

## RESPONDING TO CHILDREN IN CRISIS PRESENTER BIOS

### **Lori Ross**

Lori Ross is the President/CEO of Foster Adopt Connect. Lori began her work supporting foster parents by serving as a MAPP instructor while fostering in the state of Kansas in the 1980's. Lori has worked with the Missouri Children's Division as a teaching foster parent for twenty-nine years and is one of the founders of Foster Adopt Connect (formerly Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association) a support and advocacy organization for foster and adoptive families in Missouri and Kansas. Based on her professional and personal experience, Lori, in partnership with the Missouri Department of Social Services, designed a program called Behavioral Interventionist (BI) in 2013. The BI Program is an intensive, individualized, home-based approach to therapeutic treatment and support services to address the needs of children with severe emotional and behavioral issues. The program includes components such as crisis de-escalation, trauma-informed care, structure, and parent education. Using both her experience developing and implementing this program as well as her experience fostering and adopting many children, Lori knows the challenges that families can encounter when caring for a child who is more prone to escalate into crisis.

### **Alissa Clandra, LCSW**

Alissa Calandra is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has worked at The Baby Fold in Normal, Illinois, for the past 20 years. She has spent her career dedicated to providing treatment to children and families who have experienced complex trauma. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Social Work and her Master of Social Work degrees from Illinois State University. Alissa began her career at The Baby Fold as a direct care staff in the agency's Residential Treatment Center, where she provided treatment to children between 2-14 years old who had severe behavioral and emotional disorders. Alissa became the Assistant Director of the Residential Program in 2007 spending 8 years in that role, and then was the Director of the program where she remained until 2017. Alissa is currently the Clinical and Family Support Supervisor at The Baby Fold. She oversees an in-home stabilization program serving families with children ages 4-14 who are having significant difficulty managing their behavior, emotions, and mental health at home, school or in the community. The program provides families with trauma-informed mental health treatment, education, and linkage to needed community resources. Alissa is certified as an Educator of Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), which is a neuro and trauma-informed caregiver educational program specifically for those caring for children who have experienced trauma. She also provides training on crisis prevention and de-escalation strategies.

### **Phyllis Stevens**

Phyllis Stevens is a mother by birth and adoption and has worked in the field supporting children and families in crisis for more than 30 years. Founder and executive director of Together as Adoptive Parents in Pennsylvania, Phyllis is also a national consultant and has worked with the North American Council on Adoptable Children among other projects. Phyllis utilizes both her professional and personal experience to discuss how parents can help children feel physically and psychologically safe, the parents' role in helping children to remain regulated and strategies to employ once they have moved into crisis.

### **Terri DeMarco**

Terri and her husband are the adoptive parents to five children, two of which are kin. Terri and her husband started this journey as relatives, knowing little about needs of children who have experienced trauma, separation or loss. They later opened up their home to a sibling group of three, two of whom came with sensory integration issues. Several of their children had moderate to severe behavioral issues which had to be managed in the home.

Terri and her husband spent years educating themselves and getting involved in the foster/adoption community. They learned over the years how to control their home environment and manage their own regulation to provide a safe and nurturing home for their children. Terri spent a year closely working with a therapist to identify how she could meet her children's sensory integration needs.

Terri has been trained in TBRI and facilitates a foster/adoption support group at her church in Orlando Florida helping other parents learn techniques that help to moderate children's behaviors and prevent them from escalating.