



Building Bridges, Connecting Communities

Maximize your impact with customized support from a trusted partner in student & staff wellbeing.

For over 30 years, we've worked alongside changemakers—bridging research and practice to create impactful, community-centered solutions.

Who We Are

The **Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS)**

is a California-based nonprofit dedicated to strengthening workforce capacity in community wellness. With 50+ training and technical assistance (TTA) initiatives since 2001 and serving over 150,000 professionals, we are your partner in supporting thriving schools, students, and staff. We're committed to fostering collaboration among school and education system staff, students, families, and community organizations to build comprehensive support systems, anchored in the vision for holistic wellbeing.

Student & Staff Wellbeing Areas of Focus

- Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems Development
- Cross-Systems Partnerships
- Fostering Healthy School Leadership
- Educator Wellness
- Crisis Aftermath Navigation
- Grief Work (fostering grief sensitivity and leadership skills)
- Mental Health Literacy
- School Mental Health Workforce Recruitment and Retention
- Peer-to-Peer Programs and Support Collaboratives
- Sustainability for Student Support Programs and Initiatives
- Strengthening Behavioral Health Teams in K-12 and Higher Education Spaces
- Trauma-Informed Approaches, Resiliency and Healing Policies and Practices
- Supporting Refugee, (Im)migrant, and Newcomer Students; Students and Families Experiencing Homelessness and Home Insecurity; Students with Justice System Involvement; LGBTQ+ Students, LGBTQ+ School Mental Health Policies
- Suicide Prevention and Postvention Systems and Policies
- Community and Interest Holder Engagement Activities
- Policy Landscape Analyses
- Youth and Young Adult Mental Health

Ways We Collaborate

The CARS team delivers a full spectrum of comprehensive and innovative support services. We're a team with a broad range of professional backgrounds – from mental and behavioral health to education and community development – all working together to create positive change. Our collaborative approach makes connections across fields, drawing on expertise in developmental psychology, sociology, public health, educational leadership, and more.

Services include:



Workshops & Training – In-person & virtual learning tailored to your needs.



Coaching & Consulting – Hands-on guidance to strengthen programs.



Product & Resource Development – Tools that drive sustainable impact.



Event Planning – Strategic support for conferences and community gatherings.



Evaluation & Project Management – On-going support ensuring for success at every stage.

Who We Serve

We're adept at supporting capacity building at every level—from local coalitions, providers, and organizations; to county and state agencies; to federal staff, Tribal and territorial agencies, and national audiences. While the projects might vary in scale, community, and scope, the following holds no matter what: our approach is relational, constructivist, and healing centered. Our work centers curiosity and care, strengthening connections across divides to promote positive mental health, healing, and renewal for students and the adults who serve them.

Our Partners in this Work

We partner with organizations that share our commitment to supporting the holistic wellbeing of students and staff, ensuring all members of school communities have the resources they need to thrive. We contract with hundreds of recognized subject-matter experts who supplement our team's competencies and enthusiastically collaborate with other trainers, TTA centers, higher education institutions, advocacy organizations, and research entities.

Featured Projects



School Crisis Recovery & Renewal (SCRR)

Funded by the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative (NCTSI) Category II site to foster trauma-informed responses in schools after crisis ([website](#))



National Training and Technical Assistance Center for Child, Youth, and Family Mental Health (NTTAC)

National, SAMHSA-funded project to advance the system of care for youth (birth to age 21) and their families, including school mental health systems ([website](#))



Pacific Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC)

SAMHSA-funded center. CARS supports the mental health workforce, including the school-based workforce, serving diverse populations in California, AZ, HI, NV, and Pacific Islands ([website](#))



California Community Colleges Health & Wellness Project

State-funded TTA project. CARS supports the statewide Chancellor's Office and the 116 community colleges with improving services and supports for students, focusing on mental health and basic needs ([website](#))

Customized Offerings

Whether you need guidance in developing a Community of Practice to foster collaboration, finding a keynote speaker to inspire your audience, or implementing hands-on training and coaching to strengthen your team, we've got you covered. Annually, CARS provides over 400 training events and thousands of hours of customized support.

Featured Custom Offerings:



The Needs and Joys of our (Im)migrant* Students, Families, and Community Partners

Three-part series on strengthening our school mental health systems for students who are (im)migrants, newcomers, undocumented, or transborder learners. Following the series, CARS offered a four-part learning community with the series faculty. Access the slide deck [here](#).



SCRR Level Setting: Foundational Modules

This is a four-part asynchronous learning opportunity on theory, frameworks, and practices related to school crisis recovery and renewal. These modules on trauma-informed and healing-centered crisis leadership serve as the basis for much of SCRR's work."

Key Team Members



Angela Castellanos (she/her), LCSW, PPSC, Managing Director has 25+ years of diverse and progressive expertise in mental health care and school settings. Her portfolio of projects focuses on trauma-informed approaches and supporting diverse communities, with a specialty in school mental health and systems development. At CARS, Angela is Project Director of Orange County Mental Health & WellBeing for Diverse Communities, and she provides school mental health expertise on multiple projects.



Leora Wolf-Prusan (she/her), EdD (Educational Leadership), Managing Director of CARS' School and Community Mental Health and Leadership projects. She has served as the Project Director for the School Crisis Recovery & Renewal project and as the School Mental Health Field Director for the Pacific Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center. A sought-after facilitator and trainer, Wolf-Prusan is dedicated to work focused on educator mental health, wellness, and trauma-informed approaches to education.



Oriana Ides (she/her), MA, LPCCI, PPS, School Mental Health Training Specialist, who approaches healing the wounds of trauma and oppression as core elements of social justice. She has worked with young people across the life course and has served as teacher-leader, school counselor, classroom educator and program director. She is committed to generating equity within school structures and policies by focusing on evidence-based mental health techniques and institutional design.



Niki Magtoto (she/her), MA, Senior Project Manager for the School Crisis Recovery & Renewal project. She has a background in supporting public school districts through equity-centered and antiracist facilitation. She has worked in policy implementation as well as design and improvement projects focused on engaging all levels of stakeholders to transform systems. She is dedicated to building new realities for young people.



Tina Rocha (she/her), MSW, PPSC, Technical Assistance Specialist, has more than 20 years' experience supporting young people in school- and community-based settings. She is highly trained in multiple topics related to Critical Incident Stress Management, threat assessment, community crisis response, trauma-informed and resilience-oriented approaches, grief, and suicide prevention, and she is an approved instructor or master trainer in several of these areas. She has expertise working with youth in alternative education settings and who have justice involvement.



Gerilyn Walcott (she/her), Senior Project Manager, brings over seven years of collaborative expertise in Behavioral/Mental Health programs and training across California. Geri is a Project Manager who works closely with Wolf-Prusan and the school mental health team at CARS. Projects include California Community Colleges (CCC) Health & Wellness and multiple other CCC initiatives; Orange County Mental Health & WellBeing for Diverse Communities; and an Archewell Foundation initiative to support parents of young people affected by internet harm.

Ready to Connect? Get in Touch with Us Today.

Let's work together to strengthen your capacity and impact.

Whether you're looking for tailored training, expert guidance, or strategic support, **we're here to help you take the next step.**

Get in touch with us today.



Learn more about our work:
cars-rp.org



Request support:
bit.ly/work-with-cars



Contact us for partnership opportunities:
carsinfo@cars-rp.org