

Learn more about our Presenters

Kristen Pranzl

Kristen has worked as the Operations Lead of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Well Being Program for eight years now and is passionate about ensuring accessible mental health services for everyone. Kristen graduated with her M.Ed in 2013 from Simon Fraser University and brings an organizational leadership lens to her work. Before working in the mental health field, Kristen worked in a community support and advocacy position with families who had Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind family members. When not working Kristen really enjoys being with her family and discovering new coffee shops and restaurants all over the world!

Makoto Ikegami

Dr. Ikegami teaches an online academic course in the Public Health and Equity Sign Language Interpreting Program at Rhode Island College. He works as a private practitioner, providing telemental health services through National Deaf Therapy. Dr. Ikegami is the president of Deaf Access to Quality Life, an organization dedicated to improving accessibility to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. He is also a therapist at CaringWorks and offers substance abuse assessments, case management, individual and group psychotherapy, and crisis counseling. In addition, he maintains his licenses for the Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the states of Pennsylvania, Florida, Georgia, and New York. Dr. Ikegami received his Master of Social Work (MSW) from Gallaudet University in 2009 and received his Doctorate of Social Work (DSW) from Walden University in 2019. The title of his dissertation is Social Workers' Experiences with Deaf and Hard of Hearing People with Mental Illness. He has made a number of presentations related to addiction and mental health. Dr. Ikegami serves as the President-Elect for The American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association. He also serves as an Advisory Committee Member for BRIDGES Deaf Advocacy Program: Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Signed By Stories. He is also a Founding Board Member for the National Asian Pacific Islander Deaf Coalition.

Mary Karol Matchett

Mary Karol Matchett and work over 7 years as an Assistant Vice President of Student and Academic Services (AVPSAS) at National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). On August 19, 2021, my first-born Deaf son, 29, Scott, passed away unexpectedly by suicide. My commitment of striving for better services and opportunities for anyone and breaking down barriers that prevent others both in schools and community from succeeding, is by serving on several committees: ASLifeline Board, Deaf Women of Rochester (DWR) Board, Stories by Signs (NAMI), and Mark Seven Deaf Foundation Board-Honorary. My favorite hobbies are reading books, traveling, scuba diving, skiing, camping, kayaking, hiking, playing pickleball, golfing, and spending time with my family and friends.

Tara Nesbitt-Dyck

Tara Nesbitt-Dyck (MSW, RSW) is a Registered Social Worker in British Columbia, Canada. Tara is Deaf and uses ASL to communicate. Tara has been working in the Mental Health field since 2007. Currently Tara runs her own private practice called Tall Hill Counselling & Consulting Services. Tara holds certifications in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Trauma-Informed Practice, Stress Management, Anger Management, and Suicide Intervention and Assessment. Tara's approach to counselling is person-centred, creative, and flexible. Tara draws on techniques from various theoretical orientations in direct response to the kind of issues her clients are working on and to find the "best fit" for her clients. Tara enjoys sharing practical tools with her clients through recognizing their varying strengths and abilities.

Christina Dunams

Christina Dunams graduated with an MSW from Columbia University in 2007. Since then she had served as a clinician at a mental health center for mentally ill deaf adults and has been providing therapy at a mainstream high school, working with deaf and hearing teens since 2008. Earlier this year she was added to the roster at National Deaf Therapy and still had the chance to graduate over the summer from the Ackerman Institute for Family Therapy with a special service award. Christina's unique set of skills and experiences make her a highly sought after professional.

Moderator

Doris Zelaya

Doris Zelaya identifies as a Latina, Deaf woman. She was born in Chicago, Il., she graduated from Whitney M Young Magnet High School. She is a Gallaudet alumna with a Bachelor's degree in Family and Children Studies and a Masters degree in Mental Health Counseling.

She has 14 years of experience working in the mental health field. She worked at the Lexington Mental Health Center for the Deaf in New York City as a mental health therapist from 2008- 2010, afterwards she returned home to Gallaudet University to work as a counselor at the Counseling and Psychological Services department (CAPS).

In 2013, she obtained her License Professional Counselor and worked her way up to her current role as the Assistant Director of CAPS. Her role includes providing counseling to students and supervise trainees and non-license staff while supporting the Director in overseeing CAPS.