



DIRECT CARE PROFESSIONALS PRECONFERENCE

KNOWING BETTER, CARING BETTER: INNOVATIONS IN TRANSFORMING YOUTH RESIDENTIAL & COMMUNITY- BASED PRACTICE

Monday, March 16 | 10am-1pm



Preconference Schedule:

- 10-11:30am | Morning sessions*
- 11:30am-1pm | Lunch on your own/Public Policy Town Hall
- 1-5pm | Afternoon sessions*

**see back for workshop descriptions*

This pre-conference opportunity offers an **immersive exploration of cutting-edge practices** that redefine direct care in residential and community-based treatment. Presenters doing excellent work across the care continuum will share research-informed strategies on eliminating coercive practices, supporting neurodiverse youth, addressing loss and grief, promoting sexual health, healing trauma, and harnessing movement to restore confidence and calm. Together, these sessions create a blueprint for how direct care staff, clinicians, educators, therapists, and leaders can turn insight into action—ensuring that when we know better, we truly care better.

REGISTRATION RATE*:

\$125 MEMBERS | \$165 NON-MEMBERS



*Sending a large group? Reach out to ACRC for pricing: aprange@togetherthevoice.org

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Workshop Sessions



MORNING SESSION 1: Transforming Care: A Systemic Blueprint for Implementing Positive Behavior Supports and Eliminating Coercive Practices

Presenter: Nicole Sorenson,
MS, BCBA, IBA, LBA, Director of
Therapeutic Practices, MyPath
Support Services

MyPath's network-wide Positive Behavior Supports implementation reduces coercive practices through phased planning, training, policy redesign, and environmental changes. Fidelity systems show fewer restrictive interventions. Sustainability is driven by Behavioral Skills Training, ongoing assessment, and data-based improvement. Participants leave with practical tools and strategies for scaling PBS with equity-centered outcomes.

MORNING SESSION 2: When We Know Better, We Heal Better; Shifting Models for Supporting Loss & Grief

Presenters: Jennifer Benner,
LCSW-C and Patti McCloud, BA,
Pressley Ridge

The linear Kubler-Ross stages don't fully reflect the grief experiences of children in care. Pressley Ridge introduces the Dual-Process Model, balancing loss- and restoration-oriented coping. Comparing the models helps staff and families better understand children's grief and provide more compassionate, developmentally sensitive support.

AFTERNOON SESSION 3: Toward Sexual Health and Trauma Healing: Fostering Understanding of Problem Sexual Behaviors in Youth

Presenter: Roy Van Tassell,
MS, LPC-S, Centene
Corporation

About one-third of inappropriate sexual contact with children is by other youth, yet professionals often lack training on sexual development or problem behaviors. Youth of color are disproportionately placed in systems with limited evidence-based interventions. This session dispels myths, clarifies typical versus concerning behaviors, and offers trauma-informed prevention and treatment resources.

AFTERNOON SESSION 4: Supporting Neurodiverse Youth in Residential Care: Building Executive Functioning and Everyday Success

Presenter: Emma Harding,
LMFT, Tanager

Youth in out of home care often have ADHD, autism, learning differences, or trauma impacts that affect executive functioning. Misunderstood challenges can be misread as noncompliance. This session provides practical, evidence-informed strategies to strengthen executive skills, honor neurodiversity, and translate brain science into daily practice to improve relationships and outcomes.



AFTERNOON SESSION 5: Understanding Fear in Therapeutic Residential Care: New Insights on Responding to Emotional Dysregulation

Presenters: Yvonne Smith,
PhD, Syracuse University;
Charles V. Izzo, PhD, Cornell
University

Emotional attunement is vital in therapeutic interventions. This workshop explores fear's biological, social, and cultural dimensions, showing how children and staff learn emotional responses. Participants gain practical strategies to prevent and address dysregulation, foster safer, humane environments, and help children and caregivers develop adaptive responses to fear.

AFTERNOON SESSION 6: Reclaiming Confidence: The Power of Play, Movement, and Nature to Heal the Anxious Generation

Presenter: Brooke Holloway,
LMSW, Canopy Children's
Solutions

Teen anxiety and depression have doubled, linked to less play, social interaction, and movement. Integrating play, movement, outdoor experiences, and mindful activities builds resilience, social skills, confidence, and caregiver connection. Small, consistent, tailored daily activities—especially in nature—offer a sustainable, healthy alternative to screen time.