

CPRI Clinical Symposium 2025

Complex Child and Youth Mental Health:
Recent Developments, Resiliency, and Psychosocial Interventions



NOVEMBER 25, 2025 | VIRTUAL MEETING

PROGRAM

ABOUT CPRI AND VOCPRI

AGENDA

PLENARY AND WORKSHOP SPEAKERS

PLANNING COMMITTEE AND CPRI'S ELS DEPT



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ABOUT CPRI

Who we are

The Child and Parent Resource Institute (CPRI) is a tertiary service agency providing trauma-informed, highly specialized assessment, treatment, and targeted intervention provincially for children and youth with complex special needs. This includes children and youth with developmental disabilities, autism, and severe behavioural, emotional, and mental health challenges. CPRI also prioritizes research, program evaluation, and education related to serving and supporting this clinical population.

Located in London, Ontario, CPRI is directly operated by the Government of Ontario, and serves approximately 2,200 children, youth, and their families annually. Typically, these children and youth require more specialized care than can be provided through their community. Large hospitals refer children and youth with complex special needs to CPRI for highly individualized and specialized care. 30% of clients referred to CPRI have recently received hospital services. CPRI provides tertiary services including outpatient and inpatient programs. Our inpatient services are made up of 59 beds where clinical teams provide interdisciplinary assessment and short-term treatment; based on the child or youth's individualized clinical needs and identified goals.

Our Mental Health Programs serve children and youth who may struggle with internalizing symptoms, like anxiety, or externalizing symptoms, like aggressive behaviours. A comprehensive plan is made to reduce clinical severity, and transition to community services, closer to home. Our Inpatient Dual Diagnosis units serve children and youth with a Developmental Disability and multiple Mental Health Diagnoses. All our programs provide an ongoing collaborative process with the child or youth, caregivers, and community providers to create a comprehensive plan to manage their continuing needs in the community. To learn more about CPRI and our work, please visit our website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-and-parent-resource-institute-cpri>



CPRI
CHILD & PARENT
RESOURCE INSTITUTE

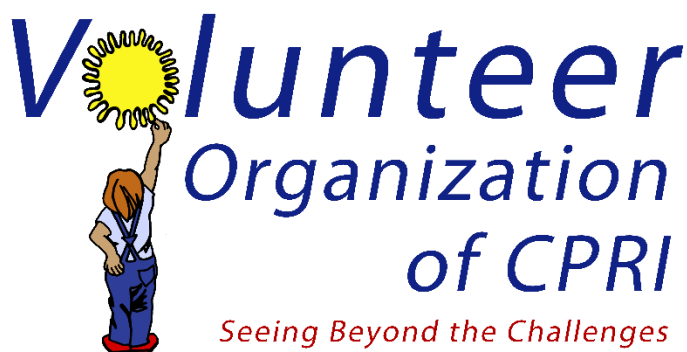
ABOUT VOCPRI

Who we are

The Volunteer Organization of CPRI (VOCPRI) is a not-for-profit registered charity that strives to support individual needs of the children, youth, families, and programs of CPRI by contributing funds for equipment, special projects, education, and research, and by fostering new funding resources, community partnerships, and positive relationships with our donors and CPRI volunteers.

Every child and youth deserve access to the mental health support they need—without obstacles. At VOCPRI, we work with families, service providers, and communities to break down barriers and build pathways to care. Together, we're striving towards a more connected, compassionate system where no one is left behind. Whether you're a caregiver, clinician, researcher, or advocate, we invite you to explore our resources, attend our events, and join us in building a brighter future for every child and youth. Please visit our website to learn more about VOCPRI: <https://vocpri.ca/>

Since VOCPRI is entirely volunteer-managed, over 90% of every dollar goes directly to supporting children and youth with complex special needs and their families. Learn about different types of meaningful donations you can make today by visiting our website: <https://vocpri.ca/donate/>



EVENT DAY AGENDA

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NOVEMBER 25, 2025 | VIRTUAL MEETING

8:30 – 9:00	<p align="center">Sign-in to Zoom Virtual Event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the Day – Technology, COI Readings, Agenda, and Land Acknowledgement 		
9:00 – 10:00	<p align="center">AM Plenary Speaker</p> <p align="center">Dr. Terry Bennett</p> <p align="center"><i>Addressing Emotional Dysregulation in Neurodivergent Children and Teens: Parsing Complexity Through a Developmental-Ecological Lens</i></p>		
10:00 – 10:20	<p align="center">Break</p>		
10:20 – 10:25	<p align="center">Hosts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Workshops 		
10:25 – 11:25	<p align="center">AM Workshop (Room 1)</p> <p align="center">Dr. Michelle Ponti</p> <p align="center"><i>Screen Use and Infant Mental Health</i></p>	<p align="center">AM Workshop (Room 2)</p> <p align="center">Dr. Kristina Kastelanac</p> <p align="center"><i>The Child and You: Experiencing Resilience using Polyvagal Theory Informed Modalities</i></p>	<p align="center">AM Workshop (Room 3)</p> <p align="center">Sarena Daljeet</p> <p align="center"><i>Dyadic Emotion-Focused Therapy for Youth and Caregivers</i></p>
11:25 – 12:25	<p align="center">Lunch</p>		

12:25 – 12:30	Hosts • Welcome Back		
12:30 – 1:30	PM Plenary Speaker Dr. Peter Jaffe <i>Children Exposed to Domestic Violence</i>		
1:30 – 1:50	Break		
1:50 – 1:55	Hosts • Introduce Workshops		
1:55 – 2:55	PM Workshop (Room 1) Dr. Genevieve Monaghan <i>Co-morbid PTSD and Eating Disorders in Youth – Considerations for Individual Treatment and Parental Involvement</i>	PM Workshop (Room 2) Dr. Karys Peterson-Katz <i>Establishing Community Systems of Care: The Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathways Initiative</i>	PM Workshop (Room 3) Dr. Kerry Boyd <i>Fostering Therapeutic Encounters: INTERVIEW with CARE</i>
2:55 – 3:00	Hosts • Closing Remarks and Online Evaluations		

* Speakers, speaker topics, and speaker time slots are tentative and subject to change without notice. Check our website for the latest version of this agenda: <https://vocpri.ca/cpri-clinical-symposium/>. All times are posted in Eastern Standard Time (EST).

For RCPCSC (MOC Section 1):

This event is an Accredited Group Learning Activity (Section 1) as defined by the Maintenance of Certification Program of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, and approved by Continuing Professional Development, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University. You may claim a maximum of 4.00 hours (credits are automatically calculated). Each participant should claim only those hours of credit that they actually spent participating in the educational program.

Sponsorship Statement:

This program has received an educational grant from The Volunteer Organization of CPRI (VOCPRI).

MORNING AND AFTERNOON PLENARY SPEAKER SESSIONS

INVITED PLENARY LECTURE

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM • MAIN ROOM

ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION IN NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN AND TEENS: PARSING COMPLEXITY THROUGH A DEVELOPMENTAL- ECOLOGICAL LENS

DR. TERRY BENNETT, MD, FRCPC, Ph.D.

Tackling the complexity involved in tailoring care for Autistic children and youth is a joy and a challenge for developmental and mental health care practitioners. We typically understand this complexity through a more individualistic lens focused on variability in Autistic profiles and care needs. However, Neurodiversity advocacy efforts and longitudinal research demonstrate that the daily environments and interactions of Autistic children can have profound and long-lasting impacts on their mental health, with implications for personal and family well-being and healthcare costs. Despite this, many developmental and autism services lack a systematic and client and family-centred approach to addressing adverse and protective childhood experiences. In this talk, I will review important research evidence that should guide our assessment of mental health risk and protective factors for Autistic children and youth. I will share a framework for assessing and acting upon important psychosocial risk factors, using the "Family Check-Up®" -- a promising strength-based, collaborative model of care.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify early risk and protective factors in the development of emotional dysregulation among Autistic children.
2. Apply a developmental-ecological approach to evaluate children at risk of persistent emotional and behavioural challenges.
3. Model key strength-based, family-centred care principles into practice to engage and support Autistic children and families with complex needs.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Teresa (Terry) Bennett is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University, a child psychiatrist at McMaster Children's Hospital, and core member of the Offord Centre for Child Studies and McMaster Autism Research Team (MacART). She holds the Jack C. Laidlaw Chair in Patient-Centred Care at McMaster University. Dr. Bennett uses longitudinal and randomized controlled trial designs to inform the development,

delivery, and evaluation of new child and family-centred prevention and timely intervention programs for young children and Autistic children and youth. She leads the Family Check-Up® Canada program, aimed at evaluating and scaling up this evidence-based, family-centred program to support highest-needs families.

INVITED PLENARY LECTURE
12:30 PM – 1:30 PM • MAIN ROOM

CHILDREN EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DR. PETER JAFFE, Ph.D., C. PSYCH.

The talk will provide an overview of the latest research on the impact of domestic violence on children as well as the implications for prevention and intervention strategies by community professionals and the public.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain how exposure to domestic violence can impact children's development.
2. Discuss the risk and protective factors that moderate children's outcomes.
3. Outline the potential risks of homicide for children living with domestic violence.
4. Develop knowledge about prevention and intervention strategies to support children exposed to domestic violence.
5. Interpret changing family laws that recognize the impact of domestic violence and coercive control on children.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr. Jaffe is a Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Education at Western University. He is the Director Emeritus for London Family Court Clinic. For over 40 years, most of his research and clinical work involves adults and children who have been victims of abuse and involved with the criminal, family, and civil court systems. He has co-authored 12 books, 40 chapters, and over 90 articles related to children, families, and the justice system, including "Preventing Domestic Homicides: Lessons Learned from Tragedies" and "Understanding Family Violence in Family Court Proceedings: Providing Effective Responses for Victims, Children, and Perpetrators." He has presented workshops across the United States and Canada, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Costa Rica, and Europe to various groups, including judges, lawyers, mental health professionals, and educators. He has been an expert witness in family and criminal law proceedings in five provinces and seven US states. He is a founding member of Canada's first Domestic Violence Death Review Committee through the Office of Ontario's Chief Coroner. He was named an Officer in the Order of Canada in 2009.

MORNING WORKSHOP SPEAKER SESSIONS

10:25 AM – 11:25 AM • BREAKOUT ROOM 1

SCREEN USE AND INFANT MENTAL HEALTH

DR. MICHELLE PONTI, HBSc, MD, FRCPC

Screen use in early childhood has been associated with negative impacts on emotional development and attachment and can affect mental health in the preschool years. This workshop reviews the current evidence and outlines the guidance for management and practical tips to help with digital-health counselling.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Summarize the impacts of screen time and use on infant and preschooler mental health.
2. Use practical guidance to counsel parents and caregivers on healthier use of screens with young children.
3. Describe the updated Canadian guidelines on screen time in preschool children using the 4M principles.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr. Michelle Ponti is a Paediatrician in London, Ontario. She works at the Child and Parent Resource Institute (CPRI) -- a children's mental and developmental health facility. She is Adjunct Professor at Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry at Western University. Her practice focuses on children with complex behavioural, developmental, and learning issues. This includes paediatric consultation about child development, dual diagnosis, attachment, and neurodevelopmental disorders including fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. She works within an interdisciplinary team model and provides medical care to children in outpatient and inpatient services. Dr. Ponti is the Chair of the Digital Health Task Force for the Canadian Paediatric Society. She worked with this Task Force on the updated recommendations on screen time in young children 0-5 years and has recently examined the health effects of screen media use in school-age children and adolescents, social media, and those with neurodevelopmental diversity.

10:25 AM – 11:25 AM • BREAKOUT ROOM 2

THE CHILD AND YOU: EXPERIENCING RESILIENCE USING POLYVAGAL THEORY INFORMED MODALITIES

DR. KRISTINA KASTELANAC, BHSc., ND, SEP.

This workshop will be an introduction to the Polyvagal Theory (PVT) and is aimed at deepening the practitioner's understanding of the physiology, and the felt sense experience, of the autonomic nervous system. We will discuss polyvagal-informed techniques (like breathwork, nature connection, and mindfulness) and how they may enhance evidence-based practices and your current work with clients/patients. This workshop will include experiential pieces that facilitate exploration of your own nervous system states (fight, flight, freeze), using simple, PVT informed techniques. There will also be discussion on co-regulation and how your nervous system responses, as the practitioner, impact the nervous systems of your clients/patients. We will also be discussing the concept of treatment fidelity, and how PVT can support flexibility, based on moment-to-moment observations of clients'/patients' and clinicians' nervous system states. Upon completion of this workshop, you will have gained deeper insight into your own nervous system patterns and how this awareness can enhance your ability to optimize co-regulation in a clinical setting.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will be able to interpret the polyvagal theory (PVT) to understand autonomic nervous system responses and apply polyvagal-informed techniques, such as breathwork, nature connection, and mindfulness, to enhance evidence-based practices like Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). Through discussion of supporting studies, participants will be able to judge the efficacy of integrating PVT with traditional interventions.
2. Participants will be able to determine the role of co-regulation in children's developing nervous systems and apply self-regulation techniques to manage their own nervous system states (fight, flight, freeze, rest, and digest) within therapeutic relationships. Through this, they will be able to demonstrate how ongoing self-care and personal development enhance therapeutic outcomes for their clients.
3. Participants will be able to describe the concept of treatment fidelity and its role in effective interventions, defending how PVT supports flexibility based on moment-to-moment observations of clients' and clinicians' nervous system states. They will design a balanced approach that maintains core intervention principles while adjusting techniques to meet individual client needs.
4. Participants will be able to evaluate their own autonomic nervous system states through guided exercises, gaining a somatic and cognitive understanding of these states to enhance personal resiliency and self-regulation. They will be able to model practical, time-efficient tools into their busy schedules as clinicians.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr. Kristina Kastelanac, ND has been practicing Naturopathic Medicine since 2010. She considers the core naturopathic principles of "identify and treat the root cause" and "the healing power of

nature” as guideposts in supporting her patients’ healing through empowerment and resilience building. Dr. Kastelanac’s passion for treating the “root cause” of imbalance in her patients’ health led her to expand her understanding and knowledge of how to best support optimal nervous system function in her patients. She received additional training as a Somatic Experiencing Practitioner (SEP), which she completed in March of 2017. Dr. Kastelanac is passionate about nervous system regulation and the polyvagal theory. Through her online business, Body Wise Insights, she offers a variety of programs that empower her clients with the training and tools to help enhance resilience and self-regulation in lasting ways. These online programs focus on developing the skills of observing one’s own nervous system patterns and learning how to complete threat responses (fight, flight, freeze) that are imprinted on the autonomic nervous system. This allows her clients to embody the healing potential of parasympathetic expression (rest, digest, heal, and bond) with greater ease, frequency, and consistency. Body Wise Insights supports adults and children to experience what a healthy nervous system is all about!

10:25 AM – 11:25 AM • BREAKOUT ROOM 3

DYADIC EMOTION-FOCUSED THERAPY FOR YOUTH AND CAREGIVERS

SARENA DALJEET, Ph.D. CANDIDATE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Dyadic Emotion-Focused Therapy for Youth and Caregivers (Dyadic EFT-Y) is a novel intervention focused on enhancing the parent-child relationship to empower caregivers to support youth with mental health difficulties. An introduction to this intervention will be provided alongside preliminary outcomes from a multisite trial. In addition, data will be presented on multiple perspectives on the therapeutic alliance (i.e., youth, caregiver, and therapist) in this intervention.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the rationale for incorporating caregivers into the therapy process for youth.
2. Define the primary components of treatment in Dyadic Emotion-Focused Therapy for Youth (EFT-Y).
3. Outline the importance of studying multiple perspectives on the therapeutic alliance.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Sarena Daljeet is a 4th year Ph.D. candidate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Waterloo. In her clinical work, she provides therapy services to youth, caregivers, and families, with a focus on caregiver interventions. Sarena’s research interests include elements of change in psychotherapy, observational coding tools in psychotherapy research, and emotion-focused therapy for youth. At the University of Waterloo, Sarena runs recurring workshops on scientific writing for undergraduate psychology courses.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOP SPEAKER SESSIONS

1:55 PM – 2:55 PM • BREAKOUT ROOM 1

CO-MORBID PTSD AND EATING DISORDERS IN YOUTH – CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

DR. GENEVIEVE MONAGHAN, Ph.D., C. PSYCH.

This presentation explores the complex intersection of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and eating disorders in children and adolescents. Drawing on current research and clinical experience, Dr. Monaghan will outline common presentations, diagnostic challenges, and the bidirectional relationship between trauma and disordered eating. The session will highlight key treatment considerations, including phased, trauma-informed approaches and the integration of CBT and DBT-based strategies. Special emphasis will be placed on the role of caregivers, including strategies for supporting parental involvement to promote recovery and improve outcomes.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recall common clinical features and diagnostic considerations in youth presenting with co-morbid PTSD and eating disorders.
2. Describe the bidirectional relationship between trauma exposure and disordered eating behaviours in adolescents.
3. Apply core principles of trauma-informed care and phased treatment planning to clinical work with this population.
4. Determine strategies for engaging parents and caregivers as active participants in treatment and recovery.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr. Monaghan is a clinical psychologist with expertise in trauma, eating disorders, and co-occurring mental health concerns. She obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Ottawa in 2018 and has worked extensively with adolescents and adults in both outpatient and inpatient settings, integrating evidence-based approaches such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), and trauma-informed care. Dr. Monaghan has a special interest in the complex intersection of PTSD and disordered eating, and is committed to advancing clinical practice through education, consultation, and system-level change. She is also actively involved in program development and clinician training within hospital and academic settings. Dr. Monaghan also runs a private practice, Evolve Psychology Ontario, focused on providing services to youth and adults in high-performance settings.

1:55 PM – 2:55 PM • BREAKOUT ROOM 2

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY SYSTEMS OF CARE: THE INFANT AND EARLY MENTAL HEALTH CARE PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

DR. KARYS PETERSON-KATZ, Ph.D.

The Infant and Early Mental Health (IEMH) Care Pathways Initiative promotes a multi-sectoral collaborative approach to enhance Canada's service integration and access for at-risk children under six. By engaging community partners, mapping existing services, and developing aspirational care pathways, this initiative addresses barriers at multiple levels, strengthens methods to improve communication, and helps build coordinated efforts across sectors. This comprehensive approach aims to transform the fragmented mental health care system into a cohesive network, ensuring efficient and effective support for young children, thereby driving significant improvements at the systems level. The workshop will focus on the framework, methodology, and preliminary findings from the IEMH Care Pathways Initiative.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the current gaps in Canada's mental health system related to infant and early mental health (IEMH). Participants will be able to recognize at least three systemic challenges or gaps in training, access, or navigation for IEMH services in Canada.
2. Explain the five-phased approach of the IEMH Care Pathways Initiative. Participants will be able to accurately summarize the key steps in the IEMH Care Pathways methodology and their relevance to building coordinated systems of care.
3. Identify strategies for engaging community partners in mapping and developing care pathways. Participants will be able to list at least two effective strategies used in the initiative for engaging cross-sector champions in system-level change.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr. Karys Peterson-Katz received her Bachelor of Arts and Science (Honours) in Cognitive Science from McGill University in 2019, and her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from Queen's University in 2023. Dr. Peterson-Katz is a post-doctoral research fellow with Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion, a program of the Hospital of Sick Children in Toronto, Ontario, and currently leads the implementation of the Canadian Database of Development, Infancy to Six, as well as the evaluation of the Infant and Early Mental Health Care Pathways initiative.

1:55 PM – 2:55 PM • BREAKOUT ROOM 3

FOSTERING THERAPEUTIC ENCOUNTERS: INTERVIEW WITH CARE

DR. KERRY BOYD, MD, FRCPC, PSYCHIATRIST

The complex needs of people living with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) may be missed for multiple reasons, including communication barriers and limited clinician time or experience. Even initial encounters can be a therapeutic intervention. This session will spell out communication best practices using INTERVIEW with CARE. We will also consider new developments, highlighting application for therapeutic virtual care encounters. CanMEDS Roles (especially Communicator, Collaborator, Health Advocate, Professional) come together as we Communicate CARE in person-centred interviews and foster resilience.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Evaluate communication guidelines and tools for therapeutic interviewing.
2. Identify three INTERVIEW with CARE principles or practices to apply in their setting.
3. Discuss Communicate CARE for virtual care encounters.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Kerry Boyd is a child and adolescent psychiatrist who has over 25 years of experience working with teams serving people with IDD in the Hamilton-Niagara Region. She is an associate clinical professor with the Dept. of Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University. She is committed to improving care through education and advocacy. She has contributed to DDPCP Mental Health, Transition, and Communicate CARE tools. As an AMS Phoenix Project Fellow, Dr. Boyd rallied a network of partners to develop the Curriculum of Caring for People with Developmental Disabilities to create web-based resources found at:

<https://machealth.ca/en/programs/curriculum-of-caring>

CPRI CLINICAL SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE

Tom Ketelaars, C.Y.W.

Committee Chair; Co-Chair of CPRI's Scientific Planning Committee; Program Manager of Professional Development and Community Relations

Dr. Palmer Taylor, Ph.D.

Event Lead Coordinator; Event Host; Graphics Design Co-Lead; Accreditation Co-Lead

Rhonda Peterson, M.A.; Dr. Jeff Carter, Ph.D.; and Dr. Joy Abramson, M.D.

Clinical Presentations Coordinators

Dr. Ajit Ninan, H.B.Sc., M.D., F.R.C.P.C.

Co-Chair of CPRI's Scientific Planning Committee; Medical Director of CPRI

CPRI'S EDUCATION AND LEARNING SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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