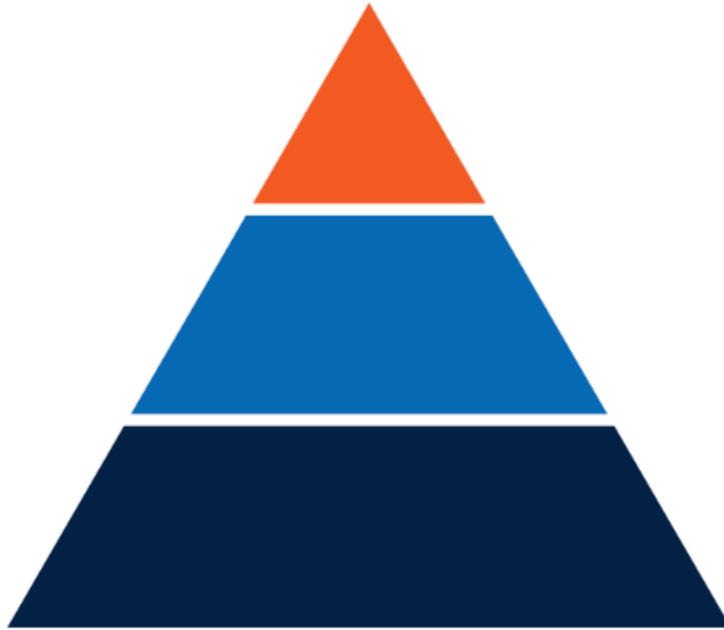


2026 SWAG ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**The Wellness Blueprint:
Solutions Across Maslow's Hierarchy Pyramid**



**Friday, March 6
8:15 AM to 4:30 PM
UT San Antonio Downtown Campus**

SCHEDULE

Buena Vista Building - Assembly Room

8:00 a.m. Registration, Networking, Coffee, and Visit Sponsor Tables

Buena Vista Building - Aula Canaria Auditorium

8:50 a.m. Elizabeth Cruz, LCSW – SWAG Conference Leadership

9:00 a.m. Dr. John Bricout – Department Chair, Social Work

9:15 a.m. Keynote Speaker – Dr. Leti Cavazos, DSW, LCSW

10:50 a.m. Dr. Johnelle Sparks – Professor, Sociology and Demography
Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Success and Administration

Durango Building – River Walk Room

11:00 a.m. Lunch

Buena Vista Building

12:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions

BV 1.318 Session 4 [Ethics and Burnout: Protecting Your License While Protecting Yourself](#)

BV 3.324 Session 9 [How Peer Support Programs Help Veterans Establish Connections in the Real World](#)

BV 3.318 Session 10 [In Dialogue and Connection with Survivors Healing from Gender-Based Violence](#)

BV 1.312 Session 14 [Strategic Onboarding: Building Trust, Setting Boundaries, and Networking for the New Social Work Professional.](#)

BV 3.328 Session 15 [Supervision as Self-Actualization: Expanding Purpose and Income Through Clinical Supervision](#)

1:15 p.m. Break/Transition

1:25 p.m. Breakout Sessions

BV 3.328 Session 1 [Addressing Maslow's Hierarchy in the 21st Century](#)

BV 1.318 Session 2 [Both And: Managing our wellness as we balance our personal and professional lives in uncertain times](#)

BV 1.312 Session 6 [Early Childhood and Family Mental Health – What is it and how it embodies our social work principles](#)

BV 3.324 Session 11 [Mental Health Benefits of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction \(MBSR\) on Immigrants experiencing Anxiety and Depression.](#)

BV 3.318 Session 12 [PrEP, Post-Exposure, and Partnership: A Social Work Approach to Comprehensive HIV Prevention](#)

2:40 p.m. Break/Transition

2:50 p.m. Breakout Sessions

- BV 3.328 Session 3 [Breaking the Ceiling: Guiding Clients Past Survival Toward Growth and Meaning](#)
- BV 3.318 Session 5 [Creating Space for Cultural Identity, Safety, and Connection in the Therapy Room](#)
- BV 1.318 Session 8 [Healing with Sound Bowls: Restoring Balance Through Vibrational Therapy](#)
- BV 3.324 Session 13 [SACRD \(San Antonio Community Resource Directory\) Resources from the Womb and every need in-between.](#)

4:05 p.m. Break/Transition

Buena Vista Building – Aula Canaria Auditorium

4:15 p.m. Closing Remarks

A NOTE FROM SWAG

On behalf of the entire planning team, thank you for joining us at this year's conference. Your presence, engagement, and dedication to the field of social work are what make this gathering so meaningful year after year. This conference would not be possible without the steadfast support and visionary guidance of the SWAG leadership. Their commitment ensures that we continue creating spaces where social workers can connect, learn, and strengthen the impact we have on our San Antonio community.

Serving on the conference leadership committee is both rewarding and deeply impactful. Each member plays a vital role in shaping an event that uplifts, educates, and energizes our local social work community. The work we do together directly contributes to the growth, collaboration, and resilience of professionals who dedicate their lives to the healing and emotional well-being of others. If you are interested in joining the committee or would like more information, please email swag@utsa.edu.

Thank you again for your participation, your heart for service, and your ongoing commitment to our field. We are grateful for you, and we look forward to continuing this important work together.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS!

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2025-2026 SWAG SCHOLAR

Proceeds from this conference benefit the SWAG Annual MSW Scholarship. Meet our 2025-2026 scholarship recipient [Eliana Carols '20, '25](#).

Keynote Presentation: *From Foundation to Fulfillment: A Pyramid Approach to Leadership and Growth*

Dr. Leti Villagran Cavazos, LCSW-S '12



Dr. Leti Cavazos, LCSW-S, is a distinguished leader in the field of social work, renowned for her multifaceted expertise and extensive experience. As the Founder and CEO of the Cannenta Center for Healing and Empowerment, she has played a pivotal role in fostering healing and empowerment within the Hispanic community. Dr. Leti's dedication to social work is further evidenced by her establishment of the Cannenta Foundation, which aims to provide crucial support to vulnerable populations while overcoming financial and language barriers.

With academic credentials, including a Master of Social Work from The University of Texas at San Antonio and a Doctor of Social Work with a specialization in Clinical Practice and Leadership from The University of Tennessee, Dr. Leti has honed her skills as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker Supervisor (LCSW-S). Her expertise in trauma therapy is underscored by advanced training and a research study on male victims of domestic violence experiencing homelessness, showcasing her commitment to addressing the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities.

Dr. Leti's significant contributions to the field have garnered widespread recognition, including being named one of Social Work Today's Top 10 Dedicated and Deserving Social Workers in 2020. Moreover, her leadership at the Cannenta Center led to the prestigious 2023 Emerging Business Award from the Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, affirming the center's exceptional contributions. In 2024, she herself was honored with the Leader in Diversity Award by the Dallas Business Journal, highlighting her steadfast commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion.

Beyond accolades, Dr. Leti's impact is evidenced by her involvement in establishing Texas's first male domestic violence shelter and her innovative approaches to addressing social issues. Her work has been featured in local publications, a testament to her profound influence on communities. Dr. Leti Cavazos is an exemplary social work figure whose unwavering dedication, expertise in trauma therapy, and innovative solutions have positively transformed countless lives and earned her widespread acclaim and respect in the field.

Session 1: Addressing Maslow's Hierarchy in the 21st Century

The sweeping changes across nearly every level of Maslow's Hierarchy will both touch social workers as people and demand their attention as professionals. This session will examine some global current and future trends, bring them home to San Antonio / Texas, and then discuss some important ways social workers need to both prepare for and intervene in these trends to aid self and society.

Presenter: Dr. Anthony Cox



COL Cox started his Army career in 1983 as an enlisted cook in the USAR, then from 1985 to 1990 as a field artillery officer in the USAR and GA-ARNG. Since joining the active Army in 1990 as a Social Work officer, COL Cox has had a wide variety of behavioral health (BH) assignments and experiences, including direct patient care, research, automation, operations, policy, prevention, epidemiology, and leadership. He has served on a variety of panels and work groups to include the prevention/intervention response team to the Pentagon following 9/11, the EPICON to Fort Bragg to explore the causes of the murder suicides occurring in the summer of 2002, the first two Mental Health Advisory Teams

to Iraq in 2003 and 2004, the team developing the Deployment Cycle Support Program, the WRAIR Land Combat Study group, the inaugural interdepartmental "Integrated Mental Health Strategy" to improve the BH systems of care in both DoD and the VA, as the XO to the BH response team for the 2009 Fort Hood shooting as well as the EPICON to Fort Carson to evaluate the murders taking place there. For 16 months during the U.S. "surge" in Iraq (2006-2008), COL Cox served as the chief of behavioral health for detainee operations - responsible for the behavioral health care of nearly 28,000 detainees, 10,000 detention facility personnel, and more than a thousand interrogators -- across Iraq. In 2012, COL Cox spent seven months in Washington, DC, as the Deputy Chief of Staff on the Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Behavioral Health, reviewing and recommending changes to the Integrated Disability Evaluation System. From 2013 to 2015, COL Cox served as the Army's FAP Manager in charge of the Family Advocacy (prevention and treatment of Family Maltreatment) and Exceptional Family Member Programs (caring for challenged Family members), and provided Army oversight of the Military Family Life Counseling (MFLC) program. From 2015 to his retirement in October 2017, COL Cox led the Department of Behavioral Health Sciences at the AMEDD Center & School, where he oversaw the training of military and civilian behavioral health providers and specialist personnel in counseling, therapy, FAP, substance Abuse, COSC, PTSD, and resiliency building subjects. Since retiring, COL (Retired) Cox is focusing on his favorite jobs: treating child/adolescent BH patients and their families, editing manuscripts for Military Medicine, the US military's premier journal, serving on the board of the Texas state chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, serving his church as a Family Services missionary and an ordinance worker at the LDS San Antonio Temple, and spending time with his wife (Kristine) of 40 years. They are the parents of five grown children – two of whom are "differently abled" -- and grandparents of two.

Session 2: Both And: Managing Our Wellness as We Balance Our Personal and Professional Lives in Uncertain Times

The personal and professional balance we maintain as social workers can be very taxing, particularly in a climate that is rapidly changing, uncertain, and anxiety-provoking. Recently, it is not uncommon to say to yourself or hear a colleague say, "What's wrong with me?" In reality, this internal conflict can be an indicator to spend some time recognizing how we are implementing our own wellness plan. This balance may feel like walking a tightrope as we hear the stories from the clients we serve while we are also taking in similar information and managing how this is affecting us, which in turn can affect our reactions to clients. The goal of this presentation is to support the development and/or review of what a wellness plan needs to contain for improved client engagement.

Presenter: Ms. Nancy Tamburo-Treviño '90



Nancy Tamburo-Treviño has been practicing the art of helping others heal for over 25 years. A graduate of The University of Texas at San Antonio with a Master of Arts in Educational Psychology and Simmons College with a Master's in Social Work, she holds licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor in the state of Texas. She has worked with non-profits in Texas, New York, and California, focusing on helping those suffering from substance use disorders as well as a multitude of other stressful life situations. She has experience working with

civilian personnel, within a major behavioral health insurance company, and youth organizations focusing on prevention strategies deterring substance use. She has expertise in facilitating and co-directing women's and youth spiritual retreats. Her most recent work experience is serving clients connected to felony drug court, providing integrated treatment services.

She is certified in Eye-Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy, believing in the healing power of the brain and creating an environment where clients can begin their healing journeys. She is a clinical member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and a current member with the National Association of Social Workers, the EMDR International Association (EMDRIA), and NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals. She has facilitated staff trainings on use of self, trauma-informed care, presented at state and national conferences, and supervised Master-level students and Licensed Professional Counselor interns as they worked on their higher education degrees and state licensure.

Session 3: Breaking the Ceiling: Guiding Clients Past Survival Toward Growth and Meaning

Many clients survive more than they live. They stay anchored in what they learned early: fear, scarcity, vigilance, and the belief that a better life belongs to someone else. This session dismantles that ceiling. Using research on neuroplasticity, trauma adaptation, and Maslow's hierarchy, we examine why clients get stuck in survival mode and how to help them move toward growth, agency, and meaning. We explore how the brain encodes learned helplessness, why hope requires more than reassurance, and how clinicians can "sell" a better future with credibility and authenticity. Participants will learn specific interventions that interrupt survival-driven behaviors, build internal capacity, and expand a client's imagined future. This session blends evidence, storytelling, and practical tools to help clinicians elevate their work and ignite genuine transformation.

Presenter: Mr. Justin Sanderson



Justin Sanderson, MA, LPC-S, MBA, is the Chief Executive Officer of Stone River Recovery Center in San Antonio. He is a trauma-informed clinician with advanced training in EMDR and DBT, and his work blends neuroscience with existential psychology to help clients build lives grounded in meaning and personal agency. Justin leads multi-site behavioral health programs and has provided speeches and trainings across San Antonio for therapists, first responders, and executives. His teaching focuses on trauma, survival states, identity formation, and effective clinical strategies that support long-term recovery. He is

known for his clear frameworks, practical tools, and ability to translate complex psychological concepts into powerful learning experiences for frontline professionals.

Session 4: Ethics and Burnout: Protecting Your License While Protecting Yourself

Social workers face increasing clinical complexity, administrative burden, secondary trauma exposure, and workforce shortages. These stressors elevate risk for burnout, compassion fatigue, impaired judgment, and ethical violations—even among highly skilled and experienced professionals. Ethical practice is not only about client care, but also about maintaining clinician wellness, competence, and sustainability in the profession.

This presentation examines the ethical obligations outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics related to professional competence, impairment, self-monitoring, and client protection. Participants will learn to identify early warning signs of burnout and impairment, understand their ethical responsibilities when functioning is impacted, and implement concrete prevention and intervention strategies. The session will connect ethical practice to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs by emphasizing the foundational importance of clinician safety, stability, and wellness in delivering ethical, effective care.

Participants will leave with practical tools to protect their clients, their license, and their long-term ability to serve their communities.

Presenter: Ms. Vanessa Valles '08



Vanessa Valles, LCSW-S, is a group and private practice owner, Licensed Clinical Social Worker Supervisor, and mental health leader with over 15 years of experience providing clinical care, supervision, and organizational leadership. She specializes in trauma treatment, ethics, professional development, and workforce sustainability. Vanessa has extensive training in evidence-based trauma treatments including EMDR, Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Trauma-Focused CBT, and Written Exposure Therapy (WET).

She is passionate about mentoring clinicians, promoting ethical excellence, and supporting the long-term wellness and sustainability of the social work workforce. As a UTSA MSW graduate, Vanessa is honored to contribute to the professional development of fellow social workers and future professionals.

Session 5: Creating Space for Cultural Identity, Safety, and Connection in the Therapy Room

Culture shapes how individuals experience safety, belonging, identity, and resilience, yet in many therapeutic and educational settings, culture is treated as an enhancement rather than an essential human need. This session invites therapists to explore how cultural identity forms part of the *foundation* of well-being and how honoring culture in the therapy room strengthens every stage of a client's growth.

Using Maslow's Hierarchy as a familiar reference point, participants will learn how cultural belonging supports physiological regulation, emotional safety, self-worth, and self-actualization. The session includes experiential exercises, reflection prompts, and clinical applications designed to help providers create culturally affirming therapeutic environments where clients feel seen in their whole humanity.

Therapists will leave with an expanded framework for assessing cultural strengths, integrating cultural anchors into sessions, and supporting clients who experience cultural disconnection, identity conflict, or generational divides. This workshop is practical, reflective, and deeply grounding, offering strategies practitioners can use immediately in their work.

Presenter: Ms. Clara Magallanes



Clara Magallanes, M. Ed, LPC, NCC, EMDR Trained, CCTP, Certified Grief Educator, CLYL, IMG AutPlay Therapy Trained, Sand Therapy Trained (STFC) – WASTP, is a licensed professional counselor, bilingual psychotherapist, certified educator, author, and internationally trained medical doctor from Mexico. She holds a Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and a Master of Education in Administration, bringing more than twenty-five years of experience supporting children, adolescents, adults, and seniors through mental health, education, community leadership, and philanthropic service.

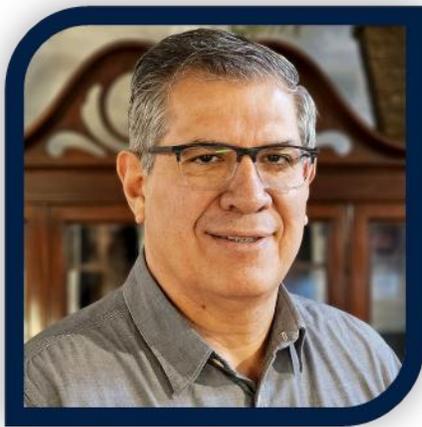
Clara is EMDR-trained, a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional, Certified Grief Educator, Certified Laughter Yoga Leader, and an AutPlay Therapy Trained provider. She also has specialized training in sand therapy (STFC, WASTP), play therapy, expressive arts, and integrative wellness approaches. Her therapeutic work is grounded in a client-centered, culturally affirming approach that honors each individual's lived experience.

Clara's work centers on the belief that culture is not an accessory to therapy; it is a source of grounding, strength, and healing. As an author and creator of therapeutic resources, she designs tools that help clinicians bring cultural belonging, emotional regulation, and meaningful connection into the therapy room. Through storytelling, clinical expertise, and experiential learning, Clara creates warm, reflective spaces that honor the whole person - mind, body, spirit, and culture - while offering practical strategies clinicians can apply immediately in their practice.

Session 6: Early Childhood and Family Mental Health – What Is It and How It Embodies Our Social Work Principles

This session will provide an overview of early childhood mental health (ECMH) and provide an alternative way of looking at mental health from a contextual, preventative, and early intervention perspective that emphasizes a relational/contextual approach in contrast to a traditional medical model. The full continuum of early childhood mental health will be presented with opportunities for participants to examine their current understanding of mental health/illness and compare and contrast an ECMH perspective, which will also integrate a culturally responsive approach.

Presenter: Mr. Fred B. Cárdenas



Fred is a lifelong educator, learner, social worker, and advocate for children and families, and those who provide services for them. He has a bachelor's and master's degree in social work, has worked in child/family mental health and education for over 35 years, and has managed a child and family mental health program at Family Service for the last 14 years, working closely with teachers, children, families, and other community partners. He is a proud grandpa and father, and is originally from Eagle Pass, Texas.

~~Session 7: Faith, Power, and Control: Addressing Spiritual Abuse in the Context of Domestic Violence~~ **SESSION CANCELLED**

Session 8: Healing with Sound Bowls: Restoring Balance Through Vibrational Therapy

Discover the transformative power of sound bowl healing in this interactive workshop designed to promote relaxation, emotional balance, and self-awareness. Participants will explore the science and art of vibrational therapy, learning how sound frequencies can help release tension, improve focus, and support emotional and physical well-being.

Presenter: Ms. Debbie Garcia



Debbie Garcia is a bilingual Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Texas. Debbie attained a Master of Arts degree (M.A.) in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Her therapeutic experiences include working with children, adults, military families, and university students. Debbie specializes in Sand Tray Therapy, Emotionally Focused Therapy, and Somatic Therapy. She also has experience in suicide prevention, family violence, crisis, and trauma.

Session 9: How Peer Support Program Helps Veterans Establish Connections in the Real World

Presenters will speak on the Bexar County Military & Veterans Peer Support Program and how it has helped build friendships and connections for Veterans post-discharge and those currently incarcerated.

Presenters: Mr. Rogelio Narvaez '22 and Ms. Alma Zuniga '17, '23

Mr. Rogelio Narvaez '22



Rogelio "Roger" Narvaez Jr. is a bilingual Licensed Master Social Worker with a master's degree in social work from The University of Texas at San Antonio. With over a decade of experience in the social services field, Roger has served in diverse roles across nonprofit community-based organizations, higher education advocacy, and local government.

He brings expertise in leadership, training, program and project management, and collaborative networking, all grounded in a client-centered, trauma-informed approach.

Passionate about helping individuals reach their highest potential,

Roger is committed to leveraging his skills and knowledge to foster growth and resilience within organizations and communities.

Ms. Alma Zuniga '17, '23



Alma Zuniga is a Licensed Master Social Worker and Texas Certified Guardian with a strong commitment to advocacy and community empowerment. She brings extensive experience as a public speaker, peer support specialist, and advocate, championing mental health awareness and equitable access to resources. Alma is also a talented artist, using creative expression as a tool for healing and connection.

Her work reflects a trauma-informed, client-centered approach, and she is passionate about fostering resilience and dignity for individuals navigating complex life challenges.

Through her leadership and dedication, Alma continues to inspire others to embrace wellness and empowerment in both personal and professional spaces.

Session 10: *In Dialogue and Connection with Survivors Healing from Gender-Based Violence*

This session focuses on using the practices of accompaniment and the relational-cultural model in work with survivors of gender-based violence (GBV; for example, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, or coercion), with the goal of enhancing capacities for trust and empowerment, which are often undermined through GBV. These approaches draw on the power of relationships between professionals/advocates and survivors characterized by mutuality, empathy, safety, power-sharing, consideration of context, and intentional privilege-leveraging to enable vulnerability and authenticity in the relationship, which ultimately fosters growth towards connection and wellbeing. These approaches also involve mutual learning and growth in the relationships between professionals/advocates and survivors (and recognize that these identities can co-exist). In this interactive session, we explore these concepts and build on them by discussing the importance of critical self-reflection and self-compassion while accompanying survivors in their relational healing.

Presenters: Dr. Amy Chanmugam, Ms. Leslie Schultz, and Mr. Derek Plantenga

Dr. Amy Chanmugam



Amy Chanmugam, PhD, LCSW, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work at UT San Antonio, where she has been a faculty member since 2009. Dr.

Chanmugam's research interests, which focus on interpersonal violence, developed through her prior social work practice with incarcerated youth, in schools (urban and rural), and in mental health (private practice and community agencies, including as a clinical supervisor for a women's counseling center). Research projects and community collaborations in the last decade

focused on child/teen exposure to adult intimate partner violence, safety planning, barriers to mental health service access, coping and resilience, recovery from sex trafficking, foster care, and family interventions and support services (especially shelter- and school-based or facilitated). Dr. Chanmugam's teaching has been honored with several awards, and in 2025, she was recognized as the NASW Alamo Area Social Worker of the Year.

Ms. Leslie D. Schultz



Leslie D. Schultz, MS, LPC, is the Director of Clinical Services at Family Violence Prevention Services (FVPS), where she has worked since 2010. Leslie has been providing clinical services both to survivors of domestic violence at the FVPS nonresidential office and to individuals experiencing homelessness (often as a result of domestic abuse) at Haven for Hope. Leslie is committed to a compassionate relational approach with her clients, seeking to partner with clients in their identified areas of desired change, healing, recovery, and

empowerment. In addition, Leslie supervises the undergraduate and graduate internship program with FVPS. Leslie has served as an expert witness for the District Attorney’s Office and the City of San Antonio. Leslie provides numerous training sessions and presentations to community groups and institutions. For the past 4 years, Leslie has held a seat on the Homeless Response System Advisory Committee that operates in alignment with the priorities of the Continuum of Care (CoC) Board of Directors and the community’s Homeless Strategic Plan, and she also serves as the Community Lead of the Domestic Violence Subcommittee. Leslie is passionate about her life’s purpose and finds it a privilege to work alongside her clients and community for the greater good.

Mr. Derek Plantenga



Derek Plantenga is currently the founding Program Director of the University of Texas at San Antonio Bachelor of Social Work Program. He previously served with the UT San Antonio MSW Program in the roles of Graduate Advisor of Record and Director of Field Education. Prior to working with UTSA, Derek worked in relief and social development with Food for the Hungry, an NGO in Bolivia, South America. Derek has also worked in San Antonio as a campus-based social worker and with a San Antonio non-profit doing behavioral health work with children and adolescents. Consistent through each of these

positions, Derek maintained a focus on holistic, transformative work with vulnerable populations—

particularly with migrant and immigrant populations. Derek graduated from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI, with a BA in Spanish and a BSW in Social Work. He graduated from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, TX, with a Master of Social Work, and he went on to attain clinical licensure as an LCSW.

Session 11: Mental Health Benefits of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) on Immigrants Experiencing Anxiety and Depression

Immigrants often face unique stressors related to acculturation, discrimination, social isolation, and the challenges of adapting to new environments—all of which can contribute to depression and anxiety. This session explores the transformative potential of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) as a holistic, evidence-based approach to improving mental health and overall well-being among immigrant populations. Grounded in Jon Kabat-Zinn’s mindfulness framework, this presentation integrates psychological theory, cultural responsiveness, and practical strategies for enhancing emotional resilience.

Participants will gain insight into how mindfulness practices, such as meditation, body awareness, and cognitive reframing, can reduce stress, foster self-compassion, and strengthen their coping mechanisms. By aligning the intervention with immigrants' lived experiences and cultural strengths, the session highlights how MBSR can be a powerful tool for both clinical practice and community-based wellness programs.

Presenter: Ms. Faith Mamombe



Faith Comfort Mamombe, MSW, LCSW-S, is a clinical social worker, owner of Mopani Mental Health Services, and Ph.D. candidate at Simmons University. Her research focuses on immigrant mental health, trauma-informed care, and culturally responsive interventions. With extensive experience providing therapy to diverse populations, she integrates mindfulness-based approaches and narrative practice in her clinical work. Her doctoral research explores how cultural beliefs and systemic barriers shape mental health access among Black African immigrants in the United States.

Session 12: PrEP, Post-Exposure, and Partnership: A Social Work Approach to Comprehensive HIV Prevention

Comprehensive HIV prevention is a critical area for social work practice, moving beyond simple education to address the complex ethical, behavioral, and structural barriers to care. This presentation will detail the San Antonio AIDS Foundation's (SAAF) model for community-based prevention, focusing on the essential roles of PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) and PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis). The emphasis will be on the Partnership component: how community health workers build trust, conduct sensitive risk assessments, overcome stigma, and ensure adherence by providing supportive, non-judgmental case management. We will discuss the challenge of access and engagement, as it relates to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and provide tangible examples of social work intervention that successfully connect vulnerable individuals to life-saving prevention resources within the context of their own complex realities.

Presenters: Miss Frances Bowers '25 and Mr. Arnold Benavidez

Miss Frances Bowers '25



Frances Bowers holds a Master's in Health, Community, and Policy from the University of Texas at San Antonio. She works as an HIV Test Counselor at the San Antonio AIDS Foundation, providing HIV/STI testing and counseling both in-office and through community outreach. Frances also serves as Co-Chair of the San Antonio HIV Prevention Task Force, where she partners with local organizations and community leaders to identify and address barriers to HIV prevention and care.

Mr. Arnold Benavidez



Arnold Benavidez is a PrEP Navigator at the San Antonio AIDS Foundation (SAAF), where he plays a key role in guiding clients through the process of starting and maintaining PrEP for HIV prevention. With five years of experience in the field of HIV prevention, Arnold brings dedication, compassion, and a deep understanding of the importance of accessible and judgment-free healthcare.

Session 13: SACRD (San Antonio Community Resource Directory): Resources from the Womb and Every Need In-Between

Join us for an interactive demonstration of SACRD.org's features and discover how to maximize the platform's benefits for yourself and those you assist. Anonymously search over 11,500 resources in and around Bexar County. Search by category, zip code, search box, or use one of the portals to filter through and find what you need. If your daily work involves connecting and sustaining relationships, learn more about SACRD PRO, designed for individuals who routinely help others find resources. SACRD PRO offers additional tools to enhance your productivity and effectiveness. Participants will be offered a 30-day FREE trial of SACRD PRO, a link to receive FREE SACRD Pocket Cards, and an opportunity to schedule a FREE virtual or in-person SACRD training for your team.

Presenter: Ms. Alice I. Alvarez



Alice leverages her talents, experience, skills, education, and networks to develop and cultivate innovative ideas. She collaborates with local, state, and national leaders to identify core issues and learn about ongoing efforts on similar matters. Her expertise in building collaborations has led to presentations both locally and nationally. Currently, Alice serves as the Community Engagement Specialist with the San Antonio Community Resource Directory (SACRD). In this role, she facilitates training sessions and coordinates events. She actively participates

in numerous area community advisory committees that promote collaboration for systems change. She engages with grassroots leaders to organize programs that utilize community assets, expand capacity, and build sustainability. Alice was born and raised in San Antonio, continuing to live in the same house she grew up in. She holds a BA in Organizational Management and an MA in Education/Teacher Leadership. As a lifelong learner, creative thinker, trained facilitator, and servant leader, Alice continues to enrich her community. In her free time, she enjoys painting.

Session 14: Strategic Onboarding: Building Trust, Setting Boundaries, and Networking for the New Social Work Professional

Entering a new professional role is a critical period for establishing psychological safety, building your professional network, and setting the stage for long-term well-being. This session introduces a trauma-informed and strengths-based framework for the new social work professional's first 90 days. Participants will learn how to engage in gentle, authentic networking, communicate clearly with colleagues, and set boundaries that protect against burnout. The content is framed around Maslow's Hierarchy (Safety, Belonging, Esteem) and is specifically designed to build the foundational habits necessary for future ethical leadership and supervision in the social work field.

Presenter: Ms. Eva Fernandez '95



Eva M. Fernandez, LMSW, is a Trauma-Informed Social Worker and Senior Career Consultant at UT San Antonio. She holds a Master of Social Work MSW, is a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach, and is trained in Adult Mental Health First Aid and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. Her experience spans higher education, nonprofits, entrepreneurship, and mental health. She is the Founder and CEO of Compassionate Consulting, co-founder of Networking for Your Cause, and was a CBCST Grief Facilitator. Her nontraditional social work path is

explored in her forthcoming book, *Compassionate Disruptor: A Latina's Nontraditional Social Work Path*.

Session 15: Supervision as Self-Actualization: Expanding Purpose and Income Through Clinical Supervision

This interactive session explores how Licensed Clinical Social Workers can integrate clinical supervision into their professional path as both a revenue stream and a pathway toward self-actualization within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Participants will examine how providing supervision not only meets practical needs (income, professional development) but also fulfills higher-order needs such as purpose, creativity, and legacy.

Presenter: Dr. Ashley Stephens



Ashley Stephens is a Board Certified Licensed Clinical Social Work Supervisor, licensed in nine states and supervising associate-level social workers in five. She completed her doctoral degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Grand Canyon University in 2023. She earned her master's in social work from East Tennessee State University and her bachelor's in psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

As a therapist, Ashley has worked with severe and persistent mental illness, substance abuse, trauma, and homelessness, and has trained in a variety of therapeutic styles. The bulk of her training and experience was with Veterans Affairs, working with combat Veterans. As a consultant and trainer, Ashley has taught courses in cultural awareness and competency, mindfulness, brain injury, and leadership development. She has coached executive leaders, managers, and front-line employees while providing opportunities for individuals to grow in the areas of organizational development, team building, executive development, and training.

As a supervisor, Ashley's main goal is to train the next generation of therapists AND leaders, with a particular focus and emphasis on building a life that serves them. The social work profession often has a reputation for being hard to survive and thrive. Ashley's goal is to help create clinical social workers who are prepared for the realities of the field and ready to take on growing their own practices into thriving businesses.



Introducing a new recipient for the

SOCIAL WORK ALUMNI GROUP SCHOLARSHIP

Eliana Carlos '20,'25

San Antonio, Texas

Master of Social Work

Eliana Carlos is a graduate student at UT San Antonio, pursuing her Master of Social Work through the College for Health, Community and Policy. A proud first-generation college student, Eliana brings both academic excellence and lived experience to her mission of serving vulnerable populations. With a near-perfect GPA and membership in the Phi Alpha Honor Society, she exemplifies dedication to both scholarship and service.

Eliana's passion for social work was shaped by personal experiences and her practicum at Bexar County PEARLS and EAGLES, where she worked directly with foster youth aging out of the system. These experiences inspired her to shift her career goals from clinical therapy to advocacy and policy reform. Upon graduation, she plans to earn her LMSW and focus on systemic change within the child welfare system, ensuring access to stable housing, education, and mental health support for youth transitioning out of care.

Beyond her academic pursuits, Eliana is a committed community volunteer and entrepreneur. She founded Choco Fresitas and More LLC, a small business specializing in chocolate-covered strawberries, through which she supported organizations like Sueños Sin Fronteras, Youth Center of Texas, and Spread Smiles Club. She also volunteers annually with the American Heart Association Heart Walk, promoting heart health awareness and fundraising.

Eliana's journey is deeply rooted in empathy, resilience, and a desire to uplift others. Her commitment to advocacy is personal, inspired by her cousin's experience in the foster care system and reinforced by her hands-on work in the field. Through her education, leadership, and service, Eliana is preparing to make a lasting impact in the lives of those who need it most.



"I am profoundly grateful to be the recipient of the Social Work Alumni Group Annual Scholarship. Your generous support is instrumental in my journey towards becoming a dedicated and impactful social worker. This scholarship not only alleviates the financial burden of my education but also empowers me to focus entirely on my studies and professional development.

Throughout my academic career, I have been dedicated to supporting underserved populations, including foster youth aging out of the system. Your generosity allows me to continue this important work and explore new opportunities within the field of social work. Thank you for investing in my education and future. Your support not only impacts my life but also the lives of those I will serve in my career. I am honored to carry forward the legacy of the Social Work Alumni Group Annual Scholarship to make a positive difference in my community."