

NATIONAL  
**Family Support**  
NETWORK



**OCTOBER 22-23, 2025**  
**FAMILY SUPPORT SUMMIT**  
*Every Family Thrives*

# 2025 Family Support Summit

The Fall 2025 Family Support Summit spotlights three timely priorities drawn from NFSN member and training feedback:

## Father Engagement • Parent Leadership • Program Sustainability

Program sustainability is essential in 2025 to keep core programming strong. It is woven throughout father engagement and parent leadership, showing how elevating family voice and strengthening community partnerships drive long-term impact.

Sessions equip participants with practical sustainability strategies, including blending and braiding funding, engaging the private sector, grant writing, and positioning programs to remain strong and effective into the future.

Across two days, family support and strengthening professionals from across the country come together for keynotes, interactive workshops, and thought-provoking panels. Participants learn from national leaders and peer practitioners, deepen practice, and leave better prepared to support families through community-centered, culturally grounded, and sustainable approaches.

The Family Support Summit is part of a national movement to ensure every family thrives. NFSN connects leaders, lifts parent and community voices, and advances systems change, rooted in the strengths of families and communities nationwide.



# Partners in Impact

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With gratitude to our sponsors, partners, members, presenters, panelists, moderators, hosts, event team, and participants.

Your involvement elevates the Family Support Summit experience and turns insights into action so every family thrives.



# Agenda:

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

10:30am ET:

**Zoom Meeting Room Opens • Check-In & Networking**

11:00 - 11:15am ET

**Welcome**

11:15 -11:45am ET

**Opening Plenary Session**

**Beyond Engagement: Building Authentic Relationships with Fathers**

*Presenter: Rob Harris (Thrive Center for Children, Families, and Communities at Georgetown University)*

11:45am-12:00pm ET: **BREAK**

12:00-1:00pm ET

**Session One: Welcoming Fathers as Leaders: Shifting Culture, Breaking Barriers**

*Presenters: Neil Tift, Chris Brown, Dr. James Rodriguez, Michael Finlay*

1:00-1:15pm ET: **BREAK**

1:15-2:00pm ET

**Session Two: Blending and Braiding: Pathways to Sustainability**

*Presenter: Christine Stoner-Mertz*

2:00-2:45pm ET

**Session Three: Community Opportunity Map: Using Data to Drive Change**

*Presenters: Lucas Gerber, Tecoria Jones*

2:45- 3:15pm ET : **BREAK**

3:15- 4:00pm ET

**Session Four: From Data to Action, Hands-On Grant Writing & Program Planning**

- *Breakout Room 1: Grant Writing for Impact*
- *Breakout Room 2: Planning for Stronger Communities*

*Presenter: Lucas Gerber, Tecoria Jones*

4:00- 4:30pm ET

**Session Five: Business Development for Stronger Communities**

*Presenter: Brenda McChesney*

# Agenda:

Thursday, October 23, 2025

10:30am ET

**Zoom Meeting Room Opens • Check-In & Networking**

11:00am-12:00pm ET

**Session Six: Parent & Family Leadership in Practice: Voices from the Field**

*Presenters: Yazmil Soriano, Terrance Davis, Jennifer Johnson-Dungey, Hilary Espinosa-Santucci, and Shaumbay Fuller*

12:00-1:00pm ET

**Session Seven: Parent Leadership in Action in LatinX & Indigenous Communities: Grounded, Connected, Sustainable**

*Moderator: Monica Beltran*

*Panelists: Elayna Fernandez, Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto, Arthur Argomaniz, Jolyana Begay-Kroupa*

1:00-1:15pm ET: BREAK

1:15-2:15pm ET

**Session Eight: Indigenous Leadership Insights for Stronger Families**

*Presenter: Barb Fabre*

2:15-2:45pm ET: BREAK

2:45-4:00pm ET

**Closing Keynote Session: Parents Leading Change: Voices that Shape Systems**

*Presenter: Valerie Frost*

4:00-4:30pm ET

**Summit Close**

*Hosts: Brenda McChesney, Julie Matusick*

## Time Zone Note

All times are shown in Eastern Time [ET].

Need a quick conversion? Here are equivalents for U.S. time zones.

2:30 pm ET equals:

- 1:30 pm CT
- 12:30 pm MT
- 11:30 am PT
- 10:30 am AKT
- 8:30 am HT

# Sessions & Plenary

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

11:15am-11:45am ET

## Opening Plenary Session

### **Beyond Engagement: Building Authentic Relationships with Fathers**

Presenter: *Robert Harris*

This keynote will spotlight the transformative role of fathers in strengthening families and communities. National leader Rob Harris, a longtime advocate and practitioner with extensive experience advancing fatherhood initiatives nationwide, will share research, personal stories, and strategies that move the field beyond “father engagement” toward building authentic, sustaining relationships with fathers. The session will highlight the current state of father involvement across the country, the ways language shapes this work, and how fathers’ voices, leadership, and lived experiences drive stronger family and community outcomes. Participants will also explore the policies, practices, and relational strategies that best sustain fatherhood programs and support fathers’ well-being over the long term.

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12:00-1:00pm ET

## **Session One: Fathers as Leaders: Shifting Culture, Breaking Barriers**

Presenters: *Neil Tift, Chris Brown, Michael Finlay, Malcolm Redhair*

Moderator: Dr. James Rodriguez

This interactive panel will showcase innovative approaches to fatherhood engagement from practitioners and fathers themselves. Participants will hear real-world strategies, lessons learned, and the lasting impact of welcoming fathers as leaders in family support. The discussion will highlight how programs have shifted culture and practice to value fathers, the barriers they’ve faced and overcome, and the ways father engagement strengthens both families and the long-term sustainability of support programs.

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12:00-1:00pm ET

## **Session Two: Blending and Braiding: Pathways to Sustainability**

Presenter: *Christine Stoner-Mertz*

Explore proven strategies for building strong, sustainable programs. This session will highlight approaches to blending and braiding federal funding streams, strengthening partnerships, and positioning programs for long-term impact.

# Sessions & Plenary

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

2:00-2:45pm ET

## **Session Three: Community Opportunity Map: Using Data to Drive Change**

*Presenters: Lucas Gerber, Tecoria Jones*

Learn how the Casey Family Programs Community Opportunity Map (COM) can guide decision-making, highlight community strengths, and identify areas for growth. This data tool allows anyone to find child and family well-being data for neighborhoods across the nation. Participants will see how organizations, including Family Resource Centers like Families Forward Virginia's network, are using COM for strategic planning, grant writing, and community engagement.

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3:15- 4:00pm ET

## **Session Four: From Data to Action, Hands-On Grant Writing & Program Planning**

- *Breakout 1: Grantwriting Session*
- *Breakout 2: Program Planning Session*

*Presenters: Lucas Gerber, Tecoria Jones*

*Take a deeper dive into the Casey Family Programs Community Opportunity Map (COM) and apply insights directly to your work. Participants will choose between two hands-on workshops: one focused on using COM for data-driven grantwriting to strengthen Family Resource Center operations, and the other on applying COM for program planning and community engagement. Both breakouts will equip participants with practical tools to advance sustainability and impact.*

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4:00- 4:30pm ET

## **Session Five: Business Development for Stronger Communities**

*Presenter: Brenda McChesney*

*The Business of Family Support: Engaging the Private Sector explores how Family Resource Centers (FRCs) and family support organizations can authentically partner with businesses to strengthen families, stabilize communities, and fuel economic growth. The presentation highlights national trends, insights from listening sessions with business leaders, and practical win-win strategies. At its core, it reframes ROI, not just as Return on Investment, but as a strategy to achieve Resilience, Opportunity, and Impact.*

# Sessions & Plenary

Thursday, October 23, 2025

11:00am-12:00pm ET

## Session Six: Parent & Family Leadership in Practice: Voices from the Field

Presenters: Jennifer Johnson-Dungey, Yazmil Soriano, Terrance Davis, Hilary Espinosa-Santucci, Shaumbay Fuller

Parents and families will take center stage in this closing panel, sharing the lived experiences that shape and define leadership in their communities. Participants will hear directly from a diverse array of voices — including parents, grandparents, fathers, and kinship caregivers — about what leadership looks like in action. The conversation will spotlight practices that build trust, foster shared power, and sustain thriving Parent Advisory Committees. Together, panelists will lift up the “secret sauce” of authentic outreach and engagement.

12:00-1:00pm ET

## Session Seven: Parent Leadership in Action in LatinX and Indigenous Communities: Grounded, Connected, Sustainable

Presenters: Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto, Elayna Fernandez, Arthur Argomaniz, Jolyana Begay-Kroupa, Monica Beltran

This panel will feature Elayna Fernandez, Arthur Argomaniz, Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto, Jolyana Begay-Kroupa, and Monica Beltran sharing culturally grounded approaches to parent engagement and leadership within LatinX and Indigenous communities.

- Elayna Fernandez (*The Positive Mom*), an award-winning storyteller and advocate, brings her expertise in elevating parent voice and empowering families to lead change.
- Arthur Argomaniz (*Center for the Study of Social Policy*), a national trainer and advocate, will share his experience supporting fathers and families through programs that center culture and belonging.
- Jolyana Begay-Kroupa (*Phoenix Indian Center*) will highlight how the *Parenting in Two Worlds* program supports Native and LatinX families in urban communities through culturally responsive parenting education.
- Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto (*Blueprint for Change, Hawai'i 'Ohana Support Network*) brings a perspective on how culturally grounded, Native Hawaiian practices and the *Neighborhood Places* model elevate parent voice and leadership across communities.
- Monica Beltran (*Escuela Verde*), Parent Leader and Educator, will moderate the session and share a parent perspective.

Together, they will lift up how parents define leadership in their own contexts, highlight outreach strategies that have proven most successful, and discuss how programs can address systemic barriers while honoring culture and language. Participants will see how these approaches strengthen both families and long-term sustainability.



# Sessions & Plenary

Thursday, October 23, 2025

1:15-2:15pm ET

## Session Eight: Indigenous Leadership Insights for Stronger Families

Presenter: Barb Fabre

Join Barb Fabre of All Nations Rise to explore how Indigenous values and leadership can strengthen families and inform the broader family support field. Drawing on her national work and lived community experience, Barb will highlight strategies for embedding equity, honoring culture, and centering family voice. Participants will gain practical insights to apply in their own programs and systems, ensuring all families have the opportunity to thrive.

2:45-4:00pm ET

## Closing Keynote Session: Parents Leading Change: Voices that Shape Systems

Presenter: Valerie Frost

Valerie Frost, a nationally recognized advocate and storyteller, will share how elevating parent and family voice transforms programs and systems. Through powerful stories and lived experience, she will highlight why authentic relationships matter, how storytelling drives sustainable change, and how one caring connection can shape generations.

**Elevate Engagement. Advance Sustainability.  
Ensure Every Family Thrives.**



# Voices of the Summit



**Arthur Argomaniz**  
*Center for the Study of  
Social Policy*



**Barbara Fabre**  
*Indigenous Visioning/  
All Nations Rise*



**Brenda McChesney**  
*National Family Support  
Network*



**Christine Stoner-Mertz**



**Elayna Fernandez**  
*Transformational  
Storytelling University*



**Hilary Epinosa-Santucci**  
*Newtown Family Center*



# Voices of the Summit



**James C. Rodriguez**  
*Fathers and Families  
Coalition of America*



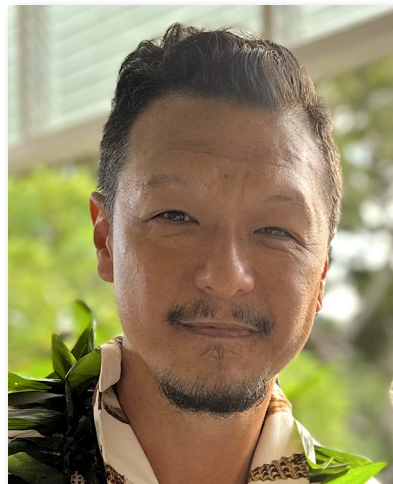
**Jennifer Johnson-Dungey**  
*National Family Support  
Network*



**Jolyana Begay-Kroupa**  
*Phoenix Indian Center*



**Julie Matusick**  
*National Family Support  
Network*



**Kukunaokalā Yoshimoto**  
*Blueprint for Change &  
The Hawai'i 'Ohana  
Support Network*



**Lucas Gerber**  
*Casey Family Programs*

# Voices of the Summit



**Malcolm Redhair**  
**Native American  
Fatherhood and  
Families Association**



**Michael Finlay**  
**This is Fatherhood, LLC**



**Monica Beltran**



**Neil Tift**  
**Native American  
Fatherhood & Families  
Association**



**Robert Harris**  
**Georgetown University,  
Thrive Center for  
Children, Family, and  
Communities**



**Robyn Shemwell**  
**National Family Support  
Network**



# Voices of the Summit



**Shaumbay Fuller**



**Tecoria Jones**  
*Casey Family Programs*



**Terrance Davis**  
*Casey Family Programs*



**Valerie Frost**  
*Your Case Plan*



**Yazmil Soriano**



# Ideas into Action

## 3 Takeaways

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## 2 Tools to Try

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## 1 First Step and Date

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## Who I Will Share With

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## Success Looks Like...

# Notes

