

## **Christine J. Whittaker, LMFT**

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MT 3108)
- Reunification Specialist (MT 3108)
- Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator (32096 F)
- Certified Social Investigator (through PACE)
- Nationally Certified Parent Instructor / Parent Alienation Instructor (Breakthrough Parenting)
- Qualified Parenting Coordinator (through Mediation Training Group)
- Supervised Visitation Program Director (Florida State University Clearinghouse)



Highly trained, experienced and licensed. My extensive experience, skills, integrity, continuing education, leadership and compassion helps to embrace and encompass an understanding of interpersonal familial relationships which allows exceptional individualized services. Not only am I a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, I am also a Supreme Court Certified Family Divorce Mediator, Social Investigator, a Nationally Certified Parent Alienation Instructor, Qualified Parent Coordinator, Reunification Specialist and authored a DCF approved Parent Education and Family Stabilization course curriculum and actively teach the course. I individualize clinical treatment to each client, my inherent compassion and empathy aid in an exceptional ability to understand client needs and better understand life patterns, cycles, and unmet needs.

### **SUMMARY**

- Over 19 years of experience in community care, screening, assessing, treating families and individuals, behavioral modification and the behavioral sciences in Florida
- Over 9 years of counseling/therapy experience including reunification therapy, family systems, parent alienation
- Over 9 years providing individual and family recommendations and testifying in the 6th judicial circuit regarding clients in my caseload for reunification therapy, parenting coordination, social investigation, parent alienation assessment and treatment, family assessments and treatment screening, assessing and treating substance abuse and mental health for individual adults, adolescents, children and families
- Over 9 years' experience working with Child Protective Services, (DCF)/Youth and Family Alternatives (YFA) via BayCare Health System field-based programs: Family Intensive Treatment (FIT) for substance abuse, Urgent Family Care (UFC) for mental health, Family

Intervention Services (FIS) for substance abuse and mental health and in my private practice

- Over 9 years assessing and referring parents with children while teaching individually and in class format parenting skills, discipline models, anger management and how to identify emotional needs of children and signs of emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- Certified Child Custody Evaluator by Professional Academy of Custody Evaluation (PACE)
- Trained and certified by the Florida Supreme Court in Family Divorce Mediation
- Authored a DCF approved Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course curriculum and certified to teach the course
- Educated, trained and experienced in an extensive variety of areas including: reunification assessment and therapy, parent alienation, behavior modification, family assessments, parenting plans and parent timesharing, individual, group & family counseling and psychoeducational classes, psychological & educational evaluations, anger management, child development, domestic violence, abuse, substance abuse, parenting skills, crisis intervention, conflict resolution
- Knowledge, training and experience in the areas of child development, family systems, parent alienation, parent roles, reunification, timesharing, the effects of divorce on children and families, crisis identification and intervention, domestic violence, substance abuse, child abuse
- Knowledge, trainings and experience in the areas of interviewing and assessing adults, children and families, conducting home studies and field investigations, identifying, organizing and understanding important collateral sources of information, administering and interpreting psychological assessments used in child custody evaluations, standardized questionnaires, surveys and other data collection tools, report writing
- 19+ years' experience in behavioral health modification
- 9+ years of clinical background, Targeted Case Management, in home behavioral health services with families involved with family court
- Trained and certified in SBIRT (screening, brief intervention, referral to treatment for substance abuse)
- Collaborative law facilitator
- Extensive experience with field based programs focused family and individual safety, family assessments, parent alienation, reunification assessment and treatment, home studies, social investigation work, parent coordination work, coordinating care for individuals and all members of the family, create family safety plans, teach parenting skills, anger management, stress management as well as domestic violence counseling, substance abuse counseling and relapse prevention including UA's, clinically assessing and treating individuals and families
- Trained and experienced in FSFN to document family progress for dependency cases directly to judges and CPI workers

- Led trainings in anger management and stress management for Pasco County Head Start Program

## **EDUCATION**

Argosy University, Tampa, FL

2013            **M.A. Degree   Marriage and Family Counseling Program**

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

1997            **B.A. Degree   Psychology**

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

1996            **B.S. Degree   Education with specialization in ESE**

## **PRESENT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Whittaker Family Services**

*01/2015- present            **Marriage and Family Therapist, Reunification Assessment and Therapy Specialist, Supreme Court Certified Family Divorce Mediator, Social Investigator, Parent Education Instructor including Parent Alienation, Qualified Parent Coordinator, Supervised Visitation Program Director***

Practices privately serving individual adults, adolescents, children as well as families. Services include screening, assessment, treatment and recommendations for: Reunification therapy, parent alienation, parenting skills, parent timesharing, domestic violence, physical and emotional abuse, family risks, needs and strengths, substance abuse, mental health, individual and family behavior modification, individual, group and family counseling for anger management interventions, stress management interventions, child development, domestic violence and abuse, teach parent education classes, crisis intervention and management, substance abuse, parenting skills, conflict resolution, biopsychosocial assessments; Forensic services as a Social Investigator, Certified Family Mediator, Parenting Coordinator. Provides direct services to the general public, as well as consults with attorneys in the areas listed above. Receives referrals from the 13th Judicial Circuit to conduct court ordered individual mental health and substance abuse assessments, parenting assessments, family assessments, parent alienation assessments, reunification therapy, supervised visitation, timeshare changes, home studies, provide recommendations for adults, children and families. Authored a DCF approved Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course curriculum and certified to teach the course. Founded a Supervised Visitation Center and created a supervised visitation program with a letter of Agreement (in progress) with the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court as a court approved supervised visitation center.

Provides surrounding communities with hope, support, education and treatment for individuals and families of all ages troubled by disordered life patterns, social concerns, behavioral concerns, mental health concerns, relationship issues, family issues.

Competent to testify regarding: parent and child reunification assessment and therapy, parent alienation, parenting plans and timesharing evaluations, child custody issues, family and marital relationships, child development, clinical diagnosis, mental health assessments, substance abuse assessments, family assessments, parenting assessments, parenting skills, parental alienation, home studies, biopsychosocial assessments. Led instruction for anger and aggression management, domestic violence, stress management. Testified as an expert witness in the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial circuit.

## **PAST EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

### **Helping Hands Counseling: Private Practice**

*11/2013-02/2016      Marriage and Family Therapist, Reunification Specialist, Supreme Court Certified Family Divorce Mediator, Social Investigator, Social Investigator, Supervised Visitation Monitor, Parent Education Instructor including parent Alienation, Qualified Parent Coordinator, Supervised Visitation Program Director*

Practices privately serving individual adults, adolescents, children as well as families. Services include screening, assessment, treatment and recommendations for: Reunification therapy, parent alienation, parenting skills, parent timesharing, domestic violence, physical and emotional abuse, family risks, needs and strengths, substance abuse, mental health, individual and family behavior modification, individual, group and family counseling for anger management interventions, stress management interventions, child development, domestic violence and abuse, teach parent education classes, crisis intervention and management, substance abuse, parenting skills, conflict resolution, biopsychosocial assessments; Forensic services as a Social Investigator, Certified Family Mediator, Parenting Coordinator. Provides direct services to the general public, as well as consults with attorneys in the areas listed above. Receives referrals from the 13th Judicial Circuit to conduct court ordered individual mental health & substance abuse assessments, parenting assessments, family assessments, parent alienation assessments, reunification therapy, supervised visitation, timeshare changes, home studies, provide recommendations for adults, children and families. Authored a DCF approved Parent Education and Family Stabilization Course curriculum and certified to teach the course.

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relationships, child development, clinical diagnosis, mental health assessments, substance abuse assessments, family assessments, parenting assessments, parenting skills, parental alienation, home studies, biopsychosocial assessments. Led instruction for anger and aggression management, domestic violence, stress management. Testified as an expert witness in the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial circuit.

### **BayCare Health Systems: Community Health Care**

*10/2008-04/2015 Marriage and Family Therapist; Social Investigation work; Parent Coordination work, Reunification assessment and therapy, Field Based Programs: Family Intensive Treatment (FIT) for substance abuse, Urgent Family Care (UFC) for mental health, Family Intervention Services (FIS), Children's Case Manager for substance abuse and mental health, Parent Education*

Worked for a managed community health care system with BayCare Health Systems obtaining direct referrals from Child Protective Services, and Youth and Family Alternatives/Eckerd, providing individual adults, adolescents, children and families with screening, assessment, treatment and recommendations for: reunification, parenting skills and parent education, domestic violence, physical and emotional abuse, family risks, needs and strengths, parent alienation, parental timesharing, substance abuse, mental health, individual and family behavior modification, individual and family counseling for anger management interventions, parenting skills, parent education, behavior modification, stress management interventions, child development, domestic violence and abuse, crisis intervention and management, substance abuse, parenting skills, conflict resolution, social investigation work, parent coordination work. Provided direct services to the general public, as well as consulted with Youth and Family Alternatives/Eckerd, Child Protective Services in services listed above. My duties entailed attending case staffing's with YFA, attending court hearings and testifying in the 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit if needed in the services listed above for clients on my caseload, assisting individuals and families to work through their case plan in order to reunify with their child(ren). Trained in FSFN to document family progress for dependency cases directly to judges and CPI workers. Led trainings related to anger management and stress management for Pasco County Head Start Program.

Competent to testify regarding: parent and child reunification assessment and therapy, parent alienation, parenting plans and timesharing evaluations, child custody issues, family and marital relationships, child development, clinical diagnosis, mental health assessments, substance abuse assessments, family assessments, parenting assessments, parenting skills, parental alienation, home studies, biopsychosocial assessments.

Led trainings related to anger management and stress management for Pasco County Head Start Program.

### **Healthcare Connections of Tampa**

*04/2012-06/2013 Marriage and Family Therapist in the Family Program at the Substance Abuse Inpatient Facility; Masters Level Internship*

Gained experience training and conducted individual therapy and taught psychoeducation groups for the substance abuse inpatient population and their families. Led therapeutic groups for the patients and their families related to ACOA, codependency, support, stress management, anger management, parenting skills, coping with having an addicted family member.

### **Pasco County School System**

*08/2008-06/2008 Special Education & Regular Education Integrated Classroom Teacher/Imagine School*

Taught as a special education teacher providing behavioral modifications, parent training in discipline, behavior modification for home, implemented Project Child, created individualized lesson plans, peer mentor for children in the special education program.

### **Hillsborough County School System**

*08/2001-08/2008 Special Education Teacher/Mendez Exceptional Center*

Taught at an exceptional center with students' whose mental health issues and behaviors were too severe for mainstream public school. The center is part of MHC program who provided psychiatric care and therapy in the center as it is in the building with Mental Health Care (MHC). Provided education and peer mentor support for child and adolescents as inpatients in the Children's Crisis Center. Counseled students whose behavior, school progress, mental and physical handicap or condition indicated need for assistance. Led and attended team meetings to discuss and determine students' school and community resources and other treatments to effect remedy. Collaborated in teams with psychologists and therapists to child and adolescent progress and unmet needs, prepared individualized lesson plans to show objectives and skills for student achievement. Assessed, identified and implemented appropriate behavioral modifications to alter attitudes and behavior of parents and children that caused or aggravated problems.

## **TRAININGS FOR CERTIFICATIONS**

- Parent Coordination (Mediation Training Group)
- Professional Academy of Custody Evaluators (PACE)  
Assessing Parent Alienation  
How to conduct a Comprehensive Custody Evaluation by Barry Bricklin, Ph.D. and Gail Elliot, Ph.D. 2015  
Interviewing and assessing adults, children and families, conducting home studies and field investigations, identifying, organizing and understanding important collateral sources of information, administering and interpreting psychological assessments used

in child custody evaluations, standardized questionnaires, surveys and other data collection tools, report writing

- HIV/AIDS 2015
- Domestic Violence 2015
- Medical Error Prevention: A Mental Health Perspective 2015
- Healthcare Professional - Basic Life Support (BLS) 2015
- Family Mediation Certification Training; Approved by the Florida Supreme Court and the Association for Conflict Resolution by Gregory Firestone, Ph.D. 2014
- Parent Coordination 2017

## **TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS**

### **Rules of Court Standards for Professional Supervised Visitation Monitors 2013**

Family and Juvenile Law Basics

Child Abuse Reporting Laws

Sexual Abuse, Substance Abuse and Mental Illness Impacts on Visitation

Cultural Sensitivity (Working with Various Backgrounds, Customs and Traditions)

Working with the Courts, Parents and Attorneys

Intake Interviews (Visitation and Client Screenings) and Gathering Documents

Safety and Security Procedures

### **Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) 2013**

### **Crisis Response Care (CRC) by University of South Florida 2008, 2016**

Crisis Response Team interventions (CRT)

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Individual and Group Crisis Intervention

Suicide prevention, intervention & postvention

### **Physical Abuse and Neglect: 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017**

Socioeconomic and familial factors that place children at risk, the signs indicative of abuse and neglect, and methods for medically evaluating and treating physically abused or neglected children

### **Conflict Resolution: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017**

Conflict resolution & management, negotiation, and dispute resolution techniques for handling conflicts, effective intervention strategies

### **Crisis Support: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017**

Defines what a crisis is and what it may look like. Define roles in dealing with a family's crisis,

and how and when to intervene and refer for services. De-escalation skills, active listening skills, how to respond to a family crisis, and the importance of intervention services

**Cultural Awareness: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016, 2017**

Define culture, explore their own culture and the culture of other participants, and address how stereotypes, values, and communication impact relationships

**Discipline with Dignity: 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017**

Prevent meltdown, as well as tips for how to handle discipline with dignity.

Defining Discipline vs. Punishment

Understanding Child Development

Exploring Needs and Behaviors

Disciplining with Dignity

**Family Violence; Impacts of Violence on Children: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017**

How to recognize the signs of violence in the home, identify different types of abuse, understand the cycle of violence, and understand the effects of family violence on children

**Trauma Informed Care (For Providers): 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017**

Defines trauma, reactions and coping mechanisms to trauma and the factors that impact an individuals' response to trauma

Types of Trauma: Acute, Chronic and Complex

Adaptive Responses to Trauma: Dissociation/Hyperarousal Continuum

Tools for working with families experiencing trauma

**Make Parenting a Pleasure: 2012, 2015, 2016**

Improve parenting skills and an understanding of child development

Positive discipline

Nurturing

Attachment and bonding

Child development

**Mandated Child Abuse Reporting Training: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016**

Legal responsibilities to report known or suspected child abuse and neglect, how to recognize indicators types of abuse and neglect, and how to make a Suspected Child Abuse Report

**Nurturing Parenting Program: 2013**

Philosophy and ethics of group and home based programs

Impacts of negative and positive nurturing, re-parenting and cellular memories

How to administer the Adult and Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2)



Define the 5 Constructs: Child Development, Empathy, Discipline, Family Roles and Empowerment.

**Strengthening Families with Protective Factors: 2013**

Protective Factors to be used as a strength-based tool to prevent child abuse and neglect

Incorporate Protective Factors into daily interactions with families.

Nurturing & Attachment

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Parental Resilience

Social Connections

Concrete Support in Times of Need

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

**Effects of separation and divorce on children and families: 2011, 2015, 2016**

**Grief and loss associated with parental separation and removal from the home due to child abuse and neglect: 2015, 2017**

**Family violence, including domestic violence and the effects of domestic violence on children: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017**

**Child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017**