

The following Clinical Lecture Series programs can be found at this link:

<https://sswevents.unc.edu/clinical-lecture-series>

and take place in at UNC School of Social Work, 325 Pittsboro Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516 and livestream via Zoom

**Title: A Shaman's Perspective on Consciousness, Psychedelics, and Healing**

**Date:** Monday, September 8, 2025

**Time:** 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm ET

**Format:** Virtual only

**CE Credit:** 1.5 CEs

**Description:** Join the UNC Psychedelic Assisted Therapy Caucus for a conversation with Vonetta Taylor on the role of Indigenous wisdom and shamanic practices in contemporary psychedelic therapy. This session will explore how traditional healing frameworks can inform ethical, grounded, and culturally responsive approaches to psychedelic-assisted care. Vonetta will share insights from her work integrating shamanic traditions with trauma healing and personal transformation. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in dialogue about practitioner responsibility, right relationship, and the relevance of ancestral knowledge in modern therapeutic contexts.

**Trainer:** **Vonetta E. Taylor** is the founder of The New Dawn Institute for Peace and Harmony and a practitioner of shamanic healing and spiritual leadership. Trained in cultural anthropology at Cornell University, her path began with fieldwork in Kenya and continued through initiations in Kriya Yoga, Tibetan Buddhism, and apprenticeship with an Amazonian Wisdom Keeper. Since 2012, she has led over 800 ceremonial retreats and developed a certification program in Shamanic Life Coaching and Facilitation. Her work integrates indigenous practices with contemporary approaches to healing, and she has partnered with neuroscientist Dr. Nakia Gordon to explore the intersection of science, spirituality, and social change. Her forthcoming memoir, *The Shaman's Apprentice*, reflects on her personal journey and evolving vision of collective healing.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe how traditional shamanic practices can support, inform, and integrate within contemporary therapeutic models.
2. Apply real world case studies illustrating shamanic methodologies applied in a modern context to facilitate healing and personal growth.
3. Discuss right relationship within the field of psychedelic assisted therapy for future professionals in the mental health field.

**Title: Navigating Tough Conversations**

**Date:** Monday, September 29, 2025

**Time:** 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET

**Format:** Hybrid

**CE Credit:** 2 CEs

**Description:** Have you struggled to voice dissent, give feedback, or talk through differences? This participatory two-hour workshop equips you with practical, transferable skills for those challenging exchanges—at work, in therapy, and in everyday life. You will learn and practice active listening, curiosity, and a simple feedback model based on observable behavior and its impact. You'll also sharpen techniques to reduce defensiveness, foster understanding, and promote cooperation—tools that strengthen therapeutic alliances, enhance supervision, bolster team collaboration, and improve relationships. The same strategies can be shared with clients to help them navigate interpersonal challenges.

**Trainer: Melissa Segal, LCSW**, a facilitator and the founder of InterHuman Solutions, partners with nonprofits, healthcare systems, and academic institutions to create cultures where people feel valued, supported, and equipped to succeed. Drawing on her experience leading culture and well-being initiatives across Duke University and Duke Health, and her experiences across nonprofit, healthcare, and higher-education settings, she designs and delivers trainings, conflict resolution through restorative practices, coaching, and culture consultations that strengthen leadership, foster psychological safety, improve engagement and retention, build teamwork, and resolve conflict. An engaging extrovert and seasoned trainer, Melissa blends deep listening with evidence-informed frameworks to help organizations transform communication, elevate inclusion, and unlock collective success. Known for her engaging, insight-driven facilitation, Melissa helps teams navigate complexity and foster trust.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Apply the Situation–Behavior–Impact (SBI) model to deliver feedback in a factual, non-judgmental, constructive way.
2. Demonstrate active listening techniques that deepen understanding and reduce defensiveness.
3. Use curiosity and active listening to find areas of agreement and sustain constructive dialogue despite disagreement.
4. Support clients in applying feedback, listening, and curiosity to navigate their own interpersonal challenges more effectively.

**Title: Change for the better: How to Undo Aloneness and Transform Trauma with AEDP**

**Date:** Monday, October 27, 2025

**Time:** 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET

**Format:** Hybrid

**CE Credit:** 2 CEs

**Description:** Feeling alone intensifies emotional distress. This workshop introduces AEDP™, an evidence-based therapeutic approach that focuses on undoing the aloneness that results from disconnection, overwhelm, and trauma. The AEDP model integrates attachment theory, interpersonal neurobiology, affective neuroscience, emotion theory, somatic-based approaches, and transformational studies into a cohesive and comprehensive four-state framework. AEDP seeks to alleviate suffering and distress by harnessing clients' innate healing capacities and facilitating corrective emotional and relational experiences that lead to positive change and transformation.

Led by Sonya Parker, LCSW and Ben Medley, LCSW, this workshop will introduce core AEDP principles and techniques, with attention to intersectionality, cultural attunement, and intergenerational trauma. Participants will learn to utilize the AEDP transformational map to dismantle defenses, lower anxiety, process emotion, expand and integrate transformative experiences, and restore the core self.

**Trainers:**

**Sonya Parker, LCSW, RYT**, is a licensed AEDP therapist and registered yoga teacher. Sonya has 17 years of combined experience in school social work, inpatient behavioral health, outpatient psychotherapy, community mental health, and substance abuse treatment, with children, adolescents, adults, couples, and groups in various clinical and organizational settings. She is currently earning her doctoral degree in social work, researching how racial trauma contributes to health disparities in African American populations. Driven by a commitment to social justice and building an ecosystem of healthy, resilient communities, she plays a vital role in broadening mental health access across NC for vulnerable populations through her advocacy and work with Pro Bono Counseling Network. Sonya is also actively involved with evolving AEDP psychotherapy and is particularly interested in exploring the intersection of spirituality and AEDP psychotherapy to develop tools to mitigate racialized trauma and oppression. Sonya serves on the AEDP Vision Collective and as Lead Chair of the Vision Collective's Racialized Trauma and Spirituality Exploratory Group.

**Ben Medley, LCSW** is an AEDP senior faculty member and has taught AEDP nationally and internationally. He has a private practice in New York City and specializes in working with the LGBTQ+ community. Ben teaches regularly in AEDP courses and has presented specialty seminars on working with oppressed populations, LGBTQ+ individuals, and men. Ben's published works include "Recovering the True Self: Affirmative Therapy, Attachment and AEDP in Psychotherapy with Gay Men" in the Journal of Psychotherapy Integration. He also contributed a chapter on using portrayals to process core affective experience for the AEDP book Undoing Aloneness and the Transformation of Suffering Into Flourishing: AEDP 2.0 and a chapter on AEDP in Experiential Therapies for the Treatment of Trauma. Ben is currently writing an article on the Triangle of Social Experience, an AEDP schema he developed for working with internalized oppression..

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify the 4 States of the AEDP Transformational Map.
2. Engage in moment-to-moment tracking of emotional expressions and somatic experience to identify emotional blockages, defenses, and opportunities for emotional processing and positive valuation of the self.
3. Explain the role of dyadic regulation to 'undo aloneness' when working with clients.
4. Use metaprocessing to help expand and reflect on positive change and transformation.
5. Identify 2 ways to apply AEDP techniques and interventions with cultural responsiveness.

**Title: Ethical and Responsible Use of AI for Therapeutic Practice**

**Date:** Monday, November 10, 2025

**Time:** 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET

**Format:** Zoom Only

**CE Credit:** 2 CEs

**Description:** AI is everywhere. For therapists, it holds the potential to streamline work and transform how we engage with clients. Automating note-writing may sound appealing, but it also raises important questions about privacy, confidentiality, bias, and the ethics of introducing AI into spaces built on trust and human connection. This virtual workshop delves into the transformative potential of generative AI technologies, with a clear emphasis on ethical and responsible use. Participants will engage in critical discussions, observe live demonstrations, and have hands-on opportunities to try the tools themselves. Attendees will also receive a Generative AI Prompt Guidebook for Social Work Practice to support thoughtful, ongoing integration of AI into their work. This session is ideal for social workers and other practitioners who want to explore AI in ways that foster innovation while adhering to ethical standards and promoting human-centric approaches.

**Trainer: Marina Badillo-Diaz, DSW, LCSW** is the founder of MABD Consulting and an adjunct professor at Columbia University, New York University, Hunter College, and Louisiana State University. Dr. Badillo Diaz has also taught in NYU's postgraduate certificate programs on school social work, data and technology, and AI in mental health. Her expertise includes social-emotional learning, school social work practice, youth mental health, clinical supervision, AI applications, and data management, and current research explores how school social workers are integrating AI into their daily work. Dr. Badillo-Diaz has presented on these topics nationally and internationally, and has served on the board of the National School Social Work Association of America. She is the creator of The AI Social Worker, a resource that offers practical guidance on 21st-century skills and the ethical AI use in practice. Across all of her work, Dr. Badillo-Diaz is committed to bridging the gap between technology and human-centric social work practices, preparing professionals to meet the challenges of the modern 21st-century world.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify at least one application of generative AI technology at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of mental health and human services practice.
2. Describe key ethical challenges associated with AI use in social work and discuss strategies for navigating these issues responsibly.
3. Demonstrate the ability to apply AI-related skills within their specific practice contexts using a client-centered and ethically grounded approach.

**Title: Political Grief and Restoration**

**Date:** Monday, January 26, 2026

**Time:** 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET

**Format: Hybrid**

**CE Credit: 2 CEs**

**Description:** In times of political, environmental, and community crisis, many people experience a profound and often unspoken form of grief, marked by heartbreak, helplessness, guilt, and fatigue. This kind of grief is not always tied to a single event, but to the accumulation of losses: to democracy, to safety, to climate stability, to community trust. People may find themselves feeling immobilized by the weight of ongoing injustice, or ashamed for tuning out when staying informed feels overwhelming. Others feel stuck between a desire to take action and the emotional cost of constantly bearing witness. Drawing from dual-process models of grief, this workshop offers participants language, frameworks, and tools to better understand and work with layered nature of losses that arise from collective and sociopolitical grief.

**Trainer: Peggy P. Whiting, LCMHCS, FT** is a professor and program coordinator in the Counselor Education Program at North Carolina Central University, where she has served since 2006. A licensed clinical mental health counselor supervisor, certified K–12 school counselor, and fellow in thanatology, Professor Whiting has over 30 years of experience in counselor education, grief and trauma work, and clinical supervision. She has developed and implemented graduate-level courses in grief, trauma, and crisis counseling that are now integrated into clinical curricula across multiple universities. In addition to her academic work, she maintains a counseling and supervision practice focused on bereavement and trauma, including consultation with hospice and oncology professionals. Her research and teaching interests center on grief, loss, and narrative approaches to clinical intervention. A past president of the Association for Death Education and Counseling and recipient of the UNC Board of Governors Excellence in Teaching Award, she is committed to preparing counselors to support individuals and communities through loss.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Explain the Dual Process Model (DPM) of coping with bereavement and how it applies to political, environmental, and community-based grief.
2. Differentiate between loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping tasks and analyze the benefits of oscillation between them.
3. Apply the DPM framework to real-world scenarios involving ecological or political grief.
4. Develop at least one personalized or professional strategy for engaging with grief while sustaining advocacy and emotional well-being.

**Title: Living Amid Fear: Supporting the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Immigrants and Refugees**

**Date:** Monday, February 23, 2026

**Time:** 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET

**Format: Hybrid**

**CE Credit: 2 CEs**

**Description:** This training addresses the psychological toll of living under constant threat for immigrants and refugees navigating hostile environments, family separation, and misinformation. Participants will gain tools for helping individuals and families manage their emotional and relational lives amid fear and uncertainty—while coping with very real danger. The program also explores community-level interventions to promote safety, connection, and resilience.

**Trainers:**

**Cheryl Chew, Esq.** is the Managing Attorney at JusticeMatters, overseeing the provision of trauma-informed family law and immigration legal services through a team of eleven attorneys and paralegals. Cheryl joined JM in 2013 as the agency's first immigration staff attorney, specializing in humanitarian immigration law to serve survivors of human trafficking and other crimes. Cheryl continues to represent clients in seeking immigration relief before the Department of Homeland Security. Over the past 12 years, Cheryl has led in the development and implementation of trauma-informed design across all areas of the organization, particularly within JM's direct services teams. Cheryl received her B.A. from Duke University and her J.D. from the University of North Carolina School of Law.

**Edith Galvan Lopez** is the Director of Impact & Engagement at JusticeMatters. Since joining the Client Services Team in 2020, she has led efforts in program design, monitoring and evaluation, and community engagement to support clients, families, and staff. Edith began her work with JusticeMatters as a Social Work Practicum student during her final year at Meredith College, later joining the team as a Client Services Specialist. She played a key role in developing the organization's trauma-informed client support services and was soon promoted to Program Specialist to expand access for clients with limited English proficiency and strengthen program infrastructure. A committed advocate for immigrant communities, Edith also volunteers with immigrant-serving organizations and mentors undocumented families. Originally from Mexico, she was raised in Raleigh, North Carolina. She holds a BSW from Meredith College and an MSW from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Edith serves as project coordinator for the Trauma-Informed Legal Services Program for Kinship Caregivers.

**Elizabeth Godown, MSW** is the Organizational Learning & Wellness Manager at Refugee Community Partnership, where she develops processes for collective care, language access, and organizational sustainability. She connects migrant and refugee community members to supportive networks and resources and provides crisis intervention. Elizabeth earned her MSW from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she contributed to a community-based participatory research project on perinatal mental health in rural North Carolina. Her work is informed by experience as a doula, trauma educator, food justice steward with FEED Durham NC, and group facilitator. She serves on the board of the Pro Bono Counseling Network and is a 2022 grantee of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Community Research for Health Equity program.

**Rachel Mack, LCSW** is a clinical social worker with experience supporting refugee, displaced, and vulnerable communities. She has worked in both resettlement coordination and clinical roles, providing individual support through home and office visits and developing multilingual support groups for newly arrived refugees, including Afghan and Congolese communities. Rachel began her work with displaced populations as a volunteer at a safe house for unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers. She has also supported incarcerated individuals and survivors of gender-based violence through group facilitation and program evaluation. Her work is grounded in a trauma-informed, culturally responsive approach.

**Maria Peralta Porra** is a Latinx organizer with Siembra NC in Durham County, originally from Puebla, Mexico, and a 2020 graduate of Guilford College. She brings both personal and professional experience serving Latinx and other marginalized communities, shaped in part by her family's experience when her stepfather was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in 2018. Her work reflects a deep commitment to intentional community building, social justice, and anti-racist advocacy, with past roles including the Union Scholars Program and leadership in Define American. Maria is passionate about

advancing the intersection of immigrant rights and broader social issues and is seeking post-graduation employment and other enriching opportunities.

**Magdalena Straub, LMFT** completed her undergraduate degree in psychology at Universidad Catolica de Chile and her M.S. in Couples and Family Therapy at University of Maryland, College Park. In addition to providing bilingual (English/Spanish) direct services to individuals and families, Magdalena collaborates in La Mesita, the training and dissemination department of El Futuro that aims to reducing the gap between research and practice in Latine Mental Health. Magdalena's clinical areas of interest include trauma-informed modalities, anxiety and OCD, systemic approaches, and common factors in therapy.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe the psychological and relational impact of chronic fear, discrimination, and legal precarity on immigrant and refugee communities.
2. Identify culturally responsive, trauma-informed strategies for supporting clients navigating family separation, deportation threats, and misinformation.
3. Explain how misinformation and systemic threats exacerbate trauma and outline ways to share accurate, trustworthy information with clients and families.
4. Explore the role of legal stressors and immigration policy in shaping clients' mental health and discuss supportive approaches for accompanying individuals and families through complex legal processes.
5. Apply community-level strategies that foster collective safety, connection, and empowerment in the face of systemic injustice.

**Title: Making Life Worth Living: Culturally Inclusive Suicide Prevention for Black Youth**

**Date:** Monday, March 30, 2026

**Time:** 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET

**Format:** Hybrid

**CE Credit:** 2 CEs

**Description:** Black youth face increasing rates of suicidal thoughts and behaviors, yet continue to be overlooked, misidentified, or disconnected from care within mental health systems. This training explores how to build culturally inclusive, community-informed responses that reduce risk and strengthen reasons for living. Participants will examine key patterns in suicide risk behavior among Black adolescents and the structural, systemic, and cultural barriers that shape their experiences of care. The session will highlight efforts for culturally inclusive suicide prevention efforts from the North Carolina Black Youth Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Board and Community of Practice members. We will explore how culturally affirming prevention and intervention efforts can make life feel worth living for youth facing racialized trauma, isolation, and despair.

**Trainer: Sonyia Richardson, Ph.D., LCSW** is an Assistant Professor at the UNC School of Social Work and holds an appointment in the UNC Department of Psychiatry. Her work centers on suicide prevention among Black youth and developing culturally inclusive interventions to make life worth living. She focuses on addressing the practical, systemic, and cultural barriers that limit access to care, and leads CA-LINC, an NIMH-funded clinical trial co-designed with Black communities to strengthen connections to mental health support. She also directs the Black Wellness Collective Lab. Before joining UNC-Chapel Hill, Dr. Richardson was a faculty member at UNC Charlotte, where she founded and directed the Mental Health Research and Practice Lab and led the Race and Social Equity Research

Academy. She is the founder of Another Level Counseling and Consultation, a Charlotte-based agency that has provided clinical services, wellness programming, and consultation for more than 16 years. Dr. Richardson was appointed to North Carolina's Andrea Harris Equity Task Force by Governor Roy Cooper and serves as Director of its Wellness Outcomes subcommittee. In 2021, she was named Social Worker of the Year by the North Carolina chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe structural, systemic, and cultural barriers that affect access to mental health care for Black youth.
2. Integrate culturally inclusive, community-informed approaches into existing therapeutic frameworks to support Black youth experiencing suicidal distress.

**Title: Ethical Life in Unethical Times: Moral Injury, Complicity, and Repair**

**Date:** Monday, April 13, 2026

**Time:** 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm ET

**Format:** Hybrid

**CE Credit:** 2 CEs

**Description:** Many individuals are navigating life within political, institutional, and environmental systems that conflict with their values. Moral pain can arise when people feel complicit in harm, powerless to act, or unable to prevent violations of what they believe is right. These experiences can manifest as guilt, grief, anger, numbness, or disconnection and are often pathologized or overlooked. First recognized in military settings, the frameworks of moral injury and moral distress now hold broader relevance for anyone living or working within systems that harm others, even when they have little control. Dr. Warren Kinghorn will outline the historical and ethical foundations of moral injury, highlighting how it names forms of suffering often mistaken for dysfunction. Dr. Jason Nieuwsma will discuss how Acceptance and Commitment Therapy offers a values-based, non-pathologizing approach to healing. Participants will reflect on what it means to live—and help others live—with integrity in the face of systems we cannot fully control, and how emotional responses may also point to sites of responsibility and action.

**Trainers:**

**Jason Nieuwsma, PhD** is a clinical psychologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He also serves as Associate Director for Integrative Mental Health in the Department of Veterans Affairs. His work focuses on integrating evidence-based psychotherapies into medical and spiritual care settings, with a particular emphasis on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), moral injury, and collaborative work with chaplains and clergy. Dr. Nieuwsma has led national initiatives within the Department of Veterans Affairs to address moral injury among veterans and healthcare providers. He has developed and evaluated ACT-based, group interventions for moral injury and trained VA chaplains and clinicians in cross-disciplinary approaches that recognize both psychological and spiritual dimensions of moral distress.

**Warren Kinghorn, ThD, MD** is a psychiatrist and theologian at Duke University, where he serves as Associate Research Professor of Psychiatry and of Pastoral and Moral Theology. He co-directs the Theology, Medicine, and Culture Initiative at Duke Divinity School and is a staff psychiatrist at the Durham VA Medical Center. His work explores the intersections of mental health, trauma, spirituality, and moral meaning. Dr. Kinghorn is a leading voice in reframing moral injury as an ethical and relational response to wrongdoing or betrayal, rather than as a psychiatric disorder. Drawing from theology, philosophy, and clinical experience, he teaches and writes about how spiritual and moral frameworks can

support healing. His work often focuses on veterans and others in caregiving roles, while emphasizing the institutional and social contexts that shape experiences of moral injury.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe the concepts of moral injury and moral distress and identify their relevance in both client and clinician experiences.
2. Recognize emotional, cognitive, and behavioral indicators of moral conflict in clinical and broader societal contexts.
3. Apply ACT-based strategies to help individuals clarify values, hold moral pain with psychological flexibility, and move toward meaningful action.



The following Clinical Institute programs can be found at this link:

<https://sswevents.unc.edu/clinical-lecture-institutes>

and take place in at UNC School of Social Work, 325 Pittsboro Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516 and livestream via Zoom

**Title: Spirituality, Religion, and Mental Health Practice: Exploring Assessment, Intervention, and Collective Healing,**

**Date:** Thursday, October 9, 2025

**Time:** 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m

**Format:** Hybrid

**CE Credit:** 6 CEs

**Description:** This day-long institute will bring together mental health practitioners, chaplains, pastoral and spiritual care providers, medical providers, and behavioral health professionals. and community leaders to explore how religion and spirituality intersect with mental health. Through presentations, dialogue, and practice-based learning, participants will gain tools for assessment, deepen their understanding of spiritual dimensions of healing, and explore interventions that are culturally and spiritually responsive.

**Agenda:**

8:30 - 9:00	In-Person Registration and Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome Remarks by Dean Ramona Denby-Brinson, Ph.D.
9:15 - 10:15	Opening Session: Land-Based Mental Health and Collective Healing with Dr. Nora Dennis, Jubilee Healing Farm
	Break
10:30 - 12:00	Spiritual Assessment in Mental Health Practice with Russell Siler Jones, ThD, LCMHC
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch (provided to all in-person participants)
1:00 - 2:30 PM	<b>Option A:</b> The Politicization of Religion and Its Effects on Mental Health Rev. Amanda Rigsby, Dr. Elizabeth Watters, and Greta Martin, MSW, LCSW <b>Option B:</b> Spiritually Informed Care in Clinical and Chaplaincy Settings Rev. Alvernia Disnew, M.Div., Ph.D. Candidate
2:30 - 2:45 PM	Break
2:45 - 4:15 PM	<b>Option C: Working with Religious Trauma:</b> Kennetra Irby-Brackett, DMin, MSW, LCSW, Chaplain <b>Option D:</b> The Healer's Journey: Spiritual Embodiment as Resistance and Transformation Millicent N. Robinson, PhD, MSW, MPH

**Trainer: Nora Dennis, MD, MSPH, PFAPA**

Dr. Dennis is the founder and CEO of Jubilee Integrated Wellness. Her approach integrates psychopharmacology, somatic interventions, ecotherapy, psychotherapy, nutrition, and mindfulness. She has served as a faculty member at Duke University School of Medicine since 2014 and continues as an Adjunct Assistant Professor. Her clinical experience includes psychotherapy, psychopharmacology, ecotherapy, and brain stimulation for treatment-resistant illness. Before she was a physician, Dr. Dennis was a yoga teacher, and she maintains a yoga and movement practice. Her training in awareness of the mind-body connection within herself and others has been foundational to her approach to medicine. In addition, she has completed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction training.

**Russell Siler Jones, ThD, LCMHCS**

Russell is a psychotherapist in Asheville, NC, Director of CareNet/Advocate Health Wake Forest Baptist's Residency in Psychotherapy and Spirituality, and Developer of ACPE's Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy Program. He is author of *Spirit in Session: Working with Your Client's Spirituality (and Your Own)* in Psychotherapy (Templeton Press, 2019) and writes on Substack at Spiritize (Spirit eyes).

**Chaplain Alvernia Disnew, M.Div., ACPE Certified Educator, Ph.D. Candidate**

Alvernia Disnew is a chaplain and spiritual care specialist in the Department of Spiritual Health and Education at UNC Chapel Hill Hospital. Ordained in the Baptist tradition and endorsed by the National Baptist Convention, she brings a deeply rooted spiritual and cultural perspective to her work, weaving together psychology, religion, and lived experience in holistic care. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in public theology and community engagement at Hampton University. Her experience includes leading a girls' group home and a women's halfway house to support safe community reintegration. Alvernia also teaches and counsels healthcare professionals, emphasizing the role of spiritual and emotional well-being in healing. A self-described Baptist mystic, she is committed to sacred, person-centered care that empowers and transforms.

**Kennetra Irby-Brckett, DMin, MSW, LCSW, Chaplain**

Rev. Dr. Kennetra Irby Brckett is Associate Director of Field Education & Career Development at Duke Divinity School. She is an ordained elder in the North Carolina Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a licensed clinical social worker, and a certified hospice and palliative care social worker. Dr. Brckett previously pastored in Littleton, N.C., and led Pediatric Bereavement Services in Raleigh, where she mentored LCSWA licensees and supervised social work interns. Dr. Brckett earned her D.Min. as a Rural Clergy Fellow and her M.Div., with a certificate in Theology, Medicine, and Culture, from Duke Divinity School. She also holds an M.S.W. and a B.A. in Romance Languages from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—proudly referring to herself as a “Blue Heel.”

**Greta Martin, LCSW**

Greta Martin, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker who works with adult clients across a range of life stages. She is known for her warm, approachable style and brings particular passion to supporting older adults and their caregivers. Greta earned her MSW from NC State University and has years of experience providing compassionate, client-centered care.

**Amanda Rigby, M. Div.**

Rev. Rigby serves as Executive Director to The Well Mental and Spiritual Care and as Pastor of Christian Education and Spiritual Formation at Edenton Street United Methodist Church in downtown Raleigh. She is trained spiritual director and ordained elder in the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist

Church. She is passionate about being a spiritual companion to those who are seeking deeper spirituality, to clergy, and to folks in the LGBTQ+ community. In her role at The Well, Amanda works to advocate for mental health care as a human right made accessible and available for all.

**Millicent N. Robinson, PhD, MSW, MPH**

Dr. Millicent Robinson is an Assistant Professor in the UNC School of Social Work with a secondary appointment in the School of Medicine, Department of Social Medicine. Her scholarship bridges academic rigor with spiritual healing practices, exploring how disconnection of the mind, body, and spirit due to societal forces can impact health and well-being. As a certified Reiki master practitioner, Dr. Robinson applies evidence-based stress reduction practices in research and community workshops. Currently, she develops culturally-relevant mindfulness interventions for Black women with cardiometabolic risk factors, building on research examining how high-effort coping affects Black women's well-being amid structural barriers. Dr. Robinson earned her B.A. in Psychology, MSW, and MPH from UNC-Chapel Hill and her PhD in Community Health Sciences from UCLA

**Elizabeth Watters, Ph.D., LMFT**

Dr. Watters is a researcher and professor who specializes in exploring and working with the impact of systemic trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) across the lifespan. They also co-direct The Well and offer life coaching. They're passionate about increased accessibility to trauma informed knowledge, treatment, and healing in marginalized communities.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify at least three populations for whom nature-based healing would be helpful.
2. Explain at least one principle of ecotherapy.
3. Name at least three dynamics of spirituality to assess as part of mental health service
4. Distinguish between explicit and implicit spirituality.
5. Recognize the role of spirituality in care by identifying how beliefs, values, and sources of meaning influence coping, decision-making, and overall well-being.
6. Apply basic spiritual assessment tools to explore spiritual needs.
7. Locate personal spiritual lens and potential bias.
8. Define religious trauma and identify common ways it affects mental health and well-being.
9. Describe at least two clinical approaches to support healing from religious trauma.
10. Locate personal spiritual lens and potential bias.
11. Define religious trauma and identify common ways it affects mental health and well-being.
12. Describe at least two clinical approaches to support healing from religious trauma.

**Title: Showing Up with Self-Compassion and Values: Integrating ACT and FAP in Uncertain Times**

**Date:** October 30 & 31 (Thursday and Friday)

**Time:** 9:00 am - 4:30 pm EST both days

**Format:** Hybrid

**CE Credit:** 12 CEs

**Description:** In times of uncertainty, both clients and clinicians can struggle to stay connected to what matters. Shame, self-criticism, and emotional overwhelm can lead to disconnection—from values, from others, and from the work itself. This training offers a space to reflect, reconnect, and practice therapeutic approaches that support alignment and compassion in the face of these challenges. Holly Yates will introduce key strategies from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) to help participants strengthen self-compassion and values-based action—both in their clinical practice and in the lives of those they serve. ACT supports values identification and

committed action in the presence of difficult internal experiences, while FAP brings this process into the therapeutic relationship through moment-to-moment connection and shaping. Participants will explore when and how shame shows up and how to help clients develop self compassion and values-based living.

Participants will leave with

- A stronger foundation in ACT and FAP processes
- Effective skills to support self-compassion and values alignment
- Hands-on experience using the ACT matrix and FAP-based relational techniques
- Teach and shape connection with our clients and each other
- Processes to support clients to be in connection with others (vital in the "pandemic of loneliness")
- Practical strategies to bring compassion into therapy, especially when it feels most difficult

#### **Agenda:**

##### **Day 1 - Thursday, October 30**

8:30 AM - Coffee, light fare, registration sign in

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM: Welcome, Introduction, and Grounding

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM: Introduction to models: ACT, FAP & Self-Compassion

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM: **Break**

10:45 AM - 12:15 PM: ACT, FAP, and Self-Compassion

12:15 PM - 1:15 PM: **Lunch**

1:15 PM - 3:30 PM: Practicing 5 rules of FAP

3:30 PM - 3:45 PM: **Break**

3:45 PM - 4:15 PM: FAP

4:15 PM - 4:30 PM: Wrap up

##### **Day 2 - Friday, October 31**

8:30 AM - Coffee, light fare, registration sign in

9:00 AM - 9:45 AM: Reflections and Q&A

9:45 AM - 10:30 AM: Demos

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM: **Break**

10:45 AM - 12:15 PM: Practices

12:15 PM - 1:15 PM: **Lunch**

1:15 PM - 3:30 PM: Practices

3:30 PM - 3:45 PM: **Break**

3:45 PM - 4:15 PM: Reflections, Q&A

4:15 PM - 4:30 PM: Wrap up

#### **Trainer: Holly Yates MS, LCMHC, Certified Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) Trainer**

Holly Yates has been in private practice in North Carolina since 2004. Her specialty areas are working with adults both individually and in groups as well as couples addressing depression, anxiety, mood disorders and life stressors through clinical intervention and skills training. Holly's practice centers on third wave therapies most specifically Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). She is a founding facilitator of the online ACT Peer Intervention Network sponsored through ACBS and a Certified FAP Trainer through University of Washington. Holly received supervision from Mavis Tsai, Ph.D., Robert Kohlenberg, PhD. (developers of FAP) and Gareth Holman PhD., in attaining her FAP certification and remains under their mentorship. She is currently under the mentorship and supervision of Matthieu Villatte, PhD. as she moves toward ACT Peer Review Trainer. Holly presents FAP and ACT workshops and trainings locally and around the country. Holly is Co-founder of North Wake Counseling Partners in Raleigh NC.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Name the six core processes of ACT and describe how they function.
2. List and experience the five rules of FAP and ACL framework.
3. Identify the three clinically relevant behaviors in FAP and how they function in a client's life.
4. Explain how the therapist-client relationship is the change agent in FAP.
5. Conduct a functional analysis to explain how consequences drive behavior.
6. Demonstrate how the ACT matrix works in moving through ACT's 6 core processes.
7. Explain how the FAP matrix works.
8. Apply the FAP matrix to clinically relevant behaviors.
9. Identify the basics of functional analysis.
10. Identify the 5 rules of FAP.
11. Explain what self-compassion is and is not.
12. Integrate self-compassion therapeutically within ACT and FAP.
13. Create a brief plan to return to values and compassion during moments of disconnection.

**Title: Internal Family Systems: Experiential Practices for Therapists**

**Date:** February 26 & 27, 2026 (Thursday and Friday)

**Time:** 9:00 am - 4:30 pm EST both days

**Format:** Hybrid

**CE Credit:** 12 CEs

**Description:** This 2 full-days experiential institute offers therapists an immersive opportunity to deepen their personal understanding and clinical application of Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy. Rooted in the view that we each hold multiple “parts” within us, IFS invites both therapists and clients to relate to those parts with curiosity, compassion, and connection. The day begins with the therapist’s own internal experience—learning to recognize and work with “therapist parts” as a foundation for understanding the model. Through explanation, live demonstrations, and guided partner practices, participants will build familiarity with key IFS principles and interventions they can bring into their clinical work.

Deborah Klinger will guide participants through core IFS steps, beginning with how to notice and engage with our own parts in a way that invites Self energy—the grounded, compassionate presence at the heart of IFS. The day will balance teaching, live demonstration, and partner work. Throughout the day, participants will engage in a series of structured practices, including:

- Identifying and befriending parts in ourselves
- Accessing Self energy and understanding how to recognize it
- Learning to stay in Self when client parts are activated
- Practicing key steps of IFS in pairs or triads
- Exploring what makes a part ready to unblend, speak, or unburden

Through a mix of teaching, experiential practice, and guided reflection, this workshop invites participants to meet shame and avoidance not as flaws to correct, but as human responses to pain. And from there, to begin the work of coming back into alignment—with values, with compassion, and with the people we strive to be. Sandra Vander Linde will also offer guidance and support throughout the day, helping participants stay grounded during experiential work and reflect on how these practices can inform their therapeutic presence and clinical decision-making.

**Agenda:**

Day One: Grounding in Self and Introducing the Model

8:30 - 9:00 - Coffee, light fare, registration sign in

9:00–9:30 - Welcome, Introduction, and Grounding  
9:30–11:00 - Accessing and Recognizing Self Energy  
11:00–11:15 - Morning Break  
11:15–12:15 - Systemic terms, the system as a whole and part  
12:15–1:15 - Lunch  
1:15–2:45 - How to Introduce IFS to Clients  
2:45–3:00 - Afternoon Break  
3:00–4:30 - Therapist Parts in the Room

### Day Two: Deepening Practice and Clinical Application

8:30 AM - Coffee, light fare, registration sign in  
9:00–9:30 - Self Connection Practice  
9:30–11:00 - Unblending: When Parts Take Over  
11:00–11:15 - Morning Break  
11:15–12:15 - Client Readiness: Pacing, Permission, and Safety  
12:15–1:15 - Lunch  
1:15–2:45 - Staying in Self When Clients are Activated  
2:45–3:00 - Afternoon Break  
3:00–4:30 - Integration, Closing, Appreciations

#### **Trainers:**

**Deborah Klinger, LMFT, CEDS-C, IFS Approved Consultant**, is in private practice in Durham, NC. She's been practicing therapy since 1990 and obtained her Eating Disorders Specialist certification in 1995. Deborah is an AAMFT Approved Supervisor, Certified Internal Family Systems Therapist and Approved Consultant, and Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy practitioner. Her journey with the Internal Family Systems model began with a Level 1 training in 2011. Deborah has given workshops at the International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals (IAEDP), American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), National Binge Eating Disorder Association (BEDA) and North Carolina Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (NCAMFT) annual conferences, and the Carolinas Group Psychotherapy Society (CGPS) semi-annual workshop, among other venues. She periodically offers trauma-sensitive yoga and her own "Love Thy Body: Yoga for Eating and Body Concerns" series. She is published in "Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention" and was the Eating and Food Issues Topic Expert for goodtherapy.org from 10/09-1/15. She combines DBT, IFS, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, and EMDR for a holistic, body-mind approach to healing.

**Exercise support by Sandra Vander Linde, LMFT**, is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in North Carolina and Indiana with over 26 years of clinical experience in public mental health and private practice. She is a Certified Internal Family Systems Therapist with advanced training in Dialectical Behavior Therapy, EMDR, Somatic Experiencing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Emotionally Focused Therapy for individuals and couples. Grounded in general and family systems theory, Sandra brings a trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and integrative approach to her work. She has extensive experience supporting clients with mood disorders, trauma, grief, relationship challenges, spiritual abuse, and the long-term impact of addiction in families. Sandra participates in ongoing consultation groups and values continual learning and personal growth. She brings warmth, depth, and authenticity to her teaching, rooted in the belief that meaningful clinical work begins with doing one's own.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe the foundational concepts of the IFS model, including the roles of parts and Self.
2. Identify common therapist parts that may arise during clinical interactions and describe strategies for working with them.
3. Explain how to access and sustain Self energy in the presence of client distress or activation.

4. Recognize somatic and emotional cues that suggest a part may be ready for deeper engagement or unburdening.
5. Apply basic IFS techniques in clinical practice with appropriate pacing and a trauma-informed approach.
6. Outline the steps of unblending a part, including gaining permission, clarifying its protective role, and facilitating dialogue.

**Title: Behind the Therapy Chair: The Parts We Don't Talk About - An Internal Family Systems (IFS) Approach to Clinician Resilience, Renewal, and Repair**

**Dates:** April 1 and 2, 2026 (Wednesday and Thursday)

**Time:** 9:00 am - 3:15 pm EST

**Date:** April 3, 2026 (Friday)

**Time:** 9:00 am - 12:15 pm EST

**Format: Hybrid**

**CE Credit:** 13 CEs

**Description:**

Clinicians carry more than the stories of the people they serve—they also carry their own history, systemic pressures, and the unspoken emotional weight of the work. Yet, in the field of social work and mental health, we rarely make space to explore the clinician's inner life. This 3-day, experiential training uses the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model to help social workers and mental health professionals identify, map, and tend to the “parts” that emerge in professional practice. Participants will explore parts that develop early in a clinician's career, those that surface during burnout, moral injury, and vicarious trauma, and the often-unspoken parts that appear in moments of rupture, self-doubt, loneliness, and systemic strain.

Through a combination of didactic teaching, guided meditations, structured reflection, and experiential breakout groups, participants will:

- Identify clinician parts activated by challenging clinical situations, systemic inequities, and personal life events.
- Practice skills for unblending from activated parts and connecting to Self-energy in the moment.
- Explore how to tend to exiled parts carrying the emotional residue of client stories.
- Name and normalize experiences often left unspoken in the field, including grief, frustration, ethical dilemmas, identity fatigue, and financial strain.
- Develop sustainable, values-aligned practices for maintaining longevity and integrity in the work.
- This training offers a safe, compassionate space to acknowledge what it means to be a helping professional today—and to leave with greater clarity, self-compassion, and connection to the “why” that brought you to this work.

**Agenda:**

**Day 1 - Clinician's Internal Family System**

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM: Coffee, light fare, registration sign in

9:00 AM - 9 20 AM: Welcome, agreements/softening

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM: Clinicians' internals system and parts

**Break**

10:45 AM - 12:30 PM: Vicarious Trauma Parts and Moral Injury

**Lunch**

1:30 PM - 3:00 PM: Vicarious Trauma Parts, cont.

3:00 - 3:15 PM: Closing Integration

**Conclusion**

**Day 2 - Unblending Clinician Parts**

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM: Coffee, light fare, sign in

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM: Check-in, Reflections, Meditation

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM: Activation, Rupture and Repair

**Break**

10:45 AM - 12:30 PM: Unblending

**Lunch**

1:30 PM - 3:00 PM: Overlap of Personal and Professional

3:00 - 3:15 PM: Closing Integration

**Conclusion****Day 3 - Lonely and Exploited Parts**

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM: Check-in, Reflections, Meditation

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM: Lonely and exploited parts

**Break**

10:45 AM - 12:00 PM: Liberating our clinician system

12:00 PM - 12:15 PM: Closing Integration

**Conclusion**

**Trainer: Tasha Hunter, MSW, LCSW** is a Black, queer listener, healer, writer, teacher, and advocate. She is a liberation-centered mental health therapist who specializes in working with Black women, femmes, and LGBTQIA communities. She believes that healing happens most often when we are seen, heard, and understood by those who value our existence. She also believes that liberation isn't possible without community and collective liberation. Tasha is a Level 3, Certified Internal Family Systems therapist who approaches healing from a non-pathologizing, decolonized lens. She most often provides a safe container for individuals seeking help due to generational trauma, ancestral trauma, inner child wounding, sexual violence, racism, sexism, oppression, sexual identity/romantic relationship stressors, and spiritual/religious deconstruction. Tasha's clinical practice also includes pre and post integration of psychedelic/entheogenic medicine experiences, breathwork, somatic practices, spirituality, and ancestral wisdom. Tasha is a Clinical Skills Cohort Leader for Naropa University's Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy certificate program. Tasha is the author of *tell me where it hurts: poetry, meditations, and divinely inspired love notes* and a memoir, *What Children Remember*. Her writing has been featured in *She Lives Her Truth* and *please cut up my poems*. She is the host of the podcast, *When We Speak*. She lives in North Carolina and owns a mental health private practice.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe the IFS model as it applies to the clinician's internal system.
2. Identify and map parts that emerge in response to burnout, moral injury, vicarious trauma, and other professional stressors.
3. Apply IFS-informed techniques to unblend from reactive parts in clinical practice.
4. Engage in Self-to-part connection with exiles carrying vicarious trauma.
5. Recognize and name commonly unspoken clinician experiences to reduce shame and isolation.
6. Develop personal strategies for sustaining resilience and alignment with professional values.



**The following Focus on Family and Disability Lecture Series can be found at this link:**  
<https://sswevents.unc.edu/family-and-disability> and take place in at UNC School of Social Work, 325  
Pittsboro Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516 and livestream via Zoom

**Title: Engaging Families as Partners in Developmental Monitoring, Screening, and Follow-up**

**Date:** Tuesday, September 9, 2025

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format: Livestream Only**

**CE Credit:** 1.5 CE

**Description:** This presentation will focus on the importance of early detection of developmental concerns in early childhood. Attendees will become familiar with standards of care related to developmental screening and surveillance, relevant resources, and how to act on concerns when they arise.

**Trainer: Chandler Knott, PhD** is a Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellow at the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities (CIDD). Chandler specializes in working with individuals with I/DD and their families. Her interests include early detection of autism in genetic syndromes, differential diagnosis of co-occurring conditions in autism, parenting interventions for children with developmental disabilities, and improving access to school and community-based supports across the lifespan. Chandler currently provides supervised psychological evaluation and consultation services within CIDD and community clinics. She also serves as one of the CDC's Act Early Deputy Ambassadors to NC to help promote developmental monitoring efforts across the state.

**Trainer: Laura Hiruma, PhD** is a Clinical Assistant Professor and Psychologist at the Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities (CIDD) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She specializes in evaluating and treating individuals with neurodevelopmental differences including autism, intellectual disability, and neurogenetic conditions across the lifespan. In her current role, Laura provides resource and referral navigation assistance as the Clinic Intake Coordinator for the CIDD. Her professional interests also include reaching families across the state through telehealth with an emphasis on developmental disability screening and family education and consultation including treatment and resource planning assistance for individuals with complex developmental and behavioral needs. Laura serves as one of the CDC's Act Early Ambassador for North Carolina to promote statewide developmental monitoring efforts and related resources for families.

**Learning Objectives:**

By end of the program, participants will be able to

1. Explain the importance of early detection of developmental concerns.
2. Identify at least 2 relevant resources to engage families in developmental monitoring and to increase understanding of developmental screening practices.
3. Review at least 2 relevant referral resources and care flow.

**Title: A Good Life for the Whole Family: Supporting People in the Context of Their Family**

**Date:** Tuesday, October 14, 2025

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format: Online Only**  
**CE Credit: 1.5 CEs**

**Description:** The Charting the LifeCourse Framework offers families and professionals a unique way of approaching the planning process. The framework helps individuals and families develop a vision for a good life, think about what they need to know and do and identify how to find or develop support. It conceptualizes key principles to ensure that all people have the right to live, love, work, play and pursue their life aspirations in their community. Originally created for people with disabilities, it is now used universally by people of all abilities. Charting the LifeCourse is ideal for planning by any person, family, organization, or system, regardless of life circumstances or target population. The framework is ideal for case management teams, providers, self-advocates, families, IEP teams, and transition coordinators to help support an individual to reach their goals for a full and inclusive life in the community.

**Trainer:** **Lisa Meyer** has worked in Human Services and Education for more than 40 years. She has been fortunate to have had multiple professional opportunities. Among them are the Director of a statewide training and technical assistance program, and Student Advisor and Adjunct Professor to those entering the field of Disability Studies. She has assisted individuals receiving support and services from Developmental Disability programs, Behavioral Health, Substance Abuse & Recovery programs, and Older Adult and Early Childhood programs. She has provided technical assistance to educational systems that support students, youth/young adults in transition, their families, and professionals in implementing planning strategies that promote youth advocacy and self-determination. Lisa currently supports the CtLC Nexus team as a trainer and coach, and she Mentors PCT Trainers. In her role as Mentor, she has supported numerous states in the implementation of person-centered practices. There is an intersection between Lisa's professional and personal life. As a family member who informally provides support to members of her family living with intellectual/developmental disabilities and Autism, Lisa brings a unique level of professionalism, experience, and understanding to her work. Lisa currently resides in Eastern North Carolina.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe for participants the impact of family and community context in supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
2. Identify at least 2 strategies for supporting individuals and families to understand and maximize the reciprocal roles of all family members.
3. Demonstrate how to use the Charting the LifeCourse framework and tools to support individuals and families in planning, problem-solving, and decision making.

**Title: NC Able and Increasing Financial Security of Individuals with IDD**

**Date:** Tuesday, November 18, 2025

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format: Online Only**

**CE Credit: 1.5 CEs**

**Description:** The presentation focuses on the ABLE account eligibility, account features and benefits of owning an ABLE account. ABLE accounts provide tax- advantaged savings and investment accounts for people living with a disability without jeopardizing other means-tested public supports.

**Trainers:**

**Jeff Hancock, CRSP, CMFC,** AIF joined the Department of State Treasurer in May 2021 to lead the Supplemental Savings Programs group including: NC 401(k) Plan and NC 457 Plan, and the NC ABLE

Program. Prior to joining the Department of State Treasurer, Jeff worked with BB&T (now Truist) for over 28 years. As division head for Retirement and Institutional Services, Jeff provided leadership for all aspects of the division including Retirement Services, Investment Advisory Services, Corporate Trust Services, and the Mortgage Document Custody group.

**Christy Farrelly** serves as the Communications Manager in the Retirement Services Division at the Department of State Treasurer. Christy also serves on the North Carolina Financial Literacy Council. Christy has worked to build partnerships with families, nonprofits, and corporate partners to grow the NC ABLE program and make it more accessible for families across NC.

**NC Treasurer Bradford B. Briner** was sworn into office on January 1, 2025. Mr. Briner graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a Morehead Scholar with a degree in economics with distinction. Mr. Briner also received an MBA with distinction from Harvard Business School.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe at least two barriers to people with disabilities being financially secure.
2. Name at least three benefits an ABLE account provides to those with the disability.
3. Describe at least two ways in which an ABLE can be used to benefit the Account Owner.

#### **Title: The Intersectionality of Race, Gender, and Disability on Black Youth with Autism**

**Date:** Tuesday, December 9, 2025

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format:** Online Only

**CE Credit:** 1.5 CEs

**Description:** This presentation explores how the intersection of race, gender, and disability shapes the experiences of Black Youth with autism. Participants will be introduced to foundational terms such as microaggressions, micro-affirmations, spirit murdering, and intersectionality—and how these concepts show up in schools, healthcare, and community life. Drawing from both lived experience and research-informed strategies, the session offers practical tools for building respectful, culturally responsive relationships with youth and families. Designed for educators, clinicians, students, and the general public, this session bridges theory and practice to promote equity, empathy, and inclusive support.

#### **Trainer:**

**Danyale Sturdivant, MSSW**, is a nationally recognized disability justice advocate, equity strategist, and clinical social worker with over 20 years of experience supporting racially and ethnically diverse communities. She is the founder of Living Autism Out Loud, an initiative dedicated to amplifying the voices of marginalized families navigating autism and disability systems. Danyale's work centers culturally responsive advocacy, family empowerment, and systemic reform across education, health care, and public policy. Her presentations reflect a rare blend of personal experience and professional expertise, grounded in a deep commitment to intersectional equity.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Understand and reflect on key concepts like microaggressions, micro-affirmations, spirit murdering, and intersectionality—and their relevance in daily and professional life.
2. Recognize how overlapping identities impact experiences and outcomes for Black youth with autism across education, healthcare, and community settings.

3. Apply at least 2 culturally responsive strategies to engage families of Black youth with autism using respectful communication, active listening, and a strengths-based approach.

**Title: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Palliative Care: Integrating Comfort, Support, and Accessibility**

**Date:** Tuesday, January 13, 2026

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format: Online Only**

**CE Credit:** 1.5 CEs

**Description:** This presentation will explore the concept of palliative care, including its continuum for individuals with chronic, noncurative, and end-of-life illnesses. Attendees will learn how disability-affirming approaches can make palliative care more accessible and foster meaningful partnerships with individuals with developmental disabilities. Practical resources will be shared, along with two case examples to illustrate key concepts. The session will include small-group breakouts for deeper discussion and reflection.

**Trainer:**

**Melissa Levin, MSW, LICSW**, (she/her) is a senior social worker at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and a program specialist for The Neuro-Inclusive Oncology Care and Empowerment Program. She provides supportive psycho-social oncology services to people who have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) and are facing cancer. She also works on systems improvements to remove barriers impacting health outcomes. In her prior roles, Melissa worked as a special education school social worker, and as a researcher alongside disability advocates delivering a self-advocacy curriculum to youth with IDD across several schools and community sites in Massachusetts. She is a former Boston Children's Hospital LEND fellow (leadership education in neuro-developmental and related disabilities). She is a mom of three elementary-aged kids, one dog, and a flock of chickens.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Define palliative care and describe its continuum, including for individuals with chronic, noncurative, and end-of-life illnesses.
2. Explore practical resources to support the implementation of inclusive palliative care practices.
3. Analyze two case examples to understand the application of key concepts in real-world scenarios.

**Title: Disability Advocacy and the Criminal Justice System**

**Date:** Tuesday, February 10, 2026

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format: Online Only**

**CE Credit:** 1.5 CEs

**Description:** This presentation will provide a basic overview of the issues people with disabilities face in the North Carolina criminal justice system as well as an outline of current systemic issues and what practical steps individuals can take to overcome barriers to care within the carceral system. We will cover initial police interaction, jail and prison conditions, and re-entry to the community after incarceration. We

will also cover the role of the P&A and other stakeholders within the carceral system and current efforts at reform.

**Trainer:** **Luke Woollard, J.D.** joined Disability Rights of North Carolina's prison and jails team in January 2019. He received his bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University. He attended UNC School of Law after spending two years in Americorps. Prior to DRNC, Woollard began his legal career working to correct the wrongful convictions of indigent North Carolina inmates.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Explore at least two options for individual advocacy within the existing criminal justice system.
2. Explore at least three systemic issues within the carceral system affecting people with disabilities and current efforts at reform.

**Title: Structured Tools to Ease the Transition into Adulthood**

**Date:** Tuesday, March 10, 2026

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format:** Online Only

**CE Credit:** 1.5 CEs

**Description:** We frequently refer to the transition to adulthood as “falling off the cliff”: across supports, services, and community connections. This presentation will focus on tools you can implement at any stage to help you build bridges across the cliff at home, in the community, and support at school/work. We will cover a variety of tools you can pick and choose from to create your own toolbox.

**Trainer:**

**Tara Regan, PhD, MSW, LCSWA** is the Executive Director of the Autism Grown Up Resource Center, an online non-profit organization. She is a sibling to 2 Autistic brothers: Tyler (34) and Tanner (26). She is an interdisciplinary professional drawing from her work in social work, special education, community-based services, and research on person-centered teams supporting Autistic people as they grow up. At Autism Grown Up, she and her team create digital downloadable resources for Autistic people and their support networks across the lifespan.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Outline at least two common needs for individuals and families around the transition to adulthood.
2. Explore a range of structured tools and how they match various needs for individuals and families.
3. Select and apply at least two tools for individualized transition planning based on your own self-assessed needs.

**Title: Positive Pathways: Empowering Lives through PERMA and Recreation**

**Date:** Tuesday, April 14, 2026

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format:** Online Only

**CE Credit:** 1.5 CEs

**Description:** This presentation will provide an overview of positive psychology and the PERMA model, focusing on how these concepts support a strengths-based approach in working with individuals with I/DD and behavioral health challenges. We'll explore how recreational activities can promote resilience,

overall well-being, and meaningful engagement and participants will learn practical ways to use recreation to promote PERMA.

**Trainer:**

**Mallory Willis, LRT, CTRS** is a Licensed and Certified Recreation Therapist and the Director for the NC START Central Resource Center, out of Easterseals Port Health. She has over ten years of passion and experience working with children, adolescence, and adults with mental health and developmental disabilities in a variety of settings. Currently, Mallory supervises 15 staff in providing short-term, home and community-based, therapeutic crisis prevention and intervention strategies to increase safety and stability, and to reduce hospital stays and police intervention within the population.

**Alexandra Smith, BA** is a Therapeutic Coach at NC START Central. Alexandra has been a part of the NC START team for three years, where she has worked with children, adolescents, and adults with mental health and developmental vulnerabilities. As a Therapeutic Coach, Alexandra supports START enrollees and their systems on crisis prevention and intervention strategies to increase stability, promote positive emotions, and provide psychoeducation. Her background in design and strategic communication is an asset to the team in creating visuals that support a range of communication and processing styles. Alexandra loves using her strengths of creativity and love of learning to create individualized, trauma-informed strategies and supports to the systems that she works with.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify at least two of the core principles of positive psychology and the PERMA model, and their relevance to individuals with I/DD and behavioral health challenges.
2. Explore how recreational activities can be used to support PERMA and promote strengths, resilience, and meaningful engagement.
3. Identify at least two practical, evidence-based strategies for applying strengths-based approaches to enhance quality of life.

**Title: Supporting and Learning from Kinship Families Raising Children with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs**

**Date:** Tuesday, May 12, 2026

**Time:** 12-1:30 pm ET

**Format:** Online Only

**CE Credit:** 1.5 CEs

**Description:** Kinship caregivers—grandparents, other relatives, and close family friends raising children when parents cannot—often take on this role with little preparation and limited support. When children have disabilities or special health care needs, the demands on kinship families grow even more complex. This webinar will explore the unique strengths, challenges, and needs of kinship caregivers, drawing from both research and lived experience. Presenters will share insights from KinCarolina, an innovative program supporting kinship families raising children with disabilities or special health care needs, highlight findings from current research, and offer strategies for building inclusive, trauma-informed, and family-centered supports. Participants will also hear directly from a kinship caregiver, with the session designed to help professionals deepen their understanding of kinship caregiving in the context of disability and strengthen the networks that sustain families.

**Trainer:**

**Amanda Klein-Cox, Ed.D.**, is a Senior Research Associate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Social Work (SSW). Dr. Klein-Cox serves as the Project Implementation Manager for the

KinCarolina program, which provides comprehensive supports to kinship caregivers raising children with disabilities or special health care needs in South Carolina. As a researcher, Dr. Klein-Cox is interested in bridging the fields of education and social work around child and family well-being, particularly in the area of kinship care. Since becoming a mom herself, she is also interested in the intersection of maternal mental health and well-being with child welfare and family well-being outcomes. Dr. Klein-Cox also works as an evaluator and consultant, providing organizations in education and social work across the country with evaluation services, coaching, and training to help them measure the impact of their programming for children and families. Dr. Klein-Cox began her career as a middle school social studies teacher in Baltimore, Maryland and has over eight years of experience as a practitioner in urban schools and districts. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Master of Public Policy degree from Johns Hopkins University and a Doctorate of K-12 Education Leadership and Policy from Vanderbilt University.

**Dr. Angela Tobin, OTD, OTR/L** is an associate researcher for the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, with five years of experience in research related kinship caregiving. Her current research interests include identifying factors that support kinship caregiver and family well-being both within families and systems at large through qualitative and translational research. She currently serves as the Program Intervention Manager for KinCarolina, a program and research study designed for kinship caregivers raising children with special health care needs funded by the Duke Endowment. She has taken an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to supporting kinship families with a background in occupational therapy and educational psychology. Additionally, Dr. Tobin is the founder and director of Kinship Caregivers Connect, an online support group network for kinship caregivers in Ohio established in 2020. As a kinship care trainer and consultant, Dr. Tobin has developed and facilitated trainings for interdisciplinary professionals around understanding and supporting kinship families, and implementing support groups. She has received research funding through the Integrating Special Populations Initiative Grant and Albert Schweitzer Fellowship. Dr. Tobin's interest in working with kinship families sparked from personal experience, as she witnessed her both her grandparents and parents raise her cousin (their grandson/nephew).

**Alison Parson** is a Native of Ridgeville, SC. She is an author, founder, motivational speaker, talk show host, professional blogger, and a NAMI Certified Mental Health Advocate. She is also the current kinship caregiver to a 6-year-old girl and is a graduate of KinCarolina. Alison possesses a strong commitment to social equity and family empowerment. Over the years, she has worked extensively with families from underprivileged communities, providing advocacy & emotional support to ensure that all families feel seen, supported and capable of reaching their full potential.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify three unique strengths, needs, and/or challenges of kinship caregivers raising children with disabilities.
2. Explain the KinCarolina framework for defining disability and the purpose behind it.
3. Describe three important considerations for engaging kinship caregivers in research.