Dr. Nicholas Abid  
NAMI Florida Board Acting President

Dr. Nick Abid has been a psychiatrist for 40 years. A graduate of Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine he completed his residency in Psychiatry at the University of Washington, Seattle. After 26 years in clinical practice, he joined Wellcare Health Plans, and for the past 14 years, has been in various roles at Wellcare. As Acting NAMI Florida Board President he is proud to be a part of this conference dedicated to helping NAMI members learn and grow in their understanding of contemporary issues in mental health.

NAMI CEO Address

Daniel Gillison  
Chief Executive Officer, National Alliance on Mental Illness

Dan Gillison brings expertise in non-profit leadership and a passion for advocating for people with mental illness to NAMI. Prior to joining NAMI, Dan led the American Psychiatric Association Foundation (APAF) and County Solutions and Innovation for the National Association of Counties (NACo). Dan has also held leadership positions at Xerox, Nextel, and Sprint.
Dr. Carolyn Jones  
NAMI Florida Board Member

Carolyn Jones, PhD recently retired from an illustrious 22-year career in the pharmaceutical industry as a Senior Medical Science Liaison. Her passion and specialty is psychiatry. Prior to working in the pharmaceutical industry, Dr. Jones served as a clinical pharmacologist with the US Food and Drug Administration.

In retirement Carolyn stays busy as a Board Member for NAMI Florida and a Board Member and Secretary for the American Beach Property Owners’ Association (ABPOA) on Amelia Island.

She obtained her BS in Chemical Engineering from Drexel University and the PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). Go Rattlers!

Gayle Giese  
President, Florida Mental Health Advocacy Coalition and NAMI Florida Board Member

Gayle Giese is Board Member of NAMI Florida, Chair and a founding member of the NAMI Advocacy Group of Broward County and President of the Board of the Florida Mental Health Advocacy Coalition, which she helped to found. She is passionate about helping those with mental illness and their families and speaks openly about serious mental illness within her family. She advocates to provide safe affordable permanent supportive housing, insurance parity for mental health services, certified peer specialists,
and better-funded FACT teams, more psychiatric treatment beds, mobile response teams, centralized receiving centers, and other vital services, First Episode Psychosis Programs and Medicaid Expansion. In 2019, she won an EPIC (Exceptional People Impacting the Community) Award from Mental Health America of Southeast Florida. She wrote a grant that led to SAMSHA providing Sequential Intercept Mapping workshops for Broward County to kick off the Stepping Up Initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jail.

State Updates: Department of Children and Families – Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Shevaun Harris
Secretary of the Florida Department of Children and Families

Shevaun Harris joined the Department of Children and Families as the Secretary in February 2021 after a nearly two-decade career at the Agency for Health Care Administration.

Prior to joining DCF, Mrs. Harris was responsible for administering the Florida Medicaid program and regulates over 40,000 health care facilities in the state. Mrs. Harris held positions in the health and human services field providing services to children and adults diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and children receiving services in an inpatient psychiatric program. During her tenure at the AHCA, Mrs. Harris led the development and maintenance of all policies for Medicaid services, including those focused on children with special health care needs, Medicaid eligibility, long-term care, and behavioral health. She has overseen implementation of the agency’s quality improvement initiatives with particular focus on perinatal and behavioral health outcomes.

Mrs. Harris is an innovator – most recently, spearheading the development of the State’s Canadian Prescription Drug Importation program. She has led several major implementations and served as the lead negotiator for multi-billion-dollar contracts under the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program. This includes contracts with specialty plans that serve the child welfare population and individuals with serious mental illness. During her time as Acting Secretary, Mrs. Harris led the Agency's COVID-19 efforts in partnership with other state agencies and essential health care providers.

She received her bachelor’s degree in psychology, a master’s degree in social work from the Florida State University and a master’s degree in business administration from Quinnipiac University.
Cindy Foster
Program and Administrative Director for NAMI Florida

Cindy Foster is past president of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Florida. Currently she is the Program and Administrative Director for NAMI Florida. Cindy Foster is a retired Department of Defense Industrial Safety and Health Manager. For more than 12 years post retirement, Mrs. Foster has used her managerial and organizational skills in diverse non-profit organizations. She is a trained NAMI Program Leader for Basics, Family to Family, Peer to Peer and NAMI Homefront courses. She is a NAMI Family Support Group Facilitator. She is also a NAMI Presenter for Ending the Silence, Family and Friends, In Our Own Voice, and Sharing Our Stories With Law Enforcement.

Ashley Grimes
NAMI FL Board Member

Ashley Grimes is a Board Member of both NAMI Florida and the Volusia Recovery Alliance. She is also a State Organizer for the Florida Recovery Advocacy Project, and a member of both the Project Management Institute and the Institute of Managerial Accountants.
Ashley is a native Floridian born in Daytona Beach. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Project Management from Colorado Technical University and is currently enrolled at Crummer Graduate School of Business at Rollins College in their 64th Professional MBA Class. She is a Certified Associate of Project Management (CAPM,) Project Management Professional (PMP,) and a Certified Recovery Peer Specialist. She currently works as a Project Assistant for a long-standing local general contractor.

Ashley lives as a person in long term recovery from co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. She shows that recovery is possible, and that people in recovery can thrive and add tremendous value to their communities.

Ashley is a strong advocate for recovery friendly workplaces, recovery oriented systems of care, trauma Informed criminal justice systems, recovery schools, peer support services, and has a deep respect for law enforcement.

Moving and Grooving - African Dance with Kya

Dr. Kyaien Conner
Chair of the USF Faculty Senate Council on Racial Justice

Dr. Kyaien Conner is a tenured Associate Professor of Mental Health Law and Policy at the University of South Florida. She is a licensed social worker and is currently Chair of the USF Faculty Senate Council on Racial Justice. Dr. Conner received her BS in Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh. She has a Masters degree in Social Work and a Masters in Public Health with a specialization in Minority Health and Health Disparities. She has a PhD in Social Work and post-doctoral training in psychiatry from The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine/Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic.
Dr. Conner’s research investigates the factors that influence disparities in health and mental health service utilization and treatment outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities. She focused on the development and evaluation of culturally meaningful approaches to improving behavioral health for African Americans. Dr. Conner has received over 5 million dollars in funding for her research on behavioral health disparities. She is currently the lead investigator of a 2.5-million-dollar research award to evaluate the impact of a transition in care intervention to reduce health disparities among African American and Latino/Hispanic patients being discharged from the hospital with chronic illness and co-occurring mental illness. She is a co-investigator on a 2.5-million-dollar grant from the National Institute of Mental Illness to evaluate the efficacy of training volunteers in low-income communities to deliver a brief intervention for depression to their acutely depressed peers in an effort to build community capacity in areas where professional mental health treatment is in short supply, and individuals may choose not to seek professional services. Dr. Conner recently co-produced a series entitled: This is My Brave: Stories from the Black Community, which used storytelling as a culturally sanctioned strategy to amplify the voices of Black and Brown Americans with mental illness, reduce stigma and encourage African Americans living with mental illness or substance use/abuse to seek care.

Dr. Conner has 45 publications that speak to the impact of her work, and she has presented at over 50 scientific conferences in the United States and Internationally. She has received a number of awards including USF’s Outstanding professor award in 2016 and USF’s Black Faculty member of the year in 2020/21. She has also received a number of accolades for her work as a public speaker. Dr. Conner presents nationally on issues regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, anti-racism and race-based trauma and its impact on mental health.

Dr. Conner also is focused on the development of policy and legislation which supports health equity. Dr. Conner recently wrote a bill that signed by Governor DeSantis on 6/17/2021 to restructure the Florida State Office of Minority Health and Health Equity (Senate Bill 404 sponsored by State Senator Darryl Rouson Senate Bill 404 (2021) - The Florida Senate (flsenate.gov)

Moving and Grooving - Zumba with Crystal

Crystal Sylvester  
Founder and Instructor at All Things Goddessy

Crystal Sylvester is the founder of All Things Goddessy. Mrs. Sylvester is a certified Co-Active Life Coach(CPCC), a 200 hour certified Yoga instructor, a certified mat Pilates instructor and a Licensed Zumba, Zumba Gold, Zumba Toning and a certified Strong by Zumba instructor.
Moderator: Ask the Expert

Michael Jones, Jr
Peer Specialist and Vice President of NAMI Volusia, Flagler, St. Johns Counties

Michael Jones, Jr has been in a state of stable recovery for the last 15 years. He took an interest in NAMI in 2013 and has been on road to help others with mental illness find their voice and combat the stigma. He is a peer specialist, peer facilitator, peer mentor, life coach, and communication specialist. He has been deemed a competent communicator by KM Toastmasters International. He is also proficient in Toastmaster International motivational strategy and visionary communication paths.

As a Matter of F.A.C.T., What is it?

Antone Massey
Assistant Team Leader for the Florida Assertive Community Treatment, Northside Behavioral Health Center

Antone Massey completed his Bachelor's degree in Psychology at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and then his Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling at Springfield College. He received specialized Substance Addiction Training from the Phoenix House Foundation while completing his Master's degree. He is a General Psychology Doctoral Student at Capella University and is a certified Mental Health First Aid instructor.
He has over 25 years of clinical experience across various settings, including outpatient specialty clinics, crisis intervention, structured outpatient programs, inpatient psychiatric, large nonprofits, child and family agencies, and school settings. One of his duties as the Assistant Team Leader for the Florida Assertive Community Treatment team includes providing administrative supervision to professionals.

Mr. Massey serves adolescents, adults, couples, families, and groups in the following areas: Mental Health First Aid, Mood Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Behavioral Disorders, Personality Disorders, Self-harming Behaviors, Anger and Stress Management, Trauma and Abuse, Family and Relationship Issues, Suicide Assessment and Risk Reduction, Group Psychotherapy, Chronic Mental Illness, Self-image and Self-esteem Issues, Obsessions and Compulsions (OCD), Coping Skills, Dual Diagnosis, Codependency Issues, ADHD, Substance abuse/addictions, Adjustment Disorders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

He believes in working in partnership with clients, utilizing their strengths to help them sort out their challenges and achieve their goals. He also realizes how important it is to identify all aspects of an individual’s life that impact their well-being, including their physical health, support systems, work or school environment, and faith/spirituality in this process. Antonio is trained in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Psychoeducation, Behavior Modification, Mindfulness and Relaxation, in which he applies an eclectic approach in working with his clients.

Breaking the Cycle: Reducing Recidivism

Tonya Dix
Vice President of Quality and Clinical Operations
Corporate Risk Manager, Circles of Care

Tonya was born and raised in Northeast Tennessee. She moved to Florida to attend Florida School for Performing Arts on a full scholarship for ballet. While completing her bachelor’s degree in dance she met her adored husband, of now over 32 years, Rickey. After the birth of their first child, Tonya followed her heart into the field of healthcare where she has served for 30 years. She started as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and worked her way up through the ranks from a Med-Surgical CNA to an ICU Patient Care Tech (a PCT has certifications as a CNA, EKG Tech, Phlebotomy Tech, Monitor Tech) and Health Unit Coordinator. Upon graduating with her BSN, she worked as a nurse in the Emergency Department and Cardiovascular ICU. In 2014 Tonya came to Circles of Care as a Residential RN where she quickly grew to be the CSP Nursing Coordinator and Corporate Risk Manager. She continues to grow in her career at Circles of Care and is now Vice President of Quality and Clinical Operations. To add to her already strong credentials of a BSN-RN and Licensed Risk Manager, Tonya has also completed her
Master’s in Business Administration with a focus on Healthcare Management. She is currently enrolled in Western Governors University working toward her Master’s in Nursing Leadership and Management.

Tonya enjoys spending her free time with her beloved husband, their two children, and two grandchildren. She also enjoys hobbies she picked up in her childhood as a Daddy's girl, such as hunting, fishing, camping, and muscle cars.

As a breast cancer survivor, Tonya embraces each day and every challenge with open arms and a desire to give back. She lives by the Mark Twain quote "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why”… According to Tonya “My work at Circles is my why.”

Dr. Caroline Griffin
Executive Team Member, Circles of Care

In October of 2017 she joined the Circles of Care team as an Inpatient Provider. Caroline is a skilled Family and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner with expertise on the identification and management of mental illness with an emphasis on psychopharmacology and health promotion to vulnerable populations. She strives to reduce health disparities through collaboration and leadership, and is well respected by her peers and staff of all disciplines.

Caroline received a MSN, FNP from Florida Atlantic University, a DNP/PMHNP from University of North Florida, and carries Board Certifications for both Family and Psychiatric Mental Health. Her first nursing job was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the rural Andes of northern Ecuador. She also has experience working in clinical nursing education and in family practice.

On a more personal note, Caroline was born and raised in Vermont, but has also lived in San Francisco. In the early 2000s she moved to Florida where she met her husband Tim who works for NASA. They are raising two daughters, Lucy (18) and Kai (16), and two lovable Beagles. Her interests include traveling, cooking, exercising and being outdoors, reading, and spending time with her family playing games.

What is Residential Treatment? (with an emphasis on Adolescent RTC’s)
Pilar Von Lazar  
**Director of Business Development at Palm Shores Behavioral Health Center**

Pilar von Lazar, MBA, MHA, received her graduate degrees from the internationally known Sawyer School of Management at Suffolk University located on Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts. Employed by both major Fortune 500 companies and small privately owned corporations, Pilar has over 30 years’ experience in healthcare management, sales, marketing and public speaking. While attending college, Pilar began her healthcare career as a Pharmacy Assistant where she quickly realized that she had a passion for making a difference in the lives of others. She currently works as the Director of Business Development at Palm Shores Behavioral Health Center, in Bradenton, Florida – a Residential Treatment Center for adolescents. In addition to her many responsibilities as Director of Business Development, Pilar also is involved in many community activities which include being a committee member for Speak Up For Kids with the Manatee County Students with Emotional Disabilities Network (SEDNET) chapter, conducting annual presentations on mental health issues for the Sarasota County Exceptional Student Education Institute and involvement with multiple community based organizations. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, reading, outdoor activities and spending time with family and friends.

**A New Model of Recovery for People with SMI: Clubhouse Combined with Supportive Housing**

Amy McClellan  
**Co-founder and President of the Board of Directors of The Key Clubhouse of South Florida**

Amy McClellan is the co-founder and President of the Board of Directors of The Key Clubhouse of South Florida, a nonprofit organization that has provided free recovery, rehabilitation and employment services for adults living with serious mental illnesses since 2010. The Clubhouse was created to fill a large gap in ongoing support services combined with housing for individuals with mental illness seeking to reintegrate in the community.

Amy and her husband Scott Perwin have two adult daughters who live with serious mental illnesses that began in their teen years. The difficulty of finding effective treatment services for her daughters led her to become a mental health activist with other family members and peers in the Miami area.

Recently, she became Vice President of the Florida Mental Health Advocacy Coalition, a non-profit, non-partisan coalition of organizations that advocate for policy changes to improve the quality of life for those who live with a mental illness and/or substance use disorder in the state of Florida. Amy is also the co-leader of a local advocacy group, Advocates for Mental Health South Florida, which is dedicated to
improving behavioral health services in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. This group is part of the Florida Mental Health Advocacy Coalition.

Amy previously served on the Board of Directors of the Thriving Mind, the Managing Entity for state-funded mental health and substance abuse services in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties from 2010 to 2019. She also served as Treasurer of that Board from 2010 to 2018. She continues to serve on the Strategic Planning Committee of Thriving Mind.

For more than 40 years, Amy has worked professionally in the nonprofit sector in fundraising, program development, grant writing and public relations in Florida, California and New York. Amy received a B.A. from Occidental College, Los Angeles, and an M.F.A. in Art History from Princeton University.

Crisis Call Hubs and the Promise of 988

Sue Ann O’Brien
CEO at Behavioral Health Link

Sue Ann O’Brien is CEO at Behavioral Health Link (BHL) and Executive Vice President at RI International. Together, these two teams deliver a full continuum of best practice crisis services, powered by customized software and technology solutions and real-time access to mental health and substance use services, diverting thousands from hospital EDs and justice systems to care in communities throughout the United States. They were both leading contributors to the development of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention’s Crisis Now exceptional practice standards in crisis care.

As CEO of Behavioral Health Link, Ms. O’Brien leads a team of visionary crisis innovators whose break-through technology and crisis services have been featured worldwide. Recognized for innovation by the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Council of State Governments, Harvard University and others, BHL operates Georgia’s statewide Crisis and Access Line, offering the nation’s broadest application of advanced crisis call center technology through their Care Traffic Control system. BHL also delivers and/or deploys 24/7 community-based mobile crisis in all 159 Georgia counties.

Ms. O’Brien was formerly Chief Operating Officer at RI International, and previously responsible for Crisis Facility services that spanned five states. RI, founders of the “living room” model in 2002, deliver no-wrong-door crisis facility-based services in seven states with rapid growth targeted. RI’s Campus of Connection model includes a strong peer workforce and surrounds the individual with support on their journey towards recovery.

With 25 years of senior leadership experience in behavioral health, Ms. O’Brien aims to foster and create crisis care equivalents to the nation’s rapid response system for individuals with medical emergencies by making care available to anyone, anywhere and anytime. Together, these two strategic partners employ
nearly 1,800 staff and have offices in Arizona, California, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana (2020), New Zealand, North Carolina, Virginia (2020) and Washington State. And, their impact is growing through consulting, training and crisis immersion experiences.

Moderator: A Look at Mental Health Issues in Children and Adolescents

Marta Prado  
NAMI FL Board Member

Ms. Prado was responsible for executive oversight of the Correct Care Recovery Solutions Division, of Correct Care Solutions, The Division had Revenues of over $300M, with contracts in 8 States. She’s currently the Chief Strategy Officer for ProHealth Select, a Company specializing in Population Health programs for multiple Health Plans. She is a seasoned healthcare professional and has been involved in all aspects of patient care as both a Registered Nurse and as an Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner. She earned a Masters of Nursing from the University of Miami and served as an EMS Training Director for Miami-Dade County. Ms. Prado also served as the President of InPhyNet’s and EMSA’s government services and correctional medical care subsidiaries. Under her leadership at EMSA / InPhyNet, as Vice President of Operations and Chief Operating Officer $350 million dollars with 150+ client contracts. In 1997, Ms. Prado was appointed as President of InPhyNet Medical Management / MedPartners’ Governmental Services Division with revenues of over $250 million and the Managed Care Division with revenues of $200 million.

Ms. Prado is the past President of the Emergency Nurses Association and a staunch advocate for patients, nurses and physicians. In addition to her extensive experience in executive management of hospital-based physician practices, prison healthcare and managed care programs, she is well known for her expertise in process improvement, team building and innovative management programs. Her leadership is recognized at both the state and national levels as evidenced by her service on the State of Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission, the Medicaid Reform Commission and the National Commission on Quality in Health Care. She has served on the Board of Trustees for Florida A & M University and is currently serving in several leadership roles on the boards of numerous community service organizations.
Managing Entities and How They Support Behavioral Health Care in Florida

Linda McKinnon
President and CEO of Central Florida Behavioral Health Network

Linda McKinnon is the President and CEO of Central Florida Behavioral Health Network (CFBHN). Under contract with the Florida Department of Children and Families, CFBHN is charged with assuring the provision of high-quality prevention and Mental Health and Substance Abuse crises and treatment services for over 100,000 individuals who are medically indigent, low income, priority populations throughout 14 Counties in Southwest Florida. Linda is the past Chair of the Florida Association of Managing Entities and NAMI Florida. She also serves on the Boards of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing (formally the National Counsel for Behavioral Health), Tampa Bay Thrives, and the Florida Health Care Disaster Preparedness Executive Committee.

Linda’s credentials include service for DCF as the Director of SAMH for the Suncoast Region and subsequently was tasked by the Department to assure the development of community treatment and support services required to successfully discharge persons and close G. Pierce Wood State Hospital.

Linda is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Her clinical experience includes a successful private practice and the development of Employee Assistance and Managed Care Services for major corporations and government entities. Ms. McKinnon was employed for ten years at Centerstone of Florida, a community mental health and addictions treatment provider in Bradenton Florida where she held numerous positions including Hospital and CSU Administrator and Vice President of Clinical Service in Bradenton, Fl.

Here4YOUth Mental Health Initiative: The power of partnerships in improving mental healthcare for youths
Jennifer Johnston
Senior Community Investment Officer, Gulf Coast Community Foundation

Jennifer Johnston, Senior Community Investment Officer, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, collaborates with nonprofit partners and diverse stakeholders to develop initiatives that positively impact regional priorities. She plays a lead role in mission-driven grant making on behalf of donors and Gulf Coast’s Board of Directors. Jennifer’s prior experience includes serving as Regional Director for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, creating healthier school environments for students and staff across the country. Jennifer completed a fellowship at the National Institutes of Health promoting health-education campaigns nationwide after earning a Master of Public Health degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Hailing from New Hampshire, Jennifer loves hiking in the mountains as well as international and domestic travel.

Harnessing the Power of Telehealth to Expand Access to Behavioral Health Services for Children Living in Florida Rural Communities

Marie McPherson
Director of the Florida Center for Behavioral Health Improvements and Solutions, University of South Florida

Marie McPherson is the Director of the Florida Center for Behavioral Health Improvements and Solutions in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences at the University of South Florida (formerly the Florida Medicaid Drug Therapy Management Program for Behavioral Health). For the past 15 years she has advocated for the evidence-based prescribing of psychotropic medications to Florida adults and children with behavioral health conditions and published the Florida Psychotherapeutic Medication Guidelines for children and adults. Ms. McPherson is tirelessly working with many stakeholders throughout Florida to expand access to behavioral health services to children with behavioral health conditions living in rural areas.
Children's Pandemic

Dr. Rahul Mehra
CEO and Chief Physician Executive of the National Center for Performance Health

Rahul N. Mehra, M.D. is the CEO and Chief Physician Executive of the National Center for Performance Health (NCPH). Dr. Mehra is Board Certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in Child, Adolescent, and Adult Psychiatry. He has been in active clinical practice for over 30 years. Dr. Mehra currently is a consultant for Major League Baseball, and previously has consulted with the NFL, NFL Players Association, XFL, and NCAA. He and NCPH have developed innovative prevention models such as “Emotional Vaccines” to optimize human performance. NCPH’s clients also include first responders, K thru 12 schools, colleges and universities, non-profits. Dr. Mehra is also on the voluntary faculty at the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine in Tampa. Born in India, and raised in South Carolina, Dr. Mehra enjoys passionately searching for “hole in the wall” dining establishments worldwide. He is joyfully married to his wife, Cathy, and they have two amazing granddaughters.

Moderator: A Look at Mental Health Issues in Children and Adolescents, Part 2

Dr. Soheyla Mahdavian
Associate Professor, FAMU College of Pharmacy and NAMI Florida Board Member

Dr. Mahdavian is an Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Florida A&M University College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Institute of Public Health (FAMU-CoPPS, IPH) and a Board Certified Geriatric Pharmacist. She maintains a clinical and experiential site at FSU PrimaryHealth, a
clinic affiliated with the Florida State College of Medicine that centers on providing services to the older, rural, minority, and underserved populations.

She received her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from FAMU-CoPPS, IPH and completed a Post-Graduate Year 1 (PGY-1) Pharmacy Practice Residency through a partnership between FAMU-CoPPS, IPH and the Apalachee Center, Inc, where she gained extensive training in the management of neuropsychiatric disorders in adults and the elderly. Upon completion of her PGY-1,

Dr. Mahdavian went on to pursue a career in Academia at her Alma Mater where she provides didactic instruction in the areas of patient education, neuropsychiatric, and geriatric medicine and experiential instruction in geriatric medicine for PharmD Candidates during their last year of clinical rotations. In addition to her role as a faculty member, she currently serves as the FAMU-CoPPS, IPH/ACI Residency Director and Director of the long-acting injectable antipsychotic (LAIA) pharmacist training course, which is a program that certifies pharmacists to administer LAIAs in the State. She has authored several peer-reviewed publications and poster presentations and has been invited to deliver numerous professional presentations at the local, state, and national level to pharmacists, physicians and other healthcare providers. Dr. Mahdavian’s areas of interest include optimizing outcomes through medication management and patient education, neuropsychiatric medicine, and geriatric medicine.

Mobile Response Teams in Children

Christin Edwards-Salinas
Program Manager of Devereux’s Mobile Crisis Services

Christin Edwards-Salinas, LCSW has served as Program Manager of Devereux’s Mobile Crisis Services since its inception and start up in August of 2015. The program underwent expansion in 2018 as the service was noted to be beneficial to reducing youth and young adult hospitalization, arrest and entrance into the dependency system.

Through the success of Mobile Crisis Services, Ms. Edwards-Salinas was selected to oversee the clinical services provided by the counselors of the Behavioral Response Unit, a partnership with the Orange County Sheriff’s Office which launched in December 2020.

Ms. Edwards-Salinas joined Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health in 2006 after receiving her Masters in Social Work from Florida State University. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Qualified Supervisor with over 14 years of experience providing advocacy and counseling
services for individuals in residential treatment and outpatient settings. Ms. Edwards-Salinas has extensive skill and knowledge in trauma informed care and crisis intervention.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE’s)

Dr. Carolyn Jones
NAMI Florida Board Member

Carolyn Jones, PhD recently retired from an illustrious 22-year career in the pharmaceutical industry as a Senior Medical Science Liaison. Her passion and specialty is psychiatry. Prior to working in the pharmaceutical industry, Dr. Jones served as a clinical pharmacologist with the US Food and Drug Administration.

In retirement Carolyn stays busy as a Board Member for NAMI Florida and a Board Member and Secretary for the American Beach Property Owners’ Association (ABPOA) on Amelia Island.

She obtained her BS in Chemical Engineering from Drexel University and the PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). Go Rattlers!

Let’s talk about what no one wants to talk about

Leigha Tipley
NAMI Jacksonville, FL Board Member

Leigha Tipley is a certified NAMI Ending the Silence presenter, where she has been able to reach many of our local youth with her message of recovery. In addition, she currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Jacksonville, FL affiliate.
Leigha holds a BS in Business Administration from Westminster College (PA), where she played softball, and moved to Jacksonville post-graduation in 2011. She earned her MBA from Jacksonville University in 2017.

She is an avid volunteer through Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Junior League of Jacksonville.

Professionally, Leigha has worked at The Haskell Company since 2016 and is a Subject Matter Expert in workforce planning as a Workforce Development Specialist.

She still loves to play and watch sports but her true love is spending time with her husband, Christopher, and their children, Deklan, 3, and Violet, 1.

Andrea Luce
Volunteer at NAMI Palm Beach

Originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico Andrea is now living in Silver Spring, Maryland while working in the development department of a nonprofit that supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She has been volunteering for over a year now with NAMI Palm Beach County doing Ending the Silence Presentations, the Peer to Peer course and just recently facilitating the young adult support groups. In her spare time she enjoys going down to DC for a meal with friends or to explore one of the many museums.
Natalie Luengas  
Member of NAMI Pinellas  

As a dedicated member of NAMI Pinellas, Natalie Luengas is a young adult presenter for Ending the Silence and Sharing Your Story with Law Enforcement. She has spoken out about her journey through recovery and ending the stigma with mental health. Natalie is also involved in the Peers in Recovery Mentorship Program, specializing in the youth endorsement. She has presented in Youth Peer Services Webinar, where she spoke about the benefits of youth peer services and her experiences. Natalie has also spoken in the Rising Above Conference, where she presented to youth about hope and mental health awareness. She is a student at University of South Florida who is working on her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. Natalie's hope is to research and present, nationwide, in depth studies of why people suppress emotional pain. Furthermore, her other goal is to educate youth about ending the stigma of mental health.

When Mental Illness Strikes; Crisis Intervention for the Financial Plan

Allen Giese CLU, ChFC, ChSNC  
President, Northstar Financial Planners, Inc., President, NAMI Broward

Allen Giese is the founder of NorthStar Financial Planners, a fiduciary fee-only financial-planning firm in South Florida that prides itself on helping clients achieve what is most important to them. Allen is the father of an adult son who was diagnosed with schizophrenia in his late teens and, with his wife, Gayle, is deeply involved in mental health advocacy. Together, they founded Ride to Awareness; in 2015, Allen and his team rode three thousand miles, crossing the United States on bicycles to promote mental illness awareness and fight the stigma attached to it. Both Allen and his wife Gayle work closely with their local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness; Allen currently is the President of the Board of Directors of NAMI Broward. Allen speaks frequently on the unique challenges of special needs and mental health financial planning.