

TITLE: Engaging the Whole Family...That Includes Fathers!

ABSTRACT: Strong families are the foundation of healthy communities, and fathers play a vital role in promoting child safety, stability, and well-being. Research shows that children with actively involved fathers experience stronger developmental outcomes and face lower risks of challenges such as academic difficulties, justice system involvement, and substance use. However, fathers, particularly those with substance use disorders involved in child welfare, often encounter systems that limit meaningful engagement.

This session explores why father engagement matters and solutions to common barriers across child welfare, treatment, and court systems. Participants will learn practical, evidence-informed strategies to better engage fathers and create family-centered practices. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to strengthen father engagement and enhance safety and well-being for children and families.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Recognize the importance of including fathers in child welfare and treatment case planning and promoting father-child relationships
2. Learn effective strategies and day-to-day practices to identify and engage fathers in treatment and services
3. Identify ways to strengthen father engagement across child welfare, substance use disorder treatment, and court systems serving families affected by substance use

Alexis Balkey is a Program Director at Children and Family Futures, working with the National Family Treatment Court Training and Technical Assistance Program. She mentors Associates and Specialists, supports project management and reporting, and has provided TTA to FTCs nationwide, responding to more than 1,600 requests over fourteen years. She served as a Change Leader for statewide system-improvement efforts and for the Prevention and Family Recovery initiative, helping jurisdictions strengthen family-centered care for families affected by substance use disorders. Before joining CFF, she managed the Riverside County Family Preservation Court and oversaw multiple funding streams, including a SAMHSA CAM grant. She is a certified addictive disorder counselor and holds a B.A. in Psychology, a B.A. in Criminal Justice from Temple University, and an MPA from California State University, San Bernardino.

Marissa Colliflower serves with the National Family Treatment Court Training and Technical Assistance Program and the Regional Partnership Grant (RPG), providing tailored technical assistance to individual requesters and RPG grant recipients to strengthen practice, implementation, and outcomes.

Ms. Colliflower holds a B.S. in family and human development from Arizona State University. She trained as an emotional first responder with the Trauma Intervention Program (TIP), and a suicide prevention facilitator for HeartLine Oklahoma. She's passionate about working with communities who have experienced trauma, as well as supporting individuals and families with substance use disorders and mental health issues.