

Biographical Data and Platform Statements

2025 Candidates

TREASURER (1 POSITION)



Debbie Manigat, DMFT (she/her)

Sincere gratitude for this nomination and candidacy to serve as Treasurer on the Board of AAMFT. My ancestors, family, pastors, mentors, professional experiences, and prior Board service has scaffolded me to

serve diligently.

I hope to continue an outlook of beloved agency and accountable stewardship in fiduciary responsibility and oversight to AAMFT. If elected, I plan to lead and encourage our membership to take intentional consider on:

How are we navigating the investment towards the work of AAMFT at all levels (clinical therapy, academia, student/professor, trainee/supervisor, policy, etc.) with our purpose and passion?

What is the cost to neglect the opportunity to support MFT research on cultural responsiveness and competence with curiosity and excellence?

How are we prioritizing funds for building systemic thinkers and relational leaders for a new generation of digital natives while equally attuning to the needs of those in grand seasons?

My goal is to be transparent in sharing fiscal challenges and opportunities for MFTs. Our field is rapidly creating innovative roles as educators, therapists, supervisors, community catalyst, and global leaders. As MFTs bear witness to family dynamics and systems, we must maintain an economic structure to support our work. Considering AAMFT's development, it is critical to keep in mind the pecuniary demands to support pathways for expert clinicians engagement while building opportunities for students to share new philosophies and ways of being in family therapy. I endeavor to continue to learn from each of you on what budgetary considerations are needed to support our growth as systemic change agents.

Overall, I lead by embracing the parallel process- recognizing that each life counts and has complexity. Each voice has value, from the families we serve to our therapeutic peers. We are AAMFT and I am here to listen, committed to work. I humbly ask for your vote.

(I) PRESENT PROFESSIONAL POSITION

- Adjunct Professor, College of Education & Behavioral Studies, Palm Beach Atlantic University, January 2022 – present
- Founder & Chief Empowerment Officer, Protective Factors Group, Inc. (Nonprofit start up for reducing mental health disparities in diverse communities) October 2021– present
- Learning & Development Officer, Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County, 2015- present

(II) MOST RELEVANT PAST PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS (WITHIN THE LAST 7 YEARS)

- 2002- present, Mental Health Consultant & Training Partner, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Florida & PBC)
- 2021– 2022, Statewide Trainer, Florida Association of Infant Mental Health (FAIMH)
- 2021 Steering Committee Member, Healthier Neighbors of Northern WPB & Riviera Beach
- 2018 – 2023, Director of Mental Health Ministry, New Song Church
- 2017 – 2022, Contracted Mental Health Administrator, Marriage & Family Services

(III) AAMFT MEMBERSHIP: PAST AND PRESENT PARTICIPATION IN AAMFT, INCLUDING TOPICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC INTEREST NETWORKS

- 2017 – present AAMFT member
- 2023 – 2025 AAMFT Board Director
- 2024 – 2026 AAMFT DEIOC Appointed Member
- 2022 – present Spirituality in Clinical Practice- Topical Interest Network (AAMFT) Member
- 2022 – present Mentor, Minority Fellowship Program- I support the next generation of MFT leaders via goal setting, MFT connections, AAMFT resources, and training opportunities.
- 2022 Florida AMFT (now FFTA) – Florida Chapter President, President Emeritus
- 2019 AAMFT Palm Beach Chapter – President
- 2019 – 2021 Doctoral Fellow, AAMFT Minority Fellowship Program in partnership with SAMHSA

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(IV) PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (Activities should be directly linked to the position and should demonstrate the skills needed for the position. Please refer to the list of competencies and skills for the position). Past and present activities, projects, or publications (limit 3) that are evidence of leadership skills, experience integrating information, working towards consensus, and decision-making skills.

Leadership Activities:

- 2025 – Mentor, New Leaders Council PBC (NLCPCB), 2018 NLCPCB Fellow
- 2022 – present *Lifetime Member*, International Family Therapy Association (IFTA)
- 2022 – present *Associate Member*, T. Leroy Jefferson Medical Society (TLJMS)
- 2021 – present *Taskforce Member*, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging, FAIMH
- 2021 *Lifetime Member*, DKO International Marriage & Family Therapy Honor Society
- 2021 – 2022 *Alumni Member*, Educational Programs Curriculum & Pedagogy, Nova Southeastern Univ. (NSU)

Leadership Projects & Trainings presented:

- May 12, 2018 – “**Trauma & Impact on Children**”, National Organization of Women, Delray Beach Library
- May 14, 2018 – “**Mental Health Awareness & Intergenerational Trauma**”, NCBW PBC
- May 19, 2018 – “**Family Mental Health & Wellness Fair**”, Mental Health Coalition of WPB
- June 11, 2018 – “**Student Mental Health & Wellness Conference**”, Palm Beach County School Board, Atlantic Community High School
- July 21, 2018 – “**Spark!Talks: Suicide Prevention**” New Leaders Council Convention at the Houstonian, Houston, TX
- July 28, 2018 – “**Healthy Mind, Healthy Body: TLJMS Annual Back to School Health Fair**”, Palm Beach Lakes High School
- July 29, 2018 – “**Mental Health & Wellness**”, Women of Purpose & Value Brunch @ Boca Raton Library
- September 22, 2018 – “**Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on Immigration**”, Interdepartmental Symposium CAHSS Graduate Student Government, Nova Southeastern University

- October 3, 2018 – “**Youth Mental Wellness: What is Mental Health?**”, Suits for Seniors, PBL High School
- February 8, 2019 – “**Mindfulness for Teachers & Teens**”, Lake Worth High School
- March 8, 2019 – “**Mindfulness for High School Students**”, Village Academy
- April 13-14, 2019 – “**A Millennials Guide to Health & Wellness**”, New Leaders Council Institute
- April 15, 2019 – “**Rising God’s Way**” *The Journey to Complete Wholeness in Christ*, Winners Church
- May 7, 2019 – **RESILIENCE: The Biology of Stress & the Science of Hope**, Center for Child Counseling #Fighting ACEs event
- May 11, 2019 – “**Mindfulness & Meditation for Compassion Fatigue**”, ELCPBC 2nd Annual Early Childhood Educators Conference
- May 24, 2019 – “**Moment to Moment**” Mindfulness for Women, Healthier Neighbors PBC Women’s Retreat
- August 3, 2019 – “**Chat & Create**” Back to School Mental Health Game Plan for Success, T. Leroy Jefferson Medical Society (TLJMS) Community Health Fair
- September 29, 2019 – “**Suicide Prevention in the Church**”, St. John Missionary Baptist Church
- September 29, 2019 – “**Mental Health Myths & the Church**”, Fresh Church, West Park, FL
- October 15, 2019 – “**Mental Health & The Church Call to Action**”, Mental Health Coalition of WPB
- October 20, 2019 – “**Train the Brain Initiative: Mindfulness for Burnout Prevention & Compassion Fatigue**”, TLJMS Friends & Family Brunch
- November 10, 2019 – “**Suicide Prevention: Mental Health of Athletes**”, Christ Missionary Baptist Church
- December 7, 2019 – “**Depression & Anxiety in the Church**”, Resurrection Life Fellowship
- February 8, 2020 – “**TLJMS Healthcare Science Stars of Tomorrow**” Career Symposium, Inlet Grove High School, Riviera Beach, FL
- February 15, 2020 – “**Mindfulness for Pain Relief**”, Invisible Me Warriors of PBC, PBC Library
- February 29, 2020 – “**Sisterly Relations: using Conflict Management, deciphering Difficult Conversations, & building Positive Relationships**”, Wellington Women’s Interest Group, Royal Palm Beach, FL

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- March 2, 2020 – **“Reflective Practice for positive Relational Responsiveness and negative Reducing Reactivity”**, Healthier Delray, Atlantic Community High School, Delray Beach, FL
- April 4, 2020 – Panelist for **“Mental Health in the African American Community: Beyond the Stigma”** by the T. Leroy Jefferson Medical Society & Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. Delta Delta Lambda Chapter
- April 16, 2020 – Guest Speaker for First Priority Palm Beach County **“Coping during COVID 19 for Teens”**
- April 21, 2020 – Panelist for **“Coping with the Stress of COVID 19”** by National Coalition of 100 Black Woman, WPB chapter
- April 24, 2020 – Panelist for **“Panic, Practice, and Pandemic”**, American Counseling Association of Georgia Online Event
- May 21, 2020 – Presentation Creator, **“Busy parents, Bored kids: Mental & Emotional Wellness Support for Families During Covid-19”** Webinar, Healthier Delray and Delray Beach Chamber of Commerce
- May 29, 2020 – Creator & Panel Host, **“How to get the green? Sharing Experiences of MFP Scholars”**
- July 28, 2020 – Guest Speaker, **NAMI PBC “Faith Over Fear: Mental Health & the Church”** Webinar
- August 19, 2020 – Guest Speaker, **Providing Staff Support & Supervision Virtually**, Brazelton Touchpoints
- August 28, 2020 – Guest Host, **United Way of Broward County, “Faded Conversations”** Webinar
- October 10, 2020 – Creator & Host, **New Song “Mental Health & the Church” Virtual Conference**
- November 3, 2020 – Researcher & Speaker, **Trauma Talks Webinar**, Nova Southeastern University
- November 18, 2020 – Featured Speaker, **SAMHSA Minority Fellowship Program** Webinar
- December 11, 2020 – Guest Host, United Way of Broward County, **“Faded Conversations 2”** Webinar
- February 25, 2021 – Guest Panelist, **“COVID-19: What we need to know to Save lives in our Community”**, National Panhellenic Council of PBC
- March 4, 2021 – Guest Speaker, **“Moving Forward with Mindfulness Reflections”** Zero to Three 2021 Cohort
- March 10, 2021 – Guest Speaker, **“Women of Color & Depression”**, Florida Atlantic University Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated Sigma Iota Chapter AKA Week
- April 13, 2021 – Applied Clinical project Proposal Defense, **“Reproductive Renaissance in Family Therapy”**, Nova Southeastern University, **Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine**
- April 24, 2021 – Conference Speaker **“Reflective Practice & Systemic Thinking”**, **It Takes a Virtual Village Early Childhood Conference - Parent Workshop by Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe**
- April 28, 2021 – Guest Speaker, **“Denim Day Virtual Rally: Rape Culture, Misconceptions, Victim Blaming”**, Vita Nova
- May 1, 2021 – Guest Speaker & Panelist, **“Mental Health in a Pandemic”**, Oasis Church International & Delta Sigma Theta PBC Alumni
- May 17, 2021 – Mindfulness Educator, **“Love & Justice Meditation”**, NAMI & NCBW of PBC
- June 12, 2021 – Conference Presenter, **“Mindfulness & Cultural Humility in Racial Equity”**, EMPOWER 21 Conference by the Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County
- July 24, 2021 – Event Coordinator & Host, **“Mental Health in the time of Crisis”** by T. Leroy Jefferson Medical Society
- August 20, 2021 – Trainer, **“Inner Work: Cultivating Cultural Humility”**, FAIMH Statewide training
- September 3, 2021 – Coordinator & Host, **“Recharge & Empower our Mental Health Heroes”**, in partnership with Healthier Delray Beach, AAMFT MFP, SAMHSA, Florida Family Therapy Alliance
- September 17, 2021– Coordinator & Host, **“Recharge: Refueling our Mental Health Heroes”**, in partnership with the Hanley Foundation, AAMFT MFP, SAMHSA, Florida Family Therapy Alliance
- September 23, 2021 – Featured Panelist, **“Pivoting after Grief & Loss”**, by Women’s Foundation of Florida
- September 27, 2021 – Guest Professor, **“Narrative Therapy & Substance Abuse Prevention”**, Nova Southeastern University Doctor of Marriage and Family Therapy Program (Invited by Dr. Ann Rambo)
- October 8, 2021 – Coordinator & Host, **“2nd Annual New Song Mental Health & the Church Conference”**, by New Song Church Mental Health Ministry
- October 25-29, 2021 – Conference Poster Presenter & Mindfulness Session Speaker, **“Take Heart: Zero the Three Virtual Conference”**
- February 1, 2022 – Guest Speaker, **“Teen Techniques for Mental Health”**, Inlet Grove High School

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- February 11, 2022 – Guest Lecturer, **“Cultural Humility in Family Therapy”**, Nova Southeastern University Doctor of Marriage & Family Therapy Faculty Retreat
- February 22, 2022 – Panelist, **“The Perception of Mental Health in the Black Community”**, Palm Beach State College
- February 25, 2022 – Trainer, **“Cultural Humility in Family Therapy”**, Florida Family Therapy Alliance Statewide Training (FAIMH)
- March 31, 2022 – Guest Panelist, **“Financial Opportunities for HBCU Students & Practitioners”**, Diversity Inclusion Showcase: SAMHSA Region VI, HBCU C.A.R.E.S, Partnerships for Equity, African American Behavioral Health Center of Excellence
- April 29, 2022 – Guest Speaker, **“Get your Green for Mental Health on Kick Off Event”**, Palm Beach County
- May 14, 2022 – Guest Lecturer/Presenter, **“Infant Mental Health: Mindful Movement & the Body Center”**, EMPOWER 22 Conference, Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County
- May 14, 2022 – Guest Lecturer/Presenter, **“Cultural Humility, Healing, & Responsiveness”**, EMPOWER 22 Conference, Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County
- May 23, 2022 – Guest Speaker, **“Maternal Mental Health”**, YouMoms
- May 24, 2022 – Guest Speaker, **“Calling vs. Career”**, Sheree Davis Cunningham Black Women Lawyers Association
- May 31, 2022 – Guest Speaker, **“Listening with Compassion: Narrative Map for Practice & Supervision”**, FAIMH Statewide Training
- June 9, 2022 – Guest Speaker, **“Mental Health in College”**, Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler Equity Institute Palm Beach State College
- June 15, 2022 – Panelist, **“Celebrate Diverse Babies Week”**, FAIMH
- June 16, 2022 – Guest Speaker, **“Careers in Mental Health”**, Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler Equity Institute Palm Beach State College
- July 29, 2022 – Guest Lecturer for Staff Retreat, **“Our Inner Work: Cultivating Cultural Humility”**, Center for Child Counseling
- August 27, 2022 – **Keynote Speaker, “Pathways to Hope” Conference**, NAMI Palm Beach County
- September 17, 2022 – **State Presenter, “Hot Topics in Psychiatry” Plenary**, NAMI Florida State Conference, Orlando, FL
- October 29, 2022 – Host & Organizer, **“4th Annual Mental Health & the Church”** Conference, Palm Beach Atlantic University
- May 6, 2023 – Guest Speaker, **“Pause & Play: Mindfulness CoP in Early Childhood Education” EMPOWER 23 Conference**, Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County
- May 6, 2023 – Guest Speaker, **“Cultural Humility: Honoring Families Healing & Sacred Stories” EMPOWER 23 Conference**, Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County
- May 9, 2023 – Guest Speaker, **“Inner Work”**, Sheree Davis Cunningham Black Women Lawyers Association
- September 6, 2023 – Guest Speaker, **“Support. Sisterhood. Shining”** Rhonda’s Promise HEY SISTAS Support Group
- Oct 25-27, 2023 – Speaker, **“MFP Mentor GPS: Finding Authentic Guide and Path to Success”**, Systemic Family Therapy Conference
- October 30, 2023 – Host & Organizer, **“4th Annual Mental Health & the Church”** Conference
- March 16, 2024 – Featured Speaker, **“MFT Faith-based Action Plan”**, AAMFT Leadership Symposium
- March 23, 2024 – Featured Panelist, **Challenges with Accessing Mental Health Services**, Oasis International
- April 12, 2024 – Commencement Speaker, **“A Journey of Spiritual Disciplines & Transformation”**, Peacock Soul Care Institute for Spiritual Formation & Direction
- June 18, 2024 – Mental Health Panelist, **“World Sickle Cell Day Education & Awareness Symposium”**, Sickle Cell Foundation of Palm Beach County & Treasure Coast
- June 28, 2024 – Webinar Presenter, **“Learning Lab”**, AAMFT Certificate of Leadership 2024 Cohort
- July 2, 2024 – Webinar Presenter, **“Divine Completion: Poetic Healing Tool”**, NAMI PBC
- November 5, 2024 – Workshop Presenter, **“Birth Equity in Family Therapy” & “MFT Faith-based Action Plan”**, Systemic Family Therapy Conference, AAMFT

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Publications:

Enhancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity in The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy – Family Therapy Magazine (2024, November/December).

**Authored by the AAMFT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Oversight Committee 2023 and 2024 (in alphabetical order): Ronald Asiimwe, PhD, Adrian J. Blow, PhD – Chair, Katie Heiden-Rootes, PhD, Naveen Jonathan, PhD, Silvia Kaminsky, MSED, Debbie Manigat, DMFT, Erin C. Schaefer, MAEd, Isha D. Williams, PhD, Monique E. Willis, PhD and AAMFT Staff Melanie A. Gibson, MA, CAE (COO), Chris Michaels, CAE (CEO) and Shari N. Olarte, MA, CAE (Dir. of Governance).*

Manigat, D. (2022, September/ October). Family Therapists in Prenatal & Postnatal Care. Volume 21, No. 5 <https://ftm.aamft.org/family-therapists-in-prenatal-postnatal-care/>

Manigat, D. (2022, May). Narrative Philosophy of Supervision: Isomorphic Journey of Discovery and Identity. The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807221104136>

In my teaching, community activism, mentoring activities, clinical, supervisory, and publishing work, I lead with a cultural humility lens. This means I recognize and acknowledge the integration of diversity, equity and inclusion in each space and regularly attune to who is and who is not in the room. I lead with what my spiritual teachings has taught me about bringing peace, love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control, faith, and meekness to my work and volunteer endeavors. This also means using intercommunication skills centered in dignity and respect. Finally, it means being a life-long learner and bringing multifaceted ideas and the fullness of life experiences.

(V) COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION: Past and present activities demonstrating knowledge of and commitment to social justice and systemic science.

Presently, I serve as a member on the AAMFT Diversity Equity Inclusion Oversight Committee (DEIOC). I attune to my social location and how it impacts my perception of social disparities by using sociocultural attunement and cultural humility lens in my work. In our inaugural year, we were charged with creating policies and procedures to abide by. Our vision is to create a feedback loop that AAMFT's DEI policies, procedures, trainings; all information is reviewed, and updates will inform training and development; creating a system for historical and institutional knowledge to be passed forward. Drawing from AAMFT's strategic plan, DEI

policy, Code of Ethics, and other key governing documents, we organized around three key pillars of cultural competency, intentional inclusiveness, and recognizing diverse voices. In addition to creating policies and procedures, we did a review of how AAMFT appears to others. We learned so much from this process that we also acknowledged that qualitative data through focus groups can give a robust opportunity for more inclusion and insight from members. We have facilitated several focus groups at this time that allowed us to identify areas needing improvement and are summarizing those areas to present to the applicable AAMFT program, department, or committee. This has been documented in our November/ December publication of Family Therapy Magazine with the following recommended steps forward for AAMFT (all of which were adopted by the AAMFT Board):

1. Increased intentional engagement with minoritized groups.
2. AAMFT communications to review DEI communication strategy to increase awareness of DEI activities and priorities.
3. Dedicated DEI space on the AAMFT website. In our review of several sister organizations, we noted that many had allocated sections on their websites to DEI. These were easy to find and included rich content. We recommend that AAMFT establish a dedicated landing page for DEI-specific information, featuring details about the DEIOC, DEI-focused networks, and other DEI programs. This resource will strengthen AAMFT's DEI efforts and member awareness.
4. Improve communication of Topical Interest Network (TIN) activities to the larger membership. TINs are offering extremely diverse programming that is attractive to members, but members may be unaware of these events or may view them as separate from AAMFT.
5. Code of Ethics. Several issues were raised pertaining to the code of ethics including reparative therapy and multicultural competence. We recommend that the Code of Ethics Revision Task Force be asked to explicitly address these issues in their work.
6. Intentional DEI continuing education for AAMFT leadership, staff, Board members, and TIN leaders, to address structural and systemic issues in governance, policy, and practice.
7. Intentional engagement of students and new professionals. Student members were not very responsive to the survey. They also reported not having a positive sense of belonging within the association.

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8. Create a scorecard now that we have these initial benchmarks against which future renditions of this survey can be compared.
9. Expanding DEI to include other topics/identities. Some respondents reported that DEI is overlooked for certain populations and minoritized identities. Topics raised by respondents included intersectional identities, disabilities, and neurodiversity.

(VI) RELEVANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION – Optional (up to five sentences)

You may choose to identify and/or describe parts of your background which may include the following: work setting (e.g., private practice, academia, agency, community health, government), home location (e.g., rural, urban, suburban), region (e.g., US state, international), any other relevant demographic information (e.g., age, ethnicity/race, gender, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual affiliation, ability, immigration status, languages spoken).

As a representative of AAMFT membership, I am a local leader in philanthropy and funding oversight, a Professor, Florida qualified MFT/ MHC supervisor, private practice architect, and mental health advocate. I am also championing a pathway to address the expansion of MFT programs at historic black colleges and universities (HBCUs). In the narrative of my humanity, I am a proud African American and Nigerian, millennial woman residing in urban South Florida with my husband and our 2 children. In my culture, faith is very important and I have chosen to be a follower of Christ in an interfaith setting under the teachings of Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman and Dr. Barbara L. Peacock as a certified Spiritual Director from the Peacock Soul Care Institute. Overall, my vision for AAMFT remains that we lead by "calling in", and move forward in connection through inner work bearing beloved agency, grounded in grace, collective healing, and restorative justice.