

2025



18th ANNUAL

GEORGIA SCHOOL OF ADDICTION STUDIES

PROGRAM BROCHURE

A photograph showing several hands of different skin tones clasped together in a circle, symbolizing unity and support. The hands are positioned in the center of the page, with the text "Empowering Communities:" overlaid in white. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white.

Empowering Communities:

Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery

August 24 - 28, 2025

Hyatt Regency, Savannah, GA

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PLEASE REMEMBER TO...

- Keep name badges accessible for scanners.
- Arrive to sessions at the scheduled times.
- Silence cell phones during all sessions.

Welcome to Savannah



Welcome Letter

Dear Georgia School Attendees,

Welcome to the 18th Annual Georgia School of Addiction Studies and the beautiful city of Savannah! Our theme, “Empowering Communities: Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery” is grounded in the belief that sustainable change begins at the local level and highlights the vital role communities play in creating supportive environments for prevention, expanding access to effective treatment, and fostering long-term recovery.

Over the next four days, you will experience various workshops, plenaries, and keynote presentations highlighting innovative ideas, best and emerging practices, and personal journeys. We have worked hard this year to put together a program that offers both workshops you will find interesting and workshops you need to meet licensing and certification needs.

This year’s lineup includes major league baseball all-star, Darryl Strawberry, who will share his inspirational story of finding strength and hope through struggles, and why he now dedicates his life to helping others do the same. In addition, nationally known speakers, Danielle Coke Balfour and Carlos Whittaker will be a highlight of the week.

Again this year we will utilize the GSAS Conference App where you will be able to view the entire conference agenda and your personal schedule, scan in and out of workshops, access workshop handouts, network with other attendees, view maps of the hotel, and much more. If you need any assistance with the app, please don’t hesitate to stop by the registration desk.

For many attendees, the Georgia School has become a yearly tradition that has led to many fond memories and friendships. We would like to welcome back and thank those who have attended over the past 17 years and welcome the new attendees to the Georgia School tradition. We encourage you to take advantage of this conference's amazing networking opportunities and develop relationships that will last for years.

Please make sure to visit our exhibitor tables and learn about the different prevention, treatment, and recovery resources available in Georgia. We also encourage you to participate in one or all the scheduled events and enjoy one of the most charming cities in the nation.

I would personally like to thank the members of the Georgia School Board, whose support and guidance made this event possible. I hope that you find this year’s School full of new ideas and new opportunities for partnership. Please enjoy the conference, take time to celebrate our successes, and embrace the important work ahead.

Sincerely,

Jessica Andrews-Wilson

Jessica Andrews-Wilson, MS, ICPS
President, Georgia School of Addiction Studies



Georgia School Board

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Certification Board of GA
Crystal Smalldon, CADC II, MATS

Council of Accountability Court Judges
Erica Acebo-Johnston, LCSW, CAADC
Sherna Tolbert, MSW

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
Jay Neal
Kristen Lee

DeKalb County Superior Court
Lasheika Kassa, CADC II, MATS, GSAS Vice President

Georgia Addiction Counselors Association
Donna Ritter, ND, CMAC, BT, CCS, CMATS
Kelly Moselle, MA, MS, CAC II, CMAC, CCS, CMATS, CAMS II

Georgia Association of Community Service Boards
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Georgia Association of Recovery Residences
Todd A. Wilson, CADC II, MAT

Georgia Council for Recovery
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Emily Ribblett, MBA, CARES, GSAS Treasurer
Jeff Breedlove, CARES

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
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Kristal Davidson, LPC, NCC
Tom Watkins, Ph.D.
Yomi Makanjoula
Prince Malcolm Moorman, NCAC-I, CAC-II, CCS
Von Wrighten, M.Div., MAC, CACII, CCS
Donna Dent, MISM, MS, ICPS
Theodore Carter, Jr., MPA
Christopher Wood, ICPS, GSAS Past President
Christy Doyle, MSW, LPD, LCSW

Georgia Department of Corrections
Antonio M. Johnson LPC, CADC-II, CAADC, CPCS, CCS
Chris Austin, MPA, CADC-II, MATS

Georgia Department of Human Services - Division of Family and Children Services
Natalie R. Green, LMSW

Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
John Izzo, LPC, GSAS Parliamentarian
Tania Appling, Ph.D.

Georgia Department of Public Health
Caroline Baer, MPH

Georgia Health Policy Center, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University
Susan McLaren, MPH, FACHE

GUIDE, Inc. (Gwinnett United in Drug Education)
Michael W. Davis, Ph.D., ICPS

Heritage Foundation
Nicole Gatlin, LPC, CPCS, CRC, RPT-S, NCACII, MAC, SAP, CCS

Licensed Professional Counselors Association of Georgia
Gale Macke, LPC

Mercy Care
Steve Roux, BA, CADCII
Vincent Washington

National Association of Social Workers- GA
Cheryl Bonneau, JD, MSW
Dr. Davine S. Ricks, LCSW, MAC, E-CADC

Penfield Addiction Ministries
Donnie Plummer, CACI

Prevention Credentialing Consortium of Georgia
Jessica Andrews-Wilson, MS, ICPS, GSAS President

Recovery Place
Leslie Backus

Southeast Addiction Technology Transfer Center
Dawn Tyus, Ph.D., LPC, MAC, NCC

Voices for Prevention (V4P)
Ester Lopez, MPS, ICPS

Student Representative
Iman Pew, LCSW

Thank you to all our Board Members for their dedication and service to the Georgia School.



Overview

The 18th Annual Georgia School offers a unique opportunity for professional development, information exchange, and networking. It is designed to address the need for knowledge and skill development through advanced training and will begin on Sunday, August 24th, at 2:00 p.m. and end on Thursday, August 28th, at 12:30 pm. The Georgia School grew from many years of experience with and support of the Southeastern School of Alcohol and Drug Studies, which was among the oldest existing regional training events of its kind. The Georgia School will continue to faithfully listen to the needs of participants and diligently work to create a positive learning environment that has been an important part of the training of thousands of substance abuse prevention and treatment professionals.

Registration

Please register early—space is limited! You can view the full announcement and register at www.thegeorgiaschool.org. Below are the conference registration fees and registration dates.

- **Early Bird Registration: June 23rd - July 23rd** **\$625**
- **Regular Registration: July 24th - August 17th** **\$650**
- **Late Registration: August 18th - on site** **\$725**

Partial week registrations are also available; Sunday - \$125, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday - \$250 each day, and Thursday - \$150.

When registering please make sure you review the workshops carefully so that your workshops do not overlap one another. There are a variety of 6 hour and 3 hour workshops being offered—all workshops must be taken in full in order to receive CEU credit. If you register for a 6 hour workshop you may not take a 3 hour workshop on the same day. You may make changes to your workshop selections after completing the registration process—deadline for making changes is Friday, **August 8, 2025.**

For inquiries related to registration, please e-mail info@thegeorgiaschool.org

Continuing Education Hours

Application has been made for CE hours through the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Certification Board of GA (ADACBGA); Georgia Addiction Counselors Association (GACA); Licensed Professional Counselors Association of GA; Georgia Society for Clinical Social Workers. Specific participant attendance records will be executed at the end of each workshop segment to support the award of individual CE hours certificates.

Application will also be made for credit hours through the Prevention Credentialing Consortium of Georgia (PCCG).

Overview

Food Service

Registered participants will have continental breakfast each day, assorted snacks and refreshments throughout the day and lunch on Monday and Wednesday. Be sure to look for our “big” breakfast on Thursday morning. For those with special dietary needs please indicate this on your registration.

Lodging

Please make your reservations as soon as possible. A limited number of rooms are being held for the Georgia School at the Hyatt Regency (2 West Bay Street, Savannah, GA) at the rate of \$176 plus tax for single or double occupancy. **August 1, 2025 is the deadline for reserving your lodging at this rate.**

For reservations you may use the Georgia School website, www.thegeorgiaschool.org
Click on the Hotel Reservations link on the home page.

Please Note: Parking is included in your room rate if you are staying at the Hyatt Regency. Also be aware that there is no self-parking, only valet service. If you are not staying at the Hyatt Regency you will need to find parking elsewhere. To find other parking options you may visit this City of Savannah link [HERE](#)



Keynote Speakers



Darryl Strawberry

Former Major League Baseball All-Star, minister, and author

Darryl Strawberry is described as a legend by many who have been dazzled by the dynamics of his game, the power he possessed at the plate and the story of redemption that continues to bring hope to so many lives. He has earned the legendary nicknames and phrases of one of the most feared homerun hitters in the game of baseball, Straw's Sweet Swing, Strawberry's Field Forever and The Legendary Straw Man! He will share his inspirational story of finding strength and hope through struggles, and why he now dedicates his life to helping others do the same.



Danielle Coke Balfour

Artist, advocate, speaker, and entrepreneur

Danielle Coke Balfour is a graphic designer turned artist, advocate, speaker, and entrepreneur. She's the founder of Oh Happy Dani, an illustration-based educational platform that uses artwork and resources to make complex ideas surrounding racial justice more accessible for the everyday advocate. Danielle works to inspire her community of over half a million people across social media to do good daily, right where they are. She's also the author of "A Heart on Fire: 100 Meditations on Loving Your Neighbors Well" and the corresponding "100 Activities and Prompts for a Life of Everyday Advocacy and Self-Compassion." Whether working with brands like Coach and Adobe, speaking in front of audiences, or running her business, Danielle hopes to inspire others to embody their values and live a life of sustainable activism by using what they have to impact the world around them.



Carlos Whittaker

Author, storyteller, and motivational speaker

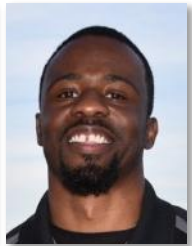
Carlos Whittaker is a best-selling author, expert storyteller, and impactful speaker to all kinds of audiences— from auditors to teachers to non-profit leaders to dermatologists. No matter who you are, his message is for you. Carlos uses his vast and varied personal life experience to captivate and engage audiences in ways that few else can. Whether your team is suffering from burnout, conflict, distraction, or disengagement, Carlos is sure to reinvigorate them with insight, humor, and inspiration.

Plenary & Lunch Sessions

Monday Morning Plenary

The Pursuit of Happiness at Work and in Life

Kiki Ramsey



Monday Lunch- Welcome to the Georgia School

Raising our Game and Doubling Down: Celebrating The Impact of Collaboration In Our Work

Eric Rowles and Ahmed Toure

Tuesday Morning Showcase

The Journey of Good Work

Danielle Coke Balfour



How to Human: Reclaiming Connection in the Work of Healing

Carlos Whittaker

Striking Back: A Champion's Rise from Addiction to Purpose

Darryl Strawberry

Wednesday Morning Plenary

Prevention in Georgia: An Update

DBHDD Commissioner Kevin Tanner



Wednesday Lunch- Awards Luncheons

Prevention Awards Luncheon:

Presentation of the Ray Avant Excellence in Prevention Award and the Prevention Rising Star Award



Treatment/Recovery Awards Luncheon:

Presentation of the Paula Crane Excellence in Treatment Award, the Buddy Horton Organizational Excellence in Treatment Award, and the Neil Campbell Recovery Champion Award

Thursday Morning Closing Plenary

2025 Georgia School Knowledge Challenge - Win Prizes!



Special Events

All Week

Exhibitor Expedition - Connect and Collect!

Use your smart phone to complete tasks or challenges with our exhibitors/sponsors to win daily prizes. Take some time to meet our exhibitors and win some prizes!

Monday

Silent Auction

The Silent Auction begins on Monday. Please place a bid on one or more of the wonderful items and help support the Georgia School. All funds raised go to scholarships.



Tuesday

Tai Chi Session - 7:30am

Discover the calming, flowing movements of Tai Chi in this beginner-friendly session designed to improve balance, flexibility, and mental clarity. This class focuses on slow, intentional motions and deep breathing, helping you connect body and mind while reducing stress. No prior experience is necessary—just wear comfortable clothing and come ready to move at your own pace.



Wednesday

Haitian Square Walking Tour – Discover Hidden Legacies in Historic Black Savannah - 5:30pm and 7:00pm

Step into the heart of Savannah's historic district and uncover powerful, often untold stories on this walking tour. This inspiring journey reveals the deep connections between Savannah and the first and second African republics, shedding light on the African and Haitian contributions that helped shape the city and the nation. Along the way, you'll visit remarkable sites including the oldest continuously operating Black church in North America, multiple Underground Railroad landmarks, the Haitian Memorial Monument, and the oldest African community in Georgia. Learn about Black Savannah's role in the Harlem Renaissance, African spirituality, and underground schools that defied oppression. From Yamacraw Bluff's true builders to the genius of Africans whose labor built the wealth of the U.S. and Europe, this tour is a rich, immersive experience that connects the past to your present. Admission \$35 per person (must be pre-paid via registration system). The tour will begin at the Hyatt. Tickets are very limited.



All Week

12 Step Meeting - 9:00pm to 10:00pm



Program Agenda

Sunday, August 24th

1:00 - 6:00pm: Conference Check-In

Feel free to beat the Monday morning crowds and check-in on Sunday evening.

2:00 - 5:00pm: Pre-Conference Workshop

Playing with Fire: Conflict, Communication, and Code Switching in your Day-to-Day Work

Ahmed Toure

What is YOUR leadership style? How can your style work in conjunction with different leadership and communication styles that you interact with every day? Wherever your work falls on the prevention - treatment - recovery spectrum, you can utilize the tools from this session to not only forecast the different approaches used in the workplace but also bridge the divide that often exists between coworkers and clients. Join us for this highly interactive and enlightening training that you can put to IMMEDIATE application at the conference, in your workplace and beyond!

Monday, August 25th

7:00am: Conference Check-In

8:00-9:00am: Morning Plenary

MONDAY 6 HOUR WORKSHOPS (9:30am-5:00pm) Sessions – A/B

Building and Fostering Therapeutic Relationships in a Telehealth Online Environment with Rural and Marginalized Poor Populations

Lucy Cannon

While the therapeutic alliance is based on a practitioner's mission to demonstrate genuine empathy, and respect for the individual's autonomy and well-being, the notion of utilizing technology to communicate thoughts and feelings during the therapeutic process has many challenges. (Thomas, 2015) The high rate of digital literacy problems in rural and marginalized ethnic groups communities require healthcare providers to seek solutions to remedy problems while providing best practices treatment to their clients. This training is designed to better prepare healthcare professionals with identifying skills that are needed to provide online therapy that is culturally sensitive while meeting the needs of their clients.



MONDAY AM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS (9:30am-12:30pm) Sessions – A

Note: Please review your workshop choices carefully. If you plan on attending a 6 hour workshop on this day then you will not be able to attend a 3 hour workshop.

Essentials of Good Board Governance for Substance Use Prevention, Care, and Treatment Nonprofits

Drew Reynolds

This interactive three-hour workshop is designed for nonprofit leaders and board members seeking to enhance their board governance practices and drive greater impact in the field of substance use prevention, care, and treatment. Participants will gain a clear understanding of board roles and responsibilities, learn strategies to build stronger board-executive director partnerships, and explore practical techniques to boost board effectiveness and engagement. The session also covers how to lead focused, productive board meetings that support strategic decision-making and organizational growth.

Instilling Servant Leadership into Substance Use Treatment Environments

Scott Luetgenau

This training focuses on infusing servant leadership principles into substance use treatment environments, emphasizing the vital role of compassion, empathy, and collaboration in leadership roles. Through thought-provoking case studies and engaging interactive exercises, participants will explore the core tenets of servant leadership, including selfless service, community building, and team empowerment. By examining real-world examples and best practices, attendees will gain valuable insights into applying servant leadership principles to enhance organizational culture and client outcomes. This training empowers leaders within substance use treatment settings with the essential skills and mindset to cultivate a thriving culture of servant leadership and excellence. Participants will leave with a deep understanding of how servant leadership can transform treatment environments, fostering a sense of shared purpose, trust, and dedication to providing the highest quality care for individuals in recovery.

Empowering Communities through Effective Supervision of Certified Peer Specialists

Heather James and James Todd

This workshop is designed to equip supervisors with the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to effectively supervise Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) in a way that enhances their personal development, promotes recovery, and fosters community empowerment. Through a combination of theoretical insights, practical tools, and collaborative discussions, participants will learn how to create supportive environments where peer specialists can thrive and positively impact the communities they serve. Participants will explore how peer specialists can be empowered to use their lived experience in meaningful ways, while also ensuring that their professional development is nurtured. Supervisors will be provided with actionable techniques for promoting autonomy, managing challenges, and ensuring that peer specialists are able to provide high-quality services to individuals and communities.

Mindful Self-Compassion in Addiction Recovery: A Path to Healing and Resilience

Vira Salzburn

Discover how Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) can transform addiction recovery by addressing shame, fostering resilience, and cultivating self-acceptance. This session introduces the core principles of MSC, explores its role in creating compassionate recovery environments, and offers hands-on mindfulness and self-compassion exercises. Participants will leave with practical tools and insights to empower themselves and their communities in fostering healing and emotional well-being.

MONDAY AM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (9:30am-12:30pm) Sessions – A

Recovery Capital and Young People: Building Age-Appropriate Tapestries of Support

Meghann Perry

This workshop will introduce current data about the landscape of substance use in young people and why young people use substances. We'll talk about current definitions of addiction, substance use disorder, and recovery and whether they align for young people. We'll then explore the concept and reality of Recovery Capital for adolescents and emerging adults and compare them to SAMHSA's Dimensions of Wellness and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. We'll end the session with a group brainstorm to create a list of Recovery Capital, recovery pathways, and other supports for increasing holistic wellness in young people struggling with problematic substance use that are built upon a young person's strengths, values, cultures, identities, passions and uniqueness, and that are also community-based, appropriate for young people, and not reliant on pathways created by and for adults.

Treating Harmful Sexual Behavior in Youth

Lisa Dunham

In this presentation, professionals will be empowered and feel increased competence in addressing HSB's with child and adolescent-aged clients. Statistics related to frequency and future harmful behaviors will be discussed. All attendees will know how to develop a comprehensive safety plan (including use of the internet). Essential components of sexual education are described so that individuals will know what to discuss with youth. Cultural considerations will be addressed. Finally, participants will be made aware of when it is essential to refer to a higher level of care. The goal is that when these behaviors show up as either a concern from a parent or when law enforcement is involved, providers can offer immediate intervention to mitigate any future harm.

Risky Business: Understanding Adolescent Risk-Taking and Effective Strategies for Support

Michael Nerney

110 mph on the highway, music blaring, open containers, four teens in the car...why do adolescents find drinking alcohol and engaging in high-risk behaviors so attractive? Recent research on the adolescent brain clearly demonstrates that adolescents perceive and process risk assessment in ways that are remarkably unlike those of adults. Changes in receptor site numbers and sensitivity, neurotransmitter action, and social-emotional responses all combine to influence how teens evaluate risk. In this program, Mr. Nerney will offer new ways to think about and talk about adolescent risk reduction, including access to structured risk taking, and the use of "gist" language. These concepts can be applied across the spectrum of adolescent risky behaviors, including drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, and others.

First Responder Training for Opioid Overdose Response and Community Education through State Opioid Response Prevention Grant IV

Andre Vasi, Stephen George, Pierluigi Mancini, and Pallavi Singh

This session explores Georgia's First Responder Strategy under the State Opioid Response Plan, focusing on two key training initiatives: the Naloxone First Responder Training and the State Opioid Response Adaptation (SOAR) program. Presenters will discuss how these initiatives aim to equip first responders with the knowledge and skills needed to recognize opioid overdoses, administer Naloxone, and respond effectively to crises. We will share first responder's feedback on training effectiveness, impact, and areas for improvement, as well as compare these efforts to national strategies to understand their role within broader opioid intervention initiatives.



MONDAY AM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (9:30am-12:30pm) Sessions – A**10 Epic Tools to Ignite Staff Training****Eric Rowles**

Is your staff inspired... or in pain? Staff training and professional development is often viewed as a painful process - but it doesn't need to be! When you apply a 13 Minute Roller Coaster approach, combined with a MIST formula of facilitation, and integrate innovative assessment, technology, and group development techniques... training can be ROCK-STAR-like! Don't miss this showcase of multiple strategies, techniques, and examples of how (and why) staff training and DYNAMIC professional development can be the SPARK to keep your colleagues engaged!

Supportive Management for Behavioral Health Professionals**Marissa Carlson and Maura McGowan**

What can we as supervisors and professionals in other program leadership roles do to help our behavioral health providers navigate the challenges of their roles and prevent burn-out? What are some ways to offer support and added value to the work they do and the professionals they are? This workshop will look at how supportive management frameworks and activities can be utilized to build the internal and external resources our behavioral healthcare providers need to stay energized in the work they do. Participants will have an opportunity to share effective strategies and initiatives they have seen, as well as leave with new ideas and activities to bring back to the workplace.

From Trauma to Triumph: ACEs Training for Health, Wellness and Prevention**Wanda Boone**

This dynamic training session equips participants with the knowledge and tools to identify, understand, and address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Participants will explore the profound impact of ACEs on long-term health and well-being, learn effective strategies for trauma-informed care, and engage in practical exercises to apply these principles in their work. By transforming trauma into triumph, this training aims to foster resilience and promote healing within the community.

MONDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – B

Note: Please review your workshop choices carefully. If you plan on attending a 6 hour workshop on this day then you will not be able to attend a 3 hour workshop.

You Want me to Give Them my Phone Number?! An Argument for Between Session Phone Coaching and How it Will Improve Results Without Burning You Out**Lesley Chapin**

Often mental health providers cringe at, or even completely avoid, situations and positions that require them to provide after hours contact with clients. Who wouldn't? After spending the day managing client needs, anyone would like a chance to disconnect and keep that separation between work and home. At the same time, when clients are in crisis frequently, it is difficult to generalize important information to their daily lives and this can result in reckless, impulsive behaviors and often ends with relying on crisis and emergency services. This workshop will demystify the concept and process of phone coaching, will make the case for why therapists should actually "opt in" to clients calling them outside of sessions, and will explore why providers might ultimately love it. Attendees will learn how to set up and orient clients to phone coaching with success in mind and how to conduct phone coaching effectively. We'll explore what phone coaching is, as well as what it's not.

MONDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – B

Program Evaluation in Substance Use Prevention, Care, and Treatment

Drew Reynolds

Program evaluation is a critical tool for enhancing the effectiveness of substance use prevention, care, and treatment initiatives. This focused three-hour workshop equips professionals with essential knowledge and tools to evaluate substance use prevention, care, and treatment programs effectively. Tailored to the unique needs of this field, the session covers how to define measurable evaluation goals, develop logic models, and apply basic evaluation methods. Participants will also learn to analyze and interpret data to improve program outcomes and communicate impact to key stakeholders.

Providing Quality Business Improvements in MOUD Programs

Jewana Lowe

Business functions are constantly changing in the addictions field. This presentation is designed to give each attendee an idea on how to keep these functions relevant, real and ready for each patient that receives services at your agency. Regulatory bodies require treatment facilities to meet rigid quality improvement measures to ensure centers are providing adequate care. This class will demonstrate how programs can use business improvements that lead to quality care.

Facilitating Recovery: Applying Recovery-Oriented Principles and Practices to Enhance

Growth in Group Settings

Meghann Perry and Paul Alves

A recovery-oriented approach to group facilitation fosters a supportive culture where SAMHSA's Ten Guiding Principles of Recovery help participants develop key recovery skills. This session introduces a framework that aligns these principles with essential group facilitation concepts, enhancing both participant engagement and skill development. Key recovery principles-such as honoring culture, autonomy, and choice; being person-driven and strength-based; and encouraging leadership and responsibility-will be paired with facilitation strategies like active listening, teamwork, agreements, risk-taking, and mistake-making. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the Ten Guiding Principles of Recovery and develop practical facilitation skills to support participant growth in diverse group settings. While the focus is on recovery, these approaches are equally valuable in mental health, substance use, prevention, harm reduction, criminal justice, public health, faith and education settings for participants of all ages.

Creating a Holistic Treatment Plan: Integrating Wellness in Therapy

Kimberly Alexander

This lecture introduces wellness in treatment planning as a tool to help clients meet their treatment goals. It also considers the impact of wellness and behavioral health diagnoses for diverse clients and special populations based on special genetic predisposition, prevalence, and treatment modalities and norms. Participants will Identify and define the aspects of overall wellness and their corresponding components, review diagnoses and disease states ideal for comprehensive wellness treatment planning based on symptom presentation and treatment history, and create sample treatment plans with objectives that include mental, physical, and spiritual treatment goals for clients.



MONDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – B**Promoting Awareness of Motivational Incentives (PAMI): What You Need to Know****Davine Ricks**

This workshop is designed with the goal of providing an efficient and effective training that results in an increased clinical understanding and implementation of PAMI (Promoting Awareness of Motivational Incentives). This workshop supports the growth and development of current and future practitioners working with the substance abuse population. Participants will have the opportunity to increase their knowledge base about the key components and principles of motivational incentives and substantiate evidence of clinical effectiveness. Participants will develop skills to increase ability to strategically use low-cost motivational incentives and increase awareness and ability to effectively implement principles of PAMI to help clients abstain from drug use.

Mind Matters: Understanding and Supporting Adolescent Mental Health**Michael Nerney**

After the pandemic, mental health experts had initially predicted a decrease in depression and anxiety across the entire population, including pre-teens, teenagers, and young adults. However, this prediction has proven to be inaccurate. The long-term effects of diminished economic opportunities, online schooling, social isolation, sleep deficiency, and other related challenges have not subsided. In many cases, these factors have contributed to increased distress within the adolescent population. Nationally, city and county mental health services report a 30% rise in teen mental health visits. These teens often present in emergency rooms seeking help for a variety of symptoms related to depression, such as loss of motivation, hopelessness, sadness, and suicidal thoughts. How can we recognize these issues in our students, and what steps can we take to help them find relief from their distress?

Thrive: Conquer Burnout with Work-Life Harmony**Kiki Ramsey**

Imagine a life where you don't just survive but actually thrive. In today's fast-paced world, many of us are overwhelmed, constantly busy, and need more time to genuinely enjoy life. What if you could break free from this cycle and truly conquer burnout? Dr. Kiki Ramsey introduces a revolutionary concept that goes beyond mere balance. The key to thriving is what she lovingly calls "harmony." Harmony is about seamlessly integrating the various aspects of your life so that they complement and support each other, creating a state of true well-being and lasting fulfillment. Through practical strategies and evidence-based techniques, Dr. Kiki will show attendees how to achieve genuine work-life harmony and thrive in both their personal and professional lives.

Overdose Fatality Review Teams: Developing and Conducting an Effective Group to Prevent Future Fatal Overdoses**Katy Freund**

Overdose Fatality Review teams are multidisciplinary groups that analyze individual overdose deaths within their community to identify gaps in prevention efforts, enhance collaboration among stakeholders, and develop data-driven strategies to reduce future overdose deaths. This workshop will provide participants with the foundational knowledge and skills needed to build or participate in an Overdose Fatality Review team in their community. Participants will learn how to conduct comprehensive assessments of the specific barriers in their community which could contribute to overdose deaths and develop specific and actionable recommendations for organizations to implement. This is an interactive workshop and requests attendees full participation.

MONDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – B

Mental Health & Faith - Bridging the Gap: Building Capacity, Reducing Stigma, and Promoting Community Wellness

Dawn Oparah and Damien Tillman

Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship reach approximately 70% of the American population each month. Clergy outnumber psychiatrists by nearly 10 to 1 and are more evenly distributed geographically than health professionals. This reality presents a unique and powerful opportunity to partner with faith, lay, and community members in building their capacity through training, education, and advocacy so they can help bridge the gap between mental health and faith. Our workshop shares the story of how Fayette FACTOR has worked with different faith communities across Georgia, while providing practical, hands-on tools and strategies for providers who want to work more effectively with different faith communities. If you want to help educate congregations about mental health, reduce the stigma associated with seeking help, and connect individuals to an online toolkit full of resources, mental health information and services they need. Join us in this workshop!

Getting Your Ducks in a Row: Preparing a Drug Free Communities Support Grant Proposal

Ari Russell and Ellen Gerstein

Imagine what your community could accomplish with \$250,000 a year for 5 to 10 years! Drug Free Communities coalitions have proven that they can and do reduce youth substance abuse. DFC grants are highly competitive, but well worth it. Learn about eligibility requirements, how to craft your narrative and action plan, tips on prevention strategies the Feds are looking for, how to meet the 100% match requirement and where to go for help.

Tuesday, August 26th

7:00-9:00am: Conference Check-In

8:00 – 9:00am Orientation to Prevention Credentialing

TUESDAY AM SHOWCASE (9:00am-12:30pm) Sessions – C

Danielle Coke Balfour - Artist, advocate, speaker, and entrepreneur

Carlos Whittaker - Author, storyteller, and motivational speaker

Darryl Strawberry - Former Major League Baseball All-Star, minister, and author



TUESDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – D**Adolescent Psychopharmacology 2025****Merrill Norton**

This presentation will explore the impact that the neurobiological basis of the 12 steps can have on Reward Deficiency Syndrome (RDS) despite addiction risk gene polymorphisms. This exploration has already been accomplished in part by Dr. Ken Blum. The purpose of this research outlines the neurobiological and genetic links, especially as they relate to the role of epigenetic changes that are possible in individuals who regularly attend mutual help meetings. It begs the question as to whether "12 steps programs and fellowship" does induce neuroplasticity and continued dopamine D2 receptor proliferation that leads to recovery one day at a time. Understanding of the neurobiological underpinnings of the 12 steps and the work of various groups such as Al-Anon may indeed be a new and important step on the road to becoming and remaining clean and sober. Embracing principles of molecular neurobiology could ultimately lead to a better quality of life in recovery.

Reconnected: Rediscovering the Art of Being Human in a Disconnected World**Carlos Whittaker**

In this restorative, hands-on breakout, Carlos Whittaker invites frontline helpers to slow down and reconnect with what makes us truly human. Building on his How to Human keynote and drawing from his time with monks, Amish farmers, and his Human School course, Carlos will guide participants through practical tools and transformative rhythms that restore presence, deepen empathy, and protect their capacity to care-in work and in life.

Assessment and Management of Suicide Risk-Approaches, Considerations, and How a Multimodal Approach Can Help**Lesley Chapin**

In Georgia, suicide is currently the second leading cause of death amongst individuals ages 10-34. Georgia is above the national average for suicide rate and has the 23rd highest rate of teen suicides. Despite increased efforts and attention aimed at suicide prevention, rates nation wide continue climbing. While training on identifying common risk factors for suicide is becoming more common amongst professionals without clinical training, the typical result is referral to mental health professionals to address suicidality. Unfortunately, up to half of the mental health clinicians tasked with treating this population of potential clients have little or no training in suicide risk assessment and management, let alone best practices in this area of care. This training will provide participants with knowledge on suicide risk factors, population specific considerations and concerns, discuss assessment tools, and explore evidence based treatments for managing suicide risk, postvention, and minimizing liability related to treating high risk clients. Additionally, this training will explore how various components contained within DBT (a comprehensive, multimodal treatment framework) can assist in the treatment of suicidal behavior.

The Ethics of Clinical Humility: Person-Centered Care & Modulation of Self-Interest**Scott Luetgenau**

This training focuses on nurturing clinical humility and embodying person-centered care in addiction treatment settings. Participants will explore the importance of acknowledging biases, power differentials, and cultural humility within therapeutic relationships. Attendees will gain insights into fostering trust, collaboration, and empowerment in clinical practice by examining the impact of provider attitudes and behaviors on client outcomes. This training aims to cultivate a culture of humility and empathy, strengthening the therapeutic alliance and supporting positive treatment outcomes. Participants will leave with a renewed commitment to prioritizing the unique needs of each individual they serve while engaging in continuous self-reflection.

TUESDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – D

Positivity-Focused & Strengths-Based Tools to Flourish in Prevention and Recovery

Garret Biss

The presentation will investigate various interventions offered through positive psychology's multiple pathways to high-level wellness. Participants will experience how addressing needs and opportunities across the full illness-wellness spectrum helps lay the foundation for prevention and for flourishing in recovery. In this experiential-based workshop, participants will not only learn to see prevention and recovery from a new perspective, but they will also have a first-hand experience in the benefits of a positivity-focused and strengths-based approach.

Unleashing the Potential: Examining the Role of Artificial Intelligence in the Healthcare Field

Lucy Cannon

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the development of intelligent machines that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. In an age where the unimaginable is within our grasp, the emergence of AI has profoundly impacted our world. "AI, with its remarkable capabilities, has become an integral part of our daily lives. It fuels our smartphones, empowers our smart home devices, enables autonomous vehicles, and even guides strategic financial choices. AI is not just everywhere - it is actively sculpting the shape of our future." (Arnold, 2023) As healthcare professionals, we must become familiar with concepts of AI and how to incorporate various AI models that can be very beneficial in helping us as healthcare providers efficiently meet the needs of the clients we serve. It is imperative that we begin taking risk to learn more about the benefits of AI and how it can help us better meet the needs of the clients we serve.

Promoting Wellness for All: Aligning Substance Use Prevention and Treatment

Michelle Provost

This presentation explores the critical importance of aligning substance use (SU) prevention and treatment strategies to promote wellness in adolescents and adults. It highlights evidence-based approaches for prevention and treatment, addresses barriers faced by minority and marginalized groups, and identifies key sectors providing direct services to youth. Additionally, it shares successful prevention strategies backed by the LRADAC prevention team, offering data-driven solutions for national implementation. Through collaboration, inclusivity, and informed strategies, this presentation aims to foster a comprehensive approach to substance use wellness. This session will include engaging activities such as scenario-based discussions, role-playing exercises, brainstorming sessions, and community mapping exercises to encourage participant involvement and hands-on learning.

Sources of Strength: Exploring Substance Use Prevention Through Staff and Peer Leader Experiences

Haley Oberg and Pallavi Singh

From 2019 to 2021, fentanyl-involved overdose deaths among Georgia youth surged by 800%, underscoring the urgent need for prevention. This session explores how the Sources of Strength (SoS) program, funded by DBHDD's State Opioid Response Prevention Grant, builds resilience and connectedness through peer-led and staff-supported school-based initiatives. Presenters from DBHDD, a K-12 SoS provider, and the Georgia Health Policy Center will share findings from recent focus groups with program staff and peer leaders, offering insights into implementation, impact, and lessons learned. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how SoS supports protective factors and advances youth substance use prevention in Georgia.



TUESDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – D**Fostering & Maintaining Emotional Health & Resiliency****Marissa Carlson and Maura McGowan**

This workshop explores the various aspects of emotional health, how our emotional health impacts us personally and interpersonally, and the things we can do preemptively and in the moment to foster healthier emotional experiences. We go beyond the typical discussion of feelings and self-care to delve into what positive and negative emotional health looks like for each of us, how to recognize when our emotional health is being impacted, and ways that we can nurture emotional health. Once we have explored topics and tools related to daily emotional health, we will then discuss components of resiliency over time, and demonstrate activities that behavioral health professionals can use with their service recipients to help them cultivate long-term resiliency.

We Have More in Common Than Different: Addressing the Needs of Prevention Across the State with Special Populations**Andrew Williamson**

This presentation aims to explore how substance misuse prevention and mental health promotion can be tailored to the unique needs of special populations. It will focus on reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors that impact the well-being of these populations. The session will highlight strategies to promote culturally and linguistically responsive mental health, prevent substance misuse, build trust and create supportive environments. The presentation will also examine the role of DBHDD partners in implementing community-based

Addressing Cannabis Risks Across the Lifespan**Charlotte Spell**

It seems like no matter what age you may be, there is a cannabis product marketed specifically for you. However, there is little to no information shared about potential risks to specific populations. This session will take a closer look at what science has revealed regarding potential harms resulting from CBD and THC use among vulnerable populations such as youth, expectant mothers, and senior adults.

Lions, Tigers and Bears to Xylazine, Nitazenes, and Pink Cocaine, Oh My!**Kelly Moselle**

Emerging drugs have unpredictable health effects. They may be as powerful or more powerful than existing drugs, and may be fatal. Emerging drugs, which include designer drugs and new psychoactive substances, are substances that have appeared or become more popular in the drug market in recent years. We will discuss Xylazine, Nitazenes and Pink Cocaine during the presentation and emphasize the importance of keeping up to date on the current drug trends.

Wednesday, August 27th

7:30-9:00am: Conference Check-In

8:00-9:00am: Morning Plenary

WEDNESDAY 6 HOUR WORKSHOPS (9:30am-5:00pm) Sessions – E/F

SHIFT HAPPENS! Creating new neural pathways for Trauma Healing

Sandy Queen

Traumatic memories are recorded in distinct neural pathways in the brain. Any new experience that comes even close to this memory will trigger the responses that the individual has developed to deal with the pain associated with the initial trauma, which means that just using talk therapy to confront and deal with the trauma can re-trigger the individual and hijack the healing process. This session will review the basics of trauma, the key elements for trauma healing, and will examine methods that go beyond the cognitive domain to involve sensorimotor and somatic experiences to help the client confront, come to terms with and release the pain associated with trauma, and ultimately create the neural SHIFT in how they view their trauma creating new neural pathways and a way to transcend into a healthier way of living. We will look at EMDR, EFT, sensorimotor techniques and somatic experiences. SHIFT CAN HAPPEN!

Using Evidence Based and Culturally Relevant Treatment Interventions to Treat Women with Substance Use Disorders

Karen Kelly

Across the decade national, data has shown that a smaller percentage of women use alcohol and illicit substances compared to men, and that frequency of use has been lower among women compared to use among men. Acknowledging this truth does not take away from the fact that substance use among women has been a hidden issue, and providing treatment for this client population has been difficult. As a result of this more attention, has been placed on the treatment of women with substance use issues. In this session participants will have an opportunity to examine the most current research and discuss the challenges, boundaries and treatment strategies for treating women with substance use disorders.

WEDNESDAY AM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS (9:30am-12:30pm) Sessions– E

Note: Please review your workshop choices carefully. If you plan on attending a 6 hour workshop on this day then you will not be able to attend a 3 hour workshop.

Military Veterans: A Strengths-Based Model to Mitigating Risk Factors for PTSD, Addiction, and Suicide

Garrett Biss

Explore a strengths-based approach to supporting military veterans as they transition to civilian life. This session will delve into key risk factors for PTSD, addiction, and suicide, offering actionable strategies to mitigate these challenges. Through compelling stories and evidence-based insights, Garret Biss, retired Marine Corps Pilot, will highlight how connection, authenticity, and purpose can empower veterans to thrive. Attendees will leave equipped with practical tools to foster resilience and well-being among those who have served.



WEDNESDAY AM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (9:30am-12:30pm) Sessions – E**How the Brain Heals in Recovery: The Neuroscience of the Twelve Steps and Recovery****Merrill Norton**

This presentation will explore the impact that the neurobiological basis of the 12 steps can have on Reward Deficiency Syndrome (RDS) despite addiction risk gene polymorphisms. This exploration has already been accomplished in part by Dr. Ken Blum. The purpose of this research outlines the neurobiological and genetic links, especially as they relate to the role of epigenetic changes that are possible in individuals who regularly attend mutual help meetings. It begs the question as to whether "12 steps programs and fellowship" does induce neuroplasticity and continued dopamine D2 receptor proliferation that leads to recovery one day at a time. Understanding of the neurobiological underpinnings of the 12 steps and the work of various groups such as Al-Anon may indeed be a new and important step on the road to becoming and remaining clean and sober. Embracing principles of molecular neurobiology could ultimately lead to a better quality of life in recovery.

Understanding Employee Burnout and the Ethics of Self-Care**Samson Teklemariam**

The concepts of burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma are not novel to those in the addiction profession, but many still report an inability to prevent or rebound from burnout. The NAADAC national code of ethics, in principle 3 - 18 states "Self-Monitoring: addiction professionals shall continuously self-monitor in order to meet their professional obligations. Providers shall engage in self-care activities that promote and maintain their physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being." Building resilience for all helping professionals must include professional empathic skills turned inward - learning how to love and care for oneself is part of the job. In this training, participants will begin with an evidence-based tool to assess burnout potential and presence of vicarious trauma and incorporate professional development goals within 8 domains of self-care.

Neuroscience of Addiction and Recovery**James Campbell**

As addiction professionals, we often have gaps in our education around the basics of how our brain functions as well how that functioning is impacted by substance use, addiction, and recovery. Neuroscience of Addiction is a foundational course designed to introduce the fundamentals of brain functioning in ways that are both understandable and can be effectively utilized in treatment and leveraged for recovery.

Your "Response Ability" in Understanding Youth Culture: Concerns, Challenges and Coping Mechanisms**Marc Fomby**

Increasingly, more communities are feeling the impact of youth who have little or no support system - no village. It is important that more individuals understand and comprehend their role in the village's future, particularly the young who will eventually grow up to make a contribution. To have a positive impact on the lives of our youngest villagers, individuals need to develop their "response ability" by better understanding youth culture and what influences it. This workshop engages participants in the exploration of the youth culture through language, music and trends to develop a working knowledge base of how to better serve their young villagers. This fun, interactive and inspiring workshop can equip willing participants with valuable, practical information that can be combined with other community and organizational prevention and intervention efforts. Recognizing and identifying your "response ability" can help get everyone one more step closer to making a difference!

WEDNESDAY AM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (9:30am-12:30pm) Sessions – E

Unveiling the Disconnected Mind: Understanding Dissociation for Those with Substance Use Disorders

Christy Plaice

We will explore the sophisticated mechanisms of dissociation, focusing on how trauma, substance use, and psychological protective strategies contribute to its emergence. Furthermore, we will analyze the effects of dissociation on daily life, interpersonal relationships, and overall mental health, as well as the therapeutic approaches employed to assist individuals in integrating the fragmented aspects of their experiences.

Leveraging Resources for Identifying and Accessing Local Data for Prevention and Evaluation in Georgia: The 2025 Georgia Social Indicator Study

Darigg Brown, Jenna Gabrio, Barrett Montgomery, and Lara Raymond

RTI International has collaborated with Georgia's Office of Prevention Services (OPS) on several prevention and data gathering efforts in recent years, including the development of a county-level Social Indicator Study (SIS). During this workshop we will present an overview of the 2025 SIS, explain the rationale for conducting an SIS, and discuss how we incorporated recent data on emerging substance use issues to update epidemiological profiles for each of Georgia's 159 counties. Attendees will participate in an interactive exercise to examine risk and protective factors of substance use to better understand applications of the SIS epidemiological profiles in their own work. We will also review key processes involved in designing and conducting a social indicator study including data procurement and organization, profile layout development, data analysis techniques for assessing county rankings and trends over time, and synthesis of data findings into a comprehensive report.

The Growing Pains- Building Effective and Efficient Teams: The Leadership Perspective

Monaletto Irby

Let's explore the foundation of building effective teams. Effective leadership is crucial for building strong teams, as it fosters a shared purpose, empowers individuals, and cultivates a collaborative environment. A leader's role extends beyond simply managing tasks; it encompasses inspiring and guiding team members towards a common vision, recognizing their strengths, and providing the resources they need to succeed. Join with me in an interactive classroom discussion with practical exercises focused on the Vision Tree, four leadership styles, team formation growing pains, creating a mission and vision statement, and networking.

Beyond Enforcement: Building Community Coalitions for Drug Prevention in Chatham County

Michael Sarhatt and Lydia McCrary

The goal of this presentation is to inform attendees of the different types of drug awareness, education and prevention programs that are currently in operation within Chatham County. The presentation will stress coalition building, and the importance of law enforcement being a part of that coalition. The objective of this presentation is to demonstrate the different programs that are successfully working in Chatham County and the role law enforcement should take to support and safeguard their community beyond enforcement. This presentation will consist of an hour-long power point which will outline and describe each of the programs, followed by an on-site tour of the Counter Narcotics Team Adult Drug Awareness Trailer.



WEDNESDAY AM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (9:30am-12:30pm) Sessions – E**Good On Paper: A Creative Look at the Work You Do****Danielle Coke Balfour**

In this interactive workshop led by Danielle Coke Balfour, participants will reflect on the purpose and behind the work they do, and turn those reflections into a colorful, illustrated booklet called a zine! This creative activity invites each person to explore the facts, stories, and feelings that define their day-to-day roles, and tell that story on paper in a fun and engaging format, answering the question: "What would I want others to know about the good work I do?" No art experience required!

WEDNESDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – F**More Changes, Again! The ASAM Criteria - Fourth Edition****Diane Diver**

The DSM-5 changed the way clinicians diagnose substance use disorder. Now, ASAM's Fourth Edition has updated its continuum of care. This course will review the DSM-5's substance use disorder criteria and present an overview of changes in The ASAM Criteria Fourth Edition. This will include a review of ASAM's guiding principles, the updated continuum of care, and how to use ASAM's Level of Care Assessment and Treatment Planning tool to develop a comprehensive treatment plan. Additionally, this presentation will highlight the new topic areas in the Fourth Edition: Early and Secondary Prevention, Telehealth, Integrating Recovery Support Services, Addressing Pain and Cognitive Impairment.

Recovery Oriented Transformational Leadership**Samson Teklemariam**

According to the Department of Employment & Development, over 15% of mental health and substance abuse counselors will leave their profession within the next year. Every industry in healthcare has already experienced drastic "workforce disruptors" that require stable and effective leadership. Existing and emerging leaders need a recovery-oriented leadership model that is ideal for the workforce and patients we serve. This presentation will identify some of the challenges in creating a healthy culture with staff, provide a leadership framework fitting the SUD treatment system, and present a data-driven leadership model that uses outcomes to build transformational programs.

Powerless to Powerful: Recovery through a Personal Empowerment Lens**James Campbell**

Both historically and currently, active addiction is frequently discussed in terms of being "powerless" over substances. As a person engages in an active and vibrant recovery, however, the transition to becoming powerful is seldom spoken of. Additionally, the transition between being disempowered and empowered is also rarely explored. This session will clarify steps in moving away from the powerlessness of active addiction and toward becoming more empowered through the recovery process. Aspects of mindfulness, rational behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care, as well as mutual aid models will be integrated in this session to provide participants with working tools to assist individuals in discovering their personal potency.

WEDNESDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – F

Empowering Recovery: Strengthening Georgia's Peer Workforce through Community-Driven Change

Brian Kite, Kenneth Pinion, and Annie Clark

This interactive three-hour workshop explores how the Georgia Council for Recovery (GC4R) is expanding Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) and strengthening Georgia's peer workforce. Funded by SAMHSA's Building Communities of Recovery grant, GC4R fosters community-driven initiatives by identifying local recovery champions, facilitating listening sessions, and hosting recovery symposiums. Participants will engage in discussions on peer-led strategies, multiple pathways to recovery, and integrating community voices into RCO development. Attendees will leave with practical tools and insights into how peer leadership is transforming recovery cultures across Georgia.

Use of DBT Mindfulness and Distress Tolerance Skills in Reducing Therapist Burn-Out

Christina Charette and Tyler Jenkins

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a type of cognitive-behavioral therapy that has been found to be effective in reducing burnout in therapists. DBT includes mindfulness and distress tolerance components that could explain lower rates of burnout. In this workshop, participants will learn about factors that play a role in burnout. They will also learn some key DBT concepts on mindfulness and distress tolerance, and have the opportunity to practice them.

Red Ribbon 365: A Year-Round Approach to Wellness

Norkesha Muhammad-Garrett

Red Ribbon 365 is a year-round initiative designed to extend the impact of Red Ribbon Week beyond a single month. Through a collection of six books—three for schools and three for families and communities—the program addresses key wellness themes: drug awareness and prevention, mental health, and building a healthy future. This session will introduce Red Ribbon 365 as a powerful resource for promoting wellness across all age groups and settings. Participants will learn how to use these resources to address the negative impacts of the pandemic on youth, foster communication, and build stronger, healthier communities through education and engagement.

Community Level Change Strategies Deeper Dive

Michael Davis

Quality use of community-level change strategies is crucial for effectively creating community change. In this session, we will examine the seven community-level change strategies in more detail and discuss the best practices associated with each strategy. From providing information to reducing barriers to modifying policies, successfully implementing a combination of strategies will create the changes we want to see in our communities.

If Only...

Marc Fomby

Too often, "if only" becomes the painful reflection after a tragedy. This powerful session is designed to help participants move from reaction to prevention by learning how to recognize signs of emotional distress, build awareness, and create space for open, potentially life-changing conversations. Through this workshop, participants will explore practical strategies to identify early warning signs of mental and emotional suffering, understand stress-related responses, and engage in supportive actions before a crisis occurs. We'll also examine risk and protective factors that influence mental health, with a focus on early intervention and reducing stigma. Together, we can change the narrative—if only we're willing to get involved.



WEDNESDAY PM 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (2:00pm-5:00pm) Sessions – F**Beyond Burnout: How the Addiction Crisis Pushed Us to the Brink****Kym Laube**

Let's be real-stress isn't the problem anymore. We've moved past that. First responders, law enforcement, and front-line workers in healthcare and the addiction crisis aren't just stressed-we're exhausted. The relentless demands of the job, lack of strong leaders, the surge in mental health and substance use crises, and the emotional toll of seeing the worst day after day have left many feeling depleted. The expectation to keep pushing through, no matter the cost, has taken its toll. But what if pushing through isn't the answer? What if there's a better way to stay in the fight without sacrificing yourself in the process?

Culture of Substance Misuse, Abuse, and Addiction Prevention**John Bringuel**

This interactive workshop will delve into the components, practices, behaviors, and mindsets associated with fostering a "Culture of Substance Misuse, Abuse, and Addiction Prevention" within social service settings. Participants will conduct a self-assessment, participate in a series of experiences, reflections, and discussions on the "Culture of Prevention", examine behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics of the "Culture", discuss strategies for enhancing the practical implementation of the "Culture".

Thursday, August 28th**8:00-9:00am: Closing Plenary - Knowledge Bowl 2025****THURSDAY 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS (9:30am-12:30am) Sessions – G****Families in Recovery****Sandy Queen**

What happens when one person in the family needs therapy? You know the answer: the entire family needs therapy. That person is only one spoke in the treatment wheel.. If we only had the individual to deal with -- but we have the entire family of individuals - each with different personalities, needs, roles. This session looks at the characteristics and crises off families in recovery. needs of all family members. We will examine the type of family therapy that fosters positive change by helping family members identify and modify negative thought patterns and behaviors that contribute to conflict or dysfunction.

Therapeutic Drumming - Creating a Strength Based Community**Tom Harris**

This workshop will introduce the practice of using group drumming with African drums as an effective Intervention for individuals with behavioral and emotional challenges. The format is about 25% didactic and 75% experiential. Topics covered include the neurological and social benefits to drumming in groups, research documenting positive outcomes from this approach, Trauma Informed Care and the use of drumming as a self-regulating activity. Participants will learn basic technique on djembe, several warm-up activities and a traditional rhythm.

THURSDAY 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (9:30am-12:30am) Sessions – G

Rebuilding Paths to Recovery: Best Practices for Supporting Justice-Involved Clients with Substance Use Disorders

Lakieshia Jones

In this presentation, participants will learn strategies to support justice-involved individuals with substance use disorders. The session will address challenges such as stigma, co-occurring disorders, relapses, recidivism, and legal barriers. Focus will be placed on cultural humility, integrating diverse cultural perspectives in treatment, and addressing the unique needs of underserved populations. Participants will gain practical strategies to improve outcomes, reduce relapses, and prevent recidivism, helping justice-involved clients break the cycle of addiction and criminal behavior while promoting long-term recovery and reintegration. This presentation will consist of lectures, discussions, case studies, and role-play.

Paving New Paths: Innovations to Empower Rural Communities for Economic Success and Resource Building

Vahe Heboyan, Catherine Clary, Mario Vernon, and Amy Szoka

Join us for an interactive and educational workshop highlighting the importance of medication assisted treatment (MAT) access, peer support, and economic resiliency in creating recovery communities that foster lasting, positive change. The family-centered approaches and results from two projects implemented in rural Northeast Georgia will be presented, along with a panel ready to dive in to explore the impact these programs have on the peers and families they serve every day. Join us as we share resources, build partnerships, and explore tangible solutions for those we serve. Recovery is real!

High THC Products Link to Psychotic Disorders in Teens, with Clinical, Prevention, and Policy Interventions

Michael Mumper and Britt Paramore

This presentation will focus on the latest research indicating that high-THC products are causing schizophrenia type disorders in alarming number of teens with no family history or precursors of schizophrenia. There are different theories about the neurological process at work. We will focus on the Anandamide neuro chemical relationship hypotheses. We will then discuss potential best practice interventions to address this, from clinical, prevention and policy standpoints.

Expanding Recovery Support: Peer Engagement in Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) and Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR)

Beverly Ragland

This interactive workshop will explore the critical role of peer support in Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) and Medication-Assisted Recovery (MAR). Through lectures, participant engagement, discussions, and activities, attendees will examine how recovery initiatives support peers receiving MAT. The session will also introduce the MAR Assertive Telephone Outreach program, designed to reduce stigma and promote inclusion in the MAT community. This workshop provides a collaborative space to learn, share, and strengthen peer-led approaches to supporting individuals in MAT, ensuring they receive the care and community connections vital to long-term recovery.



THURSDAY 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (9:30am-12:30am) Sessions– G**Structural Ethics****Stephanie Burkes**

Workplace ethics are the principles that an organization aims to live up to. By agreeing to treat others with respect and act with integrity, companies can build trust with staff, clients, and stakeholders. This workshop will explore creating an ethical culture in the workplace and learning to apply the E.T.H.I.C.S.-A method to problem-solve ethical challenges.

Achieving Success Together: Understanding Georgia's Drug-Free Workplace Laws, Programs, and Contractor Compliance + Fentanyl Update**Chris Manning**

OCGA 50-24-3 is a law in Georgia that pertains to drug-free workplaces for state employees. This statute requires that all state agencies and their "contractors" maintain a drug-free workplace by implementing policies and programs to prevent drug use among employees. It outlines the requirements for drug testing, training, employee assistance programs, and other measures to ensure a safe and productive work environment free from substance abuse. Compliance with OCGA 50-24-3 is essential for state agencies and their contractors to fulfill their obligations under Georgia law and maintain eligibility for state contracts and grants. This session will include comprehensive Fentanyl Training which has been designed to meet the training requirements of a certified drug-free workplace in GA and other states.

Building Stronger Communities Together: Lessons and Opportunities from the GUIDE & Live Healthy Gwinnett Partnership**Amira Abdulhafid and Gabriela Reinoso**

Live Healthy Gwinnett and GUIDE have partnered to promote wellness and positive youth development across Gwinnett County. By leveraging their shared commitment to community well-being, the organizations work together to encourage healthy lifestyles, provide educational resources, and prevent substance use and abuse. Live Healthy Gwinnett's focus on physical and mental wellness aligns with GUIDE's mission to foster youth development and community improvement, creating a well-rounded approach to public health and safety. This workshop aims to talk about the benefits and challenges of our collaboration efforts and lessons learned. Participants will learn innovative ways to partner with community, government and local resources to expand their prevention efforts.

Overflow Leadership: Strategies to Lead with Heart and Impact**Tiffany Cuthbert**

Imagine what's possible when you lead not from exhaustion but from a place of abundance. This workshop invites participants from all roles in prevention, treatment, and recovery to explore how prioritizing personal well-being can amplify their impact. Through interactive activities, real-life examples, and practical tools, you'll uncover the power of leading with heart, building resilience, and creating positive change in your work and community. Whether you're on the frontlines or behind the scenes, this session is your chance to recharge, reflect, and reimagine what leadership can look like.

THURSDAY 3 HOUR WORKSHOPS continued (9:30am-12:30am) Sessions – G

Positive Social Norms for Creating Lasting Behavior Change Among Young Adults

Rachel Morris

Students are more in tune with their mental health and wellness than ever before, so what does this mean for our work in prevention? Join us as we take a deep look into the shift toward positive behaviors in regard to alcohol and drug consumption on college campuses through the power of positivity. We'll discover and engage with the Positive Culture Framework, and Positive Social Norms Campaigns. Additionally, you'll hear from our College Prevention Partnership student leaders on the impacts of prevention work on college campuses, and discover what resonates with our student population. The goal of this workshop is to highlight effective ways to engage with our youth and promote thought provoking prevention programming.

Bridging Generations: Leading the Evolving SUD & Mental Health Workforce

Kym Laube

This workshop will explore the current state of the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and mental health workforce, highlighting the challenges and opportunities of managing a multi-generational team. With four to five generations- Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z- working side by side, leaders must adapt their strategies to engage, support, and retain a diverse workforce. Participants will gain insights into each generation's values, communication styles, and work expectations, along with practical leadership approaches to foster collaboration, resilience, and growth in behavioral health settings.



Speaker Bios

Amira Abdulhafid serves as the Program Director for Suicide Prevention. She joined GUIDE in June of 2019. Amira focuses on increasing awareness and resources for suicide prevention, including evidence-based suicide prevention trainings, such as QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), Youth Mental Health First Aid and Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM). Amira served in the Peace Corps as a Youth Development Volunteer in Honduras, where she facilitated education and prevention programs. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with a Creative Writing minor at Georgia College & State University. After returning home from the Peace Corps, Amira earned a Master of Public Health at Georgia State University. Amira is passionate about building relationships and sharing knowledge and education to create a healthier community.

Kimberly Alexander is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Certified Professional Counselor Supervisor (CPCS) and Master Fitness Trainer who has trained individuals and groups for nearly 30 years. Kimberly holds an MBA from Emory University, a Masters of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, and she has an extensive background and training in Executive Leadership, Behavioral Health, and Health and Wellness. Her specialty training in behavioral health includes substance use disorders and sex therapy. She is currently the Georgia State Director for Gateway Foundation - Corrections Division, one of the country's largest, longest-running substance use disorder and behavioral health treatment organizations. Her role directs the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) programs within the Georgia Department of Corrections. She is also the owner of Fit Mind, Fit Body, Fit Soul, a comprehensive health and wellness company. Navigating the therapeutic environment as a behavioral health clinician has its challenges, especially in light of legal, ethical, and clinical constraints. Add a complex client/patient population and medication management and even the most seasoned clinician can feel less than confident. Kimberly's experience as a clinical administrator, neuroscience pharmaceutical representative, and clinical director provide her with a comprehensive perspective on critically thinking through various clinically challenging scenarios. She regularly speaks to groups and individuals to motivate and educate by sharing practical tools that can be applied in real time and she is excited to have the opportunity to share with you today.

Garret Biss is a retired Marine Corps pilot and dedicated advocate for veterans, specializing in mental health, resilience, and recovery coaching. After facing his own challenges with anxiety, depression, and addiction following his military service, Garret developed a unique approach to recovery that emphasizes self-worth, identity, and the inherent strengths veterans bring to civilian life. As the founder of Diamond Mind, LLC, he delivers transformational workshops and coaching programs, including the Veteran-specific ValiantPath™ and Warrior Reset initiatives. Garret is the co-founder of an addiction recovery residence, providing leadership and developing a curriculum rooted in positive psychology. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Maryland and a Master of Real Estate Development (MRED) from Auburn University. A TEDx Speaker, Garret's thought-provoking talk, The Unspoken Trauma All Veterans Face, shares his personal insights into the struggles Veterans encounter. Through his speaking, writing, and leadership, Garret aims to inspire Veterans to thrive beyond military service.

Dr. Wanda Boone has 30 years of experience in prevention and founded Together for Resilient Youth (TRY) in 2000. TRY received 501(c)(3) in 2003. TRY's Mission is to use the public health model and collective impact to increase resilience at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels. DFC coalition 2012-2022 continuing currently! Dr. Boone is a forerunner and recognized as an expert in the field of Resilience/Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma informed living. She is a RN, Sr. RA, Duke University Medical Center and holds a PhD in Theology with an emphasis on public health and collective impact. Dr Boone is the Health and Safety Chair of the Durham Committee of the Affairs of

Black People, member of the National Collaborative for Effective Prescription Opioid Policies, member of the National Society of Prevention Sciences, and Co-Chair, of the NC Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resilience Advisory Board. She served as the Co-Chair of the National Institutes of Medicine Healthy People 2030. Publications & Curriculum: Boone W, et al -Working Together for Better State of Health 2011. Task Force on the Principles of Community Engagement, Principles of Community Engagement, 2nd edition. Washington, DC: National Institutes of Health 2011 (in press-#11-7782). Boone, Wanda Johnson. "Regulating Outlets That Sell Alcohol in Predominantly African American and Hispanic Neighborhoods." In Preventing Alcohol-Related Problems: Evidence and Community-Based Initiatives, edited by Norman Giesbrecht and Linda M. Bosma, 397-408, n.d.", Whole Health Ambassador Curriculum - 2019, Coping Together Curriculum 2023, Community Adult (2023), Youth Health Ambassador Program (2024). Writing for Health, Change Your Words. Change Your World 2023, Opioid Misuse and Overdose Prevention Community Guide 2024.

Dr. Darigg Brown is a senior manager and behavioral scientist with RTI International's Substance Use Prevention, Evaluation, and Research Program. He has over 18 years of diverse experience in community, state, federal, and international health settings, conducting research and programmatic activities. Dr. Brown has led and co-led several federally and state-funded evaluations, including the evaluation of the Minority AIDS Initiative under the Program Evaluation for Prevention Contract, which was a national cross-site evaluation of SAMHSA-funded community-based programs focused on reducing HIV/AIDS and alcohol use. He helped lead the evaluation of the Georgia Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Project and currently leads the evaluation of the Georgia Partners in Prevention Project. In collaboration with the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup and the Georgia Office of Behavioral Health Prevention and Federal Grants, he directed the 2019 Social Indicator Study to assess substance use and related consequences and led the relaunch of the GASPS Data Warehouse. Dr. Brown currently serves as the Project Director for the Georgia Social Indicator Study project.

John Bringuel, MA, CTP, CTTC, CRBF, ICPS works for The Council on Alcohol and Drugs where he is the Prevention/Intervention Program Manager. John has a MA in Psychology from The University of West Georgia and holds three professional certifications. In John's 37 years of working in the field of mental health he has worked across the prevention continuum and provided training to thousands of social service and mental health providers, professionals, and the public at large about everything from "How to Make Meetings WORK?" to "Shifting the Conversation to Emotional Intelligence an Innovative Approach to Prevention!"

Stephanie Burkes is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with 15+ of experience in the social work profession. She is currently the Director of Residential Services at CaringWorks, Inc. in Atlanta, GA, and she is a licensed attorney in the State of Florida. Stephanie's education background consists of a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Political Science; a Masters in Social Work; and a Juris Doctor degree. Stephanie's experience as a social worker ranges in various settings to include outpatient behavioral health; inpatient psychiatric care; medical social work (hospital setting); policy and administration; medical home health; psychiatric home health; residential treatment; and hospice/end-of-life care. In law school Stephanie focused her studies on family law; healthcare law; criminal law; and research and writing. Stephanie began her legal career with the 20th Circuit State Attorney's Office in Fort Myers, Florida, and she continues to consult with legal professionals in Florida on her areas of expertise and knowledge. Most recently, Stephanie had the honor of conducting workshops on topics to include Essential Connections in Housing and Healthcare (Healthcare Georgia Foundation), A Continuum of Accessible Care through Housing.Help.Hope for the Deaf (American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association), and Structural Ethics (NASW-GA Chapter).

James Campbell, LPC, LAC, MAC, AADC has worked professionally in the human services field for over twenty-nine years in a wide range of clinical settings, currently serving as the Associate Director for the Southeast Addiction Technology Transfer Center. His passion is equipping providers to support individual and family wellness effectively and build on the strengths they possess and equipping the next generation of addiction professionals to serve those in their care effectively. He's a member of both NAADAC and ACA and is a nationally recognized author and speaker.



Dr. Lucy R. Cannon is the CEO/Owner of LEJ Behavioral Health Services, LLC, a training, and consulting company in Metropolitan Atlanta. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the states of Georgia and Alabama. She has the following licenses and certifications; LCSW, LICSW, CAADC, and MATS. Dr. Cannon has been a clinician, supervisor, director, and consultant of mental health and co-occurring disorders programs in inpatient and outpatient healthcare organizations and psychiatric hospitals in various states in the United States and Camp Zama, Japan. She is an Adjunct Professor at Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work. She is also a Facilitator/Speaker for the United States Navy Reserve Command. She is a trainer for various local and national healthcare organizations. She also serves on various healthcare organizations' boards of directors and advisory boards in Metropolitan Atlanta.

Marissa Carlson, MS, CPS is the Executive Director of the NH Teen Institute, a leadership development nonprofit working with middle & high school students from around NH & New England in a variety of areas including substance misuse prevention, peer mentoring, and creating positive school & community climate. As part of her role at TI, she oversees and facilitates training for youth participants, youth & adult volunteer program staff, and outside behavioral health and education professionals. She is a facilitator and trainer of trainers for multiple workshops developed through SAMHSA systems, is a member of the advisory council of the New England Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC), and is on the diversity advisory committee for the NH Center for Nonprofits. In addition, she is the President of the Prevention Certification Board of NH, serves on the IC&RC board of directors, and serves as the chairperson of the IC&RC Credentialing Committee. Outside of her prevention work, Marissa is a founding member of Mill City Productions, a theatre company in Western Massachusetts. She graduated from Pomona College with a BA in Psychology, received an MS in Nonprofit Management from Bay Path University, and has been a Certified Prevention Specialist since 2011.

Lesley Chapin is a psychologist as well as the Vice President and Executive Director of the Pauquette Center for Psychological Services, an outpatient mental health organization that serves primarily rural areas of Wisconsin. Dr. Chapin received her undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire and doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Denver. She completed her pre-doctoral internship at CMC Randolph Behavioral Health in Charlotte, NC providing services in the emergency department, inpatient, outpatient, and residential settings. Dr. Chapin has a wide variety of experience and has spent a large portion of her career doing work in forensic, correctional, and juvenile justice settings in addition to outpatient mental health work with individuals with borderline personality disorder and emotion dysregulation, those at high risk for suicide and engaging in self-injury, and those who have a history of traumatic experiences that have negatively impacted their lives. Her primary area of focus is with Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), providing direct services to clients as well as providing consulting and training in this area across the country. She is board certified in DBT by the Linehan Board of Certification (the only certification endorsed by the creator of the treatment). She is the DBT trainer and consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (adults and juveniles) as well as for the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. Dr. Chapin is invested in improving health equity and is part of the DBT Learning Collaborative Training Consortium, which is a workgroup focused on advancing access to DBT for underinsured clients and those with Medicaid throughout the State of Wisconsin. Additionally, she is a part of the ODHHS Behavioral Health Initiative Advisory Team and the Mental Health Alliance of People Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing/DeafBlind working to increase access to mental health services for individuals in the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities. Dr. Chapin passionately believes that the clients we serve as mental health professionals deserve the best treatment options the field has to offer. She is committed to providing and expanding knowledge in areas of evidence-based practices and is dedicated to continuous learning about their application with a variety of populations and needs. She has provided training on topics related to the delivery of DBT, Behavioral Principles, Communication Strategies, Suicide Risk Assessment and Management, Violence Risk Management, and other topics relevant to the mental health field continuously since 2015 at local, state, and national levels.

Christina Charette, Psy.D. is a licensed psychologist in Georgia and North Carolina. She obtained a bachelor's degree in psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2000, a master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Pacific University in Portland, Oregon in 2004, and a PsyD in Clinical Psychology from Pacific University in Portland, Oregon in 2008. She completed an APA-accredited internship at the Northwest Georgia Internship Consortium in 2008. She also completed a postdoctoral fellowship in juvenile forensic psychology from UMASS-Boston in 2009. Dr. Charette has provided assessment and counseling to children and adolescents for over a decade in a wide range of settings to include community, residential, and detention settings. Her primary areas of expertise are adhd, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, self-harm behaviors, sexual behavior problems, trauma, and autism.

Annie Clark is the RCO Data and Technical Assistance Coordinator at the Georgia Council for Recovery (GC4R). In this role, Annie helps guide the growth of Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) across Georgia by providing ongoing support, technical assistance, and strengthening a network of over 45 RCOs. Annie is a Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialist (CARES) and a Certified Peer Specialist - Addictive Diseases (CPS-AD). As a person in long-term recovery, she is passionate about giving back to her community and inspiring others to believe that recovery is real and achievable. Annie is a proud mother of two who enjoys running, painting, and learning guitar.

Catherine Clary serves as Director of Rural Health in Augusta University's School of Public Health. Catherine provides leadership in the conception, planning and development of strategies and objectives for implementation and consideration of health solutions for rural providers and educators. Within Augusta University, she collaborates with internal groups to work on interdisciplinary approaches to solve issues facing residents and providers in rural communities. Catherine manages two HRSA Rural Communities Opioid Response Program grants. Catherine received her undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia and her law degree from Georgia State University. She served as a National Rural Health Association Fellow and is involved in various community groups, including the American Heart Association Heart Executive Leadership Team, The Walk to End Alzheimer's, Ronald McDonald House, and the Forest Hills Garden Club.

Tiffany A. Cuthbert, M.Ed, MNM, is a thought leader in community-driven initiatives and the founder of the Pillars Initiative, a nonprofit focused on mental health promotion, substance abuse prevention, and youth development. With over a decade of experience in nonprofit management and leadership, Tiffany has guided countless professionals toward balancing personal growth with impactful service. Her philosophy, Overflow Leadership, is rooted in her journey as a mother, advocate, and servant leader, inspiring others to lead from a place of abundance.

Michael W. Davis serves as GUIDE's Associate Executive Director of Prevention. In this role, Michael oversees all GUIDE's prevention strategies, activities and campaigns. As a student at Buford High School, Michael participated in Georgia Teen Institute, GUIDE's summer leadership conference, and has been involved with GUIDE and GTI as a volunteer ever since. In August 2018, Michael joined the GUIDE family as a full-time employee in his current role. Prior to working at GUIDE, Michael's career background was focused mainly on college students, serving in several roles in housing, financial aid and the Dean of Students office at four different universities. In his last role at Iowa State University, he served as interim coordinator for prevention services during the university restructuring. Michael was reminded of his passion for working with prevention programs. In that role and with his work at the Chi Phi Fraternity, Michael frequently presented on alcohol risk reduction, bystander intervention, consent and health relationships education, power-based violence prevention and social justice issues. Michael has volunteered and served on many different boards during his career, most recently serving as Treasurer of Mosaic Georgia's Board of Directors, Wellness Counselor for the Chi Phi Fraternity Grand Council, 2023 President of Let's Be Clear Georgia's Board of Directors, the Georgia School for Addiction Studies Board of Directors and recently finished up his two terms on the University of West Georgia Alumni Association Board of Directors. Michael is an Internationally Certified Prevention Specialist through the Prevention Credentialing Consortium of Georgia and regularly trains others in the Core Courses required by PCCG. In 2023,



Michael received the Ray Avant Excellence in Prevention Award for his contributions to the field. Michael is a 2022 Leadership Gwinnett graduate and serves on the Glance Gwinnett and Justice Learning Day Planning Committees. Michael holds a Ph.D. in Education from Iowa State University, a Master of Science degree in Professional Counseling from Georgia State University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of West Georgia. Michael has presented on the local, state, and national levels on leadership, education, prevention and social justice issues. Michael believes in the quote, " True prevention is not waiting for bad things to happen; it's preventing things from happening in the first place" by Don McPherson.

Diane Diver, MBA, CAC II, LCSW is the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Clinical Director at Recovery Place, Inc. Diane has almost thirty years of experience in the medical field. She has held top posts for companies such as Bayer Consumer Care and Mead Johnson Nutritionals. In her capacity as a counselor, Diane worked at Willingway Hospital in Statesboro, The Recovery House Services in Statesboro, and Coastal Harbor Health System in Savannah before joining the Recovery Place family in 2010. She received her CAC II in 2004 and LCSW in 2015. Ms. Diver is responsible for the day to day operations of Recovery Place, Inc. and Recovery Place Community Services. She oversees all clinical services as well as manages the internal evaluation process for all documentation for both the profit and not-for-profit to ensure compliance with external reporting mandates and internal policy. In 2017, she developed Recovery Place's COR-24 Program which is specifically designed to treat individuals and families with opiate use disorders.

Lisa Dunham, LCSW is a psychotherapist and clinical manager at the Pauquette Center for Psychological Services, based out of both Whitewater and Madison offices. She received her Master's degree from UW-Milwaukee in 2007 and since has enjoyed working in child welfare, inpatient mental health, day treatment, community mental health, and private practice. She currently provides therapy to children, adolescents, and adults. Lisa has enjoyed working with youth involved in the justice system for many years, and has developed interest specifically in youth who engage in harmful sexual behaviors. She feels that through focus on increased education and comfort in topic discussion for youth, clinicians, and the population as a whole, harmful sexual behaviors can be decreased, leading to decreased offenses in adulthood.

Katy Freund as the State of Georgia's Public Health Analyst under the Overdose Response Strategy. In this role she works to prevent fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses by sharing timely and relevant data, supporting evidence-based response programs, coordinating strategies between public health and public safety partners, and disseminating information to enhance community knowledge and implementation of effective overdose prevention strategies. In addition to her fourteen years of experience in public health, she also has a background in law enforcement having served seven years as a patrol officer. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from the University of Georgia and a Master of Public Health of from the University of South Florida. In her free time Katy enjoys sculpting, cooking, and time outdoors.

Jenna Gabrio is a research public health analyst in RTI International's Analytics Practice Area. She manages large-scale and multisite studies and supports community-based public health research. Ms. Gabrio has nearly 15 years of experience managing clinical trials in multisite networks, is certified as a clinical research professional, and is trained in good clinical practices. Ms. Gabrio has strong skills in quantitative research, including conducting analyses for and writing technical epidemiological reports, cleaning complex data sets, managing and maintaining large databases, and developing data dashboards. She currently serves as the lead quantitative analyst for the evaluation of the Georgia Partners in Prevention Project. Previously, she fulfilled a similar role on the evaluation of the Georgia Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Project and the 2019 Social Indicator Study. Ms. Gabrio currently serves as the Data Collection and Analysis Lead for the Georgia Social Indicator Study project.

Stephen George, Jr., is an SOR II Specialist and assists with implementation of the Opioid Prevention Project. aids the Opioid Project Coordinator in sub-recipient prevention services/programs through the monitoring of prevention contracting, goal and performance measure progress, contract deliverables, payments, reporting, and evaluations. Functions as a programmatic officer for opioid contracts. Aids the coordinator to ensure that project activities are conducted in accordance with Federal and state regulations, policies and procedures. This position will also provide technical assistance to funded providers concerning aspects of prevention and will assist in the development of the community prevention infrastructure. And must be able to utilize and apply the Strategic Prevention Framework to opioid grant activities. Prior to this position, and as the DBHDD CCP Region 1 COVID-19 Crisis Counselor, Stephen was responsible for 'filling the gaps' in mental health & developmental disabilities services during COVID-19. Responsibilities include: all areas of Grief/Crisis Counseling i.e. Group, Family, Individual, Adult, Child, "Special Event(s) Planning", and facilitate creation of a 'virtual' social service support wrap-around service. Specifically, COVID-1 Crisis Counselor operationalizes all aspects of SAMHSA Funded FEMA CCP programming for DBHDD Region 1, a 33-county region of northern Georgia. Other substantive responsibilities included: Managing institutional crises i.e. re-establishing DBHDD Protocols within institutions/jails, Speaking as 'Friend of the Court' upon request by families and/or judges, and ADA education. His educational background includes a master's degree in Public Administration (MPA), with clinical concentration in College Affairs & Student Enrollment Services, from Kennesaw State University. He obtained a bachelor's degree in Social Services, with formal minor in philosophy, from KSU as well. As a double alumnus, Stephen received recognition from KSU as one of its Top 40 Alumni; moreover, he has received an educational leadership in diversity award from KSU. Stephen is a disabled veteran, with 36 months overseas operational service with US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and US Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). His work experience includes the fields of child advocacy, mental health, crisis intervention, adult learner populations, geriatric social work, and harm prevention initiatives. By vocation, Stephen is an academically trained Public Administrator.

Ellen Gerstein was the Executive Director of the Gwinnett Coalition for Health and Human Services from 1991 through 2020. She founded the Gwinnett Neighborhood Leadership Institute, the Non-Profit CEO Roundtable, the Gwinnett Helpline, the Gwinnett Great Days of Services and the Veterans' Resource Center among other initiatives. Ellen is a well-recognized consultant on coalition-building in Georgia and the Southeast. Under her leadership, the coalition received the Drug Free Communities Support Grant for ten years along with thirteen additional DFC-related grants, including ten DFC Mentoring grants, two STOP Act grants to reduce underage drinking and a CARA grant to address opioid prevention. She served on SAMHSA's National Advisory Council as the sole voice for prevention through two presidential administrations. She has conducted numerous workshops on coalition-building, sustainability, community-level change and strategic planning in Georgia and nationally.

Dr. Vahé Heboyan is an expert in the cutting-edge field of health and behavioral economics and econometrics. He is an Associate Professor of Health Economics and Policy at Augusta University and the Director of the Health and Behavioral Economics Research Lab. Dr. Heboyan has PhD in Applied Economics from the University of Georgia and postdoctoral training in health economics from University of South Carolina at Columbia. He graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in economics and management from the Armenian State Agrarian University. He is an expert in advanced econometric/statistical analytic and economic evaluation techniques and methodologies. Dr. Heboyan's research takes a multidisciplinary approach to economic evaluation of health programs and economic efficiencies in health care delivery. His current research focuses on health/behavioral economics and application of health technologies, such as telehealth, mHealth, and VR/IR, to improve access and quality of care in civilian and military populations. Over the last five years, he has also established a strong extramurally funded program in opioid and substance use disorders that aim to improve health outcomes and economic livelihoods of individuals affected by opioid and substance use disorders. As a health economist, Dr. Heboyan uses advanced econometric modeling and economic evaluation techniques to examine efficiency and effectiveness in health care production and consumption. His research in behavioral economics aims to explain the health decisions individuals make from an economic and psychological perspective,



and the use of economic incentives to improve behaviors, habits, and overall health outcomes. His research related to health technologies focuses on better understanding clinical and economic implications of applying technology-driven solutions to healthcare and public health challenges and creating sustainable market driven solutions (e.g. business start-ups) to address these challenges. Finally, his research in health services research focuses on better understanding and improving various health and policy outcomes, such as child and adolescent mental health, smoking behaviors, gulf war illness in veterans, etc.

Tom Harris, M.S. worked in residential treatment centers for 44 years in various capacities. As he was finishing up his career in residential treatment as a therapist in 2019, after 26 years of developing and fine-tuning a Therapeutic Drumming program for at-risk children and adolescents, Tom incorporated Therapeutic Drumming Interventions and began adapting this highly effective program for use in public school settings. Tom used his decades of study of traditional West African Djembe drumming and his knowledge of Djembe drumming and its traditional culture to craft a powerful and engaging intervention. It is effective in providing children, youth and other populations an environment in which to actively heal, grow and overcome traumas and other challenges. Learning to play this ancient instrument in community offers each individual benefits, such as self-regulation, focus, improved sense of self-efficacy, competence and joy, even as it produces group benefits including a sense of safe and accepted belonging, and exploring a new way to develop and use one's voice in community.

Monaletto C. Irby has spent nearly 27 years working in the Youth Service Field in Alabama and Georgia. Mr. Irby has served in several capacities to include Case Manager (Mental Health), Counselor and Program Director (Drug Treatment Center), and Director (Youth ChalleNGe Academy) servicing youth in Alabama; before moving to Georgia in 2007. He is currently employed with Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice for 15 years serving as a Juvenile Probation/Parole Specialist for almost 4 years before moving to the Office of Training, where he has served as a Regional Training Coordinator for the Southern and Northern Regions. Irby also served as the Program Coordinator for the Basic Community Service Training (Probation/Parole Specialist) from 2014-2016. Irby was most recently the Training Program Manager for the Northern Region. In February 2022, Irby was promoted to Deputy Director in the Office of Professional Development, where he has oversight of Field Operations Team. Irby also currently serves on the Office of Professional Development Advisory Team. He also served 6 years on the agency's Policy Committee. Irby earned his Master Training Instructor Certification through the Georgia Peace Officer Standard and Training (P.O.S.T.). Irby also made good on a vision and started his own business in May of 2020. Motivated Intervention Solutions, LLC. Focused on Leadership and Staff Development Training. He is invested in his community and lends a great deal of time speaking to groups on at-risk youth behaviors, facilitating at youth summits and youth conferences on gang activity/violence, and bullying. Irby is often featured as a guest panelist at boy's self-improvement conferences as well as mentorship conferences. Irby is dedicated to encouraging youth to seek their full potential and training youth service workers on the best practices of dealing with at risk youth and their families. Irby believes in encouraging youth and challenging them to face their fears and overcome obstacles. He is often quoted as saying, "I encourage, because I was encouraged". He is the current Ministry Lead for The Circle of Sons a boy's mentoring group at his church. Irby is a member of Georgia Juvenile Services Association, American Probation Parole Association (APPA) and National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCI). Irby is the Immediate Past Georgia State Director for Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc (2019-2023) and current International Director of Collegiate Affairs. He is married to his beautiful wife Charlisa Irby and has one daughter, Kaelyn.

Heather James is a graduate from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, with a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communication, and a Master of Arts Degree in Public Administration and Public Policy and has completed graduate work in Health Communication. She currently holds the position of Chief Training and Development Officer for The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, where her portfolio now includes all trainings held by or for the Network, including the Georgia Certified Peer Specialist Project, Ready For Reentry: Forensic Peer Mentoring Training, the RESPECT Insti-

tute of Georgia, Whole Health Action Management, Wellness Recovery Action Planning, Trauma Informed Care, Elevating Language, and Peer Support 101. Before beginning this role, Heather led the Network's peer support program for Kaiser Permanente Georgia. Prior to joining GMHCN, Heather has been employed as a Certified Peer Specialist, a Communications Specialist with the Department of Juvenile Justice, and held marketing and training roles for Chick-fil-A and The ROHO group, now Permobil, which provides a diversity of experience to draw from as she positions the Network's trainings to continue to meet the needs of the 21st century behavioral health workforce.

Tyler Jenkins is a masters level mental health counselor who has worked with a variety of clients for over a decade in the state of Georgia. He has experience working in psychiatric hospitals, probation centers, group homes, and short term/long term juvenile correctional facilities. Mr. Jenkins currently splits time between the Department of Juvenile Justice and Dynamic Interventions Inc, serving as a mental health supervisor and mental health counselor respectively. Mr. Jenkins is also a certified Yoga instructor, completing his 200 hour course through Sparks Yoga in Macon, GA, where he instructs classes as well as workshops to bring about positive change both physically and mentally with his students

Lakieshia Jones, CADC-II MS, ICADC, E-CADC, SAP, MATS, is an addiction professional with over 19 years of experience. She is a Professor at Purdue University Global, teaching addiction-focused psychology courses, mentoring faculty, and leading course development. Lakieshia has worked in Georgia as a substance use prevention trainer, addiction counselor, and treatment facilitator. She is also a qualified Substance Abuse Professional (SAP), evaluating employees in safety-sensitive positions for DOT violations. Lakieshia owns Start Again Counseling, offering addiction treatment services, including DOT SAP evaluations, court-mandated evaluations, and counseling. She is committed to educating addiction professionals and advocating for individuals with substance use disorders.

Karen Kelly, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, MAC, ACRPS, CCS, CPSIV, CCJS, BCTH, BCC and Founder/CEO Circle of Recovery, Inc. Dr. Kelly's professional experience includes over 42 years working in diverse clinical settings. Dr. Kelly's has taught at a variety of universities throughout the U.S. and provides training to participants from Countries Worldwide. In addition to the many diverse clinical positions. Dr. Kelly served as the Director of the Morehouse School of Medicine, Addiction Technology Transfer Center from 1993 until 1999. She is a past President of The Georgia Addiction Counselor Association. GACA is responsible for the certification of addiction counselors in the state of Ga. She is co-founder, and a past President of S.A.S.S.Y, a non-profit organization that supports the Special Needs Adult Population. Dr. Kelly currently holds certifications as a Licensed Professional Counselor, Nationally Board-Certified Counselor, Nationally Certified Life & Recovery Coach, a Master Level Addictions' Counselor, Nationally Advanced Certified Relapse Prevention Specialist, Certified Clinical Supervisors, Certified Anger Management Specialist and Trainer, Board Certified Tele-a-Mental Health Counselor, Nationally Certified Trainer/Instructor through NAADAC/SAMSHA. Dr. Kelly's is a member of LPCA, NADAAC, NAMA, and AMHCA.

Brian Kite is the Program Manager for Recovery Community Organization Development at the Georgia Council for Recovery (GC4R). He is a Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialist (CARES, CPS-AD Certified Peer Specialist - Addictive Diseases) and has been trained in IPS (Intentional Peer Support), as a MAT Specialist (Medicated Assisted Treatment Specialist), and as a WHAM (Whole Health Action Management) facilitator. In his role at GC4R, Brian has helped numerous communities around the state of Georgia organize focused conversations around recovery, plan for and host local recovery symposiums, and work towards the formation of RCOs. He provides technical assistance and coordinates continued training opportunities for the existing Network of over 45 Recovery Community Organizations. Most importantly, Brian is a person in long-term recovery. Brian and his son Henry reside in Grant Park in the City of Atlanta and enjoy spending time at the beach, camping, watching anime, engaging with art, and living their recovery out loud.



Kym Laube serves as the Executive Director of Human Understanding Growth Services, Inc. (HUGS, Inc.), based in Westhampton Beach, NY. With over 35 years of experience in substance use prevention, Kym has dedicated her career to promoting innovative strategies that empower individuals and communities. Since stepping into the Executive Director role in 2002, she has spearheaded the organization's efforts to deliver comprehensive prevention services and recovery supports, while passionately advocating across the continuum of care. As a sought-after national trainer and speaker, Kym has collaborated with leading organizations such as CADCA, Opioid Response Network, state associations, and corporate entities, bringing her expertise to diverse audiences. Her journey with HUGS, Inc. began in 1986, when she participated in the Teen Institute program as a high school student. This firsthand experience ignited her understanding of the prevention's transformative impact on young people, preparing them to lead and inspire. From a student leader to Executive Director, Kym's mission has remained steadfast: empowering individuals to realize their full potential and become catalysts for change. Known for her dynamic, engaging, and interactive presentations, Kym connects deeply with audiences of all sizes, offering keynotes, trainings, and workshops that inspire action. Annually, she reaches over 35,000 individuals of all ages across the nation, leaving a lasting impression through her warmth and authenticity. Kym's commitment to making a difference extends far beyond her executive role. She actively serves on various local, state, and national boards and task forces, championing policy changes that impact families and communities. As a member of the NYS Governor's Opiate Task Force, she helped shape state-wide reforms, including prescribing practices, extended treatment stays, and family support initiatives. Celebrating over 35 years of her own recovery journey, Kym's dedication to fostering positive change is both professional and deeply personal. She takes pride in encouraging others to "Make the space better". When she's not advocating for change, Kym treasures time with her husband, their two adult sons, soon to be first grandchild and an ever-growing pack of beloved dogs at their home in Westhampton Beach.

Jewana Lowe has worked in the helping profession since 1992 serving as intake counselor, counselor, behavioral specialist, program director and CARF surveyor to date. She is a program director of a MOUD program in Bainbridge Georgia. She has worked in that role since 2010, but started out as a part-time counselor in 2006. Jewana is a certified alcohol and drug counselor and a certified clinical supervisor. In her spare time, she loves to travel and see new cities. It is her goal to help a many individuals reach their optimal life experience through education and encouragement. Her life's experiences have chosen the addictions field for me and I intend to help as many people as I can.

Scott Luetgenau, BSW, MSW, LCAS, CSI, is a person in long-term recovery and a respected leader in addiction treatment and recovery support. With a background in social work and specialization in addiction treatment, Scott has progressed from founding a Collegiate Recovery Community to directing North Carolina's largest Opioid Treatment Program. As founder of Gatespring, a consultation firm, and a SAMHSA consultant, he provides nationwide guidance on opioid treatment, clinical pathways, and workforce development. Scott's expertise in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Motivational Interviewing, combined with his experience in program management and policy development, makes him an influential voice in the field. He has held leadership positions in several prominent organizations, including the North Carolina Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence and Addiction Professionals of North Carolina. Scott's work continues to shape policies, improve treatment methodologies, and positively impact communities affected by substance use disorders.

Dr. Pierluigi Mancini is a national and international consultant and speaker about mental health and addiction specializing in cultural and linguistic responsiveness, immigrant behavioral health, social and racial justice, health equity and health disparities. His new book "...And Healthcare for All - How to become a high performing, equity-centric organization: A Practical Guide for Health Care Leaders" has just been published and is being heralded as a timely and important book. It is available now in English and soon it will be available in Spanish at Amazon.com. He has provided expert content to clients at the local, state and federal level. Internationally, he has provided guidance, mentorship and

internships to psychology students in Mexico, has consulted in underage drinking prevention programs in Italy and consulted in Cuba, Mexico, Kosovo, Kuwait, Egypt, Colombia and Argentina. Dr. Mancini's public service announcement and documentaries addressing Latino underage drinking, suicide and prescription drugs have won a combined six (6) EMMY® awards. Dr. Mancini has been honored with the 2023 Advocate of the Year Award, the National Latinx Psychological Association Star Vega Distinguished Service Award; the UnidosUS (NCLR) - Helen Rodríguez- Trías Award for Health; and the Mental Health America "Heroes in the Fight" Award and was named one of the 50 Most Influential Latinos in Georgia. He is the Chair for Mental Health America National Board of Directors, serves on the Board of Directors for Recovery Innovations International, and the Ruderman Family Foundation Mental Health Task Force.

Chris Manning is the Associate Executive Director of the 50+ year old nonprofit "The Council on Alcohol and Drugs". He works tirelessly to help thousands of businesses, government agencies, and non-profits, which employ millions of employees, to navigate complex drugfree workplace issues.

Lydia McCrary is the Director of Medical Services for the Chatham County Fire Department and has served her community as firefighter/paramedic, dedicated to improving community response. Lydia has served the citizens of Chatham County for nearly 20 years where she has been promoted to Director of Medical Services for the Chatham County Fire Department. She previously served as Deputy Chief of EMS and also served with the State Office of EMS. Lydia Currently serves on many workgroups that aim to break the cycle of inappropriate emergency services utilization, a community, public service collaborative in Chatham County which takes a multifaceted approach to responding to mental health, substance abuse related, homeless and high 911 utilizer calls within the community. Lydia has partnered with police departments working on mental health and opioid abuse on street intercepts. She continues to work with community mobile integrated healthcare development and sustainability. Lydia holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Master's in Health Science.

Maura McGowan, CPS is the Program Director of the NH Teen Institute, a non-profit agency whose mission is to empower youth through personal leadership development and community engagement. Maura has worked in the field of prevention since 2002 and became involved with the NH Teen Institute in 2008 when she began volunteering for programs and working on a curriculum updating and development board. In 2017, Maura became Program Director in charge of youth programming and volunteer engagement in addition to being a facilitator for professional development trainings offered by the NH Teen Institute, including serving as a SAPST & Prevention Ethics trainer. She is a graduate of the New England ATTC Leadership Development Program and has served as a mentor in the New England PTTC Prevention Mentorship Program during its first two cohorts. In 2021, Maura was appointed as an advisor to the NH Governor's Youth Advisory Council, and is on the advisory committee for the NH Prevention Community of Practice.

Rachel Morris is the Communications Specialist for Georgia Prevention Project. Her role includes building and maintaining community partnerships, and overseeing any creative projects related to our social media or community outreach. In addition, she manages our Substance Education Training Program, Internship Program, and our new College Expansion Project. Rachel joined the GPP family in January, 2021.

Dr. Barrett Montgomery is a research public health analyst with RTI International's Substance Use, Prevention, Evaluation and Research Program. His primary interests include how socioenvironmental factors influence mental health and drug use, how to measure these effects, and how they affect traditionally marginalized populations. Dr. Montgomery is especially interested in translations of these findings to policy, as well as in policy itself as a driver of public health outcomes. He has led and contributed to research on behavioral health services. Other topics of expertise and scientific publications include recreational cannabis policy, syringe sale policy, sustainability strategies for evidence-based interventions, and economic evaluations of public health investments and drug court programs. His skill set is largely quantitative and includes management of large administrative databases, econometric methods for policy eval-



uation, and prediction modeling using ensembles or other machine learning techniques. He currently serves as a data analyst for the Georgia Social Indicator Study project.

Kelly Michael Moselle, MA, MS, CAC II, CMAC, CCS, CMATS, CAMS II, is a Certified Addiction Counselor and currently serves as the Director of Training and Education for Georgia Addiction Counselors Association (GACA). In addition to his work at GACA, Kelly maintains a small private practice and provides supervision groups for CCIT, CAC I and those working towards their CCS. During his previous experiences facilitating innovative programs in higher education for over 16 years, he oriented students to learning outside the traditional classroom, building civic and social responsibility, and overall development. He brings this same passion to working with clients in early recovery. Now, for nearly 16 years, Kelly has been working in the treatment field, with a special emphasis on helping young adults in recovery. Kelly serves on the Board of Directors for the Frayed Edges Foundation and the Georgia School of Addiction Studies. Additionally, he is the Chair for the Southeastern Institute on Chemical Dependency and Secretary for the Southeastern Professional Liaison Association. Whether supervising professional staff, building recovery coalitions, or working directly with individual clients or students, his dedication is the creation of an optimal experience for positive growth and recovery.

Kesha Muhammad-Garrett is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, where she currently resides with her husband, Thaddeus Garrett. A public school educator with more than 25 years of experience, she has served as both a general education and gifted education teacher, a Curriculum Support Teacher, a Lead Literacy Coach, a School Improvement Facilitator and a Director in large school districts. She is the founder of UpLift Them, LLC, a book publishing and consulting company that focuses on overall school improvement and increasing team effectiveness in small business and large corporations as a Working Genius certified facilitator. She is the author of several books as she writes books about children's experiences that they might not otherwise read about in schools.

Michael Mumper is the Executive Director of Georgians for Responsible Marijuana Policy, Board President of the Georgia Alcohol Policy Alliance, and a consultant with Fayette FACTOR. Michael earned an MBA from Emory University, and led business management teams at GE Capital, Random House and Turner Broadcasting before shifting to substance mis-use prevention, coalition building, and policy.

Michael Nerney is a consultant in substance abuse prevention and education, with over thirty years' experience in the field. As the former Director of the Training Institute of Narcotic and Drug Research, Inc. (NDRI), his responsibilities included the management of a statewide training system which delivered more than 450 training programs to substance abuse treatment and prevention professionals annually. Mike's particular areas of expertise include Psychopharmacology, Adolescent Chemical Dependency, Relapse Prevention, Gender Differences in Communication, and Managing Violent Incidents. He is an internationally known lecturer, and has served as consultant to a number of federal and state agencies. He has been a consultant for two of the major television networks and has appeared on the ABC program "20/20."

Dr. Merrill Norton is an EMMY winning Clinical Associate Professor Emeritus of the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy with his specialty areas to include psychopharmacology and addiction pharmacy. He was most recently honored by the Georgia Addiction Counselors Association's Board of Directors and Certification Board with being bestowed the first Certified Master Addiction Counselor (CMAC) credential in the state. His recently updated book, *Understanding Substance Use Disorders Pharmacology*, has been used to train thousands of mental health professionals nationally and his latest book, *The Pharmacist's Guide to Opioid Use Disorders* was released in December 2018. Dr. Norton completed his undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy. He accomplished a three year addiction medicine fellowship under the direction of Douglas Talbott MD at Ridgeview Institute and has state, national, and international credentials in the treatment of mentally ill/addicted/chronic pain individuals. He has

also been a faculty member of the Fairleigh-Dickinson University Postdoctoral Training Program in the Masters of Psychopharmacology, Alliant International University of San Francisco College of Psychology, University of Georgia School of Continuing Education, and Berry College in the areas of Psychopharmacology and Addiction Pharmacy. His areas of specialty in addiction pharmacy are the management of chronic pain in the substance use disordered patient and the neuroscience of substance use disorders. Since his recent retirement from UGA, Dr. Norton's primary focus is to provide the latest scientific information to communities, educators, healthcare professionals, prevention specialists, treatment providers, and especially families, on the diseases of substance use disorders.

Haley Oberg is a Research Associate II at the Georgia Health Policy Center. She provides evaluation support for multiple State Opioid Response initiatives and offers technical assistance to community behavioral health agencies delivering school-based mental health services through the Georgia Apex Program. With over 10 years of public health experience, Haley has expertise in social-emotional learning evaluation, as well as designing and implementing life skills and behavioral interventions for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Dawn Oparah is the Executive Director for Fayette FACTOR, a non-profit organization committed to monitoring and helping improve the health and well-being of the Fayette County community. She has spent over 48 years working in the human services field. In 1995, Dawn co-founded Amadi Leadership Associates, Incorporated, a consulting firm that offers training and consultation in organizational development, community capacity building, management, leadership development, school improvement strategies, and human development. For over three decades, Dawn has provided technical support to non-profit organizations in the areas of organizational improvement, board development, sustainability planning, strategic planning, marketing, program planning, evaluation, and resource development. Prior to becoming a consultant Dawn served as a university administrator and instructor, schoolteacher, school principal, government administrator, and a college lecturer abroad. Dawn is the author of the book "Make a World of Difference: 50 Asset-Building Activities to Help Teens Explore Diversity". Dawn also co-authored a chapter in the book Empowerment Evaluation in 2015. Over the course of her career, Dawn has served on 26 local, regional and statewide boards. Dawn is also a co-founder for AVPRIDE, a youth leadership development organization now in its 29th year. Dawn has been a resident of Georgia for 39 years. She has been married to her husband Bernard for 47 years. She is the proud parent of two sons and two daughters and the loving grandmother of four.

Britt Parramore has served in the addiction and mental health treatment field for 11 years. During this time, he has worked for state agencies, treatment courts, universities, and in private practice. Britt currently serves as the Executive Director of PathLight Counseling in Woodstock, GA. PathLight began in 2017 with one mission in mind; to help the hurting and see people set free. Britt holds a Master's Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and is currently working on his doctorate. He is credentialed by the State of Georgia as a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor. Britt is a member of The American Counseling Association, The American Association of Christian Counselors, and The Licensed Professional Counseling Association of Georgia. Britt lives in Hickory Flat with his wife and two young sons. Britt enjoys a wide range of outdoor sports, and is a Master SCUBA instructor. He is also an active member of the Canton Rotary Club.

Meghann Perry, CARC, RCPF, is an award-winning keynote speaker, storyteller, theatre educator, curriculum developer, and addiction recovery coach. She creates innovative learning experiences blending Theatre, Storytelling, and Coaching and is an international educator of the behavioral health workforce. Meghann is the author of two groundbreaking programs, Recovery Storytelling and Embodied Storytelling, and has designed countless other creative, educational programs for such diverse groups as transgender youth and adults, adoptive caregivers, non-profit boards, and veterans. Meghann integrated Theatre practices into residential treatment services for young people for the MA Dept. of Public Health and has worked extensively with adolescents and young adults in prevention, treatment and recovery. She's a global keynote speaker and presenter for organizations like NAADAC, FAVOR, PRCOE, and the Lisbon Addictions



Conference. Meghann is a former drug user who passionately supports people across the full spectrum of substance use and recovery and leads a team of dedicated facilitators redefining education in the substance and mental health field.

Ken Pinion is the RCO Development Program Coordinator at the Georgia Council for Recovery (GC4R) and a person in long-term recovery. A Certified Peer Specialist in Addictive Disease (CPS-AD), he teaches at Georgia's CARES Academy and supports over 45 Recovery Community Organizations statewide through technical assistance and leadership development. Originally from Savannah, Ken now lives in Decatur. He holds an MA in English (Film Studies) from NC State University and teaches Film & Digital Media at UNG. In his free time, he enjoys theater, film festivals, gaming, and spending time with his cat, Aeon.

Christy Plaice shines a creative light in the therapeutic community, known for her heartfelt approach and innovative clinical work with adults, families, and various groups. Blending humanistic principles with somatic attachment techniques, multigenerational family systems, and interpersonal neurobiology, she offers a personalized & transformative experience to those she serves. Christy's clinical specializations span acute, complex, adult & developmental trauma, adult ADHD, substance use disorders, & pervasive mood challenges, & disenfranchised grief all grounded in a deep commitment to guide healing minds and hearts of others. Other diverse work settings have included residential wilderness therapy programs, LGBTQI communities, juvenile justice initiatives and critical crisis response teams. As a sought-after speaker and facilitator, Christy travels nationwide to lead workshops, experiential retreats, & consultations that inspire profound growth and collective wellness.

Michelle Leigh Provost is a Licensed Professional Counselor for the state of South Carolina, a certified hypnotherapist, Instructor of Psychology and Faculty Athletic Representative at Claflin University, project director for Mental Health Awareness Training Grant at LRADAC, a Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid Instructor with group specialization in Higher Education, Rural communities, and Public Safety, and an advocate for equality. Michelle is a graduate from Radford University with her degree in Counseling Psychology. She started her journey in Mental Health with her own practice, Fulfilling Minds, in Roanoke Virginia. She moved to SC in late 2009 and began her work in Higher Education in January of 2010. Since this time, Michelle has received SC Instructor of the Year and Claflin Professor of the year awards. She became certified as an instructor in MHFA in 2016 with her first SEED grant award from Claflin University. Since this time, she has certified close to 1000 individuals in Mental Health First Aid and has received a second SEED grant to implement Mental Health liaisons into the Orangeburg County Schools. Michelle works closely with athletics, serves as a SAAC representative for the CIAA, and is the faculty liaison for the APPLE Institute Initiative helping student athletes design and implement an alcohol and drug prevention program. Michelle maintains her licensure and continues to see clients through private practice. Michelle is a proud mom, godmother, teacher, and mentor. She is dedicated to educating ALL about mental health challenges and encouraging wellness.

Sandy Queen has been a presenter at Schools for Alcohol and Drug studies for over 30 years. She has worked with youth and adults throughout the United States and abroad for over 45 years and is known for helping clinicians and clients take a different look at the difficult area of substance use and recovery. She is the recipient of the Halbert Dunn Award, presented by the University of Wisconsin to the most outstanding Wellness Practitioner. Sandy is dedicated to or bringing humor and creativity to even the most serious topics. Her motto: You are Good Stuff! Sandy lives in Columbia, Maryland, and is active in her local community in the areas of mental health, addiction, youth enhancement and spiritual growth and joy.

Beverly Ragland, BBA, CCS, CACII, CPS-AD, CPS-MH, MATS, CAMS-II, serves as the Director of Virtual Peer Services at the Georgia Council for Recovery and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network. With over two decades of experience in addiction treatment and recovery services, she holds mul-

multiple certifications, including Certified Clinical Supervisor (CCS), Certified Addiction Counselor II (CAC II), Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialist (CARES), Certified Peer Specialist in Mental Health (CPS-MH), Whole Health and Wellness Coach (CPS-WH), and Medication-Assisted Treatment Specialist (MATS). Before retiring from the VA Medical Center in Atlanta in 2017, Beverly served as the VA National Point of Contact for Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. Her additional credentials as a Certified Anger Management Specialist II (CAMS-II), NAMI Mentor, SOAR Trainer, and WRAP Coach further enhance her ability to support individuals in achieving sustainable, quality recovery. An ordained minister since 2011, Beverly also pastors Empowering Faith Ministries, where she continues her commitment to uplifting and empowering communities.

Dr. Kiki Ramsey is a Positive Psychologist and Executive Coach that helps organizations transform their people by using positive psychology and diversity, equity and inclusion approaches to coaching and training. As the CEO of The Positive Psychology Coaching and Diversity Institute (PPCaDI), a leadership development firm that specializes in driving diverse organizational change utilizing positive psychology and DEI approaches to coaching, Dr. Kiki inspires employees to tap into their purpose, courage, and belonging, so they can do the work they love and love the work they do. She has a Master's in Social Work and Positive Psychology Coaching and a Ph.D. in Business Psychology.

Lara Raymond is a research public health analyst with RTI International's Substance Use, Prevention, Evaluation and Research Program. She has 10 years of experience in behavioral intervention studies, statistical analysis, program evaluation, and health equity efforts across multiple health domains, including substance misuse, HIV/viral hepatitis, chronic disease, and physical activity and nutrition. Ms. Raymond has led participant recruitment, qualitative and quantitative data collection, analyses of large and complex datasets, and state and local program evaluations, all through a health equity lens. Ms. Raymond is also a certified Lean Sigma Six Green Belt and has led multiple quality improvement initiatives within departments and programs. The bulk of her experience is in chronic disease, particularly cancer, but she also has interest in the areas of substance use, HIV and viral hepatitis, implementation science, and policy impacts. She is passionate about using health dissemination avenues to their full potential and enjoys employing data visualization and creative communications to reach broad and specialized audiences. She currently serves as a data analyst for the Georgia Social Indicator Study project.

Gabriela Reinoso is a passionate public health professional born and raised in Gwinnett County, Georgia. With a Bachelor of Science in Public Health from Kennesaw State University, Gabriela has dedicated her career to improving community health and wellness, with a special focus on providing access to healthcare for multicultural and diverse populations. Her journey into community health began through her concentration in community wellness, with the goal of serving those in need and advocating for better healthcare resources. Gabriela's career took off when she began working with Live Healthy Gwinnett, where her dedication and hard work led her to quickly rise from intern to supervisor in one year. Throughout her career, she has developed and implemented free programs and events that allow community members to take charge of their own health and become advocates for wellness in their own lives. Gabriela's commitment to mental health advocacy stems from her recognition of the challenges faced by youth in the populations she serves, particularly within Latino and Hispanic communities. As she witnessed many young people struggle with mental health issues and substance abuse, she took it upon herself to raise awareness and offer education on these critical topics. Gabriela became trained in Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) and Youth Mental Health First Aid to equip herself with the tools to train parents, caregivers, and educators on the signs of suicide and mental health struggles among youth, and how to approach these conversations with understanding and care. As a public health professional, Gabriela's mission is not only to advocate for physical health but also to promote mental well-being. She aims to listen, support, and serve her community, striving to be a positive force and a vessel for change, creating a healthier, more informed community for all.



Drew Reynolds, PhD, MSW, MEd is Principal Consultant at Common Good Data, where he provides data and program evaluation services to nonprofits and the public sector. In his consulting work, he advises organizations in how to use datadriven decision-making to design and evaluate effective programs, secure funding, and improve community wellbeing. While he serves organizations across many sectors, Drew - a social worker - has developed an expertise in providing data and program evaluation services for organizations in prevention, mental health, human services, and education. Drew also advises organizations on how to improve data and evaluation activities through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens that attends to the culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse contexts in which many organizations serve.

Dr. Davine S. Ricks, LCSW, MAC, E-CADC is a dedicated and enthusiastic leader with over 30 years of experience in developing and implementing behavioral healthcare systems in multimillion-dollar complex public and private sectors, and faith-based organizations. Dr. Ricks's areas of expertise include providing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other treatment services to women, men, and children in the areas of mental health, substance use and criminal justice. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Master Addiction Counselor (MAC), Certified Alcohol and Drug E-Counselor (E- CADC) and a Certified Clinical Supervisor. She has provided direct services and leadership in Outpatient Mental Health Centers, Drug Courts, DUI Courts, Veteran's Court, Re-Entry Services, Community Integration programs and Faith-Based organizations. Dr. Ricks is also accomplished as a federal and state grant writer and reviewer, program evaluator, teacher, and provider of clinical supervision. Dr. Ricks graduated Summa Cum Laude from Virginia Union University, attended University of Richmond Law School, and later received her Master's in Social Work (MSW) degree and Doctorate Degree in Social Work Planning and Administration from Clark Atlanta University. Dr. Ricks enjoys engaging, educating, and empowering individuals and organizations in her business, Sense of Equity, LLC: Program Development, Training and Accreditation Services, LLC. Sense of Equity, LLC, fills a void in the business community by providing a consistent presentation of exceptional capabilities. Services provided include Grant Writing; Program Development; Evidenced-based leadership training (behavioral health and organizational development workshops), Life Coaching Services, Counseling, Motivational Speaking and Accreditation services. Sense of Equity, LLC offers a unique skillset and credentials that create a perfect fit for providing intentional professional growth services for individuals and businesses. Having conceptualized and built programs which were successfully funded by the State of Georgia, Sense of Equity, LLC has established itself as an exemplary organization. Expertise is offered not only in writing and successfully being awarded grants, but also in successfully developing and implementing programs and ensuring sustainability and National CARF accreditation. Dr. Ricks's background includes over 24 years of experience as a CARF Administrative and Program Surveyor and Consultant effectively interfacing with local, state, and national organizations in helping them to successfully achieve national accreditation. Through Sense of Equity, LLC, Dr. Ricks embraces opportunities to share her knowledge and experiences through consultation and training at national conferences, state, and local organizations, for community leaders, governing boards, civic and professional organizations. She is a Certified John Maxwell Teacher, Coach, Mentor, Trainer, and Motivational Speaker. Dr. Ricks has more than 15 years of experience in presenting for various organizations including: Council of Accountability Court Judges, Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), Social Security Administration (SSA), Ridgeview Institute, Lakeview Behavioral Health, Alcohol & Drug Abuse Certification Board of Georgia; National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA), Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work, Georgia School of Addiction Studies (GSAS), Morehouse School of Medicine ATTC, Berean Christian Church Leadership Team, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., View Point Health Leadership Academy, Dekalb County Board of Education and the African American Female Professors Award Association (AAFPA). In addition, she serves as a support Chaplain for the WNBA Atlanta Dream Team. Dr. Ricks is also an author. Her latest publication is: "Intentional Professional Growth: Ordered Steps to Unlock Your Fullest Potential and Succeed in Your Life, Career and Business."

Eric Rowles is a nationally recognized trainer, speaker, and consultant whom has worked with over 175,000 youth, adults, administrators, professionals, and policy makers within the past 20 years. His presentations are legendary - by combining the energy and innovation of a master trainer, while at the same time reaching each of us through his stories, research, and on-the-ground strategies. One part inspirational speaker and published author, one part DJ, and two parts community organizer and parent of 2 daughters, Eric runs a customized consulting and facilitation practice that, through a network of over 20 dynamic and diversely talented trainers, works with for profit and non-profit organizations to achieve progressive and dynamic change. Additionally, Eric is the founder and current Director of the North Carolina Youth Giving Network - a statewide association of over 1100 youth philanthropists that have granted over \$400,000 to North Carolina communities since 2005. Eric's previous experience includes his work as Senior Director of Training with the Youth Leadership Institute where he designed a national training institute that provided over 1,000 days of training in five years to community organizations and coalitions throughout the country. Prior to his work with YLI, Eric was the Director of Leadership Development at Rutgers University (NJ), managed his own touring educational theater organization, Leadership Through Motivation Productions, was the Director of International Youth Summer Abroad programs, and spent five years as a substance abuse prevention coordinator in Los Angeles. Additionally, Eric through his double bachelors and Master of Science degrees in Ethnic Studies and Educational Leadership, he has served as a faculty member at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte as well as Rutgers University (NJ) and has over a decade of innovative and cutting edge classroom instruction and facilitation experience. Eric has also been a volunteer trainer and partner for a wide range of social change agencies and organizations including the National Conference on Community and Justice, College Leadership Diversity Conference, and Teaching Tolerance Curriculum Instruction.

Ari Russell is a prevention consultant who has worked with communities and coalitions throughout Georgia to develop comprehensive prevention plans and apply for federal substance use prevention grants. She was the founding Executive Director of GUIDE, Inc., a community-based substance abuse prevention agency, serving in that role for over 28 years. During that time, she founded the Georgia Teen Institute, a youth leadership and empowerment initiative that prepares youth action teams to actively participate in strategic prevention planning and implementation. She was a co-founder of the Prevention Credentialing Consortium of Georgia, holds the Internationally Certified Prevention Specialist credential and serves as the board's administrator.

Vira Salzburn is a Ukrainian-American living in Savannah, Georgia and serving her beloved community as the Executive Director of Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council. She earned a Master of Science degree in Management, Organizational Behavior & Leadership from Troy University, and a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree in Humanities from Auburn University at Montgomery. Vira also holds a graduate certificate in Topics in Human Behavior from Harvard University. Vira is a Mindful Self-Compassion Teacher, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Master Trainer, Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness and Yoga Instructor, and Community Resiliency Model Teacher. She is also trained in the Search Inside Yourself program of Google Leadership Institute, Trauma Informed Coaching, and Compassionate Leadership, the program of the Task Force for Global Health. Vira spearheads innovative community-wide Safety and Resilience programming and serves on the leadership team of Resilient Coastal Georgia. She is the developer of a community-based upstream suicide prevention approach that utilizes evidence-based Mindful-Self Compassion programming. She is a community educator and public speaker on suicide prevention, trauma-informed practices, self-compassion, and resilience, and she was the presenter at TEDx Savannah in 2022. Additionally, Vira is the recipient of the 2023 Community Impact Award from Georgians for a Healthy Future for her efforts to expand mental health prevention and intervention programs and supports across Georgia.

Michael Sarhatt attended Troy State University, Troy Alabama. In 1984 he received a B.S in Accounting from the university. Following his graduation, he worked for a Public Accounting firm from 1985 to 1987. In July of 1987 Director Sarhatt accepted a position with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) as a Special Agent until 2019 when he re-



tired after 32 years. In October of 2020 Director Sarhatt accepted his current position as the Director of Chatham-Savannah County Counter Narcotic Team (CNT). As the Director he oversees a department of 50 individuals, 43 of which are sworn agents from 9 different local and county agencies, and 2 Assistant District Attorneys. These individuals up make four enforcement groups (Major Case Unit, Two Tactical Teams and an Overdose Death Unit), an Intelligence Unit, Technical Support Unit and administrative staff. CNT's Enforcement and Intelligence capabilities rival that of their federal law enforcement partners. Director Sarhatt is married to his wife Cherie for 28 years and they have three children Ashley, Kyle, Andrea and one grandson, Parker.

Pallavi Singh is a Research Associate II at the Georgia Health Policy Center, where she contributes to the State Opioid Response (SOR) project, the Substance Use Intensive Residential Treatment (SU-IRT) program, and the Georgia Apex Program (G.A.P.). In her role with the SOR project, she supports the implementation and evaluation of DBHDD-backed initiatives, including Sources of Strength, Adopt-a-School, and the First Responder Strategy. This strategy encompasses Naloxone First Responder Training and the State Opioid Response Adaptation (SOAR), delivered through the Georgia Public Safety Training Center (GPSTC). Pallavi specializes in developing evaluation frameworks, conducting qualitative and quantitative analyses, and translating data into actionable insights to enhance substance use prevention and school-based mental health services. Previously, as a Digital Health Intern at John Snow Research and Training Institute (JSI), she worked on the USAID-funded Momentum Integrated Health Resilience (MIHR) project, strengthening maternal and child health systems in international fragile healthcare settings. With over five years of experience in public health, health informatics, and data analytics, she is dedicated to leveraging data-driven strategies to improve healthcare systems and outcomes. She holds an MS in Health Informatics from Indiana University and a B.Sc. in Dental Surgery from People's University, India.

Charlotte Spell is a Certified Prevention Specialist with over 20 years' experience in prevention of substance use, especially among young people. She has had the opportunity to address multiple substances, along with youth suicide prevention across all parts of GA over the past two decades. Charlotte currently serves as the Executive Director of Let's Be Clear, GA, a statewide cannabis prevention education collaborative. Ms. Spell also serves on the board of directors for Georgians for Responsible Marijuana Policy and GA Alcohol Prevention Alliance. She has a passion for building Georgia's capacity to address substance use at the state and local level. Charlotte also serves as a consultant with the Opioid Response Network and QPR Institute as a Master-Level Trainer.

Amy Szoka is a Georgia Southern Alumni who went straight into the substance use prevention field after graduation. Over the last 11 years of working in prevention, she has received both her state and national certifications as a prevention specialist and has completed over 500 hours of prevention and recovery related training. Working with populations across the continuum of care and pouring into community outreach has been the heart of her passion and has led to her project leadership on multiple federal and state funded grants. In her current role, Amy is the Project Coordinator and Healthcare Navigator for the ASPIrING (Access to Services for Pregnant and Postpartum Persons in Northeast Georgia) grant funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and will be providing support and navigation to providers, participants, and community partners serving mothers with substance use disorders (SUD) and/or opioid use disorders (OUD). On a personal note, she is a proud wife and mom and has two VERY adorable kiddos. Her free time is spent doing fun things around the community and spending time with family in her hometown of Savannah.

Kevin Tanner is the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. He has served as county manager of Forsyth County and served four terms as a State Representative for District 9. He has spent thirty-four years in public service. Commissioner Tanner received his undergraduate degree from North Georgia College and State University and earned his Master of Public Administration from Columbus State University. He has been heavily involved in community and civic activities in the North Georgia area for many years. Commissioner

Tanner and his wife Stacie have been married more than twenty-four years. Stacie is a public school kindergarten teacher, and they are the proud parents of three daughters: Kaitlyn, Abbie, and Chloe. He serves as a Deacon and Sunday school teacher at Bethel Baptist Church where his family has attended for seven generations.

Samson Teklemariam, LPC, CPTM, is the Vice President of Clinical Services for Behavioral Health Group (BHG). Samson also serves as the Southeast Regional Vice President for NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals. He is an accomplished leader with a history of driving organizational results with learning and development solutions. He was formerly the Director of Training and Professional Development for NAADAC and National Director of Learning and Development for Phoenix House Foundation. Samson is a certified lead trainer for the Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Substance Abuse (CBISA) curriculum, Calm Every Storm: Crisis Prevention & Intervention curriculum, and experienced in treatment trauma-related disorders using trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TFCBT) and Seeking Safety. He is passionate about culturally-responsive care for co-occurring conditions, clinical supervision and mentorship, improving access to care barriers, and advocacy for communities in greatest need.

Damien Tillman is a dynamic project director, consultant, educator, and writing coach from Brooklyn, NY, with over two decades of experience in the non-profit, youth development, and education sectors. Holding a Master's in Education, Damien empowers people to become the solution to their problems. He has collaborated with non-profit leaders, school administrators, and teaching artists to create innovative resources, develop impactful workshops, and launch initiatives that provide vital support to diverse communities across New York City and Georgia. Damien's work is rooted in a deep commitment to creating innovative initiatives and systems to support skills development, education, and communal betterment. Damien has successfully led many projects including: The Good Shepherd Services Mentoring Program; The 24-hour Juneteenth Celebration; Circle of Greatness "Inner Circle" Entrepreneur Program; The Mental Health and Substance Misuse Online Toolkit Project and the; Mental Health and Faith Summits Project.

James E. Todd, Jr. MSW, LCSW, CCS, is the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network. James comes to the Network from a career dedicated to building capacity and promoting mental health recovery and social change. His leadership spans two decades in a variety of positions with both administrative and clinical responsibilities. His experience supervising peer supports and services aligns with the core mission of GMHCN. James E. Todd, Jr. has extensive experience leading strategic initiatives and organizations delivering services to individuals experiencing mental health and substance use disorder challenges. As a consultant, CARF (Council on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) Administrator Surveyor, and previous Director of Quality Management and Training, James is committed to advancing the quality of care for peer-directed supports and is passionate about expanding access to high-quality, person-centered services for all Georgians. James E. Todd, Jr. holds a Master of Social Work from North Carolina State University with a concentration in community partnerships, and a Bachelor of Science from Shaw University. James has achieved multiple clinical designations as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Certified Clinical Supervisor, Qualified Mental Health Professional, Qualified Intellectual Developmental Disability Professional, Multisystemic Therapy Certification, and Grassroots Non-Profit Certification. He is a member of the National Association of Social Workers, a life member of Phi Alpha Honor Society, a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, and serves as a faith leader in his community. He enjoys various outdoor activities, including jogging, exploring nature trails, meditation, reading, and traveling and treasures quality moments spent with family.

Ahmed Toure is a nationally travelled speaker and presenter, working with prevention and non profit audiences from the Carolinas to the Californias. Known for his quick wit, goofy dance moves, and ability to bring humor and strategy into just about any conversation, this rockstar has been an essential part of the Leading To Change training team for the past 15 years! When he's not on the road with LTC, he is representing clients in courtrooms in both New York and Georgia.



Andre Vasi, MPH, is a Research Associate II at the Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health within the Georgia Health Policy Center. Andre has managed statewide health initiatives and contributed to strategic planning, demonstrating strong project management and data analysis skills. Andre's role in developing a state cancer plan, leading data collection, and creating survey tools for state and community health need assessments showcases their expertise in leveraging data for health policy and evaluation. Their work emphasizes a commitment to health equity, particularly through projects aimed at advancing LGBTQ+ behavioral health for Georgia's substance use workforce. Their career is marked by a commitment to data-driven public health solutions and policy development aimed at improving health outcomes for all. Andre will take on the role of evaluating the First Responder and SOAR training strategies and examining population-level data around opioid overdose mortality and morbidity.

Dr. Marlo Vernon is an Associate Professor at the Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University with appointments in the Departments of Medicine and Obstetrics and Gynecology, and a member of the Georgia Cancer Center, the Institute for Public and Preventive Health and the Georgia Prevention Institute. She is the Community Engagement Coordinator for the ROAR project. Her research focuses on family-based approaches to healthy behavior change, community cancer prevention, and maternal mortality and morbidity prevention. She is the Principal Investigator on the Cancer Health Awareness, Navigation and Screening (CHANGE) project (funded by the American Cancer Society and Pfizer) and VidaRPM - a remote self-monitoring application for blood pressure and mental health with care coordination for pregnant and postpartum women (funded by the Georgia Department of Public Health and HRSA). She also co-directs the HRSA funded Access to Services for Pregnant and Postpartum Persons in Northeast Georgia (ASPIriNG) project and leads a breastfeeding support and community engagement project, Mothers Informed Lactation Knowledge and Support, funded by NACCHO. Dr. Vernon is the mother of seven children - six of whom are girls. Promoting and supporting women's health is a lifetime passion.

Andrew Williamson serves as the Program Coordinator for LGBTQIA+ Substance Abuse Prevention. He joined GUIDE in January of 2023. Andrew focuses on substance abuse prevention among college-age young adults in the LGBTQIA+ community. Before joining GUIDE, Andrew worked across the Atlanta food scene developing skills to not only keep himself well-fed but also to build communities. He spent time learning to foster safe, meaningful spaces for people to come together. Andrew is a Marietta native. He received his Bachelor of Science in Public Health at Georgia State University. While at Georgia State, Andrew found his interests in mental health and research. Collaborating with a local non-profit, he developed his research skills while evaluating their prevention program. Andrew is looking forward to broadening his understanding of mental health and utilizing his skills for the LGBTQIA+ community. In his free time, Andrew enjoys frequenting farmers markets on the weekends and bringing together close friends and family to enjoy a good home-cooked meal.



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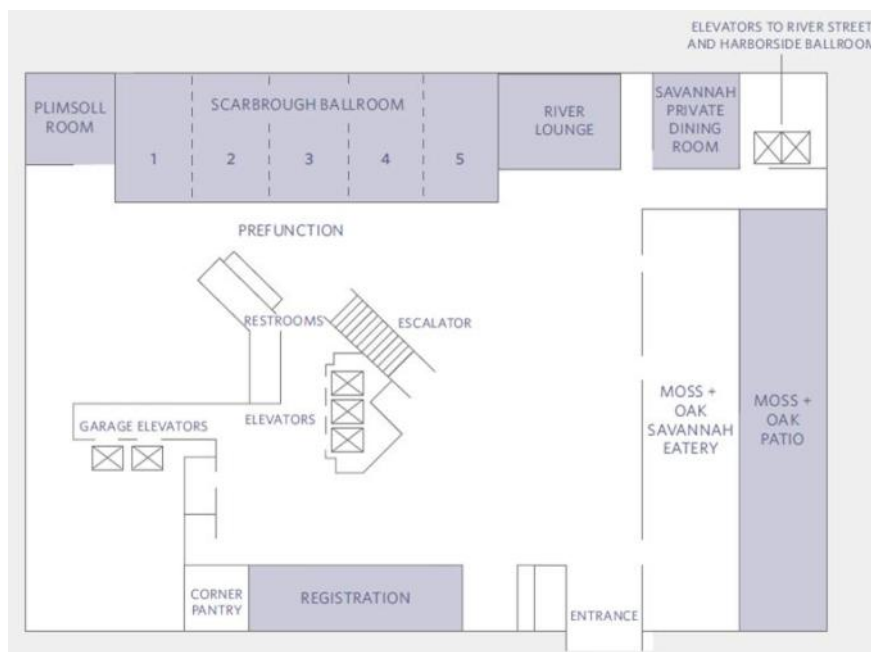
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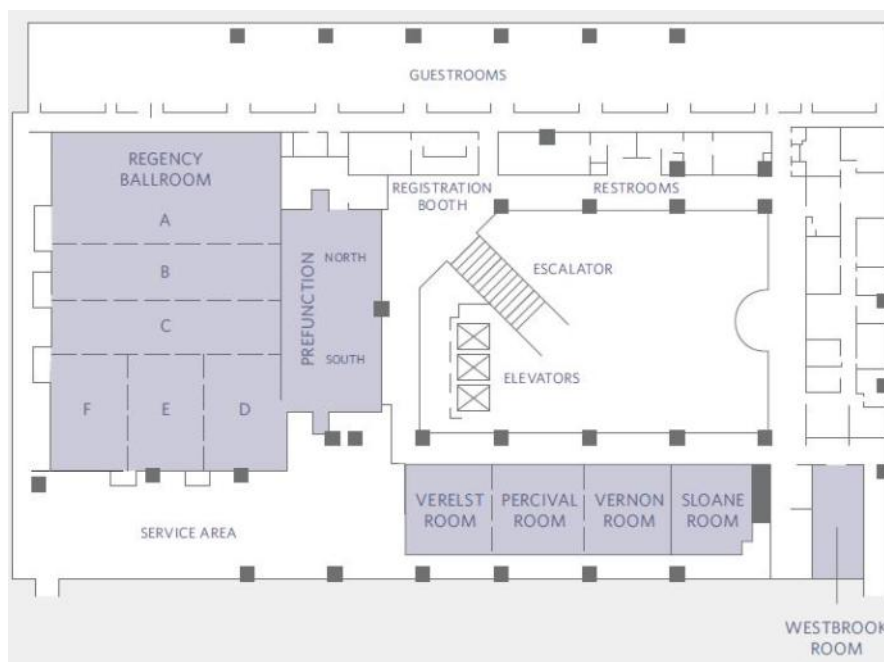
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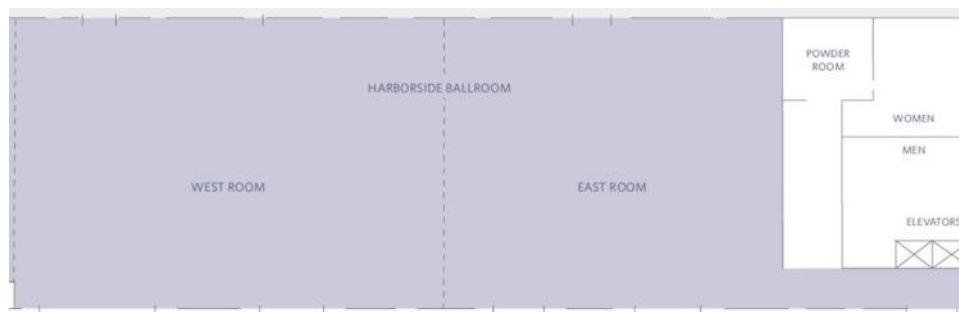
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