



THE 30TH ANNUAL | JANUARY 11-13, 2023

# CHILDREN'S LAW INSTITUTE

THE FUTURE WE NEED NOW

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CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY OF TRUST  
TO BUILD OUR SYSTEM OF CARE

## Final Report: Executive Summary

2023

### NM Court Improvement Project

Prepared by the NMSU Center of Innovation for Behavioral Health and Wellbeing,  
New Mexico State University, Department of Extension Family & Consumer Sciences



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## Introduction

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The 30th Annual New Mexico Children’s Law Institute (CLI) was held virtually from Wednesday, January 11th through Friday, January 13th, 2023, with a virtual conference pre-session Tuesday, January 10th, 2023. For thirty years, the Children’s Law Institute has focused on new and emerging trends and best practices in ever changing child welfare and juvenile justice environments. Through the CLI, the child welfare and juvenile justice communities have successfully advocated for blending systems and preserving connections. Together the CLI community has learned the importance of a trauma-informed approach, acquired skills for enhancing practice, and deepened its service to children and youth by focusing on empathy and compassion.

This year’s conference included 47 unique workshops that provided attendees an opportunity to cultivate awareness, empathy, and enthusiasm as we work to build and transform child welfare and juvenile justice to truly benefit those we serve. The conference planning committee made the decision to hold the conference virtually and utilize the web-based version of the Attendee Hub event platform to assist attendees in navigating the conference program and used Zoom as the online platform, through Attendee Hub, to host conference sessions. Overall attendees were satisfied with the ease of access to the virtual event.

This year CLI offered a virtual pre-session, two-part PBS documentary movie series *Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness* (Episode 1: The Storm | Episode 2: Resilience). The first episode focused on 20+ young people who provided an intimate look at what it’s like to experience the symptoms of mental illness, from depression to addiction to suicide ideation. The film includes insights from families, providers, and advocates and explores the impact of childhood trauma, stigma, and social media. The second episode focused on young people, their families, and friends as they talk about how they came to acknowledge and accept the reality of their mental illnesses, their work with providers to determine a diagnosis and the treatments they received, and the added stigma of racial or gender discrimination. Throughout, the young people inspire with their resilience. After each episode, there was a panel of youth organized by the La Vida Project in Las Cruces. They brought awareness by discussing and answering questions from the audience in real-time.

Opening keynote speaker Adrian McLemore shared his experience as a youth in the system as well as his experience being a kinship guardian himself while creating an impactful, thought-provoking conversation with the audience that examined the various perspectives of ‘KINSHIP’ in our legal profession and how those perspectives impact youth & families. Our day two keynote speaker, Elizabeth Manley, inspired attendees in transforming children’s behavioral health by sharing framework for transformation inclusive of values, culture, governance, fiscal and infrastructure shifts that are necessary to meet the challenge of transformation – moving toward a shared vision that prioritizes the experience of youth and families. Closing keynote speaker, Vivek Sankaran, moved and inspired attendees by examining how focusing our work on preserving and strengthening relationships can help transform the child protection system. Using a compassion-based foundation the session looked at ways in which we can nurture relationships with families, other professionals, and ourselves to help the system fulfill its aims of assisting and supporting families. During the lunch break participants were invited to connect with other attendees and discuss common experiences during facilitated Community Conversations. During the afternoon breaks, participants had the opportunity to move and dance during facilitated Zumba and Tai Chi sessions.

The Children’s Law Institute is a multi-agency and organization collaboration, led by the Children’s Court Improvement Project of the NM Supreme Court. The annual conference was planned and coordinated by the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts, the Center of Innovation for Behavioral Health and Wellbeing at New Mexico State University and the UNM Institute of Public Law, Corinne Wolfe Center for Child and Family Justice. Major contributors to the planning process include the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department’s Divisions of Juvenile Justice, Protective Services, and Behavioral Health; the NM Family Advocacy Program and representatives of the court including contract attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and State and Tribal Judges. Major financial sponsorship of the 2023 CLI was from the NM Supreme Court, The Children’s Justice Act Advisory Group, and the New Mexico State Bar - Children’s Law Section. For a complete list of financial sponsors for this year’s conference, see page 13.

## 2023 Theme Description

We are living in transformational times. Trends in our professional, societal, and natural environments are paving the way for the future to come. Let's roll up our sleeves and continue constructing the responsive community serving systems that New Mexicans deserve. The 30th Annual Children's Law Institute is both an invitation to celebrate the innovative restructuring that is happening and a challenge to break ground where the system still needs renovating. Join us as we uplift the work of stakeholders committed to creating an equitable, inclusive, and hopeful system of care.

The CLI is a statewide, multidisciplinary conference that brings over 1,000 various professionals together in a unique learning environment focused on improving the health, safety, and wellbeing of the children and families who are involved in—or who are at risk of becoming involved in—state or tribal child welfare or juvenile justice systems in New Mexico.

## 2023 Conference Attendance

This year, **1,077** participants registered for the conference with **991** in attendance. The breakdown of persons registering and attending, as well as those responding to the evaluation survey follows.

## 2023 Registration

### Registration by category:

**Total Registered: 1,077**

#### Registration Breakdown by Payment Category:

**Judge: 38**

**Attorney: 146**

**Professional: 706**

**Volunteer/Foster Parents: 85**

**Youth: 18**

**Presenters Only: 84**

#### Other Registration Information:

**Total Participating Presenters: 121**

**CLI Scholarships: 5**

### Registration by Position (self-report):

*Registrants were asked to select up the Job Role that best described them, responses below will total more than the **1,077** total registrants.*

CASA (Staff & Volunteer) - 80	CYFD – PS Children's Court Attorney - 33	Parent/Family Member - 0	Substitute Care Advisory Council (Staff/ Volunteers) - 15
Contract Attorney (GAL, YA, RA) - 90	Educator - 4	Public Defender - 1	Therapist/Counselor/Social Worker - 57
CYFD Administrator - 21	Family Peer Support Worker - 7	School Social Worker - 38	Tribal Court Judge - 5
CYFD-Early Childhood Staff - 4	Foster Parent/Adoptive Parent - 3	Service Provider - 88	Wraparound Facilitator - 11
CYFD-Behavioral Health Services - 59	Law Enforcement - 0	State of NM Judge - 30	Youth - 5
CYFD-Juvenile Justice Staff/Juvenile Probation Officer - 38	Medical: MD/RN/Other - 3	Student - 15	Youth Support Life Skills Coach - 6
CYFD-Protective Services Staff - 268	Other - 189		

## Attendance breakdown by Conference Session

*The following is estimated attendance based on CLI staff headcount during the Zoom sessions.*

Title	Presenters	Estimated Attendance
<b>PRE-SESSION - January 10th, 2023 9:30am - 3:30pm</b>		
<b>Pre-Session One: 9:30am - 12:00pm</b>		
<b>Documentary - Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness (Ep. 1 - The Storm)</b>	PBS	<b>200</b>
<b>Pre-Session Two: 1:00pm - 3:30pm</b>		
<b>Documentary - Hiding in Plain Sight: Youth Mental Illness (Ep. 2 - Resilience)</b>	PBS Panel by La Vida Project youth	<b>200</b>
<b>DAY ONE - January 11th, 2023</b>		
<b>Opening General Session: January 11th 8:10am - 9:50am</b>		
<b>What Do Families Look Like At Their Best?</b>	Keynote by Adrian McLemore Opening by Cristen Conley, JD, CWLS	<b>868</b>
<b>Workshop Session One: January 11th 10:00am - 11:30am</b>		
<b>Goodbye Anxiety, Hello Freedom</b>	Stephanie Dalfonzo	<b>182</b>
<b>How to Navigate Autism and Trauma</b>	Gay Finlayson; Kayla Lopez, MA; Felicia Nevarez, MEd	<b>143</b>
<b>Practitioner's Guide to Fulfilling the Promise of Kevin S.</b>	Bette Fleishman, JD; George Davis, MD	<b>143</b>
<b>The State of Youth Mental Health in New Mexico: Understanding and Responding to the Current Crisis</b>	Dylan Pell	<b>154</b>
<b>Fix TANK Now: Reforming New Mexico's Cash Assistance Program for Families</b>	Teague Gonzales, JD; Arika Sanchez, MPA, JD; Lecia McHargue	<b>48</b>
<b>Achieving the Gold Standard: Lessons Learned in ICWA Court</b>	Crescentia Tso, MSW; Wyndsor Yazzie; Jacqueline Yalch, MSW; Rhayna Walizer, MSW; Megan Gonzales	<b>201</b>
<b>Special Meetings: January 11th</b>		
<b>Judges Session One (11:30am - 1:30pm)</b>	Judges virtual gathering	<b>31</b>
<b>Gal and Youth Attorney Gathering</b>	Gal and Youth attorney virtual gathering	<b>27</b>
<b>Lunchtime Healing Circle (11:40am - 12:40pm)</b>	Conducted by: Elizabeth Bennett; Enas Khaleq; Sarahi Soto-Talavera; Margot Vos	<b>11</b>
<b>Workshop Session Two: January 11<sup>th</sup> 1:30pm - 3:00pm</b>		
<b>Psychological and Forensic Evaluations: What, Why, Who (1 of 2)</b>	Julie M. Brovko, Ph.D; Cristen Conley, JD, CWLS	<b>174</b>
<b>Advocating for Students with Disabilities in the Educational Setting</b>	Monica Miura; Jody Myers; Laura Speer; Michelle Tregembo	<b>161</b>
<b>Mind your C's: A Culturally Relevant Innovation in Trauma-Informed Work with Systems-Impacted Youth</b>	Anna Nelson, Ph.D, LISW	<b>177</b>
<b>Legal Update</b>	Kelly O'Neill, JD Tyler Benting, JD	<b>162</b>
<b>Readi NM: Transforming Foster Care through Resource Parent Training</b>	Shanda McKeough; Robert Vigil; Kathy Melendez' Jessica Mora-Torres; Celestina Garcia	<b>55</b>
<b>Using Motivational Interviewing and Research to Promote Change and Grow a Compassionate Workforce</b>	Brenna Hendricks	<b>102</b>
<b>Break 3:00pm - 3:30pm</b>		
<b>Zumba</b>	Jessica Sánchez Romero	<b>22</b>
<b>Tai Chi</b>	Michael Pridham, DC-APC, NRCME, CKTI	<b>61</b>

<b>Workshop Session Three: January 11th 3:10pm - 5:00pm</b>		
<b>Getting Families The Resources They Need with Dignity</b>	Ezra Spitzer, MPA; Tarra Ford, JD; Rocio Garcia; Micaela Baca; Alyssa Davis	<b>111</b>
<b>Vicarious Trauma within the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System - Ethics</b>	Kate Bunch, LPCC; Alex Floyd, LCSW	<b>239</b>
<b>CYFD and HSD System Change Innovations for 2022-2023 and Beyond</b>	Beth Gillia, JD; Emily Martin; Bryce Pittenger, LPCC	<b>144</b>
<b>Addressing the Intersection of Immigration and Child Welfare</b>	Yolanda Castro de Esquibel, MSW; Andres Santiag, JD; Ivan Villanueva	<b>106</b>
<b>Psychological and Forensic Evaluations: Evaluations of Forensic Assessments (2 of 2)</b>	Julie M. Brovko, Ph.D; Leslie Jones, JD, CWLS	<b>129</b>
<b>Successfully Working With Families through Cultivation of a Community and Shared Understanding</b>	Cam Bui, MSW, MBA, LMSW; Antonio Lopez, MSW, LMSW,PLCSW	<b>45</b>
<b>DAY TWO: January 12, 2023</b>		
<b>Opening Session, January 12<sup>th</sup> 8:00am – 9:30am</b>		
<b>Transforming Children’s Behavioral Health</b>	Keynote address by Elizabeth Manley Opening by Beth Gillia	<b>861</b>
<b>Workshop Session Four, January 12th 10:00am-11:30am</b>		
<b>Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) - Legal Paths for Vulnerable Immigrant Children in NM</b>	Lauren Armstrong, JD; Monic Newcomer Miller, JD; Judge Jane C. Levy	<b>81</b>
<b>Substance Use Disorder in Youth and Adults: Addressing the Opioid Crisis</b>	Shelley Mann-Lev, MPH	<b>381</b>
<b>CYFD and HSD Systems Change Innovations for 2022-2023 and Beyond (Repeat)</b>	Beth Gilia, MA, JD; Emily Martin; Bryce Pittenger LPCC	<b>97</b>
<b>Legal Update (Repeat)</b>	Kelly O'Neill, JD Tyler W. Benting, JD	<b>53</b>
<b>Upholding Child and Youth Rights: A Panel Discussion with CYFD Office of Children's Rights</b>	Jade Delfin, JD; Eli Fresquez, JD; Debra Poulin, JD; Andres Santiago, JD	<b>135</b>
<b>Centering the LGBTQ a d BIPOC Youth Experience - La Vida Project</b>	Christina Pointer	<b>125</b>
<b>Special Meetings: January 12th</b>		
<b>Judges Session 2 (11:30am - 1:30pm)</b>	Judges virtual gathering	<b>23</b>
<b>Respondent Attorney Gathering (11:30am - 1:30pm)</b>	Respondent attorney virtual gathering	<b>14</b>
<b>CASA Luncheon (11:30am - 1:30pm)</b>	New Mexico CASA’s virtual luncheon	<b>25</b>
<b>Lunchtime Healing Circle (11:40am - 12:40pm)</b>	Conducted by: Elizabeth Bennett; Enas Khaleq; Sarahi Soto-Talavera; Margot Vos	<b>13</b>
<b>Workshop Session Five, January 12th 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm</b>		
<b>The Court's Role in Supporting Young People: Introducing the Fostering Connections Court Guide</b>	Judge Daniel A. Bryant; Cristen Conley, JD, CWLS; Amy Delaney-Hernandez, JD; Farra Fong, LMSW; Alison Endicott-Quinones, JD; Felicia Cater	<b>143</b>
<b>A Roadmap for Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Juvenile Competency Process in NM</b>	Kaisa Marshall, PhD; Browyn Nesser PsyD	<b>136</b>
<b>Using Mindfulness Practice to Connect to Our Purpose and Intention</b>	Elizabeth Bennett, MSW, MPH	<b>160</b>
<b>Integrating Functional Family Therapy as a Family First Approach in Child Welfare Case Management</b>	Marta Anderson, LCSW; Tom Sexton, Ph.D	<b>199</b>
<b>Educational Rights of Crossover Youth</b>	Debra Poulin, JD; Heather Hoechst, JD; Reed Ridens	<b>48</b>
<b>Practitioners Guide to Fulfilling the Promise of Kevin S. (Repeat)</b>	Bette Fleishman, JD; George Davis, MD	<b>110</b>

<b>Break, January 12th 3:00pm - 3:30pm</b>		
<b>Zumba</b>	Jessica Sánchez Romero	<b>21</b>
<b>Tai Chi</b>	Michael Pridham, DC-APC, NRCME, CKTI	<b>24</b>
<b>Children's Law Section Meeting</b>	State Bar of New Mexico - Childrens Law Section	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Workshop Session Six, January 12th 3:30pm – 5:00 pm</b>		
<b>Educational and School Disciplinary Considerations for Crossover Youth with Disabilities</b>	Jesse Clifton, JD; Laurel Nesbitt, JD; Reed Ridens	<b>50</b>
<b>Barriers to Preventing Childhood Sexual Abuse: Experiences of Stigma in Non-Offending Pedophiles</b>	Rebecca Heronn, PsyD	<b>188</b>
<b>Bystander Intervention to Protect Youth: Overcoming Barriers</b>	Alena Schaim	<b>46</b>
<b>Discussion of Difficult Issues in Fostering Connections Cases</b>	Amy Delaney-Hernandez, JD; Alison Endicott-Quinones, JD; Farra Fong, LMSW; Tim Gardner, JD; Judge Alma C. Roberson	<b>98</b>
<b>Trauma and the New Normal: Essential Understanding for a Trauma-Responsive System of Care</b>	James Gilson, MA LPCC	<b>197</b>
<b>An Ethical and Evidence-Based Approach to Creating Trust and Physiological Safety on Teams</b>	Bill James, LCSW	<b>125</b>
<b>DAY THREE: January 13th, 2023</b>		
<b>Workshop Session Seven, January 13th 8:10am – 9:40am</b>		
<b>Kinship Guardianship: Creating a Supportive Circle for Children in Kinship Care</b>	Morgan Demic, JD	<b>60</b>
<b>Achieving Better Outcomes for Families Experiencing Domestic Violence &amp; CPS Involvement: A Blueprint</b>	Marlen Cisneros; Lindsey Davis; Tommi Fisher; Brenda Flores; Cristina Galarza; Flor Gonzalez; Marianne Hernandez-Jinenez, LMSW; Nubia Martinez; Bryana Valdez	<b>276</b>
<b>Answering the Call: Crisis Response and Suicide Prevention Among Youth in the Rocky Mountain West</b>	Kurt D. Michaels, Ph.D	<b>133</b>
<b>Visits Matter: Building relationships with Families through Meaningful Home Visits</b>	Freida S Baker, MSW Sophy Shore	<b>77</b>
<b>Enhancing the Lives of Children and Families through Trauma-informed and Strengths Based Services</b>	Michelle Adames, Ph.D; Diana 'Brien, MS, LMFT, IMH-E	<b>134</b>
<b>Every Student Can Succeed!</b>	Debora Poulin, JD; Heather Hoeschst, JD; Daniela Romero; Megan Speck; Reed Ridens	<b>53</b>
<b>Closing Session, January 13th 10:00am-12:00pm</b>		
<b>Harnessing the Power of Relationships to Transform Child Welfare</b>	Keynote by Vivek Sankaran, JD Opening by Alison Pauk, JD	<b>798</b>

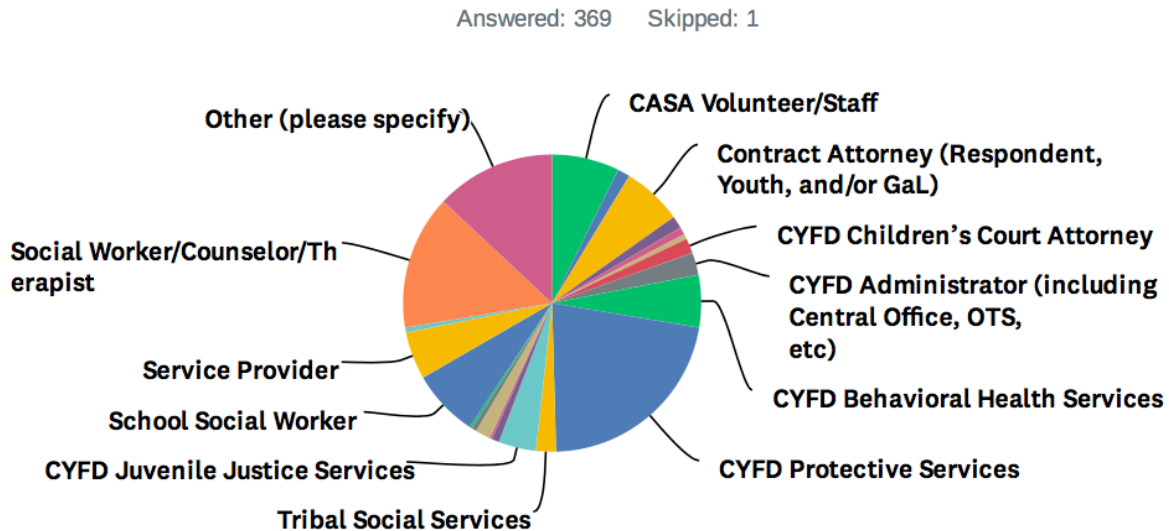
# Overall Conference Evaluation Report

All attendees of the 2023 Children’s Law Institute were sent an email with the online satisfaction survey on **January 13th, 2022**. Of the **1,077** participants at the conference, **370** responded to the survey. Participants directly after every workshop were asked to identify what sessions they attended and answered a set of questions about each session. This also acted as a CEU credit request form. Narrative feedback about each session was also collected. The responses about the general conference and overall feedback are summarized below. Responses about keynote and workshop sessions were provided to the individual presenters of those sessions as well as CLI planning committee members.

## Participant Satisfaction Survey Respondent Profile

Participants were asked to provide six ratings on four-point scale of the conference overall.

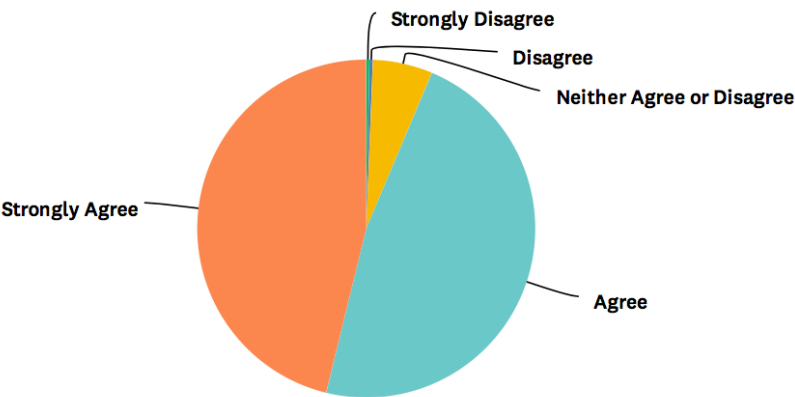
We would like to begin by asking you to select the category of participant that best fits you. Please select from the following:





I learned new information that will inform my work with children, youth, and families.

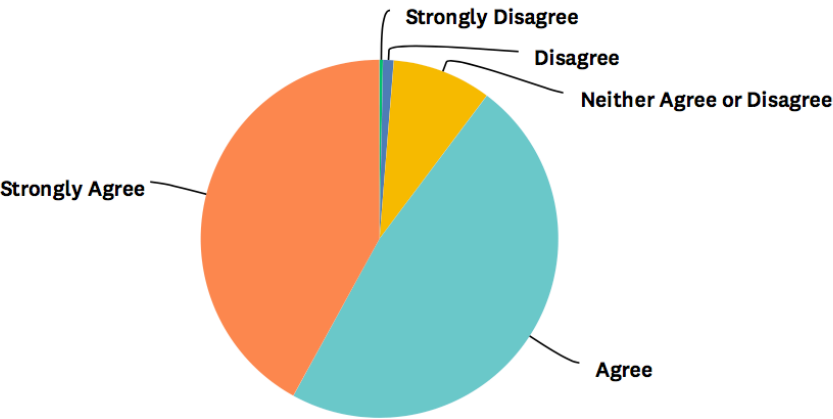
Answered: 314    Skipped: 56



STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
0.32%	0.32%	5.73%	47.45%	46.18%	314	4.39
1	1	18	149	145		

I learned new skills or gained new ideas that I will immediately apply to my work.

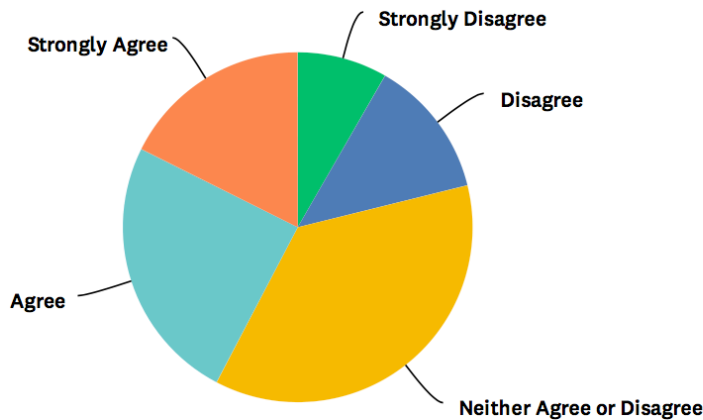
Answered: 312    Skipped: 58



STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
0.32%	0.96%	8.97%	47.76%	41.99%	312	4.30
1	3	28	149	131		

I met new people, or reconnected with people, with whom I can work collaboratively in the future.

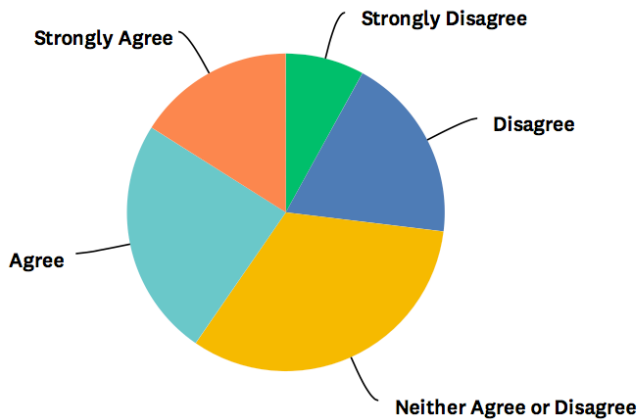
Answered: 312    Skipped: 58



STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
8.33%	12.82%	36.54%	24.68%	17.63%	312	3.3
26	40	114	77	55		

The conference allowed me to connect with colleagues I don't usually interact with.

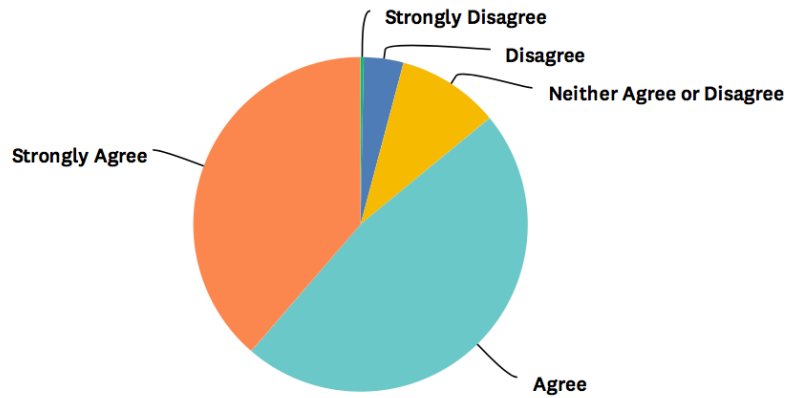
Answered: 312    Skipped: 58



STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
8.01%	18.91%	32.69%	24.36%	16.03%	312	3.21
25	59	102	76	50		

## Overall, the CLI met my expectations.

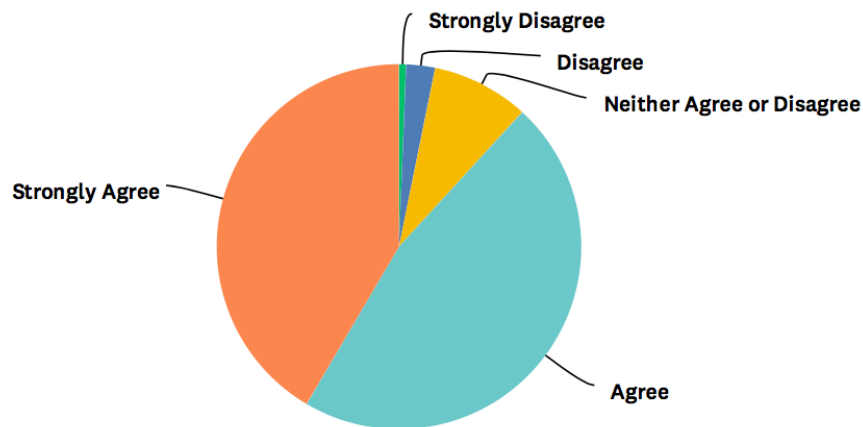
Answered: 313 Skipped: 57



STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL
0.32%	3.83%	9.90%	47.28%	38.66%	
1	12	31	148	121	313

## I found the digital conference interface easy to navigate

Answered: 313 Skipped: 57



STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL
0.64%	2.56%	8.63%	46.65%	41.53%	
2	8	27	146	130	313

# Overall Conference Narrative Feedback Summary

## Overall Organization of the Event

Overall, most respondents felt positively about the organization and implementation of the conference. Many participants noted that the conference was highly informative, inspiring, and well planned. While participants missed the face-to-face interactions, they believed the virtual conference was a suitable alternative. The opening and closing sessions were greatly appreciated by many surveyed.

Some respondents suggested clearer written instructions be provided about registration, accessing sessions and handouts.

## Speaker and Workshop Content

The majority of survey respondents had positive feedback about the quality, speaker and topic variety, and structuring of the workshop sessions. Many responses indicated that the presentations they attended were educational, relevant, and informative. Some suggestions for improvement included clearly labeling the skill level of the intended audience and offering more advanced level workshops. Attendees appreciated dynamic workshops, and some mentioned struggling with workshops that were primarily lecture based.

## Technology

Participants had varying opinions about navigating the digital interface and ease of use of the Attendee Hub and Zoom apps. Many respondents expressed satisfaction with the platforms used and found them easy to navigate. Others appreciated that the digital conference eliminated travel time and expenses and felt that the digital environment allowed them to be more focused on the presentations as there were no audience or environmental distractions.

A few participants expressed that they had technical difficulties and found it challenging to have to continuously log in and out. Some respondents noted that while they understood the necessity of a digital conference this year, they missed the in-person interaction and networking opportunities existing in previous years.

## Common Topic Suggestions for Future Conferences

- Substance Abuse
- Mental health of youth, families, and staff
- Meaningful Family Time for Children in Care
- Trauma Informed Care practices
- Youth Homelessness/Housing Resources
- ICWA / IFPA
- Support groups for families not just individual with addiction
- Prevention of crimes against children and child fatalities
- Greif and loss
- Human trafficking
- LGBTQ topics
- Race and Equity
- Self-Care

## 2022 CLI Sponsors

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Administrative Office of the Courts

Children's Justice Act Advisory Group

### Gold Level Sponsors

A Child's Voice

Healing Verses - A Journey Towards Empowerment - Book Author: Sophie Serna

NM Advocacy Inc.

State Bar of New Mexico

Wester Sky Community Care

### Silver Level Sponsors

Child Welfare Information Gateway

New Mexico Children's Alliance

New Mexico Friends of Foster Care

UNM Center for Development & Disability (CDD) Information Network