



Great Lakes (HHS Region 5)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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# Culturally Responsive Mental Health Summit

Oct. 11th, 2019

8:00a.m.–5:00p.m.

Sponsored by the Great Lakes Mental Health Technology Transfer Center in partnership with

## The Community Healing Collaborative

([MACMHP](#) , Minneapolis College & Catalyst Initiative)

Cost: \$25.00(Professionals)or \$10(Students) /Earn 8 CEUs

Location: Minneapolis College

1501 Hennepin Avenue

Minneapolis, MN 55403

Whitney Fine Arts Center Auditorium F1200

Register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/culturally-responsive-mental-health-summit-tickets-69712653423>

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## Presenters



### Host & MC: Samuel Simmons – LADC

Mr. Simmons is licensed as an Alcohol and Drug Counselor who has over 21 year background in program development, group facilitation, and curriculum development specializing in the areas of Anger Management, Chemical Dependency, Pain Management and working with African American men & young people. He has a personal commitment to improving the African American Community and vast experience in addressing individual, family and community experiences with intimate partner violence. He was awarded the 2009 Governor's Council on Faith and Community Service Initiatives Best Practices Award for his work with MN Department of Veterans Outreach Services, prison reentry and in the African American community.

For the last 18 years he has been self-employed as a behavioral consultant in all of the fore mentioned Areas. He has established a working relationship with African American Family Services, the Father Project, Q Health Services, Minnesota DOC and other organizations around the state of Minnesota and the country. He has been an active with 100 Men Take A Stand for 3 years. He is currently the Training and Curriculum Development Specialist for the Healing Generations Curriculum for Family & Children's Service.



### Maisha Giles – LMFT, LICSW, LADC, Behavioral Health Director MN-DHS, Bush Fellow

Maisha Giles wants to pioneer new strategies to cultivate black female leaders in the public sector. As behavioral health director for the Minnesota Department of Human Services, she sees a need for a comprehensive system focused not just on recruiting but also on retention and mentoring. She wants leaders of color and Native Americans at the table to help shape effective and wise public health policy, especially as it pertains to diverse populations. To become the bold leader of this work, she will earn a doctorate in leadership and public administration, strengthen her executive leadership and public policy skills, and build a network of successful black female leaders.



**Dr. BraVada Garrett-Akinsanya - PHD**

Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya is a licensed clinical psychologist and Executive Director of the *African American Child Wellness Institute*, a children's mental health agency dedicated to the research, delivery and coordination of comprehensive wellness strategies for children of African descent. Dr. Akinsanya also serves as the President of *Brakins Consulting and Psychological Services*, which has the mission of "providing excellent, culturally competent mental health and consultation services that meet the needs of children, adults, families and organizations."

Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya has worked in the field of mental health for over 35 years in a variety of public and private treatment settings serving clients of ages spanning from birth to death. Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya is a nationally

recognized speaker who has written, presented and consulted extensively in the areas of developmental psychology, women's issues, multiculturalism, poverty, homelessness, severe psychopathology and African-American mental health. Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya is also known for her "African-Centered Wellness Model" which explains mental health within the context of African American cultural identity, values and environment. Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya is recognized for her strength-based approach and her clinical expertise in assisting children, couples and families in the development of healthy relationships. She is especially effective with clients whose lives have been touched by severe psychopathology, abuse, trauma, community violence, sexual assault and domestic violence issues.

She is recognized as a clinical consultant, trainer, and clinician to multiple local schools and agencies that serve immigrant populations, women and men in recovery from prostitution and incarceration, clients with HIV, children with special needs, low-income families, homeless youth, and trauma survivors.

Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya enjoys racquetball, writing, African cooking and traveling to exotic locations. She currently lives in Plymouth, Minnesota with her partner and soul mate of thirty years, Mr. Akinyele Akinsanya, MPA, MURP, MBA.



**Johara Suleiman – LGSW, MST Therapist**

Johara has served at-risk youth and families since 2011 as an advocate, individual and family therapist, group facilitator, and program creator. Through her various roles she has interacted closely with child protective services and juvenile justice system, and has become familiar with the layered challenges for Muslim families embedded in those systems. Johara currently works full time as a multi-systemic therapist with families who have at least one child at risk of out of home placement through DOJJ or DHS. She also founded The Kifayah Initiative with the hopes of increasing support for Muslim children in foster care. Currently this is primarily through community outreach work, building awareness and educating Muslim adults about the foster care system. This fall Johara will be receiving her LICSW, and will begin providing therapy to the Muslim community through private practice. Johara is also seeking out a PhD program to build and strengthen The Kifayah Initiative.



**Laurelle Myhra - PhD, LMFT**

Laurelle is an enrolled member of Red Lake Nation and is the Director of Behavioral Health at Native American Community Clinic (NACC). In her role at NACC, Dr. Myhra has directed the expansion of chemical health programming including Intensive Outpatient Program and Medication Assisted Treatment dosing program for opioid dependency in collaboration with Red Lake. Dr. Myhra is a licensed marriage and family therapist and served in this capacity within the urban Native American community in since 2005. She has also pursued her passion for this area of work as supervisor and educator of clinical interns and trainees for the last 10+ years. Dr Myhra serves on the Health Equity Advisory & Leadership (HEAL) Council for the MDH and Hennepin Health Community Advisory Board. Dr. Myhra completed her doctorate at the University of Minnesota in Family Social Science and Marriage and Family Therapy program in 2012; during which time she was a AAMFT SAMHSA fellow. She

has dedicated her career, as a researcher, supervisor, clinician, and educator, to addressing historical- and psychological trauma, traumatic stress response, and substance use disorders among Native Americans. She has published numerous peer reviewed articles on these subjects and has several articles under review.



**José R. Picón - MA, LADC, [Manager of Chemical Health Services  
CLUES - Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio**

José is originally from Arecibo, Puerto Rico. He moved to Minnesota in 2001 and lives in Eagan. While working full-time as a Chemical Health Practitioner through his undergraduate years, he completed his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Argosy University with a concentration in Substance Abuse. Less than a year after graduation he obtained his Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) license from the Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy. José received the Argosy University Presidential Leadership Award in recognition of his demonstrated skills, leadership traits, tenacity and devotion to his chosen field of studies. He has twelve years of chemical health counseling experience with individual and group members of

the Hispanic/Latino population at CLUES.

Convinced that he wanted to further expand his education to become a better-rounded therapist, he pursued and graduated with a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy from Argosy University. Through his experience encompassing individual and group therapy, couples, families, children and adolescents, José has developed a particular interest in working with clients dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and alcohol and drug addictions. Among other treatment modalities, he utilizes sandtray play therapy for clients with these symptoms. José had worked at People Incorporated as Director of Huss Center for Men residential MI/SUD program for two years. He current works at CLUES as Manager of chemical health services and runs the MI/SUD programs in Minneapolis and at St. Paul. Jose also has 6 years of experience in teaching as a faculty member at Argosy University and currently is teaching at Metro State University as a Community Faculty.



**Vayong Moua - Health Equity Advocacy Director**

Vayong Moua is responsible for developing strategy and action for Blue Cross' prevention and health equity advocacy initiatives to reduce tobacco use, obesity, and health inequities among all Minnesotans. Moua focuses on integrating health equity into policy advocacy approaches and structural solutions. Moua currently chairs the Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (CECLC) that catalyzed the Department of Human Service's agency wide equity policy. Moua also co-founded the Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition that led passage of Minnesota's state Complete Streets law.

Moua received his Bachelor of Arts with a triple major in philosophy, sociology/anthropology, and Asian studies from St. Olaf College. He received his MPA from the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Moua was a Public Policy and International Affairs Fellow, LAAMPP Fellow, and Humphrey Policy Fellow. He currently serves on the board of directors for Transit for Livable Communities (TLC), Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy, and Leadership (APPEAL), and Neighborhood House. He came to this country as a Hmong refugee and along with his spouse, Pha Chia, enjoys raising Ishii.



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