minimize the use of seclusion and restraint in schools and kids' residential programs, and to strengthen Oregon's health care nondiscrimination laws to overturn problematic crisis standards of care. In 2021, Sara was recognized with the Carl Levin Award for Legislative Oversight through the Levin School of Law at the University of Michigan for her work to expose abuse in residential placements for Oregon foster youth.

Sara entered public service through the disability community which instilled in her a strong commitment to centering the voices of people with lived experience, including youth and people with disabilities, in policy discussions.

Teri Morgan - Urie CADC II, Springfield and Eugene Treatment Centers

My journey is marked with many years of struggling with addiction, criminality and homelessness. I was estranged from my older children and my youngest daughter was placed in foster care due to my chronic drug use and unsafe lifestyle. Through years of hard work, determination and devotion to being successful in sobriety, I have achieved all of my goals and more, including successful reunification with my family. I am a successful, professional business woman who loves public speaking and presenting, and am the Program Director of Springfield and Eugene Treatment Centers. I am passionate about educating others on the challenges and opportunities in seeking recovery from substance use disorders and believe whole-heartedly that everyone is capable of obtaining sobriety if they want to. I am a member of several professional advisory boards and have been involved with statewide advocacy addressing the addiction crisis in Oregon. My clean date is 7/26/2013 and in that time I have far exceeded even my own expectations of myself. One of my favorite quotes is "Life has no remote – get up and change it yourself."

Mikayla Avery, LCSW

Mikayla Avery is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, educator, and forensic mental health professional with deep expertise in child welfare and complex family systems. She currently serves as a Forensic Clinical manager for a Mental Health agency, teaches in the Mental Health and Addictions Counseling Program at her local college, and works with the Oregon Office of Public Defense Commission serving clients involved with dependency and delinquency cases. Mikayla is recognized for her leadership in trauma-informed care and systems advocacy, and her work has earned her accolades including the 2023 Reunification Hero Award from the American Bar Association and the 2025 Distinguished Teacher of the Year award. With advanced training in reunification therapy, custody evaluations, and interdisciplinary collaboration, Mikayla is passionate about bridging the gap between clinical care and child welfare to promote healing and long-term family well-being.



THANK YOU
to our partners



DRO

A special thanks to...

Our conference planning committee for the time, expertise, and dedication for making this first-ever collaborative a memorable experience:

- Jayne Cooper
- Heidi Moon
- Melissa Dablow
- Tricia Swallow
- Kristina Elliott
- Suzanne Callahan
- Kevin Coulson
- Stephanie Brown
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