

## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR INSTRUCTORS: Fall 2024**

SARA MERRICK-ALBANO E-RYT 500, C-IAYT, is dedicated to guiding those facing chronic pain and psychosomatic pain disorders. As a co-founder of Yoga Therapy Associates, her vision is clear: to make the healing essence of yoga accessible and resonant. With a tailored approach that draws from traditional yoga practices infused with contemporary neuroscience insights, Sara offers specialized online yoga therapy. She also sees clients in person in Watertown and Trumbull. Her commitment is to each individual's journey, ensuring that every session is a step towards holistic wellness.

LUIS M. ANEZ, PSY.D., is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine, and serves as the Director of Hispanic Services for the Connecticut Mental Health Center. His research and professional interests focus on training and education and community-based Hispanic Behavioral Health Services.

RACHEL BOUCHER, LCSW, is currently the Clinical Director at Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Prior to working in the Domestic Violence field, she worked as a clinician, supervisor and program director for 10 years providing mental health and substance use treatment to a variety of age groups in both outpatient and residential settings. Rachel has worked with survivors of violence as well as people who use violence in behavioral health settings. Rachel is passionate about providing training on domestic violence to behavioral health professionals as there is minimal available training on this topic despite its relevance and frequency. In all areas of her work her goal is to support people in obtaining resources, tools, and information to be more competent and feel more confident in their role.

BILLY BROMAGE, MSW, has been working at the Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health since 2012. He focuses on working alongside people in mental health and substance use recovery and people experiencing homelessness to engage with and shape their community. This work includes civic engagement and community-building projects like Project Connect and Focus Act Connect Every-day (FACE), as well as support for groups doing advocacy and community organizing from a lived experience perspective including Witnesses to Hunger and the Unhoused Activists Community Team (U-ACT). In addition, he designs classes for psychiatry residents in partnership with New Haven community leaders and activists as a faculty member of the Social Justice and Health Equity curriculum in the Yale Department of Psychiatry. Billy was a core faculty member in the two-year Recovering Citizenship Learning Collaborative (RCLC), which was spearheaded by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS).

SKYE COLLINS, (they/them) is the state coordinator for the Connecticut branch of the Hearing Voices Network. Skye graduated from UConn with a degree in journalism, and uses their passion for writing, research, and interviewing to change perceptions around voice-hearing. As a Recovery Support Specialist and a certified HVN facilitator, they have advocated more effective support systems for people who hear voices, see visions, and have other alternate experiences. Their work emphasizes the impact of language and word choice within mental health care, as well as the critical role cultural stigma or acceptance play in individual outcomes.

ANTHONY CRETELLA, R.N., is a Registered Nurse who has worked as a Medical / Surgical Nurse since 2010 in the state's largest hospital systems. Before coming to Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services he worked in Connecticut's Department of Corrections as a Nurse and Facility Staff Educator. While with CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services he has functioned as a Nurse Consultant and Clinical Educator.

MICHAELA FISSEL, MA, is a Breathwork Practitioner, Meditation Facilitator, 200-Hour Wild Essence Yoga Teacher, and works in the role of Executive Director at Advocacy Unlimited, Inc. Michaela has studied recovery for nearly 16 years, and recently completed a graduate degree in Conscious Studies where she explored breathwork as a method for supporting recovery from trauma. Through an integrative approach, Michaela invites a new way of perceiving and responding to distress from a place of empowered present awareness.

TARA HALL, Author, Coach and Certified Transformational Trainer in the Success Principles who creates and facilitates highly engaged and experiential trainings, workshop; hosts and moderates speaking engagements for educational settings, businesses and professional development conferences. Conducts customized trainings with an emphasis on leadership development, organizational culture, staff engagement, communication and coaching for personal and professional development. Trainings are conducted in person and virtually.

ANNIE HARPER, PHD, is Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, where she has been working at the Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health (PRCH) since 2012. She is a qualitative researcher, trained as a cultural anthropologist (not a psychiatrist!), and studies the relationship between finances, poverty, and mental health, with a particular focus on the financial lives of people with serious mental illness. Her goal as a researcher is to understand what we can do to better support people with their financial challenges in a way that maximizes their well-being, dignity, and autonomy. She believes that we must not simply help individuals to change their behavior, but also change systems that shape what is possible for people, including the banking system. Her research is action-oriented, and community based, studying questions identified by those most impacted by a problem with the goal of developing practical solutions. Annie was core faculty in the two-year Recovering Citizenship Learning Collaborative (RCLC), which was spearheaded by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS).

DAVID HOWE, L.C.S.W., has over 40 years of experience in the mental health and addiction recovery field as an administrator, psychiatric clinician, consultant, and trainer. He served as Director of Recovery Services and Consumer Affairs Director from 2007-2014 at Connecticut Valley Hospital. During that time, he was twice honored with the State of CT Distinguished Managerial Services Award for his administrative oversight, research and implementation of Person-Centered Recovery-Oriented Services. Known for his ability to effectively improve systems through creative problem solving, he pioneered a collaborative patient/staff committee that implemented significant reduction in the use of restraint and seclusion on inpatient units. He has developed and implemented a variety of innovative recovery-oriented initiatives that have ongoing influence on services and culture at CVH and the surrounding state mental health and addiction community. David is Clinical Director of the St Vincent DePaul Mission of Waterbury and is a member of the adjunct faculty in Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine.

BOB JOPE, LMHC, has been a member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers since 2010. He teaches Motivational Interviewing (MI) as an adjunct faculty member at Salve Regina University, Rhode Island College, and University of Massachusetts; he is also a consultant with the Addiction Technology Transfer Center at Brown University and works as an MI coder for a nationally recognized coding lab. Bob is the lead trainer for Jope Consulting Services, has taught MI at agencies all over New England, and consults internationally on teaching and coding the method. Holding a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology, Bob has worked in the mental health, child welfare, and substance abuse fields for the past twenty-five years. He was originally trained in MI by Stephen Andrew in 2007, and has since trained with Ali Hall, Alan Lyme, Bill Miller, and Terri Moyers. Bob has also developed and taught program-specific MI training applications and has trained thousands of people in various levels of Motivational Interviewing.

LINDA LENTINI has over 20 years of peer service experience and 15 of those years have focused on emphasizing the mind-body connection around mental health and addiction recovery. After exploring many options to support her personal healing journey over the past 25 years, she discovered Breath-Body-Mind (BBM). In this training, Linda will share the Coherent Breathing, part of BBM, that is evidence-based to balance the parasympathetic and sympathetic branches of the nervous system. Linda is a Rehab Therapist at Ct Valley, Hospital, a Level Four BBM teacher, Executive Director of the Breath-Body-Mind-Foundation, Yoga and Qigong instructor, Aromatherapist, and trained in Stephanie Covington Healing/Beyond Trauma.

CYNTHIA MARTIN is an accomplished leader with over 20 years' experience in diversity, equity and inclusion education, consulting, strategic planning, and project management. Excellent facilitator with strong platform skills and curriculum development. Led over 500 skill-based educational programs for over 25,000 people across industry, age, and all levels of employment. Recognized as an expert in social justice education, empowering others to change.

MARY-K O’SULLIVAN, LMFT, LADC, LPC, has been working as a Clinical Manager and Clinical Trainer for over 30 years. She has worked in both the private and public sectors in the fields of criminal justice, substance use disorders, co-occurring disorders, and clinical supervision in both inpatient and outpatient programs. She has worked as a trainer for the Department of Corrections, the Judicial Department, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Social Services, UCONN Medical School, the Department of Education, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the State of Connecticut as well as working as a Clinical Preceptor for the SARP program at the Groton Naval Submarine Base. She has trained both Nationally and Internationally including spending 10 years training with David Powell, PhD. and spending time in Singapore assisting their treatment system leaders in developing skills in co-occurring disorders treatment. She currently provides training and/or clinical supervision and oversight to Private Non-profits, DOC staff, DCF staff, DOL staff, CSSD staff including adult and juvenile probation officers, parole officers, juvenile residential services staff, bail staff, women’s and family matters staff, clinicians, case managers, and medical staff.

MANUEL PARIS, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine and Deputy Director of Hispanic Services for the Connecticut Mental Health Center. He also serves as Director of Training for the Latinx Track of the Yale Psychology Pre- and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program at the Hispanic Clinic. His professional contributions focus on the evaluation of cultural/linguistic adaptations of evidence-based interventions, multisite training and fidelity monitoring, workforce development, and public policy advocacy.

KIM PLATT, L.C.S.W., L.A.D.C., has over sixteen years of experience as a clinician, program director and consultant in the behavioral health field. She serves as faculty at Manchester Community College and maintains a private practice.

CHRISTINE SAARI, MA, E-RYT 200, C-IAYT, navigating her own path through anxiety and trauma has instilled in Christine a deep-seated passion for helping others find their way. As a co-founder of Yoga Therapy Associates, Christine specializes in aiding those with anxiety and trauma, emphasizing practices that are both empowering and approachable. Her strength lies in her ability to listen and adapt, individualizing yoga therapy to resonate with each person’s unique needs and preferences. Offering online and in-person sessions in Madison and New Haven, Christine’s approach is a blend of empathy, expertise, and genuine desire to guide others towards healing.

DONALD SCHERLING, Psy.D., L.A.D.C., is a Senior Clinical Consultant, Health Educator, Behavioral Health Wellness Coach, assistant in the Care for Caregivers Yoga program, & a Clinical Faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences at Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, MA. Dr. Scherling is a certified trainer for the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR Institute), the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), and a Senior Clinical Consultant and Trainer with the Connecticut Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services, the CT Women’s Consortium, and other regional and state-wide agencies in the Northeast.

SHANE SCOTT is a licensed clinical social worker and a Connecticut native. Shane received his Master’s Degree from University of Connecticut School of Social Work in 2012. He believes that compassion, understanding, and fostering a holistic approach are an integral part of the healing process. As a dynamic and skilled social worker, Shane brings a vast array of experience beginning in 2005, where he began his career with working in with youth and families across the life span and in a variety of settings, including schools and communities. In addition, Shane has experience working with individuals that are experiencing depression, anxiety, trauma, and substance abuse conditions. Shane also has a strong passion and skill in working with individuals experiencing gender and sexual identity issues. Shane also has a talent with facilitating trainings, workshops, and coaching other professionals. Shane has a strong passion for personal and professional growth and has a strong passion as being a Social Worker. Shane also enjoys music, movies, and traveling, and physical exercise.

RAYMOND TAFRATE, Ph.D., is an associate professor and clinical psychologist at Central Connecticut State University, as well as a fellow and supervisor at the Albert Ellis Institute for Behavior Therapy. He is also an author, consultant, and trainer.

JENNIFER TIRADO was certified as a Recovery Support Specialist by Advocacy Unlimited in 2016. Shortly after, she became trained as a Hearing Voices Network Facilitator. Jennifer has worked in a variety of settings, including social clubs, employment and residential programs, clinical crisis intervention teams, and community support programs. Through her journey, Jennifer's focus has been promoting alternatives that focus on choice and seeing the person served as the expert of their own experience. She has a wide breadth of experience facilitating a wellness, creative and other support groups. Jennifer began to work for the Wildflower Alliance in 2021 and began coordinating Connecticut's Alternatives to Suicide Network through Advocacy Unlimited in early 2022. Through her effort, Jennifer has successfully established Alt2u groups in all five DMHAS regions in CT.

AVIVA VINCENT, Ph.D., L.M.S.W., V.S.M., earned her doctoral degree from Case Western Reserve University, Veterinary Social Work Certificate from the University of Tennessee, a fellowship with Animals in Society, and trained at The Institute for Interdisciplinary Salivary Bioscience Research, "spit camp". She is an instructor in the Veterinary Social Work and Veterinary Human Support Certificate Program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Her research interest includes exploring the physiological impact of the human-animal bond; specifically, the potential animal support to reduce fear and anxiety in stressful situations. She is co-founder and owner of Healing Paws LLC, the only VSW practice in Northeast Ohio. Dr. Vincent is on the advisory board of the Center for Human Animal Education Research and Education at Ohio State University, board of directors for the International Association of Veterinary Social Workers, and is founder of the human-animal interactions workgroup with the National Association of Social Workers-Ohio chapter. Dr. Vincent is a contributor to the forthcoming volume *The Comprehensive Guide to Interdisciplinary Veterinary Social Work*, and *Career Paths in Human-Animal Interaction for Social and Behavioral Scientists*.

ELSA WARD, MS, CAC, is the Director of Recovery and Community Affairs, for Connecticut's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). She represents DMHAS in national organizations and events as well as helping to ensure meaningful contact, input, and dialogue with diverse representatives of the recovery community throughout Connecticut. Prior to coming to DMHAS, Ms. Ward held a variety of roles over the past 22 years in the private non-profit world, primarily focused on helping those with co-occurring disorders. This has included more traditional settings such as residential, intensive outpatient and detox, then branching out into homeless outreach and engagement programs, supportive housing, peer recovery support and then designing and implementing a paid work apprentice program for people with barriers preventing them from competitive employment. Ms. Ward has an Associate Degree in Drug and Alcohol Counseling and is a Certified Addictions Counselor (CAC) and Bachelor and Master Degrees in Human Services. Ms. Ward brings with her the very essence of empowering people with MH/SUD/COD towards change.

LISA WIBORG, L.I.S.W-S, V.S.W., completed her graduate degree in Social Work at The Ohio State University and her post-graduate certification in veterinary social work from the University of Tennessee. She has worked in direct clinical settings such as hospital social work, hospice care, and private adoption. Lisa is currently implementing her expertise on the human-animal bond in her current work in hospice. She has also developed a private practice, Healing Paws LLC which focuses on providing social work support into veterinary clinics in Northeast Ohio. Together with her Clinical Scholars Team, she will be implementing an evidenced based program to reduce compassion fatigue and burnout in veterinary medicine and promote the utilization of mental health services in the field. Lisa is currently the lead medical social worker for her hospice agency and continues to focus on education and support in the veterinary social work field with Healing Paws, LLC.