

# ***8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CHILD WELFARE FORENSICS CONFERENCE***



**PRESENTED BY:**  
**Earl Carl Institute for Legal & Social Policy, Inc.**  
**Thurgood Marshall School of Law**  
**Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association**

**MCLE CREDITS 7.75**  
**Course Number 174285325**  
**Ethics 3.0**



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY  
Thurgood Marshall School of Law  
Earl Carl Institute for Legal  
& Social Policy, Inc.



Texas Criminal Defense  
Lawyers Association

# **The Earl Carl Institute's 8<sup>TH</sup> Annual Child Welfare Forensics Conference: *Bridging Technology, Trauma, and the Law***

**July 25, 2025 ~ 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
MCLE 7.75 Hours (Up to 3.0 Ethics)**

## **Program Agenda**

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| <b>8:00 a.m.</b>  | <i>Welcome and Opening Remarks</i><br><b>Attorney Cheri A. Abbage, Associate Director of Student Development and Special Projects, Earl Carl Institute.</b>   |
| <b>8:15 a.m.</b>  | <i>Behind the Screen: Investigating Child Exploitation in the Digital Age-A Law Enforcement Perspective on Cyber Abuse, Legal Collaboration, and Survivor Empowerment(.75 Ethics)</i> – <b>Sergeant Gary Marquis, Child Exploitation Unit Investigator, Office of the Attorney General of Texas.</b>  |
| <b>9:45 a.m.</b>  | <b>Break</b>  |
| <b>10:00 a.m.</b> | <i>Pediatric Clinical Evidence in Child Welfare Litigation: Legal Insights on Interpreting Medical Findings in Abuse and Neglect Cases</i> – <b>Dr. Disha Jain, M.D., Child Abuse Pediatrics Team at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston</b>   |
| <b>11:00 a.m.</b> | <i>Combatting Online Child Exploitation in Texas: Legislative Advances, Legal Tools, and the Role of Digital Evidence</i> – <b>Brody Burks, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General of Texas</b>   |
| <b>12:00 p.m.</b> | <b>Lunch on your own</b>  |
| <b>12:30 p.m.</b> | <i>Trauma-Informed Justice in Child Welfare: A Judge's Perspective on Compassionate and Effective Advocacy - Insights from the 246th District Court on Navigating Trauma, Strengthening Families, and Advancing Equitable Legal Outcomes(1.0 Ethics)</i> – <b>Honorable Judge Angela L. Graves-Harrington, 246<sup>th</sup> District Court of Harris County</b> |
| <b>2:00 p.m.</b>  | <i>Evolving Standards in Texas Child Welfare Law: Legal Practice, CPS Procedure, and Case Law &amp; Legislative Updates</i> – <b>Jeanice Dawes, Esq., Jenkins &amp; Kamin LLP</b>   |
| <b>3:30 p.m.</b>  | <b>Break</b>  |

3:45 p.m.

*Unmasking Exploitation: Ethical and Legal Approaches to Interviewing Sexually Exploited Children in the Digital Age (1.25 Ethics)*– **Kristi Hawkins, Executive Director, Brazoria County Alliance for Children**

**5:00p.m.**

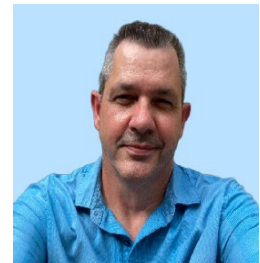
**Adjourn**

## ABOUT OUR SPEAKERS



**Cheri A. Buggs, JD, MA Comm. Ed.** currently serves as the Associate Director for Special Projects & Student Development at the Earl Carl Institute for Legal & Social Policy, Inc. In this capacity, she oversees the recruitment of law students, other volunteers, and interns as well as other special projects of the Earl Carl Institute. She earned her Juris Doctorate from The University of Texas School of Law where she was a member and officer of the Thurgood Marshall Legal Society, and the Texas Journal of Women and the Law. Buggs also earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from The University of Texas at Austin, and a Master of Arts in Communications with emphasis in Education from Grand Canyon University. Buggs' legal career began in the area of family law and public interest law. She has worked for the Legal Aid Society of Lubbock as well as several nonprofits where she served as a Staff Attorney for the Family Violence Project in New York City, and Executive Director of a Children's Advocacy Center in Arkansas. Immediately prior to joining the Earl Carl Institute, Buggs was a high school teacher, and adjunct professor in the areas of Government and Communications.

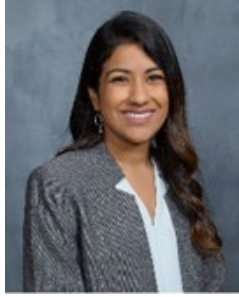
**Gary Marquis, a Master Peace Officer**, serves as a Sergeant within the Child Exploitation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General. Beginning his law enforcement journey in 1990 as a Correctional Officer at Somervell County Jail, located in Glen Rose, Texas, Gary furthered his career by graduating from the Tarrant County College Criminal Justice Training Center Police Academy in 1993, after his graduation he served a Patrol Deputy.



In 1999, Gary was chosen to be of first School Resource Officer/D.A.R.E. Officer at Glen Rose ISD, holding that role for six years. During these years he instructed both the elementary and intermediate curriculum. Transitioning to the Criminal Investigation Division in 2006, he delved into technology-based child exploitation cases, carving out a specialized niche. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 2008 and served as the Somervell County Jail Administrator until transferring to Patrol Lieutenant, a position he held until retiring from the Somervell County Sheriff's Office in 2012.

In May of the same year, Sgt. Marquis embarked on a new chapter with the Office of the Attorney General as a Child Exploitation Investigator. He was chosen at "Investigator of the Year" by his peers in 2012. In 2017, Gary was the recipient of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Texas regional office "Texas Hero for Children Award". Throughout his tenure, Gary has diligently investigated hundreds of cases involving the technology facilitated exploitation of children cases. Additionally, he has had the honor of serving as an adjunct instructor for NCMEC, imparting comprehensive training on child exploitation investigation to law enforcement officers statewide.

Gary and his wife Lynn reside in Lampasas, Texas, where they enjoy the company of their four adult children and five grandchildren.



**Dr. Disha Jain, M.D.** is a Child Abuse Pediatrics fellow with specialized training in the evaluation and care of children affected by abuse and neglect. I completed medical school at Des Moines University where I received my Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree and subsequently completed pediatrics residency at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit, MI. My clinical interests include multidisciplinary approaches to child protection, trauma-informed care, and community engagement in child welfare. I particularly enjoy education aimed at medical professionals and relevant community partners. I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in Public Health at the UTHealth

Houston School of Public Health with a focus in Health Promotion and Health Education.

**Brody Burks, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General.**

For the last 15 years, Brody has worked in public service for the State of Texas -as an assistant district attorney, criminal justice policy advisor to the governor, Chief of Staff to Commissioner Bobby Janecka at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and now as assistant Attorney General prosecuting human trafficking. He also serves as legislative liaison for the division and point of contact for stakeholder groups. He has also served as the Governor's appointee to the Interstate Compact on Adult Offender Supervision and has been a trainer and mentor through the Texas District and County Attorney's Association. He is a graduate of Austin College and The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law and lives in Austin with his wife, two children, and a rescue pit bull.



**The Honorable Angela Graves-Harrington** is the Presiding Judge of the 246th Family District Court in Harris County, a position she has held since January 1, 2019. She is the first woman and second African American to be elected to this bench.

Judge Graves-Harrington is Board Certified in Family Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. Her judicial philosophy is centered on implementing trauma-informed practices and policies within the child welfare system, ensuring every parent receives due process and support. In recognition of her work, the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission selected her to preside over one of only six trauma-informed project courts in Texas.

Before taking the bench, Judge Graves-Harrington founded the Law Offices of Angela L. Graves-Harrington, where she practiced civil, family, and criminal law. A proud alumna of Mississippi State University, Jackson State University, and Thurgood Marshall School of Law, she has been instrumental in developing the Child Welfare Externship at her law school alma mater, where she also serves as an adjunct professor.

Throughout her career, Judge Graves-Harrington has received numerous accolades, including the Texas CASA Judicial Innovation and Leadership Award and the Houston Bar Association President's Award. She is actively involved in various legal and community organizations, including the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated.

**Kristi Hawkins** serves as the Executive Director at Brazoria County Alliance for Children, Inc. She began her career at the child advocacy center in May 2011, starting out as a forensic interviewer and case manager. In her eleven years of conducting forensic interviews, she has spoken with over 1,000 children about their experience or exposure to abuse. Kristi served on the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas's Forensic Interviewer Training Faculty for seven years and has trained new and tenured interviewers throughout the state. Serving as a Board member with Brazoria County United Front Coalition to Fight Human Trafficking, she collaborated with various organizations to develop a protocol for serving children and youth in the community.



Kristi received her degree from Sam Houston State University and has lived in Brazoria County since 2005. Prior experience includes six years of providing rehabilitative case management services to children and adolescents diagnosed with mental illness and/or developmental delays at the Gulf Coast Center. Kristi has always been dedicated to serving children and families who have faced challenges and is deeply committed to the child advocacy center model and the cooperative approach to child abuse cases.



**Jeanice Dawes** is a University of Houston Law Center (UHLC) graduate. Before joining Jenkins & Kamin, LLP, as an Associate Attorney, she was an Assistant County Attorney with the Harris County Attorney's Office, representing the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (commonly called CPS). Jeanice is board certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in Child Welfare law.

Before matriculating at the University of Houston Law Center, Jeanice Dawes was a member of the Financial Managing Program (FMP) at General Electric Company. She also served as a Child Advocate during law school. She received the UHLC Distinguished Service Award for serving the community as a student attorney with the UHLC Civil Practice Clinic. After her stint at General Electric, Jeanice served as the Senior Financial Accountant for Imperial Homes, LTD. In 2002, Jeanice graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Finance from Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Jeanice has extensive experience litigating family law cases. She has tried numerous bench trials and has first and second-chair jury trial experience. Her family law experience includes handling divorce, child custody, modifications, paternity, adoption, and termination cases. Additionally, Jeanice has juvenile law and civil litigation experience.

As an Assistant District Attorney with the Galveston County District Attorney's office, Attorney Dawes representing CPS. For approximately four years, she was a private practice family law attorney representing clients across Texas, including Harris and surrounding counties. In her private practice, Jeanice represented parents as an Ad Litem attorney in Child Welfare cases and children as an Amicus and Ad Litem attorney.

Jeanice Dawes is a proud Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated- Omicron Tau Omega chapter member. She volunteers with her church, Time of Celebration Ministries Church (TOCMC), with the teen youth group. Jeanice is a member of the State Bar of Texas Family Law and the Child Welfare Law sections. She is also a member of the Houston Bar Association and a past member of the Houston Lawyer's Association. She is the proud aunt of four nieces and three nephews. Jeanice is a dog mom to a four-year-old boxer, Duchess Dawes, and a native Houstonian.



*Creating a new vision for legal & social justice*

Because truth matters: Freeing the Innocent

*Helping Children Today to Have a Better Future Tomorrow*

*Taking it to the streets: TMSL Street Law Program*

**The Bridge: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Legal  
& Social Policy**

*Increasing wealth through homeownership*

**Advocacy through academic and grassroots  
efforts**

*Creating opportunities to promote policy changes*

Student Development

Reducing disproportionality & disparity

*Serving the community*

Educational programming

**Black Girls Matter: Time for a Change**

**LEGENDS AND LEADERS**