

>> Welcome, everyone, to the Eighth National Symposium on Dispute Resolution in Special Education. I'm Melanie Reese, the director of CADRE, and I'm joined by the rest of the CADRE team, Noella Bernal, David Chadwick, Diana Nadeau and Kelly Rauscher. We are so honored that you are here with us today and are extraordinarily excited by the lineup of quality and inspiring presentations that we have in store for you over the next 2 days. We were absolutely floored by the number of registrants for this conference, pushing 900, more than triples our usual attendance. Since the conference is free, we're pretty sure you're going to get your money's worth, and we do appreciate your patience as we engage in our first virtual symposium. We're so excited about the diversity that we have represented at this conference. You're joined in attendance with folks from state and regional parent centers, federal and state agencies, early childhood resource centers and the National Technical Assistance Centers as well as dispute resolution practitioners and service providers, parents and parent advocates, district-level educators and administrators, consultants and researchers and many others on different paths in our common journey. The CADRE symposium has always been a gathering of diverse groups coming together to explore innovative practices and ideas around IDEA dispute resolution and alternative-conflict engagement in special education. We welcome one and all. For those of you who are new to our community, let me take a couple of minutes to explain what CADRE is and what it is that we do. CADRE, founded in 1998, is funded by the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, OSEP, and serves as the National Center on Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education. CADRE is part of OSEP's National Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network. Under our grant, we directly serve federally funded parent centers, state departments of education and early intervention lead agencies with a goal to increase the nation's capacity to effectively resolve special education disputes and reduce the use of adversarial processes. We owe much to the visionaries who were CADRE's founding parents, Marshall Peter, Nick Zeller, Phil Moses, Anita Engles and our senior consultant for more than 20 years, Tim Hedeem. It is because of their important and foundational work that CADRE boasts the reach we see evident today. From the beginning, CADRE has emphasized the use of mediation, facilitation and other collaborative processes as strategies for resolving disagreements. Today, we continue that tradition, as well as offering more technical assistance on more formal dispute resolution processes of written state complaints and due process hearings. CADRE provides a range of technical assistance services, including information and referral, product and resource development, training and professional development, systems improvement as well as hosting learning communities and work groups among other activities, like this symposium. Our little team of five, supported by our senior consultants, strives to have a big impact at the national level, and we're here to support you. At this time, I'd like to highlight the work of our conference planners, Noella Bernal and Kelly Rauscher, who have been mining the details to make this event a success. Our two newest members of the team, David Chadwick and Diana Nadeau, also rolled up their sleeves and worked diligently to make this happen. I couldn't be prouder to be part of such a passionate group of talented and hardworking people for the past 4 years. I'm truly blessed to have found a home at CADRE. We owe a huge thank you to our host agency, Direction Service, under the leadership

of Aimee Walsh, and the agency's numerous volunteers who are here to help support our sessions. Thank you. Additionally, our tech support team, particularly Kevin and his colleagues from Zoom, Allen Darwich from Simple Imaginations and Tessa Trow, have calmed our nerves and worked to instill confidence that this will, indeed, work out as planned. We also fortunate to enjoy the support of our friends from the Office of Special Education Programs and welcome their participation. A big shout-out to Carmen Sanchez, our OSEP project officer, whom you'll hear from in a minute. She is a valued thought partner and challenges us all in all the best ways. And finally, we want to thank all the presenters for their preparations and time to make this conference possible. We very much appreciate all of you. So speaking of this virtual conference, like much of what has happened over the last 18 months, we did not expect to be hosting a virtual event. Let me take you back to January 2020 with our CADRE team engaged in conference planning for what we thought was a face-to-face October symposium in Denver. Little did we know then the uphill climb that we were all facing with a budding global pandemic underway. In February, we started to realize that 2020 wasn't going to be a normal year and by March made the decision not to hold our in-person event and instead host a virtual symposium. We landed, perhaps prophetically, on the theme of this conference, "Rise to the Challenge." It turned out to be a clarion call for all of us to resolve, innovate, support and engage as we face the unforeseen challenges ahead. Robby Manuel suggested that we should never let a serious crisis go to waste and that it's an opportunity to do things that you think you could not do before. For example, I had no idea that I could make a decent sourdough bread or that I could knit, and CADRE had never thought about putting on a virtual conference before. But we resolved to do it, and here we are, and hopefully this will turn out better than me knitting projects did. As we all rose to the challenge, we found ourselves engaging with other centers to meet the emerging needs in the field, requiring all of us to rethink our work and innovate new ways to deliver our technical assistance. We've learned how to support each other, albeit remotely, but also how to ask for the support that we needed. We didn't let this crisis go to waste, and that is a common thread we see from our national vantage point. All of you rose to the challenge and found the opportunities to support and engage each other and to find solutions together. As we kick off this event, please keep in mind that we are a community of learners. We are here to strengthen our resolve of service, to innovate and finding solutions, support one another and engage each other in the work. We ask that in communicating with each other, particularly in an online environment, we strive for productive and friendly conversations that underscore our important goals, which brings me to Discord, perhaps the most unfortunately named platform ever for a conflict-engagement organization to use. The irony is not lost on us. I like to think Discord is short for discussion boards and is not a statement of how one should communicate, but nonetheless we'll be using Discord to build our community and network during this symposium. Please consider taking conversations to the discussion boards on Discord if you want to explore this further or engage each other outside of sessions. There you will have opportunities to connect with each other as well as post questions about the event to the CADRE team and receive additional tech support if you need it. This is a supplement platform, and we hope to see you there. We have posted additional information in the platform, or about the platform, in the chat. In the Zoom sessions, we'll have staff ... Excuse me. We'll in the rooms to post session materials and provide support as needed. We do encourage you to download session materials from the session-detail pages in advance, and we'll also be posting the evaluation links in the chat toward the end of the sessions. Those evaluations are very important to our work, and we would be most

grateful if you took the time to fill out the short surveys. At this time, I want to introduce our OSEP project officer, Carmen Sanchez. As mentioned before, Carmen is an insightful partner in our work, and we are very fortunate to have access to her knowledge, experience and expertise as we support you. Unfortunately, she couldn't be with us here live today, but prepared this short video to kick us off. So I present Carmen Sanchez from OSEP.

>> I want to extend a warm welcome to this symposium, sponsored by the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education, which we all know as CADRE. I'm Carmen Sanchez. I'm the project officer for CADRE at the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs or OSEP. As CADRE's project officer, I work with project staff, collaboratively to ensure that CADRE uses its federal funding appropriately to provide technical assistance that supports states, localities, schools, educators, families and youth for disability to resolve disputes related to early interventions and special education, as laid out in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA. While this is the eighth CADRE symposium, it is the first all-virtual symposium in its history. Of course, we had planned a conference for the fall of 2020, but like many other well-laid plans, the global pandemic made that impossible. But as the proverb goes, "Necessity is the mother of an invention." Namely, this has provided an opportunity for more people to participate in the symposium without incurring travel costs. So if this is your very first symposium, I hope that it provides you with a rich feast of information that you can use in your work or that you can use as a family member or as a young person with a disability. If this is your eighth symposium, I hope you will find new and exciting ways to sharpen your skills in resolving disputes. I would like to make a few marks about CADRE and highlight some of what you can find on its website and through its newsletter, the CADRE Caucus. CADRE has been around for several decades, and the knowledge that has been developed and the technical assistance that it has provided through those decades has been invaluable to many of us. The CADRE continuum is at the core of CADRE's work, and it's a rigorous framework for thinking through the stages of conflict that can be useful in helping all parties understand what's at stake when disputes arise. Equally central to CADRE's vision is the importance of resolving conflicts at the lowest stage possible when all parties are more open to seeing their shared interests and exploring options to meet their respective needs. I'm particularly fond of, "A Tale of Two Conversations," a video that highlights two very different approaches to the same conversation, one approach that can help parties understand each other and their shared interest and one that heightens the possibility of dispute. I also want to point out the Working Together Series that goes into greater depth on the topic of building both educator and family capacity to work together when conflicts arise. CADRE's newest product, a tool to help dispute-resolution systems assess their cultural and linguistic competency, builds on its work on exploring how dispute-resolution systems can become more equitable. And the wealth of CADRE resources support families in building their capacity to work with systems and educators to meet the needs of their children while the resources aimed at youth as self-advocates continue to grow. Many of the family and youth resources are available in multiple languages, an invaluable support to families who are learning both English and the very specific language of early intervention and special education. CADRE [foreign]. CADRE speaks your language. In addition to being CADRE's project officer, I'm also the project officer for the Center for Parent Information and Resources and many centers funded under OSEP's Parent Training Information Center Program. I so appreciate CADRE's long history in supporting these projects with information and training they need when working directly with families and resolving disputes appropriately. The long-standing relationship between CADRE and the Parent Centers has enriched both projects to the ultimate benefit of families, youth and children with disabilities. I also want to say how much CADRE's resources mean to me personally, as the mother of a now young adult with disabilities. I first discovered CADRE when my son was in grade school, and I attended a CADRE conference as a mom long before I started working with the Department of Education. The CADRE continuum and

the resources on the website were nothing short of a revelation to me. They were a way for me to learn how to navigate a complex system while always keeping my child's and my family's interest in the forefront, and by navigating disputes ... Because when something as important as a child's life is at stake, there's bound to be disagreements. When navigating those disputes appropriately, I learned how not only to meet my child's needs, but also found the mental and emotional balance that is important in any family, but especially a family that experiences a disability. In turn, too, by navigating these disputes, I could model appropriate dispute resolution for my son, who has grown into a capable, confident and effective self-advocate. Let me close, again, by welcoming to this wonderful symposium. I hope you leave full of new wisdom, some renewed energy and strength and connections with others. Thank you for being here and all you do everyday to support families, youth and children with disabilities. Let's all rise to the challenge of resolving disputes together by engaging in the work and supporting each other to find innovative, just and compassionate solutions. Enjoy the symposium.

>> Thank you, Carmen. Now to help us all get warmed up and ready for the conference, I'd like to introduce Gail Nugent of Purchin Consulting to get it started. Gail has been in the dispute resolution field for over 30 years, beginning with a career in community mediation where she managed nonprofits that provided mediation, training and facilitation to the local community. In 1998, Gail was introduced to special education when she became a mediator for the hearing office for the state of California. Since that time she has been doing her work with families, districts and schools to help build effective relationships, communication and resolve differences. Without further delay, I hand the reins over to Gail. From those of us at CADRE, have a most fabulous symposium. Gail, it's all yours.

>> Thank you, Melanie. Welcome, everyone. I'm so glad to be here with you. What I wanted to do was to invite you to join me in taking a couple of breaths and to set an intention for the workshop. I am, by the way, not an expert in this at all. I volunteered to do this. I have spent my life looking at ways of getting better at centering myself, breathing, being present because the work we do, whether you're a parent, a teacher, a special ed director, really requires us to be present and centered and balanced when we work with each other. So I just wanted to make it clear, I am no yoga. No yogi, I should say. I bring this to you out of my own learning and the value I have found in it. PS, I've also been starting to use it more and more in difficult meetings where I might stop and ask people to take a couple of breaths. We've already talked a little bit about the last year and a half, I think they said 18 months, and for many of us it was challenging. Some of us learned to knit. Some of us adopted dogs. Some of us found unique ways to connect with our families and each other, but for most of us ... So we grew. I never, ever thought I would get okay with Zoom, but I am, and look what it's done today. It has brought 900 people together that probably wouldn't have been able to come together if it wasn't on Zoom. So it's a wonderful thing in the end, but nonetheless it's been challenging for some of us. And what I'm hearing a lot of, even more so, is the return to school, the return for students to the classroom, has been challenging for most people, whether you're, again, you're a parent, a teacher, people running the school. I'm hearing that it's the hardest year ever. It's chaotic. It's stressful, and so with that in mind, I wanted us to think about letting all of that out of ourselves and bringing in some wellness, some health and mostly self-care. I hope that you're in a position for the next 2 days to disconnect with all of that and join the wonderful CADRE symposium. So with that, let me ask you to, if you're sitting or standing, just get your feet, both of them on the ground and connect with the Earth below you. Let it hold you, support you, just feel your feet. And then notice your back. Is it being supported? But feel that. Feel what's back there, and feel your legs. Just let the Earth, the chair, whatever it is hold you for a couple of minutes, and then look and see what kind of tension you have in your body, what's going on inside there and just notice. Some of you may need to roll your shoulders back a little bit a couple times. Maybe some of you need to notice your jaw, your eyes, your forehead. Wherever that tension is, take a look at it and have it leave. Just notice it leaving your body. Stay focused in that relaxed position, and I'm going to invite you. We're going to do a boxed breath. You hold a breath for four. You breathe in for four, sorry, hold it for four, breathe out for four, hold it for four. And I also want to invite you that while you're doing that, that you can think about when you breathe in, bringing in all that is good, that means something to you, wellness, health, peace, whatever is good and breathe out all that anxiety, worry. Breathe out that list you have on your desk at your office or at your home. Okay? So again, let's get settled into our chair and join me. You can count along quietly or out loud if you're in a position to do that. We're going to do this three times. All right. Take a breath in, deep, deep throughout your body and hold it for 4 seconds. Now breathe it out for four. Feel it all exiting and hold. Breathe in. Hold for four. Breathe out for four. Everything out, all that worry and hold. One more time. Let's breathe in. Deep, deep, all the good stuff is coming in. Hold it, and breathe out. Hold. Okay, just feel that for a second. That's a calming breath that you can use anytime, anywhere and people won't even notice, or you can ask people to join you in a heated discussion. Take a moment to take a couple of breaths. Now let's take ... We're going to take a couple of more energetic breaths that are calm energetic breaths, and you just breathe in and out of your nose. If you're in a position where you would like to raise your arms up or just have your hands in front of your chest, whatever is comfortable for you. In and out of your

nose. Breathe in. Breathe out. Now that's good energy. Breathe it in. Breathe it out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Okay. Just take a second. Good, now you're absolutely ready for 2 days of an energetic, connecting opportunity where you can learn, come together to learn whatever it is you're seeking. And given that, what I'd like you to do right now is to take a moment and set an intention for yourself for the workshop. Maybe jot it down. That's the best way to do it. Maybe one personal goal for you, one professional goal. Nobody is going to look at it. If your goal is just to zone out for 2 days, have at it, but just write down a couple of things, like are you interested in learning more different opportunities for ADR, connecting with others? Maybe there's a particular workshop you're really excited about. Just write that down. Stick it in your wallet. Stick it in your purse and check it out every once in awhile and just see where you're at with it, and also remind yourself the journey that you're on these 2 days. Okay? I'm just going to give you second to do that, just a quick word or two. Okay. Thank you for doing that, and thank you for joining me in this opportunity to take some breaths. I just wanted to say I am so honored to be a part of this group. You all are passionate. You care about people. You make a difference in students' lives, parents' lives, the community's lives. You are a wonder, and I wanted to thank you for that, and I really want to encourage you to enjoy the next couple of days. And lastly, I wanted to say that my wish for you for these 2 days is that one really, really exciting thing happens to you each day. So look for that and enjoy. So with that, I am going to invite you to go to the next event, and again, thank you so much for being here. Enjoy every moment. Namaste.