Your Journey Matters

2026 South Dakota
Behavioral Health Conference: Your Journey Matters

Conference Agenda

*Sessions, dates, and times subject to change. This agenda is accurate as of 8/11/2026.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed during this conference are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of the State of South Dakota, Department of Social Services.

Tuesday, August 11th

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM | Conference Registration Open

10:00 AM - 4:30 PM | Exhibits/Vendor Fair

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM | Opening Remarks

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM | Opening Keynote

GRAND BALLROOM

Unlocking the Shackles of Shame: Breaking Stigma and Reclaiming Our Stories - Lauren Sisler

Shame thrives in silence and too often stigma keeps people from asking for help, telling the truth, or believing change is possible. In this keynote, Lauren Sisler speaks directly to the weight shame carries in conversations around mental health, addiction, grief, and recovery. Through her own story and the stories of others, Lauren creates space for honesty, compassion, and hope — reminding audiences that healing begins when we name what we've been carrying and stop walking through it alone. This talk is an invitation to loosen shame's grip, challenge harmful narratives, and move toward a life marked by connection, healing, and purpose.

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM | Lunch on your own

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM | Breakout Session 1

BREAKOUT A | Meeting Rooms 1-2

Putting Settlement Dollars to Work

Presenter:

Molly Brown

Description:

Communities across South Dakota are receiving Opioid Settlement funds and implementing innovative prevention and treatment strategies. This session will explore the statewide investment to create long-term impact in addressing the Opioid crisis.

BREAKOUT B | Meeting Rooms 6-7

Behavioral Health, Education, Access, & Management for South Dakota (BEAM-SD) 101

Presenters:

Nikki Eining, CSW-PIP, QMHP; Aimee Deliramich, PhD; Heidi Aderhold, Ed.S.

Description:

This session offers a foundational overview of Behavioral health, Education, Access, and Management for South Dakota (BEAM-SD), a statewide initiative focused on expanding access to behavioral health support by increasing the capacity to address pediatric (0-21) behavioral health needs. Attendees will learn about BEAM-SD's no-cost services, including consultation, training, and resource navigation designed to support professionals across healthcare, education, and community settings. Emphasis will be placed on practical ways to integrate BEAM-SD into daily practice for those serving children, families, and perinatal populations.

BREAKOUT C | Meeting Rooms 8-10

South Dakota School K-12 Guide to Prevent Suicide Toolkit (GPS-T)

Presenter:

Dr. Scott Poland

Description:

This presentation will highlight the GPS-T which is designed to enhance the suicide prevention efforts already in place in S.D. schools. The GPS-T emphasizes the partnership between schools, parents and local and state resources to prevent a youth suicide. The GPS-T was developed with input from many prominent S.D. educators and is divided into three main sections; prevention, intervention and postvention. The GPS-T provides many tools for school personnel to use in their important suicide prevention work.

BREAKOUT D | Meeting Rooms 11-12

Integrating Medication for Opioid Use Disorder as Standard Practice in Primary Care

Presenter:

Aaron Bergman, PhD

Description:

Addressing the substance use crisis in Sioux Falls and South Dakota requires a shift from fragmented, specialty-only models of addiction care toward integrated, primary care–based treatment. Centering substance use disorder treatment within primary care settings directly addresses many of the barriers that limit access to care, including stigma, transportation challenges, workforce shortages, and poor care coordination (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2023; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ], 2022).

BREAKOUT E | Meeting Rooms 13-14

Integrating Native American Cultural Perspectives in Behavioral Health

Presenter:

Trivia Afraid of Lightning-Craddock

Description:

Trivia Afraid of Lightning-Craddock (Mahka Ta' Tawanpi Wi) is a Lakota advocate, researcher, and consultant, an enrolled

member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Miniconjou Band. Her work advances culturally grounded behavioral health, Indigenous wellness, systems transformation, and research and evaluation. She has served as Program Director at Friends of the Children–He Sapa and Program Manager with the Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, where she developed the HERO Conference. Her work includes Healing Within IPV, IndigeQuit, and the Hear Her Campaign, focusing on culturally responsive systems, community healing, and equity.

2:20 - 3:20 PM | Breakout Session 2

BREAKOUT A | Meeting Rooms 1-2

From Policy to Practice: State-Level Behavioral Health Transformation

Presenters:
Brenna Koedam, Melanie Boetel, and Jeremy Johnson
Description:
Join us for an engaging overview of some significant state-led behavioral health modernization efforts. This session will highlight recent efforts in the involuntary commitment process improvement project, key strategies driving transformation in our behavioral health systems, and efforts to develop Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). Attendees will gain insight into statewide progress, lessons learned, and what these initiatives mean for access, quality, and outcomes across the behavioral health continuum.

BREAKOUT B | Meeting Rooms 6-7

School-Based Substance Use and Mental Health Supports

Presenters:
Kerri Cox, MS and Andrea Effling, MA, NCC, CSDCA
Description:
Explore services and resources schools may utilize to support students with substance use prevention and mental health. Journey through evidence-based resources provided by the Prevention Resource Center Network and trek through resources from state entities for mental health supports. Let the adventure begin!

BREAKOUT C | Meeting Rooms 8-10

Behind the Screen: Social Media, Teen Mental Health, and School Safety

Presenters:
Angela Waldner, CHW
Description:
The South Dakota School Safety Center presents on the impact of social media on teen mental health and well-being, highlighting how online interactions can influence stress, self-esteem, and behavior. This session explores current trends, risks such as cyberbullying and harmful content, and the importance of digital awareness. It also introduces Safe2Say SD as a confidential reporting tool that empowers students to speak up about concerns and supports early intervention. Participants will gain practical strategies to promote safer online habits and strengthen support systems for youth.

BREAKOUT D | Meeting Rooms 11-12

Aging with Dignity: Behavioral Health Tools and Community Building for Older Adults

Presenters:
Amelia Henderson, CSW-PIP, NHA; Carmen Spurling; Gabrielle Hoing; and Amy Klimisch, CNP, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, QMHP
Description:
Behavioral health needs among older adults are rising rapidly- approximately 25% of older adults now live with mental health or substance use disorders. This panel brings together experts from clinical care, caregiver services- including

homecare, and community-based programs to explore the modern landscape of geriatric behavioral health. Attendees will gain insight into the challenges facing older adults today and leave with actionable steps to enhance care coordination, improve client engagement, and strengthen community connections for this population.

BREAKOUT E | Meeting Rooms 13-14

QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer

Presenters:
Audrey Simmons and Lori Williamson, LMFT, LAC
Description:
QPR Training teaches three simple steps that anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide. Just as people trained in CPR help save thousands of lives each year, people trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade and refer someone to help.

3:30 - 4:30 PM | Closing Keynote

GRAND BALLROOM

Journey Towards Recovery/Life After a Suicide(s) - Dennis Gillan

Dennis Gillan draws on over 30 years of personal recovery and the loss of loved ones to deliver a talk that cuts through the noise on suicide prevention. With honesty, humor, and hard-won wisdom, he gives audiences the real conversations—and real tools—they need to recognize warning signs, respond with confidence, and help save lives.

Wednesday, August 12th

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Exhibits/Vendor Fair

8:00 AM - 8:15 AM | Welcome Back

8:30 AM - 9:30 AM | Breakout Session 3

BREAKOUT A | Meeting Rooms 1-2

Supporting Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Co-Occurring Behavioral Health Needs

Presenters:
Kevin Dunn and Melanie Boetel
Description:
This session will provide a state level overview of efforts and activities underway by the Departments of Social Services and Human Services to support system improvement in the services and programming available to individuals with co-occurring intellectual/developmental disabilities and behavioral health disorders.

BREAKOUT B | Meeting Rooms 6-7

Strengthening Community Protective Factors: Insights from Data and Practice

Presenters:
Dr. Matthew Stanley; Thomas Otten, LPC-MH; and Brett Kollars

Description:
This session explores key community-based protective factors—such as connection, belonging, public recreation spaces, and creating opportunities for experiencing the outdoors—and how they reduce suicide risk. Participants will review data that highlight patterns and trends related to suicide, helping identify where protective factors can have the greatest impact. They will also discuss practical ideas for integrating these elements across a variety of settings—recreational, educational, workplace, and beyond—to foster resilience and well-being. The role that government can play when designing & maintaining public recreation spaces will also be explored.

BREAKOUT C | Meeting Rooms 8-10

Ethical Use of Technology in Behavioral Health

Presenter:
Duane J Kavanaugh, MS, NCC, CCMHC, LPC-MH
Description:
Telehealth, Electronic Health Records, AI...Are the robots coming for our jobs (or us)!?! This presentation will look at the Ethical issues that providers face in the ever-changing world of counseling and the interface with technology.

BREAKOUT D | Meeting Rooms 11-12

Behavioral Health Strategies for Maternal and Infant Health in Tribal Communities

Presenters:
Natalie F. Holt, MD, MPH and Chelsea Randall, MHA
Description:
This talk explores how behavioral health can be leveraged to improve maternal and infant outcomes in tribal communities. It highlights the impact of perinatal mental health, substance use, and intergenerational trauma on families, and emphasizes the importance of culturally grounded, trauma-informed approaches to care. Participants will learn practical strategies for integrating behavioral health into maternal and early childhood services, strengthening community-based supports, and reducing barriers to care.

BREAKOUT E | Meeting Rooms 13-14

Supporting Youth with Foster Care and Adoption Histories

Presenters:
Kassy Dunn, LAC; Crystal Trevino, MAHS, LSWA; and Hannah Holen
Description:
The Division of Behavioral Health, in partnership with Child Protection Services and community providers, will present on a collaborative initiative to strengthen a coordinated system of care for families involved in the child welfare system. The session will highlight efforts to build adoption and permanency competency, expand specialized training, and align services across partners to better support foster, adoptive, and impacted families statewide.

9:45 AM - 10:45 AM | Breakout Session 4

BREAKOUT A | Meeting Rooms 1-2

The RULER Framework in Practice: Strengthening Emotional Skills for Health and Resilience

Presenter:
Nikki Eining, CSW-PIP, QMHP
Description:
The RULER Framework in Practice: Strengthening Emotional Skills for Health and Resilience" is a dynamic, skills-focused

session designed for behavioral health clinicians seeking practical tools to enhance emotional intelligence in both clinical practice and personal well-being. Grounded in the evidence-based RULER approach developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, this presentation explores the five core skills of emotional intelligence: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions. Participants will engage in applied learning experiences that translate the RULER framework into real-world clinical settings.

BREAKOUT B | Meeting Rooms 6-7

Suicide Loss Response: Postvention Panel Discussion

Presenters:

Kari A. Oyen, PhD, LP, NCSP; Tayler McCarty; Mike Keller, MATM

Description:

This panel brings together professionals from organizations across South Dakota who specialize in postvention following a suicide loss. This panel will explore best practices, available resources, and approaches to supporting individuals, families, schools and communities after a suicide. Attendees will gain insight into collaborative efforts, challenges in postvention work, and strategies to promote healing and resilience in the aftermath of loss.

BREAKOUT C | Meeting Rooms 8-10

Dual Relationships & Maintaining Confidentiality in Rural SD

Presenter:

Duane J Kavanaugh, MS, NCC, CCMHC, LPC-MH

Description:

It isn't if you are going to have dual relationships, it's how you will manage them. Working in an ever shrinking world, mental health professionals are asked to serve in multiple roles. This might include serving on boards, coaching your kid's sports team or art activities, adjunct at the local university. Counselors can not be expected to hide in their homes when off duty. This presentation will look at and discuss how to identify, plan for and address potential dual relationships.

BREAKOUT D | Meeting Rooms 11-12

Opioid Effects on the Brain: Understanding the Science to Guide Treatment and Prevention

Presenter:

Don Teater, MD, MPH

Description:

Opioids have unique effects on the brain. This makes opioid use disorder significantly different from other addictions. This presentation will explain what makes opioid use disorder different and how understanding that difference should guide both treatment and prevention efforts.

BREAKOUT E | Meeting Rooms 13-14

Impact of Psychotropic Medication on the Developing Adolescent Brain

Presenter:

Dr. Clay Pavlis

Description:

This session provides a high-level overview of the impact of psychotropic medications on the developing adolescent brain. Highlights how medications interact with key stages of brain development, including areas related to emotion regulation, cognition, and decision-making. Participants will gain insight into benefits and potential risks, along with the importance of accurate diagnosis, careful monitoring, and individualized, developmentally informed treatment approaches.

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Closing Keynote

GRAND BALLROOM

The Least of Us: True Tales of America and Hope in the Time of Fentanyl & Meth - Sam Quinones

As a journalist, storyteller, and former LA Times reporter, Sam Quinones is the author of “Dreamland”, “The Least of Us” and “The Perfect Tuba”. Amid a landscape of despair, in “The Least of Us,” Quinones found hope in those embracing the forgotten and ignored, illuminating the striking truth that we are only as strong as our most vulnerable.