

WELCOME

Welcome to the 2025 TN NADD conference hosted by the TN-NADD Board, the Inn at Opryland, and the UT-Knoxville virtual team. Our theme this year is Building Highways: Creating Pathways for Resilience and Independence. Preparation, developing actions, advocating, and accessing resources are critical to building sustainable success. But how does one even begin to formulate these things, especially if there are intellectual or developmental challenges co-occurring with mental health challenges. Can these persons and their caregivers be empowered and make informed choices? The answer is yes; but often there are assumptions and stereotypes made. Dr. Stacey Dixon notes three key factors; commitment, radical acceptance, and patience. Together these help individuals form the foundations of establishing a sense of “home”. All Pathways lead home. We all think of our homes as a safe place from which we can grow independence and resilience. Today we will teach participants how to empower parents and caregivers, advocate for actionable requests, learn about innovations in supports, and navigate accessing resources. Building rapport with decision-makers, collaborating, and understanding divergence will be explored as elements of resilience approaches. Employment and education serve at different points in someone’s life to begin building this pathway. Along the highway from childhood to adulthood there are stops to learn how to emotionally regulate, adapt, and discover individuality. We hope to dispel myths, and build on values and perspectives. Our panel will address questions related to empowerment, sustainability, and definitions of success on the road to resilience and independence.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This event is relevant for clinical professionals (psychologists, social workers, case managers, certified developmental disability nurses, certified family support specialists, behavior analysts, etc.), residential providers, educators, caregivers, families, and persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS

This program was approved by the National Association of Social Workers – Tennessee Chapter (Provider Number: NASWTN 2023 – 0132) for 6 continuing education units. The National Association of Social Workers Tennessee Chapter is committed to conducting all activities in conformity with the National Association of Social Workers and the American Psychological Association’s Ethical Principles for Psychologists and maintains responsibility for this program and its contents. In this conference, there are a total of 12 possible trainings available; however, the maximum number of trainings any single participant can attend is 6 due to the overlapping schedule for breakout sessions. In order to receive 1 hour of CE credit for any training, the virtual participant must log in on time, remain logged in throughout the training, and complete the post-training evaluation afterwards. Technical challenges that prevent continuous access will be handled on a case-by-case basis with the emphasis being placed on ensuring that the participant was able to satisfy the learning objectives. The in-person participant must also check-in on time, and remain present throughout the training, and complete the post-training evaluation afterwards. Partial credit for any individual training is not available. For the whole conference, the maximum number of CE credits available for any single participant is 6. Therefore, participants may earn as little as 1 hour of CE credit and as much as 6 hours of credit. The same policy applies to the remaining professional disciplines regarding logging in and out of sessions virtually.

Psychologists: As stated within the rules and regulations of the Tennessee Board of Examiners in Psychology (1180 -01-.08(2)(B)) this program provides up to 6 hours of falling under the category of formal activities which are psychological in nature, provide documentation of attendance, and have a preassigned number of CE credits sponsored by a recognized and relevant state professional credentialing body. CE certificates will be provided by TN-NADD on behalf of NASWTN. CEUs are also available through DDNA, case management, certified family support specialists, and behavior analysts. *Total CEUs for behavior analysts through the BACB are two (2).

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants are asked to be aware of the need for privacy and confidentiality throughout the program. If the program becomes stressful, participants are encouraged to process these feelings during discussion periods. If there are any immediate issues of concern, please let a TN-NADD Board member on site know so your concern can be addressed.

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

TN-NADD and the Inn at Opryland are happy to accommodate special needs requests. We ask that you contact us using the information below at least one week prior to the event to ensure sufficient time to make any necessary arrangements. The Inn at Opryland is a fully compatible ADA venue. Please ask an Inn at Opryland staff member or a TN-NADD Board member if there is an immediate need onsite during the day of the conference.

FEEDBACK

Your Feedback is critical to us. We want to hear from you regarding how we did. By providing feedback you help us know what worked and what changes are needed for future conferences. Please take a minute to complete the conference evaluation and completing the conference survey.

OVERALL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how to create sustainable success in independence from childhood to adulthood for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities
2. Identify ways to support personal struggles with loving actions by using available resources
3. Apply the techniques learned to envision lives wherein professional and personal intersections in real-life situations create pathways for resilience

8:00AM – 8:10AM

Welcome

John Weston, President of TN-NADD

8:10AM – 8:20AM

Opening Statement

Jeanne Farr, President of NADD

8:30AM – 9:30AM**100: Keynote Address**

All Pathways Lead Home: Creating Resilience and Independence Through Diversion–

Dr. Stacey Dixon, MHA, PhD, President, Project Transition and Person-Centered Supports

Instructional Level: Intermediate

For people with long histories of hospitalization and incarceration, learning how to establish and maintain a stable sense of home in the community is a daunting task. Responses to trauma often lead them back to the settings that are familiar, even when those settings create more trauma. Helping them to envision a life without community-disruptive events requires a commitment to diverting attempts to seek higher levels of care, radical acceptance of where they are in the process, immense patience as they experience opportunities to increase their resilience and independence, and building a life worth living in the community.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn how higher levels of care can create trauma and strengthen trauma-responses
2. Identify 3 ways a provider can increase the likelihood of diversion home during pre-crisis and crisis events
3. Understand how to process “lessons learned” from crisis events with staff and the person supported in order to build resilience

9:30AM – 9:40AM**Break****9:40AM – 10:40AM****Breakout Sessions**

101: Love Is a Verb: Putting Radical Acceptance Into Action -

Dr. Stacey Dixon

Instructional Level: Intermediate

We are taught as mental health care providers to be cautious in telling the people we support that we love them. But why? Codes of Ethics are intended to protect our members from relationships that can be used to manipulate, coerce, or exploit them – and rightly so. But supporting someone in their own home with their daily lives and personal struggles involves many loving actions. What do we lose in learning opportunities when we do not label love correctly? Radical acceptance offers us a means to teach loving behaviors in an ethical manner

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn what radical acceptance is and is not.
2. Identify how and when to label actions as love when teaching skills for independence and resilience.
3. Learn how “love” may be the missing piece in diversion during crisis events.

201: The Art of Resilience, Creating an Individual Masterpiece

Rachel Kornowski

Instructional Level: Introductory

Resilience is an essential skill for progress, well-being, and sustainable success. This presentation explores the concept of resilience, both in theory and in practice. From there, we'll drill down into the foundational elements that support resilient approaches and actions, such as adaptability, emotional regulation, and objective planning. Finally, we'll focus on effective strategies for building and maintaining resilience, using tools and examples that participants can apply in real-life situations—whether in personal development, leadership roles, or team environments. Participants will walk away with a grounded understanding of resilience and a toolkit for constructing it with intention and quality.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn to explain the concept of resilience.
2. Discover how to support resilience by understanding fundamental steps
3. Learn how to implement effective strategies for high-quality construction of resilience

301: Psychological Testing with Children and Adolescents Diagnosed With Dual Diagnosis

Dr. Uduakobong Ikpe

Instructional Level: Intermediate

Robust and effective support plans are developed with the collaboration of an invested circle of support. The implementation of psychological testing and assessment is an important part of determining the functioning levels and areas of need and strength for those plans. This presentation will focus on the various areas of assessment that are commonly addressed for the child and adolescent population with dual diagnoses. Time will be spent introducing several commonly utilized assessment tools for the population and to discuss special considerations to address when working with this group. Common recommendations, important take-aways from testing and potential follow-up will be discussed.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn common areas of assessment for children and adolescents with possible dual diagnoses.
2. Be able to identify three common tests administered to possible dual diagnoses youth.
3. Be able to discuss at least two special considerations when administering assessments with and making recommendations for children and adolescents.

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11:00AM – 12:00PM

Breakout Sessions

102: Bridges, Not Barriers: Supporting Neurodivergent Resilience and Growth

Dr. NaRicia Futrell

Instructional Level: Intermediate

In a world that has becoming increasingly more aware of neurodivergence, there is still more work to be done in increasing knowledge and insight into the need for independence, resilience and growth. There have been longstanding barriers to first understanding neurodivergence and its various presentations in

individuals. As we see those barriers being knocked down, we are now faced with tackling the barriers of understanding how to promote independence for individuals requiring our support.

Learning Objectives:

1. Define neurodivergence and describe from a strength-based and trauma-informed approach how to support resilience and independence
2. Identify a minimum of three strategies for prompting meaningful independence
3. Recognize systemic and interpersonal barriers to independence and resilience

202: Sex Education as a Pathway to Independence and Quality of Life Improvement

Dr. Shane Spiker

Instructional Level: Intermediate

Sexuality education and behavior analysis have a unique intersection when it comes to independence and quality of life improvements. However, the term “sexuality education” comes with its own set of unique competencies, connotations, and misconceptions that may prevent well-trained behavior analysts from working within this space. In this talk, Dr. Spiker will make the argument that sexuality education and behavior analysis have a common values and outcomes perspectives. The goal of this talk is to encourage behavior analysts to receive additional training in sexuality education and identify intersections among our work and the work of sexuality practitioners as well as to dispel myths about our current scope of practice.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify key features of sexuality education and behavior analysis
2. Clarify shared values sets and perspectives across both professions
3. Review case examples of sexuality education and behavior analysis overlap
4. Discuss ethical implications related to the intersection of sexuality and behavior analysis
5. Determine next steps for ethical, effective, and comprehensive sexuality education practices within behavior analytic work

302: Your Guide on the Pathway to Community Resources

Linda Brown and Sheena Adams-Avery

Instructional Level: Introductory

Navigating support services for individuals with a dual diagnosis can be difficult, so attend this session to learn how Tennessee Disability Pathfinder can make it easier. Pathfinder is considered a premier hub for disability information and can help you navigate the path to finding and accessing resources for individuals’ specific needs. Through collaboration with state agencies and non-profit organizations, Pathfinder offers one-on-one assistance to individuals, an interactive website of information, and educational opportunities. Pathfinder is here to guide you in creating ‘pathways for resilience and independence.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn three reasons why Pathfinder is considered a statewide hub of disability information
2. Discover how to obtain one-on-one assistance in finding and accessing services for individuals with a dual diagnosis by contacting Pathfinder's uniquely qualified staff.

3. Determine how to locate services, resources, and events throughout the state by using Pathfinder's website.

12:00PM – 1:15PM

Lunch

12:45PM – 1:15PM

TN-NADD Annual Membership Meeting

1:15PM – 2:15PM

103: Plenary Address

There is No IEP For Life — Challenges Faced by Children and Young Adults with IDD

Dr. John Kupfner, MD, Department Chair and Outpatient Medical Director at Peninsula Hospital

Instructional Level: Intermediate

Dr. Kupfner will discuss identification and development of children who have comorbid intellectual disabilities and psychiatric or behavioral disturbances, and the challenges in their transition to adulthood and achieving their highest level of independence. He will review social, family, psychological and medical psychiatric barriers.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify challenges faced by children with ID and comorbid psychiatric or behavioral symptoms at home and school
2. Identify current mitigating treatments in childhood including IEP plans and behavior plans in the home.
3. Identify the specific challenge this population faces as moving into adulthood and attempting to achieve maximum independence.

2:15PM – 2:35PM

Break

2:35PM – 3:35PM

Breakout Sessions

104: How Support Staff Help Pave The Way for Individuals with Dual Disabilities to be Independent and Important Members of Society

Brandie Wilson, BCBA and Jessica Thompson

Instructional Level: Intermediate

There are many challenges when working with individuals with dual disabilities as support staff. Despite its complexity it is important and rewarding work especially when the appropriate and meaningful support are part of the pathway. The presenters' goal is to provide some of this guidance to encourage more practitioners to work with individuals with dual disabilities to help these individuals be successful, important members of our community. The objectives of this presentation are about supporting client dignity by teaching self-advocacy skills, setting up individuals with dual disabilities

for success with collaboration, and setting attainable goals that are client focused and significant.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify how to support client dignity by teaching self-advocacy skills
2. Learn how to set up individuals with dual disabilities for success through collaboration.
3. Explore how to set attainable goals that are client focused and significant

204: HCBS Employment Services Overview

John Camperlino

Instructional Level: Introductory

Tennessee has seen great progress through its LTSS programs aiding those seeking employment. My session will offer an overview and detailed description of available options and program advancements for those within the ECF CHOICES and CHOICES LTSS programs seeking assistance with achieving their employment goals.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn what LTSS employment services are and “paint a picture” of how they can help.
2. Explain the latest innovations and advancements in LTSS employment programs
3. Identify the employment first philosophy and the benefit of informed choice

304: Effective Advocacy

Michelle Reeves

Instructional Level: Introductory

Effective advocacy empowers parents and caregivers to navigate school meetings and interactions professionally to achieve the best outcomes for the children. It emphasizes the importance of preparation, including identifying key messages, building rapport with decision-makers, and making clear, actionable requests. Success often hinges on participants’ understanding of the student’s needs and the details of their IEP or 504 Plan.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn the functions of an advocate
2. Identify the three categories of most disputes
3. Know why it is important to ask questions and listen to the answers

3:45PM – 4:45PM

105: Panel Discussion

Building a Highway Needs Tools and Construction Workers For an Efficient Pathway

Diana Spencer, Rebecca Graham, Dr. Bruce Davis, Lorie Golden

Instructional Level: Introductory

We have learned many many tools are needed in our toolboxes to build a highway: collaboration, follow-up, planning, commitment, patience, and understanding. These all “appear” to be simple concepts but are they? Are they equal or more difficult when using them to seek resilience and independence with someone with IDD and a co-occurring mental health diagnosis. Do we need bulldozers and excavators as well for the “bigger jobs”? How does one create effective support plans, sustainable success. learning opportunities, and relationships? We have drilled down to the foundational elements needed to create this highway; an efficient pathway leading home. We have discovered creating a pipeline between individuals, leadership, and teams is critical to planning. Highways are complex, they have intersections and hubs. As persons travel along this highway, they might need to adapt to a detour sign, navigate a fork in the road, prepare for a traffic jam, or collide with a misconception. But building the highway is worth the risk. When the highway is completed, emotions become regulated, acceptance is had, persons are empowered, and perspectives are heard. The highway makes it easier to travel interactively with friends, family and supporters. The panel will address questions related to the tools and machines needed to build a sustainable highway and how they have used them effectively and efficiently to make actionable requests and advancements.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand building a highway requires tools and workers collaborating to make advancements in resilience
2. Identify ways to navigate working with leadership and teams to use tools effectively and efficiently
3. Recognize factors others have used in planning blueprints so perspectives are heard and successful adaptations made

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Sheena Adams-Avery is a powerhouse in media communications and community engagement, with 20+ years of experience spanning print, TV, digital, public relations, and crisis management. As Communications Manager for Pathfinder, she drives branding, digital strategy, and serves as managing editor of The Compass, while supporting trainings and special projects. A Certified Trainer in Community Engagement, Cultural Awareness & Belonging, and a Plain Language Expert, Ms. Adams-Avery inspires clear, meaningful conversations on complex topics. Ms. Adams-Avery loves globetrotting and lives with her husband and toy poodle. She has two creative sons and three beloved “glam children” who lovingly call her Coco.

Linda Brown serves as a Statewide Information & Referral Coordinator for Tennessee Disability Pathfinder. She assists people with disabilities, their family members, community and professional support partners find and access resources, support and services available to meet their needs. She has served on numerous councils and boards to stay up to date with the latest information involving the world of disability. Ms. Brown is the parent of an adult son with autism, and they have been navigating the disability world since her son was two years of age.

John Camperlino has dedicated over a decade to the disability employment field in Tennessee, serving in various roles such as job coach, job developer, and employment specialist. He began his career with MillarRich LLC as a lifestyle coach for the IDD population, where he discovered his passion for employment advocacy. This led to the establishment of the agency's first supported employment

department, aimed at helping individuals secure meaningful job opportunities. In 2017, Mr. Camperlino joined UnitedHealthcare's inaugural ECF CHOICES team as an employment specialist. There, he played a pivotal role in developing internal systems and promoting an "Employment First" mindset throughout the health plan. Currently, Mr. Camperlino serves as UnitedHealthcare's Employment Strategy Director, focusing on innovation, policy, and providing technical assistance to providers and internal teams. He resides in Franklin, TN, with his wife Sarah, their three daughters, and dog Olivia.

Dr. Bruce Davis has worked in the field of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities for 38 years. He currently serves as Deputy Commissioner of Clinical Services for the TN Department of Disability and aging. The Center for START Services recognized him for his service to people with disabilities and their families by presenting him with the William I. Gardner award in 2021. Dr. Davis has served in multiple capacities on the TN-NADD board and served as president of the NADD organization from 2021 – 2024. Dr. Davis has presented numerous papers at conferences. He is currently putting the finishing touches on a book entitled *Fellow Human Beings* which will be released later this year.

Dr. Stacey Dixon is a licensed psychologist with over 38 years of experience in both clinical and leadership positions in the fields of behavioral health and IDD. The primary focus of her work has been assisting people and their systems of support in transitioning out of high levels of care or incarceration into lives of their choosing in the community. Currently, she leads Project Transition and PCS Mental Health as we bolster and grow our array of community-based services and supports for people with behavioral health, substance use, and IDD.

Dr. NaRicia Futrell, affectionately known as Yo Favorite Slightly Hood Therapist, is the owner of Gihon Counseling Solutions. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Applied Psychology obtained from Christian Brother University, a Master's of Science in Social Work and later a Doctorate in Social Work. Dr. Futrell is currently licensed to practice in Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi. She is a certified Substance Abuse Professional, trained in the Trauma-Conscious Yoga Method, and a certified meditation and yoga instructor. Dr. Futrell is also an author. Her latest book, *Red Flag Diaries*, is a self-help guide exploring attachment styles, intimacy, and real-life stories of navigating red flag relationships.

Lorie Golden is a graduate of Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville TN and holds a Master of Arts degree in Teaching. As Director of Family Support for the ARC of Davidson County & Greater Nashville, she collaborates with area non-profits agencies to build partnerships and co-organize community events. Ms. Golden oversees service plans and eligibility documentation for 550 families. She has been a legislative intern for State Representative Henri E. Brooks, a volunteer for the North Nashville community garden, and a member of the Family & Children's Services Resilient Communities Task Force.

Rebecca (Jenny) Graham holds an associate's degree in criminal justice from South College. She has been self-employed since 2013 and currently owns and manages Cowboy Shack Designs. In addition, Ms. Graham is the mother of two boys with disabilities. She has been actively involved with the Tourette's Association of America, the Celiac Disease Foundation, CVID (Common Variable Immune Deficiency) organizations, the CDG (Congenital Disorders of Glycosylation) Care and Global Alliance, and the UDNF (Undiagnosed Disease Network Foundation -Vanderbilt division).

Dr. Uduakobong Ikpe is a licensed clinical and forensic psychologist and the Psychology Director for DDA Middle Tennessee Regional Office. Dr. Ikpe also works conducting evaluations for the clinical and forensic juvenile population. Prior to joining the DDA, Dr. Ikpe worked in private practice where she conducted psychological testing and assessments on various populations including children starting at age 6. Dr. Ikpe has conducted testing for a wide range of referral questions including child custody, psychoeducational evaluation, and criminal justice related evaluations. Dr. Ikpe has presented in various areas related to clinical and forensic psychology including conducting assessments with the juvenile population, suicide prevention, and collaborative safety planning.

Rachel Kornowski was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and holds a degree in Psychology from Saint Francis University. With over 30 years of experience, she has dedicated her career to serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and dual diagnoses. Rachel currently serves as the Vice President of Capitol City Residential Health Care and is an active member of the TennCare Select Behavioral Health Advisory Committee. Her work focuses on individuals with complex behavioral support needs, including those with significant trauma histories, multiple failed placements, and co-occurring diagnoses. Rachel brings deep expertise and compassionate leadership to her advocacy and care for highly vulnerable populations.

Dr. John Kupfner has been Department Chair Peninsula, a division of Parkwest Hospital, since 2015. He has been Outpatient Medical Director at the same facility since 2012. Dr. Kupfner completed his fellowship training at the University of Virginia Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. He has made multiple appearances on WBIR, WVLT, WATE and WUOT in East Tennessee. He is also board certified as an adult psychiatrist since 2011. Dr. Kupfner has several publications and has been involved for several years coaching youth baseball and softball teams.

Michelle Reeves is a growth-driven advocate and educator specializing in mental health training, trauma-informed support, and community empowerment. With a calm, solutions-focused approach, she transform complex challenges into actionable pathways while cultivating inclusive spaces for learning and healing. Through strategic collaboration and structured communication, Ms. Reeves built trusted relationships that amplify impact and foster resilience. Recognized for integrating advocacy with tangible resources, she spearheads initiatives that exceed expectations and equip others with tools for lasting change. Whether leading trainings or supporting families, Ms. Reeves approaches each interaction with clarity, empathy, and purpose—always rooted in the belief that empowerment begins with connection.

Diana Spencer began her career in mental health in 1997 with Centerstone Mental Health (formally Highland Rim Mental Health) while completing her bachelor's degree in psychology at Middle Tennessee State University. In 2001, she joined ProLex Medical Services in Chattanooga, specializing in Applied Behavior Analysis. She became a certified Behavior Analyst with the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) in 2011 after earning her master's in forensic psychology and a post-graduate certification in Applied Behavior Analysis. Ms. Spencer also served as the Deputy Director of Operations at ProLex until 2017, focusing on high-quality care for individuals with Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities and dual mental health diagnoses. In September 2017, she became the

Assistant Superintendent of Program Services at the Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute, where she oversees patient care treatment and programs from hospital admission to discharge.

Dr. Shane T. Spiker is a BCBA-D in Ormond Beach, Florida. Dr. Spiker received his MS of Psychology in 2012 and his second MS in applied Psychology in 2016. In May 2019, he graduated with his PhD in Clinical Psychology with a concentration on instructional design. He has been providing services in the field of ABA since 2010, with the majority of his experience with autistic learners and other disabilities. Dr. Spiker specializes working with teens and adults with dangerous problem behavior, sexual behavior, and medically complex individuals in the home and community based setting. Primarily, Dr. Spiker serves as the Clinical Training and Safety Director at PBS, Corp. He previously served as the Vice President of the Sexual Behavior: Research and Practice SIG through ABAI. He has written and published several articles related to behavior analysis and practice. Additionally, Dr. Spiker serves as a co-instructor at Florida Institute of Technology, Arizona State University and Regis College, where he teaches graduate level coursework. He enjoys reading and appreciates a really good cup of coffee.

Jessica Thompson is currently the Client and Staffing Services Specialist Region Assistant in East Tennessee for Positive Behavior Supports. She holds credentials of BSW, RBT, IBT, and COTA/L.

Brandie Wilson is a behavior analyst (specialist) at Bristol Tennessee City Schools since April 2025 and has been a licensed RBT and BCaBA in Tennessee for Team PBS since 2021. She holds a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instructions and a Graduate Certificate of ABA. Ms. Wilson has been involved in numerous community service experiences including Best Buddies, Special Olympics, and the Small Miracles Therapeutic Horseback Riding Center. Ms. Wilson received the Best Buddies President of the Year for Tennessee award in 2013. She has also been a presenter at the Tennessee Applied Behavior Analysis conference.