

2025 APSAAC Awards

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Colloquium
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The APSAC Awards Program honors individuals, teams, and scholarly contributions that exemplify excellence in the prevention, assessment, treatment, investigation, research, education, and advocacy of child maltreatment.

Award recipients are selected through a competitive nomination process and reviewed by APSAC committees and leadership. The awards recognize achievements across multiple disciplines, reflecting APSAC's commitment to a multidisciplinary approach to protecting children and strengthening families.

This year's recipients include pioneers whose careers have shaped the field, researchers whose work advances evidence-informed practice, frontline professionals whose daily efforts protect vulnerable children, and leaders whose service has strengthened systems of care. Their accomplishments inspire us and remind us of the power of dedication, collaboration, and innovation in creating safer futures for children.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Esther Deblinger, PhD

Professor of Psychiatry –
Rowan University, School of
Osteopathic Medicine



Nominator: Mel Schneiderman, PhD, FAPSAC

Esther Deblinger, PhD is the recipient of the APSAC Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her exceptional contributions to the field of child maltreatment. Over a distinguished career spanning more than four decades, Dr. Deblinger has advanced research, clinical practice, professional education, and systems of care for children and families impacted by trauma.

Dr. Deblinger is Professor of Psychiatry and Founding Co-Director of the Child Abuse Research, Education and Service (CARES) Institute at Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine. She is internationally recognized as a co-developer of Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), one of the most widely implemented and rigorously researched evidence-based treatments for children who have experienced abuse and other traumatic events. TF-CBT has improved the lives of countless children and caregivers throughout the United States and around the world.

In addition to her pioneering research, Dr. Deblinger has authored numerous scientific publications and influential books, secured significant research funding, and trained thousands of professionals in evidence-based trauma treatment. She has also served APSAC in multiple leadership roles, including two terms on its Board of Directors. Her enduring impact on research, practice, training, and child advocacy exemplifies the highest ideals of the profession.

Mark Chaffin Outstanding Research Career Achievement Award

Elizabeth Gershoff, PhD

Associate Dean & Graduate
Funding & Policy – University of
Texas, Austin



Nominator: Theodore Cross, PhD, FAPSAC

Elizabeth T. Gershoff, PhD is the recipient of the APSAC Mark Chaffin Outstanding Research Career Achievement Award in recognition of her transformative contributions to the science of child maltreatment and violence prevention. An internationally respected developmental psychologist and Professor at The University of Texas at Austin, Dr. Gershoff has dedicated her career to advancing research that improves the lives of children and families.

Dr. Gershoff is widely regarded as one of the leading scholars on corporal punishment and its effects on child development. Her groundbreaking research, including influential meta-analyses and dozens of peer-reviewed studies, has fundamentally shaped professional understanding of the harms associated with physical punishment and informed policy, practice, and public awareness efforts around the world. Her work has examined the effects of corporal punishment across childhood and adulthood, strategies for prevention, school corporal punishment, No Hit Zones, foster care, parenting, and child well-being.

Beyond her prolific scholarship, Dr. Gershoff has been a tireless advocate for translating research into practice through books, policy reports, congressional briefings, media outreach, and professional education. She has mentored numerous students and collaborators, helping to develop the next generation of child maltreatment researchers. Her career reflects the spirit of the Mark Chaffin Award – rigorous science in service of protecting children and strengthening families.

David Chadwick Outstanding Professional Award

Christine Baker, PhD

Clinical Director –
Metro Regional Diagnostic and
Treatment Center, Newark Beth
Israel Medical Center (retired)



Nominator: Karyn C. Smarz, PhD

Christine Baker, PhD is the recipient of the APSAC David Chadwick Outstanding Professional Award in recognition of her distinguished career advancing the assessment, treatment, prevention, and multidisciplinary response to child maltreatment. For more than three decades, Dr. Baker has demonstrated exceptional leadership, clinical excellence, and unwavering dedication to children and families affected by abuse and trauma.

A licensed psychologist since 1992, Dr. Baker has devoted much of her career to serving vulnerable children and families in New Jersey. As Clinical Director of the Metro Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, one of New Jersey's legislatively mandated child abuse centers, she has led the implementation of evidence-based practices, strengthened psychosocial evaluation protocols, championed culturally responsive services, and advanced statewide initiatives to improve outcomes for children.

Dr. Baker's influence extends far beyond her clinical work. She has mentored generations of psychologists and child maltreatment professionals, guided her team through significant challenges, and advocated tirelessly for both staff and families. A longtime APSAC member, founding member of APSAC–New Jersey, former chapter president, and recipient of APSAC's President's Honor Roll Award, she has embodied the organization's mission throughout her career. Her enduring impact through leadership, mentorship, advocacy, and service has strengthened the field and improved countless lives.

Outstanding Front Line Professional Award

**Nancy Harris, NP-C,
NYSAFE, SANE-A,
SANE-P**

Medical Manger -
Regional Child Advocacy Centers



Nominator: Janice Ceccucci

Nancy A. Harris, NP-C, NYSAFE, SANE-A, SANE-P is the recipient of the APSAC Outstanding Front Line Professional Award in recognition of her exceptional leadership, innovation, and unwavering commitment to serving children, adolescents, and adults impacted by abuse and violence. For more than 25 years, she has been a pioneering force in forensic nursing, sexual assault response, and child advocacy.

Recognizing critical gaps in care for victims of sexual violence, Ms. Harris helped establish a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program at Samaritan Hospital in 2000. Under her leadership, the program expanded to serve patients of all ages and victims of multiple forms of crime. In 2018, she launched New York's TeleSAFE program, using telehealth technology to bring expert forensic services and mentorship to rural and underserved communities across the state.

As Medical Manager for the Regional Child Advocacy Centers serving 37 counties across New York, Ms. Harris has played a pivotal role in expanding access to specialized services for children affected by abuse. Equally dedicated to workforce development, she has trained and mentored nurses and forensic examiners for decades, helping to build the next generation of professionals. Through her clinical expertise, advocacy, education, and innovation, Ms. Harris has profoundly improved the response to child maltreatment and sexual violence.

Outstanding Research Article Award

Nina Vaaranen- Valkonen, MS

Co-Founder and Executive
Director, Protect Children
(Suojellan Lapsia)



Nominator: Steven Scheid

Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen, MS is the recipient of an APSAC Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to child abuse prevention through research, advocacy, and survivor-centered leadership. As Co-Founder and Executive Director of Protect Children, a Finland-based organization working globally to end child sexual abuse and exploitation, she has dedicated more than 30 years to advancing the safety, rights, and well-being of children.

A psychotherapist and internationally respected child protection leader, Ms. Vaaranen-Valkonen has pioneered innovative approaches to preventing child sexual abuse, particularly online child sexual abuse and exploitation. Her work combines rigorous research with practical action, ensuring that survivor experiences inform prevention strategies, policy development, and professional practice. Through the Global Our Voice Survivor Survey, she has amplified the voices of thousands of survivors worldwide, generating critical evidence to strengthen child protection systems and improve responses to abuse.

Ms. Vaaranen-Valkonen's leadership extends across the international child protection community. She serves as Chair of INTERPOL's Victim Services and Offender Management Sub-Group and represents Protect Children within EUROPOL's Advisory Group on Research and Development. Through her research, advocacy, and global partnerships, she has advanced prevention efforts, elevated survivor voices, and inspired meaningful action to protect children from sexual violence worldwide.

Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award

Lindsay Druskin, PhD

Postdoc Fellow – Kennedy Krieger
Institute for Child and Family
Traumatic Stress



Nominator: Cheryl B. McNeil, PhD

Lindsay R. Druskin, PhD is the recipient of the APSAC Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award in recognition of her innovative and impactful research advancing the assessment and prevention of child maltreatment. Her dissertation, *Examining Invalid Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory Profiles within a Randomized Controlled Trial for Toddler-aged Children and their Parents*, addresses a critical challenge in child abuse prevention: accurately identifying caregivers at risk for maltreatment when socially desirable responding may obscure true levels of risk.

Using data from an international randomized controlled trial of evidence-based parenting interventions, Dr. Druskin conducted the first comprehensive examination of invalid profiles on the Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory (BCAP), one of the most widely used child maltreatment risk screening tools. Her findings demonstrated that caregivers with invalid BCAP profiles often exhibited higher levels of parental stress, emotion dysregulation, depressive symptoms, and negative parenting behaviors, challenging the longstanding assumption that invalid responses should simply be disregarded. Instead, her work suggests that socially desirable responding may itself signal heightened vulnerability and child abuse risk.

Dr. Druskin's research has immediate implications for clinicians, researchers, and child welfare professionals by improving the accuracy of risk assessment, strengthening prevention efforts, and helping ensure that vulnerable families are not overlooked. Her work exemplifies the integration of rigorous science and practical application in service of child safety and family well-being.

The Ronald C. Laney Distinguished Service Award

Sgt. Jennifer Dobey, MPA, MS

Special Victims Unit Sergeant -
Winston-Salem Police
Department



Nominator: Thomas Albert

Jennifer Leigh Dobey, MPA, MS is the recipient of the APSAC Ronald C. Laney Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her extraordinary commitment to protecting children and advancing multidisciplinary responses to child maltreatment. Throughout more than two decades with the Winston-Salem Police Department, Sgt. Dobey has dedicated her career to serving vulnerable children and families through investigation, advocacy, leadership, and professional education.

After beginning her law enforcement career in patrol and community-based youth programming, Sgt. Dobey spent 13 years as a Special Victims Unit detective, leading approximately 280 child maltreatment investigations involving physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, child fatalities, and exploitation. She became the agency's lead forensic interviewer and developed expertise in trauma-informed, victim-centered investigative practices. Following her promotion to Sergeant, she returned to supervise the Special Victims Unit, where she has overseen approximately 800 child maltreatment investigations and mentored the next generation of child abuse investigators.

Beyond her investigative work, Sgt. Dobey has devoted countless hours to training, collaboration, and systems improvement. She serves as President of the APSAC North Carolina Chapter, presents nationally on child maltreatment investigations, and continually advances best practices through specialized training and multidisciplinary partnerships. Her unwavering dedication, leadership, and service have profoundly strengthened child protection efforts and improved outcomes for countless children and families.

The William Friedrich Memorial Award

Beatrice Yorker, JD, RN, MS

Professor Emerita of Nursing, Criminal Justice and Criminalistics - California State University, Los Angeles
Former Dean - California State University, Los Angeles
Past President of the Board - Munchausen Support Foundation



Nominators: Christine Campo, Brian Fleming, & Mishelle Roberts

Beatrice Yorker, JD, RN, MS is the recipient of the APSAC William Friedrich Memorial Award in recognition of her distinguished career advancing the understanding, investigation, and prevention of child maltreatment. A nationally respected nurse educator, forensic expert, administrator, and advocate, Dr. Yorker has dedicated her professional life to improving outcomes for vulnerable children through interdisciplinary collaboration, education, research, and public service.

Professor Emerita of Nursing, Criminal Justice, and Criminalistics and former Dean at California State University, Los Angeles, Dr. Yorker has been a pioneering voice at the intersection of healthcare, forensic science, and child protection. Throughout her career, she has championed multidisciplinary approaches to child abuse assessment and investigation, helping bridge the fields of nursing, medicine, social services, law enforcement, and the legal system. Her scholarship, teaching, and leadership have influenced generations of professionals committed to protecting children and supporting families.

Beyond academia, Dr. Yorker has been a tireless advocate for children affected by complex forms of maltreatment. As Past President of the Board of the Munchausen Support Foundation, she helped advance awareness, education, and professional understanding of medical child abuse and caregiver-fabricated illness. Through her leadership, mentorship, and service, she has strengthened child protection systems and inspired professionals across disciplines. Her career exemplifies the spirit of the William Friedrich Memorial Award—compassionate service, scientific rigor, and an enduring commitment to improving the lives of children.

Child Maltreatment Article of the Year

State Policy Levers for Reducing Early Childhood Maltreatment: The Importance of Family Planning and Economic Support Policies

Gabriel Piña, PhD; Kristin Anderson Moore, PhD;
Brittany Mihalec-Adkins, PhD; Kristen E. Darling, MPP;
Fadumo M. Abdi, MPH; & Alyssa Liehr, MPH



Nominator: Child Maltreatment Editorial Board

Gabriel Piña, PhD; Kristin Anderson Moore, PhD; Brittany Mihalec-Adkins, PhD; Kristen E. Darling, MPP; Fadumo M. Abdi, MPH; and Alyssa Liehr, MPH are the recipients of the APSAC Child Maltreatment Article of the Year Award for their influential article, “State Policy Levers for Reducing Early Childhood Maltreatment: The Importance of Family Planning and Economic Support Policies,” published in *Child Maltreatment*. The article was selected by the journal’s Editorial Board as the most outstanding contribution of the year for its rigorous scholarship and significant implications for child maltreatment prevention policy.

Drawing upon population-level data and policy analysis, the authors examined how state-level policies can reduce risk factors associated with early childhood maltreatment. Their findings highlight the critical role of family planning initiatives and economic support policies in strengthening family well-being and preventing abuse and neglect before they occur. By shifting attention upstream to the social and economic conditions that influence family functioning, the study provides compelling evidence for prevention-focused approaches that extend beyond traditional child welfare interventions.

This work advances APSAC’s commitment to evidence-informed prevention and demonstrates how public policy can serve as a powerful tool for protecting children. The article offers valuable guidance to policymakers, researchers, advocates, and practitioners seeking effective strategies to reduce child maltreatment and promote healthy child development on a population level.

2026 CAPSAC Paul Crissey Graduate Student Research Award

Laura Fulton

University of California, Irvine

When Stress Silences: Autonomic Arousal and Children's Disclosures in Forensic-Style Interviews



2026 CAPSAC Paul Crissey Graduate Student Research Award



Georgia Mary Lundon

University of California, Irvine

Children's Understanding and Expression of Intent and Causality

2026 CAPSAC Neal Snyder Outstanding Service Award

David Green, MSW

Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services (DCFS)
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)



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Mel Schneiderman,
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Congratulations to the Awardees!

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