61st State School Social Work Conference

Presented by the:

New York State School Social Workers' Association

November 12 & 13, 2026

"The New School Social Work Reality:
Supporting Student Mental Health in a Changing and Complex World"

Conference Program

The Ithaca Conference Center
Ithaca, NY

Please Join Us!

9/27/2026

The NYSSSWA Board and Conference Committee would like to encourage you to join us for the **New York State School Social Workers' Association's 61st State School Social Work Conference**. Please review the complete program to assist you in making your workshop selections when registering. **Register early to "Save Your Spot"**. We look forward to seeing you in November.

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61st NYSSSWA State Conference – Schedule at a Glance

Wednesday, 11/11/2026 Pre-Conference (1.5 CEs) [Optional]

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm Registration at The Hotel Ithaca
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm "Therapeutic Tools and Self-Care for School Social Workers" by Jill Wojcik Pula, LCSW **at The Hotel Ithaca** (bring your yoga mat).
7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Welcome Reception Catch up with SSWs from around New York state.

Thursday 11/12/2026 (6 CEs)

8:00 am – 8:45 am Registration & Coffee/Tea & Breakfast Buffet (At The Ithaca Conference Center)

8:45 am – 9:00 am Welcome & Opening Remarks

9:00 am – 10:30 am Opening Keynote: "School Social Work in the Age of AI" by Marina Badillo-Diaz, DSW, LCSW (1.5 CEs)

10:30 am – 10:45 am Break

10:45 am – 12:15 pm Breakout Sessions A: (1.5 CEs)

A1: "Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth: Tools & Strategies for School Social Workers" by Jack Kavanaugh, LMSW
A2: "Steps to Attendance: Understanding and Overcoming School Avoidance" by Robin DeLuca-Acconi, Ph.D., LCSW
A3: **"Tap Into Their Nervous System: Strategies to Bring Balance to Your Students**" by Lauren Etu, MS
A4: "Clinical Leadership in Crisis: School Social Workers on the Frontline of Threat Assessment and Crisis Response" by Paul Dischiavo, LCSW-R; Jodi Kapes, LCSW-R; Krystyna Feola, Sergeant; Trish Hoyer, LCSW
A5: "Putting the 'Good' in Goodfellas"/ "Empowering Young Men. Strengthening Mental Health. Building Connection" by Paul Thompson, LMSW

12:15 pm – 1:30 pm Luncheon, Ruth Schwartz Award

1:30 pm – 3:00 pm Breakout Sessions B (1.5 CEs)
B1: **"AI and Youth Mental Health"** by Marina Badillo-Diaz, DSW, LCSW
B2: "The Stickers Aren't Working: Moving Beyond the Failed Reward Chart.: Social Work Behavior Modification for Students" by Stephanie Columbia, Ed.D., LCSW-R, BCBA, LBA
B3: "Building Resilience in a Complex World: Practical School-Based Strategies from Polyvagal Theory" (Self Regulations and De-escalation) by Laurie Belanger LCSW-R
B4: "Burnout-Proofing the Work: Sustainable Self-Care & Ethical Boundaries for School Social Workers" by Jennifer Schwytzer, LCSW, PLLC
B5: "Human Trafficking – Assessing, Assisting, and Advocating" by Christina Diaz, LMSW & Molly Johnson, M.Ed.

3:00 pm – 3:15 pm Break

3:15 pm – 4:45 pm General Session: "From Pain to Purpose: Rethinking Co-Occurring Disorders in Youth" by Stephanie Marquesano, JD, Consultant Substance Abuse MH Services Admin Opioid Response Network (1.5 CEs)

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm Hors d'oeuvre Reception, Networking, Prizes and more at The Hotel Ithaca

Friday 11/13/2026 (5.5 CEs)

7:30 am – 8:30 am Coffee/Tea & Breakfast Buffet

8:00 am – 8:30 am NYSSSWA Annual Meeting

8:30 am – 10:00 am General Session: "Helping Students Overcome the Power of Perfectionism" by Kimberly Morrow, LCSW (1.5 CEs)

10:00 am – 10:15 am BREAK

10:15 am – 11:45 pm Breakout Sessions C (1.5 CEs)

C1: "Ethics Part 1: Establishing & Maintaining Appropriate Professional Boundaries: Licensing, Ethical Standards, Boundaries: by Courtney Hill, LCSW, CSWM; (contributions by Christopher Scoville, JD & Deena Mikhail, JD) **(Need both sessions to fulfill New York's Ethics/ Boundary requirements.)**
C2: Part 1: "Advancing Prevention and Awareness of Co-Occurring Disorders: Implementing and Supporting the COD Curriculum in High School Settings" by Stephanie Marquesano, JD, Consultant Substance Abuse MH Services Admin Opioid Response Network **(Must attend Part 1 & 2)**
C3: "Functional Assessment and Behavior Intervention Planning: Behavior Management Uncovered" by Stephanie Columbia, Ed.D., LCSW R, BCBA, LBA
C4: "It Takes a Village: The Role of the Attorney for the Child, and How We Can Work Together to Advocate for Children" by Rebecca Considine, Esq, Rachel Ritzenthaler, LMSW; Clare Smokowski, Esq, Katharine Noonan, BSW, MSW Student
C5: "DBT Distress Tolerance in Schools: Practical Skills for Helping Students Manage Difficult Emotions and Challenging Moments" by Monique Johnson, LCSW

11:45 am - 12:45 pm Buffet Lunch

12:45 pm – 2:15 pm Breakout Sessions D (1.5 CEs)

D1: **Ethics: "Establishing & Maintaining Appropriate Professional Boundaries: Ethics, Boundaries, HIPAA vs FERPA"** by Courtney Hill, LCSW, CSWM; Christopher Scoville, JD & Deena Mikhail, JD **(Need both sessions to fulfill New York's Ethics/ Boundary requirements.)**
D2: Part 2: "Advancing Prevention and Awareness of Co-Occurring Disorders: Implementing and Supporting the COD Curriculum in High School Settings" by Stephanie Marquesano, JD, Consultant Substance Abuse MH Services Admin Opioid Response Network **(Must attend Part 1 & 2)**
D3: "Helping Students Face Fears: A Practical Anxiety Skills Group for Schools" by Brianna Morrow, LCSW
D4: "The School Social Worker's Guide to the Committee on Special Education" by Rebecca Considine, Esq, MSW; Rachel Ritzenthaler, LMSW; Clare Smokowski, Esq, Katharine Noonan, BSW, MSW Student
D5: "DBT Mindfulness in Schools: Practical Skills for Student Focus, Emotional Regulation, and Classroom Success" by Monique Johnson, LCSW

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm Break

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm General Session: "Navigating Student Anxiety: Real Cases, Practical Solutions for School Social Workers" by Kimberly Morrow, LCSW & Brianna Morrow, LCSW (1 CE)

3:30 pm Closing – Safe Travels!

Keynote Presenters

Opening Keynote: "School Social Work in the Age of AI " by Marina Badillo-Diaz, DSW, LCSW

Dr. Marina Badillo-Diaz is an experienced social worker, educator, and administrator with a strong background in community mental health and education. She is the founder of MABD Consulting and creator of *The AI Social Worker*, a professional learning brand dedicated to helping social workers and educators ethically and responsibly integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into their practice. To date, Dr. Badillo-Diaz has trained more than 6,500 social workers across the U.S. and Canada on using AI to enhance ethical, efficient, and human-centered practice. She also serves as an adjunct professor, teaching graduate-level courses on AI and Social Work, Mental Health and AI, and School Social Work Practice with AI and Technology. Dr. Badillo-Diaz currently serves as Secretary on the School Social Work Association of America.

General Session: "From Pain to Purpose: Rethinking Co-Occurring Disorders in Youth" by Stephanie Marquesano, JD, Consultant Substance Abuse MH Services Admin Opioid Response Network

Stephanie Marquesano, Stephanie Marquesano, an Ardsley, NY resident, founded ***the harris project*** in 2013 following the accidental overdose death of her 19-year-old son, Harris. The organization is the only national nonprofit dedicated to co-occurring disorders (COD), the combination of mental health challenges and substance use issues. Stephanie has become a national leader advancing prevention, early intervention, integrated treatment and systems transformation for individuals and families impacted by COD.

Stephanie created CODA (Co-Occurring Disorders Awareness), a youth-led prevention movement, and developed the first Co-Occurring Disorders Prevention Curriculum in collaboration with Partnership to End Addiction, now implemented in schools and communities. She also advances access to Encompass, an evidence-based integrated treatment model for adolescents and young adults with COD. Under her leadership, ***the harris project's*** award-winning national campaigns continue to advance awareness and understanding of COD. Stephanie earned her BA from Brooklyn College and JD from New York University School of Law.

General Session: "Helping Students Overcome the Power of Perfectionism" by Kimberly Morrow, LCSW

Kimberly Morrow is a licensed clinical social worker in private practice in Erie, PA. She holds a Master's in Social Work from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Kimberly has been specializing in treating people with anxiety and OCD for over 35 years and teaching other professionals how to treat anxiety for over 15 years. Kimberly is a graduate of the International Obsessive Compulsive Foundation's Behavior Therapy Institute. She is a former board member of the Obsessive- Compulsive Foundation of Pennsylvania and an active member of the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, serving on many committees. She is the 2012 recipient of the Clinician Outreach Award, the 2015 Member of Distinction Award, and the 2026 Jerilynn Ross Clinician Advocate award from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America. She is the author of Face It and Feel It: 10 Simple But Not Easy Ways to Live Well With Anxiety (2011) and co-author of CBT for Anxiety: A Skills Training Manual for the Treatment of Fear, Panic, Worry, and OCD (2018, PESI, Inc.) Kimberly is the co-owner of Anxiety Training, an online platform to provide anxiety training and case consultation to clinicians and schools.

61st State School Social Work Conference
Program of Events

Wednesday, 11/11/2026 Pre-Conference (1.5 CEs) [Optional]

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm Registration at The Hotel Ithaca

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm "Therapeutic Tools and Self-Care for School Social Workers" by Jill Wojcik Pula, LCSW

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present and aware of your current experience. As Social Worker we are used to holding the space for others. This workshop gives you the opportunity to be present, breathe and slow down. Therapeutic tools such as movement/mind-body connect, breath work, and meditation will be integrated into a self-care experience.

7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Hors d'oeuvre Reception

Thursday 11/12/2026 (6 CEs)

8:00 am – 8:45 am Registration & Coffee/Tea & Breakfast Buffet (At The Ithaca Conference Center)

8:45 am – 9:00 am Welcome & Opening Remarks

9:00 am – 10:30 am Opening Keynote: "School Social Work in the Age of AI " by Marina Badillo-Diaz, DSW, LCSW (1.5 CEs)

This keynote explores how AI is impacting school social work practice. Attendees will examine the benefits of AI tools like ChatGPT and Magic School AI, including their potential to enhance documentation, save time, and improve service delivery. The session will also address ethical concerns such as bias, privacy, and transparency through a social work values-based lens. A live demonstration will illustrate practical applications of AI, paired with real-world scenarios that highlight responsible use. Each participant will receive a prompting guidebook to support ongoing, ethical integration of AI in school social work.

10:30 am – 10:45 am Break (Check Out All Our Exhibits!)

Courtney Hill, NYSUT Find out how we are part of NY's "Collective Care Teams"

10:45 am – 12:15 pm Breakout Sessions A: (1.5 CEs)

A1: "Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth: Tools & Strategies for School Social Workers" by Jack Kavanaugh, LMSW

LGBTQ+ youth face disproportionate rates of depression, anxiety, and school-related stress. This workshop equips school social workers with current research,

affirming frameworks, and practical tools to support LGBTQ+ students across grade levels. Participants will explore identity development models, examine the impact of school climate on student wellbeing, review applicable legal protections, and practice evidence-informed intervention strategies. Case vignettes and small group discussion will ground learning in real school contexts, enabling participants to return to their buildings ready to strengthen supports for LGBTQ+ youth.

A2: "Steps to Attendance: Understanding and Overcoming School Avoidance" by Robin DeLuca-Acconi, Ph.D., LCSW

"Steps to Attendance: Understanding and Overcoming School Avoidance" will provide an overview of school avoidance, exploring its various underlying factors, which often include anxiety, depression, social issues, or specific learning challenges and unsafe school climate. Participants will learn to recognize the early warning signs, understand the function that school refusal serves for the student, and explore evidence-based strategies for intervention. Participants will learn how to implement a school attendance policy in an MTSS system and use the School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS)

A3: **"Tap Into Their Nervous System: Strategies to Bring Balance to Your Students" by** Lauren Etu, MS

In this immersive workshop, participants will engage in activities, exercises, and strategies designed to soothe the nervous system and cultivate resilience. These tools can be seamlessly woven into your practices with students (and yourself!).

A4: "Clinical Leadership in Crisis: School Social Workers on the Frontline of Threat Assessment and Crisis Response" by Paul Dischiavo, LCSW-R; Jodi Kapes, LCSW-R; Krystyna Feola, Sergeant; Trish Hoyer, LCSW

As New York State rolls out Threat Assessment Management (TAM), school social workers are stepping into a critical leadership role in school safety. This dynamic workshop introduces behavioral threat assessment grounded in best practices, including the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines and the National Threat Evaluation and Reporting Office. Participants will learn how to move beyond discipline toward a preventive, clinically driven approach to assessing and managing student threats. Through real-world application, we'll explore how multidisciplinary teams collaborate across schools and counties—and how school social workers lead the clinical process. School social workers will understand their role in conducting trauma-informed interviews, assessing risk, developing safety plans, and determining when a situation shifts from threat assessment to the need for full activation of the school crisis response team.

A5: "Putting the 'Good' in Goodfellas"/ "Empowering Young Men. Strengthening Mental Health. Building Connection" by Paul Thompson, LMSW

Join us for an impactful and practical presentation focused on supporting young men in today's world.

12:15 pm – 1:30 pm Lunch Buffet, Ruth Schwartz Award

Michelle Mellon, 2025 Recipient

1:30 pm – 3:00 pm Breakout Sessions B (1.5 CEs)

B1: **"AI and Youth Mental Health"** by Marina Badillo-Diaz, DSW, LCSW

This session explores the evolving intersection of artificial intelligence and youth mental health, with a focus on school settings. Participants will examine how AI companions and therapeutic chatbots can both support and challenge mental health outcomes for youth. The session will analyze critical ethical issues such as privacy, security, and the potential for misuse, encouraging participants to consider the role of advocacy in shaping responsible legislation and guiding future research. Attendees will also gain practical insights into ethically integrating AI-driven tools, such as the Alongside platform and WYSA, and Gheorge to support student well-being while upholding client-centered principles and professional standards.

B2: "The Stickers Aren't Working: Moving Beyond the Failed Reward Chart.: Social Work Behavior Modification for Students" by Stephanie Columbia, Ed.D., LCSW-R, BCBA, LBA

This presentation tackles the "sticker chart graveyard" by equipping social workers to lead teachers toward Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). Instead of chasing symptoms, we'll show you how to help educators decode the "why" behind the chaos—whether a student is seeking an audience or escaping a long-division nightmare. We'll bridge the gap between clinical theory and a room of thirty 5th graders by focusing on "Low-Lift, High-Impact" strategies. You'll learn to coach teachers in replacing reactive "Whack-a-Mole" discipline with proactive reinforcement, ensuring behavior plans survive the first bell and actually stick.

B3: "Building Resilience in a Complex World: Practical School-Based Strategies from Polyvagal Theory" (Self Regulations and De-escalation) by Laurie Belanger LCSW-R

Schools are increasingly shaped by the intersection of trauma exposure, learning differences, cultural stress, and mental health needs. This session introduces key concepts from Polyvagal Theory and their practical relevance for school-based professionals. Participants will learn how nervous system states influence behavior, emotional reactions, and readiness for learning. The workshop emphasizes practical "bottom-up" strategies that help students regulate and return to their thinking brains. Participants will also explore trauma-informed co-regulation and de-escalation approaches that support connection and safety during moments of distress. Strategies are presented through a strengths-based lens and are designed for immediate application in school settings.

B4: "Burnout-Proofing the Work: Sustainable Self-Care & Ethical Boundaries for School Social Workers" by Jennifer Schwytzer, LCSW, PLLC

School social workers are navigating unprecedented emotional demands, systemic pressures, and expanding roles—often while carrying their own lived experiences alongside the needs of students, families, and school communities. This interactive workshop focuses on practical, ethical, and sustainable

approaches to self-care and burnout prevention specifically designed for school social workers. Rather than placing responsibility solely on individuals to "do more self-care," this session reframes burnout through a trauma-informed and systems-aware lens. Participants will explore how chronic stress, boundary erosion, compassion fatigue, and role overload show up in school-based practice—and how ethical boundaries and values-aligned decision making can serve as protective factors.

Through reflection, discussion, and actionable tools, attendees will leave with strategies they can immediately apply to protect their well-being, strengthen professional boundaries, and remain connected to purpose without sacrificing themselves in the process.

B5: "Human Trafficking – Assessing, Assisting, and Advocating" by Christina Diaz, LMSW & Molly Johnson, M.Ed.

In 2012, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) launched Safe Harbor: NY a statewide initiative focused on addressing the needs of victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking. Westchester County was among the first four counties to implement this vital program. The Westchester County Department of Social Services has developed a pioneering model to identify, assess, and serve at-risk youth and those affected by human trafficking. One of our missions is to equip community organizations and school districts with resources to support our youth, with school social workers playing a crucial role in this effort. We aim to strengthen collaboration with local stakeholders to ensure that every at-risk youth receives the necessary support to overcome the challenges of exploitation and trafficking.

3:00 pm – 3:15 pm Break (Check Out All the Exhibit Area)

3:15 pm – 4:45 pm General Session: "From Pain to Purpose: Rethinking Co-Occurring Disorders in Youth" " by Stephanie Marquesano, JD, Consultant Substance Abuse MH Services Admin Opioid Response Network (1.5 CEs)

This session blends lived experience with professional insight to highlight the importance of recognizing and responding to co-occurring disorders (COD) in youth. Through a developmental lens, participants will explore how mental health challenges and substance use can emerge over time, and how early opportunities for connection and support across school, family, and community can improve outcomes. The session emphasizes the critical role of school social workers and educators across grade levels in fostering environments where students feel safe, understood, and supported, while strengthening partnerships with families and community providers. Through a lens of collaboration, participants will reflect on ways to enhance communication, build trust, and align supports across systems.

Participants will also be introduced to practical, school-based approaches to COD prevention, including strategies that integrate mental health and substance use within an age-appropriate framework. This includes an overview of the CODA movement and a COD Prevention Curriculum designed to equip students and trusted adults with shared language, strengthen protective factors, and encourage help-seeking. Attendees will leave with practical strategies and a clear call to action: to build understanding, deepen connection, and support students and families, while also recognizing the demands.

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm Hors d'oeuvre Reception, Networking, Prizes, and more at The Ithaca Hotel

Friday 11/13/2026 (5.5 CEs)

7:30 am – 8:30 am Coffee/Tea & Breakfast Buffet (The Ithaca Conference Center)

8:00 am – 8:30 am NYSSSWA Annual Meeting

8:30 am – 10:00 am General Session: "Helping Students Overcome the Power of Perfectionism" by Kimberly Morrow, LCSW (1.5 CEs)

Perfectionism is often celebrated as a driver of high achievement, yet in educational settings it can quietly undermine student well-being, motivation, and performance. This presentation examines perfectionism, distinguishing between healthy striving and maladaptive patterns characterized by fear of failure, procrastination, and self-criticism.

Participants will gain practical strategies to help students reframe mistakes, set realistic goals, and build resilience. The session will highlight evidence-based approaches including managing their inner critic, developing self-compassion, and engaging in exposure therapy. This presentation aims to support more balanced, confident learners who are willing to take risks and engage more fully in the learning process.

10:00 am – 10:15 am BREAK (Be sure to visit NYSSSWA's Booth & Our Exhibit Hall)

10:15 am – 11:45 pm Breakout Sessions C (1.5 CEs)

C1: "Ethics Part 1: Establishing & Maintaining Appropriate Professional Boundaries: Licensing, Ethical Standards, Boundaries: by Courtney Hill, LCSW, CSWM; (contributions by Christopher Scoville, JD & Deena Mikhail, JD) **(Need both sessions to fulfill New York's Ethics/ Boundary requirements.)**

Mental health professionals are charged with the legal and ethical responsibility to maintain professional boundaries, but the duty isn't always so easy to discern. This course brings context to ethical concerns often experienced by professionals in practice in maintaining appropriate professional boundaries. Presenters will review common ethical dilemmas and discuss a process to make informed decisions that insulate professionals from legal liability while also protecting clients/students from harm.

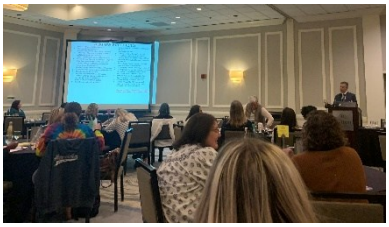
Note: *A licensed psychologist, social worker or mental health practitioner required to complete continuing education must complete 3 hours of acceptable course work in appropriate professional boundaries, in each 3-year registration period starting April 1, 2023. Completing both Part 1&2 would satisfy this requirement. See: https://www.op.nysed.gov/releases/advisory-notices/continuing-education*

C2: Part 1: "Advancing Prevention and Awareness of Co-Occurring Disorders: Implementing and Supporting the COD Curriculum in High School Settings" by Stephanie Marquesano, JD, Consultant Substance Abuse MH Services Admin Opioid Response Network **(Must attend Part 1 & 2 for the Training)**

This three-hour training provides a comprehensive introduction to the Empowering Teens: Navigating Co-Occurring Disorders for a Resilient Future high school curriculum, a research-based, first-of-its-kind initiative developed by The Harris Project in collaboration with Partnership to End Addiction. The session is designed to build a shared foundation of understanding around the intersection of mental health challenges and substance use, while equipping participants to apply this knowledge within their respective roles.

Participants will explore how mental health challenges and substance use intersect, including the three primary pathways to co-occurring disorders (COD), the role of self-medication, and the impact of substance use on the developing brain. Emphasis is placed on the critical window for prevention and early identification, helping school professionals recognize and respond before challenges escalate.

The session includes a full walk through of the three-session high school curriculum, including its structure, activities, and materials, along with companion sessions for parents/caregivers and school personnel. Participants will examine how the curriculum builds shared language, strengthens protective factors, and encourages help-seeking among youth. The curriculum also incorporates structured opportunities for student reflection and peer awareness, allowing students to self-identify or express concern for others, which can inform early identification and support. This also create space for students who may already be struggling to feel seen, supported, and more connected within the school environment.



Designed for both those implementing the curriculum and those supporting students identified through it, the training addresses real-world application across roles. Participants will explore how the curriculum can be integrated into existing school-based programming, as well as how it can inform assessment, triage, and student support. Participants will leave with a stronger foundation in COD, practical tools, and a clear framework for both implementing and supporting prevention and early intervention efforts within high school settings.

C3: "Functional Assessment and Behavior Intervention Planning: Behavior Management Uncovered" by Stephanie Columbia, Ed.D., LCSW R, BCBA, LBA

Participants will be able to identify the five functions of behavior. Participants will be able to understand the process of completing a Functional Behavior Assessment. Participants will be able to construct a Behavior Intervention Plan.

C4: "It Takes a Village: The Role of the Attorney for the Child, and How We Can Work Together to Advocate for Children" by Rebecca Considine, Esq, Rachel Ritzenthaler, LMSW; Clare Smokowski, Esq, Katharine Noonan, BSW, MSW Student

Systems advocacy is a fundamental part of improving outcomes for children, particularly in the school setting. Children in New York State are entitled to representation by attorneys in Family Court proceedings in abuse, neglect, custody, visitation, and juvenile delinquency matters. Attorneys for children provide a holistic approach to addressing the needs of children, particularly in educational settings. This presentation will provide you with an overview of the role of the attorney for the child, insight regarding how decisions made in court impact children, children's rights to appropriate educational supports, and ways to collaborate to achieve positive outcomes for the children.

C5: "DBT Distress Tolerance in Schools: Practical Skills for Helping Students Manage Difficult Emotions and Challenging Moments" by Monique Johnson, LCSW

Students face increasing levels of stress, emotional overwhelm, anxiety, peer conflict, and frustration that can impact learning and behavior. In Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), distress tolerance skills help The goal of this workshop is not to teach comprehensive DBT. However, participants will be able to explore practical ways to integrate these skills into counseling, crisis response, and classroom supports when they return to their school(s).

11:45 am - 12:45 pm Friday Lunch Buffet

12:45 pm – 2:15 pm Breakout Sessions D (1.5 CEs)

D1: "Ethics Part 2: Establishing & Maintaining Appropriate Professional Boundaries: Minimize Harm, HIPAA/FERPA" by Courtney Hill, LCSW, CSWM; Christopher Scoville, JD & Deena Mikhail, JD

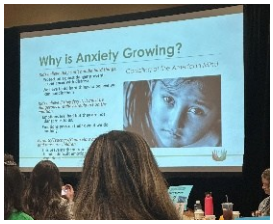
Mental health professionals are charged with the legal and ethical responsibility to maintain professional boundaries, but the duty isn't always so easy to discern. This course brings context to ethical concerns often experienced by professionals in practice in maintaining appropriate professional boundaries. Presenters will review common ethical dilemmas and discuss a process to make informed decisions that insulate professionals from legal liability while also protecting clients/students from hare. An overview and discussion of HIPAA vs FERPA as it relates to these issues will also be provided.

Note: A licensed psychologist, social worker or mental health practitioner required to complete continuing education must complete 3 hours of acceptable course work in appropriate professional boundaries, in each 3-year registration period starting April 1, 2023. Completing both Part 1&2 would satisfy this requirement. See: https://www.op.nysed.gov/releases/advisory-notices/continuing-education

D2: Part 2: "Advancing Prevention and Awareness of Co-Occurring Disorders: Implementing and Supporting the COD Curriculum in High School Settings" by Stephanie Marquesano, JD, Consultant Substance Abuse MH Services Admin Opioid Response Network **(Must attend Part 1 & 2 for the Training)**

This three-hour training provides a comprehensive introduction to the Empowering Teens: Navigating Co-Occurring Disorders for a Resilient Future high school curriculum, a research-based, first-of-its-kind initiative developed by The Harris Project in collaboration with Partnership to End Addiction. The session is designed to build a shared foundation of understanding around the intersection of mental health challenges and substance use, while equipping participants to apply this knowledge within their respective roles. See Part 1 for complete description.

D3: "Helping Students Face Fears: A Practical Anxiety Skills Group for Schools" by Brianna Morrow, LCSW



This workshop introduces a structured, school-based anxiety skills group that helps students build distress tolerance, challenge anxious thinking, and reduce avoidance behaviors. Participants will learn how to teach students about the "glitchy brain," normalize anxiety, and use experiential exercises to increase emotional resilience. The session includes hands-on demonstrations of exposure-based activities, cognitive restructuring techniques, and strategies for involving parents and teachers as effective coaches. Attendees will leave with a step-by-step framework to run their own anxiety groups and practical tools to help students face fears, tolerate discomfort, and engage more fully in school and social environments.

D4: "The School Social Worker's Guide to the Committee on Special Education" by Rebecca Considine, Esq, MSW; Rachel Ritzenthaler, LMSW; Clare Smokowski, Esq, Katharine Noonan, BSW, MSW Student

Social workers are uniquely situated to advocate for children in school. This presentation will teach you how to navigate the Committee on Special Education (CSE) process from start to finish. We will walk through Part 200.4 of the New York State Regulations for Students with Disabilities. Key points include CSE referral, consent, evaluations (SLP, OT, PT, FBA, etc.), Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, placement, and review. The CSE is a creation of NY state education law with uniform standards tailored to meet the individual needs of the student. Understanding the CSE process will enhance your ability to advocate for students.

D5: "DBT Mindfulness in Schools: Practical Skills for Student Focus, Emotional Regulation, and Classroom Success" by Monique Johnson, LCSW

Mindfulness is often misunderstood as meditation or simply helping students relax. In Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), mindfulness serves a different purpose and is the foundation of all DBT skills. This workshop introduces school social workers to DBT mindfulness practices that can be integrated into schools to support distractibility, emotional regulation, attention, and classroom functioning. Participants will explore ways mindfulness can complement other clinical approaches and help inform classroom supports for teachers. The goal of this workshop is not to teach comprehensive DBT, but to help school social workers become more DBT-informed and confident in using various DBT mindfulness strategies to support students in meaningful, practical ways.

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm Break

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm General Session: "Navigating Student Anxiety: Real Cases, Practical Solutions for School Social Workers" by Kimberly Morrow, LCSW & Brianna Morrow, LCSW (1 CE)

This presentation equips school social workers with practical strategies for supporting anxious students through collaborative case consultation. Using real-world examples, school social workers will learn to identify key signs of anxiety, differentiate between stress and impairment, and implement evidence-based interventions such as cognitive-behavioral techniques and gradual exposure. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the underlying factors of anxiety, like avoidance and negative thinking, and how to work with teachers and families to create a supportive environment. By the end of the session, participants will have actionable tools to help anxious students build resilience and succeed academically and socially.

3:30 pm Ending Announcements & Adjourn

See You In Ithaca!

Come Join Us!
(Rochester Region)