

2026 MALA Conference and Dementia Summit
May 5 and 6, 2026
Crowne Plaza, Lansing

Continuing Education Unit (CEU) Information

If you attend the entire in-person conference, you will earn 8 AFC CEUs and have access to virtual sessions to complete your 16 AFC CEUs. If you are unable to attend in-person, you can complete your 16 AFC CEUs through virtual sessions. Virtual sessions are available at your convenience during the months of May and June.

*Please note that in 2026 we are unable to offer CEUs for nurses, social workers, and nursing home administrators. AFC CEUs will be made available.

In-Person Sessions at the Crowne Plaza, Lansing

Tuesday, May 5
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Workshop A

Living with Dementia — Interdisciplinary Approaches to Bathing

This presentation will explore the lived experience of dementia and its impact on bathing. Clinicians and presenters will explore the cognitive, social/emotional, hygienic, and mobility factors involved in bathing. The goal of this presentation is to deepen the understanding of the lived experience, reduce barriers, and decrease negative experiences related to bathing in the assisted living environment.

Presenters: Katelyn McGregor, OTRL, Raman Mudgal, PT, Spencer Erdman, MA, CCC-SLP, from EverActive, and a Panel of Persons Living with Dementia from National Council of Dementia Minds

Workshop B

Department Behavioral Health Update

This session will provide an update on key issues impacting providers contracting with community mental health services programs (CMHSPs) throughout the state. Topics will include a state budget update; waiver updates; status of behavioral health system redesign; and other recent or pending developments. The session will include a question-and-answer segment.

Presenter: Kristen Morningstar, Director of Specialty Behavioral Health Services, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Workshop C

The AI Tipping Point: Balancing Implementation and Cybersecurity

This 90-minute session will explore how artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance operations and improve resident care while addressing technical vulnerabilities. Attendees will learn to implement AI responsibly with a focus on cybersecurity. The session will feature live demonstrations of both safe and unsafe AI use, highlight the evolving threat landscape, and provide strategies to protect data and maintain compliance. Participants will leave with practical examples and a framework for piloting AI initiatives, along with a complimentary 'AI Acceptable Use' policy template to aid in their efforts.

Presenter: Rich Miller, Founder and CEO, Stack Cybersecurity

Workshop D

Creating Pathways to Connection: Innovative Approaches to Reducing Social Isolation

Social isolation and loneliness have been recognized challenges in recent decades. However, the COVID-19 pandemic augmented these challenges and provided a stark wakeup call for professionals, families, and individuals at risk for isolation and marginalization in mainstream society. There is a need to provide innovative opportunities to promote a sense of belonging and community across all age cohorts, including those impacted by functional decline.

Older adults and individuals with lifelong disabilities often experience unique realities that may provide barriers for community connection and participation. Using an empirical framework, this session will provide information about risk factors and signs of loneliness, as well as effective ways to reduce social isolation and loneliness while promoting overall mental and physical health outcomes for residents, patients, and consumers.

Presenter: Dr. Christina Marsack-Topolewski, LMSW, Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at Eastern Michigan University

Tuesday May 5
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Workshop A

Creativity, Connection, and Care: The Opening Minds through Art Experience

For nearly 20 years, Opening Minds through Art (OMA) has provided social engagement and creative expression opportunities for people living with dementia. Beyond the unique artwork created, OMA inspires confidence, purpose, and meaningful connection for both the individuals living with dementia and the volunteers who participate. Research shows that older adults experience greater well-being during OMA sessions than during other activities, and volunteers report more positive attitudes toward individuals with dementia. The program builds supportive, person-centered relationships between the pair, and encourages self-expression and honoring each individual's creative choices.

More than 1,200 long-term care professionals, artists, and educators worldwide have adopted OMA and integrated it into their communities. Traditionally offered as a group experience, OMA is now expanding to reach individuals wherever they are, including at home. OMA At-Home aims to inspire creativity, strengthen connection, and offer accessible engagement opportunities for people living with dementia and their care partners, extending the program's impact to more people.

Presenters: Dr. Amy Elliot, Director, Meghan Brady, MGS, Senior Associate Director, and Kysta Peterson, BA, Associate Director, Opening Minds Through Art, Scripps Gerontology Center, Miami University

Workshop B

It Takes A Village

Collaboration is the key to success! No one entity is able to provide everything a client may need. It takes collaboration with other community partners to make sure vulnerable adults are cared for in a safe, stable environment. It may seem like a cliché however, it really does take a village to care for vulnerable adults.

Presenter: Cynthia G. Farrell, BS, Division Director of Adult Services, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Workshop C

Peer Perspectives: Real-World Insights from Senior Living Leaders

Peer Perspectives is a highly interactive roundtable experience designed for senior living executives, sales, marketing, and operations leaders who want practical ideas they can put to work right away. Attendees join small, themed tables led by experienced moderators to exchange candid insights on the challenges impacting occupancy, lead response, marketing performance, and team alignment. Participants rotate between multiple discussion tables during the session, gaining a variety of perspectives in a short amount of time while building meaningful peer connections. Topics range from driving occupancy with lean teams and identifying the metrics that matter most to designing modern prospect journeys and applying AI in real operational workflows. Attendees leave with fresh ideas, actionable strategies, and new relationships that extend well beyond the conference.

Presenter: David Leslie, Senior Account Executive, Talk Further

Wednesday, May 6
8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Plenary Session

Michigan Assisted Living Association Welcome and Update

Presenters: Robert Stein, General Counsel, Michigan Assisted Living Association; Jamie Bragg-Lovejoy, Chief Executive Officer, Michigan Assisted Living Association; and John Williams, President, Michigan Assisted Living Association Board of Directors

Legislative Update

Presenter: Melissa McKinley, President, Kelly Cawthorne

The Support Effect: How Empowered Leaders Transform Care, Teams, and Communities

In a time when the demand for compassionate, competent care is greater than ever, leadership in assisted living and behavioral health requires more than management—it requires meaning. In this inspiring and practical keynote, Dr. Tonya C. Bailey explores how today's leaders can strengthen their teams, sustain themselves, and elevate the standard of care by cultivating environments of authentic support and shared empowerment. Drawing from real-world experiences and proven leadership principles, Dr. Bailey delivers an engaging roadmap for transforming everyday challenges into opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and renewal. Whether you lead a facility, oversee staff, or provide direct care, this session will help you reimagine what's possible when leaders and teams feel seen, supported, and equipped to make a lasting impact.

Presenter: Dr. Tonya Bailey, MPA, Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Community Engagement, William Beaumont School of Medicine, Oakland University

Wednesday May 6
10:30 – 12:00 p.m.

Workshop A

Communicating Through Change: Building Safe Connections

This interactive conference session explores how dementia affects communication and how leaders can respond in ways that foster trust, safety, and connection. This dynamic presentation will be guided by Adria Thompson, M.A., CCC-SLP, of Be Light, alongside Brenda Roberts, MA, and is grounded in evidence-informed insights from members of the National Council of Dementia Minds—blending professional expertise with lived experience.

Attendees will gain practical strategies for adapting communication, creating supportive environments, and strengthening meaningful connections that promote dignity and well-being. Aligned with the conference theme Elevating Supports, Empowering Leaders, this session equips participants with actionable tools and shareable training materials they can immediately take back to their teams to support learning and practice across their organizations.

Presenters: Brenda Roberts, MA, Executive Director, National Council of Dementia Minds, Adria Thompson, MA, CCC-SLP, Be Light, and a Panel of Persons Living with Dementia from National Council of Dementia Minds

Workshop B

Five Steps Forward: A Relationship-Based Approach to Better Serving LGBTQ+ Older Adults

Strong relationships grow from five guiding principles: Safe, Communication, Choice, Structure, and Transitions. These principles shape the way people connect, make decisions, and move through change. Discover how these principles will guide your work with the LGBTQ+ adult population and how approaching this community with gentle care and support can save lives.

Presenter: Caitlin Kefgen, MA, Training and Education Director, MiGen: Michigan LGBTQ+ Elders Network

Workshop C

Introduction to Healing Centered Restorative Engagement: An Approach to Organizational Well-Being

What does it take to build a high-performing workplace culture without sacrificing well-being, equity, or connection? This engaging session introduces the Healing Centered Restorative Engagement (HCRE) model—an equity-rooted framework co-created by Dr. Tracy Hall and Dr. Jess Camp to help organizations transform harmful or disconnected cultures into ones that foster belonging, shared power, and sustainable success. Facilitated by Dr. Hall, the session blends theory with real-world insight. As HCRE domains are introduced, Dr. Hall illustrates their impact through real world examples. Attendees leave with practical strategies and a micro-action plan for change.

Presenter: Dr. Tracy S. Hall, MPA, Co-Creator, Healing Centered Restorative Engagement

Workshop D

What Your Organization Needs to Know About Recent Changes in the Law: Hot Topics and Guidance on Issues Impacting Providers

Recent and pending changes in regulatory enforcement and employment law will significantly impact how providers in Michigan operate. This seminar, presented by Bator Lobb, P.C., reviews recent developments in the law that directly affect providers and offers guidance on how to achieve compliance.

Presenter: Christian A. Lobb, BA, MPA, JD, Attorney, Bator Lobb, P.C.

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Buffet Lunch with Networking Opportunities –Lunch and seating will be available in the banquet room. Attendees can enjoy lunch and network with others or use the time to catch up on pressing emails and phone calls.

Wednesday May 6

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Workshop A

Honoring the Human Story: Integrating Personalized Songs into Daily Care

Relationship-Based Care (RBC) places human connection at the center of quality support. This session explores how personalized music—created through the Songs of Love Foundation—can strengthen relationships, enhance communication, and honor each person’s unique story. Participants will learn how personalized songs provide insights to an individual’s identity, preferences, and history, helping care partners connect more quickly and meaningfully with people living with dementia, or intellectual or developmental disabilities. The session highlights practical ways to integrate personalized music into admissions, daily routines, and team communication to create comfort, spark engagement, and support emotional well-being. By weaving personalized songs into relationship-based care, teams build trust, deepen collaboration, and help individuals feel truly known and valued from the very first day.

Presenter: John Beltzer, Founder, Songs of Love

Workshop B

Preventing Workplace Violence

Since 2020, there has been an uptick of reported complaints and injuries in inpatient long term care settings that have been investigated by MIOSHA. This presentation delves into one of the more sensitive and difficult safety and health concerns addressed by MIOSHA in care communities– injury to staff during moments of resident distress. Attendees will walk away with an understanding of MIOSHA requirements and best practices related to employee safety and health as it relates to these challenging incidents.

Presenter: Benjamin Block, MS, Senior Industrial Hygiene Consultant, MIOSHA CET

Workshop C

Incredible Through Every Phase: Reframing Care and Support Through the Power of Yet

This heartfelt and motivational session will explore how the Power of Yet reshapes the way we support one another through shared understanding, open dialogue and connection. Attendees will learn how reframing challenges as moments of growth creates space for grace, healing, hope, determination and resilience. This session will remind us that every phase matters, every story deserves respect, and every person holds potential, even when the next step hasn’t appeared yet.

Presenter: Shanta Favors, BS, Ms. Wheelchair of Michigan

Workshop D

Risk Management Update - What’s the Worst that Could Happen?

This session will provide a review of court cases, verdicts and claims for insights on how to manage risk in a world where providers are becoming a primary target for personal injury attorneys. A report on the overall state of the insurance industry will also be provided.

Presenter: Dan Hale, BA, JD, President, Michigan Business Insurance, Marsh McLennan Agency

Wed May 6

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Workshop A

Sensory Changes in Dementia

Sensory Changes in Dementia is an engaging presentation that explores how dementia affects the brain’s ability to process sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell—revealing how these changes shape everyday experiences. Through real-world examples and interactive reflection, participants will gain insight into how sensory differences can influence perception, communication, safety, and comfort. The session also emphasizes the importance of empathy in understanding and supporting individuals living with dementia. By the end of the webinar, attendees will be able to identify key sensory changes, recognize their impact on daily life, and apply empathetic strategies to enhance care and connection.

Presenters: Brenda Roberts, MA, Executive Director, National Council of Dementia Minds and a Panel of Persons Living with Dementia from National Council of Dementia Minds

Workshop B

Health Care Facilities: Licensing Update for Homes for the Aged Licensed for 21 or More

The Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) will provide an update on the latest home for the aged (HFA) licensing developments. This workshop's update is for providers with homes for the aged licensed for 21 or more.

Presenter: Andrea L. Moore, Manager, Long-Term Care State Licensing Section, Health Facility Licensing, Permits, and Support Division, Bureau of Community and Health Systems, Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs

Workshop C

Authentic Leadership: Embracing your true self and leading with a purpose.

In an era of rapid change and increasing demand for genuine connection, the traditional model of leadership is no longer sufficient. This session explores the powerful concept of authentic leadership—a practice centered on self-awareness, personal values, and leading with genuine purpose. We will delve into the core tenets of authentic leadership, including understanding your personal story, aligning your actions with your core values, and fostering an environment of trust and transparency. Through a combination of interactive discussion and practical exercises, participants will learn how to identify their unique leadership style and develop the confidence to lead in a way that is true to themselves. The goal is to empower leaders at all levels to inspire loyalty, drive meaningful change, and build resilient teams by embracing their authentic selves.

Presenter: Bryan Rife, MA, Director of Quality Assurance, National Certification Council for Activity Professionals (NCCAP)

Workshop D

Licensing Updates for Adult Foster Care

The Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) will provide an update on the latest adult foster care (AFC) licensing developments. This workshop's update is for providers with adult foster care homes licensed for 20 or less.

Presenter: Jay Calewatts, Division Director, Adult Foster Care Licensing Division, Bureau of Community and Health Systems, Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs