

2024 SPEAKER DIRECTORY  
26<sup>th</sup> Annual Connections Count! Professional Development Conference  
February 29 & March 1, 2024

**Michael R. Bertaut, M.B.A.**  
**Senior Healthcare Economist and Exchange Coordinator**  
**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana**  
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Michael Bertaut (BURR-toe) is a Certified Health Consultant and Professional of the Academy of Healthcare Management. He has nearly 40 years of analytical experience in the Healthcare, Telecom, and Retail Industry Sectors. On the ground in Washington DC when the Affordable Care Act was negotiated and intimately involved in analyzing subsequent healthcare legislation, Michael has engaged in over 1,400 public discussions on Healthcare Costs and the Impact of Reform since 2009, averaging over 120 events per year. Mike is a Fellow of the Academy of Applied Politics at Louisiana State University and lectures regularly there as well as at Tulane, The University of New Orleans, and other colleges on current healthcare issues and the flow of money through the healthcare system. Michael is currently employed as the Senior Healthcare Economist and Exchange Coordinator for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana.

**Kristen Cassidy, M.A., LPC-S, NCC, CEAP**  
**Licensed Professional Counselor**  
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Kristen Cassidy earned a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology from McNeese State University in 2010. Today, she is a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor and a Nationally Certified Counselor in private practice in Jennings, Louisiana. Before starting private practice in 2014, Kristen worked for Family and Youth Counseling Agency as a forensic interviewer and counselor. In addition to private practice, Kristen continues to work with Family and Youth Counseling Agency to provide counseling to survivors and families of sexual abuse. She works also with juvenile status offenders and their families as the FINS (Families in Need of Services) Officer for the 31<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Court in Jefferson Davis Parish. She is a co-founder of B Curriculum, LLC, as well as the Truth, Facts, & Lies education program, and helps develop and facilitate social-emotional learning curriculum for high school students.

**Melissa Dufrene, Psy.D., ABPP**  
**Clinical Psychologist**  
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Dr. Melissa Dufrene gained extensive training and experience in OCD-spectrum disorders during her pre-doctoral internship at Rogers Memorial Hospital in Wisconsin. While at Rogers, Dr. Dufrene spent significant time working at the residential OCD treatment program. Her post-doctoral experience was completed at a private practice in New Orleans, where she gained further experience in extended psychological evaluations and cognitive-behavioral therapy with diverse populations. In 2021, Dr. Dufrene and Dr. Kristin Fitch opened Rise Center for OCD and Anxiety, a private practice in mid-city New Orleans. Rise endeavors to increase access to the treatment and training of OCD and anxiety

disorders. She is thrilled to be working in coordination with Dr. Fitch to create programs for clients and providers that offer the most comprehensive approaches for effective assessment and treatment.

**Brooke Ferguson, M.S.W., LCSW**

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**Oceans Behavioral Health**

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Brooke Ferguson is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from McNeese State University and a Master of Social Work from Louisiana State University. With experience in both outpatient and inpatient settings, Ms. Ferguson's services include psychotherapy, crisis intervention, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). Brooke works to create transformative encounters within groups, couples, families and individual sessions, always focused on her dedicated commitment to driving positive change.

**Gail Gillespie, Ph.D.**

**Psychologist**

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Dr. Gail Gillespie earned a Ph.D. from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1992, with a concentration in School Psychology. She has been in private practice in New Orleans since 1996, specializing in evaluation and treatment of school-aged children, young adults, and families, doing short-term work with adults through New Orleans Musician's Clinic, as well as working with individuals with developmental disabilities. She has been a member of the LPA since 1992, having previously served on the Executive Council as Director in 2010-2011, Secretary and Continuing Education Chair (2015-2017), and co-chair for both the membership committee and convention and CE committee in 2022-23. She was President of the Crescent City Area Psychological Society in 2019 and is currently Secretary. She is Regional Director for the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology. She specializes in Emotional Freedom Techniques and is currently completing coursework toward becoming a psychedelic-assisted therapist. Dr. Gillespie continues to enjoy being a part of positive momentum in various professional psychology organizations.

**Gary G. Gintner, Ph.D., LPC-S, NCC**

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Dr. Gary G. Gintner, Ph.D., LPC-S, NCC is an Associate Professor and Program Coordinator for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at Louisiana State University. He has published numerous articles on topics such as DSM-5, differential diagnosis, mood disorders, substance abuse and best practices for the treatment of psychiatric and substance use disorders. He is a nationally recognized trainer on the DSM and best practice guidelines. His thirty years of clinical experience includes inpatient care,

substance abuse counseling, and outpatient mental health. He is a Fellow of the American Counseling Association and was the 2007-2008 President of the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA).

**Katie C. Guinn, Ph.D., LPC-S**  
**Regional Director**  
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Dr. Katie Guinn has worked at the Center for Children and Families for nearly ten years and has a passion for working with families. She has served as Regional Director for eight years in Crowley, Louisiana, and she is also clinical supervisor for provisional counselors in the State of Louisiana. Katie Guinn earned a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology in 2012 and a Doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy in 2017. She is also an adjunct faculty for the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at National University in California. Katie Guinn currently resides in Jennings, Louisiana.

**Corie G. Hebert, Ph.D., LMSW**  
**Associate Professor/ Child Welfare Program Coordinator**  
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Dr. Corie Hebert is an Associate Professor at Southeastern Louisiana University. She has been teaching for over 20 years, with over 15 of those years in the Southeastern Social Work Program. Dr. Hebert's time is divided between teaching and coordinating the Title IV-E Child Welfare Scholar Program and serving as the principal investigator for the Louisiana Child Welfare Training Academy (LCWTA), a training system created through a partnership with the Louisiana Department of Children and Families and the Pelican Center for Children and Families. The LCWTA provides child welfare training for child welfare workers, foster caregivers, child welfare legal professionals and community partners. Dr. Hebert received her B.A. from Auburn University in Psychology and her M.S.W. from the University of Alabama. She received her Ph.D. in Social Work from Louisiana State University, after practicing in the health care field for ten years. Her publications and conference presentations focus on teaching effectiveness and child welfare issues, including foster parent needs, engagement, human trafficking, and domestic violence. She is deeply involved in the child welfare community with activities ranging from providing training to board membership.

**Katherine Hebert, LCSW, PMH-C**  
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Katherine Hebert is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Certified Perinatal Psychotherapist (PMH-C) and co-owner of Bloom Mental Wellness in Lafayette, Louisiana. She holds specialized trainings in CBT, EMDR and PMAD's and currently provides clinical supervision to provisional social workers as a Board

Appointed Clinical Supervisor (BACS). She volunteers for Postpartum Support International (PSI) where she and her co-worker provide social support, information and resources to moms, dads and families in their community, helping them prevent or recover from perinatal mental health issues during pregnancy, postpartum or post-loss.

**Leslie C. Higgins, Psy.D.**

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Dr. Leslie C. Higgins has worked in a variety of settings over the course of her 39 years as a licensed clinical psychologist. Some of her accomplishments include serving as Program Coordinator for a 28-bed adolescent inpatient unit at River Oaks Hospital, consulting with special education programs for St. Charles Parish Schools, serving as the mental health consultant for Head Start programs in St. Charles and St. John parishes, and developing a mental health crisis response protocol for the Archdiocese of New Orleans Schools. She served as a board member for Parents Anonymous and was a founding board member of OCD Louisiana, the local affiliate of the International OCD Foundation. Dr. Higgins treats children and adolescents with OCD and related disorders in her outpatient private practice, Higgins Psychological Services, using exposure-response prevention (ERP). She finds it rewarding and creative and hopes you might also.

**Jenny Hollander, Ph.D., LPC-S, LMFT**

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Dr. Jenny Hollander is Owner of Hollander Counseling & Consulting, located in Hammond, Louisiana. She is also Adjunct Faculty at Southeastern Louisiana University. She holds a Ph.D. in Counselor Education from the University of New Orleans. She received a Master's Degree in Counseling from West Virginia University and completed an internship at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, working in addictions. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Dr. Hollander has presented on numerous topics and also currently works with the local fire department in Hammond, Louisiana, delivering education and mental health support. Her work has led to research presented nationally on the mental strategies of firefighters before and after an incident.

**Michael F. Monic, M.A., LPC-S, LMFT**

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Michael F. Monic is a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. He has practiced in Jennings, Louisiana, for 20 years. He has also presented at numerous conferences in both Louisiana and Texas on various topics, including "Ethics for Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists" and "Psychopaths and Serial Killers". Michael

F. Monic previously served two years on the Government Relations Committee for the Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA) and was the recipient of the LCA's 2011 Government Relations Award.

**Matt Morris, Ph.D., LPC-S, LMFT-S**  
**Professor of Counseling**  
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Dr. Matt Morris received a PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy from Virginia Tech (2006), and he currently is a Professor of Counseling at the University of Holy Cross (UHC) in New Orleans. Dr. Morris teaches systemically-oriented courses related to counseling families and couples. Matt is licensed as both a Professional Counselor (LPC-S) and Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT-S) in Louisiana, and is a Board-Approved Supervisor for both licenses. Dr. Morris frequently presents at state, national, and international conferences on topics related to couple & family therapy, training systemically-oriented therapists, teletherapy, and building a private practice. Matt is active in private practice where he specializes in couple/relationship therapy, therapies to reduce conflict and improve connection, and therapies to improve sexuality and intimacy. When not working, he can be found with family and friends at one of New Orleans' many festivals, enjoying life, music, and great food!

**Darlyne G. Nemeth, Ph.D., M.S.C.P.**  
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Dr. Darlyne G. Nemeth is a clinical, medical, and neuropsychologist in private practice at The Neuropsychology Center of Louisiana, which she founded. Dr. Nemeth has been a pioneer in the area of Clinical Neuropsychology for over 30 years and was the first to establish a private practice Neuropsychological Laboratory (1977). She is internationally recognized for her work with neuropsychologically compromised children.

**Christy Pennison, M.A., LPC-S**  
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Christy Pennison is a board-certified counselor, business-building entrepreneur, host of *Inspiring Possible* podcast, and founder of *Be Inspired Counseling & Consulting*, a multi-location therapy practice in central Louisiana. She has coached and advised leaders, mental health professionals, and business owners from across the country to help them grow through their challenges. Recognition for her work includes being awarded the *20 under 40 Acadiana Leadership Award*, guesting on the Montel Williams' podcast *Free Thinking*, and sharing her expertise in articles appearing on NBC Today and other media outlets and publications. She is passionate about empowering mental health professionals and individual leaders to live with confidence, conviction, and the belief that anything is possible.

**Tanya Radecker, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, RN**  
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Dr. Tanya Radecker is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Certified EFT Supervisor. She is Owner and Executive Director of Balanced Change Counseling and Supervision Services and one of the founding members of the Louisiana Community for EFT, as well as a former executive director for the Louisiana Community for Emotionally Focused Therapy. Dr. Radecker travels the state providing workshops on EFT, in addition to facilitating EFT trainings for clinicians working towards EFT certification. She has served as Adjunct Faculty at University of Holy Cross and frequently lectures on Sexual Assault Awareness at several universities in both New Orleans and Baton Rouge. She is certified in Hypnotherapy and has advanced training in Intensive Trauma Therapy, Sex Therapy, and Perinatal Mood Disorders. Prior to training as a LPC, Dr. Radecker worked as a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner and served as Team Leader for the Tulane University Hospital Neonatal Transport Team.

**Darrel Turner, Ph.D.**  
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Dr. Darrel Turner is a clinical and forensic psychologist and consultant who specializes in the area of sexual offending to include risk assessment, interview techniques, and grooming behaviors. He has published numerous research articles in the field and has consulted and testified in cases for the FBI, NCIS, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Military, and state agencies across the country. He has spoken and provided trainings nationally and internationally in his area of expertise.

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Hailey Verrett is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Perinatal Mental Health Therapist from Lafayette, Louisiana. She is in private practice at Bloom Mental Wellness and is passionate about caring for mothers, babies, and families, especially parents caring for children with special health needs or families experiencing a pregnancy or infant loss.

**Amanda Weathers-Meyer, LPC, NCC**  
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Amanda J. Weathers-Meyer is the Director of Wellness for St. George Fire Protection District, located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her area of focus involves improving the mental fitness of firefighters through bodily movement, mindfulness, and facilitating a greater mind-body connection. Dr. Weathers-Meyer has conducted several studies with fire departments located throughout Louisiana. Her studies have investigated the effects of mindfulness-based physical activity on mental health outcomes in firefighters. She has also piloted mind-body tactical training programs for firefighters to promote psychological resilience and improved stress management. Her clinical work focuses on culturally competent counseling practices with fire service personnel. Dr. Weathers-Meyer holds a Ph.D. in Kinesiology with an emphasis in psychological sciences, and a M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Louisiana State University. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in the State of Louisiana and a National Certified Counselor.

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Dr. Traci W. Olivier is a clinical and neuropsychologist, specializing in pediatric neuropsychological evaluations. She is currently in private practice at the Neuropsychological Center of Louisiana in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.