

# Supporting Families of Children with Complex Needs

## **Program Description**

Children with complex needs are defined as children with co-occurring intellectual/developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges. Oftentimes, children with complex needs have higher recidivism rates to emergency departments and psychiatric inpatient units and more frequent interactions with law enforcement than their more typically developing peers.

Complex behavioral presentations caused by the effects of trauma and vulnerabilities associated with their diagnoses can cause many stressors on their family units. Difficulty finding specialists who understand these vulnerabilities, qualified staff to support children through challenges, and few options for trained crisis intervention professionals can take a toll on the child and their family.

Children live and thrive in the context of their families. Supporting children with complex needs by more thoroughly supporting their family units leads to better outcomes and lower recidivism rates for high-cost specialized services. In this presentation, we will explore ways that providers and families can build capacity to support their loved ones with complex needs through a strengths-based approach. Supporting families is the first step to successfully supporting a child in crisis.

## **Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Explain the behavioral presentation of children with complex needs and the vulnerabilities associated with their diagnoses.
2. Identify the ways disability can impact family units.
3. Define areas of need and strategies for keeping families safe during crises.

## **Target Audience**

Service providers, family members, caregivers, school personnel

## **Contact Hours**

4.5 contact hours

## **Program Agenda**

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Introduction to Complex Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Understanding diagnoses</li><li>○ Understanding vulnerabilities</li><li>○ Understanding complex needs</li></ul>
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Break
10:45 AM – 11:45 AM	Impacts of diagnoses on families
11:45 AM – 12:15 PM	Trauma for all members of the family
12:15 PM – 12:30 PM	Break

12:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Supporting families and providers as they support CWCN

- Introducing concrete strategies
- Planning for safety of all family members

2:00 PM

Adjourn

**Faculty:**

**Laurel Powell, MS** is the Program Manager for the Family Support Program and the Family Support Network of NC University Office at the UNC School of Social Work. Laurel has worked with the IDD population and their support systems for over 20 years in many capacities. Laurel has expertise in building systems that support individuals with IDD and those who are neurodivergent. Laurel has extensive experience with crisis prevention and intervention planning for people with IDD and trauma histories as well as people with IDD who have co-occurring mental health challenges. Laurel’s passions lie in supporting people with IDD and neurodivergence in advocating for their needs and utilizing positive psychology practices to build more accepting and affirming communities. Laurel has a degree in Special Education from UNC Wilmington and a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling and Psychology from the School of Medicine at UNC Chapel Hill.