

Door to the Future Transition Conference

and

Empowering YOUR Future Conference

20 24

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31ST



**CONFERENCE
SPONSORS**



DOOR TO THE FUTURE TRANSITION CONFERENCE

SCHEDULE

Sessions are color coded to help with your selection

◆ Advocacy ◆ Employment ◆ Family ◆ Educational Support System ◆ Technology ◆ Transition Basics

8:30 AM

9:45 AM

11:00 AM

1:00 PM

2:15 PM

**A Family Affair:
Navigating Your
Student's
Transition from
High School to
Adulthood**

**Breaking Down
Barriers - Providing
Authentic
Transition for
Individuals with
Significant
Disabilities**

**Creating A Plan for the
Future!**

**Empowering Voices,
Building Futures:
Student Led ARDs**

Apprenticeship 101

**Essential Things
Parents need to
Know about
Transition**

**Levels of Support for
College Students with
Disabilities**

Engaging Employers

**Bridging the Gap:
Post-Secondary
Employment &
Education
Transitions**

**Expanding
Employment
Opportunities for
Youth**

**Keynote
Creating
Your
Future**

**Strategies and
Recommendations to
Reduce Disruptions
and Disparities
Among Youth with
Disabilities Aging Out
of Public Programs**

**Google Accessibility
in Action: Tools for
Inclusive Learning**

**Innovative
Strategies for
Transition Success**

**Self Advocacy At
Home**

**Teaching Soft Skills
for Successful
Employment
Outcomes**

**Work is Possible
When You Get SSI!!**

**Housing Rights for
People With
Disabilities**

**SPEDTex
Resources:
Essentials for
Families**

**Transforming Spaces:
How Smart Home
Technology Enhances
Daily Life**

Cultures of Consent

**Transition Planning
in Texas**

**Special Education:
Advocating for
Appropriate
Transition Service**

**Supported Decision
Making/Alternatives to
Guardianship**

 **8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.**

A Family Affair: Navigating Your Student's Transition from High School to Adulthood

This session will address:

- The significance of maintaining high expectations for students with disabilities
- The strategic planning necessary for ensuring future success

The transition to adulthood begins long before a student turns 18. It starts with recognizing and understanding their disability. Join us for a collaborative discussion between parents, where we will explore effective planning tools and resources designed to support both you and your child in preparing for a successful future.

Presenter: Jackie Reavis, EdD, Life Skills Teacher, Kilgore ISD

Apprenticeship 101

This session will address:

- State of apprenticeship in Texas
- How to register a program
- The roles that must be filled before registration

Presenter: L. Lee Price, Commander, US Navy (Retired), Texas State Director, US Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship

Bridging the Gap: Post-Secondary Employment & Education Transitions

Using an engaging and honest style, the presenter will discuss:

- Post-secondary employment and education strategies for students with disabilities.
- Information about current successful program models, the importance of vocational evaluation, and the findings of his dissertation which focused on understanding the relationship between successful employment outcomes and parent demographics, behaviors, and expectations

This information will be infused with the presenter's unique professional and personal knowledge as a VR Director and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor & Advanced Autism Specialist diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome.

Presenter: Dr. James Williams, CRC, ACAS, Division Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Iowa Workforce Development

Innovative Strategies for Transition Success

Join us for an engaging workshop designed to spark fresh ideas and equip vocational staff with evidence-based practices to enhance transition planning.

Learning Objectives:

- Explore a range of strategies implemented within Local Education Agencies (LEAs)
- Improve students' self-advocacy skills, strengthen parent collaboration, increase agency connections, establish a district transition team
- How to insert transition literature within existing TEKS and curriculum
- Gain actionable tools to boost student outcomes and empower students throughout their transition journey

Presenter: Tracy Johnston, M.Ed., Specialist, Special Education, ESC Region 7

BREAKOUT SESSIONS IN DETAIL

Sessions are color coded to help with your selection

◆ Advocacy ◆ Employment ◆ Family ◆ Educational Support System ◆ Technology ◆ Transition Basics

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Housing Rights for People With Disabilities

Session Objectives:

- Introduction to the Fair Housing Act and Disability Protections
- Learn the definitions of reasonable accommodations and reasonable modifications
- Discover the process for individuals with disabilities requesting necessary changes
- The landlord's responsibilities and considerations

Presenter: Veronica Cortez, Community Navigator, Housing Specialist, Disability Rights Texas

Transition Planning in Texas

Schools help all students prepare for their future. For students who receive special education services, there is a process called transition planning that begins by age 14. This process can help students decide what they want for their future and figure out the steps needed to meet their goals. This session will review resources and requirements for transition planning in Texas.

Presenter: Elizabeth Danner, State Transition Coordinator, Texas Education Agency

9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

Breaking Down Barriers - Providing Authentic Transition for Individuals with Significant Disabilities

This session is designed for parents of transition-aged youth with disabilities. This presentation focuses on equipping parents with the knowledge and tools necessary to support their child's journey into adulthood. Topics include practical strategies for fostering independence, securing employment opportunities, and creating personalized plans that reflect the unique needs of individuals with significant disabilities. Parents will learn how to navigate available resources, advocate effectively, and build a supportive network to ensure their child can achieve a meaningful and fulfilling future.







Presenter: Roni Jo Frazier, CEO, Bloom Consulting

Essential Things Parents need to Know about Transition

Attendees will discuss:

- The key things about transition to adulthood that parents need to know
- Topics such as emotional roadblocks, school transition, legal issues, long term services and supports, where will you child live, work, and build a network of support.

Presenter: Adriana Valadez, Transition Co-Coordinator, Texas Parent to Parent

 Advocacy  Employment  Family  Educational Support System  Technology  Transition Basics

 **9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.**

Expanding Employment Opportunities for Youth

What do youth want after high school? A job, living on their own, and access to their community? Employment is the key to building a full life after high school. Learn how to expand employment opportunities for youth that focus on discovering interests and skills and making connections with employers. Learn about setting up work experiences, mapping the community, networking, informational interviews, customized employment, Fair Labor Standards for youth, and finding successful job matches!

Presenter: Janet Estervig, Director of Curriculum and Training, Attainment Company

Self Advocacy At Home

Life is full of choices! Many of life's biggest decisions begin at home. Do I want to keep going to school? Where do I want to work? What about my friends and where I can live? Self-advocacy skills can support you when you face these and many other decisions. Hear from self-advocate leaders about their journey to make decisions about where to live, where to work, and the people they choose to have fun with!

Presenter: Jennifer Walton, Executive Director, The Center for Disability Leadership and Cynthia Gayles, Self-Advocate Leader, The Center for Disability Leadership

SPEDTex Resources: Essentials for Families

For some families, special education can be new or overwhelming.

During this session attendees will:

- Review practical resources, tips, and tools available on the SPEDTex website that will help parents and families understand special education basics and become prepared to participate in their child's education

Presenter: Sarah Untersee, SFCE Consultant for Special Populations, Region 10 Education Service Center

Special Education: Advocating for Appropriate Transition Service

Participants will learn the responsibilities of the school district to prepare students for their futures after high school and how to effectively advocate for students to receive these services.

Presenter: Kathryn Hogan, Education Attorney, Disability Rights Texas

KEYNOTE

11:00 A.M.

Shelbi Davenport

Creating Your Future

Using the letters F-U-T-U-R-E, Shelbi will discuss the importance of planning and focusing on the essential steps needed for successful transitions, keeping the future bright for students with different abilities. Designed to empower all attendees, this presentation challenges everyone to advocate for themselves, serve as a voice for those who cannot, and encourage others along their journey.



Shelbi Davenport found inspiration being told “NO” during her educational journey. Doctors, counselors, and well-meaning teachers set the stage for Shelbi to build her self-determination and overcome obstacles in her path. That one simple word fueled Shelbi’s persistence that lead her down a path to become who she dreamed of being. After many struggles and victories, Shelbi graduated from Texas A&M University with her degree is University Studies with an emphasis in Ag Leadership and minored in Communication and Youth Development.

Being awarded, in 2017, with the first Peer-to-Peer Training Certification in Texas was one of Shelbi's greatest achievements! This milestone has ignited her passion to change lives by empowering others to advocate for themselves and dream BIG! Shelbi has also pledged herself to advocate for others and be a voice when they cannot. Envisioning a world where many more can feel safe, secure, and important, keeps Shelbi striving toward her new goals.

Since her graduation, Shelbi has applied her leadership skills across various areas, with new opportunities emerging right before her. Her first full-time position was as a Program Assistant for the HOPS (Horticulture Options in Plant Sciences) Program. This one-year certification programs offers adults with disabilities the chance to receive training, education, and employment in the horticulture field. Another significant opportunity arose when she launched her own "Shelbi Show" in early May 2022. This show fulfills a long-held dream of hers, aimed at providing encouragement, support, and hope to anyone facing challenges. As the show progresses, Shelbi plans to share her own journey as well as others, and interview those across the nation who are dedicated to supporting and advocating for those with lived experiences.

 **1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

Creating A Plan for the Future!

As family members of individuals with disability labels, we are so overwhelmed with day-to-day activities we forget to think about the future.

In this session you will learn:

- Why you should have a written plan
- How a written plan can guide you through early childhood intervention IFSP meetings, school IEP meetings, transition planning, or adult service planning

Presenter: Mary Jane Williams, Executive Director, Family to Family Network

Levels of Support for College Students with Disabilities

College is possible for students of all abilities!

In this session attendees will:

- Understand the history of disability services in higher education and the three categories of support available to students with a wide range of disabilities; traditional disability services, supplemental services, and inclusive higher education services
- Discuss inclusive higher education programming for students with Intellectual Disability and what makes it beyond compliance
- Understand the various services provided in each category and what type of student is the best fit for each
- Receive an overview of college readiness skills
- Identify which services you or the students you serve would require for college access

Presenter: Pathways to Inclusive Higher Learning

Strategies and Recommendations to Reduce Disruptions and Disparities Among Youth with Disabilities Aging Out of Public Programs







Low-income youth with disabilities are at risk of losing coverage, disability income supports, and continuity of care when they transition into adulthood.

This presentation underscores the little attention that has been paid to the disruptions and disparities in public program access faced by transition-aged youth with disabilities, particularly Black youth, as they age into adulthood.

This was a two-year effort to examine the experience when youth and young adults with disabilities age out of Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, and Title V Programs for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN).

This presentation highlights recommendations to address gaps, complexities, and disparities for each of the public programs studied. The recommendations were drawn from the findings from key informant and self-advocate interviews, literature and program document reviews, online surveys, analysis of national survey data, and a five-state case study.

Presenter: Samhita Ilango, MSPH, Senior Health Research/Policy Associate, Got Transition/The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

 Advocacy  Employment  Family  Educational Support System  Technology  Transition Basics

 **1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

Teaching Soft Skills for Successful Employment Outcomes

Employers stress the importance of soft skills to be successful in the world of work.

In this session you will learn:

- The top soft skills or essential skills, employers are looking for in new employees and how to teach those skills
- Educational resources that can improve student's soft skills, and suggested lessons to develop these skills with your students
- Skills include personal hygiene, teamwork, active listening, social skills, problem solving, communication, flexibility, and time management

Presenter: Janet Estervig, Director of Curriculum and Training, Attainment Company

Transforming Spaces: How Smart Home Technology Enhances Daily Life

This presentation explores:







- How smart home technology is reshaping everyday living, offering convenience, security, and accessibility for all from voice-activated assistants to automated lighting
- Key products, including those powered by AI, and their practical applications in daily routines
- How these technologies can benefit individuals with diverse needs.
- The latest advancements and learn how to integrate smart solutions for a more connected, comfortable, and inclusive living environment

Presenter: Rachel Hoffman, M.Ed, MS STEAM Facilitator & Learning Coach, All Saint Episcopal School

Supported Decision Making/Alternatives to Guardianship

Students with disabilities approaching adulthood need planning and preparation that maximizes their ability to make their own life choices and decisions. This session reviews what families, administrators, and Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee members need to know about Texas law regarding guardianships and alternatives to guardianship. The session will also discuss choice considerations for transition planning.

Presenter: Cicely Reid, JD, MB, Pro Bono Coordinator, Disability Rights Texas

 Advocacy  Employment  Family  Educational Support System  Technology  Transition Basics

 **2:15 p.m. - 3:15p.m.**

Cultures of Consent

In this session learn to:

- Explore creating cultures of consent to promote and support development of skills for participating in healthy and safer relationships
- Participants will explore promoting healthy and safer relationships skills by fostering cultures of consent- where youth and adults are supported in making decisions about likes/dislikes, boundaries, and what they need to feel safe

We believe defining and holding strong boundaries can be taught, modeled, and practiced so people are more prepared and confident in their right to say NO and their right to say YES.

Presenter: Michelle (Shell) Schwartz, Director of Disability Services, The SAFE Alliance

Empowering Voices, Building Futures: Student Led ARDs

It is crucial for students to become active participants in their own learning journey.

Learning objectives for this session:

- Empower students with disabilities to ensure their unique needs are not only met but championed
- Equip educators with the knowledge and strategies to foster self-advocacy in students by guiding them to take the reins in their ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal) meetings

Presenter: Tracy Johnston, M.Ed., Specialist, Special Education Services, Region 7 Education Service Center

Engaging Employers







This training will offer insights to building relationships with the business community and focus on a sales approach to develop professional connections.

You have two customers as a job developer: the job seeker and the employer. Understanding the power of networking and speaking the employer's language can assist you to make meaningful, long-term connections that meet the needs of both employers and people you are serving.

Learning objectives for this session

- Learn how to inventory your communities, analyze labor market data, market your services, understand the lean business model and develop professional business proposals
- Learn how to match jobs seekers successfully to create outstanding job placements that complement a person's interests and skills

Presenter: Janet Estervig, Director of Curriculum and Training, Attainment Company

 Advocacy  Employment  Family  Educational Support System  Technology  Transition Basics

 **2:15 p.m. - 3:15p.m.**

Google Accessibility in Action: Tools for Inclusive Learning

This presentation highlights:

- Google's powerful accessibility tools, designed to create a more inclusive learning environment
- Features such as voice typing, screen readers, and real-time captioning, all of which enhance digital access for individuals with diverse needs
- Practical applications of these tools in educational settings
- How it can support students with disabilities and improve overall learning experiences
- Actionable strategies for integrating Google's accessibility features, fostering an inclusive and supportive classroom for all learners

Presenter: Rachel Hoffman, M.Ed, MS STEAM Facilitator & Learning Coach, All Saint Episcopal School

Work is Possible When You Get SSI!

Too often families and youth with disabilities think that they cannot work and still get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid. This is far from the truth! Mary Jane will discuss work incentives, especially for youth who are still in high school, that can be used to keep SSI and Medicaid.

Presenter: Mary Jane Williams, Executive Director, Family to Family Network

Thinking About College: Deciphering Post Secondary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disability

This presentation focuses on the transformative impact of Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs for students with intellectual disabilities across the U.S.

This session highlights:

- The national landscape of IPSE programs, emphasizing the benefits of college attendance for students with intellectual disabilities, including increased employment and higher wages
- Insights into the diverse range of IPSE programs available nationwide, guidance on selecting the right program, and resources to support students' transition to college

Presenter: Belkis Choiseul-Praslin, Research Associate, Think College, Institute of Community Inclusion at UMass Boston

Door Prize Sessions:

2:30 p.m.

Empowering YOUR Future Youth Conference

3:30 p.m.

Door to the Future Conference

EMPOWERING YOUR FUTURE YOUTH CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

9:00 AM
to
9:30 AM

ICE BREAKER - RACHEL HOFFMAN

9:45 AM to
10:30 AM

EMPOWER YOUR FUTURE - MY RIGHTS MY LIFE - TERESA SOLIS & SOPHIE BENITEZ

Practicing Boundaries and Consent in Healthy Relationships:

- Understand how to set and uphold personal boundaries
- Ask others for consent and respect other's answers
- Review different types of relationships

11:00 AM
to
12:00 PM

CREATE YOUR FUTURE- SHELBI DAVENPORT

Using the letters F-U-T-U-R-E, Shelbi will discuss the importance of planning and focusing on the essential steps needed for successful transitions, keeping the future bright for students with different abilities. Designed to empower all attendees, this presentation challenges everyone to advocate for themselves, serve as a voice for those who cannot, and encourage others along their journey.

12:45 PM
to
1:30 PM

ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS ON YOUR OWN: WHAT SKILLS DO I NEED? - ANDY BARLOW

In this session you will learn:

- The two types of advocating
- Understanding your needs
- Effective communication
- Confidence to pursue your goals

1:45 PM
to
2:30 PM

BE A DECISION MAKER: CLIMB THE STEPS TO MAKE BETTER CHOICES - SUSAN DORSEY

Attendees will learn:

- How to recognize the importance of a decision based on the consequences
- How to identify factors that influence decisions
- To recognize decisions that may require support
- Decision-Making strategies

PRESENTER BIOS



Andy Barlow
Chairman
Utah Disability Youth Leadership Committee

Andy Barlow (she/her) is the chairman of the Utah Disability Youth Leadership Committee (YLC). In the past, she served as YLC Representative for the Youth with Disabilities for the Utah Statewide Independence Living Committee. Andy loves advocating for youth with disabilities in her state and is now spreading her knowledge to help youth in other states, as well. She enjoys attending other youth conferences to gain more knowledge so she can continue to offer her insights.



Sophie Benitez
Education and Training Specialist, Disability Services
The SAFE Alliance

Sophie Benitez is an Education and Training Specialist in Disability Services at The SAFE Alliance. She began her career attending My Rights My Life training. She completed 30 sessions as part of her Adult Transition Service Program. Before her current position, she was a consultant in Disability Services and assisted with the My Rights My Life curriculum. In her current position, she presents to other organizations, researches resources and information, and instructs My Rights My Life curriculum to young adults in the community and youth in 18+ in Adult Transition Service programs.



Elizabeth Danner
State Transition Coordinator
Texas Education Agency

Elizabeth Danner is the State Transition Coordinator with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). She coordinates statewide technical assistance for transition planning “from early to exit.” She has worked in public education for over 20 years, in roles that include paraprofessional, teacher, professional development specialist, and consultant. Her professional focus continues to be connecting people with disabilities to careers, continued learning, and community beyond high school.



Susan Dorsey
Deputy Director
Crockett-Palestine Resource Center for Independent Living

Susan Dorsey has served the Crockett-Palestine Resource Center for Independent Living (CPRCIL) for twenty years. Currently, she is the deputy director and teaches a variety of skills classes, including independent living, employment, computer education, driver's education, as well as website and graphic design. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she also manages various administrative duties. On top of her role at CPRCIL, she has been actively involved as the coordinator for Door to the Future Conference Committee for the past 16 years.

PRESENTER BIOS



Veronica Cortez
Community Navigator, Housing Specialist
Disability Rights Texas

Veronica Cortez is a Community Navigator that works with the Housing/Transportation team. Veronica is a native Texan with a BA in Music Performance from St. Mary's University in San Antonio and a BA in Bilingual and Early Childhood Education from the University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg (now UTRGV). She is a member of the State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division. Veronica's ability to connect with and educate people, no doubt, stems from her wealth of experience, her career as an educator, and an advocate for minority populations. Veronica utilizes her classroom experience, her work in the community addressing housing discrimination, and her background as a paralegal assisting individuals in navigating complex challenges to serve as a bridge between attorneys and the public.



Roni Jo Frazier
Chief Executive Officer
Bloom Consulting

Roni Jo Frazier holds a master's in Education and a Bachelor's in Business Administration, demonstrating a formidable academic background. Possessing a certification as an Autism Specialist, she boasts an impressive track record of over two decades dedicated to delivering services to individuals with disabilities. For the past five years, Roni Jo has been an integral part of Bloom Consulting LLC, a prominent organization spearheading opportunities for individuals across diverse regions, including Texas, Wyoming, Virginia, Montana, Utah, and Nevada.

In her capacity as the Chief Executive Officer at Bloom Consulting, Roni Jo Frazier leverages her extensive experience in both the public and private sectors to spearhead the development and implementation of cutting-edge programs. These initiatives are meticulously designed to offer the most sophisticated and effective services to the individuals under her care. Notably, Roni Jo has actively contributed to numerous state and national boards of directors for disability-related service organizations, including prominent entities such as Association of People Supporting Employment (APSE) and American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD).

Continuing her commitment to enhancing employment opportunities and fostering community-based living for individuals with disabilities, Roni Jo remains at the forefront of program development initiatives at Bloom Consulting. Her multifaceted approach encompasses educational outreach to professionals and tireless advocacy efforts, collectively contributing to the advancement of the overarching mission.

PRESENTER BIOS



Janet Estervig Director of Training and Curriculum Attainment Company

Janet has degrees in Special Education, Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, and is a Registered Nurse. She taught high school special education and established an employment agency. For 25 years, providing integrated employment services for youth and adults with disabilities. Janet was the director of an agency providing personal care and home chore services for seniors and people with disabilities supervising registered nurses with a workforce of over 1200 personal care workers.

She worked at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services as the Employment Initiatives Section Chief building employment supports for youth and adults throughout Wisconsin. Janet is currently working at Attainment Company writing curricula for special education transition programs and provides training to support employment outcomes for students and adults with disabilities. Janet also works as a Private Duty Nurse. She currently serves on three non-profit Boards and has been a church organist over 55 years!



Rachel Hoffman MS STEAM Facilitator & Learning Coach All Saints Episcopal School

With a Master's in Curriculum Design and over seven years of teaching experience at All Saints Episcopal School, Rachel Hoffman brings a wealth of expertise in education and technology. For the past five years, Rachel has served as a Learning Coach and Technical Advisor for the middle school, where they focus on integrating innovative technology into the classroom to enhance student learning. In her role, she specializes in guiding educators and students in leveraging digital tools for improved accessibility and efficiency. Today, Rachel is excited to present on Smart Home Technology and Google Accessibility, offering insights on how these advancements can transform both personal environments and educational spaces.



Kathryn Hogan Education Attorney Disability Rights Texas

Elizabeth Danner is the State Transition Coordinator with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). She coordinates statewide technical assistance for transition planning "from early to exit." She has worked in public education for over 20 years, in roles that include paraprofessional, teacher, professional development specialist, and consultant. Her professional focus continues to be connecting people with disabilities to careers, continued learning, and community beyond high school.

PRESENTER BIOS

Samhita Ilango, MSPH

Senior Health Research/Policy Associate

Got Transition® /The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

Samhita Ilango is responsible for assisting with health care transition research related to national health survey analyses, state Title V agencies, and quality improvement efforts. She previously worked in autism and reproductive health research. Ms. Ilango received her master's in public health, focusing in health policy, from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.



Tracy Johnston

Specialist, Special Education
ESC Region 7

With 28 years of experience in education, Tracy Johnston has served in various roles, including teacher, diagnostician, transition specialist, and special education coordinator. Currently a specialist for transition services at ESC Region 7, Tracy is dedicated to empowering students with disabilities to develop the self-advocacy skills necessary for meaningful work and active participation in their communities. Her extensive experience and passion for student success makes her a dynamic advocate for effective transition planning and support.



Elsie Kramer

Program Coordinator

IN! Pathways to Inclusive Higher Education

Elise Kramer has a variety of experiences with advocating for students and learners of all kinds. With an undergraduate degree in Middle Childhood Education from Miami University (OH) and a graduate degree in Educational Psychology from University of Wisconsin-Madison, Elise deeply understands the challenges associated both with being a higher education student and with systems of education, more broadly. Elise has worked within multiple K-12 school districts, and she is excited to bring her perspective and passion for education to IN! Elise is eager to help Colorado's institutions of higher education become more inclusive.

PRESENTER BIOS



L. Lee Price
Commander, US Navy (Retired), Texas State Director
US Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship

Lee Price hails from Clopton, Alabama. He is a graduate of the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering Management. He also holds Masters Degrees in National Security from the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island and Education from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. He retired as a Commander in the US Navy where he was a qualified Surface Warfare Officer and Naval Aviator for 20+ years. Upon retirement, he became the Training Director for Austal Shipbuilders in Mobile, Alabama where he and his team built the largest registered apprentice program in the state. He was then selected as the Arkansas State Director for the US Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship for a period of six years before transferring to the Texas State Director where currently serves in this position.



Cicely C. Reid
Pro Bono Coordinator/ Senior Staff Attorney at Disability Rights
Texas

Cicely C. Reid is a Pro Bono Coordinator and Senior Staff Attorney at Disability Rights Texas, where Cicely C. advocates for the rights and protection of persons living with disabilities in Texas. With a JD/MBA, Cicely C. has extensive experience in insurance defense, personal injury litigation, and criminal prosecution. Additionally, Cicely C. has taught Professional Responsibility and Legal Ethics at The University of Houston and served as an Assistant District Attorney at the Harris County District Attorney's Office. Cicely C. holds degrees from Tulane University, The University of Texas School of Law, and Texas A&M University.



Jackie Reavis, EdD
Life Skills Teacher
Kilgore ISD

Dr. Reavis, originally from East Texas, began her career in education as a paraprofessional. She earned her Bachelor's from East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas, followed by a Master's from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, and a Doctorate from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. With a career spanning 39 years, she has held various roles across multiple districts throughout the state. Dr. Reavis retired from Region 7 ESC in 2023 but returned to the classroom as a part-time life skills teacher. Her most profound experience, however, comes from her personal journey as a mother of a child with disabilities, where she learned invaluable lessons through lived experience.

PRESENTER BIOS



Michelle (Shell) Schwartz
Director, Disability Services
The SAFE Alliance

Michelle Schwartz holds a Master of Arts Degree in Psychology and is Director of SAFE Disability Services in Austin, Texas. She gained early experience in community psychology and in both private and state-run counseling, behavioral, and mental health settings. Michelle focuses on initiatives designed to reduce the risks of victimization and identifying or developing supports for recovery and healing with youth and adults with disabilities.



Teresa Solis
Disabilities Project Coordinator and Educator
The SAFE Alliance

Teresa Solis (she, her, hers) serves as the Disabilities Project Coordinator and Educator for The SAFE Alliance. Serving people in crisis for fifteen years, she began her career as a volunteer on a crisis hotline for the local domestic violence and sexual assault (DV/SA) organization. It was at this point in Teresa's life she made a career change from the medical field to working for DV/SA organizations in three different states. Her passion is to advocate for others and share information and resources, aiming to cultivate a seed of hope and understanding.



Sarah Untersee
SFCE Consultant Special Populations
Region 10 Education Service Center

Sarah Untersee is a Region 10 consultant focused on closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities by increasing the engagement and collaboration between schools and families. She is passionate about cultivating trusting and productive relationships to help all students succeed. Her background encompasses over twenty years of service in Special Education. Sarah taught special education in both self-contained and resource settings. Additionally, Mrs. Untersee has worked as an Educational Diagnostician. She has a Master's Degree in Special Education and is currently the School, Family, and Community Engagement Consultant at Region 10 ESC where her duties include supporting the Special Education Information Center (SPEDTex).

Adriana Valadez
Transition Co-Coordinator
Texas Parent to Parent

Adriana serves as the Co-Coordinator of the Transition Program at Texas Parent to Parent. With more than twenty years of experience in the disability sector and thirty years of personal experience, she brings valuable insights to her role. Adriana is a mother to three adult daughters and a proud grandmother to two cherished granddaughters. Her eldest daughter has Down Syndrome.

PRESENTER BIOS



Jennifer Walton
Executive Director
Advocating Change Together

Jennifer Walton has worked in the disability services community for nearly 25 years and recently accepted the Executive Director position at Advocating Change Together (ACT) The Center for Disability Leadership. Jennifer's career began as a Direct Support Professional. She worked with many outstanding provider organizations and individuals in Day, Residential, and Employment Supports, and in partnership with Self-Advocacy organizations such as ACT. Jennifer lives with her blended family which represents multiple generations, neurodiversity, cultural and background differences, and much lived experience across many intersections.



Dr. James Williams, CRC, ACAS
Division Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation Services,
Iowa Workforce Development

Dr. James Williams is the Administrator for Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), a division of Iowa Workforce Development (IWD). Prior to serving as the Administrator of IVRS, Dr. Williams was the Chief Executive Officer of Bloom Consulting, a national provider organization specializing in providing vocational services, evaluations, and training to individuals with disabilities, particularly those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He is also a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, an Advanced Certified Autism Specialist, and a Certified Special Education Teacher. He obtained his Bachelor's in Special Education from Sam Houston State University, his Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from Texas Tech University Health Science Center, and his Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership from Lamar University. He has had the wonderful opportunity to work in both public and private special education with students of all ages in both teaching and administrative roles.

His passion for the last 18 years has been, and always will be, providing transitional and vocational Pre-ETS services to students with disabilities. He strives to use his professional and personal experience with ASD as a catalyst to inspire and educate others to believe in the incredible possibilities for adults and children with disabilities when they receive the appropriate services and accommodations.



Mary Jane Williams
Executive Director
Family to Family Network

As the CEO of Family to Family Network in Houston, Mary Jane is dedicated to breaking down barriers for families of children with disabilities, helping them navigate the often confusing journey of finding supports and services. She was a key figure in creating the Texas Project First website, providing accurate bilingual information on special education, and has shared her insights with thousands of families and educators across Texas. As a Cornell University Work Incentive Practitioner, she leverages her expertise and personal experience raising two successful adults to inspire and empower others.

CONFERENCE TEAM



Texas Parent to Parent



There's no deadline
for success