

**Leesandra Contreras-Gonzalez, Psy.D.**  
*Bilingual Licensed Clinical Forensic Psychologist*  
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## **EDUCATION**

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### **The Chicago School, Chicago, Illinois**

Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology (APA-Accredited Program), July 2025  
*Doctoral Dissertation*; Dissertation Oral Defense: June 2025 with Distinction  
Title: Permisánme Hablar, Latinas y Listones Azules | Allow Me to Speak: Latinas' Lived Experiences with Chicago Police

### **The Chicago School, Chicago, Illinois**

Masters in Clinical Psychology, July 2022  
Masters in Counseling Psychology, June 2019  
Concentration: Latino/a Mental Health  
Awards: Distinguished Graduate Recipient

### **Benedictine University, Lisle, Illinois**

Bachelors in Psychology, *Summa Cum Laude*, May 2015  
Bachelors in Spanish, *Summa Cum Laude*, May 2015  
Awards: Academic College of Liberal Arts Award Recipient

### **Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain**

Benedictine University Semester Abroad, August 2013

### **University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, Cuba**

Benedictine University Study Abroad, March 2012

## **LICENSURE**

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### **Virginia Board of Psychology**

License: 0810009292  
Issued: February 10, 2026  
Expiration: June 30, 2027

### **Authority to Practice Interjurisdictional Telepsychology (APIT)**

#### **The PSYPACT Commission**

Mobility Number: 24447  
Expiration: March 6, 2027

## **LANGUAGES**

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### **Spanish – Native, Bilingual**

*Degree*: Bachelors in Spanish, Graduate Spanish Coursework  
*Certificate*: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

## **CLINICAL TRAINING EXPERIENCE**

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### **Dr. Long & Associates**

*Postdoctoral Forensic Fellow*

**September 2025-present**

Washington, DC

Supervisor: Lisa Long, Psy.D., Licensed Forensic Psychologist

- Provide comprehensive forensic psychological services and expert consultation in family law, immigration, and criminal contexts, integrating trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and evidence-based approaches.
- Conduct parental fitness evaluations and complex forensic psychological assessments of adults and youth to inform legal decision-making in custody, visitation, and child welfare proceedings.
- Perform specialized forensic evaluations for federal immigration cases, including assessments related to the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), hardship waivers, and asylum petitions, synthesizing psychosocial history, trauma impact, and diagnostic formulation within a legal framework.
- Author comprehensive forensic reports integrating psychometric data, clinical interviews, behavioral observations, and collateral information, formulated to address referral questions and support judicial and administrative determinations.
- Collaborate with attorneys, court personnel, and interdisciplinary teams to ensure ethical, methodologically sound, and contextually informed forensic evaluations and recommendations.
- Engage in ongoing professional development in forensic assessment, ethics, and expert testimony to ensure adherence to current legal standards, best practice guidelines, and culturally informed care.

### **Superior Court of the District of Columbia**

*Pre-Doctoral Psychology Intern*

**2024-2025**

Washington, DC

Supervisor: Jennifer Christman, Psy.D., ABPP, Licensed Clinical Psychologist

- Provided comprehensive, trauma-informed clinical and forensic services to adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system, often under court order or referral. Services were delivered across diverse settings, including court-based environments, detention centers, and virtual platforms, demonstrating adaptability and clinical acumen in high-stakes contexts.
- Conducted a wide range of court-relevant psychological and forensic assessments including: psychoeducational evaluations, Spanish evaluations, neuropsychological assessments, competency to stand trial evaluations, psychosexual evaluations, and violence risk assessments.
- Authored comprehensive, integrative reports for submission to the Court that synthesize test data, diagnostic impressions, clinical interviews, and collateral information. Reports were formulated to support legal decision-making, psychological functioning, diagnostic clarity, risk potential, and treatment needs.
- Provided evidence-based individual and group psychotherapy to justice-involved youth, addressing complex trauma, behavioral dysregulation, and social-emotional needs within a forensic framework.
- Delivered specialized forensic interventions, including: 1) Competency restoration treatment in alignment with legal standards for adjudicative competence. 2) Sex

offense-specific therapy designed for adolescent populations, integrating risk-reduction models and systemic approaches.

- Conducted structured intake assessments and provided individual cognitive-behavioral therapy to adults on supervised release through the federal Reentry Court Program, supporting reintegration and reducing the risk of recidivism.
- Maintained active collaboration with interdisciplinary legal teams including attorneys, probation officers, and court personnel to inform recommendations, service planning, and risk management.

### **Elgin Mental Health Center**

**2023-2024**

*Advanced Practicum Extern*

Elgin, Illinois

Supervisor: Anna Gates, Psy.D., Licensed Clinical Psychologist

- Delivered bilingual, evidence-based psychoeducational fitness (competency) restoration groups within a secured forensic setting to individuals adjudicated Unfit to Stand Trial under Illinois statute (720 ILCS 5/104-16) for the Department of Human Services-Division of Mental Health.
- Conducted and coordinated formal forensic evaluations to determine defendants' fitness (competency) to stand trial, integrating legal criteria and clinical assessment to support treatment and judicial outcomes.
- Authored comprehensive forensic reports detailing diagnostic impressions, functional abilities, and evaluative findings, submitted to Illinois County Courts to guide adjudication and treatment planning.
- Demonstrated knowledge in adjudicative competence, legal standards, and forensic psychology.
- Gained competency in the use of standardized assessment tools commonly used in forensic settings (e.g., WAIS-IV, MMPI-3, PAI, M-FAST, ILK, SIRS-2, SIMS, TOMM, CAST-MR\*, FIT-R, ECST-R) maintaining accuracy, objectivity, and adherence to APA and forensic best practices.
- Developed and implemented individualized treatment plans rooted in psychological theory and strengths-based rehabilitation models to address barriers to fitness (competency).
- Designed and monitored structured behavioral and engagement interventions with defined objectives and measurable outcomes, continuously evaluating clinical effectiveness and progress.
- Participated in daily interdisciplinary case reviews with the hospital treatment team to present and interpret behavioral data, inform treatment decisions, and document patient progress through the fitness (competency) restoration continuum.

### **Advocate Trauma Recovery Center**

**2022-2023**

*Therapy Practicum Extern*

Evergreen Park, Illinois

Supervisor: Victoria Smoter, Psy.D., Lead Licensed Clinical Psychologist

- Delivered evidence-based, trauma-informed clinical services, including individual psychotherapy and case management to survivors of intentional crime and survivors of homicide victims, both in English and Spanish.

- Applied advanced understanding of trauma theory, symptomatology, and empirically supported interventions (e.g., TF-CBT, Polyvagal Theory, CPT, Narrative Processing Therapy) to aid in the restoration of safety, regulation, and functional stability.
- Demonstrated advanced knowledge of the psychological, neurobiological, and developmental consequences of trauma across the lifespan, laying the foundation for understanding the clinical and functional impact of trauma-related diagnoses (e.g., PTSD, Complex PTSD).
- Maintained adherence to best practices in trauma care, guided by trauma-informed care framework, peer-reviewed research, and APA ethical guidelines for patients across the lifespan.
- Participated in ongoing professional development, including multicultural seminars and didactic training, to remain current in trauma intervention and prevention efforts.
- Collaborated with interdisciplinary teams to assess acute psychosocial needs, remove barriers to behavioral health access, and develop trauma-informed treatment plans tailored to individual strengths and risks.

### **Kane County Diagnostic Center**

**2021-2022**

*Diagnostic Practicum Extern*

St. Charles, Illinois

Supervisor: Ashley VanOpstall, Psy.D., Licensed Psychologist

Supervisor: Michael Oliverio, Psy.D., Licensed Psychologist

- Provided comprehensive court-ordered forensic psychological services for the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit, contributing directly to judicial determinations related to mental health treatment needs and criminogenic risks of recidivism.
- Selected, administered, and interpreted batteries of psychological tests using advanced knowledge of psychometric properties and forensic relevance, tailoring assessments to the legal referral question.
- Authored detailed, objective, and defensible forensic reports synthesizing clinical interviews, psychometric data, behavioral observations, and collateral records, with clear diagnostic conclusions and court-appropriate treatment recommendations.
- Co-evaluated defendants with severe, persistent mental illness to assess appropriateness for their participation in Treatment Alternative Court (TAC).
- Observed Fitness (Competence) to Stand Trial, Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI)/ Criminal Responsibility evaluations, in addition to expert witness testimony regarding Miranda Rights and Fitness (Competence) to Stand Trial evaluations.
- Maintained cultural competence and ethical integrity in all forensic activities, with a focus on reducing systemic disparities and ensuring fair psychological evaluation of individuals from historically marginalized communities.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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### **Compsych Corporation**

**2020-2024**

*Guidance Consultant*

Chicago, Illinois

Supervisor: Allie DiPaola, LCPC and Caitlin Learnan, LCSW

- Delivered high-volume, telephonic clinical triage and crisis intervention to a diverse, nationwide clientele presenting with acute psychological distress, including suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, interpersonal violence, and abuse-related trauma.

- Conducted real-time clinical assessments and formulated rapid disposition plans, including referral to appropriate behavioral health providers, emergency services, or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources.
- Demonstrated competency in crisis stabilization, motivational interviewing, and risk assessment amid demanding circumstances, with strict adherence to ethical and legal mandates.
- Utilized advanced clinical judgment to identify individualized treatment resources, coordinate care transitions, and de-escalate high-risk situations through evidence-based intervention strategies.
- Educated clients on eligibility, access, and scope of behavioral health benefits, ensuring empowerment and informed decision-making within a culturally responsive framework.
- Maintained meticulous HIPAA-compliant documentation using proprietary clinical systems, ensuring legal defensibility, and continuity of care.

### **Family Counseling Services of Aurora**

**2018-2020**

*Masters in Counseling Psychology Intern, Bilingual Behavioral Health Therapist*

Supervisor: Mary Ihnenfeld, LCSW

Supervisor: Marion Duppen, MSW

Aurora, Illinois

- Provided bilingual, evidence-based therapeutic services across individual, family, and group modalities for clients across the lifespan, integrating CBT, DBT, and trauma-informed interventions.
- Co-facilitated Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) groups, teaching core DBT modules including mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness.
- Demonstrated proficiency in formulating DSM-5 diagnoses through comprehensive biopsychosocial assessments, collaboratively developing individualized treatment plans aligned with measurable goals.
- Delivered culturally responsive care with strong emphasis on racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-cultural congruence, adapting treatment approaches to meet community-specific needs.
- Coordinated multidisciplinary care, provided external referrals, and ensured clinical documentation met standards of third-party payers and licensing bodies.
- Monitored treatment progress using outcome-driven measures, adjusting interventions to maximize therapeutic efficacy.

### **Catholic Charities Daybreak Shelter**

**2015-2018**

*Shelter Case Aide*

Joliet, Illinois

Supervisor: Christie Lucas-Carter, B.A.

- Provided frontline crisis intervention, safety planning, and psychoeducation to unhoused individuals experiencing trauma, acute psychiatric symptoms, domestic violence, and economic instability.
- Employed nonviolent crisis de-escalation strategies and trauma-informed interviewing techniques to support client safety and stabilization.
- Demonstrated advanced multicultural competency and bilingual capacity to serve monolingual Spanish-speaking clients, ensuring equitable access to resources and continuity of care.

- Coordinated cross-agency referrals including mental health, substance use treatment, housing programs, and legal advocacy services.
- Conducted intake assessments and collaborated on case plans grounded in client empowerment and systemic navigation.

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

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### **The Chicago School**

**2022-2025**

*Doctoral Dissertation*

Chicago, Illinois

Title: Permítanme Hablar, Latinas y Listones Azules | Allow Me to Speak: Latinas' Lived Experiences with Chicago Police

Chairperson: Nancy J. Bothne, Ph.D.

Chair Member: Cynthia Lubin Langtiw, Psy.D.

*Dissertation Proposal Approved: June 2023*

*Dissertation Oral Defense: June 2025 with Distinction*

- This phenomenologically guided dissertation explored the lived experiences of Latinas in their interactions with Chicago Police Department, revealing a reality shaped by intersecting systems of oppression. Through the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectional Feminism, this study illuminated how race, gender, power, and oppression converged to produce conditions of invisibility, hyper-surveillance, marginalization, and institutional neglect. Latinas' experiences of visibility and invisibility resulted in feelings of both disempowerment and disenfranchisement, which is seemingly reflected in the absence of Latinas in the literature.

### **Joliet Junior College**

**2016**

*Research Assistant*

Joliet, Illinois

Supervisor: Patrick Mills, Ph.D.

- Conducted biochemical research investigating chemosensory stimulation in fish, specifically targeting involuntary feeding behaviors triggered by amino acid compounds.
- Applied empirical trial-and-error and iterative titration methods to determine the optimal concentration of lysine and glycine solutions capable of eliciting reflexive feeding responses.
- Independently designed a laboratory tank and delivery apparatus to minimize external cues and reduce the risk of classical conditioning, ensuring experimental integrity.
- Analyzed behavioral and biochemical data using statistical methods, and formally presented research design, findings, and implications to peers and faculty, demonstrating strong scientific communication skills.

### **Benedictine University**

**2014-2015**

*Research Assistant*

Lisle, Illinois

Supervisor: Diane Moran, Ph.D. assistant department chair

- Co-authored and presented original research findings at the Midwestern Psychological Association Conference, highlighting the efficacy of transitional support programs for neurodiverse students.

- Designed a qualitative research instrument assessing changes in participants' perceptions, attitudes, and emotional adjustment before and after transitioning from high school to college.
- Served as a peer mentor to students on the autism spectrum during the academic semester, integrating applied behavioral support strategies into a structured research protocol.
- Co-facilitated psychoeducational groups for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder, focusing on skill-building in social communication, academic readiness, time and stress management, and self-care.

### **Benedictine University**

**2014-2015**

*Research Assistant*

Lisle, Illinois

Supervisor: Diane Moran, Ph.D. assistant department chair

- Collaborated with faculty researcher to develop and deliver lab assignments and instructional content for upper-level psychology students studying learning theory and behavior modification.
- Designed and implemented interactive activities to reinforce operant and classical conditioning principles, enhancing student engagement and conceptual understanding.
- Emphasized the real-world applicability of behavioral science by facilitating discussions and exercises that demonstrated the relevance of learning principles to daily life and mental health practice.

## **LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

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### **Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights**

**2017-2023**

*The Young Center Advocate*

Chicago, Illinois

Supervisor: Kelly Albinak Kribs, Staff Attorney

- Advocated for the best interests of unaccompanied immigrant children in federal custody, aligning recommendations with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and U.S. immigration law.
- Actively participated in legal strategy development and presented best-interest recommendations to attorneys, judges, and decision-makers in immigration and family law systems.
- Conducted weekly, trauma-informed, child-led visits in detention centers and continued post-release contact to ensure continuity of care and access to legal representation.
- Served as a liaison between the child, legal teams, care providers, and government agencies, upholding child welfare and due process in a complex legal landscape.
- Recognized for sustained volunteer service and cultural competence with Spanish-speaking and indigenous children.

### **Compañeros en Salud**

**2019-2020**

*Community Grassroots Coalition Member*

Aurora, Illinois

- Served as an active member of a grassroots health coalition aimed at reducing disparities and improving healthcare navigation for underserved Latino/a/x and immigrant communities.

- Partnered with healthcare professionals, social workers, and public health advocates to identify community needs and dismantle barriers to service access.
- Provided culturally appropriate advocacy and facilitated referrals for families seeking health, legal, and social services during monthly coalition outreach initiatives.

**The Chicago School**

**2017-2019**

*Latinx Student and Friends Association (LSFA) Coordinator*

Chicago, Illinois

- Led the Latinx/e Student and Friends Association (LSFA), promoting inclusivity and cultural pride through academic dialogue, heritage education, and student-led initiatives.
- Facilitated “Spanish Hour 101,” a bilingual cultural engagement series promoting Spanish language use, identity exploration, and cross-cultural awareness.
- Expanded outreach efforts to increase campus engagement with Latinx/e cultural, social, and political issues within U.S. and global contexts.
- Cultivated partnerships with faculty and student leaders to advance diversity and inclusion on campus.

**Sheila A. Doyle Foundation**

**2017**

*Camp Explorer*

Frankfort, Illinois

Supervisor: Kelly Paroubek, LCPC

- Provided peer mentoring and grief support to children and adolescents (ages 7–17) who had lost loved ones to homicide during a therapeutic weekend retreat.
- Applied trauma-informed care strategies, active listening, and non-verbal emotional assessment to support campers throughout structured and unstructured activities.
- Served as a positive role model and emotional anchor, building trust and fostering resilience in grieving youth within a culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate framework.

**Will County Point-in-Time Unsheltered Count**

**2016**

*Unsheltered Count Volunteer*

Joliet, Illinois

Supervisor: Christie Lucas-Carter, B.A.

- Collaborated with local service providers to conduct the HUD-mandated unsheltered count by canvassing areas where unhoused individuals reside.
- Collected demographic and situational data to support federal funding efforts and improve regional homelessness intervention strategies.
- Distributed essential items (e.g., gloves, hats, toiletries) while employing trauma-informed engagement during outreach.

**The Upper Room Crisis Hotline**

**2014-2015**

*Crisis Line Operator*

Joliet, Illinois

Supervisor: Sr. Mary Frances Seeley, Ph.D.

- Responded to crisis and suicide hotline calls using non-directive therapeutic skills, reflective listening, and crisis de-escalation techniques.
- Navigated complex issues such as grief, addiction, interpersonal violence, and existential distress with compassion and confidentiality.
- Connected callers to appropriate community resources using motivational interviewing and solution-focused approaches.

- Provided daily well-being check-ins to isolated seniors through the Sunshine Service, assessing for suicide risk and medical emergencies while offering emotional support.

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

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Member of American Psychology-Law Society (APLS)

Member of American Psychological Association (APA)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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**Contreras-Gonzalez, L. (2025).** *Permítanme Hablar: Mujeres Latinas Y Listones Azules, Allow Me to Speak: Latinas' Lived Experiences With Chicago Police.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

## **PEER REVIEW SERVICE**

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Psychology, Public Policy, and Law (APA Journal). Ad Hoc Peer Reviewer, 2026.

## **PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

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Moran, D.R. & **Contreras, L.** (2014). "The many ways to better living through behavior modification". Poster presented at the meeting of the Council of Teachers of Undergraduate Psychology at the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, Illinois.

Moran, D.R., Swallow, E. & **Contreras, L.** (2015). "Win-Win Scenario: Use of college peer-mentors in Autism Spectrum Disorder research program". Poster presented at the meeting of the Council of Teachers of Undergraduate Psychology at the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, Illinois.

## **ADDITIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

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**Contreras-Gonzalez, L.** (2025). "Permítanme Hablar, Latinas y Listones Azules | Allow Me to Speak: Latinas' Lived Experiences with Chicago Police." Poster presented at the Graduate Research Forum (GRF) at The Chicago School, Chicago, Illinois.

**Contreras-Gonzalez, L.** (2023). "The psychology of immigration." Presented at Advocate Trauma Recovery Center, Evergreen, Park, Illinois.

**Contreras-Gonzalez, L., & Blandford, R.** (2021). "Assessing the intersectionality of the COVID-19 pandemic and racism pandemic on students of color wellness." Poster presented at the Graduate Research Forum (GRF) at The Chicago School, Chicago, Illinois.

**Contreras-Gonzalez, L.** (2019). "Bilingual workforce presentation series: Improving child-parent dyadic relationship among Latino families." Presented at the West Aurora Early Learning Academy, Aurora, Illinois

Boyer, C., **Contreras, L.**, Frampton, F., Juszczak K., Malik, Z., Matthew, C., Savio, A., & Zeisig, D. (2014). "Behavior Modification Strategies at Work: How to Curb your Texting Habit While Driving". Poster presented at the Undergraduate Research, Scholarship & Arts (URSA) Symposium at Benedictine University, Lisle, Illinois.

## **PANELIST INVITATION**

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**Contreras-Gonzalez, L.** (2026). "Ethical practice with justice-involved individuals." Invited Panelist, Virtual Ethics Conference on Ethical Social Work Practice with Justice-Involved Individuals. School of Social Work & Center for Professional and Applied Ethics, UNC Charlotte.

## **CONFERENCES (SELECTED)**

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**2025 American Academy of Forensic Psychology** **2025**  
Washington, D.C.

**2025 Annual Conference of the American Psychology-Law Society** **2025**  
The American Psychology Law Society  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

**2024 National Conference on Youth Justice** **2024**  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
Washington, DC

## **WORKSHOPS (SELECTED)**

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**Standardizing Forensic Evaluations:** **2025**  
**A Data-Driven Remedy for Overloaded Courts**  
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts