



Los Angeles  
Child Guidance  
Clinic

# in touch



## Family Advocates

### Partners Linking Families with Success

Family Advocates at the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic go where the families are—in the home or in the community—armed with the Clinic’s special brand of multidisciplinary care.

As a result, a Family Advocate’s “office” may be a park, school, laundromat, coffee shop, mall or other community setting. “I meet with clients and their families wherever they are most comfortable and can open up,” says Liliانا Alamillo of the Life Learning Program, which serves transition-age youth from 16 to 25 years old.

Family Advocates like Alamillo can be found throughout the Clinic, in every division, including the Access Center, Early Intervention and Community Wellness Division, Outpatient Services, Intensive Services, Full Service Partnerships and more. Their job title perfectly encapsulates what they do, as they bring case management and

rehabilitative services to children, teens, young adults, and their caregivers. “The Family Advocate role is essential,” says Tiffany T. Rodriguez, LMFT, Vice



Family Advocates Joanna Mares, left, and Liliانا Alamillo

President of Programs.

These Bachelor-level professionals collaborate with therapists and other staff members to enrich the services the Clinic offers. “We don’t want families to experience fragmented, compartmentalized services,” says Rodriguez. “In our team model, everyone talks to each other. We work together to ensure that each client and family has the coping skills and support they need.”

For a Family Advocate, a “typical” work day is anything but. The rule: expect the unexpected.

“We wear a lot of hats—there’s never a ‘regular day’ in this position,” says Family Advocate Joanna Mares, who works with children between ages 4-18, and their families. “Our clients’ priorities are always changing.”

In their case management role, Family Advocates help families navigate the network of available social services, housing and health care solutions. That may mean identifying a nearby food bank, low-cost medical clinic, or

Officers

Shelly Holmes  
Chairperson  
Rogers Finn Partners

Wayne Moore  
Chairperson-Elect and Treasurer  
Southern California Association  
of Governments, rtd.

Carlos Perez  
Vice Chairperson and Secretary  
Immediate Past Chairperson  
Deloitte & Touche, LLP, rtd.

Elizabeth W. Pfromm, M.S., MPA  
President/CEO  
Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic

Directors

Scott Bice, Esq.  
Governance and Nominating Committee  
Chairperson  
USC Gould School of Law

Robert S. Brachman  
Wilshire Insurance Agency

Chris Cruttenden  
NetChemistry

Martha C. de la Torre  
El Clasificado

Eugene Friedlander  
Ken Ruby Construction Company

David L. Hirsch, Esq.  
Advancement Committee Chairperson  
MASCO Corporation, rtd.

Quinton C. James, M.D.  
Los Angeles Unified School District, rtd.

Gail Kennard  
Kennard Design Group

Robin Moody  
Tom Moody, Inc.

Robert J. Neary  
Clinical Op. & Tech. Committee Chairperson  
TechGnosis, Inc.

Elizabeth Tabita  
The California Endowment

Thomas F. Trott, M.D., Ph.D.  
A Medical Corporation

Gary Williams  
Audit Committee Chairperson  
Loyola Law School

Virginia M. Wilson  
TIAA-CREF

## Message From the Board Chairperson



Shelly Holmes,  
Board Chairperson

In this issue of *In Touch*, you will read about two important efforts at the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic —the work of our front-line Family Advocates, who are increasing access for families to mental health services and essential resources, and our focus on boys and young men of color.

You'll also learn about our ongoing commitment to integrate mental and physical health, including with community walks and health fairs.

The Clinic's innovative new program, Seeking Safety, offers positive coping strategies to at-risk adolescents. However, we've found that this evidence-based practice connects in particular with one of our highest-needs groups: African American and Latino male youth.

President Obama recently reminded us of the critical importance of reaching out to these young men. "In troubled neighborhoods all across the country, many of them heavily African American, too few of our citizens have role models to guide them," he said. "You've got to be engaged in the barbershops, on the basketball court . . . spend time and energy and presence to give people opportunities and a chance."

One of our longstanding community partners, The California Endowment, has also made the health and well-being of this population a top priority. In addition, the California State Assembly has formed a "Select Committee on Status of Boys and Men of Color in California." The Clinic's trauma-informed programs, exemplified by Seeking Safety, align with these vital initiatives.

We are dedicated to creating successful futures for children and families in South and Central Los Angeles in all that we do. To learn how you can get involved and support the Clinic, please visit [www.lachild.org](http://www.lachild.org). Thank you.

Shelly Holmes  
Chairperson of the Board

## Special Thanks to Our Friends

The following donors have recently made generous investments in Clinic programs and the children we serve, and we thank them for their support!



Richard and Lezlie Atlas and  
The Atlas Family Foundation

Confidence Foundation

Keith W. Renken

UniHealth Foundation

Support the Clinic by giving online  
at [www.lachild.org](http://www.lachild.org), by phone at  
(323) 766-2360 x3360, or by mail.

Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic  
3031 S. Vermont Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90007

Greater Los Angeles Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) ID: 88064



assistance with insurance, utilities or rent. Alamillo often assists her adolescent and young adult clients with literacy needs, college applications and job searches—“anything to increase their independent living skills, so they can be

successful on their own,” she says.

Because they get to know their communities so well, Family Advocates become masters at locating the best, most accessible resources. “We’re continually on the hunt for new ways to help our families,” says Mares.

In their rehabilitative role, Family Advocates offer guidance in coping skills against the stressors and trauma clients may experience on a daily basis.

Initially, the Family Advocate helps the child, teen or young adult identify the types of triggers that might prompt aggressive or self-harming behaviors. Together, they talk about positive vs. negative coping techniques, then begin to explore those positive alternatives, such as deep breathing, listening to music, walking, running, drawing and writing. “It takes practice to change habits and gain new skills,” notes Rodriguez.

Mares keeps her car trunk packed with stickers, games and coloring pencils to enable younger children to express themselves and feel recognized. For teens, that activity may involve taking a walk to the mall or the park, or writing in a journal. “I’ve always had a passion for helping kids and teens overcome challenging situations,” says Mares. “A lot of children don’t have the tools they need. The reward comes in seeing them succeed.”

“It’s important for children and teens to see that there is additional support out there, and they can make other choices,” adds Alamillo.

The Family Advocate also collaborates with parents on their child’s behavior plan and coaches them on the skills of managing a child with a mental health issue.

The job is 24/7. One recent success story involved a young woman who was homeless. After Alamillo located transitional housing, the client was able to find a part-time job and pay her rent. Next came more stable housing and a chance to build on that new life. Alamillo says, “Just knowing that I provide that extra support and my intervention will help them become more independent—that I made a difference—is tremendously satisfying.”

## In Memoriam:

### Victoria Ertezsek Foote

The Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic has lost one of its true friends and longtime supporters with the passing of Victoria Ertezsek Foote on Dec. 29, 2012.



Foote was co-founder of the Clinic’s Advisory Board, a role she fulfilled with tireless grace and intelligence. Her association with the Clinic dates back more than two decades, when she was a member of the Auxiliary.

Foote, who held a Bachelor’s in Economics from UC Berkeley and an MBA from USC, left an initial career in management for success in real estate investing. She had a lifelong passion for community service instilled in her childhood.

“At the heart of everything, Victoria cared deeply about education, particularly about helping people who were disadvantaged,” says Betsy Pfromm, M.S., MPA, Clinic President/CEO. “She wanted to give children a better start in life, and she saw education as a means to do that.”

Pfromm and Foote became more than collaborators, they became close friends. Pfromm recalls a ballroom fundraising event that Foote co-chaired on behalf of the Clinic. “While everything came off with perfection, we laughed a lot along the way at all the ‘hiccups’ we faced.”

Foote served on the Board of Trustees of the California Science Center Foundation and the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Library Foundation. She also was a principal of the Ertezsek Family Foundation.

Indefatigably warm and generous, Foote was adept at bringing people together. Throughout her involvement with the Clinic, she helped to raise much-needed funds and open doors to new opportunities.

“Victoria was genuinely compassionate and inquisitive,” says Pfromm. “She cared for people as individuals and reached out to make lives better. I am blessed to have enjoyed such a remarkable friendship; the Clinic is fortunate to have benefited from Victoria’s commitment to our special children and families.”



Walkers donned t-shirts and wore signs with motivating reasons for taking part in the foot-powered event held by the Clinic and its partner, the South Central Family Health Center.

## On-the-Ground Collaboration

### Walk This Way for Better Mental Health

Walking isn't just beneficial for your health, it helps create a sense of social connectedness and accomplishment. That's the discovery of 40 enthusiastic walkers who took part in an event staged by the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic and its partner, the South Central Family Health Center (SCFHC).

"One of our goals is to introduce our clients to nontraditional ways of healing," says Betty Mendoza, LCSW. She is project lead for *Mente, Cuerpo, y Corazón* (Mind, Body, and Heart), a pilot program to integrate mental and physical health, which is funded by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.

SCFHC medical providers identify patients who may benefit from mental health services and refer them to Clinic staff onsite at the SCFHC's Central Avenue location. The focus is on patients with chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. Research shows that people with diabetes are at double the risk of depression compared with the general population.

"Exercise like running or walking raises serotonin levels in the brain, which helps relieve stress, depression, and social isolation. And that can benefit our clients," says Mendoza. She started doing half-marathons as a runner two years ago for her own health and immediately felt a difference.

Meanwhile, at the SCFHC, Wellness Coordinator Julio Campos began taking short walks around the Central Avenue clinic with clients who have diabetes. "As a team, we're trying to address the stressors that affect residents and give them new tools," says Campos.

The April 19 walk was held at a local park on Slauson Avenue that has two walking trails, allowing both a one-mile and two-mile course.

Participants were given sheets of paper to complete the sentence, "I am walking . . ." Some wrote "to decrease diabetes," while others said "to feel better" or "for my mental health." The crowd's enthusiasm was catching.

"A few people who said they only came to watch the event got so motivated, they took part, too," says Mendoza.

At the end of the walk, each participant broke a red ribbon marking the finish line and received a medal. Everyone in attendance shared healthy snacks.

Mendoza and Campos next plan to hold a 5K walk/run this fall, possibly in Griffith Park. "We want to encourage people to do healthy things for themselves," says Mendoza, "and families to do positive things together!"

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Mental health disorders are the leading cause of disability in the U.S. and Canada, accounting for 25% of all years of life lost to disability and premature mortality. (World Health Organization)
- 1 in 4 Americans and 1 in 5 children will have a diagnosable mental or emotional disorder. (Mental Health America)
- 1 in 10 children will suffer from a serious disorder that, if untreated, could lead to school failure, lifelong disability, or suicide. (Mental Health America)
- 1 in 17 adults, about 13 million Americans, will have a seriously debilitating mental illness. (National Institute of Mental Health)
- Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

For more on  
the Clinic's  
comprehensive  
services for children  
and families, visit  
[www.lachild.org](http://www.lachild.org).



*Seeking Safety team, left to right: Ernie Limon, Eric Bailey, Johnny Morataya, Cesar Porcayo-Morales, Bill Valdez Cifuentes, and Jeremy Atterman.*

## Seeking Safety

### **Coping Skills for Boys and Young Men of Color**

To teens growing up with high exposure to trauma in their community and often at home, finding a sense of safety can seem elusive or even impossible. For many, their ways of coping may turn negative—toward depression, violence, substance abuse, self-mutilation, eating disorders, or poor school performance.

Seeking Safety, an evidence-based practice offered at the Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, is helping Los Angeles teens identify the triggers that spark risky behaviors and substitute those with positive coping strategies.

Seeking Safety was originally designed to treat adults with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse. Its concepts have been tested in multiple age groups. “The program’s emphasis on coping skills and how to self-regulate makes Seeking Safety a perfect fit for our work with adolescents,” notes Richard Saneda, Ph.D., Clinic Supervisor of the Seeking Safety team.

The team, comprised of Bachelor-level professionals, has been doing outreach at local high schools and community fairs, building awareness among school officials, counselors, and teachers, as well as students and parents. The team works with its teen clients at schools, in the community, in their homes, or at Clinic offices.

“Many of the kids in our community are exposed to trauma, often on a daily basis,” notes Margaret Grammatico, LMFT, Clinical Therapist and a Seeking Safety supervisor. “With the Seeking Safety program, we can bring them tools to help ensure that the stress they may feel doesn’t progress to something else.”

One priority is connecting with one of the most difficult-to-reach populations: boys and young men of color. To make that connection easier, the team reflects client demography: young, Latino, African American, and male.

“We intentionally created this team to help build rapport with young men who may otherwise have difficulty trusting and receiving the help they need,” said Betsy Pfromm, M.S., MPH, Clinic President/CEO. “The bonus is our staff serves as positive role models for youth in our service area.”

Cesar Porcayo-Morales joined the Clinic in 2012. As a senior team member, he is stationed at Manual Arts High School and its Wellness Center each week, where he collaborates with the school psychiatric social worker to identify teens who may benefit from the program.

This in-the-moment, on-the-ground availability—versus making a referral—is especially effective.

Seeking Safety’s tenets focuses on the “here and now,” finding positive ways to handle stress or negative feelings. The team members explore each teen’s interests, whether that means music, sports, writing, or other ways to handle stress.

They also help students pinpoint what may spark their anxiety or high-risk behaviors and ask them to sign contracts and develop plans of action. “Just knowing we’re here to support them can bring an added confidence,” says Porcayo-Morales.

Seeking Safety is funded by the L.A. County Department of Mental Health with resources from the Mental Health Services Act.

**“Many of the kids in our community are exposed to trauma, often on a daily basis.”**





**Los Angeles  
Child Guidance  
Clinic**

3031 South Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90007

NON PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 14954  
LOS ANGELES, CA



Visit our Website **[www.lachild.org](http://www.lachild.org)**  
to learn more about Clinic programs and activities.



*Left to right – Board members Elizabeth Tabita, Shelly Holmes, and Life Learning Division Director Susie Davis.*

## 15th Annual FunFest: Come One, Come All!

The Clinic's 15th Annual Family FunFest on May 18 drew more than 1,000 community members—a record for the free yearly mental health outreach event at the Exposition Park Office. In addition to games, crafts, face painting, clowns, and pony rides, attendees were able to access valuable community resources and services such as mental health screenings, Medi-Cal, the CalFresh program, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program, Head Start enrollments, and more.

Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic  
Established 1924

- Affiliate of USC Keck School of Medicine, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- Accredited by CARF – The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission for Job Development and Placement Services
- A Short-Doyle Contractor of the County of Los Angeles

Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic empowers South and Central L.A.'s children and young adults to get on track to success – to reach goals in school, build healthy relationships, and enjoy emotional well-being. Our team of compassionate professionals offers behavioral counseling and support to individuals and families.

### University Park Office

Child and Youth Development Center and  
Administrative Offices  
3031 South Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
(323) 373-2400

### Exposition Park Office

The Harriet and Charles Luckman Building  
3787 South Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
(323) 766-2345

### Leimert Park Office

4401 Crenshaw Boulevard, Suite 300  
Los Angeles, CA 90043  
(323) 290-8360

### President/CEO

Elizabeth W. Pfromm, M.S., MPA

### stay connected:



[www.facebook.com/LAChildGuidance](http://www.facebook.com/LAChildGuidance)



[www.twitter.com/LAChildGuidance](http://www.twitter.com/LAChildGuidance)

### in touch

Candace Pearson, Lead Writer

César Portillo, Editor

Jonathan Lorenzo, Assistant Editor

HUTdogs / Emjay Creative Inc., Design