

Beniam Aster Megabi Awoke Betsiha

Ph.D. · MA · MRC · NCC · LPC · LCDC · CRC

Clinician · Scholar · Counselor Educator · Policy Researcher · Ed.M. Candidate, Harvard

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Professional Summary

Dr. Betsiha is a clinician, scholar, and counselor educator whose career is defined by the sustained simultaneity of its commitments: four simultaneously active clinical credentials, a CACREP-accredited doctorate, an active licensed private practice serving hundreds of clients, graduate and doctoral-level teaching across two CACREP-accredited institutions, and current post-doctoral study at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, not as a sequence of career stages, but as a single, sustained professional identity. Raised as a refugee who navigated asylum processes, ESL coursework, and credential invisibility before completing two master's degrees (Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling [CACREP-accredited] and Clinical Mental Health Counseling [CACREP-accredited]) and a doctorate (Counselor Education and Supervision [CACREP-accredited]), he brings firsthand experience of displacement to his scholarship, his clinical practice, and his teaching, and to the communities he has served for nearly a decade in English and Amharic.

Across co-teaching, clinical supervision, skills instruction, and professional mentorship spanning master's and doctoral programs at Saybrook University and Capella University, Dr. Betsiha has taught and mentored hundreds of students, many accompanied through the full arc from foundational coursework to clinical licensure. He was selected as the sole recipient of the 2025 Saybrook Standout Award from a pool of more than 300 students; invited by New York University faculty to deliver a guest lecture on digital equity and displacement; selected by Professor Fernando Reimers of Harvard to present at a global education conference and contribute to a Harvard-edited volume; and elected Vice President of Internal and Campus Affairs for the Harvard Black Graduate Student Alliance, representing Black graduate students across all twelve of Harvard's graduate and professional schools (Harvard Business School, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard Graduate School of Design, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Law School, Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study). His doctoral research applied Q Methodology to counselor self-efficacy with suicide-risk clients, addressing a preparation gap with direct implications for CACREP program design, supervision, and clinical training.

At the Harvard Graduate School of Education, his post-doctoral research focuses on foundational learning reform and trauma-informed systems design in crisis-affected and low-income country contexts, integrating clinical expertise with comparative education policy methodology and expanding his capacity for evidence-based program evaluation and policy analysis.

Areas of Expertise

- Counselor Education & Supervision (CACREP)
- Clinical Supervision & Counselor Development
- Trauma-Informed Clinical Practice
- Multicultural Counseling & Cultural Humility
- Co-Occurring & Substance Use Disorders
- Child & Adolescent Counseling
- Refugee & Immigrant Mental Health
- Group Counseling & Psychoeducation
- Crisis Intervention & Psychiatric Stabilization
- Vocational & Rehabilitation Counseling
- Suicide Risk Assessment & Counselor Self-Efficacy
- Federal Rehabilitation Policy & Regulatory Compliance
- Online & Hybrid Pedagogy (InSCiTE-Certified)
- Program Evaluation & CACREP Accreditation
- Decolonial Mental Health Frameworks
- Comparative Education Policy Methodology
- Q Methodology Research Design
- Foundational Learning Reform in Low-Income Contexts
- Education Policy Analysis (Bardach Framework)
- Digital Equity & Technology Access Policy
- Private Practice Administration & PLLC Operations
- Displacement, Asylum & Credential Navigation

Education

Post-Doctoral Ed.M., International Education Policy & Management (IEPM)

2025 – Present

Harvard Graduate School of Education · Cambridge, MA · Expected May 2027

Research focus: Foundational learning reform, trauma-informed systems design, and education policy in crisis-affected and low-income country contexts.

Ph.D., Counselor Education & Supervision (CACREP Accredited)

Conferred

Saybrook University · Pasadena, CA

Dissertation: *Counselor Trainees' Perspectives on Confidence, Skill, Knowledge, and Competence to Build Self-Efficacy while Working with Clients at Risk of Suicide: A Q Methodology Approach*

Method: *Q Methodology* — mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative factor analysis with qualitative interpretation.

Master of Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) (CACREP Accredited)

Conferred

University of Texas at El Paso · El Paso, TX

Master's, Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) (CACREP Accredited)

Conferred

Saybrook University · Pasadena, CA

Bachelor, Psychology

Conferred

University of Texas at Dallas · Richardson, TX

Licenses & Certifications

NCC – National Certified Counselor (#1725464) · National Board for Certified Counselors

LPC – Licensed Professional Counselor (#90504) · Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors

LCDC – Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (#16532) · Texas Dept. of State Health Services

CRC – Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (#477427) · Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification

InSciTE – Integrative Saybrook Certification in Teaching Excellence · The Community Solution Education System

Chemical-Terrorism Vulnerability Information (CVI) · U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Texas Real Estate Broker License · Texas Real Estate Commission (TREC)

IRS Tax Preparer Certification · Internal Revenue Service

Awards & Honors

Saybrook Standout Award

2025

Awarded for outstanding research, education, scholarship, community service, and professional impact in Counselor Education and Mental Health. Selected to present accomplishments to the Saybrook University Board of Trustees and featured across university platforms and official social media channels.

Selected as the sole recipient from a pool of more than 300 students.

Publications

Published Book Chapter — Harvard-Edited Volume

Betsiha, B. A. M. A., Otero, J. F., Triki, H., & Pham, T. (2026). Strengthening teacher AI literacy in Mexico. In F. M. Reimers, Z. Azim, M. A. Begi, J. Chia, & N. Shifat (Eds.), *Leading education systems: Learning from policy challenges and practices around the world*. Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Published Book Chapter

Avery, D., Betsiha, B., & Horton, K. (2027). Q methodology. In V. P. Holstun, L. Bohecker, & B. D. Falkenstien (Eds.), *Counseling research and program evaluation: A multidimensional approach to culture and epistemologies* (1st ed.). Cognella Academic Publishing.

Doctoral Dissertation

Betsiha, B. A. M. A. (2025). Counselor trainees' perspectives on confidence, skill, knowledge, and competence to build self-efficacy while working with clients at risk of suicide: A Q methodology approach (Publication No. 32046929) [Doctoral dissertation, Saybrook University]. ProQuest One Academic.

Independent Research

Betsiha, B. A. M. A. (n.d.). Psychological and social adjustments of immigrants: Immigration and self-esteem [Unpublished manuscript].

Manuscripts in Preparation

Betsiha, B. A. M. A. (in preparation). Trainee self-efficacy typologies in suicide-risk counseling: Supervision implications for CACREP-accredited programs. Target journal: Counselor Education and Supervision.

Betsiha, B. A. M. A. (in preparation). Q methodology in counselor preparation research: An empirical application to high-risk clinical training. Target journal: Journal of Counseling and Development.

Keynotes & Featured Engagements

"When the World Goes Digital and You Don't Exist in It"

Invited Guest Lecture · New York University (NYU)

2026

Invited by NYU faculty to address graduate students in "Cultural and Legal Implications of Digital Technology." Drew on personal experience as a refugee navigating credential invisibility and digital exclusion to examine who is designed out of digital systems and at what cost. Received public recognition from the course instructor for bridging lived experience, clinical expertise, and policy analysis in a way that reinforced the course's central arguments.

"Thriving in Your PhD: Strategy, Structure, and Self-Compassion"

Invited Speaker · Saybrook University

2025

Invited to address current doctoral cohorts on academic resilience, structural navigation of doctoral programs, and self-compassion as a dimension of scholarly practice.

"Decolonizing Mental Health: Theory and Practice"

Invited Research Presentation

2024–2025

Examined how Eurocentric clinical frameworks pathologize non-Western healing traditions and proposed culturally grounded alternatives for clinical training and counselor education curricula.

"Parenting Children in an Individualistic Culture as Collectivistic Parents"

Invited Community Presentation · St. George Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Sachse, TX

2024–2025

Delivered psychoeducation on intergenerational identity, acculturation stress, and cross-cultural parenting frameworks to Ethiopian immigrant and diaspora communities.

Conference & Academic Presentations

Triki, H., Betsiha, B. A. M. A., Otero, J. F., & Pham, T. (2026, November). *"My Name Has Scattered on the Road to My Tomorrow": Aspiration, educational possibility, and displacement in Tunisia*. Paper accepted for presentation at the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Northeast Regional Conference: Education, Migration, and Displacement, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY.

Betsiha, B. A. M. A., Otero, J. F., Triki, H., & Pham, T. (2026, January). Strengthening teacher AI literacy in Mexico. Conference Addressing Global Education Challenges: Equity, Resilience, and Innovation. Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA. [Paper selected by Professor Fernando Reimers for conference presentation and published book chapter.]

Betsiha, B. A. M. A. (2025). Legitimacy under uncertainty: Institutional authority, policy credibility, and conditions of trust in contexts of systemic crisis and resource scarcity. Research presentation, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.

- Betsiha, B. A. M. A. (2025). Closing the learning poverty gap: Policy pathways for foundational learning in Ethiopia. Policy analysis employing Bardach’s Eightfold Path framework. Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.
- Betsiha, B. A. M. A. et al. (2026). UNETE collaborative presentation: Technology, equity, and teacher capacity in low-resource contexts. Harvard Graduate School of Education Global Education Policy Conference, Cambridge, MA.
- Betsiha, B. A. M. A. (2025). Ph.D. journey: Thriving in your PhD — Strategy, structure, and self-compassion. [Invited speaker]. Saybrook University.
- Sivalingam, H., Betsiha, B. A. M. A., & Marks, A. (2023). Getting oriented as a scholar-practitioner. Saybrook University.
- Betsiha, B. A. M. A. (2022). Understanding suicide: Risk factors and prevention. Saybrook University.

Teaching Experience

Adjunct Faculty, Counseling Program

2026 – Present

Sul Ross State University • Online

Appointed as faculty in the Counseling Program, delivering graduate-level instruction to master's-level students preparing for licensure and professional practice.

Adjunct Faculty, Counseling Program

2026 – Present

University of West Alabama • Online

Appointed to the faculty of the CACREP-accredited Counseling Program, delivering graduate-level instruction to master's-level students preparing for licensure and professional practice.

Graduate Course Instructor & Clinical Practicum Supervisor

2020 – 2023

Saybrook University | *Capella University* • Hybrid

Co-instructed graduate-level CACREP-accredited courses across Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs, integrating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice throughout. Holds the Integrative Saybrook Certification in Teaching Excellence (InSCiTE), reflecting advanced online pedagogy and culturally responsive instructional design, applied across all courses taught.

Co-instructed doctoral-level coursework (CES 7025: Instructional Theory & Practice, 8 Ph.D. students) while simultaneously enrolled as a Ph.D. candidate at Saybrook University.

Hundreds of students taught, supervised, and mentored across practicum, internship, skills courses, and individual mentorship, many accompanied from foundational coursework through clinical licensure. All teaching and supervision was conducted concurrently with active doctoral study and four simultaneously held clinical credentials.

- Provided individual clinical supervision to practicum and internship students, including reflective practice facilitation, developmental feedback, and ethical oversight throughout supervised clinical training.
- Contributed to curriculum and syllabus development aligned with CACREP accreditation standards across multiple courses.

Saybrook University — Selected Courses:

- Crisis and Trauma Intervention (COUN 2562) — Co-Instructor, 15 students [FA 2023]
- Counseling Practicum, Internship I & II (COUN 8152/8154/8155) — Co-Instructor, 11 students [SU 2023]
- Instructional Theory & Practice, Ph.D. Level (CES 7025) — Co-Instructor, 8 doctoral students [SP 2023]
- Cultural Humility & Responsiveness (COUN 2560) — Co-Instructor, 15 students [FA 2022]
- Basic Counseling Skills (COUN 2500) — Skills Supervisor, 9–11 students [FA 2021, FA 2022]
- Professional Orientation & Ethical Practice (COUN 2650) — Co-Instructor, 12 students [SP 2022]

Capella University — Selected Courses:

- Child and Adolescent Counseling (COUN 5254) — Co-Instructor, 21 students [FA 2020]

Clinical Experience

Co-Founder & Clinical Mental Health / Substance Abuse Counselor

2023 – Present

Safe Space Connect, PLLC • Garland, TX

Co-founded and operates a licensed private practice delivering trauma-focused mental health and substance abuse services to refugee, immigrant, and underserved populations in English and Amharic. Practice founded on a direct understanding of the barriers displaced communities face in accessing care.

Hundreds of clients served across more than three years of practice, with services delivered in English and Amharic to refugee, immigrant, and underserved populations across the full continuum of behavioral health care.

- Delivers individual and group counseling for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, integrating trauma-focused, culturally responsive, and healing-centered treatment frameworks.
- Provides formal clinical advocacy and student rights representation for refugee, immigrant, and first-generation children and adolescents facing suspension, expulsion, and punitive disciplinary action within Texas public school districts. Representation includes written clinical advocacy letters, attendance at IEP and disciplinary hearings, and direct engagement with campus principals and superintendents during formal appeal proceedings consistently surfacing trauma histories, cultural misattribution of behavior, teacher-perpetrated harm, and the mental health dimensions of disciplinary incidents that institutional decision-makers had overlooked. All represented students have been successfully reinstated to their educational placements.
- Conducts psychosocial assessments and co-develops individualized treatment plans addressing complex trauma, displacement-related stressors, and recovery goals across the full continuum of care.
- Provides crisis intervention and psychiatric stabilization using structured, evidence-based de-escalation and safety planning protocols informed by doctoral-level research on suicide risk.
- Maintains clinical documentation in SimplePractice and CMBHS in compliance with HIPAA, ACA ethical codes, and Texas regulatory standards.
- Manages all PLLC administrative and operational functions alongside clinical responsibilities: insurance panel credentialing, billing oversight, clinical documentation systems, and regulatory compliance.

Clinical Rehabilitation Counselor Intern

2019 – 2020

CitySquare-TRAC • Dallas, TX

- Provided individual and group rehabilitation counseling to 50+ chronically homeless adults and foster care youth aging out of the system, contributing to program outcomes that included measurable reductions in recidivism rates among participants, as tracked by program records.
- Coordinated multidisciplinary rehabilitation plans across housing, behavioral health, employment, legal services, and child welfare systems — managing complex, multi-barrier cases from intake through community reintegration.
- Served as a systems navigator for clients intersecting with homeless services networks, the Texas foster care system, housing authorities, criminal justice, and employment services simultaneously.
- Implemented crisis intervention strategies and maintained service coordination in high-acuity environments with constrained institutional resources.

Clinical Mental Health Counselor Intern

2018 – 2019

Denton County Juvenile Detention Center • Denton, TX

- Provided individual and group mental health counseling to incarcerated adolescents within a carceral clinical environment — navigating mandatory reporting obligations, security protocols, and court-ordered treatment while building and maintaining therapeutic alliance.
- Developed an original resilience training curriculum designed specifically for incarcerated youth; program participants showed a reported 50% decrease in recidivism rates per facility outcome records.
- Designed group therapy programming focused on coping mechanisms, emotional regulation, and prosocial skills for a high-risk adolescent population with complex trauma histories.
- Interfaced directly with juvenile justice stakeholders including probation officers and court personnel to coordinate care and communicate treatment progress within legal parameters.

Research & Academic Appointments

Graduate Assistant — Rehabilitation Services Administration

2021

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) • El Paso, TX

- Conducted federal policy analysis and compliance review under the Rehabilitation Long-Term Training (RLTT) program (Rehabilitation Act of 1973), collaborating with UTEP's project director and U.S. Department of Education officials across multiple academic years.
- Performed 34 CFR regulatory analysis including comprehensive review of payback agreements, Certifications of Eligibility, exit certifications, deferral applications, and employment verifications.
- Cross-referenced scholar service obligation data in the Payback Information Management System (PIMS) against GPRA (1993) performance requirements, ensuring data integrity and federal compliance.

Job Skills Trainer — Vocational Rehabilitation Services

2020 – 2021

UTEP Rehabilitation Sciences Clinical Teaching Laboratory • El Paso, TX

- Provided Vocational Rehabilitative Services (VRS) within a university teaching laboratory context — simultaneously delivering services to clients while modeling professional practice for Rehabilitation Sciences graduate students in supervised observation.
- Facilitated vocational assessment, employer development, ADA workplace accommodation negotiations, and competitive integrated employment placement for clients with complex disability presentations.
- Delivered Social Security work incentive counseling to support informed client decision-making around SSI/SSDI eligibility and employment income.
- Facilitated job coaching, supported employment, and Vocational Adjustment Training (VAT) using client-centered, minimally invasive approaches focused on self-determination.

Leadership & Institutional Service

Student Representative, IEPM Forum 2026 Planning Project ("SET")

March – May, 2026

Harvard Graduate School of Education, IEPM Program / Harvard University

- Served as a student representative on the project team structuring the 2026 IEPM Forum (Sept 18–20, Harvard campus), meeting weekly with program leadership from project kickoff through execution
- Contributed to survey and focus group design gathering student input on Forum structure and content.

Vice President of Internal & Campus Affairs

2026 – 2027

Harvard Black Graduate Student Alliance (HBGSA) / Harvard University • Cambridge, MA

- Elected to serve as the primary liaison between HBGSA and Harvard's 12 professional schools, coordinating strategic communication with Deans of Graduate Schools, the Council of Deans of Student Life, and senior student affairs leadership.
- Leads cross-school collaboration, joint programming, and advocacy to advance institutional support and visibility for Black graduate students across the Harvard's 12 professional schools.
- Developed structured communication protocols between the HBGSA Executive Board and affiliated school representatives to strengthen organizational clarity and reduce information silos.

Emergency Services Coordinator

2017 – 2018 | 2010 – 2011

Texas Instruments (Fortune 500), Dallas, TX (2017–2018) | *Atrium Medical Center*, Corinth, TX (2010–2011)

- Held Chemical-Terrorism Vulnerability Information (CVI) certification (U.S. DHS), authorizing access to classified chemical facility vulnerability data — applied to emergency planning for Texas Instruments' semiconductor manufacturing operations.
- Designed and implemented Continuity of Operations (COOP), Emergency Preparedness (EP), and Contingency Planning protocols for a Fortune 500 technology corporation; led facility emergency response planning and communications systems.
- Conducted incident management audits and risk mitigation reviews (TI); ensured healthcare facility emergency preparedness and State and Federal regulatory compliance (Atrium).

CSC-DV LLC • Garland, TX

- Licensed Texas Real Estate Broker (TREC, 2008–Present) and IRS-certified tax preparer (2014–Present); both maintained as complementary professional credentials serving immigrant and first-generation clients in North Texas.

Professional Affiliations

- American Counseling Association (ACA)
- Association for Counselor Education & Supervision (ACES)
- Southern ACES (SACES)
- Association for Child & Adolescent Counseling (ACAC)
- American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA)
- Intl. Association of Addictions & Offender Counselors (IAAOC)

Languages

Amharic — Fluent / Native

English — Fluent

Swahili — Conversational

Technology & Software

- SimplePractice — *Clinical EHR*
- CMBHS (Texas DSHS) — *Behavioral Health*
- Notenetic — *Behavioral Health*
- SAMHSA Systems — *Clinical / Federal*
- Typhon Group / Tevera / Skillsetter — *Practicum Management*
- Tableau / Piktochart / Canva — *Data & Design*
- Microsoft Office Suite — *Office Productivity*
- Canvas LMS / Harmonize / Packback — *Education Technology*
- Blackboard Ultra — *Learning Management System*
- NtreisMatrix / ZipForms / ROAM — *Real Estate Platforms*
- BlockWorks / TaxSlayer Pro / TaxAct — *Tax Software*
- PIMS — *RSA Federal Compliance*