

# NCDA Conference 2016

## Descriptive Summary of Presenter's Bios and Workshops

### **Madness In The Mainstream**

Mark Drolsbaugh - keynote speaker

*Madness in the Mainstream* examines how interpretation of IDEA's *Least Restrictive Environment* has affected Deaf education over the years. The mental, physical, and social-emotional impact mainstreaming has on Deaf and hard of hearing children will be discussed, as well as some ingenious mainstream survival skills that help mainstreamed students "fly under the radar." The biggest myths in Deaf education will also be addressed, leading to better understanding and advocacy for mainstreamed students who have yet to develop a healthy Deaf identity.

The conference participants will be able to:

- 1) Gain more understanding of the mental, physical, and social-emotional impact mainstreaming has on Deaf and hard of hearing children.
- 2) Address perpetual myths about Deaf culture and Deaf education.
- 3) Identify strategies and resources that will assist in advocating for the rights of mainstreamed Deaf and hard of hearing children.

**Mark Drolsbaugh** graduated from Gallaudet University with a B.A. in Psychology (1992) and an M.A. in School Counseling and Guidance (1994). Mark is the author of *Deaf Again, Anything But Silent*, and *Madness in the Mainstream*. A former columnist for *DeafNation*, *Silent News*, and *SIGNews*, he currently writes for the *DrolzUncensored* blog on *Deaf Culture Online* (<http://www.deaf-culture-online.com>). In addition to writing, Mark gives candid presentations across the country that offer a rare, behind-the-scenes perspective of Deaf education.

### **"What's In Your Toolbox?": Exchange Inspired Visual Techniques for School and Mental Health Settings** Melinda Brown, MSW, LICSW - Volunteers of America

This School/Mental Health Counselors Roundtable will be sharing and exchanging new ideas using visual hands-on and interactive! This is a great opportunity for new and seasoned counselors to gain valuable knowledge, network with other counselors, and expose those counselors to new ideas. Come and share your ideas, therapeutic tools, intervention strategies, techniques, activities, and experiences with fellow counselors using visual materials. Each

participants should be prepared to share and demonstrate creative visual materials that she/he has used with clients/students of various ages and presenting two to three minutes. A list of all of the ideas will be provided to the attendees after the workshop. There will be time for participants to explore materials so have your toolbox ready and get ready to have some fun!

Participants will be able to:

1. walk away new exchanged visual tools and practical ideas they can use in interventions with clients.
2. select and apply visual materials what they have learned in the roundtable and utilize incorporate new tools to use with clients to achieve goals in therapy.

[Melinda L. Brown](#), MSW, LICSW is a mental health professional with Volunteers of America serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Central Western Minnesota. Ms. Brown is a Deaf woman who has provided services to the DHH community for 19 years and graduated from Gallaudet University with a master's degree in social work. Her work experience has included providing school-based counseling and mental health interventions in urban and rural settings to deaf children, adults, and their families, including culturally relevant treatment for multicultural clients. Prior to joining VOA, Ms. Brown worked at Boys Town National Research Hospital in Nebraska where she worked with the local school district to meet the mental health needs of DHH children. In 2009, she earned a Boys Town Common Sense Parenting Instructor Certification and Domestic Violence/Sexual Abuse Advocate Certification.

### **Searching for the "Ah Ha!!" Moment - Utilizing Creativity in Counseling**

Joseph Batiano, LMHC, NCC, SCC - Rhode Island School for the Deaf

Let's explore and identify different types of creative techniques that may help your students/clients find the "ah-ha!" moments using various items in your office or more. Sometimes we get stuck trying to help our students/clients understand what is happening and by using creative techniques to enhance the counseling sessions we decrease likelihood of being stuck. This workshop will be part presentation and part hands-on activities yet fun-filled all around. Perfect for school counselors, school psychologists, and/or social workers in PK-12th grade settings who provides social-emotional support via individual and/or group counseling.

[Batiano](#), Deaf himself, is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor for the State of Rhode Island and a National Certified Counselor, is a school counselor for Rhode Island School for the Deaf with over ten years of experience with providing counseling services ranging from individual, family, and/or group therapy. Batiano graduated from Gallaudet University with Master of Arts Degree was obtained in School Counseling with Mental Health Emphasis. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications with Honors. Batiano had three articles published titled, "Searching for the 'Ah-Ha! Moment in Counseling", "Can You Hear My Hands? Counseling the Deaf" and "Keeping ADARA Relevant" He travels around the country providing presentations on

topics ranging from providing appropriate services for the Deaf or utilizing creative techniques in counseling. Batiano is a member of a variety of associations pertaining to the field of counseling and Deafness. He is a strong advocate for accessibility to mental health services for those who are Deaf and/or Hard-of-Hearing. He grew up in the New England area and is excited to return to his New England roots after living in different parts of America. He enjoys hiking, camping, traveling and spending time with his family.

### **Technology & Transition Planning**

Shelley Oishi, M.S. & Alana Beal - Purple Communication

(Info coming soon)

### **Flying Solo: One's Journey with Private Practice**

Suzanne Dennis, LCSW

Suzanne Dennis, owner of Synergy Counseling and Wellness, LLC is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who practices in both Kansas and Missouri. After working at a community mental health center for 15+ years, Suzanne decided to venture out to the "unknown" and proceed with her journey with setting up her private practice.

The goal of the workshop is to share her journey which includes the "ups and downs" and provide some insight and preparation for anyone that may be thinking of doing the same.

[Suzanne](#) is a Deaf clinical social worker licensed in Kansas and Missouri. She obtained her BA in Criminology from Gallaudet University and her Master's in Social Work from the University of Missouri – Kansas City. After nearly two decades working in a community mental health environment in Kansas, Suzanne moved to the private sector to continue her counseling work. Suzanne has sat on numerous local and national level boards, advisory committees and task forces geared toward services for the Deaf community. Suzanne continues to be involved with a variety of projects that focuses on striving for better services for Deaf citizens in her state and nationwide

### **A Journey of Behavior MTSS Implementation**

Jennifer Kucinski, Psy. S., NCSP & Janna Wiesner, MSW, LCSW  
Kansas School for the Deaf

The Kansas School for the Deaf has implemented behavior Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for several years. The presentation will incorporate key concepts for MTSS implementation to support student behavior in the classroom and dormitory setting. We will describe specific strategies teachers and dormitory teachers use at the Kansas School for the Deaf to support a system of supports for students. We will also share our experience with the

Second Step character education program as part of our social skills programming. This will not be a sit back and sip your coffee presentation; be ready to get engaged as we share our journey with MTSS implementation complete with role-plays and visuals!

Goals:

1. Describe key components of a multi-tiered system of supports for behavior
2. Describe how Antecedents and Consequences affect Behavior
3. Describe specific strategies for teaching behavior expectations and routines

[Jennifer Kucinski](#) Psy.S., NCSP, is the School Psychologist at the Kansas School for the Deaf. For the past 10 years, Mrs. Kucinski has coordinated the school-wide Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for behavior. The Kansas School for the Deaf has collaborated with the Kansas State Department of Education MTSS project, the University of Kansas' Kansas Institute on Positive Behavior Support, and the Safe and Civil Schools' CHAMPS training session to provide training in behavior support for all of the KSD staff. Mrs. Kucinski coordinates the development of Behavior Intervention Plans for Tier 3 students. Mrs. Kucinski received her M.A. in Developmental Psychology and Specialist degree in School Psychology from Gallaudet University.

[Janna Wiesner](#), MSW, LSCSW, is the School Social Worker at the Kansas School for the Deaf. Mrs. Wiesner has worked with the Kansas School for the Deaf MTSS team for the past 8 years and has implemented school-wide character education via the Committee for Children's Second Step curriculum. Mrs. Wiesner participates in the Tier 2 intervention team (Behavior Education Support Team) to identify supports for students in need. Mrs. Wiesner received her MSW in Social Work from Gallaudet University and is a Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker.

### **Empowerment and Leadership for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students: Cultural Competence**

Tim Albert, MSW - Indiana School for the Deaf

The first Empowerment and Leadership for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students held in March 2007 at the first People of Color Conference in Indianapolis, focused on helping youths of color gain a broader understanding of their ethnicity needs in order to identify the need for cultural competency (awareness and education) in their schools and community that will empower and prompt them to become leaders instead of sideliners. The second Empowerment and Leadership for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students continues to focus on the importance of cultural competency in schools and the community by discussing interventions and activities that prompt self-confidence, pride and a sense of motivation in youths of color to aim for greater excellence in life.

[Tim Albert](#) is a native Louisianian who was born and raised in the "Big Easy" New Orleans. He

attended different mainstream schools in New Orleans until he was transferred to Louisiana School for the Deaf (LSD) in Baton Rouge in 1988. He graduated from LSD in 1991, and then went to National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Rochester, New York where he obtained an Associate of Science Degree in Photography in 1997. He decided to further his education so he enrolled at Gallaudet University in 1998. He obtained two degrees from Gallaudet University: Bachelor of Social Work in 2002 and Master of Social Work in 2004. Currently, he is the Dean of Students at Indiana School for the Deaf. Also, he is the President of the National Black Deaf Advocates, Inc. (NBDA). He is married to Stephanie Smith Albert and has a black lab named Lucky.

### **School Based Trauma-Informed Care**

Nicki Melby & Sara Ranssi - therapists  
Hope and Healing Family Counseling

Studies show that adverse childhood experiences impact brain development, emotional regulation, executive skills, language processing skills, social skills, and so on affecting students' ability to learn. Participants will be able to examine on how they can create safety in school environment for children and adolescents to be able to regulate so they can learn.

Participants will be able to:

1. Understand how trauma affects brain development, functioning, and learning
2. Foster collaborative partnership with educators, mental health providers, and school staffs in creating a trauma sensitive environment in school
3. Integrate trauma informed care in educational system

[Nicki Melby](#) is a deaf therapist and uses ASL as her primary means of communication. She completed her Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy at St. Mary's University in October of 2015. Nicki has over ten years of experience working in the field of adult mental health. She did her internships at Hope and Healing Family Counseling and Volunteers of America working with children and their families. She currently works with Hope and Healing Family Counseling. Nicki has a great interest in working with deaf couples. Her areas of specialty include communication and conflict resolution, parent skills training, couple and family counseling, narrative therapy, play therapy, adult child of addiction, trauma, identity issues, autism spectrum disorder, depression, and anxiety. She is Prepare and Enrich certified.

[Sara Ranssi](#) (formerly Sara Hegge) is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker with 15 years of experience working in the deaf community. She provides culturally and language specific mental health services for deaf, deaf/blind and hard of hearing youth (birth to age 22). Sara received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. She then earned a MA in Deafness Rehabilitation Counseling from Northern Illinois University, working in adult mental health, before going on to get her MSW from the University of Minnesota and finding her true passion working with children and adolescents.

## **Educator Sexual Misconduct Awareness & Prevention**

Deb Myers - Making Right Choices, LLC

Combining research and personal anecdote, my presentation will bring awareness about the subject of Educator Sexual Misconduct, which has become a national epidemic. Participants will recognize how vital their roles are in prevention of such abuse.

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify typical victim and perpetrator risk factors.
2. Understand emotional impact of sexual abuse on victims.
3. Recognize the need for training school personnel (including volunteers) and students to bring sexual misconduct awareness and prevention.

[Deb Myers](#), a survivor of educator sexual abuse, is the author of *Deception: A Deaf Girl's Journey through Trust, Betrayal, Abuse, and Redemption*. A trainer with Making Right Choices, LLC, Deb has spoken on the subject of educator sexual misconduct to elementary and secondary educators and administrators, as well as to college students. Deb holds a master's degree in mental health counseling from Gallaudet University. She has worked in the mental health field as a therapist serving Deaf teenagers and adults as well as a family educator working for a statewide early intervention program serving Deaf children and their families. A mother of five, Deb is currently homeschooling her youngest two children and is an adjunct professor of American Sign Language.

## **Identifying and Overcoming Barriers for Coordinating Client's Care with the School System**

Brandon Marin, MFT intern & Amanda Somdal, LICSW - Five Acres

(Info coming soon)

## **Creating Safe Learning Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ)**

Alex Jackson Nelson - RECLAIM!

This workshop will describe basic LGBTQ terminology important for communicating about (and with) LGBTQ students in schools and in the broader community. National school climate data for LGBTQ students will be discussed and resources will be provided to increase safety in schools for students. Participants will leave with an understanding of how to respectfully work with and for LGBTQ students and how to create a safe learning environment in school settings

Participants will be able to:

- Use respectful current language when referring to LGBTQ students

- Distinguish between sex assigned at birth, gender, sexual orientation, and gender expression and understand the importance of these distinctions
- Relate to the experiences and marginalization faced by LGBTQ students within school systems and gain resources for changing school climate towards LGBTQ students
- Identify national resources that provide support in working with LGBTQ students

[Alex Jackson Nelson](#), LGSW, LSSW, NIC identifies as Transgender and has over fifteen years of experience working in and for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) community. He was the Executive Director of a non-profit LGBT youth center, has co-founded organizations focused on providing services to Transgender and gender-nonconforming youth, worked as a Senior Policy Advocate and has provided consulting and training to thousands of service providers and ASL interpreters around the country. Alex graduated from Gallaudet's Master of Social Work program, has been a certified interpreter for several years, worked at the Metro Deaf School as their behavioral specialist, and currently works as a Senior Therapist and Director of Community Training at RECLAIM!, a non-profit agency that provides mental health services to queer and trans youth based in St. Paul, Minnesota.

### **Healthy Boundaries in Children and Adolescents**

Jaime Monson, MSW, LICSW - Volunteers of America

Melinda Brown, MSW, LICSW - Volunteers of America

In our clinical experience it has become increasingly clear that poor boundaries are, if not at the root, at least a very critical component of ongoing mental illness and poor social interaction. This is true for all ages; however critical when considering healthy development of youth. In our experience we have found improved outcomes when boundaries are explicitly written into the treatment plan, or IEP, and intentionally taught as a component of the therapeutic or educational process. Boundaries are usually modeled well by those in the helping professions, but in our experience direct instruction is less frequent. It is our hope after this workshop that you will consider boundaries in working directly with youth, and their families, and think about how poor boundaries might be impacting your client's progress in their social success.

Participants will be able to:

1. Define boundaries and why they are important.
2. Discuss how boundaries impact mental health.
3. Understand how boundaries are taught and learned.
4. Gain some interventions for teaching boundaries with individuals, groups and families.

[Jaime Monson](#), MSW, LICSW, is a mental health therapist with a Master's degree in clinical social work from Gallaudet University. She has more than 20 years of experience learning and working within the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind communities. As a therapist, Jaime has an interest in play therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy and also provides Dialectical Behavioral Therapy interventions to Deaf, Hard of Hearing and hearing adolescents and young adults. She has completed intensive DBT training through Behavioral Tech, LLC's Dialectical Behavior

Therapy Intensive Training Course© and is part of the Mental Health Clinics' adherent adolescent DBT program. Jaime is the Senior Manager of Clinical Services providing both supervision and program management to Volunteers of America of MN Mental Health Clinics programs for children and families.

[Melinda L. Brown](#), MSW, LICSW is a mental health professional with Volunteers of America serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Central Western Minnesota. Ms. Brown is a Deaf woman who has provided services to the DHH community for 19 years and graduated from Gallaudet University with a master's degree in social work. Her work experience has included providing school-based counseling and mental health interventions in urban and rural settings to deaf children, adults, and their families, including culturally relevant treatment for multicultural clients. Prior to joining VOA, Ms. Brown worked at Boys Town National Research Hospital in Nebraska where she worked with the local school district to meet the mental health needs of DHH children. In 2009, she earned a Boys Town Common Sense Parenting Instructor Certification and Domestic Violence/Sexual Abuse Advocate Certification.

### **The Importance of Executive Functioning Skill Development in Children**

Kristi Townshend, Psy.S. - Metro Deaf School

This workshop will present an overview of executive skills as well as provide participants with some strategies to help students overcome executive function weaknesses. With these presented tools, participants can offer teachers and parents/guardians additional support for developing and improving organization, time management, impulse control, goal-directed persistence and the host of other executive skills critical for independent functioning. Most information regarding executive functioning dysfunction will be borrowed from Peg Dawson, Ed.D., who is well-known for her work in this field ("Smart but Scattered" is one of her more popular books). Furthermore, this workshop will provide a better understanding of how poor executive skills often lead to negative self-esteem and how to deter socio-emotional concerns.

The participants will be able to:

1. Know what executive skills are and understand how executive skills emerge throughout childhood and adolescence.
2. Be familiar with contributing factors that impact a child's executive dysfunction.
3. Gain understanding about current trends that have an impact on executive functioning development in children.
4. Be able to identify how executive skills impact performance and daily living at home and at school.
5. Have access to classroom strategies to improve executive skills in students.

While licensed as a school psychologist, [Kristi Townshend](#) is serving Metro Deaf School in a new role this year as behavioral specialist. Kristi enjoys working with DHH students by providing supports in the classroom along with teachers/staff. In addition, she likes to collaborate with other mental health team members to implement our Character Counts! programs school-wide.