

# Special Topics

**Monday, June 8, 2026**

## **Special Topic 1: Faith, Community, and Recovery: Leveraging Spirituality in Recovery**

Room: Cedar/Maple

Speaker: Rommel Johnson, Ph.D

Faith, Community, and Recovery: Leveraging Rural Spiritual Networks for Addiction Prevention and Recovery: Faith communities often play a key role in the social and emotional lives of rural residents, shaping identity, coping mechanisms, and a sense of belonging that greatly influence addiction recovery. This presentation examines how rural spiritual networks—including churches, lay leaders, and informal faith-based support systems—can serve as powerful partners in prevention, treatment, and long-term recovery. Drawing from research, the session emphasizes how spirituality can provide meaning, resilience, and social connection, while also recognizing that religious stigma, moralizing messages, or spiritual struggles can increase shame and discourage seeking treatment. Rural communities face unique challenges in addiction care, including limited treatment resources, geographic isolation, and ongoing stigma. In this setting, faith communities often become the primary support systems. Studies show that healthy religiosity and spiritual coping are linked to lower substance use and better recovery outcomes (Kim-Spoon et al., 2018; Neff & MacMaster, 2018). Conversely, negative religious coping—such as beliefs in divine punishment or abandonment—can increase distress and hinder progress (Exline et al., 2014). This presentation will explore how addiction professionals can ethically and effectively work with faith leaders while maintaining boundaries, cultural humility, and respecting client autonomy.

## **Special Topic 2: Comprehensive Assessments**

Room: Ballroom C

Speaker: David Dawdy

Suicide risk assessment is one of the hardest parts of clinical work, especially in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, where risk is often higher and more complicated to understand. This workshop is designed to give clinicians realistic, usable skills for talking about suicide, assessing risk, and planning next steps with the people they serve. We'll start with a clear, accessible look at current suicide data, major risk and protective factors, and common warning signs, then connect these directly to everyday SUD practice. Throughout, we'll focus on the clinician's role: managing our own emotional reactions, asking direct but respectful questions, and using language that reduces shame rather than increasing it. A recurring theme is that no one can predict suicide with certainty, but we can make thoughtful, well-documented decisions that are grounded in evidence and collaboration. Because this training is geared toward SUD professionals, we'll look closely at situations that come up often in these settings: assessing risk when someone is intoxicated or in withdrawal, recognizing high-risk moments like post-detox, early recovery, and relapse, and addressing times when substance use itself may be the primary method of self-harm. We'll also talk about how suicide risk assessment fits with relapse prevention, recovery supports, and level-of-care decisions. Participants will be introduced to tools and frameworks such as the Columbia SSRS, SAFE-T, and the Stanley-Brown Safety Plan, with an emphasis on how to use them in real conversations—not as checklists to get through, but as guides to richer assessment. The workshop will close with a practical look at documentation, legal and ethical responsibilities, HIPAA, and ways clinicians can sustain themselves while working in high-risk SUD environments.

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## Special Topic 3: Addiction , Recovery and Medication

Room: Oakwood

Speaker: Dr. Paul Mladnick, MS, LADC, LMFT

This session will describe the progression of addiction , factors that led to recovery and the impact of medication in my recovery . This is a personal story of addiction , recovery and the use of medication as part of recovery

## Special Topic 4: Embracing Creativity in Recovery

Room: Ballroom A

Speaker: Brenda Rausch

The recovery process is about change and connection. Art and creativity can help us access our emotions and discover new connections “through the back door,” so to speak—offering a way around the self-protective walls that are built up in active addiction. Come and learn how to incorporate creativity, in its many forms, into the healing process.

**Tuesday, June 9, 2026**

## Special Topic 5: Faith, Community, and Recovery: Leveraging Spirituality in Recovery

Room: Cedar/Maple

Speaker: Terra Cabert

This session brings a real and honest look into the experiences many women face when gambling becomes a way to cope or survive. Through lived experience and storytelling, we explore why so many women keep their gambling struggles hidden and what is

happening underneath the surface that the outside world rarely sees. The session also highlights the very real societal differences between how men and women are portrayed and what they experience when it comes to gambling and gambling recovery. Women often carry expectations around caregiving, emotional labor, and being everything to everyone. These pressures influence both how they experience gambling harm and how and where they seek. We'll also touch on the role of hormones across a woman's life, including perimenopause, postpartum changes, monthly cycles, and the impact these hormonal shifts can have on stress, impulse control, emotional regulation, and the ability to recover. This presentation is grounded in a lived experience perspective while offering insight for clinicians, peers, prevention, professionals, and advocates who want to understand what gambling harm and seeking recovery looks like behind closed doors for women.

## Special Topic 6: Becoming a Supervisor: For Counselors and Therapists

Room: Ballroom A

Speaker: Patrick Perry

Supervisors are the models that others can pattern themselves after and need to have a sense of integrity that comes with it. It is imperative that counselors and therapists who end up becoming supervisors have adequate training to do so. In several states it is required as a part of licensure to provide supervision. This course is for supervisors who are or will be providing supervision for interns, and people seeking state licensure to practice. Also, other general supervisor tasks will be discussed such as supervisee self care, working with different populations, ethical considerations, boundaries co-occurring disorders. Treatment modalities (both what the supervisee wants to use and the experience of the supervisor. Also,

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all are trained in CBT and supervisee's need a good working knowledge of CBT.) Diagnosing or referring for serious mental illness are important and training how to share diagnoses with clients. A supervisor needs to teach what it means to be trauma informed and how to work with clients who have trauma.

## **Special Topic 7: Crossing Generations in the Workplace: A Collaborative Learning Journey**

Room: Ballroom C

Speaker: Dee Priddis, PhD

For the first time in history, there are five generations in the workplace. From leaders with decades of insight to leaders just beginning their professional journey, everyone possesses valuable contributions to the collective wisdom of lifelong learners. We invite you to join us for this interactive session to share experiences and gain insights from different generations as we expand generational boundaries and create connections.

**Wednesday, June 10, 2026**

## **Special Topic 8: 12 Steps Beyond AA**

Room: Cedar/Maple

Speaker: Desiree Grin, PhD

Exploring 12-Step Solutions Beyond AA  
This presentation offers an informative and open discussion about 12-step recovery approaches outside of Alcoholics Anonymous. Participants will learn about alternative fellowships and support programs that use the 12-step model to address a wide range of challenges, including substance use, behavioral addictions, codependency, grief, trauma recovery, and personal growth. The session will explore the principles behind 12-step recovery, how different groups adapt these concepts to meet specific needs, and ways individuals can

find supportive recovery communities that align with their experiences and beliefs. Attendees will leave with a broader understanding of available recovery resources, practical tools for support and accountability, and encouragement for building long-term wellness and connection.

## **Special Topic 9: 12 Understanding and Working with Loss in the Context of SUD**

Room: Ballroom C

Speaker: Julie Bates-Maves

Addiction is about both presence and absence. In considering how to help people survive or end an addiction, we need to consider the whole picture of what the behaviors brought, produced, or were intended to produce (presence) and what they took away (absence). When clients move towards recovery, some begin to grieve what was lost during the addiction. But what about grieving the loss of the addiction itself? This presentation will explore such losses and offer suggestions for clinical interventions.

## **Special Topic 10: Strengthening Clinical Supervision: Strategies for Rural Success**

Room: Ballroom A

Speaker: Heather Smith

This workshop is designed to support individuals who are looking to become a clinical supervisor, for those new to providing clinical supervision, and for those looking to enhance their current skills as a clinical supervisor working in rural areas. The workshop is relative to supporting leadership development by identifying challenges related to clinical supervision within rural areas and give tools to help those individuals feel confident in doing so. This

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workshop aims to support workforce expansion in the substance abuse field by increasing potential interest for providers/supervisors to conduct clinical supervision for addiction professionals towards initial licensure, or ongoing supervision requirements. Information from New Hampshire's Credentialing Support Partnership will be shared to demonstrate effective innovative approaches in overcoming challenges of providing clinical supervision in rural areas.

**Thursday, June 11, 2026**

## **Special Topic 11: Responding to Co-occurring Cognitive Impairment in SUD Treatment**

Room: Ballroom A

Speaker: Thomas Beckers, BS, LADC, CBIS

Neurologic informed care involves the incorporation of neurologically-based education and training to enhance understanding of how emotional responses, cognition, and behavior are shaped by neurological processes. This presentation will explore the interconnections among alertness, attention, processing, short-term memory, and executive functioning. Additionally, it will address the impact of drugs and alcohol on cognition and discuss how to make accommodations in substance use disorder treatment. The talk will also feature experiential examples alongside practical strategies for adapting service delivery to address co-existing cognitive impairments.

## **Special Topic 12: Working with Indigenous Populations**

Room: Cedar/Maple

Speaker: Dianne Sullivan

With the highest rates of substance use

and mental disorders among races in this country. We will look at how Indigenous people were impacted throughout American history. Treatment providers can learn ways to communicate and build relationships to improve client outcomes. How can we become more effective in developing trusting relationships to promote wellness and recovery for the Native community? Participants will demonstrate hands-on skills to improve trust and be welcomed to share their experiences in working with diverse populations.

## **Special Topic 13: Rural Poverty**

Room: Ballroom C

Speaker: Sherri Downing

Rural substance use and addiction are common, but we don't always factor in the context, which can include intergenerational, crisis poverty, under- and unemployment, educational attainment, and systemic racism. This session will discuss some of the risk factors that lead to rural poverty, its culture and enduring legacy, and effective solutions. After completing this session, participants will be able to: Name at least 3 common rural strengths. Describe at least 2 hidden rules of rural poverty. Discuss ways in which generational poverty differs from situational poverty.