



COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE CONFERENCE

25th Annual Conference

October 2-3, 2025
Sioux Falls Convention Center
SDCPCM.com/Conference

OVERVIEW

The conference steering committee welcomes you to the 25th Annual Community Response to Child Abuse Conference.

This conference includes national and regional speakers that will address a wide variety of topics in order to help professionals and the general public better understand child abuse prevention and response efforts.

Who Should Attend?

Join the effort to end child maltreatment. This conference is ideal for:

Medical Providers
Nurses
Legal Community
Behavioral Health

Social Workers
Law Enforcement
Business Community
Educators

Counselors
Community Advocates
Dental Professionals
Students

Event Details

Thursday, October 2
7:30 am check-in
8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Breakfast, lunch, and snacks provided

Friday, October 3
7:30 am check-in
8:00 am - 12:15 pm
Breakfast and snack provided

Sioux Falls Convention Center
1201 N West Avenue
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

Conference Highlights

- 15+ unique breakout sessions provided by local and regional leaders.
- 4 general sessions feature local and national experts and current best-practices.
- In 2024, 500 attendees gathered from 40 South Dakota communities and 4 area states.
- 9+ hours of continuing education credits available.

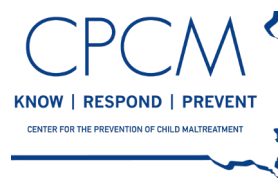
Sponsorship Opportunities

As a sponsor of the Community Response to Child Abuse Conference, you support the multidisciplinary professionals across our state as they support the effort to end child maltreatment in South Dakota. Conference attendees gain access to best practices to better respond to and prevent child maltreatment and to foster resilience in children and families.

CEUs Are Available

- Approved CEUs will be listed at SDCPCM.COM/CONFERENCE/CEUS.
- A transcribed 1-credit course through University of South Dakota is available for this year's conference, additional cost applied, with an August 31 registration deadline.

CONFERENCE HOSTS



SPONSORS



EXHIBITORS

Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment

Child's Voice - Sanford Health

SD Department of Social Services, Child Protection Services

University of South Dakota, School of Health Sciences

SD Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault

All About U Adoptions

Kinship South Dakota

South Dakota SAVIN

Perimeter Healthcare

SD Department of Education
South Dakota Parent Connection Inc.

Delta Dental of South Dakota Foundation

The Gathering Well

LSS of SD

SD Department of Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health

Southeast Technical College

Children's Home Society

University of South Dakota, Graduate Admissions

Children's Advocacy Centers of South Dakota

Royal Family Kids Camp

Helpline Center

Native Child Advocacy Resource Center

Sanford Children's CHILD Services

South Dakota DSS Medicaid/
Juvenile Justice Targeted Case Management

South Dakota Kids Belong

Sioux Falls Area CASA

Rising Hope Counseling, LLC

University of South Dakota,
Center for Disabilities

Call to Freedom

Foster605

Avera SANE

SD Department of Health

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Thursday, October 2

7:30 to 8:00	Check-In: Breakfast, Exhibitors
8:00 to 9:45	Opening General Session: Exhibit Hall 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chief Justice Welcome Message• Drum Group and Dance Sharing; Inyan Hocoka Singers from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe• <i>Be the Difference: Belonging is the Support We Need</i>; Gaelin Elmore
9:45 to 10:00	Break: Exhibitors in Ballroom A
10:00 to 11:00	Breakout Sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Room 7 <i>Safeguarding Your Youth-Serving Organization</i>; Jessica Broullire and Tifanie PetroRoom 10 <i>Forgotten Victims</i>; Amanda LieblRoom 12 <i>Honoring Lakota Ways to Protect and Uplift Children</i>; Damon Leader ChargeRoom 13 <i>TBRI®: Bringing Healing through Connection</i>; Cara DeHaanBallroom B <i>Pathways to Support: Connecting People and Services in SD's Behavioral Health System</i>; Part 1 Panel Discussion
11:00 to 11:15	Refuel & Recharge Break: Snack and Exhibitors in Ballroom A
11:15 to 12:30	Breakout Sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Room 7 <i>Child and Family Services Review: Program Improvement Planning</i>; Ashley AsmusRoom 10 <i>Life Cycle of a Forensic Evidence Kit: From Collection to Courtroom</i>; Nancy Free and Kristina FryerRoom 12 <i>Applying Brain Science to Work as Frontline Professionals</i>; Audra FullertonRoom 13 <i>Sensory Environments and Activities to Support Regulation through Healing</i>; Shana CernyBallroom B <i>Pathways to Healing: Trauma-Informed Treatment Approaches in SD</i>; Part 2 Panel Discussion
12:30 to 1:30	General Session: Exhibit Hall 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lunch• Outstanding Service Award Presentation
1:30 to 2:45	Breakout Sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Room 5 <i>Utilizing Tribal ICWA and CPS Task Forces and States of Emergency for Optimal Outcomes and to Exercise Sovereignty: A Case from the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the ICWA Coalition of Sioux Tribes</i>; Alicia Mousseau, Susan Schrader, Jessica Morson, and Shaina JohnsonRoom 7 <i>Community in Action: Creative Prevention Strategies for Safer, Healthier Youth</i>; Huron and Wagner CommunitiesRoom 10 <i>Primary Prevention: Businesses for Babies</i>; Panel DiscussionRoom 12 <i>Trauma-Informed Social Policy</i>; Tallie CasanovaRoom 13 <i>Mastering the Stand: Best Practices for Testifying as an Expert Witness in Criminal Trials</i>; Sarah ThorneBallroom B <i>Understanding the Building Blocks of Attachment</i>; Karen Rieck
2:45 to 3:00	Refuel & Recharge Break: Snack and Exhibitors in Ballroom A
3:00 to 4:30	General Session: Exhibit Hall 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The Belonging Need: Understanding Belonging to Go from Surviving to Thriving</i>; Gaelin Elmore

Friday, October 3

7:30 to 8:00	Check-In: Breakfast in Exhibit Hall 2, Exhibitors in Ballroom A
8:00 to 9:15	General Session: Exhibit Hall 2 <i>Parenting Pathways: Real Talk with Real Providers</i> ; Department of Social Services Panel Discussion
9:15 to 9:30	Break: Exhibitors in Ballroom A
9:30 to 10:45	Breakout Sessions Room 7 <i>Human Resilience, Regulation, and Laughter Yoga</i> ; Aiveen Martin Room 10 <i>Building Developmental Relationships with Vulnerable Youth</i> ; Ali Teesdale and Dana Martens Room 12 <i>Advocacy and Legal Support for Families and Children</i> ; Elizabeth Rosenbaum Ballroom B <i>From First Call to Final Verdict: A Multidisciplinary Response to Child Sexual Abuse</i> ; Panel Discussion
10:45 to 11:00	Break: Exhibitors in Ballroom A
11:00 to 12:15	Closing General Session: Exhibit Hall 2 <i>Hope in Action: Turning Struggle into Strength</i> ; Tifanie Petro Door Prize Drawing and Snack

CONFERENCE DETAILS

Visit the Exhibits

Thursday, October 2 - 7:30am to 3:00pm
Friday, October 3 - 7:30am to 11:00am

As you enter the Exhibitor area, grab a door prize drawing entry card and complete the door prize drawing entry by visiting and learning from our exhibitors. Place completed cards in the drop box in the Exhibitor area by 10:00am on Friday, October 3 to be entered into the door prize drawings to be held leading up to and during the Closing General Session.

Outstanding Service

The Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment annually presents the Outstanding Service Award during the Community Response to Child Abuse Conference. This award is presented to an individual who has made a great impact in the response to or prevention of child abuse in South Dakota. Congratulations to this year's nominees: Megan Breitag, Lutheran Social Services of SD; Jen Canton, Avera Health; Jacqueline Hendry, SDPB; Jackie Horton, First Circuit CASA; Tim Reed, SD Legislature; and Hollie Strand, Pennington County Sheriff's Office.

Certificate of Attendance

For those participants requiring a self-reported, general certificate of attendance (not for CEU purposes), please pick this up at the registration table at any time.

Technology

To access wifi, select Midco, no password needed. Two charging stations are located in the concourse. Share conference participation online using the hashtags #CRCAC25 and #KnowRespondPrevent.

Quiet Room

Room is intended for those who may need to step away from the heavy content. A counselor is available by request for conference attendees who may need help processing conference information. Access instructions will be posted in the room. Please note: the Quiet Room is not to be used for a breakroom, phone calls or computer work.

Nursing Pod

A Sanford Nursing Pod is available near the Arena doors.

WELCOME REMARKS

Opening Session Welcome Message

Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen



Chief Justice Jensen was appointed to the Supreme Court by Governor Dennis Daugaard. He was sworn in on November 3, 2017. Chief Justice Jensen was selected by his colleagues on the Court to serve as Chief Justice beginning in January, 2021. He was reelected to a second, four-year term as Chief Justice beginning Jan. 6, 2025. Chief Justice Jensen represents the Fourth Supreme Court District consisting of Union, Clay, Yankton, Hutchinson, Hanson, Davison, Bon Homme, Douglas, Aurora, Charles Mix, Gregory, McCook, Turner and Lincoln Counties. Justice Jensen grew up on a farm near Wakonda, South Dakota. He received his undergraduate degree from Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1985 and his Juris Doctor from the University of South Dakota School of Law in 1988. He clerked for Justice Richard W. Sabers on the South Dakota Supreme Court before entering private practice in 1989. In 2003, Chief Justice Jensen was appointed as a First Judicial Circuit Judge by former Governor Mike Rounds. He became the Presiding Judge of the First Judicial Circuit in 2011. Chief Justice Jensen served as chair of the Unified Judicial System's Presiding Judges Council, president of the SD Judges Association, and has served on other boards and commissions. In 2009, Chief Justice Jensen was appointed as a Judicial Fellow to the Advanced Science and Technology Adjudication Resource Center in Washington D.C. Justice Jensen and his wife, Sue, have three children and three grandchildren.

GENERAL SESSIONS

Be the Difference: Belonging is the Support We Need

Gaelin Elmore, Speaker, Trainer and Belonging Expert

What determines if an individual is a "success" story or a "cautionary" tale? Is it talent? Is it resilience or grit? Is it simply luck? Gaelin Elmore knows that stories of caution and success have more things in common than we'd care to admit. He knows because he lived it. Mr. Elmore's powerful story has motivated and inspired thousands, but instead of using his story to focus on "success," he uses it to shed light on the importance of belonging and "support." Throughout this keynote, attendees will be challenged and inspired to be individuals who CARE about belonging, because belonging is 'the difference' between a story of success and a tale of caution.

The Belonging Need: Understanding Belonging to Go from Surviving to Thriving

Gaelin Elmore, Speaker, Trainer and Belonging Expert

Belonging is a crucial, innate need that influences our daily decisions, motivation, problem-solving, and overall well-being. Genuine belonging fosters resilience and positive health outcomes in us, and those that we serve. This workshop addresses the power of belonging through the 4-directional model; internal, horizontal, vertical, and external. This workshop will empower participants to embrace belonging and bridge the gap for others while offering a fresh perspective and intention for impactful work.



Gaelin Elmore is a dynamic and nationally sought-after keynote speaker, trainer, and thought leader. He works with organizations and people to become belonging-informed in order to help children overcome trauma and unleash their potential. Gaelin's passion and energy for his work stems from his heart for justice and his own lived experience. His own belonging journey has led Gaelin to the National Football League, and now stages, board rooms, and organizations, all across the country, aiming to inspire, encourage, and equip others to think differently about their work and its long-term impact on others. Gaelin now lives in Burnsville, MN, where he gets to experience the purest form of belonging as a husband to his wife, Micaela, and dad to their three children, Laniah, Tatum, and Gideon!

Parenting Pathways: Real Talk with Real Providers

Nancy Rather, Community Programs Coordinator, Sanford Health

Lisa Blake, Instructor, Common Sense Parenting

Keith Ferguson, Family Engagement Learning Specialist, Black Hills Special Services Cooperative

Kari Ewalt, Trainer, Positive Indian Parenting

Connie Hermann, Information and Training Specialist, Black Hills Special Services Cooperative

Parenting education is a powerful tool for breaking cycles, building resilience, and fostering strong, connected families—even in the most challenging circumstances. This dynamic panel brings together a diverse group of parenting education providers who deliver impactful programming across a range of settings and cultural contexts. Panelists represent curricula and approaches including parenting for incarcerated individuals, father-focused programming, Positive Indian Parenting, Common Sense Parenting, and faith-based education models.

Nancy Raether is a Community Programs Coordinator at Sanford Children's CHILD Services in Sioux Falls, SD. Nancy has a degree in Human Development, Child and Family Studies from South Dakota State University. A Parenting Educator for thirteen years, Nancy has worked with parents and caregivers in a wide variety of situations and stages of parenting. Her five children and husband have been the best teachers she could ask for and continue to feed her passion for helping parents and caregivers in need.

Keith Ferguson is a Family Engagement Learning Specialist for the Community & Family Services division of Black Hills Special Services Cooperative. He holds a bachelor's degree in Comprehensive Recreation with a Minor in Coaching from Chadron State College and will complete his Certification as a Certified Athletic Administrator through the NIAAA in the Summer of 2024. Keith focuses on meeting families where they are and empowering them to actively participate in their children's educational journeys. Keith resides in Rapid City and loves spending time with his daughter, Abbie. They are both avid bowlers, and Keith is a self-proclaimed sports enthusiast who enjoys playing Fantasy Football.

Kari Ewalt is an Independent Contractor with South Dakota Department of Social Services providing Positive Indian Parenting classes as well as Positive Indian Parenting Train the Trainer workshops. Her past experience includes 10+ years working for the Bureau of Indian Education Family and Child Education (FACE) Program at Enemy Swim Day School. In the FACE Program, she worked as a Parent Educator, going into family's homes and assisting with early childhood education goals. Kari also spent several years as an Adult Education/Family Engagement Instructor for the program.

Connie Hermann MA, Information and Training Specialist for Black Hills Special Services Cooperative. Connie has a passion to help families and has provided services to families in South Dakota for 38 years. Instructs parenting classes and helps oversee the 15 contract sites for the state.

Hope in Action: Turning Struggle into Strength

Tifanie Petro, Victim Services Director, Pennington County State's Attorney's Office

Hope isn't some fluffy ideal, it's not a wish or a dream of something that is yet to come...hope is measurable and buildable skill rooted in psychology and neuroscience. Hope is also not a luxury that only some get to experience, it's a necessity that each person needs to thrive. The Science of Hope shows us that while setting goals is important, it's not enough. To move forward, we must identify barriers and build real pathways that lead to meaningful change.

Together, we'll explore the core components of hope—goals, pathways, and agency—and how individuals and communities can use this framework to transform adversity into opportunity. Together, we'll shift the narrative from surviving to thriving, starting with the belief that we can get there from here.

Tifanie Petro, MS, serves as the Victim Services Director at the Pennington County State's Attorney's Office. Tifanie collaborates with partners across the state by serving on boards, task forces, leading legislative advocacy efforts, and facilitating community partner meetings. Tifanie delivers prevention and awareness trainings to professionals, community agencies, and the general public in the areas of serving victims of crime and trauma related topics at local, state, national, and international speaking engagements. Tifanie believes that by empowering children, families, and individuals that we can create self-healing communities. Tifanie received her BS degree in Psychology from Black Hills State University, her MS in Public Health from Capella University, Minnesota and her MS in Human Services from Capella University, Minnesota.



TOPICS & PRESENTERS

Breakout Session 1: Thursday, 10:00 to 11:00

Safeguarding Your Youth-Serving Organization

Jessica Broullire, Child Advocacy Center Assistant Director, Children's Home Society

Tifanie Petro, Victim Services Director, Pennington County State's Attorney's Office

Navigating the safety and well-being of children should be our community's top priority! When it comes to hiring, staffing, and safety policies around the prevention of child sexual abuse it can be challenging to know where to start. This session will explore the dynamics of child sexual abuse prevention in youth-serving organizations, best practices for interviewing of candidates, and tools and application for how to complete and assessment on your organization. Attendees will leave with information and tools to start their evaluation process!

Our program will rely on the research-based curriculum of Enough Abuse, of which one of the trainers is a Master Trainer in the Curriculum. We will provide information and tools about prevention of child sexual abuse within youth serving organizations and provide insight on policies and procedure



Jessica Broullire serves as the Education Specialist/Community Navigator for Children's Home Child Advocacy Center. Jessica provides trauma informed education from parents to professionals from across the region. Jessica also provides education at local, state, and international events. Jessica also works with children and their caregivers who are seeking services due to allegations of child maltreatment. Jessica has dedicated her entire career to advocating for the wellbeing of children, firmly believing that keeping children safe is a community responsibility.



Tifanie Petro, MS, serves as the Victim Services Director at the Pennington County State's Attorney's Office. Tifanie collaborates with partners across the state by serving on boards, task forces, leading legislative advocacy efforts, and facilitating community partner meetings. Tifanie delivers prevention and awareness trainings to professionals, community agencies, and the general public in the areas of serving victims of crime and trauma related topics at local, state, national, and international speaking engagements. Tifanie believes that by empowering children, families, and individuals that we can create self-healing communities. Tifanie received her BS degree in Psychology from Black Hills State University, her MS in Public Health from Capella University, Minnesota and her MS in Human Services from Capella University, Minnesota.

TBRI®: Bringing Healing through Connection

Cara DeHaan, M Ed, TBRI® Practitioner, Executive Director, The Gathering Well

TBRI® (Trust-Based Relational Intervention®) is a trauma-informed approach designed to help children who have experienced adversity. This presentation provides attendees with an overview of how trauma impacts children, the core principles of TBRI® (Empowering, Connecting, and Correcting), and practical strategies for building trust and fostering healing. Participants will gain insights into trauma-related behaviors and learn how to create safe, nurturing environments that promote positive change and resilience.



As an educator, children's ministry director, and life-long learner, Cara has dedicated her career to nurturing young minds and hearts. Her personal journey as an adoptive parent has deepened her understanding of trauma and resilience. She is passionate about empowering families and communities to create supportive environments where every child can thrive.

Forgotten Victims

Amanda Liebl, MA, Forensic Interviewer, Sanford Health Child's Voice

Secondary victims often endure ripple effects of trauma without formal recognition or access to treatment. This presentation explores the complex and often invisible impact of trauma on secondary victims, emphasizing their need for validation, support, and therapeutic intervention.



Amanda Liebl, MA is a Forensic Interviewer with the child advocacy center, Child's Voice at Sanford Health, in Sioux Falls, SD. As a forensic interviewer at Child's Voice, Ms. Liebl gathers a medical history in order for the provider to diagnose and treat the children when there is a concern of child maltreatment. She speaks with children regarding sexual abuse, physical abuse, witness to violence, drug endangerment, neglect, emotional maltreatment, and other concerns. Ms. Liebl provides expert testimony in child maltreatment cases, conducts trainings with multidisciplinary professionals, and provides education to community members. Ms. Liebl received her B.S. in Psychology and her M.A. in Community Agency Counseling from the University of South Dakota.

Honoring Lakota Ways to Protect and Uplift Children

Damon P. Leader Charge, Director of Tribal Outreach, University of South Dakota

Connecting children to culture is a proven protective factor. In this session, participants will explore Lakota values, gaining a deeper understanding of the reverence and sacredness of children while exploring how traditional practices promote connection, identity, and healing for Lakota children. This session will conclude with identifying ways to incorporate Lakota values into organization and community efforts.



Damon P. Leader Charge, MA, Sicangu Oglala Lakota, an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe is the director of tribal outreach for the University of South Dakota's Office of Academic Affairs and Assistant Coordinator of USD's Sanford School of Medicine's Diversity and Inclusion Offices. Damon's professional interests focus around reducing disparities among Native Americans as well as culturally grounded prevention and intervention efforts. Prior to returning to USD, Leader Charge was the director of health administration for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Other experience includes Indian education, suicide prevention, tribal legislative affairs, community outreach, and cultural humility trainings.

Pathways to Support: Connecting People and Services in South Dakota's Behavioral Health System

Nikki Eining, CSW-PIP QMHP, Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Coordinator, SD Center for Disabilities

Scott Wilson, Interim 988 Director, Helpline Center

**Amanda Kriens, Community Health Worker, Avera Behavioral Health
SD Department of Social Services; Division of Behavioral Health**

Finding the right help at the right time can be overwhelming. In this session, you'll hear from navigation experts, 211 Helpline staff, Community Health Workers, and Systems of Care representatives, who specialize in guiding individuals and families to the behavioral health resources they need. Learn how these professionals collaborate, the challenges people face when seeking care, and the opportunities we have to build a stronger, more connected system to support victims of child maltreatment and their families.



Nikki Eining is a private independent practice licensed social worker who serves as the Statewide Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program Coordinator for The University of South Dakota, Sanford School of Medicine, and owns Grace Grit Growth Counseling LLC in Brookings. Nikki brings diverse experiences and passions, spending over 19 years working in the behavioral health field. Her previous experience has focused on supporting youth and families in office, school, and community settings. She has professional experience in clinical mental health, education, research design, non-profit, program development, and trauma-informed care practices.

Scott Wilson, M.Div., is the Interim 988 Director at the Helpline Center. He spent the first part of his career as a hospice chaplain, helping individuals learn how to die well with dignity and compassion. And now, Scott helps individuals learn to live well with connection and purpose. Scott is also a published poet, avid hiker, and a blessed husband and father of two.

Amanda Kriens, CCHW (By Referral Only); Amanda provides outpatient community health worker and care management services to children, adolescents, families and adults. Her services are personalized to help those dealing with anxiety, depression, abuse, stress, cultural diversity, interpersonal issues and trauma related to sexual violence. Her practice includes brief cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness and solution-focused therapy, and helping patients find additional community resources.

TOPICS & PRESENTERS

Breakout Session 2: Thursday, 11:15 to 12:30

Applying Brain Science to Work as Frontline Professionals

Audra Fullerton, CSW, CEO, Lake House Consulting

I spent 15 years in the field of domestic violence intervention, with 9 of those spent working with offenders and folks in prison. Along the way, I learned a lot about how human brains work, and ways that our brains and our wiring can get in the way of building the life we dream of. In this session, I'll share the information that transformed the way I interact with clients and colleagues, helping me to be more efficient in my work and allowing me to take home less of the emotional baggage that often comes with this work. I'll also share a framework that you can apply to your work immediately, helping you to choose the right tool at the right time.



Audra Kelley Fullerton, LMSW, is a licensed social worker specializing in applied neurobiology in high trauma populations and frontline helping professions.

Audra has extensive experience working directly with justice-involved women and gender-diverse people, both in correctional facilities and in community-based settings. As a sought-after speaker and workshop facilitator, Audra has presented at state-level and national conferences and has facilitated workshops locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally.

Her publications include Curriculum for Justice-Involved Women & Gender-Diverse People: A Trauma-focused Approach to Heal Trauma and Support Healthy Relationships and its supplemental workbook. This professional facilitator's guide was published in 2022 by the Family Peace Initiative in Topeka, Kansas.

Audra also has experience in the nonprofit field as an arts presenter, board member of multiple community organizations, and co-founder of the nonprofit #BeMoreLikeClaire.

Sensory Environments and Activities to Support Regulation through Healing

Shana Cerny, OTD, OTR/L, BCP, University of South Dakota

Everyone processes sensory information, manages emotions, interacts with their surroundings, and engages in activities in unique ways. Our life experiences, relationships, and biology shape how we perceive sensory input and develop strategies to regulate it. When trauma or repeated stress responses occur, and our sensory system becomes primed for survival. This response is protective and beneficial in dangerous situations. However, once the danger has passed, individuals who have experienced repeated trauma may struggle to feel safe again. This session will offer recommendations for creating environments and activities that help people feel safe, calm, and regulated.



Shana Cerny is an occupational therapist with board certification in pediatrics and an associate professor of occupational therapy at USD. Cerny's scholarship activities currently revolve around promoting trauma-informed care across environments and populations. This has included educating graduate students and professionals across disciplines on best practices in trauma-informed care and also providing sensory-based group and individual intervention to preschool-aged students and educators, K-12 students and educators, and individuals exiting human trafficking.



Life Cycle of a Forensic Evidence Kit: From Collection to Courtroom

Kristina Fryer, Forensic Laboratory Director, South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation Forensic Laboratory, State CODIS Administrator

Nancy Free, DO, Medical Director Child's Voice and CSDCAC, Clinical Professor, Department of Pediatrics, University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine

This presentation explores the journey of a forensic evidence kit—commonly used in sexual abuse and sexual assault cases—from initial evidence collection to final legal outcomes. The lifecycle involves trained medical personnel, law enforcement, forensic scientists, and the justice system. Key topics include proper collection procedures, chain of custody, DNA processing in state crime labs, the role of national databases like CODIS, and what happens when a DNA match is or isn't found. Through this lifecycle, we gain insight into how science and law converge to support survivors and prosecute offenders.



Kristina Fryer is the Laboratory Director of the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) Forensic Laboratory, where she leads efforts to support justice, public safety, and victim advocacy through the application of forensic science. With more than 13 years of service to the South Dakota DCI, Kristina has built a career rooted in scientific integrity, interagency collaboration, and compassion for those affected by crime. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Forensic Science from Virginia Commonwealth University, with minors in Biology and Chemistry.

Kristina began her career as a DNA analyst and later served as the State CODIS Administrator, playing a critical role in identifying suspects and connecting crimes through DNA evidence. Her responsibilities have spanned LIMS administration, grant writing, and operational planning—all focused on improving the efficiency and responsiveness of forensic services. In 2016, she was recognized with the DCI's "Civilian of the Year Award" for her pivotal role in the expedited forensic analysis of evidence in a tragic homicide case involving a pregnant mother. Her leadership helped deliver justice while reinforcing the importance of trauma-informed, victim-centered approaches in forensic investigations.

As Lab Director, Kristina is committed to strengthening partnerships with medical, advocacy, and law enforcement professionals. She prioritizes timely, high-quality forensic testing that supports survivors, informs medical-legal decisions, and advances public trust in the justice system.



Nancy Free, DO, is the Medical Director of Child's Voice Sanford USD Medical Center in Sioux Falls and Avera St. Mary's Central South Dakota Child Assessment Center in Pierre. Dr. Free is a Clinical Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine. She lives in Sioux Falls and enjoys spending time with her family.



Pathways to Healing: Trauma-Informed Treatment Approaches in South Dakota

Nikki Eining, CSW-PIP QMHP, Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Coordinator, SD Center for Disabilities
Elizabeth Milton, Tumbleweed Counseling
Erik Anderson, MSW-PIP, DPC, Sioux Falls Psychological Services
Kelsi Stricherz, LPC-MH, True Reflections Counseling

Building on the foundation of navigating behavioral health systems, this session highlights what comes next—the healing work. Join four experienced mental health care providers from diverse South Dakota communities as they share their trauma-informed approaches to care. Learn how evidence-based practices like Accelerated Resolution Therapy (ART), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Play Therapy and other interventions are being used to support children and families impacted by trauma. This session offers a deeper understanding of therapeutic modalities, how they differ, and how they can be integrated into holistic responses to child abuse and neglect.



Nikki Eining is a private independent practice licensed social worker who serves as the Statewide Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program Coordinator for The University of South Dakota, Sanford School of Medicine, and owns Grace Grit Growth Counseling LLC in Brookings. Nikki brings diverse experiences and passions, spending over 19 years working in the behavioral health field. She has professional experience in clinical mental health, education, research design, non-profit, program development, and trauma-informed care practices.

Elizabeth Milton obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Education & Human Sciences with a major in Human Development & Family Studies and her Master's of Science in Counseling and Human Resources Development with a specialty in Agency Counseling at South Dakota State University. She has 13 years of experience in the mental health field and is passionate about assisting clients through transitions of life such as adolescence or becoming a parent. Lizzy is certified to teach Bringing Baby Home workshops through the Gottman Institute. She is also certified as a Master Accelerated Resolution Therapist.

Erik Anderson, MSW-PIP, DPC is a licensed clinical social worker and Doctor of Professional Counseling with over 13 years of experience providing trauma-informed therapy to children, adolescents, and families. He specializes in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and integrates evidence-based, developmentally responsive approaches into his clinical work. Erik has worked in both inpatient and outpatient settings and has presented extensively on trauma-informed care. Erik practices at Sioux Falls Psychological Services, where he supports individuals and systems in fostering healing and resilience.

Kelsi Stricherz is the founder of True Reflections Counseling and Play Therapy in Huron, SD, a small group practice she established in March 2020. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor–Mental Health (LPC-MH) and Registered Play Therapist–Supervisor (RPT-S), and serves on the board for South Dakota Association for Play Therapy. Based in a rural community, Kelsi provides individual counseling across the lifespan, with a special emphasis on play therapy for children ages 4–12.

Child and Family Services Review: Program Improvement

Ashley Asmus, Administrator of Continuous Quality Improvement and Outcomes, SD Department of Social Services, Division of Child Protection Services

Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) are a joint federal-state initiative led by the Children's Bureau to assess and improve state child welfare systems. These reviews evaluate how well states ensure safety, permanency, and well-being for children, as well as how effectively systems function. They align with broader planning efforts, such as the Child and Family Services Plan and continuous quality improvement systems.

Following a review, states must create a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address identified challenges and achieve lasting, systemic change. This involves analyzing data and root causes, particularly disparities and inequities, and selecting evidence-based strategies to improve outcomes. SD Child Protection Services collaborates with stakeholders who provide insights and help evaluate the child welfare system's strengths and weaknesses. Their input is essential to developing a successful and inclusive improvement plan.



Ashley serves as the Administrator of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Outcomes for the South Dakota Division of Child Protection Services. She brings over 17 years of experience in child welfare, with a background that includes both direct service to children and families and broader systems-level work. Ashley has extensive experience in federal and state strategic planning, with a focus on identifying strengths and areas for improvement to ensure families receive the services needed to support positive outcomes. She is well-versed in interpreting and implementing federal laws and regulations into child welfare policy and practice.

TOPICS & PRESENTERS

Breakout Session 3: Thursday, 1:30 to 2:45

Trauma-Informed Social Policy

Tallie Casanova, LCSW, BSSW Program Director, University of South Dakota

Integrating trauma-informed principles into social policy is crucial for building systems that foster healing, resilience, and equity. This presentation will examine the intersection of trauma and policy, emphasizing how adverse experiences influence individuals' interactions with social services, healthcare, and the justice system. Attendees will learn to identify trauma-informed principles and explore practical strategies for applying them to policy development and implementation. By adopting a trauma-informed approach, policymakers can create more effective, compassionate policies that support long-term well-being for individuals and communities.



Tallie Cassanova, LCSW is a Licensed Certified Social Worker with vast practice experiences working with diverse populations. Graduating from the University of Iowa with a master's degree in social work and holding licensure in South Dakota has provided the opportunity for Tallie to utilize her skills in nursing homes, the state psychiatric hospital, program development, curriculum development, presentations across the state, and administration. Tallie is invested in the future of social work and serves as an instructor and BSSW Program Director for the University of South Dakota.

Primary Prevention: Businesses for Babies Panel Discussion

Kelsea Sutton, First Fidelity Bank
Wanda Harris, Sanford Health
Julie Waage, RAS

Primary prevention of child maltreatment connects families to resources and supports in their community. The aim of primary prevention is to prevent child maltreatment before it happens. Learn more about the power of primary prevention from South Dakota decision-makers and business leaders. This panel discussion will include: examples of primary prevention; how SD businesses and organizations can support primary prevention efforts, and economic benefits of family-forward workplace practices.



Panel members include: Kelsea Sutton, Compliance Officer and Corporate Counsel, First Fidelity Bank; Wanda Harris, Vice President of Human Resources, Sanford Health; and Julie Waage, Vice President of Human Resources, RAS.

Understanding the Building Blocks of Attachment

Karen Rieck, Family Life Education Department Coordinator, Avera Health

Understanding a child's unique abilities to form attachment with parents, guardians, and providers can greatly impact their life in a positive way. Attachment is a vital part of growth and development for all children. When children suffer from abuse and neglect their ability to connect and attach to a care provider is limited and in some cases absent. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), whether environmental, cultural or social, can have a profound impact on attachment. Learning about the styles and stages of attachment, the influences, and how to nurture a healthy attachment can potentially increase positive outcomes for children.



Mrs. Karen is the Family Life Education Dept Coordinator for Avera Family Life Education with a combined 25 years of experience working with children and families in a variety of platforms. As a lifelong learner, Mrs. Karen is currently a student as well obtaining her Master's degree in Behavioral Sciences. She has spoken at a variety of Early Childhood Conferences and events across the state of SD and most recently as a session presenter at a national conference in Dallas, TX. Karen's four children and husband of 26 years are the driving force behind her. Without them, she wouldn't be the educator she is today.

Mastering the Stand: Best Practices for Testifying as an Expert Witness in Criminal Trials

Sarah L. Thorne, J.D., MBA, Deputy Attorney General

Effective testimony as an expert witness in a criminal trial can significantly impact the outcome of a case. This presentation will highlight best practices for expert witnesses, focusing on clear communication, maintaining credibility, handling cross-examination, and staying within the scope of expertise.



Sarah Thorne is the head of the criminal appeals division at the Office of the Attorney General. She and her team review dozens of criminal cases a year with a keen eye for what was done correctly (or not). Her division's work aims to advocate for survivors of violent and non-violent crime, uphold lawful convictions, and ensure the integrity of the justice system while representing the state in appellate courts. Sarah is a wife to the coolest guy she knows and a mother of four amazing children.

Community in Action: Creative Prevention Strategies for Safer, Healthier Youth

Connie Kaufman, BSN, RN, Wagner Community Memorial Hospital-Avera

Matt Yost, Superintendent, Wagner Community School District

Kelsi Stricherz, True Reflections Counseling

Mike Keller, Suicide Prevention and Outreach Program Director, Helpline Center

Across South Dakota, communities are finding innovative ways to keep youth safe, supported, and thriving. This session will spotlight prevention efforts from Wagner and Huron, where creative partnerships and grassroots initiatives are making a difference. Learn how Wagner is engaging youth through mental health awareness campaigns, bike helmet distribution, and positive connections with law enforcement. Then hear how Huron is building strong community ties—linking schools to mental health providers, and responding to youth suicides.



Connie Kaufman BSN, RN has been a long term staff member of Wagner Community Memorial Hospital-Avera for 35 years. Connie is currently serving in the role of Clinic Manager of the Specialty Outreach Clinic, including Behavioral Health Services. In January 2022, Connie started evidenced-based prevention framework training and was instrumental in coalition building for Wagner Communities That Care (Wagner CTC). Serving as Wagner CTC coordinator, Connie collaborates to promote strong community partnerships and coordinates coalition efforts. Connie is passionate about prevention efforts that empowering youth to be resilient and successful for a stronger community!

Matt Yost has over 17 years of experience in K-12 school administration. Throughout his career, he has served as an athletic director, principal, and is currently in his fifth year as Superintendent of the Wagner Community School District. Matt is dedicated to fostering student success, supporting staff, and building strong school-community partnerships. Matt was chosen and serves as Wagner Communities That Care Champion!

Kelsi Stricherz is the founder of True Reflections Counseling and Play Therapy in Huron, SD, a small group practice she established in March 2020. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor-Mental Health (LPC-MH) and Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor (RPT-S), and serves on the board for South Dakota Association for Play Therapy. Based in a rural community, Kelsi provides individual counseling across the lifespan, with a special emphasis on play therapy for children ages 4-12.

Mike Keller is the Suicide Prevention and Outreach Program Director for the Helpline Center. His focus is on suicide prevention through mental health trainings, support programs and grief journeys for those who lost loved one's to suicide. Mike has been supporting grief survivors for nearly 30 years with a particular emphasis with Veterans and moral injury. When not at work, you can find Mike listening to music, fixing something around the house or going on lazy walks with his wife, Michelle.



TOPICS & PRESENTERS

Breakout Session 4: Friday, 9:30 to 10:45

Building Developmental Relationships with Vulnerable Youth

Ali Teesdale, Executive Director, Brookings County Youth Mentoring Program
Dana Martens, MSW, CSW-PIP, Social Worker, Brookings School District

This interactive training introduces caregivers and professionals to the evidence-based and actionable Developmental Relationships Framework developed by Search Institute, with a focus on applying it to support children who are in care or at risk of entering the child welfare system. Participants will explore how strong, intentional relationships can be a protective factor, promoting resilience, belonging, and long-term well-being. Practical tools and real-world strategies will be shared to help participants build trust, express care, and challenge growth in ways that meet the unique needs of vulnerable youth.



Ali Teesdale is the Executive Director of the Brookings County Youth Mentoring Program (BCYMP), where she leads with a commitment to youth well-being, community connection, and trauma-informed care. With a Master of Public Administration and dual Bachelor's degrees in Psychology and Communication Sciences and Disorders, Ali blends strategic leadership with a deep understanding of human development. She is also a certified presenter on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), bringing a lens of resilience and healing to her work with youth and families.

Ali joined BCYMP in 2020 and stepped into the Executive Director role in 2021. Since then, she has helped the organization grow its reach, enhance its programming, and deepen its impact in Brookings County. She has focused on strengthening partnerships, reducing waitlists, and supporting both mentors and mentees through intentional, individualized support. In addition to her nonprofit work, Ali serves as an adjunct instructor at South Dakota State University, where she teaches courses on nonprofit leadership and prepares future leaders for careers in service-driven fields. She also helps operate Teesdale Law Office, a local firm founded by her husband, Anthony, where she supports client care initiatives and community engagement efforts. Her roles reflect a lifelong dedication to empowering others and fostering meaningful change at both the individual and community level.

Ali and her husband are raising their two young children in Brookings, where they enjoy spending time together exploring local parks, the Children's Museum, and their favorite coffee spots. Whether through BCYMP, the law office, or broader community involvement, Ali remains committed to building a stronger, more connected Brookings for all.



Dana Martens is a Certified Clinical Social Worker and the sole social worker for the Brookings School District, serving students and their families from PreK through 12th grade. In this role, she provides comprehensive support for students and families facing challenges such as mental health concerns, poverty, family stress, attendance barriers, and other risk factors. She works closely with families and community agencies to connect them with vital resources, helping build stability and long-term success.

With more than nine years of experience serving South Dakota school districts—and prior work in community mental health—Martens is deeply committed to the unique impact of school-based social work. She views public education as a powerful access point for mental health and social services, particularly for students and families who might otherwise go without. By identifying at-risk students early and providing interventions within the school setting, she promotes resilience, wellbeing, and brighter futures.

A strong advocate for collaboration, Martens is an active member of multidisciplinary teams that strengthen services for both students and the wider community. As an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Interface Trainer, she equips educators and professionals with tools to better understand the effects of trauma, poverty, and mental health, fostering a more trauma-informed and resilient school community. Martens lives just outside Brookings with her husband and their four young children. She prioritizes maintaining healthy boundaries between work and home, modeling the balance needed to sustain wellbeing in an emotionally demanding profession.

Advocacy and Legal Support for Families and Children

Elizabeth Rosenbaum, Heidman Law Firm

Families involved in the child welfare system often face complex legal challenges related to custody, visitation, parental rights, and adoption. This session will introduce local and national legal aid organizations that support families navigating these issues, with a focus on culturally responsive and family-centered advocacy. Presenters will discuss the roles of family advocates, court-appointed special advocates (CASA), and legal professionals who guide families through the legal process. Attendees will also learn strategies to help families understand and assert their rights, including accessing services and accommodations, navigating private and foster care adoptions, and understanding the protections offered by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).



Elizabeth has practiced for 35 years and specializes in the areas of divorce/dissolution of marriage, custody cases and adoption. Elizabeth also provides parenting coordination, mediation, and family law arbitration services. Her primary geographical practice area is located between Sioux Falls, the Iowa Great Lakes, and Des Moines. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and a Diplomate of the American College of Family Trial Lawyers.

Elizabeth is married, has two adult children, and two grandchildren. Her free time is spent gardening, reading, kayaking, and enjoying her home on the banks of the Missouri River.

From First Call to Final Verdict: A Multidisciplinary Response to Child Sexual Abuse

Sarah L. Thorne, J.D., MBA, Deputy Attorney General
Amanda Eden, Senior Deputy State's Attorney, Lincoln County
Jonathan Carda, Retired Detective, Sioux Falls Police Department
Amanda Liebl, Forensic Interviewer, Sanford Health-Child's Voice
Shelly Hruby, Certified Nurse Practitioner, Sanford Health-Child's Voice

This panel discussion brings together key professionals who respond to child sexual abuse cases—from the initial report to courtroom resolution. Hear from a multidisciplinary team including Child Protective Services, law enforcement, a forensic interviewer, a prosecutor, and a state-level legal expert as they walk through the collaborative process that ensures a victim-centered approach. Panelists will reflect on the dynamics, communication, and coordination required at each step of a case's journey while maintaining trauma-informed care for the child and their family. The panel will explore how their shared responsibility and collaboration strengthens the system and promotes justice, without focusing on specific case details.



Panel members include: Amanda Eden, Senior Deputy State's Attorney, Lincoln County; Jonathan Carda, Retired Detective, Sioux Falls Police Department; Staff Representative, Amanda Liebl, Forensic Interviewer, Sanford Health-Child's Voice; Shelly Hruby, Certified Nurse Practitioner, Sanford Health-Child's Voice and moderated by Sarah L. Thorne, J.D., MBA, Deputy Attorney General



Utilizing Tribal ICWA and CPS Task Forces and States of Emergency for Optimal Outcomes and to Exercise Sovereignty: A Case from the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the ICWA Coalition of Sioux Tribes

Alicia Mousseau, Vice President, Oglala Sioux Tribe

Susan Schrader, CPS and ICWA Director, Oglala Sioux Tribe

Jessica Morson, Social Services Coordinator, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe

Shaina Johnson, Vice President's Office Senior Advisor, Oglala Sioux Tribe

The Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) re-established the OST Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Child Protection Services (CPS) Task Force on July 20, 2022 to proactively and consistently working on the many issues that have been continuously raised regarding ICWA and CPS. Simultaneously, the ICWA Coalition of Sioux Tribes, which is comprised of all the South Dakota tribes' ICWA directors, has been working to create change in the State to address the issues around ICWA. During this session, the individual tribal and collective efforts (i.e., legislation, rulemaking change comments, funding, etc.) will be highlighted and discussed from a best practice and sovereignty standpoint.



Alicia Mousseau, Ph.D. is in her third term as Vice President for the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Dr. Mousseau has taken on a number of local and national responsibilities in her position as Vice President including serving on the Indian Health Service Direct Service Tribes Advisory Committee, the National Institutes of Health Tribal Advisory Committee, the Administration for Children and Families Tribal Advisory Committee, the Oglala Sioux Tribe Youth Advocacy Group, and the Oglala Sioux Tribe Indian Child Welfare Act and Child Protection Services Task Force. It is Vice President Mousseau's greatest honor and privilege to collaboratively advocate and work for the health, well-being, and futures of the Oglala Lakota Nation children and families.

Jessica Morson is a dedicated advocate for children and families, with over a decade of experience serving tribal communities in South Dakota. A graduate of South Dakota State University, she has worked tirelessly to uplift underserved populations through social advocacy and systemic reform. Since 2014, Jessica has served as the Social Services Coordinator for the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, where she also holds the position of Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Director.

Throughout her tenure, Jessica's passion for Indian Child Welfare has driven her to take on leadership roles that have had meaningful impact across the state. She serves as Chairwoman of the Indian Child Welfare Act Coalition, where she collaborates with tribal and state child welfare programs, leadership and specialized workgroups to address the disproportionate representation of Native children in South Dakota's child welfare system. Jessica's work spans across local, state, and national levels, contributing to multidisciplinary teams including the Tribal/State Child Welfare Team, SD Court Improvement Project, Legislative Workgroups, FBI and Law Enforcement MDTs, Child Protection Teams and Child Welfare Taskforce. Her approach emphasizes equity, cultural respect and community empowerment.

Human Resilience, Regulation, and Laughter Yoga

Aiveen (Ryan) Martin, B.A., M.Sc., Dip CBT, CPP (CIPD), SQHP (GHR Reg), MPNLP, Laughter Yoga Professor, Educator, Consultant

What is laughter yoga and how can it be used in human resilience and regulation? This talk will explore this topic in relation to families, survivors, and the agencies that seek to support them. Laughter yoga can have a profound impact on our resilience and recovery and facilitates human connection at a very deep level, building trust and coping strategies.



Aiveen is a Wellness Consultant, Trainer, Therapist and Laughter Yoga Professor.

She has a broad-based background, including working in the private, public and voluntary (non-profit) sectors. She graduated in psychology over 30 years ago and has a Master of Science degree in Information Systems. Aiveen is qualified in various therapies and has an insatiable curiosity for what makes us tick.

Influenced by kindness, compassion, positive psychology, neuroscience, mindfulness and identifying and working from people's core narrative, inner values and strengths, she teaches relationship skills and runs a wide variety of trauma informed personal and organizational development workshops with civilian and uniformed audiences.

She is interested in innovative and preventative health approaches and teaches people about laughter yoga, which is an incredibly powerful and unique mind and body exercise routine, accessible by all ages and fitness levels.

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