

2023 WAMFT Board Applicants

At Large Board Member

Iris Anderson



Hello fellow therapists, my name is Iris Anderson and I am a soon-to-be graduate of Antioch University Seattle's Couple and Family Therapy Program. During my studies, I've passionately served our community as a student leader of Counselors of Color and founding member of Alpha Zeta chapter of Delta Kappa, the international MFT honors society. I'm excited about the opportunity to broaden these experiences as an at-large board member of WAMFT. As a WAMFT board member, my top priority is to create opportunities for our members to build community and stay connected with one another.

Our profession thrives on genuine connections. I am passionate about creating spaces for people to connect authentically and share their experiences. I want to strengthen our ties, encouraging honest conversations, mutual support, and shared growth. Leading the Counselors of Color support group and founding a chapter of Delta Kappa Honors Society at my university have been pivotal in my learning how to create these spaces. They've shown me the power of listening and the value of acting on feedback to enhance member experience. These experiences have shaped my perspective and approach, and I believe they'll serve me well on the board. Additionally, the recent shift we have experienced from in-person therapy to telehealth brings both challenges and opportunities. I'm eager to collaborate on ways we can navigate this change together, ensuring we remain effective and connected, whatever the setting.

Being a Washington state therapist who lives out of state has given me unique insights. I want to ensure that no matter where you're based, you're able to create new connections, stay informed, and have your voice heard. Thank you for your consideration, Iris Anderson.

Ashley Haynes-Gibson



As a fellow MFT and former foster care youth, it would be an honor to serve on the WAMFT Board as an At Large Member. I would be honored to serve in this position because I am personally and professionally dedicated to making a systemic difference as a Marriage and Family Therapist in Washington State. I understand the importance of receiving competent, compassionate, and authentic representation within the professional organizations that govern our work—representation that not only understands, values, and advocates for my lived experience, but the values and lived experiences of my peers and colleagues as well.

The experiences that have prepared me for this role vary across time and trade, but from a personal perspective, the experiences that I believe have prepared me most involve my history in foster care. These motivated me to become a Marriage and Family Therapist so that I could help foster parents develop better relationships, and communication, with their children. This blossomed into a deep appreciation for the systems in which we work, and an understanding that the power we hold in creating change is not to be taken lightly. I am currently pursuing a PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy through Antioch University New England so that I can use the gift of my experiences to create lasting, systemic change within the foster care system.

Being a Marriage and Family Therapist is a great honor. Every day I am given the privilege of being present for a fellow human being's lived experience—experiences that range anywhere between deeply painful to deeply fulfilling—and they are also not to be taken lightly. Someone is entrusting me with their pain, their suffering, their hopes, and their dreams—who would I be if I did not take that trust seriously? I view my commitment to this board position with WAMFT in the same way—a personal and professional commitment to be undertaken with the utmost respect.

Successful leadership necessitates emotional intelligence, empathy, perseverance, and compassion. Throughout my life, I have had the privilege of receiving training in Business Management with Emotional Intelligence through Seattle University, I've done crisis work with parents at risk of losing their children to foster care, and I have volunteered with organizations like the Mockingbird Society, Fostering Scholars, and The College Success Foundation to support foster youth within the legislature who are aging out of the system. I am also currently a volunteer member of the Technology and

Communications Committee through the WAMFT, and if chosen as your representing At Large board member, I promise to do my absolute best to represent the needs, voices, and values of all members, and I will do so with honor, integrity, and commitment.

Bethany Suppes



Hello! My name is Bethany Suppes, PhD, LMFT, and AAMFT-Approved Supervisor based in Spokane, Washington. I am running for WAMFT Member at Large because I am invested in expanding the notoriety of marriage and family therapy as an outstanding clinical license in the PNW. In a time of competing clinical licenses, it is important to spotlight what makes MFTs distinct and exemplary!

It is the responsibility of WAMFT leadership to ensure membership remains beneficial to our members – student, preclinical, and clinical alike. As a Member at Large, I emphasize enhancing the organization’s professional resourcefulness, efficiency, and intentional cultural mindfulness. This includes offering relevant and beneficial CE’s, legislative advocacy, and providing networking opportunities both online and in person – the things that MFTs need to maintain (and improve!) our licenses and quality of service to our clients.

I am uniquely prepared for this role. I have been on WAMFT’s Ethics, Training, and Standards (ETS) committee since 2020 and stepped in as a WAMFT Board Member and the ETS Chair in March 2023. I jumped in with both feet, eager to immediately contribute to the design of a new fully online continuing education application, stepping in as a moderator for a panel in the Ethics Spring series in May 2023, approving quality CE trainings throughout the state, and contributing to the preparations for the WAMFT conference in September 2023! I do so with all the cliché-but-true essential skills of curiosity, constructive comradery, receptivity to multiple perspectives, a positive attitude, and proactivity to move toward goals, including a balance of personal responsibility and delegation. As we know as MFTs – it’s all systemic!

In addition to my existing experience with the WAMFT board, I also have experience in a variety of clinical roles and academia. Licensed since 2015, I have worked as a therapist in community and university counseling centers, inpatient and intensive outpatient hospital settings, and group and individual private practices. I have also been an assistant professor, guest lecturer, and clinical director of a COAMFTE-accredited

program, overseeing quality internship experiences for students and highly invested in the quality of their learning and supervision. I also published a foundational textbook, *Family Systems Theory Simplified* (2022), that highlights the core concepts that make MFTs the well-rounded therapists we are.

All this to say, I have only just begun my potential contributions to WAMFT's leadership team and hope to continue to do so. I have the experience, optimism, and relationships to continue momentum forward, improving what it means to be an MFT in the PNW. Thank you for considering me!

Student Board

Paula Anna De Leon



I would be honored to serve as a Student Board Member for WAMFT. I am motivated to serve fellow students and colleagues because there is a substantial gap in highlighting marginalized student voices and having someone who understands and embodies marginalized identities advocate for our students. As a first-generation immigrant, queer Filipina woman, I, too, have felt voiceless and invisible in several academic settings and professional spaces. I entered the United States not speaking a word in the English language so assimilating to a new culture bode similar to the

experience of entering the MFT field, witnessing a predominantly White faculty during my interview, and seeing that I belong in the minority voices in my cohort. On a macro level, not being able to see student representatives who looked like me, spoke like me, or thought a bit differently from the 'status quo' have all played a part in my experiences throughout my undergraduate and graduate journey. More importantly, I have heard eerily similar stories and experiences from my fellow classmates in my cohort as well as colleagues from other universities, especially from students of color. Our communities are packed with people of color, LGBTQIA+ folks, indigenous peoples and immigrants facing complex trauma yet generations of therapists continue to be groups of White-identifying, cisheterosexual, American-born individuals. When we do not have representation inside the therapy room and even so far as in the state of Washington, it feels limiting. This is exactly why I would like to become a Student Board Member: to replace those limits with more voices.

I obtained my B.A. in Psychology from California State University, Fullerton where I also worked as a teaching assistant during the pandemic. From there, I honed my ability to advocate for 50+ students who felt safe to reach out and talk to me during such a vulnerable period of time. I also worked at an IOP within Advances and Breakthroughs in Mental Health where I directly facilitated group therapy sessions biweekly for 10+ clients. That experience helped me master my ability to hold space for multiple perspectives, personalities, and voices in the room, especially as I listened to those who do not speak up as often or as loudly as others in the room. From there, I also learned how to advocate for my clients' needs to a group of direct supervisors, licensed therapists, primary care providers, and other colleagues whom I collaborated with. At the FSCSS in Olympia, I learned how to support and empower disadvantaged populations, specifically individuals who struggled with addiction, trauma, and mental illnesses, survivors of domestic violence and chronically homeless families. Building rapport and trust was not an easy task especially when they have felt systematically let down by the systems they are a part of. Being that one person they trust and feel safe to confide in helped me help them as they eventually started trusting others, trusting themselves, and creating more stability in their lives. In November 2022, I participated as a public speaker for NAMI-WA's Brainpower Chronicles in Kirkland as part of an annual fundraising event to help break the stigma against mental illness. This year, I was also a student panelist and speaker at the 2nd Annual Therapist of Color Conference in Tacoma where I spoke about my experiences as a student of color alongside BIPOC alumni and colleagues.

I believe that I am prepared to become a Student Board Member for WAMFT and if I need additional support, I would be honored to build connections and relationships with fellow WAMFT members so I can get that extra help and guidance. I aim to learn more about the present MFT field, what we strive to work and improve on, and what future MFTs will look like within the next few years. I am most excited to help bridge that gap between the WAMFT organization and my fellow students and colleagues. Thank you so much for your time, energy, and consideration!

Devrim Özcan



I'm excited for the opportunity to be considered for the WAMFT student board member position. As a dedicated student of Marriage and Family Therapy, I'm eager to further my understanding of marriage and family therapy from the individuals who advocate, educate, and advance this field. I have always experienced the most growth by delving deep into the inner workings of a subject, and I'm

hoping this position will allow me the opportunity to learn, grow, and excel while simultaneously granting me access to serve using the knowledge and experiences I've accumulated along the way.

I've been fortunate to have served my communities in some capacity for the last 15+ years. I've sat on multiple boards and am currently serving a two-year term as Secretary for a local non-profit based in Burien. Our mission is to enrich the lives of the Burien/Highline communities through the arts. Since joining Burien Arts, I have undertaken various responsibilities, including maintaining a website to showcase our featured artists, organizing fundraisers, assisting with marketing, and occasionally managing our social media accounts. Outside of secretarial duties, my main responsibilities have been organizing and facilitating a free weekly art workshop that supports both local artists and folks that want access to free art classes as well as a twice-yearly art market called BAM! The Burien Art Market is a celebration of arts and artists that showcases local musicians, visual artists, dance, and community spirit in partnership with a thriving local garden. It's a free-to-attend community event that fosters art exploration and community building. We try to make these spaces as accessible as we can by making them free to the public and by supplying a (no-ask) free art supply pick-up spot for anyone who might need them. Art has always been a way for me to connect my mind, body, and spirit, and I take great pride in helping people bridge those connections themselves whenever I'm able.

As Dr. Pennant touched on in his letter regarding Anti-trans and LGBTQIA+ legislation, we are at a pivotal time in history where laws are being passed that dehumanize and pathologize people's lived experiences. Now more than ever, our BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities are being harmed by targeted legislation and the continuance of our country's systemic racist structures. If given the opportunity to serve, I want to learn how to help facilitate meaningful change so that all people might have the same opportunities to live their life with autonomy, free of judgment and persecution in however they exist in this world. I want to live in a world where all people are treated with respect, kindness, and compassion regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, able-bodiedness, or mental health status, and I know that starts with me helping create third-order change in our communities.

I view this position as a chance to serve my community while learning from the people that shape, improve, maintain, and lead the core tenets of this field. I understand the substantial commitment of time and effort this role demands, and I take it very seriously. Please consider me when filling this position. What I lack in knowledge of our field, I make up for in enthusiasm and perseverance.

Brittney Richards



I am one of many students who are working towards being a professional in this field. My journey started at Washington State University where I earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a minor in Human Development and Psychology. I then went on to obtain my Life and Relationship Coaching Certification from Life Purpose Institute. Currently I am a Marriage and Family Therapist Intern at a private practice to complete my practicum hours. In addition to this role, I support underrepresented youth to reach their post-secondary goals.

The vision I have for the type of care that should be available to communities starts by being part of organizations like WAMFT. With just me alone I can make small impacts within my network but by serving in a capacity like this I can help make a larger impact with all the other amazing professionals in this organization.

Throughout my educational and professional career, community has always been one of the values I focus on. I have supported housing initiatives for communities, education initiatives, and mental health is the current initiative I am passionate about. I believe my experience working with non-profit organizations, private corporations, and state agencies have prepared for this position. Not only have my previous positions and experiences prepared me but they have strengthened my desire to give back to my community and provide accessible care to all demographics.

Elections Committee

Sara Wilson



I am running for the position of Elections Committee Member for WAMFT, because I believe I have the skills and experience necessary to make a positive impact on the organization and this committee. I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Bellingham, WA, and I have over 5 years experience working with children,

adults, couples and families. I am passionate about the work of marriage and family therapists in our community and I believe that WAFMT plays a vital role in supporting and advocating for the profession.

Our organization is only as strong as the diversity of its members. To this end, I will be committed to working with diverse and underrepresented colleagues in my community to encourage them to run for elected positions within our organization. I am committed to serving the members of WAMFT and to making a positive impact on the profession of marriage and family therapy. I ask for your vote, and thank you for your support!

Youran Zhang



I'm pursuing a Master's Degree in Couple and Family Therapy at Antioch University Seattle, where I also serve as a student leader for the Counselors of Color student support group. Since joining the student group leadership team, I have stepped out of my comfort zone into a co-creator role with my fellow student leaders. It has been a great opportunity for me to learn from them and the faculty liaisons to develop more leadership skills. I value community and I have been wanting to participate more in WAMFT, when I was made aware of the opportunity, I decided to challenge myself to take a step further by applying for the Election Committee position, to better serve the growth of the field of Couple and Family Therapy.

As a Chinese immigrant who moved to the States in her twenties, I experienced many external challenges and an internal sense of incompetency in all aspects of my life, due to systemic oppression and internalized systemic oppression. As non-native English speakers, our intelligence and competency are constantly questioned and evaluated based on our ability to speak, read and write in English, especially in higher education. I see this as a form of gatekeeping from institutions and organizations. In addition to that, the difficulty in navigating an entirely different educational system was daunting, I found myself feeling lost and not having enough resources to help me adjust to the differences between the education systems, especially at the beginning of graduate school.

As an Election Committee member for WAMFT, I would love to serve the underprivileged, underrepresented and marginalized students by creating more space for their voices to be heard, especially the voices of the students who are immigrants. My goal is to create more diversity and equity within the organization in order to better support my immigrant community.

