



Naomi Ruth Cohen
Institute for Mental Health Education
at The Chicago School

2025

Community Mental Health Conference



Neurodiverse Brains:
Understanding Differences,
Empowering Potential

Saturday, May 17th, 2025

9:00am-5:00pm

Evanston Township High School

1600 Dodge Ave, Evanston

Conference Schedule

9:00am – 9:50am	Registration / Continental Breakfast / Exhibit Hall / Poster Presentations (Location - Cafeteria)
10:00am – 12:00pm	Panel Presentation (Location - Auditorium)
12:00pm – 12:50pm	Lunch / Exhibit Hall / Poster Presentations (Location - Cafeteria)
1:00pm – 4:30pm	Breakout Sessions - 3 Rounds (Location - See breakout session schedule on the next page for location information)
4:30pm – 5:00pm	Networking Reception (Location - Main Lobby)

Breakout Session Schedule

(Sessions are listed in this booklet in alphabetical order)

ROUND 1 - 1:00pm – 2:00pm	ROUND 2 - 2:15pm – 3:15pm	ROUND 3 - 3:30pm – 4:30pm
Leveraging Strengths: A Neurodiversity-Informed Approach to Screening and Intervention with Children	Embracing Diversity: Affirming and Supporting Neurodivergent LGBTQ+ Lives	On the Crossroads of Neurodiversity and Mental Health
ADHD and Neurodiversity	Reimagining Parenting: Navigating Family Life with Neurodiverse Children	The School We Need Now
Empowering Autistic Adults	Mapping the Spectrum: A Historical Journey of Autism Diagnosis and Care	Trauma and Autism Spectrum Disorder: Beyond the DSM-V
Language Matters	The Power of Authenticity: Cultivating Culturally Informed Connections in Neurodivergent Communities	Talk Saves Lives: Suicide Prevention Best Practices and Research for Neurodiverse Individuals
Neurodiversity and Sensory Processing in the Workplace	Embracing Neurodiversity: Cultivating Inclusive Workplaces and Services	Accommodations and Beyond: A People-First Workplace Inclusion System By and For Neurodivergent Employees
Transition Services: Planning for the Future	The Intersection of Neurodivergence & Increased Risk Factors for Youth	Nurturing Neurodiversity

Not all sessions qualify for all CE types.
Please see individual program pages for
session-specific CE information.

CONTINUING EDUCATION INFORMATION

Psychologists: This program, when attended in its entirety, is available for 1.0 continuing education credits. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology maintains responsibility for this program and its content. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is committed to accessibility and non-discrimination in its continuing education activities. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is also committed to conducting all activities in conformity with the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles for Psychologists. Participants are asked to be aware of the need for privacy and confidentiality throughout the program. If program content becomes stressful, participants are encouraged to process these feelings during discussion periods. If participants have special needs, we will attempt to accommodate them. Please address questions, concerns and any complaints to OfficeofCE@thechicagoschool.edu.

Counselors/Clinical Counselors: This program, when attended in its entirety, is available 1.0 hours of continuing education. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) to provide continuing education programming for counselors and clinical counselors. License Number: 197.000159

Social Workers: This program, when attended in its entirety, is available for 1.0 hours of continuing education. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) to provide continuing education programming for social workers. License Number: 159.001036

MFTs, LPCCs, and LCSWs: Course meets the qualifications for 1.0 hours of continuing education credit for MFTs, LPCCs, and/or LCSWs as required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences. If you are licensed outside of California please check with your local licensing agency to determine if they will accept these CEUs. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is approved by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) to offer continuing education programming for MFTs, LPCCs, LEPs, and/or LCSWs. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is an accredited or approved postsecondary institution that meets the requirements set forth in Sections 4980.54(f)(1), 4989.34, 4996.22(d)(1), or 4999.76(d) of the Code.

School Psychologists: This program, when attended in its entirety, is available for 1.0 hours of continuing professional development. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology's School Psychology Program is approved by the National Association of School Psychologists to offer continuing professional development. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology maintains responsibility for this continuing professional development activity.

Illinois Educators: This program, when attended in its entirety, is available for 1.0 hours of continuing professional development. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is an approved provider for continuing professional development by the Illinois State Board of Education.

Human Resource Professionals: Course meets the qualifications for 1.0 Professional Development Credits for Human Resource Professionals. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is approved by SHRM to offer Professional Development Credits (PDCs) for the SHRM Certification Program (SHRM-CP® or SHRM-SCP®). For more information about SHRM certification or recertification, please visit www.shrmcertification.org.

National Board. This program, when attended in its entirety, offers 1.0 NBCC Clock Hours. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology has been approved by NBCC as an Approved Continuing Education Provider, ACEP No. 3036. Programs that do not qualify for NBCC credit are clearly identified. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is solely responsible for all aspects of the programs.

Non Psychologists. Most licensing boards accept Continuing Education Credits sponsored by the American Psychological Association but non-psychologists are recommended to consult with their specific state-licensing board to ensure that APA-sponsored CE is acceptable.



CONTINUING EDUCATION INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

Target Audience: Post-graduate/licensed mental health professionals, HR, school, and other professionals, students and community members.

Not all sessions qualify for all CE types.
Please see individual program pages for session-specific CE information.

Participants must attend 100% of the program in order to obtain a continuing education certificate or certificate of attendance.

A maximum of 5 CEs can potentially be earned by attending this conference
(2 CEs for the panel and 1 CE for each breakout session, when attended in full).

Disclaimer for all programs: If participants have special needs, we will attempt to accommodate them. Please address questions, concerns, and any complaints to OfficeofCE@thechicagoschool.edu. There is no commercial support for this program nor are there any relationships between the CE Sponsor, presenting organization, presenter, program content, research, grants, or other funding that could reasonably be construed as conflicts of interest.



PANEL PRESENTATION: Neurodiverse Brains: Understanding Differences, Empowering Potential

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 2.0 CEs for Psychologists, 2.0 IL CEUs for Counselors and Social Workers, 2.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 2.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 2.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, 2.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals, or 2.0 NBCC Clock Hours.</p>
<p>Panelists</p>	<p>Jennifer Gerlach, MSW, LCSW; Owner of True Story Counseling, LLC Samantha Kolkey, MSW, LCSW; Director of Programs and Services at the Center for Independent Futures (CIF) Debra Vines; Founder/Executive Director of The Answer Inc. Natalie LaDuke, Ph.D., LCP, NCSP; Associate Professor at The Chicago School (Moderator)</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>Neurodiversity means all brains are different, just as gardens flourish with diverse types of plants. There is no "perfect" brain, and differences in how people think, learn, and feel are natural and valuable, much like how a variety of plants and flowers enrich a garden's beauty (Armstrong, 2015). Neurodivergent individuals and their family members face unique challenges and opportunities when navigating the world. Research indicates that understanding and supporting psychological well-being requires a nuanced and empathetic approach that honors lived experiences and individual needs (Cooper, Kumarendran, & Barona, 2024).</p> <p>The panel will engage in presentation and discussion of multiple dimensions of neurodiversity, including history, terminology, psychological well-being, and lived experiences relevant to individuals, families, clinicians, educators, employers and other community members interested in fostering mental health. Emphasizing inclusion and accommodation, this presentation aims to create a welcoming world for all kinds of minds, where differences are celebrated and empowered individuals can thrive.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the meaning of neurodiversity • Identify strategies for fostering acceptance and mental well-being in neurodiverse individuals • Discuss the importance of resources and support for parents with neurodiverse children
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Armstrong, T. (2015). The myth of the normal brain: embracing neurodiversity. <i>AMA Journal of Ethics</i>, 17(4), 348–352. https://doi.org/10.1001/journalofethics.2015.17.4.msoc1-1504</p> <p>Botha, M., Chapman, R., Giwa Onaiwu, M., Kapp, S. K., Stannard Ashley, A., & Walker, N. (2024). The neurodiversity concept was developed collectively: An overdue correction on the origins of neurodiversity theory. <i>Autism : The International Journal of Research and Practice</i>, 28(6), 1591–1594. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613241237871</p> <p>Cooper, K., Kumarendran, S., & Barona, M. (2024). A systematic review and meta-synthesis on perspectives of autistic young people and their parents on psychological well-being. <i>Clinical Psychology Review</i>, 109, 102411-. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2024.102411</p> <p>Silberman, S. (2015) <i>Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity</i>. Avery, New York.</p> <p><u>NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity</u>. (n.d.). <i>Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics</i>. https://doi.org/10.1097/dbp.0000000000001124</p>



Accommodations and Beyond: A People-First Workplace Inclusion System By and For Neurodivergent Employees

CE/CEUs	When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals.
Presenter	Robin Kacyn, BA; Director of Inclusion and Outreach at Aspiritech Evanston
Workshop Description	<p>We like to say that we're an accommodating workplace, but that doesn't quite capture the breadth of what we try to do on a regular basis. Many workplaces speak of accommodations as a vague concept but struggle when it comes to actual implementation. Research suggests that successful employment for autistic individuals requires tailored support systems that go beyond basic accommodations, addressing factors such as workplace culture and individualized needs (Scott et al., 2015). At Aspiritech, we integrate employee feedback into our accommodation process from the start, beginning with the interview process, to ensure that every individual receives the support they need. Studies show that workplaces that actively involve neurodivergent employees in decision-making regarding accommodations foster greater job satisfaction and overall workplace success (Black et al., 2020). This presentation will highlight our people-first approach, which prioritizes inclusivity and practical, individualized accommodations rather than relying on preconceived notions of what is "best" for neurodivergent individuals.</p> <p>Our ultimate purpose, as well as the focus of this presentation, is to build a world that embraces all neurotypes. Research indicates that social support plays a significant role in the mental health and well-being of autistic individuals, reducing the risk of depression and suicidal ideation (Hedley et al., 2017). By fostering an environment that values neurodiversity and actively supports employees, we create a model that can be replicated across industries. Contrary to common misconceptions, accommodations are often neither costly nor labor-intensive but make a significant impact on productivity and workplace morale (Black et al., 2020). At Aspiritech, we've created a microcosm of what we hope to see more of in the wider workforce. We look forward to engaging in a broader discussion following this presentation, where we can address concerns, share best practices, and provide insights into how organizations can implement sustainable and effective accommodations.</p>
Learning Objectives	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the importance of a person-focused, inclusive environment • Develop plans to address reasonable accommodations in their own workspace and community • Identify strategies to actively involve neurodivergent employees in the decision-making process
APA Standard	-----
References	<p>Black, M. H., Mahdi, S., Milbourn, B., Scott, M., Gerber, A., Esposito, C., Falkmer, M., Lerner, M. D., Halladay, A., Ström, E., D'Angelo, A., Falkmer, T., Bölte, S., & Girdler, S. (2020). Multi-informant International Perspectives on the Facilitators and Barriers to Employment for Autistic Adults. <i>Autism Research</i>, 13(7), 1195–1214. https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2288</p> <p>Hedley, D., Uljarević, M., Wilmot, M., Richdale, A., & Dissanayake, C. (2017). Brief Report: Social Support, Depression and Suicidal Ideation in Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i>, 47(11), 3669–3677. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3274-2</p> <p>Scott, M., Falkmer, M., Girdler, S., & Falkmer, T. (2015). Viewpoints on Factors for Successful Employment for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. <i>PloS One</i>, 10(10), e0139281–e0139281. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0139281</p>



ADHD and Neurodiversity

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CEs for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, or 1.0 NBCC Clock Hours.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Mark A. Reinecke, PhD, ABPP, ACT; Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, past Chief of the Division of Psychology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>For many years, ADHD was believed to affect only young boys—those who were restless, unable to sit still, and frequently disruptive in classrooms. Today, we recognize that ADHD presents with more varied symptoms and can occur across the lifespan. The rates of diagnosis have increased significantly, rising 60% between 2020 and 2022 in the United States (Chellappa, 2025). Additionally, ADHD symptoms often overlap with a range of other conditions, including autism, learning disabilities, anxiety, and depression, raising questions about the traditional binary model of diagnosis (Sonuga-Barke & Thapar, 2021). A more nuanced perspective suggests that ADHD is better understood as a convergence of multiple neurocognitive systems—such as attention regulation, novelty seeking, reward processing, and executive functioning—each with unique biological underpinnings and developmental trajectories. Rather than a singular disorder, ADHD can be viewed as a multifaceted constellation of traits, with individuals experiencing diverse manifestations depending on their unique neurocognitive profile (Armstrong, 2015).</p> <p>In this break-out session, we will explore this evolving framework for understanding ADHD and discuss its implications for treatment, education, and career planning. While medication management remains beneficial for some, a broader approach that includes environmental adjustments, strengths-based interventions, and strategies to minimize cognitive overload may support better outcomes (Sonuga-Barke & Thapar, 2021). Recognizing ADHD within a neurodiversity framework allows for a more personalized approach, acknowledging that individuals with ADHD have unique abilities and challenges that can be accommodated to help them achieve success and fulfillment in various aspects of life (Chellappa, 2025).</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe contemporary diagnostic criteria for ADHD • Discuss limitations of dichotomized diagnostic systems • List the component "traits" which may underlie ADHD
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Armstrong, T. (2015). The myth of the normal brain. <i>AMA J Ethics</i>. 2015;17(4):348-352. DOI 10.1001/journalofethics.2015.17.4.msoc1-1504.</p> <p>Chellappa S. L. (2025). Addressing multiple neurodivergent identities in clinical and research settings. <i>The Lancet. Child & adolescent health</i>, 9(1), 5–6. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(24)00261-X</p> <p>Sonuga-Barke, E., & Thapar, A. (2021). The neurodiversity concept: is it helpful for clinicians and scientists?. <i>The lancet. Psychiatry</i>, 8(7), 559–561. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(21)00167-X</p>



Embracing Diversity: Affirming and Supporting Neurodivergent LGBTQ+ Lives

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CE for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, 1.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals, or 1.0 NBCC Clock Hours.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Peter Myers, Psy.D.; Director of Group and Therapeutic Community Services at Yellowbrick</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>The intersection of LGBTQ+ identities and autism has garnered increasing attention in recent years, as emerging research suggests that there may be a higher prevalence of autism spectrum conditions among transgender and gender-diverse individuals compared to the general population. Several studies have indicated that autistic traits or a diagnosis of autism may co-occur with gender dysphoria, suggesting a complex interplay between neurodevelopmental factors and gender identity development (van der Miesen et al., 2018; de Vries et al., 2010). This convergence raises essential questions about the underlying neurobiological and psychosocial mechanisms that contribute to both conditions and the implications for clinical assessment and support. The social and political landscape surrounding transgender and neurodivergent individuals is shifting rapidly, marked by both increasing visibility and intensified debates over rights, representation, and access to essential services. While advocacy efforts have led to greater recognition and support, legislative challenges and societal resistance continue to shape the lived experiences of these communities, highlighting the urgent need for inclusive policies and affirming spaces. Understanding this intersection is critical, as it can inform more nuanced, empathetic, affirming, and strength-based approaches for individuals who navigate both identities.</p> <p>This presentation intends to share both research and shared lived experiences to explore the developmental paths and clinical needs of those at the crossroads of autism and transgender identity. For instance, research has highlighted that the unique social communication challenges associated with neurodivergence might influence the way gender identity is experienced and expressed, for example, the potentially complex and complicated understanding of gender dysphoria (Warrier et al., 2020; Strang et al., 2018). Furthermore, it is more apparent with time that traditional therapeutic and support models may require adaptation to address the specific needs of these individuals. (Chakraborty et al., 2019; George & Stokes, 2018). As the field advances, further interdisciplinary studies will be essential to develop evidence-based interventions that are sensitive to the dual needs of autistic and transgender individuals, ensuring that both neurodevelopmental and gender-related aspects are holistically addressed (Kreukels & Cohen-Kettenis, 2011; van der Miesen et al., 2018).</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss current construct of differing gender identities • Develop an appraisal of what modifications and accommodations would be supportive of gender-diverse neurodivergent individuals • Describe the potential differing developmental paths of gender-diverse neurodivergent individual • Identify ways that they can be affirming and supportive of their gender-diverse neurodivergent loved one or person with whom they provide care, education, or support
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Kallitsounaki, A., & Williams, D. M. (2023). Autism Spectrum Disorder and Gender Dysphoria/Incongruence. A systematic Literature Review and Meta-Analysis. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i>, 53(8), 3103–3117. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05517-y</p> <p>Strang, J. F., Meagher, H., Kenworthy, L., de Vries, A. L. C., Menvielle, E., Leibowitz, S., Janssen, A., Cohen-Kettenis, P., Shumer, D. E., Edwards-Leeper, L., Pleak, R. R., Spack, N., Karasic, D. H., Schreier, H., Balleur, A., Tishelman, A., Ehrensaft, D., Rodnan, L., Kuschner, E. S., ... Anthony, L. G. (2018). Initial Clinical Guidelines for Co-Occurring Autism Spectrum Disorder and Gender Dysphoria or Incongruence in Adolescents. <i>Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology</i>, 47(1), 105–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2016.1228462</p> <p>Van Der Miesen, A. I. R., Hurley, H., & De Vries, A. L. C. (2016). Gender dysphoria and autism spectrum disorder: A narrative review. <i>International Review of Psychiatry (Abingdon, England)</i>, 28(1), 70–80. https://doi.org/10.3109/09540261.2015.1111199</p> <p>Warrier, V., Greenberg, D. M., Weir, E., Buckingham, C., Smith, P., Lai, M.-C., Allison, C., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2020). Elevated rates of autism, other neurodevelopmental and psychiatric diagnoses, and autistic traits in transgender and gender-diverse individuals. <i>Nature Communications</i>, 11(1), 3959–3959. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-17794-1</p>



Embracing Neurodiversity: Cultivating Inclusive Workplaces and Services

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CEs for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, or 1.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Samantha Kolkey, LCSW; Director of Programs and Services at Center for Independent Futures</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>As diversity, equity, and inclusion is finally being prioritized in the workplace, neurodiversity is a natural form of diversity to incorporate into these discussions and policy and workplace cultural shifts. With recent research allowing for more accurate diagnosis of neurodevelopmental disabilities, there are an increasing number of neurodivergent employees and job seekers. Research has shown that neurodivergent employees bring valuable skills and perspectives to workplaces in all industries including increased innovation, creativity, and problem-solving. By creating an inclusive and accommodating workplace culture, organizations, and business can improve employee engagement, motivation, productivity, and retention. In addition, for clinical providers, utilizing a neurodiversity lens and moving towards the social model of disability can support more accurate diagnosing and therefore treatment and long term positive outcomes for clients.</p> <p>This session will begin with defining terms and a brief historical context of the neurodiversity movement and approach. Neurodivergent and autistic burnout will be defined and differentiated from occupational burnout, and mood disorder and anxiety diagnoses, and how these types of burnout significantly impact a neurodivergent person's success in the workplace. Neurodiversity hiring initiatives will be defined and discussed to support shifting the "traditional" HR lens when it comes to the recruiting, hiring, and retention practices of organizations and businesses. You will walk away with clinical knowledge and practical strategies for establishing policies, procedures, accommodations, and environments that foster neuroinclusive workplaces and services.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define Neurodiversity, Neurodivergence, the Neurodiversity Movement, and the Neurodiversity Approach • Describe and differentiate autistic burnout and neurodivergent burnout from occupational burnout, mood disorder diagnoses, and anxiety disorder diagnoses • Apply practical knowledge, tools, and strategies to support a neuro-inclusive recruiting and hiring process, and workplace culture and environment, as well as neuro-inclusive clinical practice settings
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Doyle, N. (2020). Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults. <i>British Medical Bulletin</i>, 135(1), 108–125. https://doi.org/10.1093/bmb/ldaa021</p> <p>Mantzalas, J., Richdale, A. L., & Dissanayake, C. (2022). A conceptual model of risk and protective factors for autistic burnout. <i>Autism Research</i>, 15(6), 976–987. https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2722</p> <p>Miller, D., Rees, J., & Pearson, A. (2021). "Masking is Life": Experiences of masking in autistic and nonautistic adults. <i>Autism in Adulthood</i>, 3(4), 330–338. https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.0083</p> <p>Raymaker, D. M., Teo, A. R., Steckler, N. A., Lentz, B., Scharer, M., Santos, A. D., Kapp, S. K., Hunter, M., Joyce, A., & Nicolaidis, C. (2020). "Having All of Your Internal Resources Exhausted Beyond Measure and Being Left with No Clean-Up Crew": Defining Autistic Burnout. <i>Autism in Adulthood</i>, 2(2), 132–143. https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2019.0079</p>



Empowering Autistic Adults

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CEs for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals, or 1.0 NBCC Clock Hours.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Alison B Carris, MA, BCBA, LCPC; Founder and Chief Clinical Officer of Behavioral Learning</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>As awareness of autism continues to grow, so does the understanding that traditional approaches often overlook the diverse needs and strengths of autistic adults. Research emphasizes that shifting from deficit-based models to affirming approaches fosters acceptance, autonomy, and emotional well-being (Allen et al, 2024; Mathur et al, 2024). By supporting self-advocacy and meaningful connections, neuroaffirming care promotes greater inclusion and quality of life.</p> <p>This session, designed for parents, community members, and support professionals, will explore strategies for creating inclusive environments. how neuroaffirming care has the capacity to celebrate the unique strengths and perspectives of autistic individuals while addressing their diverse needs with compassion and respect. Attendees will gain insights into creating environments that prioritize acceptance, autonomy, and well-being, by encouraging meaningful connections, supporting emotional well-being, and teaching self-advocacy skills. Together, we can build a world that uplifts and values every member of our community.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define neuroaffirming care and explain how it differs from traditional deficit-focused approaches to supporting autistic adults • Identify no less than one strategy to foster an inclusive environment in your home or work space
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA’s continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Allen, L. L., Mellon, L. S., Syed, N., Johnson, J. F., & Bernal, A. J. (2024). Neurodiversity-Affirming Applied Behavior analysis. <i>Behavior Analysis in Practice</i>. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40617-024-00918-0</p> <p>Mathur, S. K., Renz, E., & Tarbox, J. (2024). Affirming Neurodiversity within Applied Behavior Analysis. <i>Behavior Analysis in Practice</i>, 17(2), 471–485. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40617-024-00907-3</p> <p>Pahnke, J., Jansson-Fröjmark, M., Andersson, G., Bjureberg, J., Jokinen, J., Bohman, B., & Lundgren, T. (2023). Acceptance and commitment therapy for autistic adults: A randomized controlled pilot study in a psychiatric outpatient setting. <i>Autism : The International Journal of Research and Practice</i>, 27(5), 1461–1476. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221140749</p>



Language Matters

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CE for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, or 1.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Claudia Hypes; Education Manager at NAMI Metro Suburban Addie Van Zwoil, MJ, MSW, LCSW; Director of Programs at School-Based Health Alliance</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>Language Matters emphasizes the critical role of word choice and its impact on identity, safety, and belongingness. Research indicates that language usage, including the distinction between person-first and identity-first language, can influence how individuals are perceived, supported, and engaged in care (Taboas, Doepke, & Zimmerman, 2023; Grech, Koller, & Olley, 2023). This presentation explores how acts of bias contribute to the stigma associated with language and labels, highlighting the need for thoughtful and respectful communication in schools, the community, and in mental health practice.</p> <p>Attendees will gain skills to differentiate between person-first and identity-first language, exploring the diverse preferences within neurodivergent and disability communities. Additionally, this program will equip participants with strategies to determine when to "call in" versus "call out" in addressing harmful language, behaviors, and biases (Journal of the American Philosophical Association, 2024). By fostering awareness and providing alternatives to stigmatizing jargon while promoting intentional language use, the program empowers participants to cultivate more inclusive and affirming environments and communities.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the value of language and its impact on individual and community wellbeing • Explain the evolution of language and important milestones of inclusive language (ex. disability movement) • Identify stigmatizing and potentially dangerous jargon that affects individuals seeking help for their mental health
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Call-Outs and Call-Ins. (2024). Journal of the American Philosophical Association. https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2023.29</p> <p>Grech, L. B., Koller, D., & Olley, A. (2023). Furthering the person-first versus identity-first language debate. Australian Psychologist, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/00050067.2023.2192863</p> <p>Taboas, A., Doepke, K., & Zimmerman, C. (2023). Preferences for identity-first versus person-first language in a US sample of autism stakeholders. Autism : The International Journal of Research and Practice, 27(2), 565-570. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221130845</p>



Leveraging Strengths: A Neurodiversity-Informed Approach to Screening and Intervention with Children

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CE for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, or 1.0 NBCC Clock Hours.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Natalie LaDuke, Ph.D., LCP, NCSP; Associate Professor at The Chicago School</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>The session will explore how the neurodiversity approach can reshape screening and intervention practices, particularly for mental health professionals working with children. As discussed by Dwyer (2022), neurodiversity-informed frameworks promote personalized strategies that recognize the individual strengths of neurodiverse children, rather than merely focusing on remediating weaknesses. Through the lens of this approach, participants will learn practical techniques for implementing strengths-based interventions and fostering inclusive classroom teaching practices.</p> <p>Additionally, the session will cover strategies for facilitating student-led IEPs, empowering students to actively participate in their educational planning and advocate for their needs. Tools such as the Social-Emotional Health Survey (SEHS) will be discussed for supporting strengths-based interventions. The presentation will conclude with a case study illustrating how screening and intervention were successfully conducted using the SEHS, highlighting the importance of fostering resilience, well-being, and inclusive educational practices for diverse children.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement neurodiversity-informed frameworks in screening and intervention practices • Apply practical techniques for incorporating strengths-based interventions • Apply tools to enhance resilience and well-being among diverse children
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.1: Program content focuses on application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that have overall consistent and credible empirical support in the contemporary peer reviewed scientific literature beyond those publications and other types of communications devoted primarily to the promotion of the approach.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Botha, M., Chapman, R., Giwa Onaiwu, M., Kapp, S. K., Stannard Ashley, A., & Walker, N. (2024). The neurodiversity concept was developed collectively: An overdue correction on the origins of neurodiversity theory. <i>Autism</i>, 28(6), 1591–1594. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613241237871</p> <p>Brown, H. M., Stahmer, A. C., Dwyer, P., & Rivera, S. (2021). Changing the story: How diagnosticians can support a neurodiversity perspective from the start. <i>Autism</i>, 25(5), 1171–1174. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613211001012</p> <p>Dwyer, P. (2022). The neurodiversity approach(es): What are they and what do they mean for researchers? <i>Human Development</i>, 66(2), 73–92. https://doi.org/10.1159/000523723</p>



Mapping the Spectrum: A Historical Journey of Autism Diagnosis and Care

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CE for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Javier E. Acevedo-Arus, M.A; Doctoral Intermediate Extern at AARTS (Autism, Assessment, Research, and Treatment Services) Center at Rush University Medical Center, Advanced Pediatric Neuropsychology Extern at the University of Chicago</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was first described by Leo Kanner (1943) as a constellation of affective symptoms, including obsessiveness, stereotypy, and echolalia, which are observed since early childhood. Prior to this, similar symptoms were often attributed to schizoid disorders. Over time, the conceptualization of ASD shifted significantly, indicating broader changes in the psychological, medical, and cultural understandings of neurodevelopment. These changes are reflected in the diagnosis, treatment, and language surrounding ASD by providers, patients, and family members alike.</p> <p>The purpose of this presentation is to provide a historical overview of ASD, tracing its diagnostic and treatment history while examining how societal attitudes have influenced and evolved alongside these changes. A central focus of the presentation will be how autism has been assessed clinically in each edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). From the inception of "Infantile Autism" as the first recognized distinct autism disorder in the DSM-III (1980), to the consolidation of Autism Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder into Autism Spectrum Disorder in the DSM-5 (2013), ASD research and treatment continues to evolve.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze fundamental diagnostic considerations for autism spectrum disorder per each entry of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 1-5) • Explain how changes in autism diagnostic criteria have influenced clinical assessment and treatment approaches • Analyze the relationship between societal attitudes and diagnostic frameworks for autism
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Dallman, A. (2024). Affective Contact in Autism: A Phenomenological Study of the Emotional Experiences of Autistic Adults. <i>The American Journal of Occupational Therapy</i>, 78(4). https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2024.050502</p> <p>Katz, L., Nayar, K., Garagozzo, A., Schieszler-Ockrassa, C., & Paxton, J. (2020). Changes in Autism Nosology: The Social Impact of the Removal of Asperger's Disorder from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5). <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i>, 50(9), 3358–3366. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-04233-4</p> <p>Rice, C. E., Carpenter, L. A., Morrier, M. J., Lord, C., DiRienzo, M., Boan, A., Skowrya, C., Fusco, A., Baio, J., Esler, A., Zahorodny, W., Hobson, N., Mars, A., Thurm, A., Bishop, S., & Wiggins, L. D. (2022). Defining in Detail and Evaluating Reliability of DSM-5 Criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Among Children. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i>, 52(12), 5308–5320. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05377-y</p>



Neurodiversity and Sensory Processing in the Workplace

CE/CEUs	When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals.
Presenter	Olivia Danielson-Veed; Senior Project Interior Designer Daniel Niewoehner; Principal, Regional Leader of Science + Technology
Workshop Description	<p>Creating inclusive environments for neurodivergent individuals presents both challenges and opportunities, particularly given the sensory, cognitive, and social difficulties many face in traditional settings. Research highlights that neurodiverse individuals may experience hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity to auditory, visual, and tactile stimuli, significantly affecting their engagement and productivity (Lusa et al., 2019). The presentation emphasizes the importance of designing spaces that accommodate various sensory thresholds, incorporating elements such as quiet retreat areas, natural light, and flexible workspaces. Studies show that biophilic design—integrating natural elements into physical spaces—can help mitigate stress and enhance cognitive well-being, ultimately improving overall functionality and comfort for neurodivergent individuals (Bratman et al., 2015). Additionally, neuroscience research supports the role of structured and adaptable environments in facilitating a state of "flow," wherein individuals are fully engaged and able to function at their highest capacity (Linden, Tops, & Bakker, 2020).</p> <p>HOK proposes various design strategies to foster inclusivity, including sensory zoning, diverse seating options, and adaptable workspaces. Despite their unique strengths and high intelligence, many neurodivergent individuals face employment barriers due to a lack of proper workplace accommodations (van Bergen et al., 2019). The presentation also explores operational and individual-level strategies, such as flexible work policies, awareness training, and task management techniques, to support neurodivergent individuals in both educational and professional settings. Studies suggest that enhancing social inclusion through workplace adjustments and supportive policies significantly improves job satisfaction and well-being (van Bergen et al., 2019). Ultimately, the message is clear: inclusive design extends beyond physical spaces to creating experiences that embrace diversity, enhance productivity, and promote well-being for all.</p>
Learning Objectives	<p>After attending this intermediate-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine practical strategies to design sensory-friendly environments that benefit both neurodivergent and neurotypical employees, from flexible spaces to aiding in individuals' ability to manage sensory stimuli • Discuss how to create spaces that accommodate diverse sensory thresholds to increase creativity and efficiency, improve focus, reduce anxiety, and promote well-being • Discuss how to create spaces that accommodate diverse sensory thresholds to increase creativity and efficiency, improve focus, reduce anxiety, and promote well-being
APA Standard	-----
References	<p>Linden, D., Tops, M., & Bakker, A. B. (2020). Go with the flow: A neuroscientific view on being fully engaged. <i>European Journal of Neuroscience</i>, 53(4). https://doi.org/10.1111/ejn.15014</p> <p>Lusa, S., Käpykangas, S. M., Ansio, H., Houni, P., & Uitti, J. (2019). Employee Satisfaction With Working Space and Its Association With Well-Being—A Cross-Sectional Study in a Multi-Space Office. <i>Frontiers in Public Health</i>, 7, 358–358. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2019.00358</p> <p>van Bergen, A. P. L., Wolf, J. R. L. M., Badou, M., de Wilde-Schutten, K., IJzelenberg, W., Schreurs, H., Carlier, B., Hoff, S. J. M., & van Hemert, A. M. (2019). The association between social exclusion or inclusion and health in EU and OECD countries: a systematic review. <i>European Journal of Public Health</i>, 29(3), 575–582. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky14</p>



Nurturing Neurodiversity

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Brianne Jonathan, MA, LBSI; Director of the Neurodiversity Initiative at Aurora University</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>The purpose of this presentation is to focus on building a community that not only supports but nurtures neurodiverse students, faculty, and staff. A strengths-based perspective on neurodiversity will be emphasized, highlighting the unique abilities and contributions of neurodivergent individuals rather than viewing differences as deficits. Research suggests that fostering inclusive environments requires understanding the hidden curriculum—the unspoken social rules and expectations that may pose challenges for neurodiverse individuals, particularly in academic and professional settings (Sulaimani & Gut, 2019). By recognizing these implicit barriers, institutions can create more supportive structures that empower neurodiverse individuals to thrive.</p> <p>Content will include a brief overview of different vantage points of neurodiversity, activities that encourage new ways of thinking about neurodivergent individuals, and practical strategies for implementation. These strategies can be applied and adapted to multiple educational and professional settings, helping both students and employees succeed in diverse environments. For instance, explicitly teaching group work expectations can enhance collaboration for neurodivergent students, improving both academic and social outcomes (Scott, 2019). Similarly, workplaces benefit from structured accommodations and a culture of acceptance, which have been shown to improve productivity and well-being among neurodiverse employees (Blackburn, 2023). By incorporating these approaches, institutions can move toward a more inclusive and strengths-focused model that supports neurodiverse individuals across different contexts.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the meaning of Neurodiversity and reflect on neurodiverse thinking and learning • Analyze the Hidden Curriculum in various settings and brainstorm strategies to bring the covert into view. • Discuss Social Coaching and learn strategies for coaching neurodiverse minds
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>-----</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Blackburn, B. (2023). Managing neurodiversity in workplaces. <i>Occupational Medicine (Oxford)</i>, 73(2), 57–58. https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqac142</p> <p>Scott, K. (2019). Teaching the Hidden Curriculum of Group Work for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. <i>Open Education Studies</i>, 1(1), 122–137. https://doi.org/10.1515/edu-2019-0008</p> <p>Sulaimani, M. F., & Gut, D. M. (2019). Hidden curriculum in a special education context: The case of individuals with autism. <i>Journal of Educational Research and Practice</i>, 9(1), 30–39. Retrieved from https://go.openathens.net/redirector/aurora.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/hidden-curriculum-special-education-context-case/docview/2859036256/se-2</p>



On the Crossroads of Neurodiversity and Mental Health

CE/CEUs	When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CEs for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, or 1.0 NBCC Clock Hours.
Presenter	Jennifer Gerlach, MSW, LCSW; Owner of True Story Counseling
Workshop Description	<p>Neurodiversity has become a widely discussed topic in recent years as awareness of autism, ADHD, and related neurodivergences has grown. The intersection between neurodiversity and mental health is significant, with some researchers considering mental health conditions themselves as manifestations of neurodiversity (Cherewick & Matergia, 2024). Understanding neurodiversity beyond a deficit-based model is essential for fostering well-being and social belonging for neurodivergent individuals. Research highlights that the challenges neurodivergent individuals face are often rooted in societal barriers rather than intrinsic limitations, emphasizing the importance of shifting toward neuroinclusive practices (Josefson, 2024).</p> <p>This workshop will explore what neurodiversity means and how practitioners, families, and community members can support one another at the crossroads of neurodiversity and mental health. By addressing empathy gaps and communication differences, professionals and caregivers can create more supportive environments for neurodivergent individuals (Finke & Dunn, 2023). The discussion will also include strategies to promote acceptance and inclusion, helping neurodivergent individuals navigate mental health challenges while leveraging their strengths.</p>
Learning Objectives	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe multiple dimensions of neurodiversity• Discuss strategies for improving quality of mental health for neurodivergent people• Develop strategies for communicating effectively between neurotypes
APA Standard	This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.
References	<p>Cherewick, M., & Matergia, M. (2024). Neurodiversity in Practice: a Conceptual Model of Autistic Strengths and Potential Mechanisms of Change to Support Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing in Autistic Children and Adolescents. <i>Advances in Neurodevelopmental Disorders</i>, 8(3), 408–422. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41252-023-00348-z</p> <p>Finke, E. H., & Dunn, D. H. (2023). Neurodiversity and double empathy: can empathy disconnects be mitigated to support autistic belonging? <i>Disability & Society</i>, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2023.2295802</p> <p>Josefson, C. (2024). Toward a neuroinclusive culture: designing neuroinclusivity with Triple Empathy Theory. <i>Disability & Society</i>, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2024.2424193</p>



Reimagining Parenting: Navigating Family Life with Neurodiverse Children

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CE for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, or 1.0 NBCC Clock Hours.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Lynn Denton, LCSW; Founder and Principal Owner at Lynn Denton Therapy</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>This presentation is targeted to parents of neurodiverse children, as well as therapists and educators who support them. Often, the parenting approaches that parents initially envision may not be effective for a neurodivergent child. Research highlights that parenting stress is significantly higher in families of children with neurodevelopmental disorders, which can impact both parental well-being and the effectiveness of parenting strategies (Craig et al., 2016). By understanding how their child presents and responds to different environments, parents can adopt alternative approaches that are more successful in meeting their child's needs. When parents feel supported and informed, they are better equipped to foster an environment where their child feels understood, secure, and emotionally regulated (Suvarna et al., 2024).</p> <p>Additionally, when a family includes one or more neurodivergent children, family dynamics may not function as parents initially expected. Everyday activities, such as taking a vacation or going out to dinner, can present unexpected challenges that require adjustment and flexibility. Research suggests that peer support networks can play a critical role in helping parents navigate these challenges by providing shared experiences, emotional support, and practical strategies for family engagement (Wong & Shorey, 2022). The impact on siblings must also be recognized, as they may experience shifts in family attention and expectations. This presentation will provide suggestions for parenting neurodivergent children, along with strategies for adapting family interactions to enhance overall well-being and enjoyment.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the emotional and developmental stages parents experience while raising a neurodiverse child, fostering self-awareness and adaptive parenting strategies • Implement strategies that enhance a child's confidence, sense of understanding, and overall well-being, promoting positive parent-child relationship • Assess the impact of neurodiversity on family interactions and apply structured approaches to family events that foster a calmer and more successful environment
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Craig, F., Operto, F. F., De Giacomo, A., Margari, L., Frolli, A., Conson, M., Ivagnes, S., Monaco, M., & Margari, F. (2016). Parenting Stress among parents of children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders. <i>Psychiatry Research</i>, 242, 121–129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2016.05.016</p> <p>Suvarna, V., Farrell, L., Adams, D., Emerson, L-M., & Paynter, J. (2024). Differing relationships between parenting stress, parenting practices and externalising behaviours in autistic children. <i>Autism : The International Journal of Research and Practice</i>, 13623613241287569-. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613241287569</p> <p>Wong, T. S. M., & Shorey, S. (2022). Experiences of peer support amongst parents of children with neurodevelopmental disorders: A qualitative systematic review. <i>Journal of Pediatric Nursing</i>, 67, e92–e99. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2022.09.004</p>



Talk Saves Lives: Suicide Prevention Best Practices and Research for Neurodiverse Individuals

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CE for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, or 1.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Michael Bushman, MBA; Mental Health Speaker, Trainer, Volunteer and Writer</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>Talk Saves Lives: Suicide Prevention Best Practices and Research for Neurodiverse Individuals explores the general scope of suicide as a leading cause of death, focusing on neurodivergent populations who experience unique risk factors and warning signs. Research indicates that neurodiverse individuals, particularly those with autism and ADHD, face increased vulnerability to suicidal ideation due to heightened social isolation, difficulty accessing mental health care, and the presence of co-occurring psychiatric conditions (Richards et al., 2019; Curnow et al., 2023). Additionally, studies emphasize the role of stressful life events in exacerbating suicidal risk, highlighting the need for early identification and targeted interventions (Cohen et al., 2023). Gender-diverse neurodivergent individuals are particularly at risk, further underscoring the importance of specialized suicide prevention approaches that account for intersectional identities (Polidori et al., 2024).</p> <p>This program discusses key efforts to reduce suicide risk among neurodiverse individuals, including education, improved access to adapted screening tools, and individualized safety planning. Research supports the effectiveness of peer support and neurodiversity-affirming mental health care, which can help mitigate the impact of social stigma and communication barriers often faced by neurodivergent individuals in crisis (Pantazakos & Vanaken, 2023; Mitchell, Sheppard, & Cassidy, 2021). Additionally, structural changes—such as inclusive policies within healthcare and workplace settings—can improve long-term well-being and decrease crisis episodes (Favril et al., 2023). The session will explore these evidence-based strategies, offering practical tools for professionals and communities to create more supportive environments that recognize and address the specific mental health challenges experienced by neurodivergent individuals.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify risk and protective factors to suicide • Describe how to recognize suicide warning signs • List ways to seek and offer support and resources for neurodiverse individuals
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA’s continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Batty, G. D., Kivimäki, M., Bell, S., Gale, C. R., Shipley, M., Whitley, E., & Gunnell, D. (2018). Psychosocial characteristics as potential predictors of suicide in adults: an overview of the evidence with new results from prospective cohort studies. <i>Translational Psychiatry</i>, 8(1), 22. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41398-017-0072-8</p> <p>Cohen, L. J., Hernandez, M., Mokhtar, R., Richards, J., Bloch-Elkouby, S., Rogers, M. L., & Galynker, I. (2023). Stressful Life Events and Near-term Suicidal Risk in a Clinical Population. <i>Psychiatric Quarterly</i>, 94(3), 467–482. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11126-023-10038-7</p> <p>Favril, L., Yu, R., Geddes, J. R., & Fazel, S. (2023). Individual-level risk factors for suicide mortality in the general population: An umbrella review. <i>The Lancet. Public health</i>, 8(11), e868–e877. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(23)00207-4</p>



The Intersection of Neurodivergence & Increased Risk Factors for Youth

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CEs for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, or 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Bryant Laiche, MA; Administrator of the Youth Prevention Resource Center at Prevention First Randy Wilkins; Mental Health & Youth Engagement Specialist at Prevention First</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>Neurodivergence, which includes conditions like attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, and others, often co-occurs with substance use disorder (SUD). Research indicates that individuals with ADHD have a high comorbidity rate with SUD, as both conditions share underlying neurobiological factors (Craig et al., 2016). The stress and stigma faced by neurodivergent individuals can further increase their vulnerability to substance use as a coping mechanism. Additionally, parenting stress in families of neurodivergent children can impact the support systems available to them, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to reduce risk factors (Suvarna et al., 2024).</p> <p>Effective support systems and resources are essential for addressing co-occurring neurodivergence and SUD. This workshop will define neurodivergence, examine the role of stress and stigma in substance use risk, and explore strategies for fostering protective factors. Peer support among families of neurodivergent individuals has been shown to improve coping and resilience, underscoring the importance of creating inclusive, positive environments (Wong & Shorey, 2022). By implementing evidence-based interventions, professionals and caregivers can help neurodivergent youth develop healthier coping strategies, reducing the likelihood of substance use.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this introductory-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define key neurodiversity concepts and identify common neurodivergent conditions • Discuss the intersection of neurodiversity and substance use disorder, including comorbidities and risk factors for neurodivergent youth • Develop strategies for creating supportive environments that enhance protective factors and reduce substance use risks for neurodivergent youth
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Butwicka, A., Långström, N., Larsson, H., Lundström, S., Serlachius, E., Almqvist, C., Frisé, L., & Lichtenstein, P. (2017). Increased Risk for Substance Use-Related Problems in Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Population-Based Cohort Study. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i>, 47(1), 80–89. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-016-2914-2</p> <p>Pharmacotherapy for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Retention in Outpatient Substance Use Disorder Treatment. (n.d.). <i>The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry</i>. https://doi.org/10.4088/jcp.20m13598</p> <p>Walker, N. (2021). <i>Neuroqueer heresies: notes on the neurodiversity paradigm, autistic empowerment, and postnormal possibilities</i>. Fort Worth, TX: Autonomous Press.</p> <p>Weir, E., Allison, C., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2021). Understanding the substance use of autistic adolescents and adults: a mixed-methods approach. <i>The Lancet. Psychiatry</i>, 8(8), 673–685. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(21)00160-7</p>



The Power of Authenticity: Cultivating Culturally Informed Connections in Neurodivergent Communities

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CE for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists, 1.0 SHRM PDCs for Human Resource Professionals, or 1.0 NBCC Clock Hours.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Sharde' O'Rourke, LMFT, LPC, LSATP, PAI, SAP, CCTP; The Mahogany Projek</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>This presentation explores the intersection of authenticity, cultural awareness, and effective communication within neurodivergent communities. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how cultural and neurodivergent identities influence communication styles, behaviors, and self-expression, shaping social interactions and personal experiences. Research highlights the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in supporting neurodiverse individuals, ensuring that educational and community environments foster inclusivity and validation (Lindo, Gutierrez, & Boveda, 2021). Additionally, studies suggest that early intervention and research within neurodivergent communities must be approached with an awareness of potential biases and conflicts of interest, reinforcing the need for authentic, evidence-based practices that prioritize the lived experiences of neurodivergent individuals (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2021).</p> <p>The session will provide evidence-based strategies for mental health professionals and community advocates to foster authentic relationships that validate neurodivergent experiences while respecting cultural diversity. By incorporating culturally informed practices, professionals can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and communication approaches. This aligns with research indicating that psychological theories and intervention strategies must evolve to reflect neurodivergent voices and perspectives (S & F, 2019). Participants will leave with practical tools to create inclusive spaces, ensuring that neurodivergent individuals are empowered to navigate their personal and professional lives with authenticity and confidence.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this intermediate-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the interplay between neurodiversity and cultural identity and how these factors influence communication and self-expression • Explain the concept of masking and its impact on neurodivergent individuals, particularly within diverse cultural contexts • Develop culturally responsive strategies to foster authentic communication and relationships in neurodivergent communities
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Bottema-Beutel, K., Crowley, S., Sandbank, M., & Woynaroski, T. (2021). Research review: Conflicts of interest and potential bias in autism early intervention research. <i>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i>, 62(1), 4-11. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13249</p> <p>Fletcher-Watson, S., & Happé, F. (2019). Autism: a new introduction to psychological theory and current debate. https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB28132665</p> <p>Lindo, E. J., Gutierrez, M. V., & Boveda, M. (2021). Culturally relevant pedagogy for neurodiversity. <i>Community College Journal of Research and Practice</i>, 45(10), 711-727. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2021.1972362</p>



The School We Need Now

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CEs for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, or 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Thomas Golebiewski, Ph.D., MSW; Therapist, Consultant, and Author Timothy Dohrer, Ph.D.; Assistant Professor and Director of Educational Leadership at National Louis University</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>Schools of the future must be designed with a whole-child perspective, integrating the science of learning with the science of mental health. This approach better prepares students for personal, professional, and societal challenges while enabling educators to stay focused and effective. By fostering positive, engaging school environments, we create spaces that nurture hope and resilience in our communities.</p> <p>This workshop will introduce five key strategies schools can implement to support mental health. According to the World Health Organization, mental health is not merely the absence of illness but a state of well-being in which individuals recognize their abilities, manage life's stresses, work productively, and contribute to their communities. Defining mental health in this way is the first step toward developing a strong Mental Health Action Plan (MHAP).</p> <p>A successful MHAP requires self-reflection on strengths and challenges, as well as the ability to build resilience in the face of adversity. This workshop will present five essential concepts drawn from neurobiology and the mind-body connection, emphasizing a developmentally informed, whole-child and whole-school framework. Topics include the science of stress, trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning, and fostering a culture of care through approaches such as Circle Keeping and restorative justice.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this intermediate-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define stress, trauma and Mental Health and understand its significance in the school environment and how to build coping skills and resilience • Discuss how a mental health action plan can support the mental health of all individuals • Identify how Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Circle keeping and restorative practices can improve overall student well-being, learning outcomes, and school climate and ensure a culture of care and compassion
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Immordino-Yang, M. H., Darling-Hammond, L., & Krone, C. R. (2019). Nurturing nature: How brain development is inherently social and emotional, and what this means for education. <i>Educational Psychologist</i>, 54(3), 185–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1633924</p> <p>Karatekin, C., & Hill, M. (2019). Expanding the Original Definition of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). <i>Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma</i>, 12(3), 289–306. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-018-0237-5</p> <p>Levy, D. J., Heissel, J. A., Richeson, J. A., & Adam, E. K. (2016). Psychological and Biological Responses to Race-Based Social Stress as Pathways to Disparities in Educational Outcomes. <i>The American Psychologist</i>, 71(6), 455–473. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0040322</p> <p>Viner, R., Russell, S., Saulle, R., Croker, H., Stansfield, C., Packer, J., Nicholls, D., Goddings, A., Bonell, C., Hudson, L., Hope, S., Ward, J., Schwalbe, N., Morgan, A., & Minozzi, S. (2022). School closures during social lockdown and mental health, health behaviors, and well-being among children and adolescents during the first COVID-19 wave. <i>JAMA Pediatrics</i>, 176(4), 400. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2021.5840</p>



Transition Services: Planning for the Future

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CE for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, or 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Emily Wilson, JD, MEd; Staff Attorney and CAP Advocate with the Special Education Clinic at Equip for Equality</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>This session will provide an overview of the legal rights of students with disabilities to access appropriate transition services through special education, including a breakdown of an IEP transition plan and key elements families and students should look for in their transition planning process. Research indicates that implementing evidence-based practices in secondary transition planning is crucial for promoting successful outcomes for students with disabilities as they move into post-secondary education and employment (Mazzotti & Plotner, 2016). This session will also cover the rights of students transitioning to post-secondary education and employment, including the services available through the Division of Rehabilitation Services and their right to reasonable accommodations in college and workplace settings.</p> <p>Through in-depth discussions of advocacy strategies and practical case studies, participants will be provided with the tools to apply this knowledge to maximize the transition services of students with disabilities and ensure that all students are able to access appropriate transition services, vocational services, and accommodations in the post-secondary setting.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this intermediate-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the legal requirements for developing appropriate transition plans for students with disabilities • Describe the rights and responsibilities of the Division of Rehabilitation Services as it relates to the transition planning process and services available for youth in transition • Develop creative advocacy strategies to support appropriate transition planning for students with all disabilities
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.2: Program content focuses on ethical, legal, statutory or regulatory policies, guidelines, and standards that influence psychological practice, education, or research.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Barger, J., Contri, D., Gibbons, L. J., Ruch-Ross, H. S., & Sanabria, K. (2015). Transition Planning for Youth With Special Health Care Needs (YSHCN) in Illinois Schools. <i>The Journal of School Nursing</i>, 31(4), 253–260. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059840514542130</p> <p>Mazzotti, V. L., & Plotner, A. J. (2016). Implementing Secondary Transition Evidence-Based Practices: A Multi-State Survey of Transition Service Providers. <i>Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals</i>, 39(1), 12–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143414544360</p> <p>Prince, A. T. (2024). Youth Rights in Postsecondary Transition: Gibson v. Forest Hills (2016). <i>Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities</i>, 49(1), 56–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969231218715</p>



Trauma and Autism Spectrum Disorder: Beyond the DSM-V

<p>CE/CEUs</p>	<p>When attended in full, this program offers 1.0 CEs for Psychologists, 1.0 IL CEUS for Counselors and Social Workers, 1.0 BBS California CEUs for LPCCs, LPSWs, and LMFTs, 1.0 ISBE CPDUs for Illinois Educators, or 1.0 NASP CPDs for School Psychologists.</p>
<p>Presenter</p>	<p>Javier E. Acevedo-Arus, M.A; Doctoral Intermediate Extern at AARTS (Autism, Assessment, Research, and Treatment Services) Center at Rush University Medical Center, Advanced Pediatric Neuropsychology Extern at the University of Chicago</p>
<p>Workshop Description</p>	<p>Autistic individuals navigate the world in unique ways. Similarly, the manner in which autistic people experience and develop trauma-related symptomatology differs from their allistic counterparts. Additionally, autistic people and their families are more likely to suffer victimization throughout their lives, including being 7 times more likely to experience sexual abuse (Weiss & Fardella, 2018) and nearly 3 times more likely to have encounters with law enforcement (Collins, et al., 2023) (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018). Ultimately, adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) find themselves at higher risk of developing posttraumatic stress disorder (Rumball, et al., 2021).</p> <p>This presentation is a comprehensive examination of the current literature on the diagnosis, treatment, and clinical/community considerations for autistic people and their families who have faced trauma. A diagnostic overview of ASD and trauma-related disorders will provide useful discussion regarding differential diagnostic considerations for clinicians in attendance. Given the unique sensory and cognitive presentations of individuals with ASD, a portion of this presentation explores the growing literature on trauma exposure beyond what has traditionally been defined as traumatic per the DSM-V-TR (Rumball, et al., 2020). Notable emphasis is placed on intersectional and biopsychosocial considerations that attendees will carry with them as they interface with prospective autistic patients, clients, and colleagues.</p>
<p>Learning Objectives</p>	<p>After attending this intermediate-level program, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the relationship between trauma and autism spectrum disorder • Identify developmental risk factors for developing trauma-related symptomatology in patients with autism spectrum disorder • Discuss trauma presentations that may not align with DSM-5 diagnostic criteria, considering alternative frameworks for assessment and intervention
<p>APA Standard</p>	<p>This program meets APA's continuing education STANDARD 1.3: Program content focuses on topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Kerns, C. M., Lankenau, S., Shattuck, P. T., Robins, D. L., Newschaffer, C. J., & Berkowitz, S. J. (2022). Exploring potential sources of childhood trauma: A qualitative study with autistic adults and caregivers. <i>Autism</i>, 26(8), 1987–1998. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613211070637</p> <p>Kirby, A. V., Bakian, A. V., Zhang, Y., Bilder, D. A., Keeshin, B. R., & Coon, H. (2019). A 20-year study of suicide death in a statewide autism population. <i>Autism Research</i>, 12(4), 658–666. https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2076</p> <p>Rumball, F., Brook, L., Happé, F., & Karl, A. (2021). Heightened risk of posttraumatic stress disorder in adults with autism spectrum disorder: The role of cumulative trauma and memory deficits. <i>Research in Developmental Disabilities</i>, 110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2020.103848</p> <p>Rumball, F., Happé, F., & Grey, N. (2020). Experience of trauma and PTSD symptoms in autistic adults: Risk of PTSD development following DSM-5 and non-DSM-5 traumatic life events. <i>Autism Research</i>, 13(12), 2122–2132. https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.2306</p>



Neurodiverse Brains:
Understanding Differences,
Empowering Potential

SATURDAY, MAY 17TH, 2025
9:00AM-5:00PM

EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL
1600 DODGE AVE
EVANSTON, IL 60201

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