

2023 McHenry County Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Recovery Conference

McHenry County College | Friday, September 8, 2023 | 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Keynote Presentation 9:00 – 10:30

Go Upstream Together: A Call for “Come Unity” in Driving Change – Chelsea Laliberte Barnes (Luecht Auditorium B170)

Navigating times of struggle together will benefit those who are daring enough to fall forward. South African bishop, theologian, and human rights activist Desmond Tutu is known globally for coining the concept, "There comes a point where we must stop just pulling people out of the river. We must go upstream and find out why they're falling in." During times when the ground under us is shakier than it's still, when we take two steps forward and five steps back, when it's hard to find shelter from the storm, when it feels like nothing will change or that we're alone in our thinking, a new line of sight can ignite the shift we've been waiting for. Advocating for change requires bravery, vulnerability, and the audacity to reimagine and explore what is possible when we prioritize the power of the collective. If a young Jewish social worker from Buffalo Grove can help lead a harm reduction movement that has helped shift how we approach our state's drug crisis, what can the rest of us regular people do with our forces combined?

Presenter Bio: Chelsea Laliberte Barnes

- Appointed Member, Illinois Opioid Remediation Fund Advisory Board
- Cofounder and Former Executive Director, Live4Lali
- Cofounder and Board Chair, Lake County Opioid Initiative
- Cofounder and Chair, Illinois Harm Reduction & Recovery Coalition

Chelsea is a powerful advocate who uses her voice and experience to promote compassion, justice, and resources to patients and families impacted by mental health, substance use, and overdose. She has led several community coalitions addressing community safety and public health, reducing overdose rates and drug-related harms. She has helped write and pass more than 25 state and federal laws that address prevention, early intervention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction. Bills include the federal and state versions of Lali's Law (named after Chelsea's brother), the Heroin Crisis Act (PA 99-0480), and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (PA 114-198). She addresses intersecting issues such as poverty, housing, equality, care access, and criminal justice reform. [Read more...](#)

Breakout Session I - 3 concurrent breakouts 10:45 – 11:45

Surviving Trauma and Stress: The Mind-Body Connection - Judy Pasternack, BSN, RN, NPD-BC, and Gary Rukin, LPC

In this breakout session, we will explore the intricate relationship between the mind and body when it comes to coping with trauma and stress. Our aim is to familiarize ourselves with the three primary types of stress, comprehend the physiological responses they elicit, and recognize their impact on our brains and bodies. Additionally, we will delve into the physical consequences of stress, emphasizing how prolonged exposure can exact a toll on our well-being. By examining stress at different stages of life, we'll gain insights into its varying effects on individuals. Furthermore, we will introduce strategies to alleviate traumatic stress, enabling our minds and bodies to restore a sense of equilibrium. These approaches include therapeutic interventions as well as lifestyle modifications, both of which hold the potential to benefit us all. **Objectives:** Define the three main types of stress, explain how and why our bodies react to stress, list the mechanisms the body uses to deal with stress, describe the basic physical consequences of chronic (long-term) stress, summarize the physical consequence of chronic stress, recognize how chronic stress at an early age can be especially damaging, describe the connections between stress and traumatic brain injury, obesity, diabetes and heart disease, identify the warning signs of trauma exposure, and apply mitigating factors to can lessen risks. **Presenter Bios:** *Gary Rukin, LPC has worked in Community Mental Health for the past twelve years. He serves as the Trauma-Informed Coordinator for the McHenry County Mental Health Board, and has presented trainings on Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Understanding Psychosis, Understanding and Treating Emotional Trauma, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Thresholds, The Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Recovery Conference, Northwestern University Hospital, and the Illinois Department of Human Services. Judy Pasternack, BSN, RN, NPD-BC, is a Clinical Practice Specialist at Northwestern Medicine. Her specialty areas include substance use disorders/detox and withdrawal, behavioral health, trauma informed care, and workplace violence/safety. She has spoken locally and nationally on a variety of topics including incivility, resilience and self-care, workplace safety and trauma. She is also a trained instructor on the ACES initiative, promoting trauma informed care approaches in health care and in the community.*

The Intersection of Neurodiversity and Mental Health – Courtney Behrens, LCSW, and Susan Perkins, MA, LPC

The presentation will provide attendees with understanding the connection between being autistic / having ADHD and mental health. Presenters will cover symptoms, dual diagnoses, and risk factors as they relate to mental health and the neurodivergent community. Case scenarios will be utilized for participant engagement and application of understanding the impact of being neurodivergent has on mental health diagnosis. Additionally, we will provide clinical insight regarding typical evaluations utilized for suicide risk and the implications they may have when working with an autistic client.

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The Intersection of Neurodiversity and Mental Health – Courtney Behrens LCSW, and Susan Perkins, MA, LPC

Presenter Bios: *Courtney Behrens, LCSW.* Courtney Behrens is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with Options and Advocacy for McHenry County since 2019. She is currently the program manager for the Neurodiversity & Mental Health Clinic, previously she was part of the Autism Resource Center. Courtney obtained her MSW from Aurora University in 2016. She then went on to engage in crisis and clinical therapy in Cook County. Courtney brings with her a multifaceted experience from macro level development such as grant writing and program development to individual therapy. Her professional work has been largely associated with vulnerable populations, youth, domestic violence victims, and individuals with disabilities. Courtney has also done extensive training and work around gender identity, healthy development, and the LGBTQ+ population **Susan Perkins, MA, LPC** has been with the Autism Resource Center (ARC) at Options and Advocacy for 8 years. She started as a service coordinator and was promoted to the position of ARC Program Manager in 2020. She has two children who are on the Autism Spectrum. Her 19-year-old son is the reason she came to work with Options and Advocacy and both children have helped to inform her experience as a professional in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorders. In her free time, Susan enjoys spending time with her family, doing yoga, singing in a choir, and reading.

Youth Advocacy Movement – Dr. Melissa Katz and local youth advocates

Youth Advocacy Movement. Join members of the McHenry County Youth Empower Alliance (YEA) as we discuss how to support the charge towards youth driven change. Our panel of local teen advocates will share stories of their bravery and impact increasing efforts for diversity, equity and inclusion while supporting mental health concerns and reducing stigma. **Moderator Bio: Dr. Melissa Katz.** *Dr. Melissa Katz is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist who received her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology with a child and adolescent specialization from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology. Her areas of expertise include youth with neurodevelopment disorders such as ADHD and ASD, early childhood interventions, pediatric anxiety and mood disorders, OCD, parenting work, and school consultation. Melissa combines evidence-based practices with systemic and dynamic approaches that focus on the unique needs and strengths of every child and family. In addition to clinical work, Melissa leads the charge towards integrative behavioral health care in our community. She is active in reducing barriers that might inhibit services and expanding the behavioral health care network into medical, school and community settings. She is a member of our clinical training team and serves as adjunct faculty at several clinical programs throughout the Chicagoland region. Melissa is the Secretary of the NAMI Board (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and serves on the McHenry County Board of Health. She is a founder of the Youth Empower Alliance (YEA) of McHenry County and active on the Suicide Prevention Task Force.*

Breakout Session II - 3 concurrent breakouts 12:45 – 1:45

Reintegrating Offenders into the Community – Erica Harris, MSW

Problem Solving Courts (PSC) are also known as specialty or therapeutic courts. PSC include, but are not limited to, drug, mental health, veterans, and DUI courts. They have developed nationally and in Illinois to provide an alternative forum for individuals in the criminal justice system who have behavioral health disorders, which include mental illness and substance use disorders. PSC utilize a collaborative, therapeutic approach with justice professionals partnering with community treatment providers to address an individual's underlying behavioral health issues. McHenry County problem solving court programs are designed to help individuals who continue to find their way to the criminal justice system because of arrest related to mental health and substance use. The PSC programs are designed to provide intensive treatment, accountability, and support to help address the underlying reasons for continued arrest while helping clients achieve stability. The treatment court includes a supportive team consisting of a case manager, clinician, nurse, probation officer, judge, state attorney and either a public defender or a private attorney. Clients are in some form of treatment the entire time they are in the program which lasts on average 18-24 months. Clients in the treatment court are also required to submit to random drug and alcohol screens, attend court dates, and meet with their clinician and probation officer on regular basis. Case managers help clients with additional community resources such as transportation needs, medication management, employment, and housing. Objectives: Purpose of PSC, certification, AOIC, evidence-based practice, case management plan, clinical assessment tool, clinical treatment plan, sanctions and incentives. **Presenter Bio: Erica Harris.** *Erica Harris has been working as the DUI court clinician for McHenry County since July of 2022. Previously Erica was the Shelter Manager at Home of the Sparrow and worked for McHenry County probation and intact services for The Youth Service Bureau of Illinois Valley. Erica received her bachelor's degree from Columbia College of Missouri and from there went on to receive a Master of Social Work from Aurora University. She is passionate about supporting others during their path to sobriety and helping individuals gain the tools and resources to excel in other areas of their life.*

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Resiliency as it Relates to Alcohol Use Disorder – Sara Lemke, MA, LCPC, CADC

This presentation will explore concepts related to understanding and strengthening a client's sense of resiliency. We will explore how resiliency plays a key role in recovery from an alcohol use disorder. Tools and tactics that can be used to increase resiliency will be discussed, as will myths surrounding it. Finally, clinicians will leave this presentation with a working knowledge of techniques that can assist them in their therapeutic practice of treating people living with a substance use disorder. **Objectives:**

1. Identify and gain understanding of what resiliency truly is and how it relates to recovery from an alcohol use disorder.
2. Gain insight into myths surrounding resilience and tactics that renew or deplete resiliency thinking and behavior patterns
3. Explore tools that can assist clients in understanding their own resilience and strengthen their “resilience muscle”.

Presenter Bio: Sara Lemke, MA, LCPC, CADC. Sara Lemke is Revival Therapy's founder and the Clinical Outreach Specialist for Newport Healthcare in both IL and IN. Sara decided in 2020 with the pandemic coupled by social and political unrest that there was a great need for more mental health services in her community. She decided to leap and start her own counseling practice, Revival Therapy. With over 20 years of experience in the behavioral health industry, Sara provides competent treatment for a multitude of issues that often bring individuals to therapy. She is a licensed clinical professional counselor, a certified drug and alcohol counselor, as well as, being certified in DBT (dialectical behavior therapy). Her areas of expertise are depression, anxiety, mood disorders such as bipolar disorder, substance abuse issues, personality disorders, grief, divorce, PTSD, co-dependency, narcissistic abuse recovery, chronic pain and illness and life adjustments/transitions. Her professional career has included working as an Executive Regional Director for a national behavioral health care company, a Clinical Liaison for AMITA Health, a professor for several universities both in IL and CO and an Admissions Director for the Gateway Foundation. In addition, Sara has also been featured as a podcast guest and content expert for the Face of Chicago Business, as well as the Woodstock Independent in multiple articles for topics related to mental health and recovery. [READ more...](#)

Youth Advocacy Movement – Dr. Melissa Katz and local youth advocates (Repeat breakout session)

Youth Advocacy Movement. Join members of the McHenry County Youth Empower Alliance (YEA) as we discuss how to support the charge towards youth driven change. Our panel of local teen advocates will share stories of their bravery and impact increasing efforts for diversity, equity and inclusion while supporting mental health concerns and reducing stigma. **Moderator Bio: Dr. Melissa Katz** (see bio information from session 1)

Breakout Session III - 3 concurrent breakouts 2:00 – 3:00

Importance of Peer Support and Community Connection in Early Recovery – Bobby Gattone, MBA

The presenter will start off with sharing local statistical information around substance abuse. Evidence-based information about isolation and lack of belonging in relation to substance use disorders will be discussed. There will be an overview of the “Features of Peer Support”, belonging vs fitting in, and the 5 A's (Attention, Acceptance, Affection, Appreciation and Allowing). The benefits of lived experience, and information about where to find local community support will be shared as well. There will be time for open discussion at the end of the presentation. **Presenter: Bobby Gattone** received his Bachelor of Business Administration and Management from Loyola University. Bobby is the Executive Director for New Directions Addictions Recovery Services since August of 2020. He has previously worked with Consumer Credit Counseling and has spent the past several years enthusiastically and earnestly aiding others in their recovery journey and in establishing services for that end.

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention - ENGLISH - Nicole O'Dea, LCSW

QPR stands for Question, Persuade, Refer. These are the steps that anyone can learn to help prevent suicide. QPR Training is a one-hour presentation that will teach you simple suicide prevention techniques. Much like CPR or the Heimlich maneuver, the use of QPR may save a life. A QPR Gatekeeper is anyone in a position to recognize the warning signs of someone who might be contemplating suicide. School staff, social workers, first responders, public officials, faith communities, staff of parks and recreation; anyone who works with people, regardless of their field of employment, can benefit. **Presenter Bio: Nicole O'Dea, LCSW.** Nicole received her Bachelor of Psychology degree from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and her Master of Social Work from Loyola University, Chicago. She has extensive experience working with adolescents and adults in addressing challenges related to depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, grief and loss, academic stress, divorce, marital and relational complexities, caregiving, mental health crises and additional life transitions and stressors. Nicole provides individual as well as family therapy. She strives to guide individuals and families in strengthening skills, enhancing their strengths, and building resiliency.

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Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention - **ENGLISH** - Nicole O'Dea, LCSW

Presenter Bio: Nicole O'Dea, LCSW (cont'd) She believes each person is capable of creating a life worth living. Nicole uses holistic and strengths-focused approaches, Motivational Interviewing (MI), Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and mindfulness practices in her therapy. Nicole is a certified Question-Persuade-Refer (QPR) Instructor and facilitates trainings educating the public on how to recognize and respond to an individual who may be suicidal. She is also a member of the McHenry County Suicide Prevention Task Force.

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention - **SPANISH** – Suzanne Martinez and Edith Sanchez

QPR stands for Question, Persuade, Refer. These are the steps that anyone can learn to help prevent suicide. QPR Training is a one-hour presentation that will teach you simple suicide prevention techniques. Much like CPR or the Heimlich maneuver, the use of QPR may save a life. A QPR Gatekeeper is anyone in a position to recognize the warning signs of someone who might be contemplating suicide. School staff, social workers, first responders, public officials, faith communities, staff of parks and recreation; anyone who works with people, regardless of their field of employment, can benefit. **Presenter Bios: Suzanne Martinez** is a Staff Chaplain at Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital in Barrington, IL, one of the largest hospitals in the area. Besides her pastoral duties ministering to hospital patients and their families, Suzanne also serves as Congregational Coordinator and Hispanic Liaison for Good Shepherd's Office for Mission and Spiritual Care. **Edith Sanchez** was born and raised in McHenry County. She is currently earning her BSW at Aurora University. She works with the National Alliance on Mental Illness of McHenry County (NAMI MCH) as the Educational and Outreach Programs Coordinator and currently interning with the Youth and Family Center of McHenry County. As a first-generation Latina, Edith wants to inspire and motivate others to make a positive change and difference in the community. Throughout her life experiences, there have been many obstacles that have helped her become a stronger person and a leader. Edith wants to be able to help guide people with her own experience and let them know that their actions matter and have a place in this world. She wants to make sure people have a voice in this very loud world. Edith is a mental health and suicide prevention advocate and hopes to spread awareness, stop the stigma, and serve in the pursuit of the betterment of humanity.

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