
Alison P. Sheesley, PhD, LPC, RPT

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Regis University
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Contact Information

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Education

PhD, Counselor Education and Supervision (Child and Adolescent Emphasis)

University of Northern Colorado

August 2013 – May 2017

Dissertation: *Medicaid Expansion, Medicaid Reimbursement Methodologies, and Counselor Employment at Federally Qualified Health Centers*

Advisor: Elysia V. Clemens, PhD, LPC

MS, Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Loyola University New Orleans

August 2010 – May 2013

BA, Political Science and American Studies

Cum Laude

Tulane University – Newcomb College for Women

August 2003 – December 2006 (American University in D.C. semester of Hurricane Katrina)

Licensure and Certification

Licensed Professional Counselor in Colorado (#LPC.0012707; exp. 8/31/2025; since 2016)

Registered Play Therapist with the Association for Play Therapy (#T5746; exp. 4/30/2024; since 2021)

Spanish–Language Immersion Certificate
Academia Falcon in Guanajuato, Mexico
January 2008 – May 2008

Selected Trainings

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR Provider #4154)

Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Weight Loss and Maintenance (Beck Institute for Cognitive Behavior Therapy)

ASIST: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

Employment History

Assistant Professor at Regis University (Visiting during 23–24 Academic Year)

Director of the Regis Center for Play Therapy

August 2023 – present; Denver, Colorado

- Course lead for the following courses: Introduction to Play Therapy, Advanced Play Therapy, Play in Family Therapy, and Human Growth and Development.
- Securing and administering a \$328,335 grant from The Colorado Trust to create The Playducto Program, a training program for Spanish-bilingual play therapists in Denver.
- Conducting research related to The Playducto Program and child-centered play therapy services at our on-campus clinic, the Regis Center for Counseling, Family, and Play Therapy.
- Serving on Regis Institutional Review Board Committee and Blessing of the Heart Committee.

Clinical Director and Co–Founder of Comedy Is Therapy

January 2020 – present; Denver, Colorado

- Comedy Is Therapy provides play therapy across the lifespan: child-centered play therapy for children and improv comedy-based therapy for adults.

Play Therapist, Mental Health Counselor, and Supervisor

May 2012 – present; New Orleans, Louisiana and Denver, Colorado

- Treating numerous clients facing a wide variety of issues; using advanced training in play therapy, group counseling, and the supervision of counseling students/interns
- Specific clinics and locations have included: Beacon Behavioral Health in Metairie, LA (May 2012 – May 2013; counseling intern); UNC's Psychological Services Clinic in Greeley, CO (August 2013 – May 2016; counselor and supervisor); Griffith Centers for Children in Weld County, CO (July 2013 – May 2016; play and family therapist); UNC's Group Lab Experience in Greeley, Colorado Springs, and Denver, CO (January 2018 –

present; group therapist); Comedy Is Therapy (August 2019 – present; play therapist and group therapist; www.comedyistherapy.com)

Staff Researcher and External Projects Coordinator at the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver

May 2018 – May 2020; Denver, Colorado

- Evaluating, writing, editing, and supporting the publication of empirical research generated by the Colorado Lab's internal and external projects, including designing a randomized control trial and process evaluation for CO Dept. of Human Services – Division of Child Support Services (note: this project was previously housed within the Education Innovation Institute at the University of Northern Colorado, where I was employed from October 2017 – May 2018)
- Managing day-to-day operations for all external projects from start to finish (beginning October 2019 – May 2020)
- Working with state officials to evaluate public policies, design improvements to existing programs, and pilot new interventions intended to benefit Colorado residents through a partnership with the Governor's Office

Prevention Data and Reports Specialist at the CO Dept. of Public Health & Env't. (Temp.)

Dec. 2017 – June 2018; Denver, Colorado

- Synthesizing empirical research on a variety of important topics within the Violence and Injury Prevention – Mental Health Promotion Branch, including the opioid epidemic
- Writing an evidence-based community-level interventions manual for Communities That Care, a community-based adolescent substance abuse prevention program (and engaging in similar work from Jan. 2017 – May 2017, prior to maternity leave)

Graduate Assistant at the UNC Dept. of Applied Psychology and Counselor Ed.

Aug. 2013 – May 2016; Greeley, Colorado

- Supporting research and writing for the project Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care, involving a historic data-sharing agreement between the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Human Services
- Contributing to reports that have informed public policy directly affecting foster care students in Colorado
- Analyzing large data sets of foster student education information using SPSS, STATA, and R programs

Constituent Services Rep. for U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu and Field Coordinator for Democratic Coordinated Committee Landrieu and Obama 2008 Campaigns

July 2008 – Aug. 2010; New Orleans, Louisiana

- Facilitating citizens' access to various federal, state, and city programs and serving as a link between citizens and Senator
- Gaining an insider understanding of the political challenges that must be navigated when formulating public policy

English as a Second Language Program Coordinator through AmeriCorps VISTA

January 2007 – December 2007; New Orleans, Louisiana

- AmeriCorps VISTA is a one-year volunteer service commitment
- Teaching English-as-a-Second Language and facilitating a program employing Tulane student volunteers

Honors and Awards

Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Conference 2015 Emerging Leader, 2015

University of Northern Colorado Graduate Dean Scholarship, 2013

Loyola University New Orleans Counseling Department Excellence in Research Award, 2016

Loyola University New Orleans LaNasa-Greco Scholarship, 2013

Tulane University Presidential Scholarship, 2003-2006

Scholarly Activities: Publications

Publications in a Refereed Journal (articles, books, book chapters)

Sheesley, A. P. (2020). Social justice scenes. In M. Pope, M. Gonzalez, E. Cameron, & J. Pangelianan (Eds.), *Social justice and advocacy in counseling: Experiential activities for teaching* (pp. 148-152). New York, NY: Routledge.

Clemens, E. V., Lalonde, T., **Sheesley, A. P.**, & Klopfenstein, K. (2019). Early warning indicators of dropping out of schools for teens who experienced foster care. *Child Welfare, 97*(5), 65-88.

Cureton, J., & **Sheesley, A. P.** (2019). Suicide competencies: Stories from counseling interns. *Journal of Professional Counseling: Practice, Theory, & Research, 44*(2), 14-31.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15566382.2017.12069188>

Sheesley, A. P., Pfeffer, M., & Barish, B. (2017). Comedic improv therapy for the treatment of social anxiety disorder. In N. Mazza (Ed.), *Expressive therapies: Major themes in mental health*. London, UK: Psychology Press.

Clemens, E. V., Lalonde, T. L., & **Sheesley, A. P.** (2016). The relationship between school mobility and students in foster care earning a high school credential. *Children and Youth Services Review, 68*, 193-201.

Sheesley, A. P. (2016). Counselors within the Chronic Care Model: Supporting weight management. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 94*(2), 234-245.
[doi:10.1002/jcad.12079](https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12079)

Sheesley, A. P., Pfeffer, M., & Barish, B. (2016). Comedic improv therapy for the treatment of social anxiety disorder. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 11(2), 157-169. doi:10.1080/15401383.2016.1182880

Evans, A., Ebrahim, C., **Sheesley, A. P.**, & Foster, T. (2016). Constructivism as pedagogy: An analysis of master's level students' experiences. *Wisconsin Counseling Journal*, 29, 49-60.

Publications in a Non-Refereed Journal (articles, papers, reports, multimedia)

Lalonde, T., Tsai, Chia-Lin, Clemens, E., Myers, K., **Sheesley, A. P.**, Tolliver, L., McElhinney, C. (2020). *Flattening the college curve: Lessons learned from foster care to improve postsecondary participation for all youth*. Denver, CO: Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver. Retrieved from <https://coloradolab.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Postsecondary-Foster-Care-Report.pdf>

Clemens, E. V., **Sheesley, A. P.**, Moses, S., & Davis, L. (December 2019). *Transforming Colorado's Child Support Services to a two-generation approach: Lessons learned and impact results from implementing an 11-county randomized controlled study* (Report No. 104C.V2). Denver, CO: Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver. Retrieved from <https://coloradolab.org/projects/2019-projects/#2gen>

Clemens, E. V., & **Sheesley, A. P.** (2019). *Fostering Opportunities program manual: Middle and high school version* (Report No. 105A, Version 1). Denver, CO: Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver. Retrieved from <https://coloradolab.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/07/Fostering-Opportunities-Manual.pdf>

Clemens, E. V., Lalonde, T. L., & **Sheesley, A. P.** (2018). *Insight into the 2017 drop in foster care graduation rates: An examination of trends in dropout events, academic proficiency, school mobility, and child welfare placement changes for the foster care classes of 2014 to 2017* (Report No. 103). Denver, CO: Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver. Retrieved from <https://coloradolab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/8-31-18-foster-care-grad-rate-report.pdf>

Clemens, E. V., & **Sheesley, A. P.** (2018). *Educational success of Colorado students in foster care: What we have learned and future directions for actionable research* (Report No. 102). Denver, CO: Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver. Retrieved from <https://coloradolab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/8-6-18-foster-care-research-agenda-report.pdf>

Sheesley, A. P. (2017). *Medicaid expansion, Medicaid reimbursement methodologies, and counselor employment at Federally Qualified Health Centers* (Doctoral dissertation).

Retrieved from University of Northern Colorado
<https://digscholarship.unco.edu/dissertations/418/>

Clemens, E. V., & **Sheesley, A. P.** (2016). *Every transition counts: Educational stability of Colorado's students in foster care, 2007-08 to 2013-14*. Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado. Retrieved from http://www.unco.edu/cebs/foster-care-research/pdf/reports/Every_Transition_Counts_V.1_Interactive.pdf

Scholarly Activities: Presentations

Refereed Presentations

Sheesley, A. P., & Jones, S. (2023, October 13). Improv for Occupational Therapists [interactive workshop]. Occupational Therapy Association of Colorado Annual Conference. Denver, CO, United States.

Sheesley, A. P. Counselors Within the Chronic Care Model: Supporting Weight Management. (October, 2015). Presented at the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Biennial Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

Spiegelhoff, S., **Sheesley, A. P.**, Hooper, L., Cole, J., & Brown-Smythe, C. Incorporating Integrated Care into Counselor Education Curriculum. (October, 2015). Presented at the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Biennial Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

Non-Refereed Presentations

Presentations to Colorado State Agencies

Sheesley, A. P., & Moses, S. (2019). *Impact Evaluation Findings of the 2Gen Transformation Project*. Presented to the Colorado Department of Human Services Division of Child Support Services 2Gen Leadership Team.

Sheesley, A. P. (2019). *Implementation Evaluation Findings of the 2Gen Transformation Project*. Presented to the Colorado Department of Human Services Division of Child Support Services 2Gen Leadership Team.

Sheesley, A. P. (2018). *Randomization Procedures for the 2Gen Transformation Project*. Presented to Colorado Department of Human Services Division of Child Support Services caseworkers from 11 pilot counties participating in the 2Gen Transformation Project.

Grant Activity

Active Grants

The Playducto Program: Training Spanish-Bilingual Registered Play Therapists in Denver

First Author; PI

July 2024 – July 2027

Private Foundation: The Colorado Trust

Award of \$328,335

Current Research Activities

Sheesley, A. P., Jones, S., & Ochoa, S. (in progress). *Comedy Therapy Treatment Manual for Clinicians.*

Media and Outreach Activities

Maintaining a TikTok account @comedyistherapy focused on teaching parents play therapy skills with approximately 30,000 followers

Interview with Madame Figaro JP magazine by Chinami Inaishi. “Surprising Health Care Tips from LA: Laughter is the best medicine. Improvisation, or improvisational comedy, is a hot topic as a form of therapy.” Retrieved from <https://madamefigaro.jp/series/yukai/Sekaiyukai-LA-health.html>

Feature article in Counseling Today by Lindsey Phillips in September 2021. “Yes, and... improv can be therapeutic.” Retrieved from <https://www.counseling.org/publications/counseling-today-magazine/article-archive/article/legacy/yes-and-improv-can-be-therapeutic>

Scholarly Professional Activities

Membership in Professional Associations

- Association for Play Therapy
- Colorado Play Therapy Association
- American Counseling Association
- Improv Network

Service

- Regis Institutional Review Board Member
- Blessing of the Heart Ceremony Committee Member
- Thornton Campus Art Co-Coordinator

Teaching Responsibilities: Primary Course Instructor

Fall 2024

MCPY 605 Human Growth and Development (Course Lead)

MCPY 678 Introduction to Play Therapy (Course Lead)

Summer 2023

MCPY 670 Advanced Play Therapy (Course Lead)

MCPY 680 Current Trends in Play Therapy (Course Lead)

MCPY 698A/ MCPY 698B/ MCPY 698C Supervised Internship A, B, C

Spring 2023

MCPY 630 Groups: Process and Counseling

MCPY 692/ MCPY 693 Counseling Practicum and Clinical Supervision

MFT 668/MCPY 668 Play in Family Therapy (Course Lead)

Fall 2023

MCPY 630 Groups: Process and Counseling

MCPY 692/ MCPY 693 Counseling Practicum and Clinical Supervision