

**We empower people of all ages to achieve success – at home, at work.
We believe a connected community is a thriving community.**

NMCS Mental/Behavioral Health and Wellness Programs

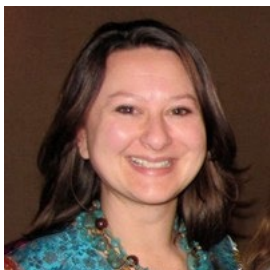
Our person-centered approach to mental health services offers individuals and families a chance to achieve a better quality of life. We provide integrated trauma-informed and culturally centered services to children, adolescents, families, and adults who would benefit from mental health services and supports.

Services are provided in our main clinic at 680 Wilson Ave, at the Novato Teen Clinic, and in schools throughout the Novato Unified School District. We are also able to offer confidential telemental health services.



**To get started, please call (415) 892-1643, ext 239
(se habla Español) for a confidential phone assessment.**

Clinical Supervisors and Administrative Staff:



Alaina Cantor, LCSW, Director of Wellness Programs

Alaina (she/her/siya) is a social service professional with over twenty-five years of experience developing, evaluating and managing programs designed to improve the quality of life of diverse communities. Her administrative skills are uniquely complemented by her therapeutic experience, as she is highly effective in helping children and families address issues stemming from complex trauma, mental health disorders and psychosocial stressors.

Alaina received the 2010 Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award from the Marin County Human Rights Commission for her work developing a Promotores (community health advocate) program with Berta Campos-Anicetti, MPH and the Novato Youth Center while she served as the Associate Executive Director. Alaina left the organization to pursue a long-held goal of obtaining her license as a clinical social worker but returned to North Marin Community Services in October 2019, bringing with her extensive clinical experience as an LCSW. While working with Kaiser Permanente and with Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's) in the Bay Area, Alaina gained proficiency in providing psychotherapy to under-served patients while also helping to oversee integrated behavioral health services in an administrative capacity. She facilitated a successful Psychiatric Grand Rounds program, served youth and families in an outpatient eating disorder treatment program, implemented Medication Assistant Treatment (MAT) programs, and practiced an array of evidenced-based therapy modalities including Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Family-Based Therapy (FBT), among others.

Born and raised in Novato, Alaina enjoys exploring the S.F. Bay Area with her husband and two daughters.



Dr. Stefanie F. Smith, Director of Behavioral Health

Stefanie F. Smith, Ph.D is a licensed clinical psychologist who brings 30 years of youth and family focused experience across a range of sectors including public and private school education, community mental health, crisis response, health care/hospital, legal, non-profit, residential, and undergraduate and graduate training. She has served as direct service provider (teacher and psychologist), researcher and program evaluator, consultant, supervisor, trainer, professor, and executive leader. She specializes in training, strategic planning, program development, and evaluation design. Her overarching expertise is in trauma specific services, and trauma-responsive care. *She has published articles and book chapters in this area and presented at regional, national, and international conferences and is an affiliate member of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.*

She loves to develop innovative and engaging services that use the science of trauma and adversity and to train providers, especially in trauma-specific interventions. She is “passionate about expanding the ways we think about providing mental health services, especially when it comes to trauma and adversity, so the services can be more accessible and effective.”

Dr. Smith loves spending time outdoors, especially hiking and participating in many other outdoor recreation activities and spending quality time with her daughter.



Jason Newman, LMFT, Lead Clinical Supervisor

Jason (he/him/His) brings a breadth of experience, with a particular passion for working with marginalized youth and the LGBTQ+ population, including transgender youth. He received his undergraduate degree at University of California, Santa Cruz and his master’s degree from University of San Francisco. He has worked with adults with severe and persistent mental illness, as well as with children and low-income families, offering a variety of therapeutic services in schools and community-based settings. Some of Jason’s prior experience ranges from doing Gottman’s couples therapy to TAY (transitional age youth) case management and serving populations such as justice involved youth. He has been trained in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) from the Linehan Institute and Psychwire. Jason also has experience and training in CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), narrative therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction.

Jason believes in the mind-body connection and enjoys teaching others how taking care of the body can help our mental health. He is passionate about helping clients gain compassion for a larger sense of self. Self-acceptance and being your own unique individual are core components that have driven Jason to want to be a therapist and are some of the reasons he continues to connect with so many who are on the path to embracing oneself and loving oneself fully. Jason is also highly interested in doing groups as well as providing family therapy especially with youth who do not feel like they are given a voice in their day to day lives.



Marlia Keeley-Newbold, LMFT, Clinical Supervisor

Marli (she/hers) is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who has been working with North Marin Community Services since 2015. She is passionate about helping new clinicians learn and grow in this field and is experienced in supporting children and families to strengthen their relationships, She hold a certification in Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) and has worked with children and families in many different capacities in addition to her role as a therapist and clinical supervisor. These roles include supporting parents on a parental support hotline, volunteering for multiple mentoring programs which focus on reaching individuals from underserved populations, including at-risk adolescents, children in the foster care system, and developmentally disabled youth. Marli received her Master's in Counseling Psychology from the Wright Institute and she holds a B.A. in Sociology and Educational Studies from Colorado College.

When she is not working, Marli enjoys spending time with her son and husband hiking through the hills of Marin County.



Laura Abel, Wellness Program Assistant Manager

Laura (she/her/hers) is happy to be part of the team at North Marin Community Services. She is a Bay Area native, raised in Petaluma. Laura is a graduate of Santa Rosa Junior College and UC Berkeley, where she majored in Social Welfare. After working as an IT consultant for non-profit organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area, she spent several years as a data analyst at Santa Rosa Junior College. She joined the North Marin Community Services team in March of 2022, where she is able to combine her background in social work and data analysis while supporting the mental health and wellness staff as an assistant manager.

In her spare time, Laura hangs out with her cat Andromeda, reads everything under the sun, and devotes endless hours to solving puzzles.



Alma Perez, Wellness Program Navigator

Alma is excited to join the team at North Marin Community Services. Alma comes from the East Bay but was born and raised in Jalisco, Mexico. Since an early age, art and education have been her passions; Alma is an artist, poet and community advocate. She has a Bachelor of Science in Human Services with a concentration in children and family services. Alma has worked in healthcare for 8 years specializing in case management, mental health, and community outreach. Combining her education and experience, Alma uses a holistic approach to better support her clients.

Clinical Staff:



Andrea Alphonso-Gibbs, Associate Marriage & Family Therapist (AMFT)

Andrea emigrated to the United States from Guyana when she was 9 years old. As the eldest of four siblings, she helped her family navigate and adjust to their new circumstances in the northeastern region of the country. After graduating with a general science degree, she worked with young adults and families in higher education as an admission counselor. Later she continued in the technology field where some of her duties involved helping international researchers get adjusted and settled within the community. After having children, she retrained and worked with parents and students, providing support to families by teaching children, conducting parenting classes and mentoring those others in Early Childhood Education. Andrea graduated from Dominican University with a Master's in Counseling Psychology and has provided psychotherapy to young adults.

Andrea strives to provide children and families with attuned collaborative care, working to reinforce strengths, build skills and use play and the arts to creatively and more fully integrate mind and body to promote and augment healing through common stressors and transitions. In her spare time, she likes to be active by hiking and gardening. She also enjoys reading, meditating and making useful beautiful objects by knitting, sewing and painting.



Andrea Melano, Associate Marriage & Family Therapist (AMFT)

Andrea Melano is the daughter of Mexican immigrant parents and was born and raised in San Pablo, CA located in the East Bay. She attended Saint Mary's College of California (SMC) for her undergraduate studies and obtained her B.A. in Spanish. During her time at SMC, she discovered her love for traveling, learning about new cultures and traditions when she studied abroad in Spain and Mexico for a year and a half. Andrea also obtained her master's degree in Counseling from SMC where she specialized in College Student Services, Marriage Family Therapy, and Professional Clinical Counseling.

Andrea has worked in the academic field for over 10 years supporting the low-income, minority, and immigrant student population. Before joining NMCS as a Bilingual Mental Health Clinician, she provided academic, career, and personal counseling to community college students at Merritt College in Oakland. During the pandemic she decided to expand her knowledge and received her Integrative Nutrition Health Coach Certificate. She decided to take on this certificate program to be able to support individuals' mental health and overall well-being in a holistic way. Andrea loves nature; you can find her exploring trails throughout the Bay Area. She also has a deep love for dancing Latin music, spending time with her family and loved ones, traveling, and eating delicious food, pastries, and desserts. Andrea enjoys being part of the NMCS family and being of service to the Novato community.



Brenda Fonarev, Associate Marriage & Family Therapist (AMFT)

Brenda is excited to be joining the team at North Marin Community Services as a Mental Health Associate Clinician II. Brenda has over 20 years of experience in child welfare helping families manage such challenges as substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health issues. Her first position was with the Families First Program in Pontiac, Michigan where she learned to team with families while her most recent position with Sonoma County allowed her the opportunity to provide counseling and preventative and supportive services that were inclusive and promoted wellbeing. Brenda holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from UCLA and a master's degree in Counseling from Cal State Fullerton. She is a lifelong learner who feels it is important to continue growing as a mental health professional. Brenda and her husband live in Novato and have enjoyed raising their two children in this community. She enjoys reading, hiking and spending time with her family.



Carmen Perez, Associate Clinical Social Worker (ACSW)

Carmen holds a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and is a bilingual therapist (offering services in Spanish & English) with North Marin Community Services. She is also a Salvadorean/Canadian born in El Salvador. She is a painter and sees the world through an artistic mind, striving to add beauty, order, and healing to her life and that of her clients. She likes to volunteer to engage in community life, to share herself, and to learn from other people. In the past, she has worked with different populations when serving clients and is proud to serve Latinx clients at NMCS. She is very committed to the mission and work of NMCS.



Christie Rovira, Associate Marriage & Family Therapist (AMFT)

Christie (she/her) joined North Marin Community Services in August 2021. She provides school-based therapy at San Jose Intermediate School and also sees clients through NMCS' community-based agency services. Christie will received her Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology from Dominican University. Christie incorporates a variety of treatment modalities into her work and is especially interested in Somatic, Attachment and Biopsychosocial Psychology. Christie has an incessant curiosity about the interdependent relationship between mental and physical health - especially while enduring chronic and/or acute stress. Through personal experience and professional training, Christie embraces the undeniable mind/body connection and is humbled by how small adjustments in one's life can create positive change.



Elise Holland, Associate Marriage Family Therapist (Associate MFT)

Elise is excited to transition from being an MFT Trainee to an AMFT at North Marin Community Services! She will continue providing mental health counseling services to adolescents at Sinaloa Middle School, as well as taking on more agency clients. Elise has just finished her Master's in Counseling Psychology from the California Institute of Integral Studies and is pursuing her MFT license. Prior to this work, Elise was a recruiter, building teams for a variety of Bay Area technical companies. Elise grew up in England before moving to Michigan, then Boston and finally the Bay Area. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, hiking and writing children's fantasy. She is most passionate about holding clients in unconditional positive regard; combining transpersonal aspects of psychotherapy with evidence-based modalities such as CBT, DBT and trauma-informed care.



George Nicol, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT)

George Nicol is a graduate of the Counseling Psychology program at Dominican University and has served as a mental health clinician with North Marin Community Services since 2019. George has a specialty providing care and dedicated support to adolescents and families and has served as a primary therapist at San Jose & Sinaloa Middle School for the past three years. In addition to school-based therapy, George also provides therapeutic care to the community through NMCS' sliding scale services and NMCS' contract with Marin County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services. George connects with his clients through his warm and engaging presence, attuning to the needs of his clients, and empowering individuals to be the experts of their own experience. George utilizes strength-based, motivational, cognitive behavioral, and narrative techniques to support his clients to build skills that will allow them to achieve their personal goals.



Jenny Maldonado, Marriage Family Therapist Trainee (MFTT)

Jenny joins North Marin Community Services with a profound passion for supporting and helping uplift immigrant communities. She was born and raised in Marin County. In recent years, she has obtained two associate degrees from College of Marin, a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and is currently working on her master's degree at Dominican University of California in order to become a licensed therapist. Jenny brings with her the experience of being a daughter to immigrant parents and the eldest sibling of a blended family. She hopes that the challenges she has overcome will help her connect and empower individuals of similar backgrounds. In addition to her educational accomplishments, Jenny enjoys teaching dance to teenagers, coaching group fitness classes, and journaling in front of a sunrise.



Josephine Biteng, Marriage Family Therapist Trainee (MFTT)

Josephine “Josie” (she/her) is a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) trainee completing her practicum through providing school-based and clinic-based mental health counseling services with North Marin Community Services. She is a first-generation Filipino American who is sensitive to families’ varying levels of acculturation and works to empower families to be proud of their heritage.

Prior to dedicating her work to MFT, Josie provided Applied Behavior Analysis services to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder as a Registered Behavior Technician, where she realized that working with entire family systems was the most conducive to sustainable and meaningful change for the individuals she supported. As an MFT Trainee, Josie has successfully worked with children in an elementary school setting, as well as families, couples, and adults both in person and through telehealth. Josie’s familiarity with providing age and culturally appropriate services is influenced by her broad volunteering history, including conducting intakes at an acupuncture detox clinic setting, providing resources for at-risk families in a family service setting, and supervising activities for children in a community-based youth center.



Mackenzie Graham, Marriage Family Therapist Trainee (MFTT)

Mackenzie grew up in Arizona and moved to San Rafael her senior year of high school. Then she earned her Bachelor’s degree in child development from Sonoma State University where she graduated cum laude. She is currently in her second year at Dominican University earning her Master’s degree in Counseling Psychology.

Mackenzie plans to merge her interests in child development and psychology by working to foster social-emotional development in preschool-aged children. She has previously worked with at-risk middle school students and while she played many roles working with them, she felt most fulfilled when she brought parents, teachers, and students together to create a community of support for the kids. Additionally, she has spent the last year working as a preschool teacher focusing on early intervention and emotion comprehension. She is looking forward to joining NMCS and blending her interests in creating a supportive community, early intervention, and fostering social and emotional development.

When Mackenzie isn’t working you can find her hiking with her two dogs, paddle boarding, or curling up with a good book.



Marika Yakumithis, Associate Marriage Family Therapist and Professional Clinical Counselor (AMFT, APCC)

Marika Yakumithis is excited to be joining the team at North Marin Community Services. She is a recent graduate of Dominican University, earning a Master’s in Counseling Psychology pursuing MFT and PCC licensures. Marika, a Bay Area native, enjoys trying different restaurants throughout the Bay, going for walks with her dogs and spouse, and spending time with her family and close friends.

Quote: “I appreciate the opportunity to give back to my community by providing mental health services and support through counseling.”



Nadia Last, Marriage Family Therapist Trainee (MFTT)

Nadia is a Marriage and Family Therapy Trainee currently pursuing her Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy from The Wright Institute in Berkeley, California.

Prior to pursuing Psychotherapy, Nadia led Product Marketing for Block (formerly known as Square’s) small business lending team.

Nadia hosts a podcast called, The Current, where she shares about psychology, spirituality, and other healing modalities she’s found valuable along her own journey. Nadia originally hails from Grand Rapids, Michigan and obtained her bachelor’s degree in Communications and Sociology from Northwestern University.

In her spare time, you can find her hiking with her two dogs in the hills behind her home in Lucas Valley.

