

Lilefia Garcia

Clinical Mental Health Counseling Graduate Student | Harm Reduction & Trauma-Informed Care | Policy, Program Operations & Grant Management

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SUMMARY

Clinical counseling graduate student and nonprofit operations consultant with nine years of experience serving people who use drugs, people in the sex trade, and survivors of trauma and sexual violence. Background spans harm reduction outreach, crisis intervention training, multi-institutional research partnerships, and grant management (over \$250,000 secured). Founder of Across Five Systems, an NYC operations and policy consultancy. Pursuing LMHC licensure and seeking clinical supervision focused on criminalized communities and trauma survivors, with law school planned on a flexible timeline to pursue policy and legal advocacy.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder & Principal Consultant | 2025 – Present

Across Five Systems, New York, NY

- Provide operations, policy, IT, funding, and training support to grassroots organizations, state-level nonprofits, therapy practices, and small businesses.
- Write personnel and confidentiality policy with client teams, aligned with compliance standards, and support leadership through implementation.
- Build scopes of work, MOUs, and data-sharing and reporting systems across partner organizations, medical and academic partners, and city agencies.
- Set up HIPAA-compliant, encrypted workspaces, case management, and scheduling systems for practices handling sensitive client information.
- Manage grant research, writing, compliance, and renewal; design staff training on prevention, harm reduction, policy, and domestic and sexual violence.

Prevention Outreach & Technician Specialist | 2023 – 2025

Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC), Chicago, IL

- Founded and led a 20-member research and advisory board spanning partner nonprofits in drug policy advocacy for populations ages 12 and older, alongside a companion youth board.
- Directed the build of a cloud-based training portal and launched hundreds of curricula on it, based on what community needs assessments showed.
- Served as primary liaison to partner agencies, coordinating cross-organizational workflows and adapting systems to partner capacity.
- Monitored public health policy and funder requirements to maintain grant and program compliance across partner organizations.

Prevention Education & Campaign Manager | 2021 – 2023

Resilience, Chicago, IL

- Revamped 30–40 presentations across the organization's 40-hour and 60-hour state-certified crisis intervention training tracks.
- Delivered ICASA-certified crisis intervention training to mental health professionals, specializing the curriculum in sex work and drug use as they relate to sexual violence policy and survivor populations.
- Delivered training and psychoeducation reaching thousands of mental health professionals, volunteers, interns, and students across Chicago Public Schools.
- Facilitated psychoeducation alongside therapeutic treatment for clients processing trauma and sexual violence, providing informal supervision and direct support.
- Our Music My Body: secured funding for and led a consent and body-safety campaign, partnering with music festivals and local venues to bring harm reduction and consent education into nightlife spaces.

Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) Chicago | 2016 – 2021

Executive Partnerships & Operations Manager, 2019 – 2021

- Built and managed multi-institutional partnership agreements with the University of Illinois Chicago, Rush University Medical Center, and the City of Chicago, coordinating scopes of work, timelines, and deliverables.
- Owned the full grant lifecycle as sole fundraiser, managing scope, budget, compliance, data tracking, and financial reporting for six-figure funding.
- Directed two research initiatives on drug harm reduction and sex work, coordinating with universities and grantors and translating findings into policy advocacy.

- Developed confidentiality protocols and trained partner organizations in confidentiality standards and compliance.
- Recruited, trained, and directly managed a core team of 15, while coordinating outreach corps of 100+ volunteers, staff, and interns.

Street Outreach Coordinator, 2016 – 2019

- Provided trauma-informed harm reduction services and direct support to people on the street, meeting them where they were without judgment.
- Recruited, trained, and supervised outreach volunteers and built relationships with community partners.
- Championed hiring practices that prioritized professionals with lived experience who shared identities with the populations served.

Digital Photo Technician | 2013 – 2016

Chicago Tribune, Chicago, IL

- Automated a manual photo processing workflow, raising throughput from 20 to 200 photos per day with no loss in quality.

Direct Support Professional & Program Instructor | 2011 – 2014

Envision Unlimited, Chicago, IL

- Implemented individualized therapeutic interventions for a caseload of up to 10 clients.
- Contributed to clinical treatment planning under therapists for adults and seniors with autism spectrum disorder, developmental disabilities, and physical disabilities.

EDUCATION

Master of Arts, Clinical Mental Health Counseling (In Progress)

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology | CACREP-accredited program

Planned coursework: Advanced legal and ethical issues; Psychopharmacology; Substance use

Bachelor of Science, Psychology | Minor in Creative Writing | 2025

DePaul University, Chicago, IL

Relevant coursework: Abnormal Psychology; Community Psychology; Health Psychology; Physiological Psychology; Research Methods I–III; Statistics I–II; Introduction to Psychological Measurement; Critical Thinking; Contemporary Moral Issues; Multiculturalism in the U.S.

LICENSURE, CERTIFICATIONS & TRAINING

In progress

- Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC), New York; Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Illinois
- Continuing Education in Clinical Spanish, six-course sequence
- LSAT preparation

Completed

- 60-Hour Illinois Crisis Intervention Training, ICASA Certified; CPR / First Aid Certified; Certified Direct Support Professional
- 500-Hour Yoga Teacher Certification & Yin Yoga

SKILLS

Clinical: Crisis intervention; trauma-informed care; harm reduction; substance use; psychoeducation; collaborative treatment planning; evidence-based curriculum design

Policy & compliance: Confidentiality and personnel policy; HIPAA compliance; human subjects protections; policy monitoring; funder compliance

Program & grant management: Project scoping, budgets, timelines and risk; contract and MOU development; grant writing and full lifecycle compliance; multi-institutional partnerships; research design and data analysis

Clinical & EHR systems: Epic; Cerner; Kareo; TherapyNotes; nonprofit case management platforms

Technology: Microsoft 365; Google Workspace; Proton Mail, Calendar & Drive; Zoom; encrypted video conferencing; website design (HTML/CSS); CRM and donor databases; scheduling systems; system migration; cloud-based training portals

Data & AI: Excel (advanced formulas, pivot tables, data visualization); Google Sheets; SPSS; database reporting; Claude and other LLM platforms; workflow automation scripting

Languages: English; Clinical Spanish (coursework in progress)

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Community Organizer & Restorative Justice Facilitator, Dollhouse, Chicago, IL | 2016 – 2019: restorative justice mediation for survivors of sexual violence; trauma-informed wellness programming.

Volunteer Educator, City Lights, Chicago, IL | 2011 – 2014: educational support and behavioral intervention for children with neurodevelopmental needs.