



## **Early Childhood Mental Health Training Institute Class of 2006-2008**

**Sherri L. Alderman, MD, MPH, FAAP**, sees first hand the need and potential benefits of early intervention for families challenged by childhood mental health issues while working as a pediatrician on the multidisciplinary team evaluations for the Early Childhood Evaluation Program (ECEP) within the Center for Development and Disability (CDD). The ECEP program evaluates children birth to three years of age who have been referred for possible developmental delays. ECEP teams not only see children in Albuquerque but travel to over 20 outreach clinics across the state. Often the ECEP team collaborates with the child's Early Intervention service providers to provide comprehensive developmental evaluations and provide continuing education credit for the service provider's participation in the evaluation. Sherri is confident that applying many of the basic concepts of infant mental health to promote healthy family dynamics is one of the most effective preventive measures of child abuse and neglect, her special interest.

As a trainee at the Early Childhood Mental Health Training Institute, Sherri will develop the capacity to blend her medical background in pediatrics with early childhood mental health expertise. Within her role at the CDD, she will be able to apply early childhood mental health expertise with the CDD's family-focused direct services and enhance Early Intervention provider capacity and support across the state. Additionally, as director of the development rotation of the UNM pediatric residency training program, Sherri plans to introduce the concepts of early childhood mental health to doctors in training, further building provider competences in childhood mental health.

Sherri received her medical degree from the University of Wisconsin and Masters in Public Health degree from the University of New Mexico. She also has certification in biomedical ethics and teaches the child rights class within the Masters of Public Health program at UNM. Sherri's research interests are in the areas of child abuse and neglect and the economics of poverty in New Mexico. Interweaving expertise in childhood mental health with her active interest in public health, systems analysis, child well-being and child rights will open opportunities to create innovative applied research that will promote professional capacity and services in early childhood mental health in New Mexico.

**Elizabeth Davidson Arellano, MSW, LISW** was born and raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She currently works as therapist in a home visiting capacity for Las Cumbres Community Services / Santa Fe Community Infant Program. She provides mental health services including counseling, emotional support, case management, and advocacy to parents/caregivers and their young children with the overall goal of enhancing and strengthening the parent-child relationship. She works with families facing a wide array of challenges including child abuse/neglect, substance abuse, domestic violence, developmental delays, mental health concerns, post partum depression, and poverty. Her clients come from all socio-economic levels, various cultural and ethnic backgrounds,

and also include teenage parents and pre and post natal drug exposed infants. Previously, she worked for Child Protective Services serving at-risk families in the northern part of New Mexico. She received her Master of Social Work Degree with a concentration in Clinical Practice from New Mexico Highlands University and her Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of New Mexico in Psychology and Political Science. Prior to graduate school, she worked in both the legislative and judicial branches of government. She worked for the First Judicial District Children's Court, which handles abuse/neglect, juvenile delinquent, and adoption cases. She is a member of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). She has a passion for infant mental health and has witnessed first hand the not only the tremendous need for intervention in the early years but also the amazing outcomes that are possible.

**Monica Armas Aragón** is a Licensed Independent Social Worker. She has many years experience providing support and services to children and families in diverse settings. She worked with homeless families in the Washington DC area and migrant families in Pennsylvania. She completed a fellowship with the UNM LEND Program (Leadership and Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities). Currently Monica is the Family Therapist with the UNM Developmental Care Program in the Department of Neonatology providing family Therapy to families with children at the UNM Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

**Cindy Bernard** has an MA in Counseling and a BA in Human Services. She has worked in the field of early childhood for over twenty years. Her experience includes home visiting in rural Arizona and classroom teaching in various early childhood settings. She is currently the Children's Services Manager for Presbyterian Medical Services, which includes Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K programs which offer comprehensive early childhood services to 471 children in Santa Fe County. She served as the Director of Family Intervention Services for Santa Fe Community College from 1990-1997 which included the Corazon Crisis Nursery Project, Emergency Child Care Program and the Nosotros Therapeutic Nursery. She also served as a full time faculty member of the college's Early Childhood, Family Studies and Teacher Education Program. She has a special interest in prevention as it relates to early attachment and bonding, and currently trains and supervises Home Visitors in the Early Head Start Program at PMS.

**Maria Brock, L.I.S.W.** (Laguna and Santa Clara Pueblos/German/Czech), an "urban Indian", was raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico where she graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of New Mexico (1998). She then went on to complete a Master of Social Welfare degree at the University of California , Berkeley (2001). She has been blessed to work with both urban and rural Native people, in New Mexico and in California . Her direct practice is diverse, encompassing adults, children, youth and families focusing on issues of recovery and resiliency. She is most interested in holistic treatment modalities and has incorporated acupuncture detoxification into her practice in the past year. She is a founding contributor to the Native American Community Academy, and is currently the clinical supervisor for their Student Support Services. She is the current treasurer of the New Mexico Indian Child



Welfare Association and is a trainee for Las Cumbres Early Childhood Mental Health Training Institute class of 2006-2008.

Maria's interest in working with young children began in the 1990's as an assistant preschool teacher in Albuquerque, NM. Since 2001 she has worked closely with child protective services to provide therapeutic parenting and family therapy for high risk families. She currently provides mental health consultation for several tribal Head Start programs in Sandoval County.

In addition to providing the highest quality direct services, Maria is most interested in sharing the knowledge she has gained through the Early Childhood Mental Health Training Institute with other key service providers and community members including tribal officials, tribal judges, social services, tribal police and health care workers to increase community competency in early childhood mental health. Once she completes the Institute, one of her dreams is to have an annual training workshop each spring in which newly elected tribal governors and officials, from all over the state, as well as key community members will attend and learn about early childhood mental health. She believes this will ensure that those involved in decision making about tribal families with young children will be grounded in the knowledge of how to create the optimum environment for the youngest tribal members to thrive.

Maria lives in Albuquerque, NM with her husband, 2 young children and various pets.

**Doreen Tso-Olivas Campbell** lives in Chimayo, NM with her two children and has a BA in psychology. Most of Doreen's experience has been working with families who are at risk of or who have specific mental health needs. As a student, she participated in research which involved brain function and the complicated chemistry with the brain. Doreen has worked in case management and has worked with families whose children or adolescents are at risk for out-of-home placements, who are having difficulty at school, and those who have a mental health diagnosis.

Doreen is again looking at the brain and its function in relationship to an infant's as well as in building stronger attachments between parent and child, promoting healthy families, providing parent education, providing advocacy and offering support all in an effort to facilitate change within families. Home-based services and a parenting group are available to the families served through Doreen's program. Doreen is currently employed as an Infant Mental Health Specialist with Las Clinicas del Norte, a Northern Rio Arriba rural health center which has clinics in El Rito, Abiquiu, and Ojo Caliente. The Infant Mental Health Program is in its third year of funding by a HRSA grant. The Program is working to provide infant mental health services to babies 0-3 years old and their families in collaboration with Las Cumbres Early Childhood Learning Center and La Clinica del Pueblo, located in Tierra Amarilla.

Doreen hopes to utilize the training she receives to continue educating communities about the importance of early childhood mental health and the various prevention strategies that

families can utilize. She also hopes to gain as much training in early childhood as possible.

**Irma Torres-Catanach** is a licensed mental health counselor currently working for the Las Cumbres Community Services / Community Infant Program (CIP). Before joining CIP, Irma's past work experience included counseling with older children and adolescents in outpatient and inpatient settings. She then worked for the local Head Start/Early Head Start program coordinating services for children with disabilities and for children that needed additional mental health supports. In her current position with the Community Infant Program, Irma provides home-based counseling services to pregnant mothers, infants, toddlers, and their families that reside in Santa Fe County. The focus of the work is on utilizing current therapeutic approaches in the infant mental health field to help caregivers develop and strengthen a healthy relationship with their child. CIP specifically works with children and families that have a variety of risk factors, such as poverty, drug abuse, domestic violence, isolation, disability, and various mental health issues. Clients include teen moms, foster and adoptive parents, single parents, and predominantly Spanish-speaking immigrant families. In order to provide counseling services to these infants, toddlers, and their families, Irma relies heavily on the relationships she establishes with various community providers, which include: St. Vincent's Hospital, CYFD, New Vistas Early Intervention Services, Children's Medical Services, Early Head Start, Healthy Families, La Familia Medical Center, and other community medical providers.

Irma's goal for participating in the ECIMH Institute is to first, strengthen her clinical skills to better identify and offer competent treatment utilizing infant mental health theoretical approaches. Secondly, she'd like for families to have access to counseling resources that can help to support their relationship with their young child.

**Beth Dehler** has been working for the Albuquerque Public Schools preschool program as a school social worker since 2000 supporting underserved families and children with developmental delays. Beth's work has emphasized helping families become more aware of personal, biological and environmental barrier's that may interfere with positive, loving relationships in order to create more harmony within family systems. She also supports children with developmental delays in a group, individual or filial play therapy setting.

The vision Beth holds as she becomes trained as an Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist is to help preserve the integrity of the practice of early intervention with in agencies throughout New Mexico that serve children from 2-5 while also cultivating the importance of healthy relationships with in families where children feel safe, protected and loved.

Beth graduated from the University of New Mexico with a Bachelors degree in psychology in 1995 and her Masters degree in Social Work in 1997 at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico. She maintained a board member

position with the New Mexico Association for Play Therapy for the past three years and is a volunteer support group facilitator for the Children's Grief Center of New Mexico.

**Mary Dudley** began her work in early education in 1969 as a kindergarten teacher in a bilingual program in CA. Over the years, she moved from the classroom to working with teachers and families. Mary created a program for sharing information about infant development informally with families in a pediatrics clinic for people whose incomes were low. Later she helped create a private pediatrics practice in which she met with parents in small groups or individually to talk about early development and family matters. For 17 years, she facilitated weekly conversations about child development and adult/child relationships in groups of parents, grandparents and teachers sponsored by a very large HMO. Along the way, she completed her Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico in the psychological foundations of education, an interdisciplinary program in which she focused on very early child development from a cross cultural perspective, with a specialization in language acquisition in bilingual children

Before retiring as the director of the Family Development Program at UNM in 2003, Mary led her team in creating and implementing professional development opportunities for early educators throughout NM. She authored three books for families about early development and many articles for local publications and for the Program's publication, *Family Development*.

Since retirement she worked with mostly Spanish-speaking families in a federally-funded Early Reading First project and currently she's a mentor teacher in the City of Albuquerque's early childhood centers where she works with children and their families and with teachers. She serves on the NM Child Development Board and the Steering Committee of the Early Childhood Action Network—both advocacy organizations that strive for improving the lives of young children and their families.

She's been married a long time to Jim Dudley and they enjoy two grown daughters and their friends.

**Paula Gurule** has been with La Clinica del Pueblo for eight years. With a colossal interest in Infant Mental Health, Paula is committed to working with area families. Currently the Director of the Community Outreach Program, she is an active member of the Northern Rio Arriba Community Health Coalition. As a native of northern New Mexico, and a commitment to serve her community, she has overseen the implementation of prevention programs including parenting programs, youth development, intervention and behavioral health services as well as substance abuse prevention programs.

Paula believes that families in rural areas are especially vulnerable due to the fact that resources are so limited. It is her hope that spreading the awareness of the importance of Infant Mental Health and building a rapport with the community will open many doors of opportunity to provide services to families. This will have to include working with other organizations in which we can either acquire knowledge or share what has been learned to better serve our communities.

**Judson Kusy** currently works as the Lead Family Therapist with Tresco TOTS, an early intervention provider in Las Cruces. His interests in the field include ecopsychology, early childhood mental health and engaging fathers in therapy. He works also in Sunland Park, Anapra, Chaparral, Santa Teresa and as far north as Truth or Consequences while collaborating with a number of community agencies including the Las Cruces Public Schools, *Parents As Teachers* and Children, Youth, and Families Department. Judson hopes to train other mental health professionals in early childhood mental health as well as make policy advancements in New Mexico in this exciting area. He also hopes to continue teaching social-emotional assessment, environmental risk factors and working with children with autism.

**Michael Lawrence** attributes his entry into early care and education to his two sons. As very young children, they developed in Michael a fascination about how young children learn. Michael became a preschool teacher, learned to appreciate toddlers as terrific and fell in love, again, with infants. The indelible spirit of young children with special needs inspired Michael so he earned a graduate degree in Early Childhood Special Education and advocated for young children with special needs and their families. Michael found himself most comfortable working with young children and families for whom life was hard.

Early on, Michael was uncomfortable with the escalating focus and policies on the achievement of "readiness" competencies without associated supportive policies acknowledging and promoting healthy early relationships. Innately, Michael knew that all work with young children and families needed to be based upon positive relationships. He felt like a voice in the wilderness, but no longer.

Michael was already promoting early mental health awareness by advocating early childhood interests in the development of two local healthy community initiatives. His participation in the Institute will allow Michael to develop the skills to fulfill two goals he has established for the duration of his career: 1) facilitation of a comprehensive, collaborative systems change among community partners about how we think, feel, act (and fund!) relative to early childhood mental health; and 2) help early care and education programs implement a spectrum of early mental wellness promotion, preventative interventions and treatment services. Michael is truly grateful for these opportunities.

**Denise Lucero Lopez** is a speech-language pathologist with La Vida Felicidad's Early Intervention program. She received her Master's degree in communication disorders with a bilingual endorsement from New Mexico State University. She has provided early intervention services for over eight years to children ages birth to three years with communication and feeding difficulties in the Valencia County area, including Los Lunas, Belen, Tome, Meadowlake, Veguita, and Highland Meadows. Many of the families that she works with have limited access to services due to the lack of transportation, the unavailability of adequate services for young children, language, and socio-economic barriers. La Vida Felicidad has also established a relationship with the Los Lunas Children Youth and Families Department and serves children that have had

early experiences with abuse, neglect, or drug exposure. After completing the Early Childhood Mental Health Training Institute program, Denise hopes to have the knowledge to assist parents and guardians of children that may have multiple and complex mental health issues. She aspires to assist children in achieving early developmental milestones and help decrease or eliminate the need for future services. She also hopes to serve as a resource to other early interventionists.

Early childhood mental health holds special meaning to Denise as she has first hand knowledge of the effects of early childhood trauma. She and her husband, Don, adopted two boys with special needs from the State of New Mexico over four years ago, and continue to struggle to provide the services and support that they need. As a result, she feels that she has much to offer post placement adoptive families.

In addition to her adopted sons, she shares a very busy household with her husband and biological infant identical twin sons. They all live under the kind and watchful eye of the true ruler of the house, their 4 year old daughter.

**Paula Marechal** was born and raised in Brazil and is the mother of three school age children. About 7 years ago, Paula had the opportunity to help start a residential project in Brazil, which received international attention for its innovative and culturally appropriate approach. The project called *Lua Nova* provides multidisciplinary services for Brazilian street girls and their children (0 – 5). The project reunites mothers and children and provides an array of services using a multi-disciplinary team to provide counseling, skills training and socio-economic reintegration into society.

When back from Brazil Paula started working for Young Children's Health Center (YCHC) in Spring 2001. YCHC's home visiting program serves the mostly Hispanic and immigrant communities' residents of the southeast heights of Albuquerque. This program is an essential part of YCHC's community approach to health. YCHC also uses multi-disciplinary teams (medical staff, social workers, psychologists). The coordination across disciplines, perspectives, and approaches is really important. Paula firmly believes that people have the strength and the resources to deal with the problems they face, especially when in partnership with family, community, and agencies. She works on a regular basis with a wide range of community groups such as, schools, government agencies, the non-profit organizations: Peanut Butter & Jelly Family Services, All Faiths Receiving Home, Enlace Comunitário, Hogares, Inc, and the local grass-roots Community Health Partnership (CHP).

Paula's hope is that being an ECMH Specialist will integrate the experience she has gained in her work in Brazil and USA with a broader conceptual framework so that she can provide enhanced services to the young children and families through her work as well as mentor and share knowledge with other professionals. Paula also hopes to create a space for effective collaboration and coordination with other agencies that work in the area of Infant Mental Health. Finally, she wishes to become a stronger advocate for effective policy change and connect our work with work being done at the global level.

At the global level, Paula wishes in time we could share experiences in this field with agencies like *Lua Nova* in Brazil.

**Soledad Pilar Martinez**, LISW, IMH-E (07) was born in Chile, South America. Her parents, Lola and Ramon Martinez immigrated to the USA with three other children. The youngest Diego was three, Paula Pia five, Cristian Rodrigo nine and Soledad, a budding adolescent. This and many other events in her life have shaped Soledad's interest in the humans' resiliency to thrive and grow.

Soledad's professional career has included working with prospective adoptive parents, managing neonatal nurseries at Charity Hospital, LA, crisis intervention and counseling runaways and "throw away" youth, Clinical Director for residential treatment programs, teaching graduate students at Highlands University, working as the state manager for home based services, Bureau Chief for Protective Services, and program manager for different prevention and treatment programs. Through these experiences, it has become clear to Soledad that what we have been doing has had little impact on the overall well being of children and families. She believes that Infant Mental Health practice holds the key to brighter outcomes for children and families, and in fact holds a brighter future for all humanity! Soledad is honored and privileged to be in the first class of the Infant Mental Health Institute!

**Nikki McCarthy** has been challenging the status quo one way or another ever since her own preschool days, when she and a black bear claimed the same blueberry bush. Fortunately, she had learned to share well with others, and both she and the bear survived to tell about it. She comes to the ECMH Training Institute with a varied background, having majored in Russian language as an undergraduate, worked as a research assistant on forestry air pollution projects for an environmental studies laboratory, and volunteered for overnights at a domestic violence shelter. She earned her MSW from Ohio State University, completing a qualitative thesis about Russian refugee resettlement in rural Ohio. In 1994, Ms. McCarthy accepted a social worker position with CYFD, and relocated to New Mexico. Since 1995, she has worked for the Department of Pediatrics at UNM, providing direct social work and case management services for families whose children were prenatally exposed to alcohol and/or drugs, or for families experiencing multiple social issues (e.g., drug use, domestic violence, mental illness) which can affect family functioning. Funding for this program is provided on a fee-for-service basis through the Department of Health Family, Infant, and Toddler Program; additional supports are provided by the UNM Center for Development and Disability.

Ms. McCarthy continues to have an interest in child welfare, and child abuse and neglect, and participates in discussions between the UNM Health Sciences Center staff and CYFD representatives to improve procedures for addressing child abuse and neglect in Bernalillo County. She also advocates for acknowledging and accommodating the emotional needs of children in foster care, during visits with their parents at CYFD, and during placement changes or reunification efforts. The ECMH Institute Training will provide Ms. McCarthy with the additional knowledge and skills necessary to specialize as a provider for early childhood mental health treatment, as well as enhancing her

current work providing preventive interventions. She would like to use ECMH knowledge to provide case consultation for staff providing preventive intervention services with high-risk families.

**Debbie Michael, MS., Family & Child Science** is a licensed educator and works as the Lead Family Educator with the Las Cruces Public Schools *Parents As Teachers* program. Her primary roles include providing direct services to families with young children and serving as program mentor to other family educators. Throughout her career Debbie has been connecting with families, whether as a kindergarten teacher, WIC nutritionist, or adjunct faculty member at NMSU. Her current position allows her to engage with a diverse population and also provides opportunities for multiple collaborations around family support systems.

Debbie's vision and goals upon completing this training include: becoming a part of a competent work force whose primary purpose is healthy child outcomes, becoming more effective in utilizing relationship-based prevention/intervention strategies, sharing knowledge and growing expertise within her community, and helping to build a community that is strongly committed to families and children.

**Ella Pavone** has been a Developmental Specialist III and Service Coordinator for Native American Professional Parent Resources (NAPPR) for the past three years, though she has been in the early intervention field since 1996. NAPPR serves Native American families residing in a four county area in New Mexico with children ages birth to three who have developmental delays, or who are at risk for delays. As a home visitor, Ella works closely with families to support the child's development, as well as addressing other pressing needs of the family. NAPPR is expanding their services to include a Child and Family Services Department in response to the mental health needs of the families served.

Growing up alongside an older sister with cerebral palsy has been a strong influence on Ella's career path, having watched her sister's struggles and triumphs through life. This desire to help improve individual lives is what drives her work with families. By participating in the Early Childhood Mental Health training, she looks forward to learning how to expand the services she already provides as a Developmental Specialist and will work towards helping other Developmental Specialists go beyond the realm of child development.

Ella enjoys life in Rio Rancho with her husband Ralph, daughter Lily, and their Golden Retriever Summer.

**Michelle Peixinho** is a Filipina- American from Manila and Honolulu. She has a BA in Speech and Communication from Marquette University. She has lived in New Mexico for seven years and works for Tewa Women United as the Program Coordinator for their Indigenous Women's Health and Reproductive Rights Program. She is a homebirth midwife, certified doula, and childbirth educator. She sits on the Board of the New

Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, and the Governor's Women's Health Advisory Council. She has three beautiful children all born at home.

**Annie Rasquin**, MSW, is a case manager and early intervention social worker with New Vistas in Santa Fe, NM. She partners with families who have children 0-3 with developmental delays. Her work centers on supporting children who have experienced neglect, abuse or prenatal drug exposures and are involved with Child Protective Services.

Annie has 10 years experience in injury prevention, emergency medicine and crisis intervention. For 7 years she was a paramedic/firefighter with the City of Santa Fe. She has been involved in disaster response and international relief work, and helped establish a clinic for women and children in Southern Bangladesh.

Annie, a European native, is blessed with two exuberant children Ethan 3 and Molly 5, and lives with her husband Matthew in the mountains of Santa Fe.

Annie hopes her work as an ECMH Specialist will enable her to more effectively advocate for and support the mental health of our community's most vulnerable children. She also plans on providing counseling for national disaster victims and their children.

**Omar Reyes** is a 2nd generation immigrant from Mexico. He is a bilingual and bi-cultural Licensed Mental Health Professional Counselor and is finishing a second master's degree in Communication Studies. A majority of Omar's experience is providing home-based therapy. His primary theories of counseling are Interpersonal Process, Rational Emotive Therapy, and Functional Family Therapy. Omar has worked with various families in the southern New Mexico region varying from rural to "urban" environments. In addition, he has worked with families that have various dynamics: single father, single mother, grandmother with child, etc. Omar has also worked with families of various standing of socio-economic status and families that are in various stages of becoming residents or citizens in the United States. He primarily works with families that are bilingual (Spanish) and with families that are mono-lingual Spanish speakers. Omar strongly believes in being culturally sensitive and believes his agency, Aprendamos, believes in and practices cultural sensitivity. Omar wants to contribute to the Early Childhood Mental Health System by being inclusive for the families that may be unaware of, misunderstand, or mistrust the system.

Omar hopes to reach the various populations that need the help through education and accessibility. This sounds like a simple task, however when education programs are put out, many of the people who need to be attending, unfortunately, are not. There is a gap there. Some factors that contribute to the gap are cultural. Some deal with the huge gap of economic status between clients and providers, gender role stereotypes, lack of fostering self determination in families, and many other factors. Omar wants to increase accessibility and the confianza (trust) that is needed by the community from us as providers. Omar's ultimate goal is described well by R. W. Emerson:

*"To laugh often and much,  
to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children,  
to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends,  
to appreciate beauty,  
to find the best in others,  
to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child,  
a garden patch...  
to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.  
This is to have succeeded!"*

**Alicia Ter Avest** graduated in the spring of 2005 from New Mexico State University with a Masters in Social Work. After graduation, Alicia jumped head first into family therapy working intensively with adolescents and their families. During that time she also accepted a contract position at Tresco, TOTS, where she has worked for over a year, and most recently decided to take on full time. Early intervention is a great field to work in. Every family is unique and brings something different to the therapeutic experience.

About 50% of Alicia's case load is based in Southeastern New Mexico (Vado, Mesquite, Sunland Park, la Union, Santa Teresa, Chamberino.) Most of the 0-3 year olds are the first generation born to their families in the United States. Each day Alicia learns about a family's culture and how their system affects "their world."

Alicia is excited to be a part of this first group of trainees. She has many visions of what she can do when she becomes a specialist. Alicia is planning to share this information to not only people at her agency, but also to service providers and families in the Las Cruces community that are interested in Early Intervention. On a larger scale, Alicia plans to network with her friends that are working with young children and families internationally, teaching and training them to make their work that much more rewarding and effective.

**Jeff Versaw, LISW** is currently the Mental Health Coordinator and Acting Disability Manager at Jicarilla Child and Family Education Center in Dulce, New Mexico, where he has been working since 2001. As part of his duties he works closely with the Disability Program at JCFEC and he also consults with teachers and staff around behavior and mental wellness issues with children who attend Head Start and Early Head Start. Jeff also sees individual children in his capacity as Mental Health Coordinator in individual Play Therapy. He has completed numerous trainings, as well as individual supervision in Play Therapy.

Jeff completed his Bachelors in Social Work in 1983 at Colorado State University and his Masters in Social Work from the University of Denver in 1997. He has worked with young children, adolescents, and families in a variety of settings for the past 23 years and feels that the birth to 5 age level is the most rewarding as well as challenging. The opportunity to participate in the Early Childhood Mental Health Institute will allow him to exchange ideas with fellow professionals while growing professionally in the area of early childhood wellness.