



Becky Lomaka, MA, CT, FT

Becky Lomaka, MA, CT, FT is a Fellow in Thanatology and holds a master's degree in counseling psychology. Since 2013, she has served as the Director of Grief Support and Education at O'Connor Mortuary in Laguna Hills, California. In this role, Becky offers compassionate support to individuals and families coping with loss, and provides education and resources on death, dying, and bereavement to healthcare professionals, hospice teams, faith communities, and the broader public.

In addition to her work at O'Connor Mortuary, Becky is an instructor for the Institute for Exceptional Funeral Service, an organization dedicated to bridging the educational gap between mortuary science programs and real-world professional practice. Becky has presented at national and regional conferences, sharing her expertise with diverse professional audiences including funeral service professionals, healthcare and hospice providers, mental health practitioners, clergy, and educators. Her engaging presentations address topics such as grief literacy, compassionate communication, caregiver resilience, and the intersection of spirituality and end-of-life care.

She has served on the Board of Directors for the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC), an international professional organization committed to excellence and diversity in death education, end-of-life care, grief counseling, and research in thanatology. Locally, she serves on the Board of Directors for the Newport Mesa Irvine Interfaith Council, is a member of the Advisory Council for the Trauma Intervention Program and contributes as a community educator for the Orange County Advance Care Planning Partners.

Guided by the belief that "Education is our most powerful tool in helping communities understand and navigate death and grief," Becky remains passionate about raising awareness and transforming grief care. Her mission is to normalize the grief experience and foster a culture in which grief is embraced, understood, and honored.



Kelsi (Hildreth) Wilson, MS, CCLS

Kelsi (Hildreth) Wilson has been a Certified Child Life Specialist for over 8 years and has experience serving both pediatric patients and children of adult patients. Her career in pediatrics began on the Medical Specialty Unit, working primarily with Adolescent Medicine, Epilepsy, and Diabetes cohorts of patients. These chronic populations developed her love for building therapeutic relationships within the healthcare setting in order to curate a safe, expressive, and healing environment, despite facing often steep challenges. Her time was subsequently spent in the PICU and supporting the children of adult patients in a neighboring adult tower. Currently Kelsi serves as one of the child life specialists at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas, helping parents and children navigate the coping and loss that hospitalization of a loved one often brings. In addition, she is pursuing her Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies at Texas Woman's University, where she also serves as an adjunct professor and child life graduate assistant. Her research interests include pediatric patients coping within adult healthcare settings, adolescent patients/children and ACE scores, supporting families through infant loss, and fostering the academic and clinical development of child life students.



Tessa Whitten

Tessa Whitten is a Certified Child Life Specialist with over seven years of experience supporting children and families through medical challenges. She began her career in pediatric hematology/oncology, where she developed a deep understanding of the unique needs of children and their siblings as their families navigate serious illness. For the past three and a half years, she has worked with children of adult patients, helping them cope with the complexities of having a seriously ill or injured adult in their life.

With a strong passion for grief and loss work, Tessa is dedicated to creating safe and warm spaces for children to process their emotions and experiences. She has a special interest in anticipatory grief and is committed to supporting children and teens as they prepare for and adjust to the many losses life brings. As someone who leads with curiosity, Tessa is always learning more about serving children and families throughout the most tender moments of life. She finds balance in life through crafting, being the 'fun aunt', and the endless search for the perfect latte in Dallas, TX.



Laura Camerona, BS, BA, CCLS

A Certified Child Life Specialist in the hospital for 15 years, Laura built her career around helping children cope with their health conditions and the health conditions of their loved ones. In 2020, Laura founded Words Worth Repeating, a business that creates children’s books that support important conversations between children and their caregivers. She has since created customized books with numerous families, built templates that empower families to create their own customized Legacy Books, and published 16 titles about many topics related to grief, the hospital, and other health-related topics. Six of these published titles were commissioned by organizations/non-profits as ways to support and educate their target audience.

Laura hopes that her books and templates develop a vocabulary within the family unit that leads to continued conversations in the car or at the dinner table. She has focused her business on filling gaps in the children’s books that are available, so that families can find the resources they are needing. Laura is excited to inspire professionals to utilize well-written books by a variety of authors in their work and to explore the possibility of creating books for their families.



Mackenzie Liberta, MA, CCLS, GC-C

Mackenzie is a dual-certified Child Life Specialist and Grief Counselor with a master's degree in Child Life and a bachelor's degree in Psychology. She has extensive experience supporting children and families through end-of-life experiences and bereavement in both hospital and nonprofit settings. Currently, Mackenzie provides grief support to children and teens in schools and also facilitates professional presentations across the Chicagoland area on supporting children through grief and loss. She has had the privilege of presenting on children's grief at national conferences, including the National Alliance for Children's Grief Annual Symposium and the Association of Child Life Professionals Annual Conference. Mackenzie is also the founder of The Grieving Space, a child life private practice in Chicago, dedicated to supporting children and families navigating grief related to serious illness and death loss.



Shaindy Alexander

Shaindy Alexander has been practicing as a Certified Child Life Specialist for 23 years. In 2024 she took on the leadership role as clinical manager with the Child Life team at SickKids Hospital in Toronto, Canada. During her professional career she has supported patients and families within palliative care, grief support, haematology/oncology, burns and plastic surgery, and critical care. She is passionate about partnering with youth, families and health care providers while advocating for children and teenagers to be included and supported throughout the illness journey.



Kia Ferrer, PhD, CCLS

Kia Ferrer, PhD, CCLS is a Certified Child Life Specialist in the NICU at Northwestern Medicine, specializing in psychosocial support, bereavement care, and culturally conscious family engagement. With a Doctorate in Child Development, Kia is dedicated to advancing health equity and improving the experiences of children and families navigating critical illness.



Thuy Uyen C. Vo

Thuy Uyen C. Vo is a dedicated Pediatric Social Worker at Lightways Hospice and Serious Illness Care, specializing in medical social work with a focus on supporting children and families through complex health journeys. With a strong foundation in hospital-based care, Thuy Uyen began her career in discharge planning and complex care coordination, where she developed a comprehensive understanding of navigating the healthcare system and supporting patients through some of life’s most challenging transitions.

Thuy Uyen brings expertise in psychosocial assessments, case management, and interdisciplinary collaboration, and is known for her compassionate, culturally-informed approach to working with underserved populations and minorities. Her professional philosophy centers on advocacy—ensuring that the voices of vulnerable individuals and families are heard, especially during times when they may not be able to speak for themselves.

She earned her undergraduate degree from Winona State University and her Master of Social Work (MSW) from the University of Iowa. Thuy Uyen holds social work licensure in both Illinois and is actively pursuing her clinical licensure with plans to achieve it within the next year. Her ongoing commitment to professional development is fueled by her belief in lifelong learning and the importance of growth in both skill and empathy.

Above all, Thuy Uyen is driven by a deep sense of purpose: to provide awareness, support, and unwavering advocacy for families navigating serious illness. Through every interaction, she works to elevate dignity, bridge gaps, and empower the families she serves.



Scott Adair Cox

Scott Adair Cox has worked with children and adolescents since 1998. He is a trauma specialist that has provided psychotherapy since 2002. Scott spent the first 22-years of his career in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice. Scott held leadership positions between 2006 and 2020, yet always kept a caseload to ensure he maintained the skills necessary to warrant the Clinical Director designation. Scott worked as a Clinical Social Worker between 2020 and 2024 in Illinois' only outpatient Pediatric Hospice and Palliative Care program. Scott was an adjunct professor for ten years, teaching clinicians how to practice psychotherapy. Scott believes education is an important step in ensuring Illinois patients and families receive the quality of service they deserve as they navigate Hospice and Palliative Care. Finally, Scott enjoys research and is an advocate for children and families in need.



Katie Gradick

Katie Gradick, MD, MHS, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Utah in the Division of Pediatric Palliative Care. Dr. Gradick received her MD from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, and Masters of Health Science from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Medicine and Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland. She completed her internship at the Massachusetts General Hospital for Children, and her Pediatrics residency and a Hospice and Palliative Medicine fellowship at the University of Utah.

She is a qualified bilingual provider in Spanish and serves as the Director for Global Pediatric Palliative Care at the University of Utah. Her clinical interests include global capacity building in pediatric palliative care, language justice, and trainee wellness. She is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Gold Humanism Honor Society and serves as the Physician Wellness Champion for the Office of Graduate Medical Education.

Dr. Gradick enjoys cooking plant-based recipes, reading children's books, and hiking in the mountains with her husband, daughter, son, and dog.