

**Media Contact:**

Noelle R. Moss

Side by Side

(415) 457-3200 ext. 114

[nmoss@sidebysideyouth.org](mailto:nmoss@sidebysideyouth.org)

[www.sidebysideyouth.org](http://www.sidebysideyouth.org)



## Side by Side Announces Appointment of Dr. Christine Isana Garcia as Chief Executive Officer

*Garcia Brings Over 20 Years of Experience in Nonprofit Leadership and Youth Mental Health*

**San Anselmo, Calif. (September 1, 2021)** – [Side by Side](http://www.sidebysideyouth.org), a San Anselmo-based nonprofit that serves vulnerable youth and their families in four Bay Area counties, today announced the appointment of Dr. Christine Isana Garcia as Side by Side’s new chief executive officer, effective October 1, 2021. Dr. Garcia succeeds Mary Denton, who recently retired after serving at Side by Side for over 20 years.

Dr. Garcia’s appointment concludes a six-month national values-based search process led by Side by Side board member Ricki Syufy. According to Syufy, Dr. Garcia was the clear top choice, possessing all the desired skills identified by the search committee, including deep familiarity with youth mental health and school/community-based services, demonstrated success in nonprofit leadership, and a focus on empathy. “It was immediately evident to the committee that Christine’s ability to perform at the highest level, along with her deep clinical background and demonstrated success in leading organizations and teams, would align with the needs of Side by Side,” Syufy says. “We’re confident that Christine is the right person to lead Side by Side and carry on the long legacy of providing exemplary services to Bay Area youth.”



*Dr. Christine Isana Garcia,  
Side by Side’s new CEO*

*Photo credit: Hugo Ahlberg*

Dr. Garcia comes to Side by Side from Edgewood Center for Children and Families, whose services include outpatient behavioral health, inpatient residential services, transitional housing for foster youth, a crisis stabilization unit, and a non-public school that serves a population similar to Side by Side’s [Irene M. Hunt School](#). Her deep and diverse experience in program development, leadership, and strategy will help take Side by Side to the next level as the agency strives to address the critical mental health needs of underserved communities and housing challenges for foster youth. Dr. Garcia’s interest in youth mental health and expansive career is rooted in her experience as a child when she would go with her family to help bring needed food and support to migrant families and foster youth.

“Christine’s warmth, collegial style, and passion for leading with empathy will be assets to her new role,” said Side by Side’s board president Howard Schomer. “A product of a bilingual, multiracial, immigrant family, she brings a unique perspective to her work and the issues facing youth today. As the Bay Area continues to seek ways to come together to address the extreme effects of the pandemic on the mental health of our youth, Side by Side’s role in supporting our clients and their families, as well as building bridges to community partners, has never been

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more important. We are confident that Side by Side will be well positioned under Christine's guidance to continue on this path, and to thrive in the years to come."

"This is an extraordinary opportunity to make an impact in our community," said Dr. Garcia, who has lived in the Bay Area since 2014. "Side by Side is a stellar agency that offers so much to the youth and families of today. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lead and help develop programs and services that are responsive to the ever-changing landscape of the needs of young people. I believe Side by Side is poised to come out of the pandemic a stronger agency and continue to be a leader in this area. I look forward to working together with Side by Side's board and staff in this endeavor."

#### **About Dr. Christine Isana Garcia**

Prior to Side by Side, Dr. Garcia served as San Francisco Regional Director for Edgewood Center for Children and Families, where she managed a staff of nearly 200 and was responsible for an \$18 million regional budget. Her visioning and strategic planning in that role included leadership in the areas of cultural humility, equity, and inclusion.

Before coming to Edgewood, Dr. Garcia was Clinical Director at both the Masonic Center for Youth and Families in San Francisco and UCSF's Young Adult and Family Center. Before coming to the Bay Area, she worked at Princeton University's Counseling and Psychological Services where she provided clinical service, taught post-doctoral fellows, and served on committees focused on services to underserved students.

As a clinical psychologist for more than 20 years, Dr. Garcia specialized in the issues of trauma, eating disorders, equity and diversity issues, and chronic mental illness in youth and families. Her clinical and teaching experience includes extensive work with survivors of sexual trauma, including foster youth, military veterans, and individuals and families with intergenerational histories of abuse.

Dr. Garcia holds a B.A. in English from Vassar College and a Doctorate in Psychology from Rutgers University.

#### **MEDIA PLEASE NOTE:**

For more information or to request an interview with Dr. Christine Isana Garcia or Howard Schomer, please contact Noelle R. Moss at [nmoss@sidebysideyouth.org](mailto:nmoss@sidebysideyouth.org) or (415) 457-3200 ext. 114.

#### **ABOUT SIDE BY SIDE**

At Side by Side, we walk with young people impacted by adversity on their unique journeys to heal from trauma, restore resilience, and embrace their own potential. We provide critical and comprehensive services that honor the young person's unique needs and strengths to prevent the escalation of dangerous conditions and behaviors and set them on a positive path. When they feel seen for who they are today, we believe our youth can move with confidence toward a future with meaning and connection.

Since our founding in 1895 as an orphanage – and through many years as Sunny Hills Services – Side by Side has been at the forefront of best practices in child welfare. Today, Side by Side

operates in four counties – Marin, Alameda, Sonoma, and Napa – across the Bay Area, each year reaching nearly 2,000 youth ages 5-26 and family members with critical services related to behavioral and mental health, early intervention in schools, LGBTQIA+ support, transitional housing for foster youth, and special education. Learn more at [www.sidebysideyouth.org](http://www.sidebysideyouth.org).

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