



**Office of Children  
and Family Services**

# **Directors of Services Leadership Training Forum**

**October 14 - 16, 2025**

**Silver Bay YMCA | Silver Bay, NY**



**Office of Children  
and Family Services**

# Agenda

## Day 1

## Tuesday, October 14, 2025 \*Assigned Seating for Day 1\*

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Arrival and Registration**

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

**Lunch-** *Cafeteria or Gullen Lounge*

1:00 pm - 1:15 pm

**Welcome and Introductions-** *William Boyd Conference Room*

- Kelli Reilly, Facilitator, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services
- Gail Geohagen-Pratt, Deputy Commissioner, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services

1:15 pm - 2:15 pm

**Discussion with Leaders-** *William Boyd Conference Room*

OCFS leaders will join the participants in impactful table discussions. By partnering together, each table conversation will share successes, entertain new ideas, and inspire future strategies and goals. Table participants will have an opportunity to share their important talking points with the larger group and leadership panel.

2:15 pm - 2:25 pm

**Change Tables**

Please refer to the 2<sup>nd</sup> number listed on your table tent to assist with this transition.

2:25 pm - 3:25 pm

**Structured Networking and Mentorship-** *William Boyd Conference Room*

This session provides participants with an opportunity to engage in professional development, experience personal growth, and develop professional relationships. The statewide group of Directors possesses a vast amount of knowledge and expertise to share, thereby building the statewide capacity to be more efficient and robust.

3:25 pm – 3:45 pm

**Break**

3:45 pm – 5:00 pm

**Understanding Substance Abuse and Overdose Prevention-** *William Boyd Conference Room*

Overdose is a leading cause of death in communities throughout the state. Project COPE is a SAMHSA-funded grant initiative that seeks to reduce rates of overdose death in New York by connecting to vulnerable, underserved populations such as pregnant and parenting persons. Join members of the Project COPE team in exploring the science of substance use and substance use disorders, the basics of overdose prevention and naloxone use, and concrete ways professionals outside of the substance use disorder treatment system can help prevent overdoses among the individuals and families they serve.

- Jessica Sorbello, LCSW, Project Director NYS Opioid Overdose Prevention Grant, NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports
- Julie Redmond, Project Coordinator, NYS Opioid Overdose Prevention Grant, NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

**Networking**

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

**Dinner-** *Gullen Lounge*



# Agenda

## Day 2

**Wednesday, October 15, 2025**

8:00 am – 9:00 am

**Breakfast-** *Cafeteria or Gullen Lounge*

9:00 am – 9:05 am

**Welcome Back!** – *William Boyd Conference Center*

- Kelli Reilly, Facilitator, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services

9:05 am – 10:15 am

**Keynote- Rise: Sustaining Elevated Leadership when Times are Turbulent-**  
*William Boyd Conference Center*

Aysha will focus on how to stay the course of your vision when the path forward is met with unexpected obstacles. Child welfare professionals are always problem-solving and finding new ways to support families. However, the current economic environment presents new challenges for the child and family-serving ecosystem. This is a critical time for leaders to stay confident in their ability to navigate turbulence that could come in any form.

- Aysha E. Schomburg, President & CEO of the New York Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children

10:15 am – 10:30 am

**Break**

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

**How to Use COGNOS** – *William Boyd Conference Center*

This presentation will provide an overview of the OCFS Data Warehouse (DW) and educate participants on how to use the OCFS DW Reports within the Cognos environment. By the end of the session, attendees will know: The purpose and benefits of the OCFS Data Warehouse; How to request OCFS DW access; Tips and tools for locating, running, and exporting reports; and how to receive assistance when needed. A few of the most frequently used reports will be made available to provide hands-on experience for participants.

- Rebecca Colman, PhD, Research Scientist VI, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Research Evaluation and Performance Analytics
- Jon Zafra, Data Analyst III, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Research, Evaluation and Performance Analytics

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

**Lunch-** *Cafeteria or Gullen Lounge*

# Agenda

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

## **Empowering Change: Integrating Motivational Interviewing as an Evidence-Based Practice in Child Welfare-** *William Boyd Conference Center*

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a collaborative, evidence-based approach that enhances family engagement and supports behavior change, key factors in effective child welfare practice. This session will focus on how MI can be strategically implemented within local departments of social services, highlighting core elements such as staff training, leadership support, fidelity monitoring, and alignment with trauma-informed, strengths-based models. Designed for agency leaders, the presentation will offer practical guidance for sustainable integration and improving outcomes for children and families.

- Monica Schroeder, M.S., The Center for Excellence, YRI
- Michael Rolleston, M.S., The Center for Excellence, YRI
- Anthony Ruiz, The Center for Excellence, YRI

2:00 pm – 2:15 pm

## **Break**

2:15 pm – 3:15 pm

## **Kin First Philosophy: Reshaping Child Welfare Spaces –** *William Boyd Conference Center*

By embedding kin-first philosophy across all child welfare program areas, Chemung County has transformed its services space. The shift towards strengthening kinship networks and reinforcing family support systems has had deep impacts, reflecting a remarkable move from reactive, institutional approaches to proactive, preventive practices. Our family-centered system has resulted in improved outcomes for children, families, and child welfare professionals alike, benefiting the entire community. As we celebrate our fifth anniversary of system change, be inspired by the compelling data and strategic insights marking this evolution.

- Mindy Banfield, MSW, Commissioner of Human Services, Chemung County

3:15 pm – 5:00 pm

## **Self- Care Cafés: Rotating Groups Based on Dot Color**

### **❖ Canine Comfort: Calm in the Chaos of Child Protection –** *Morse Hall*

This workshop examines the growing role of therapy dogs as a valuable support resource for child welfare staff. Participants will learn about primary trauma, secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and moral injury associated with a child welfare career. Participants will learn about the psychological and physiological benefits of animal-assisted interventions, including stress reduction, emotional regulation, and improved workplace morale.

- Belinda Schlafer, LMHC, CCTP, EMDR-C, Compelled to B Well, LLC
- Annabelle

# Agenda

## ❖ **Mindfulness Walk – William Boyd Conference Center**

Participants will experience nature in a slow, mindful way, learning skills on sauntering through the woods (or on a beach, in a park, in their yard), observing the sights, sounds, textures, and breathing as they explore. They will learn the benefits of grounding and centering themselves. This is especially beneficial in stressful situations or when experiencing secondary trauma. This will be an individual experience in a group setting, which allows participants to feel safe. During the experience, participants will be invited and encouraged to slow down to feel the tree trunks, leaves, and earth; to smell the bark, the earth, the air; to listen to the birds, the wind rustling leaves, and the silence. We will take time for a sit spot to enjoy an open-eyed meditation, allowing them to observe their surroundings in silence, to just breathe and notice.

- Sandra Wilson, Mindfulness Outdoor Experience Guide

## ❖ **Sound Healing - Boathouse**

This offering is specifically designed to support the emotional and psychological well-being of administrators and direct care staff working within child welfare and community services. The presentation merges clinical credibility with calming experiential practice, leaving attendees with immediate tools to reduce stress and long-term resources to support ongoing self-care for themselves and their teams.

- April Hannah, LMHC-D, Owner of Hannah's Healing Wellness Studio

**5:00 pm – 6:00 pm**

**Networking**

**6:00 pm – 7:00 pm**

**Dinner – Gullen Lounge**

# Agenda

## Day 3

**Thursday, October 16, 2025**

8:00 am – 9:00 am

**Breakfast - Cafeteria or Gullen Lounge**

9:00 am – 9:05 am

**Welcome Back! – William Boyd Conference Center**

- Kelli Reilly, Facilitator, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services

9:05 am – 10:15 am

**Blind Removal Panel – William Boyd Conference Center**

The blind removal panel presentation will showcase local departments of social services (LDSS) that have successfully implemented the blind removal process, highlighting their strategies, challenges, and outcomes. By focusing on real-world examples, the presentation will demonstrate how the process has led to better outcomes for children and families. It will also delve into the practical aspects of the implementation process, examining the key factors that contributed to each district's success. The goal of this session is to provide actionable insights for other districts.

- John Thompson, Professional Development Program, Rockefeller College
- Kari Carroll, Project Staff Associate, Professional Development Program, Rockefeller College

10:15 am – 10:25 am

**Break**

10:25 am – 11:35 am

**Trauma-Informed Practice Implementation in the Workplace – William Boyd Conference Center**

This inspirational and motivational presentation will focus on key points and takeaways of the Trauma-Informed Practice Project that Fostering Change for Children is conducting for OCFS in 2025 and 2026.

- Barry Chaffkin, CEO & Founder, Fostering Change for Children
- Lindsay Jackson, Project Leader, Fostering Change for Children

11:35 am – 12:00 pm

**Reflections, Takeaways, and Closing Remarks- William Boyd Conference Center**

Directors of Services will be provided with the opportunity to reflect on their experience

- Kelli Reilly, Facilitator, NYS OCFS, Division of Child Welfare and Community Services

12:00 pm

**Boxed Lunch & Departure**