

McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center Presents

STAND AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

CONFERENCE



**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25TH, 2025
MARRIOTT SYRACUSE DOWNTOWN**

THIS CONFERENCE IS INTENDED FOR:

SCHOOL PERSONNEL, PROSECUTORS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, PROBATION OFFICERS, CHILD PROTECTIVE/CHILD WELFARE PERSONNEL, MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, MEDICAL PROVIDERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

COST:

\$100.00 per person, (\$90.00 *Early Bird Rate* until August 1st, 2025)

\$75.00 Group Rate (4 or more register together from the same organization)

No CEU's Available this year

Vendors & Sponsors

\$50.00 Vendor Table (Contact Derrick Brill if interested dbrill@mcmahonryan.org)

Sponsor packages available that include advertisement opportunity, free registrations and vendor table - contact Dana Walk if interested dwalk@mcmahonryan.org

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE:

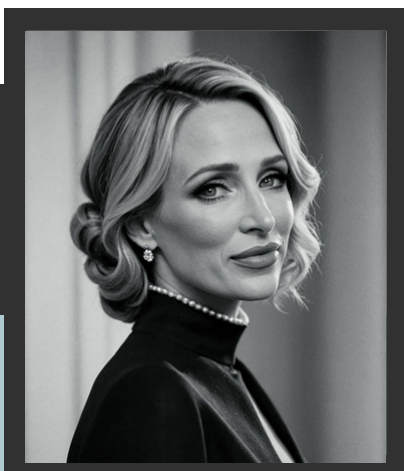
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|---------------------|--|
| 7:45 to 8:25 a.m. | Registration & Continental Breakfast |
| 8:25 to 8:30 a.m. | Welcome |
| 8:30 to 9:15 a.m. | Keynote Presentation: Christina Meredith |
| 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. | Workshop Session 1 |
| 11:00 to 12:15 p.m. | Workshop Session 2 |
| 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. | Lunch |
| 1:45 to 3:00 p.m. | Workshop Session 3 |
| 3:15 to 4:30 p.m. | Workshop Session 4 |

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



KEYNOTE SPEAKER CHRISTINA MEREDITH

Christina Meredith, a native of St. Augustine, Florida, overcame years of sexual, emotional, and mental abuse, trauma, foster care, poverty, and homelessness to become a symbol of hope and resilience. After aging out of the foster system and spending over a year homeless, she moved to California, where she worked odd jobs before being encouraged to enter the Miss California pageant—ultimately winning the title in 2013. Her inspiring journey, detailed in her best-selling memoir *CinderGirl* (soon to be a major motion picture), chronicles her transformation through faith, hard work, and determination. Christina later became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army, graduated from college, and founded a nonprofit dedicated to supporting abused and foster youth. She has since received numerous accolades, including ISF's Community Impact Award, and has spoken nationwide—appearing on major news outlets and before Congress—advocating for child welfare reform and trauma-informed care. Her message centers on the power of dreams and the ability to rise above even the darkest circumstances.



WORKSHOP SESSION 1: 9:30 to 10:45AM

OPTION 1A

It Took a Village: How School & Teachers Saved My Life

Keynote Speaker: Christina Meredith

By the time she reached high school, the chronic abuse that Christina Meredith had endured had crippled her ability to learn. Traumatized by sexual abuse by her uncle and psychological and physical abuse by a mentally ill mother with substance use disorder, she actually believed that she had lost her capacity to learn. Then, teachers saved her life. From buying her food when she was too hungry to concentrate to spending hours providing her with tutoring to catch up, graduate, and eventually go on to college and career, their caring made a difference. Finally faced with a solid support system, they also gave Christina the courage to speak out about her home life and find safety and stability in foster care. In this inspiring talk, Christina talks about how teachers literally saved her life and how their caring inspired her to help other children surviving trauma or aging out of foster care.

OPTION 1B

Sextortion & Crime Prevention Through Digital Safety, Empathy and Mindfulness Workshop

Speaker: Richard Guerry

Apps like TikTok continue to grow; Deep Fakes are becoming a more common issue, AI is being deployed on a larger scale, Communication in online gaming is growing more frequent for children at younger ages, and; Wearable tech like Snapchat Specs & Meta Smart Glasses will continue to evolve, thus the need for responsibility, as well as empathy and kindness has become even more paramount. This workshop will provide attendees with information & tips to create responsible decision making with today's - and tomorrow's - technology and understand how to replace blind decision making with informed decision making. The information provided will assist attendees in helping youth, and other adults, not just understand how to survive - but how to thrive - with continuously evolving digital tools and technologies.

Richard Guerry is the founder of the non-profit organization the Institute for Responsible Online and Cell-Phone Communication (IROC2.org) and one of the nation's most sought after speakers on digital safety, empathy and mindfulness. He is the author of multiple cyber safety books and has been a featured speaker at numerous national & international conferences. His Programs have received numerous awards from the School Safety Advocacy Council. Richard has appeared as an expert on Radio Disney, CNN, FOX, CBS, MTV's Thin Line Campaign, as well as in Parade Magazine and many local, regional, and international publications to help humans better understand how to wield the power of evolving technology with wisdom and responsibility through solution-oriented concepts critical to anyone using digital tools.

WORKSHOP SESSION 1 (cont.): 9:30 to 10:45AM

OPTION 1C

Empowering Safe Futures: Understanding the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children and the Role of Protective Factors

Speaker: Lindsey Crusan-Muse

Children who are exposed to domestic violence often face emotional, behavioral, and developmental challenges that can impact them well into adulthood. This workshop will help participants better understand the effects of domestic violence on children; how to respond effectively to support the child and non-offending guardian(s); and how protective factors at the individual, relationship, and community level can reduce the short and long-term negative consequences of exposure to domestic violence.

***Lindsey Crusan-Muse** is the Director of Crime Victim Services at St. Peter's Health Partners in the Capital Region, where she has led efforts to support victims and prevent crime for over 17 years. She oversees nine programs serving more than 5,000 victims annually and educating over 35,000 community members and professionals. Lindsey also holds leadership roles on several statewide and regional councils focused on violence prevention and victim advocacy. She earned her B.A. in Psychology and Communications from Hamilton College.*

OPTION 1D

Cracks in the Story: When Broken Bones Raise Red Flags

Speaker: Dr. Pekarsky & Dr. Ray

This workshop explores how certain fracture patterns in young children should raise concerns for physical abuse, while some are more likely to be consistent with an accidental mechanism or even a medical problem. Using real case examples and visual aids such as bone models, this presentation highlights key red flags, fractures that are highly specific for child abuse, fractures that are commonly seen in mobile children and the importance of a thorough medical evaluation completed by a child abuse medical professional. Attendees will learn about the appropriate medical evaluation; the importance of multidisciplinary teamwork will be highlighted.

***Dr. Alicia Pekarsky** is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at SUNY Upstate Medical University, Director of the Child Abuse Pediatrics Division, Co-Medical Director of McMahon/Ryan Child Advocacy Center and Program Director for the Child Abuse Pediatrics fellowship at Upstate. Dr. Pekarsky is also the pediatric representative on the NYS Children's Justice Task Force and the NYS Child Fatality Review team. She is currently working with Dr. Ann Botash and others on a \$750,000 grant from NYS Office of Children and Family Services to survey medical professionals working at Child Advocacy Centers to assess their needs, provide education to multi-disciplinary teams and create a peer-review network. In 2024 she was elected to a 3-year term on the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Child Abuse and Neglect Executive Council. Dr. Pekarsky took the first board exam in this field in 2009 and subsequently became one of the first 191 American Board of Pediatrics certified Child Abuse Pediatricians in the US. She has evaluated more than 4,000 children for suspected maltreatment and has received state, national and international recognition for her work in this field over the past 20 years.*

***Dr. Elizabeth Ray** obtained her undergraduate degree from Boston University in 2016, and her medical degree from New York Medical College in 2020. She completed her Pediatrics Residency in 2023 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse, NY, and has been continuing at the same hospital for her fellowship in Child Abuse Pediatrics. Dr. Ray will finish her fellowship at Upstate in Summer of 2026. She has a special interest in fractures, and in pediatric ingestions, and is working on research in this area.*

WORKSHOP SESSION 2: 11:00 to 12:15 p.m.

OPTION 2A

That Kid Did What?!?! Understanding and Helping Children and Teens with Problematic Sexual Behavior

Speaker: Jimmy Widdifield

Children and teens engage in sexual behaviors that range from developmentally expected to problematic and harmful. However, many professionals often misinterpret normative behaviors and are also unequipped to effectively address genuine problematic sexual behaviors (PSB). As a result, many children and teens with PSB do not receive the types of services that support a helpful multidisciplinary coordinated response or healthy behavioral functioning and family healing. This lecture will provide research-based information to help participants learn about sexual development in children and teens and problematic sexual behavior (PSB), identify potential contributing factors to PSB, dispel common misconceptions about these behaviors and children and teens, and have a more robust and evidence-informed response cases of child/teen-initiated PSB.

Jimmy Widdifield, Jr., MA, is a Licensed Professional Counselor (Oklahoma) and training and technical assistance provider in child maltreatment, trauma, and adversity. He is the Project Director for Grant Training and Resources at the National Children's Advocacy Center. This national grant provides multi- and interdisciplinary TTA on child maltreatment to enhance professional development and response in the field. Mr. Widdifield has experience planning and providing TTA, nationally and internationally, to child maltreatment professionals with an emphasis on the research and treatment of youth with problematic sexual behavior and, also, youth with marginalized sexual orientations and/or identities. Mr. Widdifield is a graduate of the Interdisciplinary Training Program in Child Abuse and Neglect at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

OPTION 2B

The Power Of Prevention Education

Speaker: Derrick Brill

"The Power of Prevention Education" is an engaging and interactive session designed for anyone who want to play an active role in protecting children from sexual abuse. Grounded in real-world experience and hands-on tools, this presentation explores how age-appropriate body safety education empowers children, builds resilience, and fosters a culture of prevention in schools. Participants will engage with the very materials used in classrooms, experience the lessons through a child's eyes, and leave with practical strategies to overcome barriers, spark meaningful conversations, and create safer spaces for all kids.

Derrick Brill is the Lead Outreach and Education Specialist at McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center. Derrick has worked in education for over 18 years. Derrick spent 8 years working at a school on the southside of Chicago before returning home to Brewerton, NY, to obtain his degree as an Occupational Therapy Assistant. Since graduating, Derrick has worked at the CAC for 4 years providing Prevention education to children and adults, all across the county.

WORKSHOP SESSION 2 (cont.):

11:00 to 12:15 p.m.

OPTION 2C

Children, Domestic Violence and Play Therapy

Speaker: Dr. Jodi Mullen

Millions of children across the globe experience violence in their homes. Growing up in a violent home may be a terrifying and traumatic experience that can affect every aspect of a child's life, growth and development. In this workshop participants will learn how play therapy addresses and mitigates the effects of domestic violence on children. Developmental and cultural issues relevant with this population will be addressed and many practical skills and case conceptualization will be demonstrated.

Dr. Jodi Weinstein Mullen, PhD LMHC NCC RPT-S CCPT-Master is a professor at SUNY Oswego in the Counseling & Psychological Services Department, where she has been a counselor educator for over 30 years. She is the Director of Integrative Counseling Services, with offices in Central New York. Dr. Mullen is an international speaker, author, credentialed play therapist and play therapy supervisor. Dr. Mullen provides training, consultation, and supervision to professional helpers. She has authored books on play therapy, counseling children and adolescents, grief counseling and parenting. Dr. Mullen was the 2008 recipient of the Key Award for Professional Training & Education through the Association for Play Therapy.

WORKSHOP SESSION 3: 1:45 TO 3:00 P.M.

OPTION 3A

Trauma Adapted Yoga for Adolescents

Speaker: Dr. Nayla Khoury, Dr. Kathryn Hagen & Alena Thotam

We will be leading an experiential workshop highlighting principles and practices of trauma adapted yoga, a form of trauma sensitive yoga that is aimed to help regulate the nervous system for psychiatric patients and healthcare providers. We will review the literature on the use of yoga in supporting wellbeing in psychiatric settings and present preliminary findings and lessons learned from conducting a study of the impact of this yoga on the wellbeing of adolescents in psychiatric care.

Dr. Khoury is an associate professor of Psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University with interests in supporting wellbeing and equity in clinical education. She is a child psychiatrist who works at the Onondaga Health Clinic, private practice and with Project TEACH, a collaborative care program for NY State. She is also a yoga teacher, has extra training in healthcare wellness and serves on Upstate's executive council for wellbeing. She works closely with trainees from multiple disciplines. She studies the impact of trauma adapted yoga and body based practices on adolescents in psychiatric care as well as healthcare providers.

WORKSHOP SESSION 3 (CONT.):

1:45 TO 3:00 P.M.

OPTION 3B

The NCMEC Perspective: Child Sexual Exploitation Trends, Issues & Priorities

Speaker: Sara Segerlin

Serving as the nation's clearinghouse and largest child advocacy organization in the U.S., NCMEC will share data, insights and activities seen through their unique lens. CyberTipline data from 2024 will be presented, highlighting trends and the effect of current reporting worldwide. Current threats to child safety including violent online groups, financial sextortion, and generative AI will be discussed. NCMEC will also share news about their global outreach and engagement, both through advocacy and training around the world. In addition, programmatic, legislative and technology updates impacting the CyberTipline, victim identification and survivor services will be shared.

Sara Segerlin is a Senior Analyst in the Child Victim Identification Program (CVIP) at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) in Rochester, NY. She has been with CVIP in the Exploited Children Division since January 2017. CVIP serves as the clearinghouse for identified victims within the United States, and assists law enforcement and prosecution with child sexual abuse material cases and victim identification efforts across the country and around the world. Preceding her work at NCMEC, Sara worked as a Digital Forensic Examiner and was an intern with the United States Marshals Service. Sara has her Bachelor of Science from Utica University in Cybersecurity Forensics, with a Minor in Psychology.

OPTION 3C

When Removals are Necessary: Understanding the Trauma of Removal in Child Welfare Services

Speaker: Kelly Varamogiannis

This interactive discussion will focus on the child welfare decision making leading up to a removal and explore the potential impact of trauma on children placed in the foster care system through a guided imagery experience.

Kelly Varamogiannis first started her career in child welfare at Schenectady County Department of Children & Family Services. She then went to work for the Center for Development of Human Services where she trained child welfare workers throughout NYS and quickly rose to oversee and manage the statewide implementation of the KEYS model of child welfare supervision. Kelly is now Deputy Commissioner of Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services where she utilizes her skill, knowledge, and expertise to guide her staff as they work to meet positive outcomes for children and families.

WORKSHOP SESSION 4: 3:15 to 4:30 p.m.

OPTION 4A

CE-CERT: A New Paradigm for Addressing Secondary Traumatic Stress, Moral Distress, and Burnout

Speaker: Jimmy Widdifield

All professionals who work in child maltreatment are at risk of experiencing burnout, moral distress, and secondary traumatic stress (STS). While there is an increase in recognizing and addressing these experiences, typical strategies often focus on aftercare which fall short of providing a long-term meaningful impact. Components for Enhancing Career Experience and Reducing Trauma (CE-CERT) is a paradigm shift in how we conceptualize and address burnout and STS. Based on current evidence, CE-CERT organizes practical skills we all know or are easily acquirable in a way that supports well-being throughout the day and establishes new habits that more effectively mitigate the impact of burnout and STS. This session will overview the conceptual foundation and five practice components of CE-CERT. Participants will learn skills they can immediately use to support their well-being and that of others.

Jimmy Widdifield, Jr., MA, is a Licensed Professional Counselor and, also, the Project Director for Grant Training and Resources at the National Children's Advocacy Center. Mr. Widdifield is an experienced TTA provider in child maltreatment with an emphasis on the research and treatment of youth with problematic sexual behavior and, also, youth with marginalized sexual orientations and/or identities.

OPTION 4B

What are we fighting for?!

Speaker: Tony DeVincenzo

Often, multidisciplinary teams struggle with engaging their team members in meaningful ways. This workshop will explore how Vision, Mission, Purpose and Meaning can inspire greater team buy-in and participation from MDT partners.

Tony DeVincenzo is a Training Specialist with the Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center, where he provides training and technical assistance to Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) and Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) across the Northeast Region. In addition to his direct work with CACs and MDTs, Tony presents workshops on a variety of child advocacy topics at regional and national conferences. Prior to his current role, Tony served as the Director of Programs and MDT Coordinator at Deirdre's House, the CAC for Morris County, New Jersey, where he oversaw services and coordinated the county's multidisciplinary response to child abuse. Tony's work is built on a 25-year career in law enforcement in New Jersey, where he served as a patrol officer with the Roseland Police Department and as a Detective with the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, specializing in crimes against children. His combined expertise in law enforcement, CAC leadership, and MDT facilitation strengthens his commitment to improving outcomes for children.

WORKSHOP SESSION 4 (cont.): 3:15 to 4:30 p.m.

OPTION 4C

A Case Study; Understanding Victim Behavior

Speaker: District Attorney John Muehl and Sura Page, LCSW-R

This workshop will present a complicated child sexual abuse case involving two victims that disclosed several years after being removed from their abuser. District Attorney John Muehl will discuss the complexities that were involved in this case and how they were addressed in this trial. Sura Page will explore the conceptual framework of child sexual abuse and dynamics of child sexual abuse relationships. The presenters will discuss the connections this specific case has with Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome. Finally, it will examine the need and benefit of utilizing expert witness testimony to inform and educate the jury regarding CSAAS and child victim behavior.

John Muehl, Otsego County District Attorney - John obtained his Law Degree in 1995 from Northern Illinois University, School of Law. After being admitted to the New York State Bar in 1996, John began his lifelong career serving the public. In addition to starting his own Private Practice, John began his career working as Assistant District Attorney in Delaware County. In 2000, he became the Chief Assistant District Attorney in Delaware County where he spent several years. In 2004 John ultimately became The District Attorney in Otsego County where he has dedicated the last 21 years of his career. Amongst the many accomplishments in his career, John has been passionately working to bring justice to victims, especially children. He played an essential role in the creation and inception of The Otsego County Child Advocacy Center in 2004 and has remained an active member of the multidisciplinary team providing leadership and oversight

Sura Page, LCSW-R - A Graduate from Fordham University, Sura has been practicing as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Otsego County since 1996. For the past 29 years Sura has held various positions within the County as an administrator, clinical supervisor, clinician and consultant. She has been an active member of the Multidisciplinary Team for the Otsego County Child Advocacy Center since its inception in 2004. Sura is also a clinical supervisor and clinical consultant for multiple programs and agencies in other New York Counties. For the past decade Sura has been an expert witness providing testimony in criminal and family courts to inform and educate the jury regarding Child Sexual Abuse, Adult Sexual Assault/Rape, Intimate Partner Violence and Understanding Victim Behavior.

OPTION 4D

Human Trafficking Awareness & Prevention for Adults working with Youth

Speaker: Diego Luque

This session aims to give participants information on what human trafficking is, how to recognize it amongst youth, tips for talking about exploitation, reporting options for suspected trafficking, and available resources for adults and youth to raise awareness of the crime.

Diego A. Luque serves as a Partnership and Engagement Specialist at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Blue Campaign, the Department's national public awareness campaign to combat human trafficking. In this role, he supports the Prevention portfolio of the Blue Campaign, assisting on decreasing victimization within vulnerable communities and deterring criminal activity. With over four years of experience in the anti-trafficking sphere, Diego is passionate about creating meaningful partnerships and educating different industries on how to prevent this crime.

REGISTER & SUBMIT FORM BY SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2025

COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW & MAIL PAYMENT TO:

McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center

Attn: Krystal Peters

601 E. Genesee St., Syracuse, NY 13202

OR EMAIL TO: kpeters@mcmahonryan.org



OR PAY ONLINE BY SCANNING QR CODE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Email: _____

Workshop Session 1: Please select (1A, 1B, 1C, or 1D) First Choice: _____ Second Choice: _____

Workshop Session 2: Please select (2A, 2B, or 2C) First Choice: _____ Second Choice: _____

Workshop Session 3: Please select (3A, 3B, or 3C) First Choice: _____ Second Choice: _____

Workshop Session 4: Please select (4A, 4B, 4C, or 4D) First Choice: _____ Second Choice: _____

Total Payment: \$ _____ Paid by: ☐ Check ☐ Credit Card ☐ Eventbrite

Credit Card #: _____ Billing Zipcode: _____

Expiration Date: _____ 3 Digit Security Code: _____

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If paying with a credit card a 3.75% fee will be added

Please include other group members' names on a separate sheet and enclose with this form.



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Please call us if you have any questions: 315-701-2985



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