

Healthy Families for a Healthy Workforce

September 28 12:00 PM

Meet the Panelists



Alexa Lofaro

Certified Mental Health Community Partner

Founder & CEO, LUNA Disability Counseling & Consulting

Alexa Lofaro is a Mental Health Community Partner and holds certification in Disability Work Incentive Counseling from the Social Security Administration and Virginia Commonwealth University. She also holds a Master's Degree in Disability Studies from CUNY School of Professional Studies and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Pace University. Alexa has worked in the fields of disability service and non-profit organizations for over 12 years and has a passion for universal accessibility, inclusion, and equity. She is currently operating as the founding consultant of LUNA Disability Counseling & Consulting, which aims to apply a holistic approach to Lead Universal, Normative, Accessibility in educational and employment circles in order to alleviate disability stigma and support the mental wellness of individuals. Alexa hopes to marry her expertise from the disability service world with the mission of MHANYS and the Mental Health Community Partner Program to promote positive familial and professional relationships.



Christopher Warden

Dual-Certified Mental Health Community Partner

& MHANYS CarePath Coach

Director of Peer Services, Mental Health Association of Niagara County

Chris Warden has been working in the field of mental health and substance use for over 20 years. He is a Mental Health First Aid Instructor, Aikido martial arts instructor, Peer Support Specialist and holds numerous coaching certificates in mindfulness, grief, substance use as well as being dual certified as a CarePath & Community Partners Coach. On a personal level, Chris is a cult survivor and a trauma survivor. He has also recovered from both mental health and addiction issues. Chris is currently the Director of Peer Services at the Mental Health Association of Niagara County and is finishing his doctorate in Mental Health Administration at D'Youville University. His dissertation research is on the impact that being a mental health Peer Support Specialist has on that person's own recovery.



Michelle G. Garcia

Dual-Certified Mental Health Community Partner

& MHANYS CarePath Coach

Assistant Director, Mental Health Community Partners, MHANYS

Michelle G. Garcia is passionate about mental health, family health, and workforce wellness. As a survivor of childhood trauma and workplace trauma during her early career in global human rights work, she has lived experience of the intricacies and intersections of immigrant survival mentality, impact of family on school & work performance, and hidden burnout & mental health risks of overachievement. Following a serendipitous internship at MHANYS, Michelle became a mental health trainer and learned self-compassion, & self-care strategies that transformed her personal life and healing. As a family member & mentor of students & young professionals, and assistant director at MHANYS, Michelle strives to model work-life balance, advocates for mentally healthy family & work cultures, and practices day-to-day wellness with the MHANYS team.



Meg Spagnola

**Dual-Certified Mental Health Community Partner
& MHANYS CarePath Coach**

Program Specialist, Mental Health Community Partners, MHANYS

Meg Spagnola is a graduate of the State University of New York at Potsdam with a BA in Psychology. Meg's career has been in substance abuse counseling for the last 8 years spanning the continuum of care from detoxification, inpatient, residential and outpatient treatment facilities in NY. She is a CASAC-2 with clinical supervision training. Meg began her work with MHANYS on the MHCP project with a belief that there are alternative ways to support individuals and their families in their journey towards mental health recovery and wellness. Meg brings her clinical background to this human-centric, relational, wellness oriented program in order to improve systemic gaps in care through providing engaging and exciting trainings to professionals and paraprofessionals across New York State.

Facilitated By



Deborah Faust

**Dual-Certified Mental Health Community Partner
& MHANYS CarePath Coach**

Director, MHANYS CarePath & Mental Health Community Partners

Deborah Faust is the Director of MHANYS family mental health programming including Mental Health Community Partners and MHANYS signature CarePath program. Ms. Faust is Co-Director of Building Connections, a joint project with the New York State Coalition against Sexual Assault. Building Connections strengthens trauma-informed services throughout NYS. Prior to her position at MHANYS Deborah was the Director of Justice Initiatives for NAMI-NYS. Her career has focused on supporting families to achieve and maintain a sense of wellbeing regardless of any diagnosis. Deborah's primary role at MHANYS involves developing content that suggests community wellbeing is not in isolation of our own health and wellness and vice versa. That message is reflected throughout MHANYS programming and intergenerational whole-family health training and presentations.

