



OFA State and Tribal Technical Assistance and Resources *TANF and Relationship Education: Lessons Learned from Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Grantees Providing Stability Through Challenging Times*

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Nikkole Abbas, *Family Support and Advocacy Services Director, Youth and Family Services (YFS) of South Dakota*

Nikkole Abbas was hired at the beginning of Youth and Family Services' first HMRF grant and began teaching Active Relationships classes in 2016. She continued to teach this class, as well as developing a Blended Family class and becoming certified and teaching Crucial Conversations classes as well. Bob Ketchum and Ms. Abbas were teaching together at the start of the COVID pandemic and navigated the changes required together, while getting YFS ready to implement the new Frameworks grant. Under the new grant, Ms. Abbas was promoted to Stronger Family Program (SFP) Manager, and has now recently taken on a new role as the Program Director for SFP and other programs under the YFS Family Support and Advocacy Services Department.

Prior to working for the Stronger Family Program, Ms. Abbas worked in the Boys & Girls Clubs of Coachella Valley in Southern California, and in several drug and alcohol prevention programs in Rapid City, South Dakota. She was also a Peace Corps Volunteer for two years in Central Asia, after which she brought home a souvenir (her husband). They have three daughters and have been married for 20 years. (Although, as she tells participants who attend relationships classes she teaches, she still does not consider herself any sort of relationship "expert.")

She has a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice from the University of South Dakota and is certified as an instructor for Active Relationships, Active Romance, Relationship Smarts from the Dibble Institute, and Crucial Conversations.

Robyn Cenizal, *Director of Family Strengthening, ICF*

Robyn Cenizal is Director of Family Strengthening with ICF, currently managing the National Fair Housing Training Academy which provides training related to investigation of discriminatory practices associated with Fair Housing. She previously designed and managed the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families which provided training and technical assistance to educate State/Tribal TANF and other social service providers on the long-term effects of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences and offered strategies for mitigating these effects through integration of healthy relationship education into safety-net services. In addition to 11 years of experience at the national level, she has 26 years of experience working for the City of Jacksonville, Florida, specializing in strategic public/private partnerships to mitigate community distress and designed, implemented and managed the Jacksonville Network for Strengthening Families which served over 4,000 families.

Recognized as a national expert, Ms. Cenizal has authored numerous publications on promising practices associated with serving high-risk, low-resource and culturally-diverse populations. She is a nationally



Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) serving on the Advisory Board for the National Council on Family Relations as well as an internationally certified Health Coach with a focus on Integrative Nutrition. Ms. Cenizal is a Community Volunteer Leader with North Florida Red Cross and chairs the Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Mariana Falconier, *Associate Professor of Family Science in the School of Public Health and Project Director of the TOGETHER Program*

Mariana Falconier is an Associate Professor and Director of the Couple and Family Therapy Master's Program in the Department of Family Science at the University of Maryland, College Park. Dr. Falconier is a licensed marriage and family therapist and has been an approved supervisor by the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy since 2007. She has developed the evidence-based program TOGETHER and JUNTOS en PAREJA, an interdisciplinary group program designed to help couples improve their communication, coping and financial management skills. Dr. Falconier has published and presented nationally and internationally and is the leading editor of the book *Couples Coping with Stress: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, recipient of the 2018 CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title Award. Recently, she was convened as an expert by Pope Francis and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences to present on families' chronic stress and coping.

Before joining the University of Maryland, Dr. Falconier was an Associate Professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, serving as Director of the Center for Family Services and later as Director of the Master's Program in Marriage and Family Therapy. She was also director of outpatient mental health clinics at WATS and Vesta, Inc. before joining Virginia Tech.

Dr. Falconier completed her master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and her doctoral degree in Family Studies at the Department of Family Science at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Bob Ketchum, *Program Manager, YFS Stronger Family Program, Youth and Family Services of South Dakota*

For over six years, Bob Ketchum has worked as an Adult Educator with Youth and Family Services' Stronger Family Program (from the start of the first grant YFS received). Prior to this, Mr. Ketchum worked as an educator on a Fatherhood program with Lutheran Social Services in Rapid City, which involved going into prisons to teach Employment and two Fatherhood curricula as well as facilitating both Domestic Violence and Moral Reconciliation Therapy groups. He has worked as a Youth Counselor for South Dakota's Department of Juvenile Corrections and as a Veterans' & Training Representative for South Dakota's Department of Labor and Regulation.

Mr. Ketchum has a Bachelor of Science degree from Black Hills State University, Spearfish, South Dakota, and he holds certifications in in MRT and DV/MRT, Active Relationships, Active Romance, the Dibble Institute for Marriage Education, and several curricula from Love Thinks, and he is a nationally certified Anger Management Instructor.

Mr. Ketchum lives happily in Custer, South Dakota with his wife, three cats, and loyal Keeshond.