

Conference at a glance

7:45 am – 8:40 am

Registration/Continental Breakfast/Exhibits

During breaks, please visit the local community providers and organizations displaying helpful information to increase awareness of the services they offer to individuals and families affected by mental illness.

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

Charma D. Dudley, PhD, FPPR, Associate Director of Behavioral Health Services, Beacon Health Options, President, NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania Board of Directors

9:00 am – 10:15 am Morning Keynote Address

“Children & Adolescents:
Best Practices for Suicide Prevention”

Michelle Kuchuk, MS, Coordinator of Best Practices in Clinical Technologies at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

10:15 am – 10:30 am Break and Exhibits

10:30 am – 11:45 am Morning Plenary

“Before a Diagnosis: First Steps in Early Intervention”
Irene Hurford, MD, Asst. Prof., Dept. of Psychiatry, Univ. of Pennsylvania; Clinical Director, Psychosis Education, Assessment, Care and Empowerment (PEACE) program, Horizon House

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Buffet Luncheon

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm | Workshop Session 1

A. Moving Toward LGBTQIA+ Affirming Psychiatric Inpatient Care | Kyle Bullock, MSW, LSW Manager of LGBTQIA+ Services at Garfield Park Behavioral Hospital

B. Inside the Adolescent Brain: Contributing Factors to Substance Abuse | Susan L. Tarasevich, Ed.D., Preventionist, Addiction Medicine Services of Western Psychiatric Institute & Clinic of UPMC

C. Understanding Suicidal Teens: 5 Things We Tend To Miss | Tamara Hill, MS, NCC, CCTP, LPC Licensed Child & Adolescent Therapist/Nationally Certified Clinical Trauma Therapist

D. The “How to” of Talking to Children about Emotions and Mental Health Using Children’s Books | Jane S. Phelps-Tschang, MD, Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Fellow, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic; Monique

Simpson, MD, Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Fellow, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic

E. Social Media and Adolescent Suicide: Risks, Benefits, and a Novel Monitoring Intervention | Candice Biernesser, LCSW, MPH, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic; Jamie Zelazny, PhD, MPH, RN, University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing; Craig Sewall, LCSW, MSW, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work

F. Strategies to Better Serve Urban Students in the Classroom | Nicole Thompson, Ed.S, Certified School Psychologist, The Urban School Psychologist

2:15 pm – 2:30 pm Break and Exhibits

2:30 pm – 3:45 pm Workshop Session 2

G. Expressive Writing: A Tool to Reach Beyond the Barriers of Complex Trauma | Erin Bastow, MS, LPC, NCC Clinical Training Supervisor, Harborcreek Youth Services

H. Supporting Therapeutic Work With Young Children Who Have Experienced the Opioid Epidemic | Erin Troup LPC, NCC, CT Sprout Center for Emotional Growth and Development, LLC

I. Mental Health Support Through Compassionate Education: Using mindfulness and peaceful practices to promote elementary student well-being | Leyna Bonanno, BA, Coach, PERSAD Center Inc.

J. Special Education Burning Questions | Joanna Patterson, M.Ed, Education Specialist, Allegheny County Office of Behavioral Health; Jeanette Geary, MS, Educational Specialist, Allegheny County Office of Behavioral Health

K. Alternatives for Families: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (AF-CBT): Empowering Caregivers to Help Children Manage Anger and Aggression | Barbara Lynn Baumann, PhD, Research Instructor in Psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

L. Best Practices In D&A Prevention | Matthew Null CAAP, CPS. Referral Development Manager, Guadenzia

3:45 pm – 4:00 pm Evaluations and Adjournment

Program Information

Morning Keynote Address

“Children & Adolescents: Best Practices for Suicide Prevention”

Michelle Kuchuk, MS, Coordinator of Best Practices in Clinical Technologies at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline



Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24. There's a lot of talk about suicide – in the news, on social media, on TV, in movies, and it is therefore more important than ever to provide quality care for this group. Today's keynote presentation will focus on addressing the need to provide relevant and effective suicide prevention and crisis response services for youth. In her presentation, Michelle Kuchuk will share information on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's crisis chat services, including demographic data and what their concerns are. These lines are heavily used by youth nationwide. Michelle will discuss the nuances of providing chat services and how your organization can begin to use or develop this mode to provide better care for this demographic. She'll give examples of common roadblocks that professionals in crisis prevention face when attempting to address the concerns of young people. She will also provide guidelines that audience members can use in their everyday lives at home, in schools, and in the workplace that can help them engage in quality conversations with youth in crisis by explaining the importance of communicating compassion, concern, and respect and the power of validating experiences. Finally, she will share important resources tailored to youth, and best practices for sharing these resources.

Presenter: Michelle Kuchuk, MS, has a BA in Psychology from NYU and a Master of Science in Neuroscience & Education from Teachers College at Columbia. With over a decade of academic, practical, and research experience focused in mental health and education, Ms. Kuchak has also overseen the training of close to two thousand crisis counselors in technology-based crisis intervention. She currently leads the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's efforts to define and expand best practices in both new and established clinical technologies.



Morning Plenary Session

“Before a Diagnosis: First Steps in Early Intervention ”

Irene Hurford, MD, Asst. Prof., Dept. of Psychiatry, Univ. of Pennsylvania; Clinical Director, Psychosis Education, Assessment, Care and Empowerment (PEACE) program, Horizon House

Early mental health intervention in adolescents and young adults has been gaining traction in the U.S. in part due to the expansion of coordinated specialty care for early psychosis. The benefits of such care have been impressive, and data across the country continues to accumulate about its impact. However, often the very earliest symptoms of mental health issues in transition-age youth are not diagnostically clear or discrete. Other countries have started adopting a staged model of care based on presentation and developmental stage rather than diagnosis. One such example is *Headspace* in Australia. This presentation will discuss the current state of the evidence for early psychosis care in the US, and the *Headspace* model. Dr. Hurford will also describe the Pennsylvania Early Intervention Center and its role around developing, supporting, and disseminating evidence-based treatments for transition-age youth in PA.

Presenter: Irene Hurford, MD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania and the Clinical Director for the Psychosis Education, Assessment, Care and Empowerment (PEACE) program at Horizon House. Prior to her current position, she led the Severe Mental Illness Treatment Team at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center. Dr. Hurford's clinical and research work focuses on cognition in schizophrenia, treatment of early episode psychosis, and functional and quality of life improvements in young people with psychosis.