



Session Agenda

Tracks



April 6-9, 2026 | Nashville, TN

Register



MONDAY
April 6

TUESDAY
April 7

WEDNESDAY
April 8

THURSDAY
April 9

8:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Registration Desk Open



April 6-9, 2026 | Nashville, TN

Register

New Attendee Orientation

1:15 PM – 2:30 PM



Crisis on Campus: A National Playbook to Tackle the Overdose Threat in Schools

Moderator



Jeff Breedlove

CARES

Presenter



Holly Geyer

MD



Stephen Anderson

MD, FACEP



Kimberly Stanislo

DNP, APRN-CNP, LSN, NCSN, CPNP-PC



Billy Davis

Room

Delta Ballroom D



Session Description: Amid a surge in youth overdose deaths driven by illicit fentanyl, American schools remain dangerously underprepared. The National School Overdose Preparedness Campaign, led by the NFL Alumni Health (NFLAH) initiative in collaboration with the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), and The Naloxone Project, is the first nationwide initiative to equip K–12 schools with the training, policies, and tools needed to respond to overdose emergencies and protect students.

This session will introduce a multi-phase national strategy built on cross-sector collaboration, youth-centered messaging, and partnerships with education, health, and government leaders. Attendees will learn how the campaign engages trusted messengers—including former NFL athletes—to raise awareness, secure endorsements, and build infrastructure for naloxone access, staff training, and student education. Special focus will be placed on collaboration with the National PTA and the National School Boards Association (NSBA).

Building on successful pilots in Colorado and Arizona, the campaign is now scaling nationally and engaging federal agencies and national organizations to support model school policies for naloxone access and overdose response, standardized legislative templates for state-level preparedness, training materials for school personnel and students, and interim strategies to address nursing scope-of-practice limitations.

Prevention



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM



Building Recovery Ecosystems That Work: Sustainable, Community-Driven Models in Action

Moderator



Kevin Tanner

MPA

Presenter



Shelly Weizman

JD



Tara Hyde

MPA, MPP



**Nikki Soda**

MS

Room**Delta Ballroom C**

Session Description: This session will showcase community-driven recovery ecosystem models that are advancing recovery in sustainable, system-wide ways—even amid fiscal constraint. We'll begin by highlighting Kentucky's Recovery-Ready Communities initiative, a statewide model that empowers localities to become certified as recovery-ready by building infrastructure across housing, employment, treatment, peer services, and local governance. This grassroots-led approach demonstrates how state policy and community readiness can reinforce each other.

Next, we'll explore Palm Beach County, Florida's opioid settlement investment strategy and the region's innovative Recovery-Oriented System of Care (ROSC), designed to braid funding, engage local partners, and center recovery voices in decision-making. We will touch on themes from several other jurisdictions, including New Jersey and Maryland.

Finally, we will discuss an emerging National Framework for Recovery, a new federal-state-local effort led by Georgetown University, Shatterproof, Johns Hopkins, and Black Faces Black Voices to define, support, and scale recovery ecosystems across the country.

Panelists will offer practical strategies for sustaining recovery services—whether through local innovation, braided funding streams, or building strong partnerships between government and community organizations.

This panel is designed for state and local leaders, funders, public health professionals, and advocates who want to build recovery ecosystems that are effective, efficient, and rooted in community values. Attendees will leave with concrete models, tools, and policy ideas that can be adapted to their own states and regions—regardless of political affiliation.

Recovery Support



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM

Fake Pills: Current Landscape and Evolving Challenges in Monitoring Counterfeit Drugs and Reducing Risk to the Public in the United States

Moderator



Blair Coleman

PhD, MPH

Presenter



Jody Green

PhD, FAACT



Jason Bordelon

B.S. Chemistry, M.S. Chemistry



Kait Brown

PharmD, DABAT



Joshua Black

PhD

Room

Volunteer Ballroom D

Session Description: Fake pills (also called counterfeit, falsified, pressies, fakes, cut, laced) are illicitly manufactured products that look like FDA-approved medications but instead contain substances such as illicit fentanyl, methamphetamine, or no active substance at all. Composition and availability of these unregulated products are constantly evolving, posing serious public health challenges. This symposium will address the current landscape of what we know about fake pills, as well as the ongoing challenges, from a variety of data sources including (1) efforts to standardize real-world data collection in the National Poison Data System (NPDS), (2) an exploratory, mixed-methods study investigating fake pill awareness and use among members of the Behavioral



Health Research Panel (BHRP; a voluntary opt-in research panel of adults assessed for substance use), (3) an online behavioral drug survey of the general population, the Survey of Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs (NMURx), and (4) laboratory testing findings from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Implications for surveillance and public health messaging regarding the dangers associated with fake pill use will be discussed.

Illicit Drugs



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM



Breaking the Silence: Evidenced Based Practices in Addressing Suicidality in Behavioral Health

Moderator



Anne Burns

RPh

Presenter



Trish Caldwell

MFT, LPC, CAADC, CCDP-D, CCTP

Room

Delta Ballroom B

Session Description: Suicide is a major public health concern and a leading cause of death in the US. In 2020, suicide was the 12th leading cause of death overall in the United States, claiming the lives of over 45,900 people. Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives. Alcohol and opioid use disorders significantly increase risk for suicidal ideation, attempts, and death, and are the two most frequently implicated substances in suicide risk. Individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) are particularly susceptible to suicide and suicide attempts as suicide is a leading cause of death among people who misuse alcohol and drugs. This training will explore the signs to look out for when working in the field and identify evidence-based



practices to help break the silence.

Clinical



2:45 PM – 4:00 PM



Visualizing and Implementing Change: CDC's Collective Efforts to Prevent Substance Use Initiation Among Youth

Moderator



Grant Baldwin

PhD, MPH

Presenter



Jasmine Kenney

MPH

Room

Delta Ballroom D

Session Description: Youth may use substances to help cope with mental health challenges like stress, anxiety, and depression, and ongoing use can lead to a substance use disorder. Substance use can lead to worsening mental health and contribute to the development of some mental health conditions.¹ Breaking the stigma surrounding mental health and substance use can help prevent overdose deaths and encourage more young people to seek the support they need.²

To prevent substance use initiation among youth, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created two important products. The Free Mind campaign, was created through research and real conversations with youth, parents, and caregivers. Through these conversations, CDC identified a need to address the connection between substance use and mental health among youth ages 12-17. The second product, ENGAGE: Evidence-Based



Strategies to Prevent Youth Substance Use, contains effective strategies and approaches to help local, community, state, and other organizations plan for and implement a wide range of prevention activities that can be tailored to address specific community needs.

This presentation will describe both CDC products. First, attendees will learn about the development of ENGAGE and the six evidence-based strategies that communities can implement. Next, it will focus on two Free Mind interactive learning experiences where attendees will learn how to tailor and implement campaign messaging to educate youth on specific risks related to drug use, substance use disorder, and overdose and articulate the impacts that mental and behavioral health issues have on youth as they relate to drug use.

Prevention



2:45 PM – 4:00 PM



Encouraging Prehospital Buprenorphine Programs - Expanding the EMS Role in New Jersey

Moderator



David Hamby

Presenter



Tim Seplaki

BS, NRP, CPM



Cassandra Angelo

BS



Jenny Gerace

Room



Delta Ballroom C

Session Description: Only about a quarter of adults with a past-year opioid use disorder (OUD) received medication for it, highlighting the need for federal, state, and local policymakers to develop new avenues for reaching individuals in need. Individuals experiencing opioid withdrawal symptoms, either due to ceasing opioids (spontaneous withdrawal) or receiving an opioid antagonist to reverse an overdose (precipitated withdrawal) may need medication for OUD but often do not receive it. An emerging way to reach these individuals in need is for emergency medical service (EMS) clinicians (paramedics and EMTs) to provide buprenorphine induction in the prehospital or mobile care setting, such as at the scene of an overdose or as part of a community paramedicine program. In recent years, EMS agencies across the country began such programs ("EMS-Bup programs"). Studies from established EMS-BUP programs show that, in addition to being safe, they are effective in connecting individuals to treatment and reducing the risk of future overdose. Starting an EMS-Bup program involves the development of program infrastructure, treatment protocols, referral processes, data collection, and training. In addition, if not done so already, there must be system change (either through statute, regulation, agency action(s), or executive order) to authorize an EMS clinician to carry and administer buprenorphine in prehospital/mobile care settings. Be part of the solution to the opioid crisis by discovering how EMS-led buprenorphine programs are transforming overdose response into a powerful gateway to treatment. Join this session to learn how innovative policy, protocol, and frontline action can turn moments of crisis into lifesaving opportunities for recovery.

Public Safety



2:45 PM – 4:00 PM

What Clinicians, Policymakers, and Scientists Should Know About Vaping

Moderator

**Andrew Schreier**

Master's in Counseling, ICS, CSAC, LPC, ICGC-II, and BACC

Presenter**Adam Leventhal**

PhD

Room**Delta Ballroom B**

Session Description: This session will review the latest scientific evidence on nicotine vaping and other novel products, focusing on use patterns, impacts on other drug use uptake, and impacts on tobacco smoking cessation. Evidence review will focus on how these impacts vary by age, substance use status, and sociodemographics. Research on the constituents that modulate the appeal and addiction liability of vaping products, such as benzoic and lactic acid and flavoring compounds, will also be reviewed. The session will conclude by discussing vaping regulatory policies that address flavorings and other additives that alter product pH and by extrapolating existing evidence to new and emerging non-combustible nicotine products, including nicotine pouches. Developed in Partnership with:



Clinical





2:45 PM – 4:00 PM

Managing Key Federal Grants Supporting Substance Use Disorder Services – a Lens From State Alcohol and Drug Agencies

Moderator

**Daniel Blaney-Koen**

JD

Presenter

**Robert Morrison**

BA

**Sara Goldsby**

MSW, MPH

**Chinazo Cunningham**

MD, MS

Room

Volunteer Ballroom D

State alcohol and drug agency directors – also known as Single State Authorities – oversee the nation's publicly funded prevention, treatment, and recovery system. These agencies develop State plans, oversee programming, and support providers across the continuum. In the process, State alcohol and drug agencies manage federal grants such as the Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services (SUPTRS) Block Grant, State Opioid Response Grant (SOR), and others. This session will feature a presentation on the role of State alcohol and drug agencies and key federal grants supporting substance use disorders. In addition, the panel will feature two leaders of State alcohol and drug agencies discuss their systems and share how federal grants support service delivery.

Advocacy





4:15 PM – 5:30 PM

Opening Plenary

Panelist

**Stephen Taylor**

MD, MPH, DFAPA, DFASAM

**Michael Hogue**

PharmD, FAPhA, FNAP, FFIP

**Bobby Mukkamala**

MD

**Nora Volkow**

MD

Room

Delta Ballroom A

Session Description: This opening plenary panel brings together leadership from ASAM, the AMA, and APhA to examine how physicians and pharmacists can work together to strengthen care for patients with substance use disorders and pain. The discussion will explore clinical best practices, emerging substance use trends, and real-world barriers to patient care, including challenges related to access, communication, and care coordination. Panelists will highlight new initiatives from their organizations and share insights on team-based, community-centered approaches that improve outcomes. The session will also address strategies to reduce stigma, enhance collaboration across care teams, and support clinicians navigating the evolving landscape of polysubstance use.



5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Opening Reception in Exhibit Hall & Poster Session

5:45 PM – 6:45 PM

Open Meeting



CE Information

This activity has been designed to meet the educational needs of physicians, pharmacists, advanced practice registered nurses, registered nurses, social workers, addiction professionals, prevention professionals, health education specialists, certified counselors, lawyers, law enforcement officials, and psychologists.

[More Details](#)



Congressman Hal Rogers Beacon of Hope Award

The ongoing effort to combat drug addiction requires a multidisciplinary approach involving stakeholders from all aspects of society. Many leaders have emerged in this movement, and in 2018 the Rx Summit decided to annually recognize a change-maker tackling this epidemic. The inaugural award was presented to Congressman Hal Rogers of Kentucky.



[Learn More](#)



Hope Ambassadors

Stories of Recovery and Inspiration for Hope

The work we do at **Rx and Illicit Drug Summit** through sessions, workshops, and networking is all centered around one goal: to create effective strategies for prevention, treatment, and recovery that will ultimately save lives. This is why we created the **Hope Ambassadors program**, to highlight stories of ***people in recovery***, and those who ***have impacted the recovery journey of others***.

↑ Through our dedication and collaboration at Rx and Illicit Drug Summit, our community has the power to create more stories of recovery and thus a stronger sense of **hope**. We look forward to continue sharing **more recovery stories and inspiration for hope** at Rx and Illicit Drug Summit 2026 in Nashville.

[Learn More](#)

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April 9



7:00 AM – 5:45 PM
Registration Desk Open





7:30 AM – 8:45 AM

Finding Balance: Integrating Faith, Peer Support, and Overdose Prevention in the Recovery Journey

Moderator



Monty Burks

Phd., CPRS

Presenter



Ashlee Crouse

CPRS-J, RCPF



Kyle Prichard

Bachelor's Degree in Bible and Theology



Kristi Beeler



Joseph Hoffman

LPN, CRC

Room

Delta Ballroom C

Session Description: We will explore the intersection of faith, peer support, and harm reduction, highlighting the importance of incorporating spiritual beliefs and community connections in the journey towards recovery. By combining the principles of faith-based support with evidence-based harm reduction strategies, individuals facing substance use challenges can find strength, hope, and understanding in a supportive peer network. This multiple pathway approach recognizes the diverse needs of individuals and emphasizes the power of faith and community in promoting healing and resilience.

Recovery Support





7:30 AM – 8:45 AM

TBI Tennessee Dangerous Drugs Taskforce: Innovative Strategies for Integrating Prevention and Enforcement

Moderator

**Jeff Breedlove**

CARES

Presenter

**Evangeline Watanabe****Tabatha Curtis**

BS CPSII

**Mark Delaney**

TBI

**James Hixson**

Room

Volunteer Ballroom D

Session Description: The Tennessee Dangerous Drugs Task Force (TDDTF) was established in 1999 and operates as part of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation's Drug Investigation Division. Since its establishment, the TDDTF has been at the forefront of innovative programs and initiatives designed to assist both law enforcement and the general public in addressing the escalating opioid and drug epidemic. The Task Force's motto is "Protect, Enforce, and Educate."

Participants will have the opportunity to engage with a panel of experts from law enforcement, intelligence, prevention, and mental health fields. They will learn how to collaborate effectively with various state and local agencies and organizations to develop sustainable programs across the state.



The program will highlight successful statewide initiatives led by the TDDTF, including the quarterly Pill Take Back response, the Drug Endangered Children Alliance, the Handle with Care notification system, mobile drug testing for law enforcement agencies, the intelligence and overdose reporting system, and comprehensive training and education programs.

Participants will gain practical strategies and insights into implementing the TDDTF model within their own communities at both the state and local levels.

Public Safety



7:30 AM – 8:45 AM



Innovation Through Data Collaboration: Tennessee's Cross-Agency Approach to Overdose Surveillance and Prevention

Moderator



Sherman Brown

MPA

Presenter



Cate Faulkner

MA, LCSW



Arch Robertson

MPH

Room

Delta Ballroom D

Session Description: Tennessee is transforming overdose prevention through strengthened cross-agency collaboration and real-time data integration. The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) and the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) have developed a coordinated framework that aligns public health surveillance, outreach, and



community engagement across the full continuum of substance use prevention. This partnership streamlines communication, shares data in real time, and enables quick, flexible responses to both prescription opioids and emerging illicit substances, including synthetic opioids beyond fentanyl, stimulants, and novel psychoactive compounds while providing timely training, tools, and stigma-reduction education to support local prevention efforts.

This session highlights the process of collaboration, including formal data-sharing agreements, co-located epidemiologic support, cross-sector working groups, and co-developed initiatives. Attendees will see actionable data products—dashboards, reports, and briefs—and learn how these tools guide adaptive prevention strategies. Through these efforts, Tennessee has seen a 5% reduction in overdose deaths from 2022–2023 and provisional 2024 data suggesting a 30.9% decline. By focusing on structure, coordination, and shared mechanisms, this presentation demonstrates a model for integrating data, programs, and expertise to maintain agility in responding to evolving substance use threats.

Prevention



7:30 AM – 8:45 AM



Meeting People Where They're At: Foundations of Harm Reduction Treatment for Substance Use

Moderator



Caroline DuPont

MD

Presenter



Susan Collins

PhD



**Seema Clifasefi**

PhD, MSW, LICSW

Room**Delta Ballroom B**

Session Description: This presentation introduces the concept of harm reduction for clinicians, counselors, and other professionals working with people who use substances. We will share how to apply the principles of the larger, grassroots harm-reduction movement to clinical and counseling settings. Participants will be introduced to harm-reduction treatment—a pragmatic, evidence-based, person-centered approach designed to reduce substance-related harm and improve quality of life without requiring abstinence. We will show how harm-reduction treatment can extend and complement abstinence-based approaches to engage clients and patients who are not yet ready, willing, or able to commit to abstinence, thereby broadening what you can offer your clients and patients. The session will provide an overview of the concepts, scientific foundation, and clinical practices of harm-reduction treatment. Discussion will address common misconceptions, ethical and cultural considerations, and practical steps for incorporating harm-reduction treatment alone or alongside other treatment modalities. We will conclude with guidance on initiating supportive, nonjudgmental conversations about substance use that promote trust, collaboration, and meaningful change.

Developed in Partnership with:



Clinical





8:55 AM – 10:20 AM

Morning Plenary

Moderator

Karen Kelly

Panelist

Brett Guthrie



Andrew Clyde



Hal Rogers



Steny Hoyer



Andy Barr



Steve Cohen



Madeleine Dean



John Rutherford

Speaker

Jay Bhattacharya

MD, PhD



**Eric Nation**

AA

Room**Delta Ballroom A**

Session Description: This session will begin with remarks from the executive director of the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children.

Hear directly from influential policymakers during this timely plenary session exploring the intersection of healthcare, legislation, and public policy. Congressional leaders and experts will discuss current priorities, recent developments, and future directions shaping national health initiatives and reform efforts.

Gain firsthand insights into how policy decisions impact practitioners, patients, and the broader healthcare system, and engage with perspectives that drive meaningful change across the field.



10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

**The Healing Power of Humor: Connecting Through Laughter in Recovery****Moderator****Andrew Schreier**

Master's in Counseling, ICS, CSAC, LPC, ICGC-II, and BACC

Presenter**Thomas Farley****Room****Volunteer Ballroom D**

Session Description: While humor is a powerful tool in everyday life—reducing stress, improving health, and building connections—it is often overlooked or discouraged in behavioral health treatment settings. In this engaging and interactive session, attendees will explore how humor can be effectively used to support recovery from substance use and mental health challenges. Drawing on both research and lived experience, this session will challenge the assumption that recovery must always be serious. Instead, it offers an evidence-based argument for why laughter and lightness can be critical elements of healing.

Participants will examine how humor is sometimes viewed as a sign of denial or avoidance and why these perceptions can hinder engagement. Attendees will learn how to recognize appropriate uses of humor, adapt to individual client needs, and responsibly use humor to build rapport and promote emotional safety. This session includes demonstrations of humor techniques, discussions on boundary-setting, and strategies for cultivating connection in group and individual therapy.

Takeaways include: practical ways to use humor therapeutically, awareness of cultural and clinical considerations, and renewed permission to bring humanity and joy into the recovery process.

Recovery Support



10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

Fraud, Waste and Abuse in Addiction Treatment: Medical and Legal Issues

Presenter



Kelly Clark

MD, MBA



Michael Barnes

JD



Room

Delta Ballroom C

Session Description: The diagnosis and treatment of Substance Use Disorders are the focus of much civil and criminal litigation regarding Fraud, Waste, and Abuse (F/W/A). These are reflected in the most recent years HHS/DOJ's "Annual Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control Program. But beyond federal (and state) criminal and civil charges, private insurers and individuals are also involved in suits. While physicians generally understand issues of malpractice, F/W/A issues are different – and also impact owners and administrators of treatment programs and associated providers such as laboratories performing urine drug testing.

The presenters of this session are a physician and an attorney with extensive policy and practice expertise. Areas of discussion include areas of risk, 'red flags,' how providers can assess and minimize their risk, and what litigators can do to understand areas of gross deviation from standards of treatment and billing.

While this session will focus on the areas of F/W/A, other medico-legal issues relevant to treatment providers and public safety and/or legal professionals will be discussed, including the medically legitimate ordering of services, prescribing of controlled substances, and billing for services.

Participant providers will leave the session with increased ability to understand and mitigate their risks. Participant funding organizations of treatment services will understand how to monitor and identify appropriate vs. inappropriate care and billing; while participant federal/state/local officials and attorneys will leave the session with improved understanding and ability to streamline assessment of potential cases of Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in the diagnosis and treatment of Substance Use Disorders.

Advocacy





10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

Building Resilient Communities: How Metro Nashville Public Health Department is Using Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACES) Science to Prevent Illicit Drug Use

Moderator

**Grant Baldwin**

PhD, MPH

Presenter

**Anidolee Melville-Chester**

PhD, M.Ed., MPA, LMFT

**Kylan Hadley**

MSSW

Room

Delta Ballroom D

Session Description: Childhood trauma and toxic stress are well-documented upstream drivers of substance misuse, addiction, and poor mental health outcomes. In response, the Metro Nashville Public Health Department (MPHD) has launched the Resilient Communities and PACEs Education Program, a trauma-informed, community-based prevention initiative that equips individuals and systems with the tools to build protective factors and foster resilience. This session will introduce participants to MPHD's dual-pronged approach: (1) From Adversity to Hope, a science-based training curriculum grounded in Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACES), and (2) Resilience in Healthcare and Communities, a Train-the-Trainer model adopted by partners including the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Both components center on applying strengths-based strategies and HOPE (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences) science to reduce the long-term impacts of early adversity.

The presentation will detail the structure, implementation, and evaluation of this program, which has trained over 400 professionals and certified 15 new facilitators. Emphasis will be placed on the model's cultural responsiveness,



cross-sector scalability, and alignment with public health goals to prevent substance misuse through early intervention and education. By fostering resilience in high-risk communities, MPHD aims to disrupt cycles of trauma and addiction while promoting sustainable, community-led wellness.

Prevention



10:30 AM – 11:45 AM



From Principles to Practice: Concrete Tools for Implementing Harm Reduction in Clinical Care

Moderator



Sherman Brown

MPA

Presenter



Seema Clifasefi

PhD, MSW, LICSW



Susan Collins

PhD

Room

Delta Ballroom B



Session Description: Building on the concepts of harm reduction, this session offers clinicians, counselors, and other professionals who work with people who use substances some practical tools for applying harm-reduction strategies across diverse treatment, counseling and other behavioral health settings. Participants will learn how to assess and track substance-related harm, help patients and clients generate harm-reduction goals, and share safer-use strategies to help people immediately start taking steps towards reducing their harm. Through real-world case examples and demonstrations, we will show how harm-reduction tools can enhance engagement and promote positive

outcomes among clients and patients who might otherwise not show up or be reluctant to engage. Importantly, harm-reduction tools can complement other abstinence-based and medication-assisted approaches in your practice. Participants will leave with practical skills, handouts, and conversation guides to use immediately in their clinical, counseling and other community-based work. Developed in Partnership with:



Clinical



11:45 AM – 1:15 PM



Lunch Break in Exhibit Hall

11:45 AM – 5:00 PM



Exhibit Hall Open

1:15 PM – 2:30 PM



The Impact of Adolescent Cannabis Use on Mental and Behavioral Health: Current Evidence and Insights

Moderator



Jennifer Tourville

DNP (Doctor of Nursing Practice)



Presenter**Kristen Gilliland**

PhD

Room**Delta Ballroom B**

Session Description: Adolescent cannabis use is associated with an elevated risk of mental and behavioral health disorders, including cannabis use disorder, anxiety, depression, and even psychosis. The expanding legalization of both medical and recreational cannabis, coupled with the increased availability of high-potency tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) products, further heightens this concern. Adolescence represents a critical period of neurodevelopment, during which the endocannabinoid system plays a key role in the maturation of brain regions such as the prefrontal cortex. THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis, can interfere with this developmental process, potentially leading to lasting neurobiological and behavioral consequences. Research on cannabis' impact on the developing brain has exploded over the last decade. Therefore, this session will highlight the most current research findings on THC's impact on the adolescent brain, with a focus on the disruption of typical endocannabinoid system function and its implications for long-term brain and mental health.

Clinical



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM

**Nitazenes - The New Drugs on the Block****Moderator****Jennifer Place**

MA, LPC, LAC

Presenter

**Raeschell Williams**

PharmD, MPH, BCPS, BCPP

**Alexa Flood**

PharmD

Room**Volunteer Ballroom D**

Session Description: Nitazenes are synthetic benzimidazole opioids and known for their potency, with contradictory evidence noting potency as hundreds to thousands times more potent than morphine and other opioids, ten times more potent than fentanyl. Examples of such agents include butonitazene, flunitazene, protonitazene, etonitazene, etc. They have no approved use and have re-emerged in the drug supply since 2019. They are often added to fentanyl, heroin, and illicit benzodiazepines. They are not detected in a standard 10-panel urine drug screen, but have the same risks as other opioids, to include sedation, slowed breathing, decreased heart rate and blood pressure, overdose and death. This session will focus on a review of nitazenes to include pharmacology, epidemiology, expected effects, withdrawal management, pharmacological treatment strategies, and harm reduction efforts. Given the difficulty in testing for nitazenes, additional discussion will surround what symptoms to look out for when patients present to community or emergency settings along with the role psychiatric pharmacists can play in various treatment approaches.

Illicit Drugs



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM

**Quick Response Teams: A Discussion of Impact, Innovation, and Cost Savings****Moderator****Chauncey Parker**

Presenter**Michael Davenport**

MS

**Meagan Guthrie**

MA

**Dawn Schwartz****Cleave Baker**

CPRS, LCDCII

Room**Delta Ballroom D**

Session Description: For nearly a decade, communities across the U.S. have been working closely with law enforcement and first responders to implement an innovative, comprehensive approach to address the complex issues of addiction: The Quick Response Team (or QRT). Developed in Ohio, the QRT model is now the most widely replicated model of overdose response in the United States. The premise of the QRT is simple. The Quick Response Team aligns resources that already exist in most communities, creating a network of support that spans systems and connects people to care.

Although the QRT model has been widely adopted, there has been little research to understand its impact. In this session, presenters from two of Ohio's most mature Quick Response Teams will present results from analyses of their respective programs. By cross-referencing data from QRTs with criminal justice records and hospital records, these QRTs were able to explore how engagement with their programs reduced individuals' engagement with multiple systems in the community. This analysis indicates that programs like QRT have meaningful and significant outcomes: the QRT can reduce overdose deaths, improve community safety and produce significant cost savings for Medicaid. The presenters will explain the development of their work over time, and discuss the resources necessary to measure impact in a community collaboration. Finally, the panelists will describe the potential for system improvement and future cost



savings with investments in data collection and law enforcement assisted diversion at scale.

Public Safety



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM



KY HELP Statewide Call Center, Powered by Operation UNITE: A Coordinated Response in Bridging the Gap to Substance Use Treatment Services in Kentucky

Moderator



Elizabeth Nichols

MS

Presenter



Van Ingram

NONE



Jamie Gilliam

CADC



Courtney Maynard

Masters of Science in Industrialized-Organizational Psychology

Room

Delta Ballroom C

Session Description: Connecting Kentuckians to Hope: The KY HELP Statewide Call Center Model

The KY HELP Statewide Call Center, staffed by Operation UNITE and funded by the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, is a vital resource for Kentuckians impacted by substance use disorders and their families. Launched in December 2017, the toll-free line (1-8338-KYHELP) serves as a compassionate and confidential access point for individuals and families



seeking support, information, and connections to treatment.

This presentation will highlight the creation, structure, and evolution of the KY HELP line, which now operates seven days a week with extended hours. Staffed by trained Screening and Referral Specialists, the call center provides crisis support, treatment navigation, and ongoing outreach services for at least one year of post-contact. Email support is also available, expanding accessibility for those in need.

The session will also contextualize the call center's impact against Kentucky's substance use landscape. In 2021, Kentucky experienced a record 2,250 overdose deaths, but by 2024, this number declined to 1,410 — a 30.2% reduction. This session will explore how the KY HELP model supports individuals needing treatment and/or their families seeking treatment options for a loved one.

Attendees will gain insights into effective strategies for centralized resource coordination, crisis response, and how long-term support and help navigating barriers contribute to maintained sobriety. This model offers a replicable framework for other states working to combat addiction through proactive, human-centered care.

Recovery Support



3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Vision Session: Prevention That Resonates—Engaging Students on the Risks of Fentanyl & Fake Pills

Moderator



Dee-1 .

Speaker



**Robert Lawlor**

MS-ADPP, MS, BSCJ

**Anna Gasinski**

CPS

**Lisa Deane****Jon DeLena****Rick Rendon****Room****Volunteer Ballroom D**

Join us for the premiere screening of *The Risks Are Real: The Truth About Fentanyl & Fake Pills*, a powerful one-hour virtual program designed to educate middle and high school students nationwide about the dangers of illicit fentanyl and fake pills. After being broadcast live to schools across the nation in the morning, the program will make its conference debut at this Vision Session, offering prevention professionals, healthcare providers, and law enforcement a firsthand look at youth-focused, expert-informed approaches to fentanyl education and awareness. Attendees will gain practical insights into effective messaging and engagement strategies that resonate with young audiences. The session features a screening of the program, which helps students understand the real risks of fake pills, addresses mental health support and prevention strategies, and provides practical tools for students to protect themselves and support peers. Following the screening, participants will engage in a panel discussion with the program's producers and presenters to explore how this turnkey educational content can be implemented in their communities. This free, classroom-ready resource is aligned with national prevention goals and offers an interactive, engaging approach to a critical public health challenge.



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3:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Vision Session: Eliminating Barriers: Expanding Safe Drug Disposal and Prevention Across Rural Communities

Speaker



Julie Brenner

**Angela Faircloth****Room****Delta Ballroom D**

Discover how Deterra delivers an innovative and strategic approach to safe medication disposal and drug deactivation. This session will explore how Deterra's proven technology helps organizations reduce diversion risk, strengthen compliance, and protect communities through practical, forward-thinking solutions. Attendees will gain insight into how a strategic approach to drug deactivation paired with an educational element can support safer workflows, improve accountability, and drive meaningful impact.

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**3:00 PM – 3:45 PM**

Vision Session: Your New Teen Prevention Playbook: Applying Research with Thousands of Teens to Prevent Drug Use

Speaker

**Penny Norman****Gloria Rosado**

MPH

Room**Delta Ballroom C**

Recent research conducted in Virginia showed that 6 in 10 teens were offered pills or powders by someone they trust. Most of this exposure isn't happening in scary, back alleys with shady drug dealers—it's happening at parties, school, and hangouts with friends. Rescue is unveiling a first-of-its-kind approach to creating campaigns that prevent teen drug use by replacing authoritarian tones with authentic guidance, while motivating parents to be your most effective prevention allies. Join us to learn how to move the threat of fentanyl-laced pills and powders from an abstract concept to a personal reality. Gain evidence-based strategies to reach teens in their social circles and empower parents to start prevention conversations, even when they don't believe their child is at risk.

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3:00 PM – 3:45 PM

Vision Session: Harnessing the Power of Data to Inform Overdose Prevention and Response: Introducing RADOR-KY, A Novel Public Interactive Data Platform

Speaker



Lindsey Hammerslag

PhD



Sharon Walsh

PhD



Daniel Harris

PhD



Trish Freeman

RPh, PhD, FAPhA, FNAP

Room

Delta Ballroom B

Rapid Actionable Data for Opioid Response in Kentucky (RADOR-KY) is a cutting-edge platform delivering timely, actionable data to strengthen opioid overdose prevention and response efforts across Kentucky. This novel system, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, integrates data from a comprehensive set of sources which are vital to understanding and mitigating the opioid overdose crisis, including data from vital statistics, emergency medical services, hospital and emergency department discharges, state police, Kentucky's prescription drug monitoring program, and Medicaid claims. In addition to creating a one stop shop for accessing data from across the opioid care continuum, RADOR-KY leverages automation, advanced analytics, and predictive modeling to create actionable insights from emerging trends and geographic hotspots. These insights can be used to guide strategic resource allocation and enable targeted opioid overdose prevention efforts at both state and local levels. This session, moderated by Dr. Sharon Walsh, will demonstrate the RADOR-KY system and provide attendees with practical information for



leveraging publicly available data to respond to the opioid crisis. Dr. Daniel Harris will give an overview of RADOR-KY's design and how data are integrated and managed to allow for novel and actionable analyses such as emerging hotspot mappings. Dr. Lindsey Hammerslag will demonstrate the RADOR-KY system and detail dashboard development, and the community engagement approach used to ensure that stakeholder needs are met. Dr. Trish Freeman will highlight use case scenarios to demonstrate how RADOR-KY or similar data systems can be used to develop evidence-based resource allocation plans for overdose prevention interventions across the opioid care continuum.

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3:25 PM – 3:35 PM

Vision Session: The Next Phase of the Crisis – When Smuggling Goes Invisible

Speaker



Alexander Sappok

PhD

Room

Delta Ballroom D



National overdose numbers may be declining—but the crisis is evolving, not disappearing. As enforcement adapts and border interdictions improve, drug delivery mechanisms are becoming smaller, subtler, and harder to detect. Today, illicit substances are increasingly moving through everyday channels: mailrooms, correctional facilities, courthouses, treatment centers, and government buildings. Drugs are embedded in paper, dissolved into legal mail, concealed in tiny quantities inside routine correspondence. These methods are not just difficult to detect—they put staff, first responders, and vulnerable populations at risk of accidental exposure. The battlefield has shifted from visible trafficking routes to invisible pathways. In this session, we explore how smuggling tactics are evolving, why traditional detection methods are struggling to keep pace, and what it means for policymakers, corrections leaders, and public safety professionals. We will examine real-world examples, emerging threat patterns, and the operational blind spots that allow these methods to succeed. If we continue fighting yesterday's smuggling methods, we risk losing tomorrow's lives. The next phase of the crisis demands new awareness, new tools, and a new mindset focused on protecting people at the point of entry—before exposure happens.

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3:45 PM – 4:45 PM

Break in Exhibit Hall (Posters Open)





4:45 PM – 6:15 PM

Evening Plenary- Opioid Settlement Funding

Panelist



Karen Kelly



Stephen Loyd

MD



Sarah Thomason

PharmD, BCPP, BCACP

Speaker



Nora Volkow

MD



Terrance Cole

Room

Delta Ballroom A

Session Description: This session will explore how opioid settlement funds are being allocated and utilized to address the ongoing addiction and overdose crisis. Expert panelists will examine strategies for maximizing the impact of these resources, promoting equitable distribution, and ensuring funds are directed toward sustainable prevention, treatment, and recovery initiatives.

Attendees will gain insights into national and state-level approaches, transparency efforts, and opportunities for collaboration among healthcare leaders, policymakers, and community organizations.

Additional panelists will be announced soon!



6:15 PM – 7:15 PM

Open Meeting



CE Information

This activity has been designed to meet the educational needs of physicians, pharmacists, advanced practice registered nurses, registered nurses, social workers, addiction professionals, prevention professionals, health education specialists, certified counselors, lawyers, law enforcement officials, and psychologists.

[More Details](#)



Congressman Hal Rogers Beacon of Hope Award

The ongoing effort to combat drug addiction requires a multidisciplinary approach involving stakeholders from all aspects of society. Many leaders have emerged in this movement, and in 2018 the Rx Summit decided to annually recognize a change-maker tackling this epidemic. The inaugural award was presented to Congressman Hal Rogers of Kentucky.



[Learn More](#)



Hope Ambassadors

Stories of Recovery and Inspiration for Hope

The work we do at **Rx and Illicit Drug Summit** through sessions, workshops, and networking is all centered around one goal: to create effective strategies for prevention, treatment, and recovery that will ultimately save lives. This is why we created the **Hope Ambassadors program**, to highlight stories of ***people in recovery***, and those who ***have impacted the recovery journey of others***.

↑ Through our dedication and collaboration at Rx and Illicit Drug Summit, our community has the power to create more stories of recovery and thus a stronger sense of **hope**. We look forward to continue sharing **more recovery stories and inspiration for hope** at Rx and Illicit Drug Summit 2026 in Nashville.

[Learn More](#)

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Session Agenda

Search Agenda

Tracks



April 6-9, 2026 | Nashville, TN

Register



MONDAY
April 6

TUESDAY
April 7

WEDNESDAY
April 8

THURSDAY
April 9

7:00 AM – 5:15 PM
Registration Desk Open





7:30 AM – 8:45 AM

A Place to Catch Their Breath: Respite Housing as a Recovery Bridge That Works

Moderator

**Jennifer Tourville**

DNP (Doctor of Nursing Practice)

Presenter

**Troy Sandifer**

CPRS

**Stephen Loyd**

MD

Room

Delta Ballroom C

Session Description: Respite Housing is emerging as a vital recovery support service, bridging a dangerous gap between crisis and care. Whether someone is fleeing domestic violence, awaiting a detox or treatment bed, recently released from incarceration, or experiencing homelessness, Respite Housing provides a safe, low-barrier, recovery-oriented environment where individuals can stabilize and re-engage in services. This session will explore the implementation and measurable outcomes of Hustle Recovery, Inc.'s Respite Housing model in Tennessee and provide a detailed roadmap for replication in other regions. Hustle Recovery's Respite Housing has served over 300 individuals since its launch, with over 92% successfully transitioning into long-term/short term treatment, housing, or recovery programs. By offering immediate shelter, peer support, and structured case navigation, this model reduces emergency room utilization, prevents overdose deaths, and increases engagement in the recovery continuum.

Attendees will learn about essential partnerships with hospitals, jails, treatment providers, and courts, as well as funding strategies through grants, Medicaid, and community collaborations. The presentation will include implementation checklists, intake protocols, and outcome tracking systems. Attendees will leave



equipped to establish their own Respite Housing program using evidence-based practices and adaptable frameworks.

Recovery Support



7:30 AM – 8:45 AM



Are Novel Psychoactive Substances on Your Radar?

Moderator



Richard Sanders

MSCJ

Presenter



Theresa Meli

M.S., D-ABFT-FT



Jillian Neifeld

M.S., D-ABFT-FT



Jack Kain

PharmD



Sarah Bartock

PhD, F-ABFT

Room

Volunteer Ballroom D

Session Description: Illicit drug trends shift rapidly, challenging healthcare providers to stay informed and adapt treatment strategies accordingly. Since the late 2000s, synthetic and designer substances, known as novel psychoactive substances (NPS), have been fluctuating annually, creating challenges for routine drug testing and for clinicians trying to determine what a patient may have ingested. This session will explore the critical importance of tracking emerging drug patterns and how they evolve over time. It will also discuss the



need for integrating that knowledge into patient care. Special attention will be given to the re-emergence of two high-risk substances that have been increasingly detected in toxicology reports since December 2024: carfentanil, an ultra-potent fentanyl analog, and fluorexetamine, a designer stimulant. Through an examination of recent data and case examples, participants will gain a clearer understanding of how these substances appear in clinical settings, their presence in polydrug use, and the implications for diagnosis, overdose management, and treatment planning. Whether working in emergency medicine, behavioral health, addiction treatment, or primary care, clinicians will understand the utility of testing based on updated drug trends to help stay ahead of shifting drug landscapes and protect vulnerable patient populations.

Illicit Drugs



7:30 AM – 8:45 AM

Marijuana Regulation to Reduce Youth Initiation in States with Legal Recreational Use

Moderator



John Dreyzehner

MD, MPH, FACOEM

Presenter



Kevin Roy

MBA



Kristen Pendergrass

MSW

Room

Delta Ballroom D

Session Description: Shatterproof will present on its efforts to influence policies in states that have legalized recreational marijuana.



This effort entails collaboration with the Partnership to End Addiction to leverage its seminal review of state marijuana policies, Youth Protection Provisions within Marijuana Liberalization Laws: Evidence-based Recommendations for Policymakers.

The presentation will share work with policy makers to enact policies that research shows will impede youth initiation in these states. Examples of evidence-based policies from the report include THC potency limits, dispensary distance specifications from children, advertising restrictions and others.

Shatterproof piloted this effort in several states and will report on progress to date. It will also report on the challenges in confronting commercial interest.

Finally, we will share the research citations included in the report and elsewhere that justify this policy initiative and show that youth are especially susceptible to a reduction in perception of risk in legalized states.

Advocacy



7:30 AM – 8:45 AM



Creative and Purposeful Approaches to Retention in MOUD

Moderator



Anne Burns

RPh

Presenter



Hillary Tamar

MD, FASAM



**Andrew Schreier**

Master's in Counseling, ICS, CSAC, LPC, ICGC-II, and BACC

Room**Delta Ballroom B**

Retention in substance use treatment is one of the strongest predictors of improved outcomes. With fentanyl, stimulants, and other challenges shaping today's landscape, it's more important than ever to be purposeful and creative in how we support people to stay engaged in care long enough to reach their goals. How can we help retain patients in treatment? Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) are the gold standard for opioid use disorder treatment. Strong evidence shows MOUD improves retention, reduces mortality, decreases illicit opioid use, and lowers rates of infectious disease transmission and criminal justice involvement. Despite this strong evidence base, barriers to accessing MOUD persist, underscoring the need for intentional strategies to expand availability and engagement. Explore evidence-based strategies to address barriers to MOUD access and expand effective treatment for opioid use disorder. Discover how technology-based tools, including smartphone applications and text-messaging support, further enhance connection and continuity between visits. The utilization of harm reduction principles and the elimination of stigmatizing language are essential to engaging individuals who use substances. Prioritizing staff retention is integral to success, since continuity in provider relationships supports patient connection to care and fosters thoughtful, innovative approaches to creating a safe space. Improving retention demands flexible, person-centered approaches that support individuals at every stage of their recovery journey.

Clinical



9:00 AM – 10:15 AM

Morning Plenary**Speaker**

**Sara Carter****Kash Patel****Kathryn Burgum**

MBA

Room**Delta Ballroom A**

Session Description: This plenary session will provide an update on the evolving landscape of drug trafficking organizations and their impact on substance use trends, public health, and community safety. Expert presenters will discuss enforcement strategies and the shifting dynamics of illicit supply chains influencing the opioid and stimulant crises.



10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

**Deflection Turns 10: Ten Lessons from a Decade of Police, Drug Treatment, and Community Partnerships****Moderator****Robert McClintock**

BSBA/FF/NRP

Presenter**Jac Charlier**

MPA

Room**Delta Ballroom D**

Session Description: Ten years ago, an article appeared in the September 2015 issue of IACP's Police Chief magazine that would introduce a new word



into the U.S. police and justice lexicon: deflection. Eventually, the word also would make its way into the public health world of drug treatment and recovery, as well as move into global usage. In the article, "Want to Reduce Drugs in Your Community? You Might Want to Deflect Instead of Arrest," author Jac Charlier described a model of crime reduction and crime prevention in which police would "deflect" people who use drugs to substance use treatment rather than arresting and charging them, thereby addressing the root of the problem—that person's drug use—and, in turn, reducing drug-related offenses in the community. Further, in the case of opioids, police also were seeking to prevent overdoses. A decade later, the benefits suggested in the 2015 article have borne out, and the practice of deflection indeed has exploded into the emergence of a global field and movement. Reflecting on the impact of deflection over the past decade, many additional lessons and benefits have become evident as well. In this presentation, ten lessons learned will be presented, in brief.

Public Safety



10:30 AM – 11:45 AM



Recovery Ready Families: The Untapped Power in the Room

Moderator



Eric Bailly

LPC, LADC

Presenter



Kemp Chester

MA



John Kelly

PhD, ABPP



Alexandra Plante



**Stacey Read**

BA, MSW, LSW

Room**Delta Ballroom C**

Session Description: Families powerfully, influence health, relationships, risk of substance use disorder (SUD), and the ability to recover from SUD. Families are affected not only by the experience of a loved one's SUD, but by the cultures and larger systems in which they are embedded as well as the systems with which they interact. Families represent not only a potentially powerful form of recovery capital (RC) for those who have SUD or are in recovery. Additionally, they can benefit from physical, social, and, cultural RC themselves and can serve as a form of RC for each other.

This session presents the Recovery-Ready Families framework, a structured approach that equips families with practical principles and postures to reduce harm, strengthen connection and support recovery. It also examines the interaction between families and broader systems and the roles families can play in supporting recovery and explores the impact of parental SUD on children, reviewing evidence-based approaches for addressing associated trauma and for promoting intergenerational healing and recovery, including the National Council for Children of Addiction's evidence-based Celebrating Families! Curriculum and its Clergy Education and Training Project. Panelists will review research on the relationship between family engagement in SUD treatment and recovery, and examine how families, communities, employers, and other entities can become recovery ecosystems.

Drawing on the latest research and practice, panelists will explore how stigma, isolation and fragmented supports limit a family's capacity to respond effectively and will provide an overview of strategies that can help them overcome these challenges.

Recovery Support





10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

Advances in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Addictive Disorders

Moderator

**Kelly Clark**

MD, MBA

Presenter

**Bruce Liese**

PhD, ABPP

Room

Delta Ballroom B

Session Description: We begin this presentation by emphasizing that cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a superordinate category that contains an assortment of “branded” therapy approaches (e.g., Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Behavioral Activation, Cognitive Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Exposure and Response Prevention, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, etc.). These approaches have some obvious similarities and differences. Perhaps the most conspicuous similarity is that they focus on patients’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They are typically structured, time-limited, and present-focused, providing structured techniques to facilitate desired patient outcomes. Differences mostly regard their various primary focal points (e.g., automatic thoughts, beliefs, schemas, acceptance, commitment, behavior change, compassion, emotion regulation, mindfulness, interpersonal processes, etc.).



We describe and distinguish between content and process in the provision of CBT for addictive disorders. We consider structure, collaboration, case conceptualization, psychoeducation, and specific techniques, with emphasis on potential challenges common to each of these processes.

We discuss some of the many misconceptions regarding CBT. Perhaps the most egregious is that CBT involves a superficial, formulaic, expedient approach to helping patients. Those who effectively practice CBT know well that CBT is not

superficial, formulaic, or expedient. Instead, CBT engages a complex process, involving complex content. To further complicate matters, CBT patients form a diverse group whose members vary in their responses to therapy and therapists. For example, some benefit from directive therapy, some from non-directive therapy; some require a high degree of structure, others prefer less structure; some desire relaxed, friendly relationships with therapists, others prefer formal, professional relationships with therapists.

Developed in Partnership with:



Clinical



10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

Medetomidine: Xylazine's Nastier Cousin Has Arrived!

Moderator



Michael Meit

MA, MPH

Presenter



Willam Lynch

BS Pharm, RPh



Jason Piotrowski

BA, MPH Candidate

Room

Volunteer Ballroom D

Session/Poster Description: Medetomidine is a veterinary alpha-2 agonist sedative, similar to xylazine ("tranq"), that was first found in Philadelphia/Southern New Jersey drug supply in May 2024. Medetomidine is 100-200 times more potent than xylazine and can cause longer-lasting sedation, low heart rates (bradycardia), and more severe withdrawal symptoms. Medetomidine is not an opioid, but is increasingly found in the area's "dope" (street opioid) supply. Since May 2024, emergency department visits for substance use related skin and soft tissue injury driven by xylazine have decreased by 50%, while visits for withdrawal related to medetomidine have more than doubled. Medetomidine's sudden emergence in the Philadelphia polysubstance drug supply demonstrates how rapidly the illicit substances in a geographical area can dramatically change. Communities need to anticipate these potential sudden changes and prepare for them. This presentation will share how four different regional health care systems have come together with public health officials to do just that, by collaborating first for xylazine and now to address medetomidine's emergence. Different initiatives to address awareness of these changes, identification of medetomidine overdose and withdrawal management will be shared, especially regarding how they are different from xylazine. Outbreaks in New Jersey have been disparate by location and the rationale for these differences will be reviewed. Attendees will be able to consider and initiate mitigation strategies employed through public health, law enforcement, and clinician collaboration on how to decrease medetomidine overdose presence in their communities. These strategies and initiatives can then be taken back home and utilized to prepare and address future sudden changes of the emergence of any new problematic drug substance, like medetomidine, in their drug supply.



Relevant Evidence: Based on drug testing and reports from local emergency departments, medetomidine is rapidly replacing xylazine in the Philadelphia/South Jersey drug supply. Since the introduction of medetomidine, there has been an increase and variation in withdrawal symptoms, a decrease in the number of patients seeking treatment for xylazine-associated wounds, and a decrease in the presence of xylazine in the drug supply. Per the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Department of Health from May 2024 to November 2024, the percentage of Philadelphia drug samples with medetomidine increased from 29% to 87%, while the percentage of samples with xylazine decreased from 97%

to 42%, suggesting that medetomidine is quickly overtaking xylazine in the drug supply. During this period, medetomidine was also found in overdose death data from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health's (PDPH) Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) and, like xylazine, has always been found in combination with fentanyl. In December 2024, a health alert notifying providers of severe withdrawal symptoms requiring ICU level of care attributed to concurrent use of medetomidine and fentanyl was issued. In May 2025, the CDC published a report describing 165 patients admitted to Philadelphia's health systems between 9/1/24 to 1/31/25 with a newly recognized medetomidine withdrawal syndrome, of which 91% were admitted to ICU and 24% were intubated. As reported by New Jersey State Police Department of Forensic Science, similar results are being seen in southern New Jersey where medetomidine has an increasing presence in the drug supply, almost exclusively being combined with fentanyl.

Relevance to Rx Summit Audience: Polysubstance overdoses with new emerging illicit substances are happening constantly across the country with sudden changes increasing in occurrence. A perfect case scenario is the emergence of medetomidine rapidly replacing xylazine in the Philadelphia/Southern New Jersey drug supply. This sudden change to medetomidine has brought increasing challenges in managing patients due to the overdose/withdrawal and other complications that differ from xylazine. Working through xylazine prepared the Philadelphia region to be prepared for the emergence of a new illicit substance and these learnings were employed to address medetomidine. Attendees will benefit from understanding how the Philadelphia region responded to medetomidine through a massive collaborative effort. The methodologies, learnings, and strategies employed by cooperation of multiple stakeholders directly involved will be shared so that participants can take these ideas home to their local communities and improve their overall response when medetomidine or any other new substance appears in their neighborhoods.

Illicit Drugs



11:45 AM – 1:15 PM

Lunch Break in Exhibit Hall



11:45 AM – 5:00 PM

Exhibit Hall Open



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM

Kentucky is Better Without It: Scaling a Statewide Prevention Initiative

**Moderator****J. Kevin Massey****Presenter****Christopher Evans**

BA, MA

**Carolyn Capern**

Bachelor of Arts

**Greg Trujillo**

Bachelor of Science

**Stanley Brizz**

MS, Addictions and Substance Misuse Counselor

**Room****Delta Ballroom C**

Session Description: The BETTER WITHOUT IT® campaign (@betterwithout.it) reaches Gen Z on digital platforms with clear, objective information about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and a critical message of empowerment. This unique prevention campaign, based in the principles of positive youth development, originated in Central Florida – and then a chance meeting at Rx Summit 2024 opened the doors to impact an even bigger

audience of young people.

Through a new partnership with the Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission and the Office of the Attorney General, as well as three major state university partners, BETTER WITHOUT IT® has begun to help young people across the State of Kentucky understand that their minds, bodies, relationships, and future are already better without illicit substance use.

Using the expansion of the BETTER WITHOUT IT® campaign as a case study, this session will provide insights into the challenges and opportunities of engaging Generation Z on a statewide level via a positive youth development approach, partnerships with student athletes and other youth ambassadors, and direct youth engagement strategies. Presenters will share their practical takeaways from directing this youth engagement campaign and building partnerships in Kentucky with the goal of inspiring an entire state to pursue a substance-free lifestyle.

Prevention



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM



The Long-Term Outcome: Where Recovery Meets Leadership

Moderator



Monty Burks

Phd., CPRS

Presenter



James Harper

MS, LPC-MHSP(t), NCC, CPRS



Nathan Payne

MA, CPRS, LPC-MHSP (t)



**Allen Burnette**

CPRS

Room**Delta Ballroom B**

Session Description: This session will spotlight four Tennessee-based leaders who have transformed personal histories of addiction and justice involvement into powerful platforms for statewide impact. These individuals—now serving in executive roles across the Tennessee Governor’s Faith-Based and Community Initiative, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), the Tennessee Opioid Abatement Council, and a rural Recovery Court—share a common thread: lived experience.

Through authentic storytelling and real-world strategies, this session will explore how recovery is not just a personal journey but a leadership pipeline. Each presenter represents a system that has evolved to embrace the value of lived experience—not just as a testimonial, but as infrastructure. Tennessee has taken a bold step by formally integrating lived experience into its workforce. From state-funded mentorship models to court innovation and recovery policy, the state is demonstrating that the long-term outcome of recovery isn’t just sobriety—it’s public service, strategic leadership, and community transformation.

Recovery Support



1:15 PM – 2:30 PM



Gas Station, Smoke Shop, and Corner Store Drugs: The New World of Kratom, Cannabinoids, Psychedelics, and Other Substances in Your Neighborhood

Moderator**John Eadie**

MPA

Presenter**Alex Krotulski**

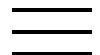
PhD

**Barry Logan**

PhD, F-ABFT

Room**Volunteer Ballroom D**

A portion of the North American drug landscape has fundamentally transformed, shifting from illicitly street-sourced substances to brightly lit convenience store shelves. This session will address the rise of "gas station drugs" that have become easily accessible and largely unregulated among retail products across the United States. Under the allure of "safe" and "legal", numerous new drug substances are now available for purchase over-the-counter, and this new paradigm requires specialized knowledge from law enforcement, clinicians, scientists, and public health officials. Several policy changes have helped fuel this new landscape. The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 ("Farm Bill") opened the door to new semi-synthetic cannabinoids (e.g., delta-8 THC, delta-10 THC) produced from hemp CBD extract, in addition to more potent cannabinoids (e.g., THCP). The DEA's 2016 decision not to schedule mitragynine and 7-hydroxy mitragynine has led to a surge in high-potency kratom extracts and the sale of enriched semi-synthetic mitragynine alkaloids. Moreover, there has been a surge in availability of psilocin and its chemical derivatives (e.g., 4-AcO-DMT) sold in mushroom-marketed products, and repurposed therapeutic drugs, like tianeptine ("gas station heroin") and phenibut are now consumed in macro-doses to elicit altered psychoactive

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discussed, and countermeasure strategies will be explored.

Illicit Drugs





2:45 PM – 3:30 PM

Afternoon Plenary- Rethinking Chronic Pain and the Opioid Crisis

Speaker



Sanjay Gupta

MD



Eric Garland

PhD, LCSW



Dan Kruger

Room

Delta Ballroom A

Session Description: Untreated chronic pain remains an overlooked driver of the opioid epidemic. This powerful, solution-focused plenary brings together internationally recognized experts to share new science, clinical strategies, and personal perspectives on advancing integrated pain care. Featuring Sanjay Gupta, MD (CNN), Eric Garland, PhD (University of California, San Diego), and Dan Kruger (Professional Motorcycle Athlete), this session will highlight innovative approaches like Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement (MORE) and inspire action toward a new standard of healing for individuals living with pain and opioid dependence.

Additional speakers will be announced.



3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Break in Exhibit Hall (Posters Open)





4:30 PM – 5:45 PM

Linking Actions for Healthy Mothers and Babies (LAHMB) a Program to Lower the Incidence of Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS)

Moderator



Christopher Jones

PharmD, DrPH, MPH

Presenter



Julie Craig

Bachelors Public Health, Masters of Science in Nonprofit Administration



Charlene Becker

CAPPA Certified Childbirth Educator

Room

Delta Ballroom D

Session Description: This session would include information on the raters of Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS) and how our program Linking Actions for Healthy Mothers and Babies (LAHMB), funded through RCORP/HRSA, is working with pregnant moms to provide education and support to lower the number of babies born with NOWS. W will cover how to provide caring case management, evidence-based birthing and parenting education, prevention presentations in the schools, Peer Support Groups, and implement a Consortium of providers to reduce the incidence and impact of NOWS with a multi-dimensional approach across the preconception, prenatal and post-partum continuum using best practice methods. The session will include an overview of the LAHMB program activities such as universal screening, brief intervention and referral (SBIRT), trauma informed screening practices, filling in gaps in the coordination of care among providers, offering information sessions and materials to help prepare pregnant women with SUD/OD for the experience of delivering their babies at hospitals, providing prenatal and post-partum education, increasing Naloxone education, administration and distribution, educate high-school aged youth, enhance



wrap-around care and professional advocacy for mothers with SUD/ODU, and providing a peer support network for participants. Participants will take-away how to set up a program in their area, new information on the needs of pregnant women with SUD, and how to set up partnerships to focus attention and resources on the continuing battle with opioid and other substance use dependency and its consequences on children and families.

Prevention



4:30 PM – 5:45 PM



Navigating Life and Grief: Supporting Families Affected by Substance Use Disorder

Moderator



Daniel Blaney-Koen

JD

Presenter



Karen Osilla

PhD

Room

Delta Ballroom B

Session Description: Family members—whether biological, extended, or chosen—are often overlooked in clinical, research, and policy discussions about the impacts of substance use disorders (SUD). For every individual with a SUD, multiple family members are affected, and the health and social impact of a loved one's substance use on families is substantial. Families impacted by SUD are at high risk for their own health issues, including depression, anxiety, and exacerbation of substance use or chronic health problems. The impact of these consequences is heightened because of the stigma, guilt, shame and self-blame that often accompany substance use. As a result, families affected by SUD seldom seek support for themselves, which perpetuates their social isolation



and increases their health risks. This session will describe the literature on the unique effects of SUD on families and how these effects can change throughout their loved one's substance use trajectory, including research understanding the "special grief" people who are bereaved by overdose deaths experience. Dr. Osilla will also discuss a range of evidence-based strategies for supporting families. In particular, she will provide clinical insights on implementing the Community Reinforcement Approach and Family Training (CRAFT) for families seeking tools to help a loved one who is resistant to treatment. Additionally, she will share grief support techniques for those grieving a drug-related death. This session ultimately aims to champion the needs of families affected by SUD, and it urges the field to both understand the nuances families experience and tailor effective strategies for serving this often-overlooked group.

Developed in Partnership with:



Clinical



4:30 PM – 5:15 PM

Regional Networking Sessions

4:30 PM – 5:45 PM

Office of National Drug Control Policy Strategy Update

Moderator



John Dreyzehner

MD, MPH, FACOEM

Presenter**Roneet Lev**

MD

**Peter Gaumond**

AM

**Kemp Chester**

MA

Room**Delta Ballroom C**

The Trump Administration's upcoming National Drug Control Strategy provides the roadmap for the Nation's effort to target the sources and methods of drug distribution, and fortify our communities here at home by preventing drug use before it starts and assisting those fighting to reclaim their lives by providing the treatment, recovery support, and other services they need. The Administration's approach begins by promoting the social norm of a drug-free America, highlighting that 83% of Americans do not use drugs. Preventing substance use before it begins is one of the most effective ways to protect public health, strengthen communities, and reduce the long-term social and economic impacts of drug use. While prevention remains the ideal, millions of Americans currently have a substance use disorder (SUD). SUD touches every community and neighborhood in our Nation, and the Administration aims to make finding treatment easier than finding drugs. The Strategy focuses on integrating addiction treatment into the mainstream healthcare system and, for the first time, addresses faith as an integral part of treatment and recovery. Finally, the Strategy celebrates the 23.5 million Americans in recovery, and is committed to helping more Americans achieve and sustain recovery by expanding and enhancing recovery support services and the peer support workforce across the Nation.



5:45 PM – 6:45 PM

Open Meeting



CE Information

This activity has been designed to meet the educational needs of physicians, pharmacists, advanced practice registered nurses, registered nurses, social workers, addiction professionals, prevention professionals, health education specialists, certified counselors, lawyers, law enforcement officials, and psychologists.

[More Details](#)





Congressman Hal Rogers Beacon of Hope Award

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[Learn More](#)



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Session Agenda

Search Agenda

Tracks



April 6-9, 2026 | Nashville, TN

Register



MONDAY
April 6

TUESDAY
April 7

WEDNESDAY
April 8

THURSDAY
April 9

7:15 AM – 8:15 AM
Open Meeting



8:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Registration Desk Open



8:30 AM – 9:30 AM

AI & the Overdose Crisis: Innovation at the Front Lines

**Panelist****Kyle Hillman**

CAE, CMM

**Eric Bailly**

LPC, LADC

**Brian Barash**

MD

Room**Delta Ballroom A**

Session Description: Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping industries across the globe—and its impact on the nation's overdose epidemic is just beginning to emerge. In this forward-looking plenary, experts from across sectors will explore how AI is being leveraged to support prevention, strengthen public safety strategies, expand access to treatment, and improve data-driven decision-making.

Speakers to be announced soon!



9:45 AM – 11:00 AM

Integrated Advocacy: Working through the Congress, Courts, and Federal Executive Agencies to Promote Public Health Solutions to Addiction



Moderator**Michael Barnes**

JD

Presenter**Joseph Longley**

JD

**Regina LaBelle**

JD

**Libby Jones**

M.Sc.

Room**Delta Ballroom C**

Session Description: This session will present practical tools advocates can use to make change in their communities to expand access to evidence-based responses to addiction and substance use disorder. In a rapidly changing federal landscape—with dramatic changes to SAMHSA, substantially less enforcement activity from the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, and an estimated \$1 trillion cut to Medicaid over the next decade—what tools do communities have to make positive change? We will discuss the work that is ongoing to pass bipartisan, common sense legislation that expands access to addiction treatment; federal litigation aimed at vindicating the civil rights of people with substance use disorder; and efforts to ensure that when the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and state Medicaid offices implement the recently enacted work reporting requirements, people with substance use disorders can maintain access to their Medicaid coverage. Attendees will leave up to date on the latest work happening at the federal level and in courts across the country, and be provided tools to work with policy advocates, lawmakers, and litigators in their own communities to make positive change.

Advocacy





9:45 AM – 11:00 AM



Still the #1 Overdose Killer: How Orange County Uses Messaging to Keep Fentanyl in Focus

Moderator

**Jeff Breedlove**

CARES

Presenter

**Mark Lawrenz**

LCSW

**Simon Dixon**

Room

Delta Ballroom D

Session Description: Fentanyl is driving a deadly fourth wave of the opioid epidemic, fueled by counterfeit pills that have taken hold in communities across the US. In Orange County, fentanyl-related overdose deaths have risen sharply, especially among youth and young adults. To respond, the Orange County Health Care Agency (HCA) launched Fentanyl is Forever in October 2023, a multilingual, culturally inclusive public awareness and harm reduction campaign funded by Opioid Settlement Funds (OSF). The goal was to deliver urgent, emotional messaging, direct residents to free naloxone and local resources, and normalize harm reduction practices.

The HCA began with a ready-to-launch Turn-Key Campaign from Idea Engineering, allowing for a rapid, full-scale media rollout within weeks. This was followed by locally tailored messaging and media partnerships to ensure cultural and linguistic relevance. Strategies included digital, social, streaming, out-of-home, print, radio, in-theater, and community-based outreach, resulting in more than one billion impressions and over 437,000 new visitors to the



campaign website.

Partnerships with city leaders, law enforcement, and community organizations amplified impact through customized toolkits, localized materials, and co-branded outreach. The campaign's success demonstrates how combining speed, strategy, and community voice can drive measurable results.

This session will guide attendees through every stage of campaign planning and execution, from early decision-making and OSF deployment to optimization based on real-time data. Attendees will leave with practical lessons learned and proven steps to build impactful prevention campaigns that save lives and strengthen communities.

Prevention



9:45 AM – 11:00 AM



Delivering Medically Tailored Meals-MTM as Food Is Medicine-FIM to Address Diet-Health Issues Related to Illicit Drug Crisis, Prevention, Treatment and Care to Improve Lives and Enhance Health Equity

Moderator



Elizabeth Nichols

MS

Presenter



Walter Okoroanyanwu

MD, MPH, MBA



Ethan Cowan

MD, MS



Robert Graham

MD, MPH, ABOIM, FACP & Chef



Room**Delta Ballroom B**

Session Description: Medically Tailored Meal is the backbone of the Food is Medicine movement(1) which aims to prevent, treat, control and even cure diet-related health issues by allowing doctors and providers to prescribe food(2) appropriately as they do for medicines. The illicit drug crises and overdoses fueled by addiction carry health-related complications and co-morbidities including hypertension, diabetes, heart diseases, HIV, malnutrition, infections, poor wound healing, food deserts/insecurity, homelessness(housing is health), etc. A 2019 study found that opioid overdoses were concentrated in more economically disadvantaged zip codes, indicated by higher rates of poverty and unemployment as well as lower education and median household income. Other studies have found poverty to be a risk factor for opioid overdoses, unemployment to be a risk factor for fatal heroin overdoses, and a low education level to be a risk factor for prescription overdose, and for overdose mortality. Homelessness was associated with overdoses as well, especially among veterans(3). These healthcare disparities associated with Social determinants of health(SDOH) - poverty, homelessness, and social stigma make addiction more deadly(4). Providing MTMs to opioid users at home and at opioid crisis centers, prevention centers, and recovery centers provide a safe avenue for engagement and care continuum.

Clinical



11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

**From Crisis to Connection: Implementing Successful Police-Peer Partnerships****Moderator****Richard Sanders**

MSCJ

Presenter

**Vicky Butler****Brittney Garrett**

MS

**Travis Teets**

PRSS/CHW

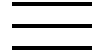
Room**Delta Ballroom D**

Session Description: This session highlights two successful peer and police collaborative models aimed to address the opioid and addiction epidemic in Massachusetts and West Virginia. First, Plymouth County Outreach (PCO) in MA will discuss their multi-faceted collaborative and nationally recognized model uniting 27 municipal police departments with peer Recovery Coaches and community organizations to address the opioid epidemic. This session will detail PCO's innovative approach, including its core program where law enforcement partners with trained peer Recovery Coaches for post-overdose home visits and street outreach. This session will also introduce the Police and Peers (PNP) initiative in West Virginia, which embeds Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSS) with law enforcement to address social service needs during non-violent incidents. Police refer individuals with substance use disorder to PRSS, who, with lived experience, build trust and connect individuals to treatment and recovery services, diverting them from the criminal justice system

Attendees will gain practical insights into establishing and operating these collaborative models that provide compassionate, judgment-free support and connect to treatment and recovery resources. A key takeaway will be understanding the vital role of peer professionals—individuals in recovery with specialized training in de-escalation, case management, and motivational interviewing. These peers meet individuals "where they're at," offering voluntary services, and connecting them to comprehensive support for basic needs and treatment navigation. The session will provide the audience with a "Peers and Policing Implementation Guide" based on best practices. This offers a replicable framework for communities to enhance their collaborative, peer-driven responses, fostering trust and reducing overdose fatalities.



Public Safety



April 6-9, 2026 | Nashville, TN

[Register](#)**Moderator****Caroline DuPont**

MD

Presenter**Laura Monico**

PhD

**Danielle Bellosi**

CPRC, NCPRSS

**Jodi Bostwick**

PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP

Room**Delta Ballroom B**

Session Description: Buprenorphine is the cornerstone of evidence-based treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD), yet significant challenges persist for patient access. Most patients who experience problems filling buprenorphine report missing at least one dose, with a mean duration of five days missed. People who live in rural areas or in pharmacy deserts face disproportionately greater access barriers, from providers and pharmacies. Even when patients bring a prescription to a pharmacy, national secret shopper telephone audits have identified fewer than 40 percent of pharmacies willing and able to promptly dispense buprenorphine for OUD. Concerns about misuse and diversion have been identified as major contributors to this problem, yet these concerns continue to be unfounded while creating a grave situation for people



unable to readily obtain life-saving medication. The pharmacies that strive to maintain and expand buprenorphine inventory also face uncertainty from opaque pharmacy distributor quantity thresholds.

In this presentation, we will describe three of the most common pharmacy refusal scenarios encountered in clinical practice, and share research and real-world examples of what drives these failures. Drawing from multi-state data, qualitative research, and experience delivering care to more than 20,000 patients via telehealth, we will explore provider-pharmacist communication strategies, educational tools to address pharmacy-level misinformation, and upstream policy levers to promote buprenorphine access. Attendees will come away with actionable insights on how to support patients navigating pharmacy barriers and how to engage across sectors to close the final gap in the medication access pathway.

Clinical



11:15 AM – 12:30 PM



Your Journey, Their Path: Avoiding Personal Bias in Client Recovery

Moderator



Eric Bailly

LPC, LADC

Presenter



Jessica Jennings

LCDCII



Mike Gersz

LPCC-S, LICDC-CS, GAMB

Room

Delta Ballroom C



Session Description: Professionals with lived experience of addiction offer unique insight and connection in opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment, yet their personal recovery journeys can also introduce unintended bias—particularly in relation to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD). This interactive workshop explores how personal values shaped by abstinence-based recovery can unintentionally influence professional practice and client care. Presenters, both in long-term abstinence-based recovery, will share their personal and professional evolution—from initially resisting MOUD to embracing its evidence-based efficacy—highlighting the harm caused when personal beliefs are projected onto clients.

Attendees will examine how bias can undermine client autonomy, reduce MOUD engagement, and unintentionally stigmatize clients. Through self-assessment, case analysis, and facilitated discussion, participants will identify personal values that may impact professional judgment and learn actionable strategies to ensure ethical, client-centered care.

Takeaways from this session include:

Self-assessment tools to evaluate recovery-related bias in practice

Communication techniques to support client autonomy when discussing MOUD

Ethical strategies to separate personal experience from clinical decision-making

Real-world examples of recovery projection and how to repair therapeutic relationships when harm occurs



As the opioid crisis evolves, embracing all pathways to recovery is critical. This session helps professionals ensure their lived experience enhances rather than limits care, aligning with the current shift toward harm reduction, MOUD, and individualized treatment planning. Designed for counselors, peer support specialists, clinicians, and supervisors, this workshop supports more inclusive, ethical, and effective responses to the opioid epidemic.

Recovery Support



CE Information

This activity has been designed to meet the educational needs of physicians, pharmacists, advanced practice registered nurses, registered nurses, social workers, addiction professionals, prevention professionals, health education specialists, certified counselors, lawyers, law enforcement officials, and psychologists.



[More Details](#)



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