

CBHACON26
December 3-4, 2026

Chicago Hilton / Oak Brook Resort,
3500 Midwest Rd, Oak Brook, IL 60523
(630) 850-5555



Day 1

7:00 am - 4:00 pm

Registration in East Foyer & Exhibit Hall in Ballrooms G-J / South Foyer

9:00 am

Welcome - Ballroom F

9:15 am – 10:15 am

Session Title: Preserving Mission in a Time of Turbulence: A Behavioral Health Leader's Roadmap

Location: Ballroom F

Session Description: Kick off CBHACon with keynote speaker Monica E. Oss, Chief Executive Officer of OPEN MINDS, as she explores the forces reshaping behavioral healthcare and what they mean for community providers. In an era of evolving Medicaid policy, financial uncertainty, workforce challenges, and healthcare transformation, Monica will provide a forward-looking perspective on the trends influencing organizational strategy and long-term sustainability.

Participants will gain practical insights into navigating change, identifying emerging opportunities, and positioning their organizations for continued success while maintaining their commitment to delivering high-quality, community-based care.

Speaker: Monica Oss, Chief Executive Officer, OPEN MINDS

10:15 am - 10:45 am

Break with Exhibitors in Ballrooms G-J / South Foyer

10:45 am - 11:45 am

Session Title: Responsible AI in CMHC's: A Practical Blueprint for Strategy, Ethics, and Implementation

Location: Mallard

Session Description: As artificial intelligence rapidly transforms healthcare, behavioral health organizations have an opportunity to improve efficiency while strengthening care delivery. Join leaders from Thresholds as they share practical lessons from developing and implementing an enterprise AI strategy within a community mental health center.

This session will provide a roadmap for responsibly adopting AI in behavioral health organizations to address workforce shortages, administrative burden, and increasing demand for care while upholding the ethical responsibilities of serving individuals with mental health and substance use disorders. Participants will learn the foundational elements of an organizational AI strategy, explore an ethical framework for evaluating AI tools that emphasize client safety, privacy, equity, transparency, human oversight, and accountability, and apply a practical prioritization model to assess feasibility, organizational impact, and implementation risk.

	Speakers: Sherin Khan, LCSW, Chief Strategy Officer & Tim Turner, MBA, VP, Business Intelligence & Data Analytics, Thresholds
10:45 am - 11:45 am	Session Title: Blueprint for Transformation: Update on Illinois' Vision for Improved Behavioral Healthcare for Illinois Children Location: Ballroom F Session Description: Since the launch of Illinois' Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative in 2022, the state has made significant progress toward building a more coordinated, equitable, and family-centered behavioral health system for children and youth. Guided by the <i>Blueprint for Transformation</i>, this work continues to shape how services are designed and delivered across Illinois. Continuing a longstanding CBHACon tradition, Dr. Dana Weiner will provide an update on the implementation of the Blueprint, highlight recent accomplishments and upcoming priorities, and engage attendees in a discussion on opportunities and challenges as the transformation effort moves forward. Speaker: Dana Weiner, Ph.D, Senior Policy Fellow, Chapin Hall
10:45 am - 11:45 am	Session Title: Sobering Care 101: A CCBHC-Era Innovation for Illinois Location: Conference Dining Session Description: Join subject matter experts from Wellbeing in Action and Good Samaritan Shelter for an introduction to the emerging sobering center model—a low-barrier, recovery-oriented service that has been recognized by SAMHSA and is now supported by CARF accreditation standards. As Illinois continues to strengthen its behavioral health crisis continuum, this session will explore how sobering centers bridge behavioral health, substance use, emergency medical services, and homelessness systems. Attendees will learn what sobering care is and is not, how the model strengthens the CCBHC crisis continuum, what the workforce model looks like, and how braided funding strategies can sustain services. Speakers: Jesse Sieger Walls, Owner & Managing Principal, Wellbeing in Action and Sylvia Barnard, Executive Director, Good Samaritan Shelter
11:45 pm - 12:15 pm	Break with Exhibitors in Ballrooms G-J / South Foyer
12:15 pm - 2:00 pm	Awards Lunch in Ballrooms A-E
2:15 pm - 3:15 pm	Session Title: Neurofeedback in Action: Proven Results for Healing Trauma Location: Conference Dining

	Session Description: Discover how Infra-Low Frequency Neurofeedback, an innovative approach to brain training, is helping transform mental health care, particularly for individuals affected by trauma. This presentation will explain what neurofeedback is, how it works, and the scientific evidence supporting its effectiveness. Attendees will also hear compelling real-world outcomes from it's use with underserved populations. Speakers: Colette Melancon, LCSW, Executive Director & Christy Johnson, QMHP, Advocacy Project Director of Membership, Neurofeedback Advocacy Project
2:15 pm - 3:15 pm	Session Title: Staff Resilience & Retention: Strengthening Organizational Connection in Turbulent Times Location: Ballroom F Session Description: A healthy, engaged workforce is essential to delivering high-quality behavioral healthcare. Join the presenters from Incite Consulting Solutions as they explore the connection between staff wellness, resilience, retention, engagement, and organizational performance. This interactive session will highlight practical, evidence-informed strategies leaders can use to strengthen workplace culture, support employee well-being, and reduce burnout. Attendees will leave with actionable tools and at least one management practice they can immediately implement to foster a more resilient and connected workforce. Speakers: Kara Sweeney Guerriero, MPH, Founder & Chief Executive Officer & Tony Zipple, MBA, Senior Consultant, Talent Optimization, INCITE Consulting Solutions
2:15 pm - 3:15 pm	Session Title: Navigating the Waters: How We Sustain and Advance Equity and Social Justice in Turbulent Times Location: Mallard Session Description: As behavioral health organizations navigate an evolving landscape, creating inclusive workplaces and advancing equitable care remain essential to organizational success and community impact. In this session, you will hear from nationally recognized leaders and experts from nonprofit organizations through a panel discussion and breakout groups. You will learn what you can do in your organization to further these conversations and lean upon your community to continue to rise to the moment. This session is brought to you through the efforts of CBHA's Race, Equity, and Justice (RESJ) Committee members Julie Rodriguez, Ellen Ross, Mitchell Sandy, and Anne McNeils. Speakers: Tonika Davenport-Tiner, MPP, Director of Racial Equity Inclusion Justice, Mark Ishaug, MA, President & Chief Executive Officer, Thresholds, & Juan Carlos Linares, President & Chief Executive Officer, Association House of Chicago
3:15 pm - 3:45 pm	Break with Exhibitors in Ballroom G-J / South Foyer

3:45 pm - 5:00 pm	Session Title: (State Panel) Leading Through Change: State Leaders on the Future of Behavioral Health Location: Ballroom F Session Description: Hear directly from leaders in Illinois State Government as they discuss the policies, initiatives, and system changes shaping the future of community behavioral healthcare in an evolving federal and state landscape. As providers navigate changes to Medicaid and other emerging challenges, panelists will discuss implementation priorities, opportunities for innovation, and the importance of continued partnership and collaboration to strengthen behavioral healthcare and ensure access to high-quality, community-based mental health and substance use services. Speakers: TBD
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Networking Reception in Ballrooms A-E
Day 2	
7:00 am - 12:00 pm	Registration in East Foyer & Exhibit Hall in Ballrooms G-J / South Foyer
8:45 am - 9:00 am	CBHA Annual Meeting in Ballroom F
9:00 am - 10:00 am	Session Title: Embracing Innovation: Building Teams that Thrive Location: Ballroom F Session Description: High-performing teams are essential to delivering high-quality behavioral healthcare. Join MTM Services as they share practical strategies for building collaborative, resilient teams that thrive in today's complex healthcare environment. Participants will learn how to break down organizational silos, strengthen cross-functional collaboration, and foster a culture of innovation that improves operational effectiveness, staff engagement, and client outcomes. Speakers: Valerie Westhead, MD, FASAM, Medical Director & Medical Operations, Care Integration and Workforce Development Consultant & Katherine Schroeder, LMHC, MCAP, QCS, Workforce Development and Process Change Consultant, MTM Consulting Services
10:00 am - 10:30 am	Break with Exhibitors in Ballroom G-J / South Foyer
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Session Title: A Heart for the Work, A Mind for the Data: The Impact Alignment Framework in Practice Location: Ballroom F

	Session Description: Join Ginger Bandeen, Founder and CEO of Mission Driven Data, as she introduces the Impact Alignment Framework—a practical approach to connecting organizational data with mission, strategy, and decision-making. Participants will learn how to use existing data to strengthen workforce planning, financial sustainability, and organizational outcomes while demonstrating impact to funders, partners, and stakeholders. Attendees will leave with practical strategies and actionable next steps to better align their data with their mission and organizational goals. Speaker: Ginger Bandeen, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Mission Driven Data
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Session Title: Internships with Impact: Developing a No-Cost, Practical Guide for the Next Generation of Youth Social Workers Location: Mallard Session Description: Join the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago (JPA) as they share the development of an innovative training guide designed to support social work interns and early career behavioral health professionals as they transition from the classroom to clinical practice. Created through foundation support, this interactive, year-long resource features real-world scenarios, reflective exercises, and practical tools to build confidence and strengthen therapeutic skills when working with children and families. Participants will learn about the guide's development, key content areas, and strategies for implementing and disseminating this free resource to strengthen the behavioral health workforce across Illinois and beyond. Speaker: Karen G. Foley, MBA, Chief Executive Officer & President, Juvenile Protective Association
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Session Title: The Answer in the Room: A Trauma-Informed Workforce Strategy for Illinois Community Behavioral Health Location: Conference Dining Session Description: Trauma is the engine underneath the most complex presentations agencies see, and underneath the compassion fatigue their workforce carries. Join Deborah Kennard, from the Personal Transformation Institute, for a discussion of trauma-informed principles that offer a pathway toward healing for clients and an increasing sense of belonging and support for staff. Attendees will leave with a clear picture of what agency level trauma treatment capacity looks like and how to begin building it within their own organization. Speaker: Deborah Kennard, MS, LLP, Founder of Person Transformation Institute, Developer of (SAFE) Somatic and Attachment Focused EMDR, Personal Transformation Institute
11:30 am - 12:00 pm	Break with Exhibitors in Ballroom G-J / South Foyer

12:00 pm - 1:30 pm	Speaker Lunch in Ballrooms A-E
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm	Session Title: (Legislative Panel) The Legislative Outlook: Navigating the Future of Behavioral Health Location: Ballroom F Session Description: Join legislative leaders for a discussion on the policies shaping behavioral healthcare in Illinois amid a changing federal and state landscape. Panelists will explore the impact of the state budget, evolving federal Medicaid policies, and emerging legislative priorities on community behavioral healthcare. Attendees will gain insight into the challenges and opportunities ahead, as well as the importance of continued collaboration between providers and policymakers to strengthen the behavioral health system and improve access to care. Speakers: TBD