

Keynote:

Responding to a Silent Epidemic in our Schools: Toward a Trauma Informed and Resilient School District

An epidemic occurs when the incidence rate of disease substantially exceeds what is expected. In the US, 7 to 12% of the general population suffer from PTSD. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, trauma screening is identifying over 50% of students reporting moderate to severe traumatic stress. The profound effect on the learning of students exposed to trauma is well documented. LAUSD SMH has understood this crisis for the past fifteen years, and we are doing something about that. This session will offer a framework for educators, mental health professionals and all adults who work with students and our future generations towards creating Trauma Informed School District and School Communities.

Pia Valenzuela Escudero provides local and national leadership to assist in the development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of trauma-informed services for the benefit of promoting resiliency, healing and recovery for children, families and LAUSD stakeholders. She currently directs the Los Angeles Unified School District School Mental Health and Crisis Counseling & Intervention Services. Her leadership has supported the nation's largest cadre of school mental health professional; over 300 Psychiatric Social Workers, Child Psychiatrists, and support staff who are trauma informed and trained in an array of trauma specific interventions.

She was one of the original contributors to the development of the Emergency Immigrant Education Program (EIEP), which was an early version of Cognitive Behavior Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) targeting immigrant students. CBITS is a skills based group intervention that is aimed at relieving symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and general anxiety among children and youth exposed to community violence and trauma. Her continued work with research partners at RAND Corporation, the UCLA Health Services Research Center, UCLA Nathanson Family Resilience Center, and USC has led to the development of effective tools, practices and programs that are implemented throughout LAUSD. Her partnership with Echo Parenting, funded by the California Endowment, is furthering the opportunity to better serve the students of LAUSD by supporting their resiliency and optimizing their potential to contribute to our communities.

Pia Valenzuela Escudero is the proud mother of two talented individuals who are making an impact in the world; they have found their passions in the world of music and literature.