

[Times listed in CST]

For CEU/PDU credit see pages 10–12

10:45am – 12:30pm **Welcome**

Kelli Kelley

Founder & CEO of Hand to Hold

Jessica Thornton MS, RDN, CSP, CNSC, CLC

Senior Manager, Medical Education Nutrition, Mead Johnson Nutrition

Hand to Hold NICU Hero Award

This award recognizes a NICU professional who provides exemplary family-centered care. NICU Heroes encourage and support the NICU parents' role as a valued member of the care team.

Disparities and Inequities in Healthcare and how it Relates to the Mental Health Challenges of NICU Families

Health Equity

Neel Shah, MD, MPP, FACOG

Keynote speaker

12:30pm – 12:35pm **Mindfulness Moment**

Ayesha Youngblood, LPC

1:00pm – 2:00pm **Bereavement and Palliative Care in the NICU – Parents' Perspectives**

Grief & Loss

Christine Tester, MHPS, PSS (moderator); Monica Rivera, MHPS; Amber Pasquerella, Raliene Banks

2:15pm – 3:15pm **Mental Health and the Latinx Community**

Health Equity

Laudy Burgos, LCSW-R, PMH-C

3:15pm – 3:20pm **A Look Inside Hand to Hold's Resource Store**

Renli Reynolds

3:30pm – 5:00pm **Caregiver Burnout: Building Resiliency through Self Care**

Burnout & Self-Care

Nyisha Causey

**Agenda is subject to change.*

CEU Eligibility – RN, LCSW, LMFT, CCLS, LMHC, LPC, MHPS.

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10:45am – 12:30pm **Welcome**

Katrina Moline
Executive Director of Hand to Hold

Hand to Hold NICU Hero Team Award

This award recognizes a NICU unit that provides exemplary family-centered care. NICU Heroes encourage and support the NICU parents' role as a valued member of the care team.

Supporting the Mental Health of Dads in the NICU

Mental Health
Sheehan Fisher, PhD
Keynote speaker

12:30pm – 12:50pm **Live Mindfulness Meditation Break**

Maureen Minow

1:00pm – 2:00pm **Children with Complex, Special Needs in the NICU – Parents Perspectives**

Communication
Diana Marrero, MHPS (moderator); Shelby Linzza (moderator); Cynthia Shogreen, LMHC, LPC, BCBA, MBA; Britney Newberry; Austin Haralson

2:00pm – 2:05pm **NICU Nurse Appreciation**

Hand to Hold

2:15pm – 3:15pm **Trauma-Informed Care in the NICU**

Trauma-Informed Care
Parijat Deshpande

3:30pm – 5:00pm **Back Pocket Scripts – Self Advocacy in the NICU and in Life**

Mental Health
Kasey Mathews

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Kelli Kelley, Founder & CEO of Hand to Hold

Kelli founded Hand to Hold in 2010 after struggling for years with difficulties surrounding the premature births of both of her children. She now invests her time and talents to raise awareness about the high incidence of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder among NICU parents, and advocating for hospital- and community-based programs to ensure better outcomes for babies and families.



Jessica Thornton MS, RDN, CSP, CNSC, CLC

Jessica is a dietitian and a neonatal/pediatric nutrition fellowship graduate from the IU School of medicine. Her primary role is to act as a conduit of scientific information between Mead Johnson Nutrition and healthcare professionals. Jessica provides scientific support and clinical application of company products, feeding protocol guidelines, and research methods. She strives to pull people together into highly effective teams. Her strong nutrition knowledge drives her to ask insightful questions, identify the most important part of a problem or issue, and see things from a different clinical perspective.



NICU Hero Award

Individual Award: **Richard Shaw, MD**

Richard Shaw is Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at Stanford University School of. He is a nationally recognized child and adolescent psychiatrist with a specialty in the field of psychosomatic medicine. His contributions to teaching and education have also been acknowledged by numerous teaching awards at Stanford University. Dr. Shaw's research interests include the study of psychological stress in children with physical illness and their parents including parents of premature infants. He has authored three textbooks including the second edition of the Clinical Manual of Pediatric Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry which are the core teaching texts in his specialty in children's hospitals across North America. His book, Treatment of Psychological Distress in Parents of Premature Infants: PTSD in the NICU, was published in 2020 and focuses on psychological care for NICU parents.

*The Individual Hero Award is proudly sponsored by **Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals***

Keynote Speaker



Neel Shah, MD, MPP, FACOG

Neel Shah, MD, MPP, FACOG, is Chief Medical Officer of Maven Clinic, the world's largest digital clinic for women's and family health, and a visiting scientist at Harvard Medical School. He oversees the design and delivery of Maven's care model, serving 20 million people globally in all phases of life. As a physician-scientist, Dr. Shah has written over 100 articles and contributed to 4 books. Dr. Shah has been recognized with the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Humanitarian of the Year Award from the March of Dimes. He is featured in the 2023 Emmy-nominated film "Aftershock," and "The Color of Care" from the Smithsonian Channel and Executive Producer Oprah Winfrey. He serves on the boards of Neighborhood Villages and Diana Health, and resides in Cambridge, MA.

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1:00pm – 2:00pm



Christine Tester, MHPS, PSS

Christine is Hand to Hold's Hospital Program Manager, overseeing the team of Family Support Specialists in partner hospitals across Texas. She has been a Certified Mental Health Peer Specialist since 2018 and a Peer Support Supervisor since 2021. She completed additional training with PSI & The Seleni Institute on maternal mental health, perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, & perinatal loss. She is currently working on her Trauma-Informed Professional certification. Through her own experience, Christine understands some of the challenges NICU parents face. She believes that walking alongside parents during their NICU journey is an honour. She speaks English, Spanish, & French.



Monica Rivera, MHPS

Monica Rivera has been a Family Support Specialist with Hand to Hold since 2024, supporting NICU families in Houston, TX. She is certified as a Mental Health Peer Specialist and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Monica has previously worked with children with special needs as a hospital social worker, as well as volunteering to provide peer support to families who receive a prenatal diagnosis. She is the mother of a child who has Trisomy 13, which is often referred to as a life-limiting diagnosis. Monica uses her own experiences to support families with anticipatory grief and trauma when receiving a life-limiting diagnosis, as well as supporting families who receive palliative and hospice care.



Amber Pasquerella

Amber is an elementary school teacher turned NICU mama turned stay-at-home-mom turned bereavement peer mentor. Her NICU journey began in 2021 with her son, Bryce. Born GBS positive, he spent 10 days in the NICU and is now a thriving 4.5 year old. In 2023, her 2nd child, Daisy, suffered a severe brain injury, HIE, during delivery. Daisy lived for 6.5 weeks before passing away. Both NICU stays and her tragic loss deeply impacted her. She gained hope and strength through Hand to Hold's support groups as she continues to navigate grief. Amber is a peer mentor through Hand to Hold and Just Enduring, and is working to become a peer specialist in NY.



Raliene Banks

Raliene was born and raised on Guam and spent the past 17 years serving as an Air Force pilot. She resides in Utah with her husband Josh, 5-month-old son Asher and two cats. But Raliene has one more child—Faith was diagnosed with Trisomy 13 at 15 weeks gestation and passed a week after birth. The Support Organization for Trisomy (SOFT) was her lifeline during pregnancy, which led her to later serve on its board of directors. Faith's life was brief but her impact immeasurable. In her honor, Raliene founded Crowned with Faith, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting trisomy families. Both Faith and Asher spent time in the NICU, and Raliene is forever grateful for the hands that held her babies when she couldn't.

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2:15pm – 3:15pm



Laudy Burgos, LCSW-R, PMH-C

Laudy Burgos, LCSW-R, PMH-C is a bilingual licensed clinical social worker with more than 27 years of experience in perinatal mental health, family services, and child welfare. She is trained in trauma-informed treatment approaches including Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT). As Associate Director of Social Work Services at Mount Sinai Hospital, Ms. Burgos oversees social workers in the OB/GYN Ambulatory Practice and the NICU, and manages the Northeast Regional Alliance (NERA) Behavioral Health–Social Work Program, and currently serves as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for Postpartum Support International (PSI).

3:30pm – 5:00pm



Nyisha Causey

Nyisha Causey is the founder of OCEANS Plus Consulting, LLC, where she offers communities educational advocacy, networking, and support. With over a decade of experience as an educator, advocate, and nonprofit professional, Nyisha specializes in special education, family support, and community engagement. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from UC Santa Cruz and a Master's in Special Education from Lamar University. Nyisha is deeply committed to empowering parents and training educators through trauma-informed, restorative, and inclusive practices. Her work reflects a strong track record in program leadership, board service, and public policy advocacy, all aimed at enhancing educational experiences for students with disabilities.

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Katrina Moline, Executive Director of Hand to Hold

Katrina became Hand to Hold's Executive Director in 2024 after joining as Operations Director in 2018. She holds a Bachelor's of Science in Communications from Texas State University. Katrina first connected with Hand to Hold in 2009 as a peer mentee following the birth of her son at 24 weeks, later becoming a peer mentor herself. Before Hand to Hold, she spent 14 years as an Account Manager at Screen Solutions, Inc. Now, she focuses her talents on a mission close to her heart, advocating for NICU families and supporting better outcomes for babies and their families.



NICU Hero Team Award

Unit Award: **Ascension Dell Children's Medical Center NICU, Austin, TX**

Dell Children's Medical Center is a level 4 NICU in Austin, Texas. They received their 3rd year of USNWR rankings and currently hold #36 in Neonatology and #3 in the Southwest region. The staff care for approximately 500 admissions annually and provide family-centered care as their core values. One Dell Children's NICU mom, Stephanie, says, "Our NICU journey has not been easy, but it has been made bearable and even beautiful in moments because of the incredible support from the NICU Psychosocial team. They are great advocates and empower us to be part of his care journey. Everyone on the team has reinforced the importance of emotional, spiritual, and developmental care, right alongside medical care. These relationships have not only supported us but have sustained us in our sanity as parents."

The Individual Hero Award is proudly sponsored by Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals

Keynote Speaker



Sheehan Fisher, PhD

Sheehan Fisher, PhD, is an Associate Professor and perinatal clinical psychologist at Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine and the Associate Dean for Academic Environment and Success at The Graduate School. He conducts research on mood disorders in birthing and non-birthing parents during the perinatal period to examine the effects of psychosocial stress on parents' mood, parenting, and ultimately infant/child health outcomes. Ultimately, Dr. Fisher's goal is to optimize the health and effectiveness of the parental team to positively influence the child health trajectory and help the family thrive.

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1:00pm – 2:00pm



Diana Marrero, MHPS

Diana Marrero is a Dominican-American, wife, and 3-time NICU mom. Her oldest NICU baby is now 15 years, and she had 2 pandemic babies ages 4 and 3. As a Mental Health Peer Specialist/Bilingual Virtual Family Support Specialist at Hand to Hold, she provides emotional and psycho-social support to NICU families, drawing from her own experiences. In facilitating the Black NICU and Spanish-speaking NICU support groups, she gets to hear the experiences and perspectives of these families and their interactions with NICU professionals. She is currently pursuing a Peer Specialist National Certification with a focus on maternal mental health.



Shelby Linzza

Shelby is a Master of Social Work student at Baylor University's Diana R. Garland School of Social Work, pursuing a clinical concentration through the advanced standing program. She joined Hand to Hold in May 2025 as a Mental Health Therapist Intern. While she does not have direct NICU experience, growing up alongside a sibling with a developmental disability shaped her empathy and trauma-informed, family-centered approach. She supports NICU parents and families through individual and group settings and is passionate about promoting emotional adjustment and sibling well-being.



Cynthia Shogreen, LMHC, LPC, BCBA, MBA

Cynthia serves Hand to Hold families as a Virtual Family Support Specialist and a Bilingual Mental Health Counselor. She is responsible for supporting NICU families virtually, with a goal to reduce the negative impact of a NICU stay and ensure the best outcome for the entire family. She earned her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and behavior analysis in Florida. A NICU mom herself, Cynthia strives to provide excellent service and support, a sense of community, and a safe space for NICU families.



Britney Newberry

Britney Newberry is a proud single mother of three from Georgia. Her youngest daughter, Skye, spent more than two years in the NICU and now thrives as a trach baby. That journey opened her eyes to how little awareness and support there is for families raising medically fragile children. Britney now works from home to stay close to Skye. Her goal is to build a nonprofit that helps mothers and families like hers – providing support, resources, and hope while also raising awareness for NICU and trach families. She wants every mom to know they are not alone, and that even in the hardest seasons, love and resilience can carry us through.



Austin Haralson

Austin's son, Zenith, was born weighing just 1 lb 10 oz and admitted to the NICU, where he spent 137 days before coming home. During that time, Austin and his family faced immense challenges, including job loss and the uncertainty of raising a medically complex child. When it became clear that Zenith's needs required full-time care, Austin embraced the role of dedicated caregiver and advocate. Today, he manages a demanding schedule of therapies, appointments, and coordination while drawing on his background in operations to stay organized and resilient. Austin hopes that by sharing his story he can shed light on how being a NICU parent of a medically complex child can lead to unique mental health challenges and experiences.

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2:15pm – 3:15pm



Parijat Deshpande

Parijat Deshpande is a clinically trained child and family therapist, university lecturer, and the founder of Ruvelle, a company dedicated to trauma-informed resources for parents and professionals aiming to prevent high-risk pregnancy, NICU stays, preterm birth, and medical trauma. With a background in clinical psychology, psychoneuroimmunology, and child development, Parijat specializes in translating complex research into practical strategies that improve outcomes for families and care teams alike. Her work has supported patients, parents, clinicians, practitioners, hospitals, and organizations in making trauma-informed care both accessible and actionable.

3:30pm – 5:00pm



Kasey Matthews

Kasey Mathews is a holistic life coach, inspirational speaker, and award-winning author of *Preemie: Lessons in Love, Life and Motherhood* and *A Mom's Guide to Creating a Magical Life*. As the mother of a preemie and a passionate advocate for premature birth awareness, Kasey shares her personal story to offer insight, hope, and heart to families and professionals alike. With a Master's in Education and advanced training in Ancestral Clearing, Reiki, Energy Codes, Feminine Power, Happiness Coaching, and Gateless Writing, Kasey brings a deeply intuitive and solution-oriented approach to her work. She's on a mission to uplift and empower women – especially those navigating challenging life circumstances, helping them uncover their gifts and lead lives filled with purpose, joy, and meaning. Her work has been featured on Yahoo, NBC Tonight, NHPR, and Doctor Radio, and she calls New Hampshire home.

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DISPARITIES/INEQUITIES IN HEALTHCARE

- Describe how race, socioeconomic status, geography, and language barriers contribute to mental health challenges for NICU families.
- Explain the role of digital health and how it can bridge the gap in access, support, and continuity of care.
- Learn strategies to address disparities in clinical, digital, and community settings.

BEREAVEMENT AND PALLIATIVE CARE IN THE NICU – PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

- Learn the importance of compassionate, trauma-informed care in the NICU.
- Learn strategies for supporting NICU families with sensitivity and respect.
- Learn helpful communication techniques for supporting bereaved families in the NICU.

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE LATINX COMMUNITY

- Learn the unique emotional and mental health needs of Latinx families in the NICU.
- Learn how language barriers, immigration related concerns, and medical mistrust can compound the NICU experience.
- Learn culturally responsive strategies to support Latinx families in the NICU.

CAREGIVER BURNOUT: BUILDING RESILIENCY THROUGH SELF CARE

- Learn to recognize the signs of caregiver burnout in NICU families.
- Learn the impact of prolonged stress on NICU families.
- Learn practical tools for self care and how early intervention can build resilience and protect caregiver well being.

SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF DADS IN THE NICU

- Recognize the signs and symptoms of depression in NICU fathers.
- Learn strategies to help support the mental health challenges of fathers in the NICU.
- Discuss the impact of the perinatal period on the mental health of fathers.

CHILDREN WITH COMPLEX, SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE NICU – PARENTS PERSPECTIVES

- Learn strategies for supporting NICU families who have children with complex medical needs.
- Learn communication techniques that can be used to support NICU families with compassion and respect.

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE IN THE NICU

- Learn the basic principles of trauma informed care in the NICU.
- Learn how trauma informed practices can improve long term outcomes, enhance family engagement, and support provider well being.
- Learn common misconceptions regarding trauma informed care in the NICU.

BACK POCKET SCRIPTS: SELF ADVOCACY IN THE NICU AND IN LIFE

- Learn how to know what to say what not to say to NICU parents.
- Introduce the concept of scripts to guide supportive communication with NICU families.
- Learn powerful tools for reclaiming agency during difficult moments in the NICU.

INTENDED AUDIENCE:

- RN-CE, LCSW/LMFT: CEUs provided by PAC/LAC
- CCLS: PDUs provided by ACLP
- LPC, MLPC: CEs provided by NBCC
- MHPS: CEUs provided by Texas Certification Board

CREDITS:

Continuing education credits available for intended audiences. For specific questions contact info@handtohold.org.

COST:

The event is free for parents. There is a \$40-\$50 fee for NICU professionals. All fees are non-refundable.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

To request accommodations for special needs, please email info@handtohold.org.

GRIEVANCES:

To obtain the grievance policy or report a grievance, please email info@handtohold.org.

CERTIFICATES:

Credits are awarded per day. To obtain your certificate, you must be present for all sessions each day.

RN-CE, LCSW/LMFT: Once the conference is over, you will take the evaluation survey. Your certificate will be emailed to you by PAC/LAC.

LPC, MLPC, MHPS: Once the conference is over, you will take the evaluation survey. Your certificate will be emailed to you by Hand to Hold.

CCLS: After the conference, your certificate will be emailed to you by Hand to Hold.

Please note: If you do not log in to the conference sessions with the link you receive (e.g., you watch a session with your coworker), we will not be able to award you credit. The CEU/PDU providers require sign-in proof from every participant.

CREDENTIALING SERVICES:

For LCSW/LMFT: PAC/LAC is approved by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists to sponsor continuing education for LCSW and LMFT. PAC/LAC maintains responsibility for this program/course and its content. This course is approved for 10.0 LCSW and 10.0 LMFT continuing education credits. PAC/LAC's provider number is 128542.

For Nurses: The Perinatal Advisory Council-Leadership, Advocacy, and Consultation (PAC/LAC) is an approved provider by the California Board of Registered Nursing. This course is approved for 12.0 contact hours. PAC/LAC's provider number is CEP 5862. Licensee must retain this certificate for a period of four years.

This activity is jointly provided by Partners for Advancing Clinical Education and Hand to Hold and is approved for AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™, ANCC, APA, and ASWB credits. Full accreditation information available on our [registration page](#).

This program is provided in partnership with PAC/LAC, ACLP, NBCC and Texas Certification Board.



WHAT ACCREDITATION COMPANY COVERS MY FIELD?

PAC/LAC: RN-CE, LCSW/LMFT
ACLP: Child Life Specialist (CCLS)
NBCC: LPC, LMHS
TCB: MHPS

HOW MANY CREDITS ARE AVAILABLE?

PAC-LAC: RN-CE – 6 CEUs per day. LCSW/LMFT – 5 CEUs per day.
ACLP: CCLS – 5 credits per day.
NBCC: LPC, LMHS – 5 credits per day.
TCB: MHPS – 5 credits per day.

DO I HAVE TO ATTEND ALL THE SESSIONS TO GET CREDIT?

You must attend an entire day to receive credits for that day.

WHERE DO I GET MY EVALUATION TOOL TO GET MY CEUs?

PAC-LAC: [Click here to find your evaluation.](#)
NBCC: [Click here to find your evaluation.](#)
TCB: [Click here to find your evaluation.](#)
ACLP: Attendees will receive the certificate via email

All evaluation surveys must be completed by Friday, Nov. 21 at 5 pm central time.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT MY CREDITS AFTER THE CONFERENCE?

PAC-LAC: info@paclac.org
All others: jenny@handtohold.org

WHAT IF I REGISTERED AS A PARENT AND WANT CEUs?

Please re-register as a professional so your licensing data is collected to support the CEU approval process.

WILL I BE ABLE TO WATCH THE CONFERENCE RECORDING TO EARN CREDITS?

No, only live sessions will be able to earn credits.

WHEN WILL I RECEIVE MY CERTIFICATE?

We anticipate you receiving your certificate within two months of attending the conference.

For more questions on CEUs/PDUs contact jenny@handtohold.org.