

NATALIE ELLIOTT HANDY



**THURSDAY
AM**

“Mastering the Juggle: Balancing Caregiving, Career & Everything in Between”

Natalie Elliott Handy, MSW, is a seasoned healthcare executive with 25 years of experience in the health and human services sector. She is the CEO of CareForward, an innovative platform that connects individuals in need with community volunteers and partner organizations, enhancing the quality of life for both caregivers and care recipients.

In addition to her role at CareForward, Natalie is the co-host of the podcast *Confessions of a Reluctant Caregiver*, alongside her sister JJ Elliott-Hill. Together, they lead numerous initiatives to support caregivers, including educational resources, community outreach, and the podcast, which has over 300K monthly downloads and streaming listens across 54 countries. Their work explores the challenges and rewards of caregiving, offering support, inspiration, and resources to caregivers worldwide.

Natalie also works for Health Connect America, where she supports initiatives across Virginia and eight southeastern states. Previously, she served as CEO of a statewide mental health organization, CEO of three psychiatric residential treatment facilities in Virginia, and VP of Utilization Review and Clinical Audit.

Prior to her role at CareForward, Natalie was CEO of a statewide mental health organization, CEO of three psychiatric residential treatment facilities in Virginia, and VP of Utilization Review and Clinical Audit. She is known for her work as a mental health concierge, advocating for systemic change at local, state, and federal levels, and for bridging gaps in services.

Natalie holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Hollins College and a Master of Social Work from West Virginia University. Based in Roanoke, Virginia, she resides with her husband, Jason, and their pets, Winston the Bulldog and Daisy the Beagle.

NICOLE WASHINGTON



THU. PM BREAKOUT – “Professional Ethics: Where Morality Meets Action”

Description:

Our morals and ethical views are a significant and integral part of who we are and how we navigate the world. So, why would it be any different in the workplace? Join us as we discuss ethics, professional ethical practices and why even the most well-intentioned professionals stray from their own interests. Learn how we can improve our interactions with our co-workers and the youth that we serve.

Bio:

Nicole Washington is a native of Fort Washington, Maryland. In 2013, she graduated from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia earning a Bachelor’s degree in Criminology/Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology. Following graduation, Nicole began to establish her roots in Richmond and found her purpose in providing counsel and mentoring to youth. She began her career with the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice in 2014 as a Juvenile Correctional Officer at Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center. In 2016, she was promoted to the position of Residential Counselor and when Beaumont closed, she transitioned to the Central Admissions and Placement (CAP) Unit.

In her current role, as a Training and Development Specialist with the agency’s Training and Organizational Development Unit, she has spent the last three years organizing and passing on her expertise to oncoming and veteran DJJ employees. Nicole has a passion for educating her community on Mental Health, Trauma, and the impact that it has on our youth and families. She has two beautiful children and in her free time enjoys reading fiction novels and immersing herself in African American History.

Allison Chappell, Anne Perrotti, Tancy Vandecar-Burdin

THU. PM BREAKOUT – “Cognitive Communication Disorder (CCD) in System-Involved Youth”

Description: Research shows that system-involved youth have high rates of Cognitive Communication Disorders (CCDs), a group of disorders that affect communication through cognition and executive functioning (e.g., mental capacity and decision-making skills). Our presentation will provide an overview of CCDs, including their incidence, presentation, impact, and relevance to juvenile justice practice. We will discuss and solicit feedback on the results of a recent study conducted with DJJ personnel which examined perceptions of communication and language problems among youth, and how CCDs shape experiences, opportunities, and outcomes for youth and staff in the juvenile justice system.

Bios:

- Dr. Allison Chappell is a Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Old Dominion University (ODU). She has been conducting research on youth justice, policing, and inequality for 25 years.
- Dr. Anne Marie Perrotti is a certified speech-language pathologist and Associate Professor in Special Education at ODU. Her research uses interprofessional collaborative partnerships to promote equity in outcomes for historically excluded youth and young adults.
- Dr. Tancy Vandecar-Burdin is the Director of the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at ODU. She has more than 25 years of experience with survey research, data collection/analysis, program evaluation, and general grant/contract management and serves as the University IRB Chair ensuring that research studies meet ethical standards, comply with federal regulations, and protect participants' rights and welfare.

JESSICA STEFENACK

THU. PM BREAKOUT – “Interstate Compact for Juveniles”

Description:

This training will offer an overview on the ICJ process. We will cover Transfer of Supervision, Travel Permits, and Returns.

Bio:

I am the Virginia ICJ Coordinator with DJJ. I graduated from East Carolina University in 2017 with a bachelor’s in science. My career with DJJ began in September 2017 when I accepted a position as a juvenile probation officer with Chesapeake Court Service Unit. In November 2023, I accepted my position as the Virginia ICJ Coordinator with the main responsibility of handling Returns and Runaways.

Beyond my professional achievements, I am a devoted wife and mother to a sweet 3-year-old boy. During my leisure time, I enjoy time with my family, outdoor exploration, and reading.

STEPHAN STARK & PATRICK SLIFKA



FRI. AM GENERAL SESSION – “Covid in Retrospect: The genie that won’t go back in the bottle”

Description:

Over four years since our society shut down, the fog of COVID remains in our minds, our workplaces, and our culture. Deficits endure as evidenced by escalated rates in depression, anxiety, social development and productivity. The world has changed, and the greatest impact on society since the great depression has left individuals and organizations exhausted in their attempts to find a new normal. During COVID, Patrick and Stephan held weekly webinars with the intention of maintaining human interaction and providing meaning in a dark time. This training will reflect on what we have learned and how we may move forward in the spirit of healing. Topics will include engagement challenges in both the workplace and in treatment, motivational strategies and expanding our insight into meaningful interventions with a focus on resilience. Join us in examining the challenges and opportunities we continue to face, as both private and public entities, while we serve those most impacted by the shutdown.

Bio:

Stephan Stark grew up in the suburbs of New York City (yes, technically New Jersey) and aspired to become a psychologist while in high school. He graduated from the University of Richmond with a major in psychology and went on to study Transpersonal Psychology at Atlantic University while earning a certification in hypnotherapy. Although his early aspirations were to become a practicing psychologist specializing in depth and analysis, synchronicity would have another say. After graduate school, and while working in a group home for behaviorally disordered teens, Stephan found a new focus. Since 1996, he has dedicated himself to helping disadvantaged children and families find meaningful treatment and support; first as a practitioner, and then as an administrator. In this time, Stephan has developed programs and approaches that serve Virginia’s diverse communities with value in mind, and an emphasis on strength-based care. Notably, Stephan established the renowned CARE Approach and StartPoint Program at NCG, as well as numerous other delivery models, to include Northern Virginia's famed CR2 crisis program, which have become the standard for effective and efficient treatment. Stephan has been honored to sit on numerous state work groups and presently resides on the boards of the Central Virginia Partnership on Youth, Virginia Juvenile Justice Association, and Virginia Association of Community-based Providers. In addition to development, training and making people laugh, there is nothing he loves more than finding creative and effective ways to serve people and then sharing those success stories. Other than his wife, Rebecca, and his children, Mina and Hayden, this is his greatest joy. Of course, a close third is eating anything in mass quantity. Want to have lunch? We can eat and talk about improving lives.

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Bio:

J. Patrick Slifka is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has provided mental health and addiction treatment in the state of Virginia for over 35 years. His clinical experience includes the delivery of dual diagnosis services in residential, outpatient and community-based settings. Currently he is the Director of Management and Leadership Development for ncgCARE, Mr. Slifka received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from Hampden-Sydney College in 1987 and received his Master of Social Work Degree from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1998. Mr. Slifka has also received a significant amount of post-graduate training on dual diagnosis treatment, sex offender treatment, motivational interviewing, clinical supervision, inhalant abuse, and professional leadership development. He has conducted over 400 statewide trainings to more than 6000 public and private mental health, substance abuse, and criminal justice professionals and is part of NASW-VA’s professional training team. He is a former member of the Board of Directors for Chesterfield County’s Substance Abuse Free Environment (SAFE) and is the past Chairman for the SAFE’s Inhalant and PULP (Proper Use of Legal Products) Task Forces. He was recently awarded the 2020 Virginia Juvenile Justice Association Meritorious Award for Community Service.