

NEWS FROM

GAMFT

Georgia Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

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Legislative Update

David Blanchard, Legislative Committee Chair



David Blanchard

GAMFT's Legislative Committee's success this year began with the groundwork laid from numerous members from previous years, and ended with the passage of HB 591 in the final hours of the 2021 legislative session.

Before this year, Georgia's 1,050 licensed MFTs were the only counseling discipline that were able to diagnose and treat clients experiencing mental health issues, but were not able to authorize emergency evaluations for those in

crisis. HB 591 has brought our profession's authority on this issue to parity with the over 8,500 licensed LPCs and over 8,200 social workers in the state. It is set to become law July 1, 2021.

It is with deep gratitude to our membership that we celebrate this moment. Many of you were a direct part of this success.

A model for success

The story of this success is at the heart of how our association should work, when at its best. We built on momentum, prepared the foundation, and asked for your active contributions.

Well before the 2021 session began, GAMFT members met with key legislators during the summer of 2019, as well as with representatives from the Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission Report. We also met with lobbyists with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to advocate for the 1013/2013 to be included in their agenda.

It was from this participation and advocacy that we ensured GAMFT's legislative priority for the 1013/2013 issue be included within the Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission Report.





We continued to lay the foundation by also securing support from DBHDD, the [National Alliance on Mental Illness of Georgia](#), and the [Georgia Psychiatric Physicians Association](#).

During the session, our voice was loudly heard by state legislators — with over 300 emails being sent to them throughout the process. And the Committee worked to prepare a team to offer testimony that included Helen Morton, Steve Livingston, Dan Upshaw, Michele Smith, Courtney Geter, and Michael Chafin.

All of these efforts were supported by GAMFT's new lobbyist, Elizabeth Appley, who helped us focus our efforts successfully. It is hard to imagine the successful passage of HB 591 without her hard work. Her expertise, attention, and follow-through proved critical at several points in the process where concerns and misunderstandings of the impact of our proposed change were raised by legislators.

We were also successful in applying for financial support from AAMFT toward our lobbying efforts. GAMFT hopes to be a future recipient of AAMFT's Practice Protection Fund (PPF) grants for legislative and advocacy issues relevant to the MFT profession. AAMFT created the Practice Protection Fund (PPF) to help defend the MFT profession from legislative and regulatory threats, as well as to help fund the advancement of the profession in every state. Donations can be made at [Advocacy Donation to AAMFT Practice Protection Fund](#).

Preparing for our future

Georgia's own Michael Chafin, while AAMFT's president, worked hard to ensure the following paragraph is included in the AAMFT code of ethics:

Commitment to Service, Advocacy and Public Participation

Marriage and family therapists are defined by an enduring dedication to professional and ethical excellence, as well as the commitment to

service, advocacy, and public participation. The areas of service, advocacy, and public participation are recognized as responsibilities to the profession equal in importance to all other aspects. Marriage and family therapists embody these aspirations by participating in activities that contribute to a better community and society, including devoting a portion of their professional activity to services for which there is little or no financial return. Additionally, marriage and family therapists are concerned with developing laws and regulations pertaining to marriage and family therapy that serve the public interest, and with altering such laws and regulations that are not in the public interest. Marriage and family therapists also encourage public participation in the design and delivery of professional services and in the regulation of practitioners. Professional competence in these areas is essential to the character of the field, and to the well-being of clients and their communities.

In short, it is part of our ethical code to participate in activities that improve our communities and societies.

We are called to be concerned with “developing laws and regulations pertaining to marriage and family therapy that serve the public interest, and with altering such laws and regulations that are not in the public interest.”

The committee has already begun meeting with stakeholders to solicit input toward future legislative priorities.

With this momentum from our recent success driving us forward, we at GAMFT are excited for these next ventures, which are only made possible by the advocacy and efforts of our members. We encourage and welcome your input to our work.■

The Legislative Committee is comprised of David Blanchard, Michael Chafin, Michele Smith, Dan Upshaw, Heather Maldonado, and Tommy L Hampton.



Other Tracked Legislation

→ **HB307: Georgia Telehealth Act; revise**

to revise the "Georgia Telehealth Act"; to revise definitions; to authorize health care providers to provide telemedicine services from home; to authorize patients to receive telemedicine services from their home, workplace, or school; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Last Action: 5/4 Signed by Governor

→ **HB 395: The Professional Counselors Licensure Compact Act; enact**

to amend Chapter 10A of Title 43 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to professional counselors, social workers, and marriage and family therapists, so as to revise certain licensing provisions; to enter into an interstate compact known as the "Professional Counselors Licensure Compact"; to authorize the Georgia Composite Board of Professional Counselors, Social Workers, and Marriage and Family Therapists to administer the compact in this state; to authorize the board to conduct national background checks; to provide for conditions; to provide for eligibility; to provide for related matters; to provide for a short title; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Last Action: 5/10 Signed by Governor

→ **HB 590: Mental health; grant program to establish assisted outpatient treatment programs**

to amend Title 37 of the O.C.G.A., relating to mental health, so as to provide for a grant program to establish assisted outpatient treatment programs for persons with mental illness who struggle to maintain engagement with essential mental health treatment; to provide for related matters; to provide for effective dates; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Last Action: 2/24 Introduced

A few corrections...

In the GAMFT Winter 2021 Newsletter, Cecil Walker's title was incorrect. It is LAMFT. Please also note a few updates to our board of directors and chapter chairs at the end of this newsletter.

Upcoming GAMFT Events



*Shirley Shani Ben-Zvi,
Student Representative*

Virtual Town Hall: What Now? Next Steps for Students and Pre-Licensed Professionals

- Date: Friday, June 25
- Time: 12:00pm to 1:30pm, EST
- Location: Zoom

GAMFT Student Representative Shirley Shani Ben-Zvi and special guest Dr. Kathryn Klock-Powell, PhD, LMFT, RPT-S, and former member of the licensing board, invite you to join them as they provide guidance on the process towards licensure, answer questions about paperwork and exam prep, discuss differences in licensure tracks between accredited and non-accredited programs, and more. This is a free virtual event.

[Click here to register!](#)



*Elizabeth Bizzell,
Approved Supervisor
Committee Chair*

Supervision Roundtable

- Date: Friday, July 9
- Time: 9:00am to 10:30am, EST
- Location: Zoom

The GAMFT Supervision Committee hosts this roundtable event as an opportunity for AAMFT Approved Supervisors and AAMFT Supervisor Candidates currently conducting supervision to connect and explore all things supervision.

[Click here to register!](#)

Upcoming Events, continued



Supervisor-Supervisee Panel Plus Meet & Greet

- Date: Friday, July 16
- Time: 11:30Am to 1:00pm, EST
- Location: Zoom

Are you looking for supervision, or interested in learning more about how to find the right supervisor? This event will have a panel of supervisors with current openings for supervisees. The supervisors will share about different supervision styles and answer supervisee questions.

[Click here to register!](#)



Virtual Town Hall: Intersection of Ethics and Clinician Self-Care

- Date: Friday, August 27
- Time: 12:00pm to 1:30pm, EST
- Location: Zoom
- CEs: 1.5 Ethics hours pending approval

Join the GAMFT Ethics committee for this virtual town hall on the topic of the intersection of ethics and clinician self-care.

[Click here to register!](#)

Christus Powell Fellowship 2021

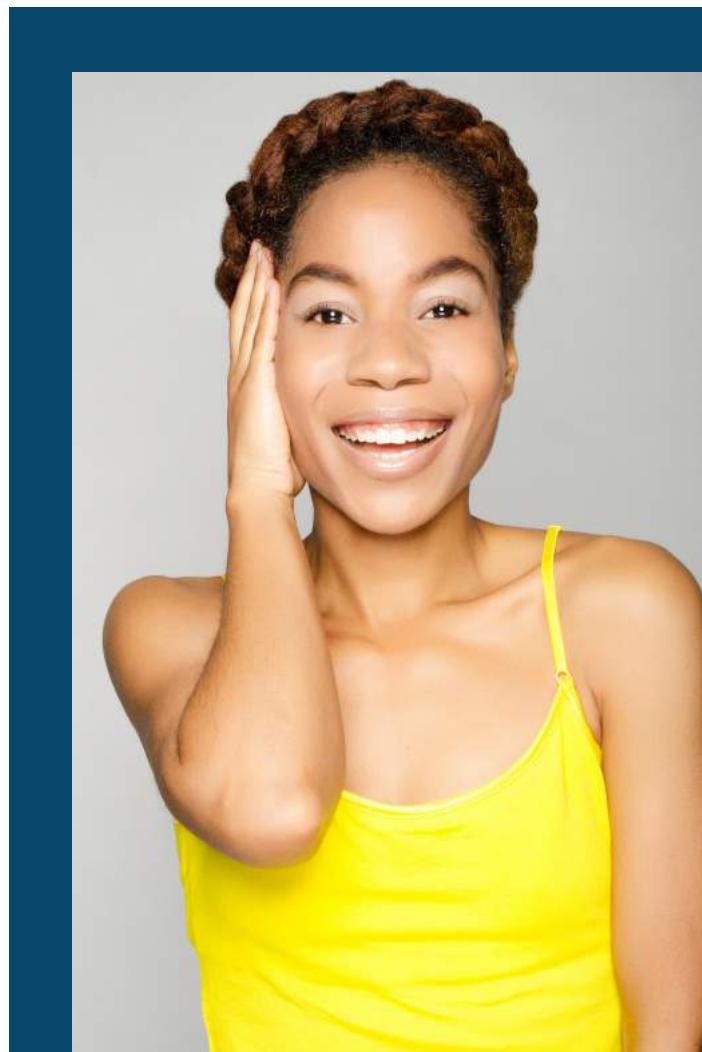
Cecil Walker, Multicultural Affairs Chair

The Georgia Association for Marriage and Family Therapy would like to congratulate Soumayah Nanji, this year's recipient of the Christus Powell Minority Fellowship. In efforts to promote the importance of diversity in the work of MFTs across the state, this award is given to a Georgia student of minority background who shows promise in and commitment to a career in MFT education, research, or practice.

Soumayah Nanji is an Atlanta native, PhD Candidate at Northcentral University with a specialization in Culture, Diversity, and Social Justice in a Global Context. Currently, she is an intern with Cura Couples and Family Therapy Center and Kaleidoscope Family Therapy with diverse clients that identify as BIPOC and transnationals.

As a PhD student, her honors and awards include being a Northcentral University GAP Grant and Leading In Your Field Scholarship recipient as well as a new inductee into the Delta Kappa International Marriage and Family Therapy Honor Society.

As a practitioner, Miss Nanji envisions our social issues as a holistic experience. Soumayah is an avid traveler having traveled to more than 20 countries across 5 continents examining the importance of culturally competent and culturally sensitive social constructs in the mental health field. Her practice of therapy as a solution focused therapist in training employs a therapeutic process of helping clients identify their issues as interconnected facets of their well-being. Soumayah believes that as therapists



Soumayah Nanji
2021 Christus Powell
Fellowship Awardee

we are mirror images of the clients that we serve and that there are teaching moments for both us and the clients throughout the therapeutic relationship.

Miss Nanji prides herself on being a proponent of global mental health and diligently aims to create a therapeutic environment of inclusivity and intersectionality in the field of marriage and family therapy. Soumayah hopes to create positive change in the field of marriage and family therapy by becoming an advocate for increasing more

opportunities for BIPOC therapists to create sustainable careers and to create more accessibility for diverse clients to be both served from a multicultural approach and by multicultural practitioners who innately can identify with the societal systems that marginalize their families and communities.

Miss Nanji is honored and humbled to be chosen as the 2021 GAMFT Christus Powell Fellowship recipient and looks forward to becoming a licensed marriage and family therapist in the state of Georgia. ■

Virtual Spring Symposium Student Poster Winners

Jennifer Lambert-Shute, Treasurer

Though this year's spring event moved online, GAMFT carried on our important tradition of including student poster presentations. This session provides students with a wonderful opportunity to practice their presentation skills and is a great networking opportunity. GAMFT extends congratulations to this year's winners!

Research Poster Winner

"Let's Have a Sex Talk" How Conversations about Sex Impact the Experiences of Black Women Presented by Asia Dukes, Chyna Doughty, and Kinsey Baughman

Non-Research Poster Winner

Resilience in Transgender Youth Presented by Carson Outler

Selected CE Opportunities

**See a full list of all continuing education events at
gamft.org/upcoming-ce-events/**

6/12	Ttlemental Health: Breaking Geographical Boundaries Hosted by Dr. Sonja Sutherland <i>6 Telemental Health Hours; Live webinar</i> Call 404-835-6119	7/16	Conducting Individual Psychotherapy from a Systems Perspective Hosted by The Knowledge Tree <i>5 Core Hours; Live webinar</i> Call 404-913-2005
6/23	Addressing Emotional Dysregulation in Children Using Play Therapy Techniques Hosted by The Methodist Home for Children and Youth <i>6 Core Hours; In-person in Macon, GA</i> Call 478-737-9601	7/30	Black Lives Matter: Antiracist Practice with African-American Clients Hosted by The Knowledge Tree <i>6 Core Hours; Live webinar</i> Register here or call 715-855-8107
6/25 6/26	Live 43rd Annual Meeting and 1st Virtual Conference and Enduring 43rd Annual Meeting American Family Therapy Academy <i>Up to 43.75 Core Hours; Live webinar</i> Call 651-789-3722	8/11	Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias Certification Training Hosted by Pesi, Inc. <i>6.25 Core Hours; Live webinar</i> Call 715-855-5257
7/9	Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Made Easy: ACT for PTSD, Anxiety, Depression & Personality Disorders Hosted by Pesi, Inc. <i>6.25 Core Hour; Live webinar</i> Call 715-855-5257	8/11	Postpartum Depression & Related Disorders: Clinical Strategies to Identify and Treat Mothers Who Are Suffering in Silence Hosted by Pesi, Inc. <i>6.25 Core Hours; Live webinar</i> Call 715-855-8107

Classifieds

Opportunities posted with GAMFT for employment, supervision, and more.

Employment Opportunity

Successful counseling practice in Alpharetta looking to add a skilled couples counselor. Experience working with couples in graduate school and/or clinical settings required. Marriage and Family Therapy license an advantage. Must have scheduling flexibility to be willing to see some clients on Fridays and Saturdays. Please send cover letter and resume to andrew@mcconaghiecounseling.com.

Supervision Opportunity

New post graduate supervision group forming this spring. Meets the 2nd Friday of the month 9-11am in Roswell. Cost is \$60. Consultation prior to group start is required. Led by Jennifer Vann, LMFT, AAMFT Approved Supervisor.

<https://www.cornerstonefamilyservices.com/copy-of-jennifer-vann-lmft>.

Employment Opportunity

Thriving private practice in Woodstock, Georgia seeking licensed clinician to perform intake, therapy, and possible assessment/testing responsibilities. Clinician must be willing to join major insurance panels if not already a participating provider. Warm, friendly work environment with administrative and collegial support. Significant independence and ability to plan own work hours. Please contact office manager, Teresa Ingram, if interested at 770-592-0150.

Employment Opportunity

Accelerated Recovery Centers is seeking experienced LMFTs for Full-Time and Contract openings in our Family Systems Program. For more information, please contact Scott Ferguson at 678-429-3958 or at sferguson@iwanttostopnow.com. Days, Nights and Weekends.

Office Space

BEAUTIFUL OFFICE SPACE NEAR CLAIMONT AND I-85. Amenities include office supplies, equipment, free parking and handicap access. Reasonably priced. Contact Jeanne Montgomery MA, LMFT 404-633-3347.

Submit to an upcoming issue

In addition to sharing relevant information with our members, the goal of the GAMFT newsletter is to strengthen our MFT community by supporting and promoting connection and inclusiveness through sharing our collective wisdom, resiliency and enthusiasm. Therefore, the more of us who contribute our knowledge, experience, and ideas, the richer our GAMFT family becomes.

Therefore, the more of us who contribute our knowledge, experience, and ideas, the richer our GAMFT family becomes. We encourage members to make submissions including clinically related articles that offer educational and/or inspirational insights to your colleagues, reviews such as books or movies that may be valuable to MFT's, or any relevant information on issues involving the GAMFT community.



Stephanie Jordan

Submission Guidelines:

- Articles can include a maximum word count of 920 for full page; recommend maximum 750-word count with photo. Approximate word counts also include: 690 for 3/4 page; 460 for 1/2 page; 230 for 1/4 page.
- We encourage including a professional photo of the author. Please also provide your name and credentials as they should appear in the article. Please submit a 1-2 line biography of the author as well to be added at the end of the article. The Newsletter is published quarterly, in February, May, August, and November.
- Submissions need to be received by noon on the 20th of the month prior to the newsletter going out that you would like your submission included in. Therefore, if you want to publish in the May newsletter, you will need to have your submission in by April 20th.
- Articles can be submitted in Word or PDF format to StephanieJordanLMFT@gmail.com and any questions can be directed to our Social Media/Communications Chair and Newsletter Editor, Stephanie Jordan, at the above email address.

We look forward to hearing from you and including your voice in this process. Thank you!

Advertise with us

Looking to announce an upcoming workshop, employment opportunity or available office space? The GAMFT newsletter is released quarterly in February, May, August, and November and provides a great option to reach our active members.

Rates:

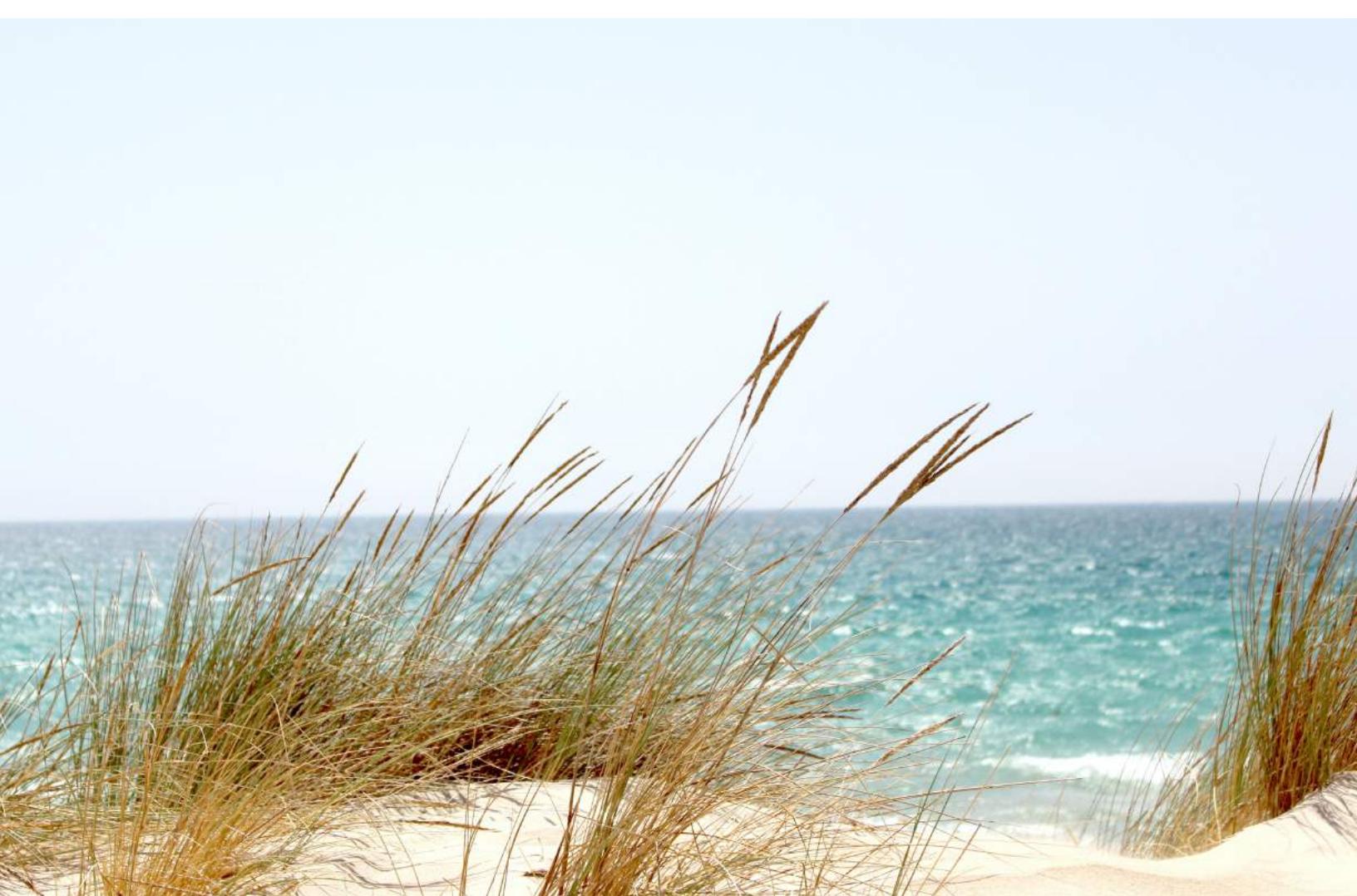
- Classified listing \$35.00
- 1/4 page (3 1/2 x 4 5/8) \$70.00
- 1/2 page (7 5/8 x 4 5/8) \$140.00
- Full page (7 5/8 x 9 7/8) \$280.00

★ 20% Discount for GAMFT Members

Submission Deadlines:

- January 15
- April 15
- July 15
- October 15

To inquire about advertising with us, email
StephanieJordanLMFT@gmail.com



Board of Directors

Executive Committee

President: Andrea Meyer Stinson, Ph.D., LMFT, 478-301-4098
President-Elect: Kara McDaniel, Ph.D., LPC, 678-430-8089
Vice President: Adam Albrite, Ph.D., LMFT, 404-804-0218
Secretary: Jennifer Vann, LMFT, 770-910-2753
Treasurer: Jennifer Lambert-Shute, Ph.D., LMFT, 229-245-4323

Committee Leadership

Approved Supervisors: Elizabeth Bizzell, LMFT, 478-952-8736
Continuing Education: Jeff Bickers, LMFT, 229-244-4200
Elections:
 Adam Froerer, Ph.D., LMFT, 678-547-6787
 Tiana Teague, LAMFT, 470-354-0239
 Tabitha McCoy, ABD, LMFT, 229-921-7761
Ethics: Meg McLeroy, LMFT, 404-721-3596
Legislative: David Blanchard, LAMFT, 770-876-0639
Membership: OPEN POSITION!
Multicultural Issues: Cecil Walker, LAMFT, 470-231-9640
Personnel: OPEN POSITION!
Public Relations: Abby Culin, LAMFT, 678-329-7009
Student Representation: Shirley Shani-Ben Zvi, LAMFT, 770-846-2595
Social Media/Communications: Stephanie Jordan, LMFT, 678-744-4064

Chapter Leadership

Coastal GA (Savannah): Ashley Moore, LMFT, 912-675-8913
East GA (Augusta): Ashley Quamme, LMFT, 919-218-8697
Metro Atlanta: Dan Upshaw, LMFT, 404-585-1404
North Metro Atlanta: Ken Cross, LMFT, 770-429-9293
Middle GA (Macon): Andrew Benesh, Ph.D., LMFT, 478-301-4078
Northeast GA (Athens): Andrea Farnham, LMFT, CST
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South GA (Valdosta): Leah McMillan, DPA, LMFT, 229-262-1000
South Atlanta: K. Nichole Hood, LMFT, 678-671-9908
Southwest GA (Albany): Nicola Bradley, LMSW, 229-312-7006
West GA (Columbus): Fred Remick, LMFT, 706-577-2725