



VASGW

The Virginia Association
for Specialists in Group Work

Group-a-Rama

April 17, 2026



1801 Alexander Bell Drive
Reston, VA 20191

- 8:15-8:45am Check-In, Donation collection for INOVA Children's Cancer Ward (see donation information for items), Continental Breakfast & Coffee, 50/50 Raffle and Prize Raffle
Tickets for Sale (cash or Zelle)
- 8:45-8:55am Opening Remarks
- 8:55-10:30am Keynote Speakers: **Kim Crumbley and Laura Rankhorn, School Counselors, Authors and Podcasters (Counselor Accents)**

The Ripple Effect: Small Groups, Big Impact

Counselors often face the challenge of balancing passion with sustainability — diving into initiatives with intense energy, only to find that the momentum fades, leaving them frustrated or burned out. This session, *The Ripple Effect: Small Groups, Big Impact*, addresses the struggle of intensity versus consistency and how it affects the impact of counseling programs. Using small groups as a practical lens, participants will explore how consistent, steady efforts — rather than short bursts of intensity — lead to deeper trust, stronger student engagement, and lasting program success. Through stories, strategies, and actionable takeaways, counselors will leave equipped to manage their energy, create sustainable practices, and foster meaningful ripple effects in their work.

10:45-11:45am Session A

A-1/2 Small Group Sleuths: Using Data to Solve Student Needs

Presenters: Kim Crumbley, MEd School Counseling & Laura Rankhorn EdS School Counseling

Audience: School Counselors, (ES, MS, HS), Graduate Students, Supervisors and Educators

Summary: Step into the role of data detective and join us for "Small Group Sleuths: Using Data to Solve Student Needs," a high-energy session where school counselors crack the case on what truly drives student success. Using a fun investigation-style framework, you'll learn how to spot hidden needs in your data, select the right students, gather meaningful evidence, analyze trends, and implement targeted small group interventions that actually make an impact. If you want to walk away with practical tools, real-world strategies, and a fresh way to make your groups more effective, this session is your next big case. Grab your metaphorical magnifying glass and get ready to solve the mystery behind stronger, smarter, data-powered small groups—your future groups (and your students!) will thank you.

Session Learning Objectives: 1.) Analyze Student Data to Identify Needs: Counselors will learn to review academic, behavioral, and social-emotional data to determine which students will benefit most from small group interventions. **2.)** Design and Implement Data-Informed Small Groups: Counselors will create structured small group plans, including measurable goals, evidence-based activities, and strategies tailored to student needs. **3.)** Evaluate Group Effectiveness and Adjust Interventions: Counselors will learn methods for monitoring progress, interpreting post-group data, and refining interventions to maximize student outcomes.

A-3 **Group Counseling Techniques for International Populations: Activities Based on Experts from the Field** * session does not qualify for CE's

Presenters: Sarah Yi, Aidan Markley, GMU Master's in Counseling students & Dr. Sam Steen, Professor at GMU and Director of the Research Action Consortium

Audience: Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors, General (open to all counseling professionals), Graduate Students, Supervisors and Educators

Summary: This program provides creative activities that can be used when facilitating groups with international populations. The techniques, tools, and skills shared in the session are informed by group experts with experience in international environments outside of the U.S. The ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors "Ability to identify and overcome barriers" and "Leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse groups", and "Cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness" align with this session's outcomes.

Session Learning Objectives: 1.) Apply research-informed, new, and potentially unorthodox counseling techniques during group sessions with international/multicultural populations. **2.)** Enhance cultural responsiveness using an expanded counseling toolkit for groups with different cultural backgrounds and/or nationalities. **3.)** Explore the facilitation of group techniques with a variety of multicultural perspectives in an international context.

A-4 **Felt Belonging: Creating LGBTQIA+ Celebratory and Neuro-Affirming Group Processes*** session does not qualify for CE's

Presenters: Hela Baer, LCSW & Anna Morrison, LMSW

Audience: School Counselors, (ES, MS,HS), Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors, General (open to all counseling professionals), Graduate Students, Supervisors and Educators

Summary: Join us for a workshop that moves beyond definitions and focuses on the practice of creating LGBTQIA+ celebratory and neuro-affirming group processes that cultivate a culture of belonging and connection. Participants will be introduced to a framework for assessing and developing inclusive group processes in therapeutic and education settings. While this workshop focuses on supporting LGBTQIA+ and neurodivergent youth, this framework can be used to support youth of all identities and experiences.

Session Learning Objectives: 1.) Describe at least three domains of inclusive group processes. **2.)** Assess current facilitation practices using the Five Domains framework. **3.)** Identify at least two strategies to foster a culture of belonging in group processes.

A-5 **The Nature of Group Healing: Integrating Ecotherapy and Systems Theory for Enhanced Therapeutic Outcomes*** session does not qualify for CE's

Presenter: Iman Mostafa, GMU Master's in Counseling student

Audience: General (open to all counseling professionals)

Summary: This curriculum will provide a unique approach that integrates ecotherapy and systems theory to enhance group therapy experiences for clients and counselors. This integrative approach reframes well-being, healing and growth as being deeply connected to Earth and its natural ecosystems. Participants will learn practical strategies that leverage their environmental contexts to deepen group cohesion, foster greater personal insight, and improve therapeutic outcomes. This content supports ASCA Mindset Standard M 1.

Session Learning Objectives: 1.) Identify at least three core principles of ecotherapy and systems theory that are directly applicable to work in group therapy settings. **2.)** Develop one activity or intervention that successfully integrates a specific natural element (e.g., an outdoor space or natural materials) to

enhance group cohesion. **3)** Explain how the natural environment can be used as a co-therapist or symbolic tool to reframe clients' problems within the context of their broader systemic and ecological relationships.

A-6 **A Guide to Facilitating Groups with Diverse Populations**

Presenter: Gregory C. Wright, LCPC, NCC

Audience: Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors, General (open to all counseling professionals), Graduate Students, Supervisors and Educators

Summary: This session explores ethical and culturally responsive group counseling with diverse populations. Grounded in ASGW Best Practices and ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, it emphasizes fostering belonging, empathy, and growth. Examples from men's groups and Black clients highlight adapting interventions to promote safety, cultural identity, and empowerment while addressing developmental and relational needs within inclusive group settings.

Session Learning Objectives: **1)** How to better engage minority males about mental health **2)** How important engagement is with the counseling relationship **3)** Why mental health is so hard for minority males

11:45am-12:30pm Lunch – buffet with selection of meats, cheese and fruit

12:30-1:30pm Session B

B-1 **Pokémon Power: Leveraging a Worldwide Craze to Engage Students in SEL**

Presenter: Becca Wilson, Licensed Professional School Counselor

Audience: School Counselors, (ES, MS, HS), Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors; General (open to all counseling professionals); Graduate Students; Supervisors and Educators

Summary: This session explores ideas for 6–8-week small groups that fuse the evidence-based Zones of Regulation curriculum with counselor-crafted SEL trading cards inspired by the Pokémon universe. You'll leave with a digital set of SEL "Trainer Cards" to deploy each week, helping students evolve their emotional vocabulary, unlock regulation strategies, and build a take-home SEL Pokédex. While primarily intended for elementary practitioners, the tools in this session can help level up therapeutic buy-in for Pokémon fans of any age.

Session Learning Objectives: **1)** Understand the Zones of Regulation framework and identify options to use it in a 6–8-week intervention. **2)** Consider how leveraging student interests leads to increased buy-in. **3)** Be equipped with Pokémon cards to help teach and positively reinforce Zones of Regulation and other SEL strategies

B-2 **From Storytelling to Resilience: Creative Group Techniques for Emotional Growth and Prevention**

Presenter: Dr. Maryam Majd, Developmental Psychologist

Audience: School Counselors, (ES, MS, HS), Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors, General (open to all counseling professionals), Graduate Students, Supervisors and Educators

Summary: This experiential session demonstrates creativity-based group methods that translate developmental-psychology research into practical prevention tools. Using storytelling, art, and imagination, participants learn three adaptable group techniques, Creative Identity Mapping, Emotion Color Circles, and Story Building for Resilience, to strengthen self-regulation, empathy, and protective thinking. A brief documentary segment will illustrate real-world applications of these methods in schools and community settings.

Session Learning Objectives: **1)** Explain how storytelling and creative expression enhance emotional regulation and resilience. **2)** Apply three practical creativity-based group techniques in school and

community settings. **3).** Integrate developmental research findings into group curricula for prevention and emotional growth.

B-3 Group Counseling Leadership Skills for School Counselors

Presenter: Dr. Sam Steen, Professor at GMU and Director of the Research Action Consortium

Audience: School Counselors, (ES, MS,HS), Graduate Students, Supervisors and Educators

Summary: In this session, participants will review knowledge and group counseling leadership skills to create culturally affirming groups for students in elementary, middle and high schools. Participants will critique and generate groups based on the “TRATE My Group” framework which helps counselors plan, implement and evaluate Tier 1, Tier 2 and nontraditional groups (e.g., clubs, after school programs). This session aligns with the ASCA’s student standards “Leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse groups”.

Session Learning Objectives: 1). Create culturally affirming groups for students in elementary, middle or high schools **2).** Generate different types of groups across MTSS Tiers based on the “TRATE My Group” framework **3).** Determine 5 Steps to take when applying the knowledge and skills learned in the session

B-4 One-Hour Lifeline: Reflections of a Group Art Therapist Working in Inpatient Settings

Presenter: Yonsenia White, LPC, LPCC, ATR, CMCC

Audience: Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors, General (open to all counseling professionals), Graduate Students, Supervisors and Educators

Summary: Group art therapists provide two types of psychotherapy in multiple daily groups, with clientele of all ages, diagnoses and acuity levels at a hectic pace with changing environmental elements. Within one hour, these providers build therapeutic rapport and skill-building with clients they may never see again. This session explores a group art therapist’s experience in creating “one-hour lifelines” and offers helpful clinical management strategies for emerging and seasoned group therapists working in similar settings.

Session Learning Objectives: 1). Describe the impact and benefits of introducing creativity into group session work; **2).** Learn to use client resistance as a therapeutic tool that strengthens boundary setting for group safety and empathy building; **3).** Adopt self-care practices for crisis care management and provider self-reflection.

B-5 Building Grit & Resilience in the Classroom* this session does not qualify for CE’s

Presenters: Stephanie Adams, MSW & Shelley Taylor, Clinical Mental Health students

Audience: School Counselors, (ES, MS, HS), Supervisors and Educators

Summary: This professional development session equips school counselors and mental health professionals with evidence-based strategies to strengthen resilience in K–6 students experiencing everyday stress and setbacks. Using a real-world case study, participants will explore trauma-responsive practices, coping skill development, and classroom collaboration techniques that promote perseverance and emotional well-being. Through interactive discussion and practical application, attendees will learn how to build supportive school environments where students feel safe, confident, and capable of overcoming challenges.

Session Learning Objectives: 1). Identify three key elements of resilience and explain how they manifest in students’ emotional and behavioral responses. **2).** Implement classroom-based coping strategies and affirmation tools that encourage perseverance and self-regulation. **3).** Develop practical approaches for creating classroom environments that balance compassion, structure, and emotional growth to promote resilience in all learners.

B-6 Accompanying Children Through Grief: Creating Groups to Support Grieving Children

Presenter: Ailish Riggs Dermody, MA, NCC, Resident in Counseling

Audience: School Counselors, (ES, MS, HS), Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors, General (open to all counseling professionals), Graduate Students

Summary: The manifestation of grief in childhood varies greatly depending on the age and developmental level of the child. During the grieving process, children look to their caregivers who may be struggling to process their own grief. Children can turn to maladaptive coping mechanisms, impeding their growth and functioning over time. Childhood grief groups can offer a space where children can express their grief and process their experiences without feeling that they are burdening the adults in their lives.

Session Learning Objectives: 1). Identify the manifestations of grief in children, **2).** Highlight ways in which mental health and school counselors can provide support for grieving children, and **3).** Provide practical guidance for structuring and implementing a grief group for children.

1:45-2:45pm

Session C

- C-1 Kimochis® in Action: Building Emotional Awareness and Connection Through Group Work**
Presenters: Becca Wilson & Richard Jones-Hang, Licensed Professional School Counselors
Audience: Elementary School Counselors, Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors, Graduate Students
Summary: Discover how the Kimochis® curriculum can transform group counseling by teaching children to identify, express, and manage emotions in fun, hands-on ways. This interactive session will introduce the core concepts of Kimochis®, explore practical resources for school and private practice settings, and demonstrate how to adapt lessons for small group use. Leave with tools and strategies to create emotionally safe spaces where students learn empathy, self-regulation, and positive communication.
Session Learning Objectives: 1). Have a general understanding of Kimochis curriculum **2).** Gain familiarity with session resources that they can access and use in their school or private practice. **3).** Understand ways to apply the curriculum to a small group format.
- C-2 Healing in Community: Integrating Faith into Group Work*** session does not qualify for CE's
Presenters: Irene Kiraithe-Muchene & Shelly Taylor, Masters in Clinical Mental Health students
Audience: General (open to all counseling professionals), Graduate Students
Summary: This presentation explores how faith integration and trauma-informed care strengthen group work in Christian counseling settings. Participants learn how scripture, emotional regulation skills, and supportive group structure foster resilience, belonging, confidence, and healthy relationship skills. The session will highlight the importance of creating safe, spiritually grounded groups and will offer practical ideas for engaging activities that build connection, deepen reflection, and support whole-person healing in a church-based counseling environment.
Session Learning Objectives: 1). Participants will describe how faith integration enhances safety and connection in groups. **2).** Participants will identify trauma-informed practices that support emotional and relational growth. **3).** Participants will implement practical, faith-aligned activities that promote resilience and group engagement
- C-3 When the Glass Becomes Your Mirror: What Do You See? *** session does not qualify for CE's
Presenters: JaNell C Jones, M.Ed. Candidate (2026), BSBA, QMHP-T, CSAC-Supervisee & Dr. Brian Maiden, Assistant Professor of Counselor Education at Virginia State University
Audience: Private Practitioners/Agency Counselors, General (open to all counseling professionals), Graduate Students, Supervisors and Educators
Summary: This workshop offers a reflective, trauma-informed approach to group counseling that helps adults explore identity, insight, and the stories that shape how they show up. Using creative, low-resource techniques such as mirror mapping, guided metaphors, and narrative sequencing participants deepen reflection, increase emotional clarity, and strengthen authentic engagement. Through demonstration and discussion, attendees learn adaptable, culturally responsive strategies that enhance cohesion, promote self-understanding, and provide practical tools for use across clinical, community, school, and higher-education settings.

Session Learning Objectives: 1). Implement trauma-informed and culturally responsive principles for facilitating reflective group counseling with adults. **2).** Facilitate at least two creative experiential activities such as mirror mapping or narrative reflection that increase insight, connection, and group cohesion. **3).** Integrate a structured reflective framework to support meaning-making and deepen processing within adult group sessions.

C-4 **Music, Marks, and Mandalas**

Presenter: Melissa Deaton Cook, LPC, NCC, ACS

Audience: General (open to all counseling professionals)

Summary: In this experiential workshop we will play with percussion instruments and art supplies as we create mandalas together. Feel your sense of well-being and grounding increase as we play, create, and co-regulate together. We will increase our energy and re-set our nervous systems together. Mandala meets drum circle! No experience or talent required. All supplies provided.

Session Learning Objectives: 1). Gain an understanding of how music making and expressive art invitations can improve emotional well-being. **2).** Experience and understand how music and expressive arts create community. **3).** Walk away with 3 ideas on how to implement simple mandala making invitations with your groups.

C-5 **No Member Left Behind: Broaching as the Path to Equitable Group Work**

Presenter: Syreeta Wright, EdS, LPC, CSAC, NCC

Audience: General (open to all counseling professionals)

Summary: This session will highlight the critical role of facilitator-led broaching in group counseling. Broaching, the proactive introduction of cultural and identity factors, is essential for building psychological safety and authentic cohesion. It leverages established group norms to validate marginalized members, deepen universality, and equip the group to manage microaggressions. Broaching transforms the group from a passive space into an equitable, restorative, and effective therapeutic environment.

Session Learning Objectives: 1). Attendees will be able to define broaching and explain why it is vital for establishing group safety. **2).** Attendees will be able to formulate at least one group rule related to broaching during the group contracting phase. **3).** Attendees will be able to analyze a brief group scenario and determine an appropriate response using broaching.

C-6 **Tips and Tricks to Make Managing Groups More Manageable**

Presenter: Johanna Druen, Licensed Professional School Counselor

Audience: School Counselors, (ES, MS, HS), Graduate Students

Summary: Small group counseling can feel daunting at first, yet research shows it is as effective as individual therapy while reaching more students in one setting (APA, 2023). Initially, I questioned its value, but in six years of counseling on the elementary level, I saw 100% improvement in targeted mindsets and behaviors in every group I ran. This session will equip participants with practical tools to create safe spaces, collect data for membership and curriculum decisions, and design a six-week program—without extensive prep time or costly resources.

Session Learning Objectives: 1). Participants will demonstrate creativity to create and manage group curricula **2).** Participants will be able to apply media and technology skills **3).** Participants will have ideas to create positive and supportive relationships with [other] students who are in their groups

2:45pm

Closing and Raffles

50/50 Raffle for the VCA Foundation

What is the VCA Foundation? The VCA Foundation is a non-profit, charitable, philanthropic endowment fund. The primary purpose of the fund is to support counselors in Virginia through;

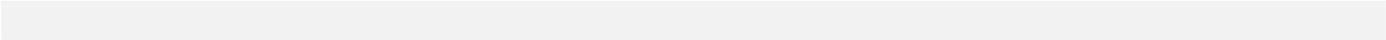
the VCA Leadership Academy, publication of the VCA Journal, VCA Convention Keynote speaker and offering Grants and Fellowships.

2:45 - 3:30pm To Receive a Confirmation of Attendance you must complete the evaluation that will be emailed to you. To receive CE's you must fill out an evaluation for each session attended. Once all evaluations have been completed you will be emailed your CE certificate.

*Attendees will receive a certificate of participation for 4.5 hours. Attendees can receive 4.5 hours of CE's once all session evaluations are completed.

Virginia Counselors Association (VCA) has been approved by NBCC as an Approved Continuing Education Provider, ACEP No. 2047. Programs that do not qualify for NBCC credit are clearly identified. Virginia Counselors Association (VCA) is solely responsible for all aspects of the programs.

Please see the next page for cost and other information.





1801 Alexander Bell Drive, Reston, VA 20191

Donations: We will be collecting the following items for the Cancer ward at Fairfax INOVA Children’s Hospital: Crayons, Markers, Individual small bubbles, Play-Doh, Play-Doh tools, Craft kits - more so for 8y+, and Lego sets - easy to hard as all ages like these (harder ones especially for the older kids). Here is the link to their Amazon Wishlist for our whole child life department too: <https://www.inovachildrens.org/donate>

PARKING at ASCE Bechtel Center: Group-A-Rama parking is FREE and there are ample parking spaces on the left or right side of the conference center. Park and come in through the building’s front entrance.

DIRECTIONS to ASCE Bechtel Center, AND AREA INFORMATION:

Google Maps: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/cx79mFLgEZ1U2xUD6>

FROM THE 495 BELTWAY (495): Take VA- 267 West (Dulles Toll Road) to exit 14 (VA-674)/Hunter Mill Road. Turn left onto Hunter Mill Road and go 0.3 miles. Turn right onto Sunrise Valley Drive and go .04 miles. Turn right onto Alexander Bell Drive, go 0.1 mile and the conference center is on the right.

FROM RESTON PARKWAY: If heading north on Reston Parkway (VA-602) turn right on Sunrise Valley Drive (before the Dulles Toll Road overpass) and go 2.5 miles. Turn left on Alexander Bell Drive, go 0.1 mile and the conference center is on your right.

Information for the On-Line Registration:

Name:

Email:

Current Work Setting:

* (note school)

Cost: Until March 8	Cost: March 9 – April 10
VCA/VASGW Members: \$70	VCA/VASGW Members: \$80
Non- VCA/VASGW Members: \$85	Non-VCA/VASGW Members: \$95
Graduate Students*: \$55	Graduate Students*: \$55
Retired Counselors: \$55	Retired Counselors: \$55

No On-Site Registration

Breakfast: Assorted pastries, fruit, juice, coffee, and water

Lunch: Assorted sandwiches, pasta salads, salad, chips, soda/water, and cookie

If you have any dietary restrictions and need to discuss alternative options, please contact Dr. Terri Mason at tmasonvca@aol.com

Presenter Bio's

Keynote Speakers - Kim Crumbley & Laura Rankhorn

Laura Rankhorn and Kim Crumbley have been school counselors in Alabama with combined educational experience of over 30 years. Together they host the critically acclaimed Counselor Accents Podcast. They wrote the books, *Growing Your Program for School Counselors*, *Working Smarter, Not Harder as School Counselors*, and recently released a children's book, *Hi, Gene!* Most days Kim and Laura are "in the trenches" as school counselors, but they also speak nationally and work with school systems to help train school counselors on ways to run an effective school counseling program. Both Kim and Laura received the RAMP designation for their schools in 2023. Spoiler alert: Laura is slated to earn it again this summer. Kim was also named the 2023 Alabama Elementary School Counselor of the Year! Their free time is spent focusing on their hobby: school counseling!

Stephanie Adams

Stephanie Adams, MSW, serves as the Director of Clinical Services and Practice Operations at Cornerstone Counseling Coaching & Care. She brings 20 years of combined experience in education, school social work, and clinical mental health services. Stephanie specializes in child and adolescent mental health, faith-based counseling, and resilience-focused SEL programming. She is passionate about equipping schools with practical, strengths-based strategies that help students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Hela Baer

Hela Baer, LCSW, E-RYT (she/they) is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker specializing in trauma-informed, relational therapy that integrates mindfulness, body-based practices, and human-animal-nature connection. Using an LGBTQIA+ celebratory and neuro-affirming approach, Hela works with teens and adults who want to better understand themselves, process trauma and loss, alleviate symptoms of anxiety and/or depression, manage stressors with more ease, heal relational wounds, and cultivate meaning and joy in everyday life. Hela currently works as a psychotherapist at Alexandria Place Therapy and Cloverleaf Equine Center, and has nearly 20 years of facilitation experience in intercultural, educational, and therapeutic settings.

Melissa Deaton Cook

Melissa Deaton Cook, LPC, NCC, ACS is a bilingual Licensed Professional Counselor and Drum Circle Facilitator. She has incorporated music, movement, nature, and creativity both in her personal life and in her professional career for over 30 years. Melissa uses trauma informed expressive arts and play therapy where she integrates the theories of Dr. Bruce Perry (Neurosequential model) and Dr. Stephen Porges (Polyvagal theory) in her work with children and teens. Melissa is the sole proprietor of Spiral Roots LLC.

Johanna Druen

Johanna Druen began teaching English in 1992 and earned her Master of Arts in Education from Western Kentucky University in 1997. With over 30 years in education, she has taught English and Gender Studies from grades 6 through college. Johanna brings seven years of counseling experience across elementary and high school levels in two states, complemented by work as a Behavior Clinician and in-home counselor. Trained in Trauma-Informed CBT, she currently serves as a school counselor while pursuing coursework at GMU to qualify for her LPCA. Her career reflects a deep commitment to supporting students academically and emotionally.

JaNell C Jones

JaNell Jones is a counselor-in-training at Virginia State University and a community-based group facilitator whose work blends creative expression, reflective practice, and trauma-informed principles. Her facilitation style weaves together metaphor, experiential techniques, and guided reflection to help groups explore identity, deepen insight, and strengthen connection. She has facilitated groups across community

centers, higher education, and cross-cultural spaces where she supports adults navigating transition, purpose, and self-understanding. She is known for her warm presence and her ability to help participants “look in the glass” to discover who they are and who they are becoming.

Richard Jones-Hang

Richard Jones-Hang is a 12-year professional school counselor with FCPS and previously was a Latin teacher. Richard has presented on tai chi and mindfulness applications in counseling, and play-based skills learning at the national, state, and local levels. His personal interests include baking, cooking, cosplaying, and playing with his 6-year-old rescue pit terrier Lavender.

Irene Kiraithe-Muchene

I am a graduate counseling student building clinical expertise in trauma-informed counseling for individuals and groups. I facilitate emotional regulation, guide group process, and foster healthy connection using a strengths-based, client-centered approach. I prioritize client autonomy and integrate faith only when requested. I have supported groups in a community and church setting, emphasizing emotional safety, structured interventions, and practical strategies that promote resilience, belonging, and reflective growth in clinically grounded, ethically sound group work.

Dr. Brian Maiden

Dr. Brian S. Maiden is an Assistant Professor of Counselor Education at Virginia State University and the School Counseling Coordinator. He has taught Group Counseling at both Virginia Tech and Virginia State, and his work centers on identity development, reflective practice, and culturally responsive group facilitation. Dr. Maiden helps adults explore authenticity, presence, and the personal stories that shape how they move through the world. His approach integrates trauma-informed principles, creative metaphor, and experiential activities that promote insight, connection, and growth. He designs and leads reflective group experiences in educational and community settings and is known for a grounded, relational style that supports self-awareness and meaningful engagement.

Dr. Maryam Majd

Dr. Maryam Majd is a developmental psychologist, author, and Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP-A/C) and Applied Psychology in Reston, Virginia. Her doctoral research, *Relationship Between School Type and Quality of Neighborhood with Children’s Social Vulnerability* (Liberty University, 2024), examines how environmental factors shape resilience. Through her books *The Sun and Charlie*, she translates psychological research into story-based curricula that help children build protective thinking and emotional intelligence. She leads workshops for schools and families using creative group techniques to prevent vulnerability and promote mental well-being.

Aidan Markley

I graduated from Virginia Tech in 2024 with a BS in Psychology, and am currently pursuing a M.Ed in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at George Mason University. I have obtained experience in the mental health field in both residential and clinical settings during my time as an undergraduate and postgraduate. As I work through my graduate program, I continue to seek out new opportunities where I can apply my educational and clinical experience in hopes of deepening my understanding of mental health care. After I have completed my Master’s program, I intend to obtain a PhD in Clinical Psychology

Anna Morrison

Anna Morrison, LMSW (she/her) is a Supervisee in Social Work at Fairfax Place Therapy and Cloverleaf Equine Center. As a proud member of the LGBTQIA community, Anna's practice focuses on expressive, somatic, and animal-assisted psychotherapeutic interventions for LGBTQIA youth and their families in Northern Virginia. With a background in LGBTQIA youth advocacy, including chairing GLSEN Maryland and leading American University's LGBTQIA student support programs, Anna is passionate about creating spaces of belonging for her youth and adult clients to explore the stressors and joys associated with having marginalized identities, and find connection to community and resources that increase their wellbeing.

Iman Mostafa

Iman Mostafa is currently pursuing a Master's degree in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at George Mason University. Building on over a decade of experience in behavioral health settings and in childcare, Iman is passionate about exploring integrative and holistic approaches to healing. Her clinical interests center on leveraging the natural environment to facilitate deeper connection and personal insight within group settings. Currently, Iman's focus is on exploring and developing creative curricula that integrate ecotherapy and systems theory to support clients navigating complex relational dynamics.

Dr. Sam Steen

Dr. Sam Steen holds a bachelors in Psychology, a Master's Degree in School Counseling and a Ph.D. in Education with a specialty in preparing school counselors and mental health professionals. He holds the rank of Professor and is a licensed Professional School Counselor, the Director of the Research Action Consortium, and the former Director of the Child, Family, Community Engagement Division at George Mason University. Dr. Steen specializes in school counseling, group counseling and cultivating Black students' academic identity development. He was a school counselor for 10 years and this experience shapes his research agenda, approach to teaching, and service.

Shelly Taylor

Shelley is a graduate counseling intern committed to providing warm, collaborative, and growth-focused support to clients. Her clinical interests include working with couples, young adults, and group counseling settings. She integrates cognitive-behavioral strategies, trauma-informed practices, and faith-based perspectives when desired by the client. Drawing from strengths-based approaches, she emphasizes creating a safe and supportive environment where clients can explore challenges, strengthen relationships, and deepen emotional insight. She is passionate about helping individuals navigate life transitions, build healthier communication patterns, and develop practical tools for long-term well-being as she continues her professional training.

Becca Wilson

Becca Wilson is in her 13th year as a school counselor. She has 3 years experience at the middle school level and 10 years at the elementary school level. Becca believes in the magic and efficiency of group work and loves to blend evidence-based practices with current trends and creativity to increase client and student buy-in. Becca is a proud mom to 2 kids, aged 8 and 5, and an 8-year-old husky mix.

Gregory C. Wright

Gregory Wright is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and supervisor specializing in holistic, culturally responsive, and spiritually integrated counseling. His work focuses on creating spaces for healing and transformation through authentic connection and ethical presence.

Syreeta Wright

Syreeta Wright is a doctoral student in Counselor Education and Supervision at Virginia Commonwealth University. She earned an Education Specialist degree in Counseling from Old Dominion University and a

Master's degree in Counseling with specializations in School Counseling and Marriage and Family Counseling from Regent University. Licensed as a professional counselor in Virginia since 2011, she also holds licenses in Georgia and Washington, D.C. Syreeta has supervised graduate students and residents in counseling and brings 20 years of experience across schools, hospitals, residential programs, military, and private practice. Her clinical and research interests focus on healing for women survivors of intimate partner violence, and counselor education and supervision.

Sarah Yi

Sarah Yi has a Bachelor's in Urban and Environmental Policy and Computer Science from Occidental College. She received the Community Action Award there, signifying her contributions to advancing community-driven programs to build healthy, thriving communities and achieve social, economic, and environmental justice. Previously at Deloitte, she served as a presenter, event coordinator, and mentor in the Climate Equity, Asian and Allies, and Native American/Native Hawaiian communities. Sarah is currently a Master's student in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at George Mason University. She is interested in gaining experience applying group counseling practices more broadly in a community and societal context.