



Welcome to the 23rd annual Community Mental Health Conference!

We're so glad you've joined us today.

We are honored to welcome this year's panelists: Ms. Samantha Kolkey, Ms. Jennifer Gerlach, and Ms. Debra Vines, with Dr. Natalie LaDuke serving as our moderator. We also extend our sincere thanks to our exceptional breakout session presenters, most of whom are based right here in Illinois.

This conference is made possible through the dedication of many individuals. Special thanks to our host, Evanston Township High School, and to The Chicago School for their continued partnership. We are deeply grateful to our conference planning committee and volunteers whose hard work brings this day to life. We also appreciate the generous sponsors and in-kind donors who help make this event accessible to our community.

A few logistics for your day:

- The **panel presentation** will take place in the Auditorium from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. If you have a question for the panel, please write it on the enclosed index card and hand it to a volunteer, or submit it electronically via Slido (instructions are on your Conference Schedule).
- After the panel, please join us across the hall in the East Cafeteria (E120) for lunch and a chance to explore the Exhibit Hall.
- **Breakout sessions** begin at 1:00 p.m. (round one), 2:15 p.m. (round two), and 3:30 p.m. (round three). Your selected sessions and lunch order are printed on the back of your name tag.

Please take a moment to complete your breakout session and overall conference evaluations. Your feedback helps us shape future conferences and improve our programming.

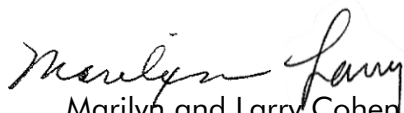
We also invite you to support the Institute's work. All donations are tax-deductible and go directly toward providing low-cost mental health education throughout Chicagoland, advancing efforts to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness and suicide. You'll find a QR code for online giving in your folder, envelopes are available at the NRCI table if preferred.

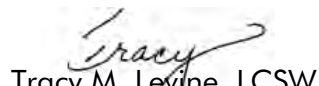
Save the date!

Our 24th Annual Community Mental Health Conference is tentatively scheduled for **Saturday, May 16, 2026.**

To learn more about the Naomi Ruth Cohen Institute and explore current mental health education offerings, please visit: www.naomicoheninstitute.org.

Thank you for being part of this important day.


Marilyn and Larry Cohen
Founders


Tracy M. Levine, LCSW
Executive Director

NRCI extends our thanks to the following for their support:

2025 Conference Committee

Larry Cohen
Marilyn Cohen
Ana Belmonte
Jill Glenn
Tom Golebiewski
Harvey Kelber
Natalie LaDuke
Sue Laue
Tom Laue
Michael Losoff
Mark Reinecke
Hollie Sobel
Nancy Sussman
Addie Van Zwohl
Sharon Weingarten

Evanston Township High School

Ta'Mia Banks
Jason Crawford
Clinton Jones
Kathy Wideman

NRCI Team

Tunisha Potter – Training Coordinator
Mahogany Bonner
Amber Greviskes
Karishma Sunkara
Courtenie Taccolini



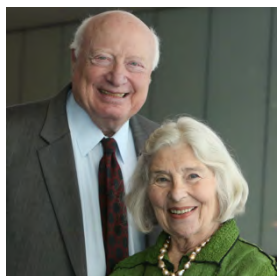
Neurodiverse Brains:
Understanding Differences,
Empowering Potential



Meet the Conference Panel

Marilyn & Larry Cohen - Founders

www.naomicoheninstitute.org



Marilyn and Larry Cohen founded the Naomi Ruth Cohen Charitable Family Foundation in 2000 in honor of their daughter Naomi who died by suicide at age 33, having lived with bipolar disorder. Their mission is to reduce the stigma often associated with mental illness and suicide. In 2002 they hosted the first Community Mental Health Conference, and in 2008, they partnered with The Chicago School to form the Naomi Ruth Cohen Institute for Mental Health Education at The Chicago School (NRCI).

Tracy Levine, MSW, LCSW - Executive Director

tlevine@thechicagoschool.edu



A Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 30 years of experience, Tracy joined NRCI in 2021, bringing a compassionate commitment to behavioral health, direct services, and community empowerment.

A graduate of the University of Michigan (BA, MSW), Tracy has held senior and executive leadership roles at Chicago-based agencies supporting children, families, and individuals affected by various challenges. Her work has focused on building resilience, strengthening family relationships, and helping emerging adults thrive. She has also served as an Assistant Professor in The Chicago School's Counseling Psychology program.

Tracy is a certified instructor in multiple Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) curricula including Youth and teen MHFA, as well as Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) suicide prevention. Widely recognized for her empathetic and engaging teaching style, she consistently receives praise for making complex topics accessible and actionable. She is currently a board member of Mental Health America Illinois.

Natalie LaDuke, PhD - Moderator

www.thechicagoschool.edu



Dr. Natalie LaDuke is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Nationally Certified School Psychologist with a distinguished career in school psychology and mental health. She earned her doctoral degree in School Psychology from Loyola University Chicago, where her research focused on supporting marginalized students, including those who are homeless and transgender.

Before pursuing her doctorate, Dr. LaDuke began her career as a school psychologist at the Morton Freshman Center in Cicero, IL. There, she implemented district-wide mental health screenings and led social-emotional learning initiatives focused on promoting resilience, self-advocacy, and emotional regulation.

Currently, Dr. LaDuke is an Associate Professor at The Chicago School, where she teaches courses on the dissertation process, school-based mental health supports, and neurodiversity. Her research and consultation work centers on the evolving role of school psychologists, and strategies for promoting resilience in all children, including those who are neurodiverse.

Dr. LaDuke also demonstrates her commitment to supporting neurodiverse populations through her work at O’Koon Psychology Group, where she specializes in assessments for children and adolescents with learning, social/emotional, and behavioral concerns.

In addition to her clinical and academic work, Dr. LaDuke is dedicated to giving back to her field. She currently serves as the Treasurer for the Illinois School Psychological Association, where she supports and promotes best practices for helping children in schools and school psychologists in practice.

Samantha Kolkey, LCSW - Panelist

<https://independentfutures.com>



Samantha Kolkey (she/her) is a licensed clinical social worker with a distinguished career dedicated to supporting and empowering individuals with disabilities. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Women's Studies from the University of Michigan and subsequently obtained a Master's Degree in Social Work from the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Samantha began her professional journey as a case manager and clinician, working with children, youth, and families. In 2017, she transitioned into the field of disability services, assuming the role of Director of Programming at a nonprofit organization focused on supporting neurodivergent young adults in their pursuits of post-secondary education, employment, and independence. Her leadership and vision led to her promotion to Executive Director in 2018, where she honed her skills in nonprofit management and team leadership.

Throughout her career, Samantha has been instrumental in developing, implementing, and evaluating a variety of programs aimed at enhancing and expanding support services. Her approach is deeply influenced by her own neurodivergent identity, embracing values such as vulnerability, connection, collaboration, and empathy. She advocates for the social model of disability, striving to create opportunities for individuals to build fulfilling lives.

In her current role as Director of Programs and Services at the Center for Independent Futures (CIF) in Evanston, Samantha continues her commitment to partnering with individuals with disabilities to live meaningful, independent lives through innovative programs, personalized support, and community collaboration. CIF strives to create inclusive communities where everyone can thrive, pursue their goals, and achieve their dreams.

Jennifer Gerlach, LCSW - Panelist

<https://truestorycounseling.com>



Jennifer Gerlach, LCSW, is a psychotherapist, author, and speaker based in Southern Illinois, specializing in the intersection of neurodiversity and mental health. She earned both her Bachelor of Science and Master of Social Work degrees from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Identifying as a neurodivergent individual in mental health recovery, Jennifer offers a unique, empathetic perspective in her practice. She is the owner of True Story Counseling LLC, where she provides neurodiversity-affirming, recovery-oriented therapy to adolescents and adults. Her areas of specialization include autism, self-harm, psychosis, mood disorders, and young adult mental health.

Jennifer is the author of "The Psychosis and Mental Health Recovery Workbook: Activities for Young Adults from ACT, DBT, and Recovery-Oriented CBT," a resource integrating Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and Recovery-Oriented Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to support young adults in their mental health journeys.

In addition to her clinical work, Jennifer provides training and consultation services to mental health professionals on topics such as neurodiversity-affirming care, adolescent mental health, and psychosis. She has presented nationally through organizations like PESI, sharing her expertise on therapy with autistic clients.

Jennifer's personal experiences as a neurodivergent individual enrich her professional practice, allowing her to offer compassionate, informed care to her clients. She is committed to breaking the stigma surrounding neurodiversity and mental health, advocating for acceptance and understanding within the community.

Debra Vines - Panelist

<https://theanswerinc.org>



Debra Vines is the founder and CEO of The Answer Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting families affected by autism and developmental disorders in the greater Chicagoland area. Her journey into advocacy began when her son, Jason, was diagnosed with autism in 1989. Facing a scarcity of resources and support, Debra transformed her personal challenges into a mission to assist other families navigating similar experiences. Since its inception in 2007, The Answer Inc. has served over 4,000 families, offering services such as support groups, educational workshops, recreational programs, and workforce development initiatives. The organization also provides training for first responders and municipal staff, aiming to foster a more inclusive and understanding community.

Debra's unwavering commitment to autism advocacy has earned her national recognition. In 2022, she was honored as one of CNN's Top 10 Heroes, highlighting her significant contributions to the autism community. Further acknowledging her impact, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, inducted Debra as an honorary member in 2023, celebrating her dedication to education and support for individuals with autism and their families.

Beyond her organizational leadership, Debra is a sought-after motivational speaker and trainer, sharing her insights and experiences to inspire others. She also hosts a radio segment on 1390 AM, further extending her advocacy and outreach efforts. Debra Vines' work exemplifies resilience and dedication, transforming personal adversity into a beacon of hope and support for countless families dealing with autism.



Neurodiverse Brains:
Understanding Differences,
Empowering Potential



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

Meet the Conference Presenters



Addie Van Zwoll, PhD, MJ, LCSW
Language Matters



Alison B Carris, MA, BCBA, LCPC
Empowering Autistic Adults



Brianne Jonathan, MA, LBSI
Nurturing Neurodiversity



Bryant Laiche
The Intersection of
Neurodivergence & Increased
Risk Factors for Youth



Claudia Hypes, CRSS
Language Matters



Daniel Niewoehner, AIA, ARCHIL
Neurodiversity and Sensory
Processing in the Workplace



Emily Wilson, JD, MEd
Transition Services: Planning for
the Future



Javier E. Acevedo-Arus, MA
Mapping the Spectrum: A
Historical Journey of Autism
Diagnosis and Care
and
Trauma and Autism Spectrum
Disorder: Beyond the DSM-V



Jennifer Gerlach, LCSW
On the Crossroads of
Neurodiversity and Mental Health



Lynn Denton, LCSW
Reimagining Parenting:
Navigating Family Life with
Neurodiverse Children



Mark Reinecke, PhD, ABPP, ACT
ADHD and Neurodiversity



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



Natalie LaDuke, PhD, LCP, NCSP
Leveraging Strengths: A
Neurodiversity-Informed
Approach to Screening and
Intervention with Children



Olivia Danielson-Veed, NCIDQ
Neurodiversity and Sensory
Processing in the Workplace



Peter Myers, PsyD
Embracing Diversity: Affirming
and Supporting Neurodivergent
LGBTQ+ Lives



Randy Wilkins
The Intersection of
Neurodivergence & Increased
Risk Factors for Youth



Robin Kacyn
Accommodations and Beyond: A
People-First Workplace Inclusion
System by and for
Neurodivergent Employees



Samantha Kolkey, LCSW
Embracing Neurodiversity:
Cultivating Inclusive Workplaces
and Services



Sharde' O'Rourke, LPC, CCTP, LMFT
The Power of Authenticity:
Cultivating Culturally Informed
Connections



Tom Golebiewski, PhD, LCSW
The School We Need Now



Timothy Dohrer, PhD
The School We Need Now



Neurodiverse Brains:
Understanding Differences,
Empowering Potential



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

Thank you to our 2025 Conference Sponsors!

BENEFACTORS



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Illinois

The Illinois Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention focuses on eliminating the loss of life from suicide through education, research, outreach, and advocacy. The grassroots work we do focuses on eliminating the loss of life from suicide by delivering innovative prevention programs, educating the public about risk factors and warning signs, raising funds for suicide research and programs, and reaching out to those individuals who have lost someone to suicide.

As a part of AFSP's growing nationwide network of chapters, we bring together people from all backgrounds

who want to prevent suicide in our communities. Families and friends who have lost someone to suicide, vulnerable individuals, mental health professionals, clergy, educators, students, community/business leaders, and many others energize our chapter.

Website: <https://afsp.org/chapter/illinois>

Phone: 312-890-2377

TRILOGY

Mental Wellbeing

Trilogy's mission is to provide comprehensive integrated care that enables people in mental health recovery to build meaningful and independent lives. We envision a society where everyone impacted by mental illness is valued, embraced, and supported holistically, systematically, and culturally; where the stigma of mental illness is eliminated; and where quality of care is not determined by socioeconomic status.

For 50 years, Trilogy has provided people across Chicago and beyond with support to recover from mental illness and

move toward stability. We provide our clients with an array of essential services and ongoing support so that they can live independently and thrive in our community.

Website: <https://www.trilogyinc.org>

Phone: 773-382-4060



Rogers Behavioral Health is a nationally recognized, not-for-profit provider of highly specialized psychiatric care. Rogers offers evidence-based treatment for children, teens, and adults with OCD and anxiety, addiction, depression and other mood disorders, eating disorders, trauma, and PTSD. Backed by more than a century of experience, Rogers is leading the way on measurement-based care and use of clinical outcomes.

Rogers provides partial hospitalization care (PHP) and intensive outpatient care (IOP) in a growing network of communities across the U.S. Additionally, inpatient and residential treatment are available at hospital locations in southeast Wisconsin for patients in need of a higher level of care. Learn more about the programs available at each Rogers location at [rogersbh.org](https://rogersbh.org/locations/skokie-il), call 1-800-767-4411 for admissions.

Website: <https://rogersbh.org/locations/skokie-il>

Phone: 224-470-9407

PATRONS



Since 2005, Yellowbrick has executed its mission to serve as the national leader and resource for the psychiatric treatment of emerging adults. Our treatment philosophy is guided by research findings that show that enduring success is facilitated by working alongside emerging adults coping with actual life experiences in "real time," with a professional

presence supporting the development of skills required to navigate the challenges of life.

By combining treatment with active participation within the community, Yellowbrick sustains and strengthens personal confidence and establishes educational and vocational accomplishments that anchor the emerging adult. Our community of peers and professionals, along with the neighboring university community of Evanston, is united in a commitment to assist individuals in discovering the inner strengths, motivations and goals that build the foundation on which a productive and satisfying life can be achieved. Treatment is provided across all diagnoses and levels of care from supported apartments through PHP, IOP, Outpatient and wrap-around supportive services.

Website: <https://yellowbrickprogram.com/>

Phone: 866-234-0222



Thresholds is one of the oldest and largest providers of recovery services for persons with mental illnesses and substance use disorders in Illinois. We offer 30 innovative programs at more than 75 locations throughout Chicago, the adjacent suburbs, and four surrounding counties. Services include assertive outreach, case management, housing, employment, education, psychiatry, primary care, substance use treatment, and research.

We work with many populations, including youth and young adults, veterans, young mothers, deaf, and individuals experiencing homelessness, among others. Recovery from mental illnesses and substance use is possible. Recovery is a process of finding and living a satisfying and meaningful life, as one defines it for oneself. We assist our clients as they work to reclaim a positive sense of self, and discover their own potential, gifts, and skills.

Website: <https://www.thresholds.org/>

Phone: 773-572-5500



Erie Family Health Centers believes that healthcare is a human right. We acknowledge the deep history of systemic oppression, racism, and discrimination that plagues our communities. We recognize that these marginalized groups have long been denied access to quality healthcare, education and employment opportunities which has led to devastating health disparities. Erie is committed to confronting these inequities, challenging ourselves to work with excellence and humility, and keeping ourselves open to critical conversations that encourage learning,

progress, and change.

We seek an organizational culture where the dignity and worth of each of our patients, staff, learners, and community partners are honored, and value is seen in everyone's unique differences. We pledge to continually explore and advance the values of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging across all levels of Erie Family Health Centers.

We provide high quality medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare to all, regardless of ability to pay.

Website: <https://www.eriefamilyhealth.org/>

Phone: 312-666-3494



Founded in 1975 PEER Services reduces the harms of substance use, addiction and stigma by engaging youth and adults with innovative prevention programming and by supporting people on their path to recovery through holistic, evidence-based treatment. We provide affirming services to all in need, regardless of their ability to pay.

We strive toward a community free from harmful cycles of trauma, substance use, and addiction and from the stigma and systemic barriers that reinforce them. Our goal is to help people develop the skills and resilience to overcome challenges and to unleash their inner capacities to create the lives they want.

PEER Services is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and strives to manifest these values throughout our programs and services; in our interactions with all clients, community members, and other constituents; and within our team, including staff and board members.

Website: <https://peerservices.org/>

Phone: 847-492-1778



Endeavor Health delivers convenient access to pioneering, world-class care combined with a seamless, personal experience — every patient, every time. We are proud to be based in the communities we serve, where our patients, team members and community partners call home, and where we're committed to advancing wellbeing, health equity and local

economic growth. By uniting nine top regional hospitals and connecting over 300 care locations across Chicagoland, expert care is right around the corner (and in your neighborhood). Endeavor Health provides convenient access to expert, compassionate care where, when and how you need it. At Endeavor Health, you don't have to choose between receiving the highest level of medical expertise and feeling cared for and understood by your healthcare team.

NorthShore University HealthSystem, Edward-Elmhurst Health, Northwest Community Healthcare and Swedish Hospital are united under one name as one comprehensive, community-based health system.

Website: <https://www.endeavorhealth.org/>

ADVOCATES



As a trusted resource since 1972, C4 offers quality, trauma-informed care tailored to the diverse needs of the individuals and families we serve. Our mission-driven approach emphasizes empowerment, resilience, and holistic healing, ensuring that every client receives personalized support and compassionate guidance on their journey to recovery. With a dedicated team of clinicians and staff, C4 provides a safe and supportive environment where individuals can thrive and reclaim their well-being.

In addition to our impactful clinical services, C4 offers exciting career opportunities for those passionate about making a difference in behavioral health. What sets C4 apart is our commitment to fostering a culture of growth, innovation, and excellence. We prioritize professional development through mentorship, training, and ongoing support, empowering our team members to excel in their roles and contribute meaningfully to our mission. Whether you're just starting your career or seeking to advance in the field, C4 provides the resources, opportunities, and supportive community you need to succeed.

Website: <https://www.c4chicago.org/>

Phone: 773-769-0205



Relief Mental Health is a leading outpatient provider of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), psychedelics (SPRAVATO® esketamine and IV ketamine), psychiatric medication management, and talk therapy, for the treatment of depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety and other diagnoses. Using BrainsWay Deep TMS™ technology, Relief's care is the most advanced and effective treatment available. TMS is FDA approved, non-invasive, and is covered by insurance.

Founded in January 2020 and dedicated to delivering expedited care, Relief has 10 facilities in three states. In Illinois, clinics are located in Chicago (Lakeview and West Loop), Oak Brook, Orland Park, Northbrook, Rockford, and St. Charles. Relief's other clinics are in Warren and Red Bank, New Jersey, and West Allis, Wisconsin. With a commitment to personalized care for evolving patient needs, Relief Mental Health continually explores innovative treatments to provide the best possible outcomes.

Website: <https://reliefmh.com>

Phone: 855-205-2764



Plena Mind Center Child & Adolescent Partial Hospitalization and Intensive Outpatient Programs is located just north of Chicago. Plena, chosen from the Latin root which translates to "full," is at the heart of what we want to achieve. A truly personal approach ensures all participants and their families

live their fullest lives.

Our approach empowers children and adolescents to actively participate in managing symptoms in the service of living their fullest life. Plena's treatment team creates an atmosphere of open communication and collaboration with parents, guardians and referring behavioral health providers regarding diagnosis, medication recommendations, and symptom management.

Plena's team includes board-certified child and adolescent board-certified psychiatrists, licensed clinical professional counselors, licensed clinical social workers, a licensed teacher, an expressive therapist (board-certified music therapist), and multiple patient support specialists. The team provides child and family centered care that is individualized to your child and family's needs.

Website: <https://www.plenamind.com/>

Phone: 847-562-5612



Since 1909, Mental Health America of Illinois has been the leading non-profit, non-governmental, statewide organization in Illinois concerned with the entire spectrum of mental and emotional disorders. We are dedicated to promoting mental health, working for the prevention of mental illness and improving care and treatment for persons suffering from mental and emotional disorders. MHA develops and supports policy positions on key mental health issues by working with legislators, state agencies and other not-for-profit groups to advocate for improved services. We sponsor occasional seminars and educational events on key clinical and policy issues.

MHAI is an affiliate of the national nonprofit, Mental Health America.

Website: <https://www.mhai.org/>

Phone: 312-368-9070

FRIENDS

Organization	Website
Authentically You Eating Disorder Counseling	https://www.authenticallyyouedc.com/
Clarity Clinic	https://www.claritychi.com/
Compass Health Center	https://compasshealthcenter.net/
Impact Behavioral Health Partners	https://impactbehavioral.org/
Institute for Therapy through the Arts	https://itachicago.org/
Prospect Music Therapy	https://prospectmusictherapy.net/
Riveredge Hospital	https://riveredgehospital.com/
Turning Point	https://www.tpoint.org/
Wolcott College Prep	https://wolcottcollegeprep.org/

IN KIND SUPPORTERS



F O R C A D E

Professional Consulting Services. Creating environments that don't just identify and guide but directly embody your culture. Design. Branding. Wayfinding.

Website: <https://forcade.net/>

Phone: 847-424-1010



Starbucks
1901 Dempster St. Evanston

corner bakery
CAFE

3232 Lake Ave Wilmette



TheChicagoSchool®

For more than four decades, The Chicago School has been a leading nonprofit university dedicated to training professionals for careers that improve the integrated health of individuals, organizations, and communities across the globe. Grounded in the values of education, innovation, community, and impact, The Chicago School offers 40+ distinct academic programs at campuses across the country (Washington DC, Chicago, Dallas, Southern California) and online, educating over 6,000 students annually in fields across integrated health.

The Chicago School is accredited by the Western Association of Schools & Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). The Chicago School is also an affiliate of The Community Solution, a network of nonprofit higher education institutions that works collaboratively to advance institutional sustainability, increase student success, and enhance community impact.

Website: <https://www.thechicagoschool.edu/chicago/>

Phone: 866-827-9107





Neurodiverse Brains:
Understanding Differences,
Empowering Potential



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

2025 Conference Schedule

9:00am - 9:50am Check-In/Breakfast/Exhibit Hall/Poster Presentations
(East Cafeteria)

10:00am - 12:00pm Panel Presentation (Auditorium)

We will be using slido for audience interaction and our moderated question-and-answer period. You may write questions on the card inside your program folder and hand it to a volunteer or submit electronically and anonymously via slido on your smartphone or other device. You do not have to create a slido account.

(Wi-Fi access: ETHS_Guest, no password required)

To access slido go to www.slido.com or scan the QR code below or on the auditorium screen.

Use event #Neuro, Passcode: NRCI

Joining as a participant?

Neuro



12:00pm - 12:50pm Lunch/Exhibit Hall/Poster Presentations (East Cafeteria)

1:00pm - 2:00pm Breakout Sessions Round 1 (Classrooms)

2:00pm - 2:15pm Break

2:15pm - 3:15pm Breakout Sessions Round 2 (Classrooms)

3:15pm - 3:30pm Break

3:30pm - 4:30pm Breakout Sessions Round 3 (Classrooms)

4:30pm - 5:00pm Networking Reception (Main Office Lobby)

The following poster presentations and exhibit tables will be available for viewing and interaction in the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch:

Poster Presentations:

- **Neurofeedback & ADHD: Rewiring Potential**
Jaime Langosch, MA, LPC
- **Neuroqueering: Intersections of Gender, Sexuality, and Neurodiversity**
Ione Sobieski
- **Exploring Online Dating Experiences of LGBTQ+ Emerging Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder**
Megan Thomason, BA
- **Inclusive Education Interventions in Asian Contexts: What's Working?**
Radhika Puppala, BA, BS and Tan Jia Wei, BA, BS
- **The Pedagogy of Prevention: Tailoring Substance Use Education for Neurodiverse Minds**
Courtney Clay, MPH and Mahalia Jackson, MPH

Exhibitors:

Please take a few minutes to walk through our exhibit “hall” to learn about services and supports available in our community:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – IL (AFSP) | • Peer Services |
| • Authentically You Eating Disorder Counseling | • Plena Mind Center |
| • Clarity Clinic | • Prospect Music Therapy |
| • Community and Residential Services Authority | • Relief Mental Health |
| • Compass Health Center | • Riveredge Hospital |
| • Erie Family Health Centers | • Rogers Behavioral Health |
| • Impact Behavioral Health Partners | • The Schools We Need Now |
| • Mental Health America of Illinois | • Trilogy Mental Wellbeing |
| • Naomi Ruth Cohen Institute/The Chicago School | • Turning Point Behavioral Health Care Center |
| | • Wolcott College Prep |
| | • Yellowbrick |



Naomi Ruth Cohen
Institute for Mental Health Education



TheChicagoSchool®



Neurodiverse Brains:
Understanding Differences,
Empowering Potential



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

Breakout Session Locations

Session Title	Session 1 1:00pm- 2:00pm	Session 2 2:15pm- 3:15pm	Session 3 3:30pm- 4:30pm
Leveraging Strengths: A Neurodiversity-Informed Approach to Screening and Intervention with Children	N115		
ADHD and Neurodiversity	E115		
Empowering Autistic Adults	E111		
Language Matters	N113		
Neurodiversity and Sensory Processing in the Workplace	E113		
Transition Services: Planning for the Future	N111		
Embracing Diversity: Affirming and Supporting Neurodivergent LGBTQ+ Lives		N115	
Reimagining Parenting: Navigating Family Life with Neurodiverse Children		E115	
Mapping the Spectrum: A Historical Journey of Autism Diagnosis and Care		E111	
The Power of Authenticity: Cultivating Culturally Informed Connections in Neurodivergent Communities		N113	
Embracing Neurodiversity: Cultivating Inclusive Workplaces and Services		E113	
The Intersection of Neurodivergence & Increased Risk Factors for Youth		N111	

Session Title	Session 1 1:00pm- 2:00pm	Session 2 2:15pm- 3:15pm	Session 3 3:30pm- 4:30pm
On the Crossroads of Neurodiversity and Mental Health			N115
The School We Need Now			E115
Trauma and Autism Spectrum Disorder: Beyond the DSM-V			E111
Talk Saves Lives: Suicide Prevention Best Practices and Research for Neurodiverse Individuals			N113
Accommodations and Beyond: A People-First Workplace Inclusion System By and For Neurodivergent Employees			E113
Nurturing Neurodiversity			N111

Optional:

4:30pm - Connect with presenters, colleagues and attendees at our Networking Reception hosted by NRCI's Executive Director Tracy Levine. Please proceed to the lobby area by the Main Office. Light refreshments will be available.







Neurodiverse Brains:
Understanding Differences,
Empowering Potential



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

Instructions for Continuing Education and Evaluations

Welcome to the 23rd annual Community Mental Health Conference!

Whether or not you are seeking continuing education/professional development credit (CEs), we ask that you participate in our sign in/out process and invite you to complete the evaluations for the panel, breakouts, and conference overall to provide feedback.

If you are seeking CEs, you **MUST** be electronically signed in and out of the panel and all breakout sessions and complete the corresponding evaluations to receive your credits. Your digital sign-in/sign-out will be time stamped and reconciled to ensure you have attended the full session. Volunteers will be assisting with this process.

Note: Evaluations do not have to be completed today.

Panel Sign In:

- Upon entry, you will be directed to the CEU Support table to be checked in to the panel presentation, no further action is needed.
- **Note: You must be signed in no later than 10 minutes after the start of the presentation (10am) to be eligible for CEs.**

Panel Sign Out:

- Option A:
 - Scan the QR code
 - Select PANEL PRESENTATION – Neurodiverse Brains: Understanding Differences, Empowering Potential
 - Click “Next”
 - Select your name
 - Select “Signing Out”
 - Click “Next”
 - Select “Yes” if you would like to fill out the evaluation for the panel now. Select “No” to get an email from officeofce@thechicagoschool.edu on Monday with a direct link to complete your evaluation.
- Option B:
 - Check out at one of the CEU Support Tables upon exiting the auditorium

Breakout Session Sign In:

- Upon entry to the classroom please check in with the volunteer, no further action is needed.
- **Note: You must be signed in no later than 10 minutes after the start of the session to be eligible for CEs.**

Breakout Session Sign Out:

- Option A:
 - Scan the QR code
 - Select your session title and click "Next"
 - Select your name
 - Select "Signing Out"
 - Click "Next"
 - Select "Yes" if you would like to fill out the evaluation for your session now. Select "No" to get an email from officeofce@thechicagoschool.edu on Monday with a direct link to complete your evaluation(s).
- Option B:
 - Ask the classroom volunteer to sign you out via their device. On Monday you will get an email from officeofce@thechicagoschool.edu with a direct link to complete your evaluation(s).

If you prefer a paper and pen evaluation, please request one from the classroom volunteer or at a CEU Support table. You will complete the evaluation on site and your responses will be entered electronically on your behalf.

Evaluations are required for CE eligibility and *appreciated* if you are not seeking CEs.

Your feedback helps us to improve our offerings. Select "no" if you do not need a certificate. Please do not complete the final conference evaluation until you have finished all conference activities, including the networking reception, if applicable.

You may visit one of our CE Support Tables if you have any questions, concerns, or need assistance. (Conveniently located outside of the auditorium and in the main lobby between classroom wings).

QR Code – Panel/All Sessions

(Required for CE/CEU/PCD)



Powered By QuestionPro

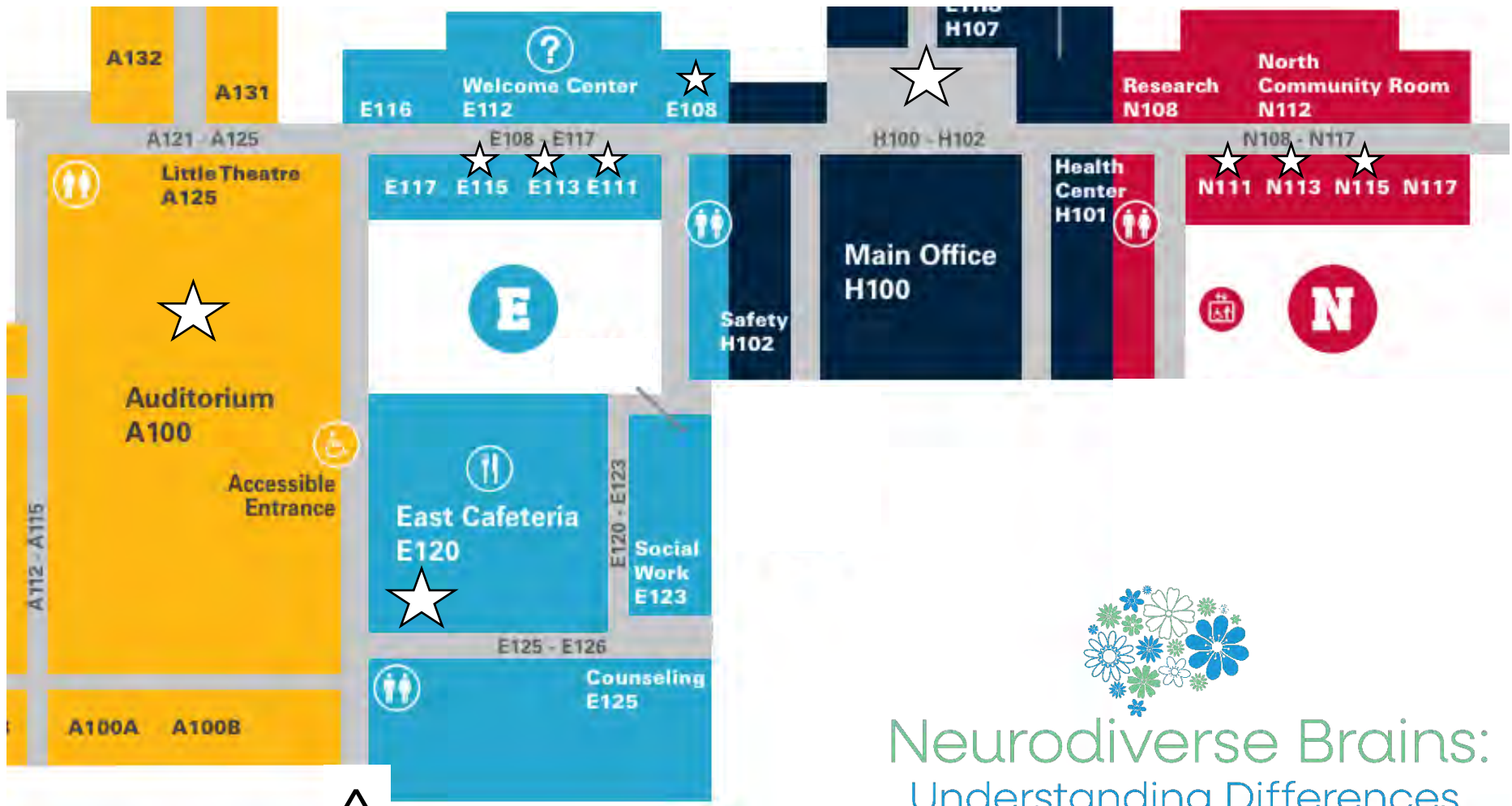
QR Code – Overall Conference Only



Powered By QuestionPro

Conference Venue - ETHS

☆ = Conference Spaces



Enter – Door 6 (front of school)

Parking Lot 1 – Dodge Avenue


Neurodiverse Brains:
 Understanding Differences,
 Empowering Potential



Resources

National Crisis Resources

988 (call or text), 988lifeline.org. Learn more: <https://988hotline.illinois.gov>

Anyone who feels sad, hopeless, or suicidal; family and friends who are concerned about a loved one, or anyone interested in mental health treatment referrals can call the Lifeline. Callers are connected with a professional who will talk with them about what they are feeling or concerns for family and friends. Call toll-free 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

Crisis Text Line: Text to 741741, <https://www.crisistextline.org/>

Available 24/7/365 this organization connects callers with trained crisis volunteers who will provide confidential advice, support, and referrals if needed.

Friendship Line (Adults 60+ or Disabled 18+ and Caregivers) 1-800-971-0016 (24/7/365)

The Trevor Project: Call 866-488-7386 or Text "START" to 678-678 <https://www.thetrevorproject.org>

Trained counselors are available 24/7 to support youth who are in crisis, feeling suicidal, or in need of a safe and judgment free place to talk. Specializing in supporting the LGBTQI+ community.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Mental Health/SUD Helpline: Call 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline: Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline provides 24/7, 365-day-a-year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters.

Illinois Resources

Illinois Warm Line: 1-866-359-7953 (M-Sat 8am – 8pm except holidays)

Call4Calm Mental Health Support Line

Text the word 'TALK' to 552020 for English (or 'HABLAR' for Spanish-language support). Call4Calm offers emotional support via text and can connect you to resources in your community.

IL Living Rooms

<https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=126349>

IL Department of Human Services Resources

<https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=29763>

IL Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) 1-800-843-6154

Office/Service Locator: <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12&officetype=&county=>

Local Resources

Turning Point: 1-847-933-0051

Crisis Response 1-847-933-9202

Living Rooms at:

311 Elmwood Avenue Evanston (open 12pm – 8pm daily)

8324 Skokie Blvd. Skokie (open 24/7/365)

Trilogy: First-response Alternative Crisis Team (FACT) – mobile response unit

1-800-FACT400 (1-800-322-8400)

Thresholds: Mobile Crisis Response Team 1-773-572-5464

Evanston Care Network: Call 311 in Evanston or 1-847-448-4311, <https://evanstoncarenetwork.org/>

NAMI Cook County North Suburban

847-716-2252

<https://www.namiccns.org/>

Please see our Conference Sponsors handout for other resources.

Additional Resources

Naomi Ruth Cohen Institute: <https://naomicoheninstitute.org/resources/external-resources/>

Mental Health First Aid USA: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/mental-health-resources/>

Mindfulness Meditations (Self Care in multiple languages): <https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/mindful-meditations>

National Eating Disorders Hotline: 1-800-931-2237

Marijuana Anonymous: 1-800-766-6779

Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): 1-800-656-4673

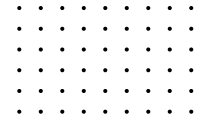
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233, Text “start” to 88788

Finding a Behavioral Health Provider

The National Council for Behavioral Health <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/providers/?region=>

Search for organizations that are committed to providing mental health services to anyone in the community who needs it regardless of their ability to pay.

SAMHSA <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help>.



Our Mission:

The Naomi Ruth Cohen Institute for Mental Health Education at The Chicago School is committed to ending the stigma surrounding mental illness and suicide. We empower individuals, families, and communities by fostering understanding, expanding access to support, and encouraging honest conversations about mental health.

Through community outreach, training programs, and events, we provide education, elevate lived experiences, and inspire hope. Our work amplifies voices too often unheard, creating a more compassionate, informed, and stigma-free world.



Executive Director:

Tracy Levine, MSW, LCSW

NRCInstitute@thechicagoschool.edu

325 N. Wells St.

Chicago, IL 60654

312.467.2552

naomicoheninstitute.org



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



Marilyn & Larry Cohen, Founders

In 2000, the Naomi Ruth Cohen Charitable Foundation was formed to honor Naomi's memory following her lived experience with bipolar disorder and death by suicide. The first annual community mental health conference was held in 2002.

In 2008, the foundation joined The Chicago School becoming The Naomi Ruth Cohen Institute for Mental Health Education at The Chicago School (NRCI), broadening the organization's reach and supporting its work to eliminate the stigma around mental illness and promote suicide prevention.



Our Work

NRCI is committed to eliminating the stigma associated with mental illness and suicide. We fulfill our mission through educational initiatives including our annual community mental health conference and the facilitation of accredited suicide prevention and mental health education programs. We support mental health advocacy at the state and national levels, and frequently collaborate with community partners.

We offer presentations to community members, agencies, organizations, schools and corporations as well as mental health professionals including but not limited to*:

- Mental Health First Aid (for adults) including curriculums for Older Adults, Higher Education, Fire/EMS, Public Safety, Military/Veterans/Families, and Corrections
- Teen Mental Health First Aid (for teens 14-18)
- QPR Gatekeeper for Suicide Prevention
- Ethics
- Safety Through De-escalation
- Stress Management and Mindfulness

**NRCI will work with you and your team to develop programs that meet your needs, facilitated by our clinically trained and certified instructors. In-person and virtual options available. Many programs are CE eligible.*

