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2021

News

Alliance-COA Announce SPARK 2021 Line-Up



COA

September 14, 2021

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Virtual Conference To Take Place October 12-14, 2021 Featuring Bestselling Authors Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, Heather McGhee and Other Nationally-Renowned Speakers

Washington, D.C. – The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities and Council on Accreditation (Alliance-COA) today announced the line-up for their upcoming annual conference, taking place October 12-14, 2021. **SPARK 2021** will be a three-day virtual learning experience that will activate the power of the social sector. Registration is now open (early bird registration rates available through September 27) and can be accessed [here](#).

“Fueled by a commitment to advance equity and improve the well-being of all people, we hope this virtual conference will spark and elevate important conversations around some of today’s most vexing challenges and inspire participants to implement innovative practice, policy, and research,” commented Jody Levison-Johnson, president and CEO of Alliance-COA. “We will also be launching our new organization and unveiling our new brand during the opening session, which represents a critical moment in the history of our organizations as we work to create a unified, intrepid, just, and purposeful network so that all people can thrive.”

SPARK 2021 will open on Tuesday, October 12 with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, bestselling author of [How to Be an Antiracist](#). Dr. Ibram X. Kendi is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University, and the founding director of the BU Center for Antiracist Research. He is a contributing writer at *The Atlantic* and a CBS News racial justice contributor. In 2020, *Time magazine* named Dr. Kendi one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

The closing ceremony on Thursday, October 14 will feature Heather McGhee, bestselling author of *The Sum of Us*. A renowned expert on the American economy, Heather McGhee is one of the most brilliant and influential thinkers exploring inequality today. Both her [viral TED talk](#) and her instant *New York Times* bestseller [The Sum of Us](#) reveal the devastating true cost of racism—not just for people of color, but for everyone. Deeply stirring, intelligent, and compassionate, McGhee’s talks offer us an actionable roadmap during one of the most critical—and most troubled—periods in history. McGhee has drafted legislation, testified before Congress, and become a regular contributor on shows like Meet the Press and Real Time with Bill Maher.

Key sessions over the three-day conference will include:

- **Intersection of Identities: Using Who You Are to Advance the Work of Equity** featuring Charles Montorio-Archer, president and CEO of One Hope United, and author of *Everybody Paddle: A Leader’s Blueprint for Creating a Unified Team*
- **How Internal Power Sharing Can Transform Organizational Culture and Advance Change** featuring a panel of social sector leaders from the Children’s Guild Alliance, Villa of Hope and Children & Families First
- **What We’ve Learned about Effective Partnership for Addressing Pervasive Racial Disparities** featuring key leaders in the collective impact movement from StriveTogether, Built for Zero and Cities United

- **Policy Solutions at the Intersection of Child Welfare, Poverty, and Racism** featuring a panel discussion with Jerry Milner, director of Family Integrity and Justice Works, Public Knowledge; Brian Samuels, executive director of Chapin Hall; and Dr. Julia Jean-Francois, Co-Director for the Center on Family Life in Brooklyn, NY.
- **Jointly Addressing ACEs and Racism: Moving from Theory to Action** featuring leaders from Cooperative of Communities, RYSE Center and Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health
- **Understanding Power Dynamics: The History of Disparities in America** featuring Rueben C. Warren, executive director of the National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care from Tuskegee University

SPARK 2021’s diamond sponsors are Brown & Brown Insurance of Lehigh Valley and FEI Workforce Resilience. Sponsors for SPARK include: Aramark, Binti, Unite US, United Healthcare, Villa of Hope, and Your Part-Time Controller. Additional sponsors include: Accreditation Guru, Afia, BakerTilley, Datis, Gallagher, Insperity, Lincoln Families, One Hope United, Presence, Truth Collective, Turning Points for Children, and Youth Villages.

Media Notes: The newly merged Alliance for Strong Families and Communities and Council on Accreditation will be announcing its new name and brand during the opening session on October 12, 2021 at 11am EST. Media are invited to attend the full conference free-of-charge. To request access, contact Jennifer Devlin at jdevlin@alliance1.org.

For more information, to access the full agenda of events, or to register for SPARK 2021 go to [link](#).

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About the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities and Council on Accreditation (Alliance-COA)

The Alliance-COA and resulting new organization will convene and catalyze a dynamic, inclusive, multifaceted network of human/social services organizations that leverages the collective experience of the field and research to spark a current in the sector and drive continuous evolution and improvement. Our goal is to activate the power of the social sector and create a unified, intrepid, just, and purposeful network that propels our field forward so all people can thrive. The new organization will provide a range of opportunities to actively shape the sector through collaboration, innovation, policy, and practice excellence.



About COA

Founded in 1977, the Council on Accreditation (COA) is an international, independent, nonprofit organization that accredits human and social service providers. Our mission is to partner with human and social service organizations to strengthen their ability to improve the lives of the people they serve.

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