



Together for Families



Strong Families

Promising Futures

Virtual Conference · October 20-22, 2026

2026 PROGRAM BOOK



NATIONAL
Family Support
NETWORK

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



Welcome



About the National Family Support Network

The National Family Support Network (NFSN) advances a future where families flourish. Founded in 2011, NFSN convenes state and regional networks nationwide and supports a field of more than 3,000 Family Resource Centers. We advance quality, learning, and impact across communities nationwide. Through its Membership Network, Training Academy, and Evidence & Impact Institute, we strengthen and elevate Family Resource Centers and the state and regional networks that support them through connection, capacity-building, and evidence-informed practice.

Welcome to Together for Families 2026

Dear friends and colleagues,

Thank you for being part of the NFSN community. Over the next three days, practitioners, family leaders, researchers, funders, public-system partners, and others from across the Family Support field will come together online to learn from one another, share what is working, and think together about what comes next.

The program reflects many kinds of experience and expertise. You will hear from people working in Family Resource Centers (FRCs) and communities every day, as well as from researchers, systems leaders, and national partners. Each brings knowledge worth learning from. Across the plenary and featured sessions, 25 Concurrent Sessions, and six Bright Spot Deep Dives, we hope you find practical ideas you can use, people you want to stay connected with, and renewed energy for the work ahead.

We are grateful to our sponsors, speakers, presenters, and everyone who gave their time and perspective to help shape this event. Most of all, thank you for the work you do every day alongside children, families, and communities.

With gratitude,

Julie Matusick and Brenda McChesney

Co-Executive Directors

National Family Support Network





At a Glance

From insight to action, together.

Families thrive when they have strong relationships, practical resources, and trusted places to turn. Together for Families 2026 brings the field’s practitioners, family leaders, researchers, and funders together to build what comes next.

Be part of a national movement strengthening Family Resource Centers, elevating family leadership, and helping communities create the conditions for families to thrive.

3 days of learning	25 Concurrent Sessions	6 Bright Spot Deep Dives	3 conference tracks
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Three days, one shared journey

DAY 1 Tuesday, October 20	DAY 2 Wednesday, October 21	DAY 3 Thursday, October 22
11:00am ET Welcome & Opening Plenary	11:00am ET Bright Spot Deep Dives, Round 2	11:00am ET Featured Plenary
12:45pm ET Concurrent Sessions	1:00pm ET Concurrent Sessions	12:30pm ET Concurrent Sessions
2:15pm ET Bright Spot Deep Dives, Round 1	2:45pm ET Featured Interactive Session	2:15pm ET Concurrent Sessions
3:45pm ET Concurrent Sessions	3:45pm ET Concurrent Sessions	3:45pm ET Closing Conversation

All times are Eastern Time (ET). The conference begins at 11:00am ET each day.

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Session formats

Plenary and featured sessions. Four shared sessions bring the full conference together: the Welcome and Opening Plenary, a featured interactive session, a featured plenary, and the Closing Conversation.

Bright Spot Deep Dives. Six organizations and communities share promising practice in two rounds. Each round begins with a 15-minute shared preview of all three. Participants then choose one for a 60-minute deep dive.

Concurrent Sessions. 25 interactive workshops across the three conference tracks. Several sessions run at the same time in each block, so participants can choose what fits their work.

Agenda



Tuesday, October 20, 2026

- **Track 1:** Quality Practice and a Strong Family Support Workforce
- **Track 2:** Community-Rooted Innovation and Family Leadership
- **Track 3:** Evidence, Systems, and Sustainability

11:00am–12:20pm ET

Welcome & Opening Plenary: From Adversity to Possibility

The Catalytic Drivers of Primary Prevention

Dr. Robert Sege · Rebecca Jones Gaston · Dr. David W. Willis · Romero Davis (Moderator)

12:20–12:45pm ET

Break

12:45–2:00pm ET

Concurrent Sessions

1. Combatting Wait Times in a Rural CAC: Implementing the Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTSI) **TRACK 1**
2. What Makes FRCs Work? Evidence, Implementation, and Sustainability Lessons from Indiana **TRACK 3**
3. Connection, Collaboration, and Community Impact **TRACK 2**
4. From Listening to Leading: Building Trauma-Informed Family Leadership Through Community Partnership **TRACK 2**

2:00–2:15pm ET

Break

2:15–3:30pm ET

Bright Spot Deep Dives: Round 1

Each round begins with a 15-minute shared preview of all three. Participants then choose one for a 60-minute deep dive.

- From Grassroots to Comprehensive **TRACK 2**
- Keeping Families Rooted **TRACK 3**
- Building Communities of Hope **TRACK 3**

3:30–3:45pm ET

Break

3:45–5:00pm ET

Concurrent Sessions

5. Navigating with Purpose: How Standards of Quality Advance Family-Centered Practice and Organizational Impact **TRACK 1**
6. Starting Where You Are: Building Family Resource Centers Through Community Voice and Adaptation **TRACK 2**
7. The Art of Developmental Feedback: Building Strong Staff, Stronger Teams, and Better Outcomes for Families **TRACK 1**
8. Elevating Family Voice: From Involvement to Engagement to Shared Leadership **TRACK 2**

Agenda



Wednesday, October 21, 2026

■ **Track 1:** Quality Practice and a Strong Family Support Workforce

■ **Track 2:** Community-Rooted Innovation and Family Leadership

■ **Track 3:** Evidence, Systems, and Sustainability

11:00am–12:15pm ET

Bright Spot Deep Dives: Round 2

Each round begins with a 15-minute shared preview of all three. Participants then choose one for a 60-minute deep dive.

- Mending the Gaps **TRACK 3**
- Addressing Family Housing Instability and Homelessness **TRACK 3**
- Reimagining Prevention **TRACK 3**

12:15–1:00pm ET

Break

1:00–2:15pm ET

Concurrent Sessions

1. Strong Staff, Strong Families: Evidence-Based Strategies for Wellbeing, Retention, and Family Impact **TRACK 1**
2. From Fragmented Services to Family Success Infrastructure: Organizing Systems Around Families, Not Families Around Systems **TRACK 3**
3. From Crisis to Capacity: Building Family-Centered Supports for Complex Autism **TRACK 2**
4. More than Play: Fun, Growth and Meaningful Moments **TRACK 1**
5. Beyond Participation: Facilitation Skills for Meaningful Family Engagement and Group Dialogue **TRACK 1**

2:15–2:45pm ET

Break

2:45–3:45pm ET

Featured Interactive Session: Follow the Money: A Sustainability Lab for Family Support

Fiscal approaches to sustain local programs and build prevention capacity
Deszeree Thomas • Christine Stoner-Mertz, LCSW • D.L. Moffitt

3:45–5:00pm ET

Concurrent Sessions

6. Family Threads: Integrating Family Support and Peer Recovery **TRACK 1**
7. Strengthening FRCs Through Research, Practice, and Policy Partnerships **TRACK 3**
8. Small Tools, Big Difference: Designing Practical Visual Supports With and for Families **TRACK 1**
9. Connect. Support. Empower: A Family Engagement Story **TRACK 2**

Need help during the conference?

Tech support (text): **502-592-1995** | Questions: info@nationalfamilysupportnetwork.org

Agenda



Thursday, October 22, 2026

- **Track 1:** Quality Practice and a Strong Family Support Workforce
- **Track 2:** Community-Rooted Innovation and Family Leadership
- **Track 3:** Evidence, Systems, and Sustainability

11:00am–12:00pm ET

Featured Plenary: One Big Doable Thing!

Advancing Child and Family Flourishing Through Relationship-Centered Practice and Systems Change

Dr. Christina Bethell

12:00–12:30pm ET

Break

12:30–1:45pm ET

Concurrent Sessions

1. Being Community Driven: Moving Beyond Service Delivery to Community Partnership **TRACK 2**
2. Strengthening Families Through Family Resource Centers: Evidence, Collaborations, and Sustainable Community-Based Prevention **TRACK 3**
3. Mandated Reporting Processing Guide: A Tool to Support Thoughtful Decision Making **TRACK 1**
4. Lifting Family Voices: Honoring Families as Their Child's Advocate **TRACK 2**

1:45–2:15pm ET

Break

2:15–3:30pm ET

Concurrent Sessions

5. From Data to Direction: A Practical Framework for Continuous Improvement in Family Resource Centers **TRACK 3**
6. From Information to Access: Using Technology to Connect Families with Resources **TRACK 2**
7. Exploring Maternal & Paternal Parenting Styles **TRACK 1**
8. Nurturing the Wellness of Children, Families, and Communities: An Evidence-Informed Parent Leadership and Family Support Workshop **TRACK 2**

3:30–3:45pm ET

Break

3:45–5:00pm ET

Closing Conversation & Conference Close: The Future Families Need

A Call to Build the Systems and Supports That Help Families Flourish

Dr. Melissa Merrick • Jerry Milner

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Plenary and Featured Sessions

WELCOME & OPENING PLENARY

Tuesday, October 20, 11:00am–12:20pm ET

From Adversity to Possibility

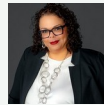
The Catalytic Drivers of Primary Prevention

Primary prevention is more than intervening earlier. It requires positive experiences, nurturing relationships, trusted community supports, strong practice, aligned systems, and the conditions that help families flourish. The speakers will explore how positive childhood experiences, early relational health, lived experience, community-rooted support, and public-system transformation can work together as a national primary prevention strategy.



Dr. Robert Sege

Tufts Medical Center / HOPE



Rebecca Jones Gaston

New York City Administration for Children's Services



Dr. David W. Willis

Georgetown University Thrive Center / Nurture Connection



Romero Davis

Texas Alliance of Child & Family Services
Moderator

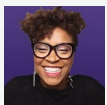
FEATURED INTERACTIVE SESSION

Wednesday, October 21, 2:45–3:45pm ET

Follow the Money: A Sustainability Lab for Family Support

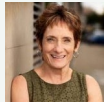
Fiscal approaches to sustain local programs and build prevention capacity

Sustaining Family Support programs takes more than finding the next grant. Foster America will take participants inside a real financing challenge facing a state network of Family Resource Centers, drawing on its Fiscal Leadership Circle and NFSN's fiscal resources. Participants will explore funding pathways, including the Family First Prevention Services Act and Medicaid, and leave with a practical framework for their own sustainability challenges.



Deszeree Thomas

Head of Fellowships, Leadership and Learning, Foster America



Christine Stoner-Mertz, LCSW

Stoner Mertz & Co, LLC



D.L. Moffitt

Fiscal Innovation Specialist, Foster America

FEATURED PLENARY

Thursday, October 22, 11:00am–12:00pm ET

One Big Doable Thing!

Advancing Child and Family Flourishing Through Relationship-Centered Practice and Systems Change

A future-facing conversation about what becomes possible when relationships, flourishing, family and community leadership, and systems change are treated as essential infrastructure for child and family well-being. The conversation will touch on relationship-centered practices, shared responsibility for systems change, and turning that vision into actionable change.



Dr. Christina Bethell

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative

CLOSING CONVERSATION & CONFERENCE CLOSE

Thursday, October 22, 3:45–4:45pm ET

The Future Families Need

A Call to Build the Systems and Supports That Help Families Flourish

What would it take to build a future in which every family can access meaningful support, strong relationships, and opportunities to flourish, long before challenges become crises?

In this intimate closing conversation, Dr. Melissa Merrick and Jerry Milner will explore why reaching families early, strengthening relational health and connections, and investing in primary prevention are essential to the well-being of children, families, and communities.



Dr. Melissa Merrick

Prevent Child Abuse America



Jerry Milner

Family Justice Group

Conference Tracks

Each Concurrent Session is labeled with its track in the agenda.

01

TRACK 1

Quality Practice and a Strong Family Support Workforce

How Family Resource Centers and Family Support organizations can provide consistent, responsive, high-quality support while strengthening the people who deliver the work: the National Family Resource Center Model™, Standards of Quality, workforce and leadership development, staff retention, family engagement, parent leadership, outreach, and continuous quality improvement.

02

TRACK 2

Community-Rooted Innovation and Family Leadership

Families and communities shaping solutions that reflect their strengths, priorities, cultures, and changing realities: parent voice and shared leadership, FRC and Network bright spots, community-designed approaches, rural and tribal strategies, culturally specific practices, kinship and grandfamilies, economic mobility, and innovative uses of technology and AI.

03

TRACK 3

Evidence, Systems, and Sustainability

The policies, partnerships, evidence, and investments needed to make high-quality Family Support available to every family: research and evaluation, FRC outcomes and impact, community-based prevention, child welfare transformation, funding, network development, cross-sector partnerships, data and shared measurement, and policy and systems change.

Track Sponsor: Sunlight



Getting Started

Using Whova

How do I access the conference?

Create a Whova account using the email address you used to register. Sign in to the Together for Families Whova Web Portal using Google Chrome. Whova also has a mobile app and a desktop version.

Will sessions be recorded?

Yes. Sessions, including the Bright Spot Deep Dives, will be recorded. Recordings are accessible on the Whova platform 72 hours after each session and remain available for 90 days after that, through January 21, 2027, at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Do I need to sign up for individual sessions?

Yes. Add all Plenary Sessions for October 20–22 (random drawings happen throughout the event and only require you to be present). Choose your Concurrent Sessions, and add the Bright Spot Deep Dives for October 20 and 21.

What time do sessions start in my time zone?

All session times are shown in Eastern Time (ET), and the conference begins at 11:00am ET each day. Use a time zone converter, or add sessions to your calendar from the Whova app so they appear in your own time zone.

On-Demand Learning Before the Conference

These webinars provide key background to help participants prepare. Access them any time before or after the event.

[National Family Resource Center Model™ Overview](#)

Overview of the National Family Resource Center Model

[From Under the Radar to All the Rage](#)

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) & FRC Networks

[Supporting Families Through Best Practice](#)

Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening & Support

Need help during the conference?

Real-time conference tech support: text **502-592-1995**

Non-urgent conference questions or tech issues: email info@nationalfamilysupportnetwork.org



Prizes

There are four ways to win prizes during Together for Families 2026. Take part, show up, and share your experience. Each opportunity has its own eligibility requirements.

1	Engagement Raffle Earn raffle entries and leaderboard points in Whova by taking part in eligible activities such as polls, session feedback, and event feedback. You must be present at the time of the drawing. Prize: Fall Hygge Care Package (\$68 USD value)
2	Photo Contest Upload a fun photo of your conference setup that includes you and the event on your screen. Eligible entries also receive 4,000 bonus leaderboard points. You must be present when the winner is announced. Prize: Bifties Go-Getter Gift Basket (\$85 USD value)
3	Random Drawings During the Conference Drawings are held for registered participants who are present at the time. If your name is called, respond live to claim your prize. Prize: National Family Support Network \$100 USD Training Credit; Complimentary Registration to Together for Families 2028
4	Social Media Drawing Share your experience on Facebook before October 21, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET. Use #T4F2026 and set your post to public. Multiple entries are welcome. You must be present when the winner is announced. Prize: \$50 USD Powell's Books gift card

Prizes are for registered participants. Limit one prize per person. NFSN training credits and future registration are subject to standard requirements and availability. Prizes have no cash value.



Session Descriptions

- **Track 1:** Quality Practice and a Strong Family Support Workforce
- **Track 2:** Community-Rooted Innovation and Family Leadership
- **Track 3:** Evidence, Systems, and Sustainability

Tuesday, October 20, 2026

Concurrent Sessions | 12:45–2:00pm ET

1. Combatting Wait Times in a Rural CAC: Implementing the Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTSI)

TRACK 1 Savanna Knowles, Allen Babcock
West Georgia Child Advocacy Center

This session explores how the Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention (CFTSI), a brief, early intervention, addresses children's trauma-related symptoms while strengthening caregiver involvement. Presenters will introduce its core components: caregiver-child engagement, symptom identification, coping and communication skills, and collaborative treatment planning.

They will also share lessons from implementing CFTSI in a rural Child Advocacy Center, including strategies for reducing wait times, engaging caregivers, and building partnerships with community providers and graduate interns. Participants will leave with practical strategies for recognizing trauma-related needs, supporting caregivers, and strengthening referral pathways.

2. What Makes FRCs Work? Evidence, Implementation, and Sustainability Lessons from Indiana

TRACK 3 Susana Mariscal
Indiana University School of Social Work

This interactive workshop shares findings from a five-year mixed-methods evaluation of Strengthening Indiana Families (SIF), which established and sustained four FRCs in Indiana. From 2021 to 2024, the FRCs welcomed 32,883 visits and provided 71,688 services. Families reported improved wellbeing and protective factors, and child welfare investigations declined in areas with greater FRC reach.

Presenters will cover implementation themes, including relationship-first practice, collaborative leadership, and data-informed adaptation, and SIF's transition from a federally funded demonstration toward state-supported network infrastructure. A moderated panel and peer

exchange will connect the findings to participants' own work.

3. Connection, Collaboration, and Community Impact

TRACK 2 Kethzia McClendon, Melanie Gartside
Oklahoma State Department of Health/Oklahoma Family Support Network

Regional Meetings were established to strengthen community partnerships by supporting providers in building and sustaining collaborative relationships with organizations serving families in their local communities. This session will share the growth of the Regional Meetings and the outcomes of implementation.

4. From Listening to Leading: Building Trauma-Informed Family Leadership Through Community Partnership

TRACK 2 Tanea Robinson
Santiago Canyon College / UCLA / Trekwise

FRCs are well positioned to move beyond engaging families as participants toward partnering with them as leaders, co-designers, and decision-makers. This interactive workshop explores how trauma-informed, culturally responsive practices strengthen family leadership and build trust and belonging. Through reflective activities, participants will identify barriers to authentic family leadership and learn approaches to share power and elevate parent voice.

The session also looks at how FRCs can use community assets, restorative practices, and technology, including thoughtful uses of artificial intelligence, to improve outreach and access. Participants will leave with practical tools and a planning framework to adapt.

Bright Spot Deep Dives: Round 1 | 2:15–3:30pm ET

● From Grassroots to Comprehensive: Building and Sustaining a Multigenerational, Community-Rooted Family Support Center

TRACK 2 Dr. Barbara Palmer
Kingdom Kare, Inc

How can a smaller, community-rooted nonprofit build and sustain a comprehensive Family Support Center that serves multiple generations? Using Kingdom Kare, Inc. as a case study, this workshop explores how education, early

childhood services, prevention, family support, and youth development can work as one coordinated ecosystem.

Presenters will share Kingdom Kare's place-based services, neighborhood outreach, and work with pregnant and parenting youth, along with its growth through Maryland's Blueprint Expansion for Family Support. The session also considers what systems leaders, funders, and FRC Networks should understand about equitably investing in trusted community organizations.

- **Keeping Families Rooted: Housing Innovation Designed With Families, Not For Them**

TRACK 3 Cheri Williams, Alisa Otto, LaTanya Bennett
Imagination Factory, Samaritas

What if communities could use existing child welfare resources to address housing instability before it contributes to family separation? Imagination Factory and Samaritas will share the Rooted approach, in which four communities received readiness support, fiscal coaching, and implementation help to co-design locally responsive housing solutions with families.

Participants will explore how local data, family leadership, cross-sector partnerships, fiscal innovation, and structured co-design can address housing as a root cause of child welfare involvement. Rather than offering a single model to replicate, the workshop provides a practical framework for identifying what families need, examining available resources, and engaging families as co-designers.

- **Building Communities of Hope: Turning Local Data into Community Action and Sustainable Investment**

TRACK 3 Lucas Gerber, Tecoria Jones
Casey Family Programs, Everybody LLC

Come with your priorities in mind and learn how to support your funding efforts with mapped social wellbeing data. Whether you are a funder, funding seeker, or funding decision-maker, good data strengthens your approach. This workshop shares tools from Casey Family Programs' Building Communities of Hope, a body of work two decades in the making and dedicated to preventing out-of-home placement.

Presenters will offer strategies and a framework for engaging partners across sectors, and will demonstrate the newest version of the Community Opportunity Map, which provides mapped data on education, economy, housing, demographics, and child and family wellbeing, customizable to US Census tracts.

Concurrent Sessions | 3:45–5:00pm ET

5. Navigating with Purpose: How Standards of Quality Advance Family-Centered Practice and Organizational Impact

TRACK 1 Julie Walter, Connie Dunlap
Thriving Wisconsin

Strong organizations do not achieve quality by accident. This interactive session explores how the Standards of Quality (SOQ) framework can strengthen family-centered organizations and improve outcomes for children and families. Presenters will share examples from Wisconsin FRCs that used the Standards of Quality to enhance family strengthening, community engagement, diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, and evaluation practices.

Participants will learn how organizations can move beyond compliance and use self-assessment, action planning, parent leadership, and continuous quality improvement to create sustainable growth.

6. Starting Where You Are: Building Family Resource Centers Through Community Voice and Adaptation

TRACK 2 Mendy Smith, Gabby Hidalgo
Brightpoint

FRCs are often defined by the services they offer. This workshop explores another approach: building FRCs around existing relationships, community assets, and ongoing engagement with families, so support can evolve as needs change. Brightpoint will share two examples: Schubert Elementary School, where a school-based therapist became the foundation for broader family support, and a Crisis Nursery that grew from emergency childcare into a hub for whole-family services.

Presenters will discuss how family perspectives shaped decisions, along with the opportunities and challenges around funding, partnerships, and sustainability.

7. The Art of Developmental Feedback: Building Strong Staff, Stronger Teams, and Better Outcomes for Families

TRACK 1 Beverlee Wenzel
Beverlee Wenzel Consulting

Many leaders struggle to give timely, honest feedback in ways that strengthen performance, support staff development, and promote retention. This interactive workshop explores how intentional feedback practices create stronger teams and better outcomes for families. Grounded in strengths-based practice, psychological safety, and workplace wellbeing research, participants will learn a practical framework built around four components: intentional leadership, deliberate culture, preemptive actions, and powerful processes.

Through reflection, discussion, and practical tools, participants will learn to create environments where feedback is welcomed rather than feared, and leave with strategies to apply with staff, colleagues, volunteers, and family leaders.

8. Elevating Family Voice: From Involvement to Engagement to Shared Leadership

TRACK 2 Chris Burba, Shea Coughlin

National Center for Families Learning

What does it look like when families move beyond participating in programs to helping shape the decisions that affect their children, schools, and communities? This interactive workshop explores the progression from family involvement to engagement to leadership, and the role FRCs and family support professionals can play in creating pathways for family voice.

Participants will examine the differences between involving, engaging, and sharing leadership with families, explore research and examples from schools and communities, and work through real-world scenarios. They will leave with practical ideas for strengthening family partnership and leadership in their own organizations.

Wednesday, October 21, 2026

Bright Spot Deep Dives: Round 2 | 11:00am–12:15pm ET

● Mending the Gaps: Operationalizing Trust and Flex Funding to Build Neighborhood Stability

TRACK 3 Adrienne Elder, Jonah Johnson

Resilient Oklahoma, RestoreOKC

This session presents the "Trust-to-Stability" ecosystem, a multi-level framework that builds "Community Quarterback" capacity to braid resources and operationalize trust. We will demonstrate how to deploy "Weaver" microgrants as a Relational Gateway to "mend the gaps", decentralize decision-making, resolve immediate crises, and provide the stability necessary to transition families from supportive employment pathways to economic stability.

Participants will explore how to institutionalize this approach, moving from fragmented service delivery to a cohesive, positive-reinforcing ecosystem that informs state and national prevention policy.

● Addressing Family Housing Instability and Homelessness: Data, Strategies and Opportunities

TRACK 3 Leah Lindstrom Rhea, Kristy Piescher, PhD, Samantha Goldman, Bianca Stewart

Corporation for Supportive Housing, University of Minnesota, Scott County Human Services

Stable housing helps prevent child welfare involvement and supports timely family reunification. In this workshop, participants will learn about a cross-system data match that explores the overlap between the child protection system and the homelessness system across six counties in the Metro area of Minnesota.

Presenters will discuss the findings and share recommendations, along with strategies to better align homelessness prevention, housing resources, and child welfare services. Multi-sector partners working at FRCs and in family supportive housing will share learnings and examples.

● Reimagining Prevention: Building a Primary Prevention Ecosystem with FRCs in Virginia

TRACK 3 Kiersten Sutton, Ronald L. Brown, Cassandra Calender-Ray, Erin Watson

Prevent Child Abuse America, Families Forward Virginia, Family Matters FRC, Weaving Change

What happens when a Family Resource Center becomes a focal point for building a broader community prevention ecosystem? The Virginia Primary Prevention Ecosystem Pilot offers a candid case study of applying a nationally developed framework in real communities. Grounded in Prevent Child Abuse America's Blueprint for Family Well-being, the pilot brought together PCA America, Families Forward Virginia, Weaving Change, LLC, participating FRCs, families, and community partners.

Attendees will examine how prevention can move beyond individual-level risk factors to creating the conditions that help families thrive, and leave with ideas for integrating family well-being strategies and preventing adversity before it occurs.

Concurrent Sessions | 1:00–2:15pm ET

1. Strong Staff, Strong Families: Evidence-Based Strategies for Wellbeing, Retention, and Family Impact

TRACK 1 Beverlee Wenzel

Beverlee Wenzel Consulting

FRCs and family support organizations face increasing staff burnout, turnover, and workforce sustainability challenges. Yet research shows that employee wellbeing is directly connected to engagement, retention, and service quality. This interactive workshop, grounded in the science of wellbeing, explores six evidence-based

wellbeing pillars: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and vitality.

Participants will take a deeper look at three easy-to-implement strategies: leading with positive emotions, leveraging character strengths, and reducing conflict while building relationships. The strategies align with protective factors that strengthen both workforce resilience and family wellbeing.

2. From Fragmented Services to Family Success Infrastructure: Organizing Systems Around Families, Not Families Around Systems

TRACK 3 Jasper Person, Charles "CHIP" Spinning, Keisha Hunley-Jenkins

Tailored Fit Consulting, Franklin County Children Services, Executive Outcome Resources

Talent is universal. Navigation is not. Families often interact with many well-intentioned programs, yet more services do not automatically produce better outcomes. This interactive workshop asks: what if the next innovation in Family Support is not another program, but stronger infrastructure connecting what already exists?

Participants will learn an emerging community-rooted framework for organizing people, relationships, resources, and programs around family strengths and family-defined goals. In a design lab, they will map a realistic family's journey, identify navigation gaps and duplication, and redesign the experience. Aligned with NFSN's Standards of Quality, the session offers tools to strengthen cross-sector collaboration.

3. From Crisis to Capacity: Building Family-Centered Supports for Complex Autism

TRACK 2 Michele Havens, Jaclyn Nunez

Imagine Academy

Families supporting children and adults with complex autism often face overlapping challenges involving communication, anxiety, safety, sleep, school participation, and access to dependable services. In this interactive workshop, a behavior analyst and a parent will present a practical framework for helping FRCs and family support professionals move from crisis response toward sustainable family capacity.

Participants will learn to distinguish immediate safety needs from longer-term goals, identify family priorities and barriers, and select feasible supports. A composite case and guided planning activity will show how families, schools, clinicians, and providers can share responsibility. Participants will leave with a reusable Crisis-to-Capacity planning framework.

4. More than Play: Fun, Growth and Meaningful Moments

TRACK 1 Keyera Tipton-Bradley, Brenda Gonzalez
Child Care Resource Center

This interactive workshop explores the essential role of play in children's growth and development. Through discussion and hands-on activities, participants will examine the different types of play and their impact on cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical development.

They will learn how developmentally appropriate play fosters curiosity, creativity, problem-solving, communication, and healthy relationships. Participants will leave with practical tools, resources, and play-based activities to promote positive child and family interactions and to create nurturing, inclusive environments where children and caregivers can build strong relationships.

5. Beyond Participation: Facilitation Skills for Meaningful Family Engagement and Group Dialogue

TRACK 1 Sarah Weisbarth, David VanderMolen

Discover You, Inspired2Change

Facilitation is one of the most important yet overlooked skills for Family Support professionals. Whether leading parent groups, community conversations, staff meetings, or family workshops, skilled facilitation can turn passive participation into meaningful engagement. This highly interactive session draws on key facilitation methods and techniques that help participants feel seen, heard, and valued.

Attendees will learn practical approaches for creating connections, encouraging diverse perspectives, managing group energy, and facilitating difficult discussions. Participants will try facilitation tools firsthand, reflect on their own style, and leave with strategies to improve group engagement and program quality.

Concurrent Sessions | 3:45–5:00pm ET

6. Family Threads: Integrating Family Support and Peer Recovery

TRACK 1 Karen Welford

Archways

Family Threads, a program of Archways of New Hampshire, bridges family support and substance use recovery through a Family Resource Center. Each family receives guidance from a Family Support Worker while the individual in recovery works with a Peer Recovery Support Worker, and together they set shared Recovery Goals and Family Support Goals.

Piloted in 2021 with extensive cross-training, the program uses motivational interviewing and tailored, coordinated

services. Omni Institute's 2025 data analysis showed improvements in family functioning, mental health, income, housing, food security, recovery capital, and protective factors. This session explores the model and how it can be replicated.

7. Strengthening FRCs Through Research, Practice, and Policy Partnerships

TRACK 3 Joshua Mersky, Connie Dunlap

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Thriving Wisconsin

This workshop shows how Wisconsin is expanding the evidence base for FRCs and using data to strengthen continuous quality improvement and policy. Presenters will describe the Strong and Stable Families Study, a first-of-its-kind investigation of FRCs and their long-term impact. The study follows more than 2,000 Wisconsin families, nearly a third of whom received support from one of 18 FRCs in Thriving Wisconsin's statewide network. Findings shed light on the families FRCs reach and how FRCs address access barriers and connect families to supports. The session will also discuss how research is being used to enhance FRC practice and make the case for public investment.

8. Small Tools, Big Difference: Designing Practical Visual Supports With and for Families

TRACK 1 Michele Havens

Imagine Academy

Visual supports can make safety instructions, routines, communication, transitions, and community participation more manageable for children and adults with disabilities. Yet families are often given generic or age-inappropriate materials that do not reflect their priorities, culture, or routines. In this interactive workshop, participants will learn a practical process for designing visual supports with families rather than simply delivering visuals to them.

Through a critique and redesign activity, attendees will apply a family-centered design checklist to a realistic case. They will leave with adaptable templates, design principles, and questions for collaborating with families to create respectful, individualized, and usable supports.

9. Connect. Support. Empower: A Family Engagement Story

TRACK 2 Dr. Rosalind Stevenson

Memphis Shelby County Schools

This presentation highlights how Memphis-Shelby County Schools is redefining family engagement with family-centered supports that remove barriers and strengthen connections between schools, families, and the community. Participants will explore initiatives such as Mobile Food Distributions, Family Forums, the Fatherhood

& Family Impact Expo, Family Resource Rooms, and strategic community partnerships that address the academic, social, and basic needs of students and their families.

Thursday, October 22, 2026

Concurrent Sessions | 12:30–1:45pm ET

1. Being Community Driven: Moving Beyond Service Delivery to Community Partnership

TRACK 2 Julie Walter, Connie Dunlap

Thriving Wisconsin

Family-serving organizations increasingly recognize that sustainable impact requires more than delivering services. It requires authentic partnerships with families and communities. This interactive workshop explores what it means to shift from a traditional service delivery model to a community-driven approach that centers family voice, shared leadership, and collaborative decision-making.

Participants will examine practical strategies for identifying community needs, leveraging local assets, building partnerships, and engaging families as co-creators of solutions. Through reflection, discussion, and real-world examples, attendees will leave with tools to strengthen community engagement and create programs that are responsive, equitable, and sustainable.

2. Strengthening Families Through Family Resource Centers: Evidence, Collaborations, and Sustainable Community-Based Prevention

TRACK 3 Stacy Merritt, Christen Lancaster, Robin Perry

Partnership for Strong Families, Inc., Institute for Child and Family Services Research

The Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) has developed and evaluated a network of four FRCs serving Alachua and Columbia counties in Florida. Guided by primary prevention theory, the model offers family support services designed to enhance five protective factors and tailored to community needs. This workshop shares process and outcome findings and lessons learned from a federally funded (Children's Bureau) evaluation of the role FRCs can play in reducing child maltreatment and ongoing DCF involvement.

Participants will explore how FRCs build trust, nurture community partnerships, and incorporate family voice, and what it takes to sustain FRC networks over time, including funding, shared infrastructure, and policy change.

3. Mandated Reporting Processing Guide: A Tool to Support Thoughtful Decision Making

TRACK 1 Ashley Simon, Cindy Marroquín

The Child Abuse Prevention Center

Many mandated reporters are committed to child safety and family well-being. However, when liability concerns become the main reason for reporting decisions, opportunities for community support may be missed. Responding to feedback from mandated reporters and parents in Sacramento County focus groups, the Child Abuse Prevention Center (CAPC) created a Mandated Reporting Processing Guide to strengthen decision-making.

The guide prompts reporters to reflect on all available information, including potential indicators of abuse or neglect, family strengths and risk factors, cultural context, and their own potential biases. Participants will review the focus group results and use the guide in mock scenarios.

4. Lifting Family Voices: Honoring Families as Their Child's Advocate

TRACK 2 M. Dewana Thompson

Brazelton Touchpoints Center

Families bring unique voices and perspectives to advocacy for their children. This workshop explores strategies that foster meaningful collaboration between providers and families around advocacy, and recognizes that advocacy can show up in traditional and non-traditional ways. Both are necessary and should be welcomed.

Participants will explore community-based examples of fostering family advocacy and supporting pathways to family leadership. Through practical strategies and tools, providers and families will gain insight into the perspectives each brings, learn from one another, build strengths-based relationships, and partner to support children's overall development.

Concurrent Sessions | 2:15–3:30pm ET

5. From Data to Direction: A Practical Framework for Continuous Improvement in Family Resource Centers

TRACK 3 Megan Jensen

Creating Community Consulting and MNCFRN

FRCs collect data with the support of state networks and the Standards of Quality. What most lack is a simple, sustainable process for turning that data into decisions, one that works for small teams, survives staff turnover, and does not collapse between annual reporting cycles.

This session introduces a practical continuous improvement approach developed by Creating Community Consulting through direct FRC support across 10 counties in Greater Minnesota. Participants will receive tools for

moving from data to solution brainstorming, strategy prioritization, action planning, and ongoing monitoring, and will leave with a standard operating procedure template, an adaptable continuous improvement log, and a concrete first step.

6. From Information to Access: Using Technology to Connect Families with Resources

TRACK 2 Abby Struffert, Rozel Buzby

Director of Parent and Caregiver Support Network, Alaska Impact Alliance

This workshop explores how technology, community partnerships, and strong referral systems can work together to help FRCs connect families to essential services. Using Alaska's 907 Navigation platform and the 100% Communities initiative as real-world examples, participants will learn how FRCs can use technology while strengthening relationships with community-based organizations, coalitions, and cross-sector partners.

The session highlights Alaska's statewide resource navigation platform alongside community-driven efforts to identify service gaps and improve coordination. FRCs and FRC Networks will leave with practical ideas for strengthening referral networks and creating a more coordinated, accessible system of support for families.

7. Exploring Maternal & Paternal Parenting Styles

TRACK 1 Neil Tift

Native American Fatherhood & Families Association

Research indicates that, in many respects, fathers' parenting styles differ from mothers'. As more community programs respond to growing demand for services from fathers and men in families, staff will need to respond to the unique needs of this emerging group.

This workshop summarizes current research on maternal and paternal parenting approaches, comparing and contrasting the two. It offers management and staff of family service agencies, government programs, and community organizations opportunities to develop strategies to recognize and respect the benefits of these differences in their program delivery.

8. Nurturing the Wellness of Children, Families, and Communities: An Evidence-Informed Parent Leadership and Family Support Workshop

TRACK 2 Dr. James Rodriguez, MSW

Fathers and Families Coalition of America

Nurturing the Wellness of Children, Families, and Communities is an evidence-informed, highly interactive Parent Leadership and Family Support workshop for parents, family leaders, frontline professionals, Family Resource Center staff, managers, and community partners

at all levels. The workshop explores the connections between personal wellness, goal setting, emotional intelligence, resilience, healthy boundaries, authentic relationships, purpose, leadership, and family engagement.

Participants examine how strengthening the individual can positively influence relationships, parenting, professional practice, organizational culture, and outcomes for children, families, and communities. The session draws on Dr. James C. Rodríguez's reference manual, *Unlocking Unlimited Potential*.



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Data and Engagement Initiative in partnership with National Family Support Network

Building the Infrastructure Family Resource Centers Deserve



NFSN is partnering with Sunlight and Omni Institute to launch a coordinated data and engagement framework that will strengthen how family resource centers serve families today and prove your impact for years to come.

The difference Sunlight makes.



For families

- Simple, secure app, accessible via mobile or web browser
- Clear communication between families and their team
- Next-step, task, meeting alerts
- Multilingual capabilities (English, Spanish, et. al.)



Resource center staff

- Build a national database of your life-changing impact
- Coordinate intake, triage and case management
- Closed-loop referral tracking and partner collaboration
- Less paperwork, more family engagement



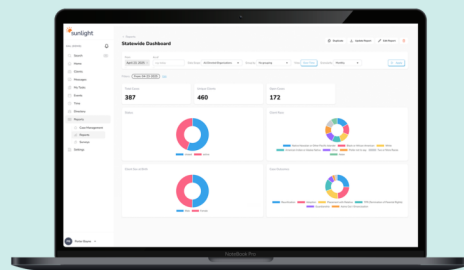
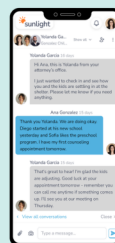
Networks and the national field

- De-identified data securely rolls up for coordinated statewide and national impact reporting
- Consistent outcomes measurement across sites

What is Sunlight?

Sunlight is a HIPAA-compliant family-engagement platform that supports family-serving organizations across 35+ states. Sunlight connects families with their resource teams, while securely automating collection of engagement data.

Get started



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