

2026 MALA Conference and Dementia Summit

Virtual Conference

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.

Virtual Conference Sessions

Move Smarter, Care Safer: Body Mechanics for Everyday Caregiving

Join the Therapy Management, Inc. team for an engaging virtual session designed to make everyday caregiving safer and easier. Learn how simple adjustments in body mechanics can significantly reduce strain, prevent injury, and create a more comfortable experience for both care partners and residents. From safe transfers to supporting eating, walking, and lifting, this session offers practical, confidence-building techniques you can put into practice right away.

Presenters: Raman Mudgal, PT, Kate McGregor, OTRL, EverActive

Improving Employee Retention Using Safety Science

When something bad happens, our first question is ‘Whose fault is it?’ We blame people without even realizing we do it. Then, we think we solve our problem by firing employees, writing new policies, or retraining staff. While sometimes necessary, these approaches can have poor results when it comes to making systems safer. When employees feel they will be disciplined or fired for an accident or mistake in the course of normal work, they are less likely to share their concerns and the barriers they face to getting the job done. Without this information, we cannot learn and improve. Using a science called human factors and system safety, or safety science, we can shift from a blame culture to a culture of accountability and learning. This session will motivate participants to capitalize on safety science principles to see these research-based results: enhanced organizational learning and improvement, increased shift staffing levels, improved disciplinary outcomes, and improved employee retention. Participants will learn specific techniques that they can implement quickly and methods that can help set their systems up for success in the long run.

Objective 1: Participants will be able to recall how creating a safety culture can lead to better retention.

Objective 2: Participants will be able to describe how they can increase accountability while removing blame.

Objective 3: Participants will be able to employ techniques that engage staff in improving the system in which they work.

Presenter: Shannon Gadd, MSc, Senior Director, Collaborative Safety LLC

Therapeutic Interventions

This presentation explores the idea that every interaction, support, or Activity of Daily Living (ADL) can be intentionally structured as an “activity.” Rather than viewing care tasks or supports as routine or passive moments, the presentation emphasizes the importance of giving each interaction a clear beginning, middle, and end. This structure helps individuals understand what is happening, stay engaged during the process, and recognize when the interaction is complete. By framing everyday supports in this way, caregivers and professionals can promote predictability, reduce anxiety, and support smoother transitions between tasks. Participants will learn practical strategies for applying this approach across a variety of settings to improve communication, independence, and overall participation.

Presenters: Amy Sheridan, CTRS, Director, Christin Cardani, LPC, Family Support Program Manager, Seasons Adult Day Services

The Hidden Cost of Caring: Understanding Trauma and Stress in Direct Care, Part 1

To define the specific psychological hazards of direct care work (beyond general burnout) and to introduce the Healing Centered Restorative Engagement framework as a tool for workforce retention and safety.

Presenter: Dr. Tracy Hall, MPA, Healing Centered Restorative Engagement

From Burnout to Belonging: Strategies for Workforce Wellbeing, Part 2

To provide actionable strategies that build a "culture of health" and operationalize the concepts of Healing Centered Restorative Engagement (presented in The Hidden Cost of Caring: Understanding Trauma and Stress in Direct Care).

Presenter: Dr. Tracy Hall, MPA, Healing Centered Restorative Engagement

Toward Dementia Friendly Communities

A Dementia Friendly Community is a town, a city, a county where persons living with dementia and their caregivers feel comfortable and confident in shopping, dining, doing business, going to the theatre, worshipping, with no worries about being embarrassed or disrespected. In a dementia friendly community, people walk towards persons with dementia, not away from them. For several years, the City of Saline was Michigan's only nationally recognized Dementia Friendly Community, because of the efforts of a small, independent non-profit now called Dementia Friendly Services. There are several more now and the list will grow. With increasing success, DFS works with cities and towns across Michigan to foster dementia friendliness. Using free lectures, workshops, even live "Dementia Awareness" theatre, DFS educates the public, governments, businesses and organizations about dementia and dementia friendly practices. In addition, this highly active non-profit runs a suite of engagement and support programs for persons with dementia and their caregivers. These include their pioneering Dementia Friendly Movies program, their innovative Memory Cafes, their Dementia Friendly Live Theatre, a Dementia Friendly Community Chorus, Dementia Friendly Shopping events, Dementia Friendly Art Fairs, a lending library of Memories Kits, and more. This session, presented by founder and long-time caregiver Jim Mangi, will describe the multi-faceted work of Dementia Friendly Services and how assisted living providers and others can join in the growing effort to make Michigan Dementia Friendly.

Presenter: Dr. Jim Mangi, Dementia Friendly Communities

How Virtual Reality is Revolutionizing Senior Care

As the elderly population grows, so does demand for innovative solutions to tackle age-related chronic diseases and disabilities. Virtual reality enables older adults to interact with the outside world in genuinely innovative ways that promote engagement, wellness, access, and positive outcomes. As an adjunct to traditional interventions, VR has the potential to have a positive impact on helping patients reach their goals. In this session, participants hear how VR is being used with residents with dementia (and other diagnoses) to impact ADL, IADL, exercise, balance, motivation, enjoyment, successful discharge, quality of care, and more. Providers must be aware of these innovations so to monitor their use, develop policies regarding use, market their use and ensure that resident and QOL satisfaction remains high. As an adjunct to traditional interventions for dementia, VR has potential for positive impact. Is VR coming to your community? The answer is probably yes.

As a result of this presentation the participant will be able to:

- Define the scope, type and incidence of virtual reality in senior living including functional benefits and outcomes related to use.
- List barriers to implementation along with strategies to overcoming barriers.

Presenter: Dr. Kathleen Weissberg, OTD, OTR/L, CMDCP, CADDCT, CDP, CFPS, CGCP, TIE, National Director of Education, Select Rehabilitation

Fostering Purpose and Meaning for Persons with Dementia

With limited resources, how can providers deliver person-directed care that supports meaningful engagement, promotes function, and improves quality of life for persons with dementia?

This session explores meaningful and purposeful engagement through dementia programming. Participants will learn principles of soliciting preferences, tailoring activities, reducing unwanted behaviors, addressing common challenges, and initiating tasks using novel approaches.

The Montessori approach and Tailored Activity Programs (TAP) are presented as practical methods to foster engagement and functional outcomes. Both emphasize person-centered care by focusing on abilities, needs, interests, and strengths. Participants will learn how to structure activities with everyday materials and create meaningful roles, routines, and experiences within a supportive environment.

Using these approaches, providers can develop programs for any stage of dementia that promote function, reduce unwanted behaviors, and enhance quality of life—regardless of residence size or setting.

As a result of this presentation the participant will be able to:

- Describe how meaningful activity addresses the needs of persons with dementia
- Use case examples to support person-centered care and improve QOL
- Identify novel approaches to facilitate engagement

Presenter: Dr. Kathleen Weissberg, OTD, OTR/L, CMDCP, CADDCT, CDP, CFPS, CGCP, TIE, National Director of Education, Select Rehabilitation

MIOSHA Applicability for Assisted Living Facilities

This course is designed first line supervision, safety and health committee members, and management personnel. Participants will learn about the MIOSHA regulations with applicability to assisted living facilities and receive an overview of hazard recognition, prevention, and best practices. This course will assist attempts to improve employee safety and health practices and direct facilities to resources and tools critical to understanding MIOSHA regulations.

Presenter: Ben Block, M.S., Senior Industrial Hygienist, MIOSHA, CET Division

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

Building Recovery-Friendly Workplaces: Understanding Substance Use Disorder and Supporting Michigan's Workforce

This informational webinar introduces the Michigan Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) Initiative and explores how substance use disorder (SUD) impacts the workforce—and how employers can be part of the solution. Participants will gain a clear, stigma-reducing understanding of SUD and recovery, learn why recovery-friendly practices benefit both employees and employers, and hear examples of how organizations across Michigan are building supportive, healthy workplace cultures. The session also outlines the goals of the Michigan RFW Initiative, available trainings and resources, and practical next steps for employers interested in becoming a Recovery Friendly Workplace.

Presenter: Nicki Gabel, BS, Program Manager, Keoshia Banks, BS, MPH, Project Manager, Recovery Friendly Workplaces, Michigan Public Health Institute

Bridging the Gap—Restoring Resilience for Staff and Residents

When staff morale is at its lowest, sessions should shift from standard "management-led" presentations to supportive, human-centric interactions that prioritize listening and immediate validation. This session is designed for leadership and frontline teams in residential care to address deep-seated burnout and disconnection. Instead of "toxic positivity," the session focuses on transparent communication, psychological safety, and small, actionable wins that reconnect staff to their "calling" and their residents.

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

AI in Human Hands: Tools for More Impactful Services Track: Service Innovation & Flexibility

Artificial intelligence (AI) isn't coming—it's already here. This session brings subject matter experts to show how AI can reduce documentation burdens, improve quality, and strengthen trust without losing the human touch. Attendees will see real-world examples of AI tools being used in human services today—from summarizing documentation and detecting health risks to streamlining attendance—and hear honest lessons about what works, what doesn't, and what's next. Whether you're AI-curious or already exploring how to integrate it into your agency, you'll leave with clear ideas, concrete strategies, and a fresh perspective on how to lead in the age of AI.

Presenters: Karen Neidermeier, Associate Director of Business Development, Jason Laws, Director of Quality and Data Initiatives, Therap Services

Collaborating for Change: Michigan Dementia Coalition and the CDC Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act.

This session will explore the Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act (BOLD), Michigan's progress under this landmark initiative, and the state's plans for the future. Learn how the Michigan Dementia Coalition is driving collaboration and supporting efforts to improve dementia care and quality of life across communities.

Presenter: Shona Mackenzie, MPH, CHES, Dementia and Healthy Brain Unit-Injury and Violence Prevention, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Your Staff. Your Residents. Your Operations.

Assisted living and behavioral health facilities serve Michigan's most vulnerable residents. Cybercriminals are increasingly targeting these providers, but their focus isn't clinical data. Instead, they pursue more accessible and lucrative targets: employee records, financial systems, and operational infrastructure. Business email compromise schemes extracted \$2.8 billion from American companies in 2024, with health care and human services enterprises ranking among the most affected sectors. When cybercriminals breach payroll platforms, human resources systems, or email networks, facilities face immediate disruption. Paychecks stop processing, accounts freeze, fraudulent transfers drain funds, and staff members lose confidence in their employer's ability to protect sensitive information. This webinar examines the specific cyber risks confronting assisted living facilities, adult foster care homes, homes for the aged, and behavioral health agencies. Participants will learn concrete strategies to protect their workforce data, safeguard financial assets, and maintain operational continuity against evolving digital threats.

Presenter: Rich Miller, Founder and CEO, Stack Cybersecurity

Supporting Patients / Clients / Residents with Chronic Pain and Co-Occurring Conditions

Chronic pain is highly prevalent among older adults, as well as younger populations that necessitate care in assisted living and adult foster care settings. This webinar equips direct care providers and professionals with a comprehensive, person-centered framework for understanding, recognizing, and supporting chronic pain needs. A focus of this webinar is on providing practical strategies for improving comfort, communication, and overall quality of life for residents experiencing persistent pain. Learning Objectives:

-List multiple understandings of pain and the derivation of pain.

-Describe chronic pain and the impact on clients.

-Explain supportive mechanisms and strategies to support individuals living with chronic pain.

Introduction to Dementia in People Living with DD (for professionals)

Presenter: Dr. Christina Marsack-Topolewski, LMSW

Elevating Hospitality in Senior Care: Creating Experiences That Feel Like Home

In today's evolving senior living landscape, hospitality is no longer a luxury — it's an expectation. Families are choosing communities not just for clinical excellence, but for warmth, comfort, personalization, and meaningful experiences. Join us for a practical and inspiring webinar designed for leaders, administrators, nursing directors, and frontline teams who want to transform resident experience through hospitality-driven care.

In this session, we will explore how principles from world-class hospitality brands like The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and Disney can be adapted to senior care settings — without compromising clinical excellence.

You will learn:

- The difference between service and hospitality in assisted living
- How culture drives resident and family satisfaction
- Practical strategies to create “wow” moments in everyday care
- The role of leadership in modeling hospitality behaviors
- Staff training techniques that build empathy and ownership
- How hospitality improves occupancy, reputation, and retention

Whether you operate independent living, assisted living, memory care, or skilled nursing, this webinar will provide actionable tools to elevate your community from a care facility to a true home.

Transform care into connection. Transform service into hospitality. Transform communities into homes.

Presenter: Jess Desjardins, Hospitality Professor, Grand Valley State University

Sensory Strategies to Support Participation across the Lifespan

Individuals with conditions such as autism, developmental conditions, dementia and mental illness can all experience changes in the way they perceive the world through their senses. Awareness of sensory differences, preferences and needs can be fundamental to discovering supports for these individuals by looking at the environment and how we adapt and modify basic life activities. In this presentation, Leana Tank MSOTR will guide learners in a simple sensory assessment to explore their own sensory preferences, needs and differences. Learners will gain a basic understanding of how the different sensory systems (visual, auditory, touch, vestibular, proprioception, taste/smell) may be impacting participation and behaviors. Leana will discuss simple interventions that can be immediately integrated into any home that will support the sensory needs of the individuals served.

Presenter: Leana Tank, MSOTR, Hope Network

Is this Dementia?

At some point in our lives, all of us will know someone whose life has been touched by dementia. Whether through personal experience, a loved one, friend or neighbor. As a result, we may wonder about our own cognition. Maybe you have thought, “I can't remember names sometimes,” or “I've lost my keys again.” Is this a sign of dementia? Could this be happening to me or someone I love? In this video you discover the difference between healthy aging signs and what dementia is. You will learn signs and symptoms of dementia, and how to recognize them in yourself or others. Lastly, you will be given important strategies of what to do next if you suspect dementia as well as some valuable resources to help you get started.

Presenter: Lois Thomas, BSN, RN, CDP, Dementia Institute

Adapting to Changes in Late-Stage Dementia

There are several dementia related staging scales used by providers and professionals today. Yet the interpretation of when late stage begins may still vary amongst family members and professionals alike. In this video we will discover those variances, as well as signs and symptoms of late-stage dementia. These symptoms

can vary from person to person and often do. As changes are happening in the brain of someone living in late-stage dementia, so do the needs of the body. This presents the need for great strategies amongst care partners to meet their changing needs. We as care partners can make adaptations in our communication and how we choose to offer support to meet these ever-changing needs. We will learn some key adaptations for use in our daily care that include meeting dietary and hydration needs in the late stage.

Presenter: Lois Thomas, BSN, RN, CDP, Dementia Institute

What is Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MiDDC)?

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MiDDC) is a group of 25 Michigan citizens. Members are appointed to the Council by the governor. They come from across the state and are people with disabilities; family members of people with disabilities; and professionals from state and local agencies who provide supports and services to people with developmental disabilities. This diversity enables the Council to better analyze and improve systems and services within the state and ensure that the voices of people with developmental disabilities and their families heard.

The Michigan DD Council:

- Is housed under the Department of Health and Human Services
- Has 25 members, appointed by the governor with staggered terms
- Has representation from certain state agencies outlined in the DD Act, additional seats are reserved for people with I/DD and family members of people with I/DD
- Has ten staff positions, who are assigned to lead the completion of objectives within the Council's five-year plan
- Covers the whole state of Michigan
- Advocacy, Capacity Building and System Change

Come see how the resources can support your organization.

Presenters: Mary Shehan, MA, Community Inclusion Coordinator, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council, Jeanine Rowe, MiDDC Council Member

Sexuality Education for People With IDD

We understand what the lack of sexuality and relationship education for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) can lead to: High rates of abuse, being charged with a sex crime, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and isolation and loneliness. We also know that self-advocates want to learn about this topic and often say they are still healing from the trauma of learning the hard way. These statistics can improve by providing medically accurate, age-appropriate sexuality and healthy relationship education for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Another reason this is so important is there are ways to provide this education by having self-advocates become one of the sexuality and relationship instructors or peer educators of this topic which provides them with leadership opportunities that are part of the solution. Come learn all the resources available in Michigan to help people make healthy relationships and how support staff can help.

Presenters: Mary Shehan, MA, Community Inclusion Coordinator, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council, Jeanine Rowe, MiDDC Council Member, Frank Vaca, MiDDC Council Member

The Mental and Physical Impacts of Clutter

Clutter can significantly impact mental well-being, health & safety, and overall quality of life. This session distinguishes between situational clutter—temporary disorganization caused by life events such as illness, relocation, or crisis—and chronic disorganization, which is persistent, longstanding, resistant to self-help efforts and impacts activities of daily living and quality of life. Chronic disorganization is also expected to continue into the future. This session will explore the psychological and physical health effects of ongoing clutter, the emotional attachment individuals have to their possessions during downsizing, life transitions, moving and

other situations impacting their lives. Practical and compassionate strategies & tips will be shared to support mindful decluttering, downsizing and organizing while honoring each person's life story. Learning Objectives:

- 1) Participants will be able to identify at least 3 mental health and 3 physical health impacts associated with clutter.
- 2) Participants will be able to distinguish situational clutter from chronic disorganization by identifying at least two defining characteristics of each.
- 3) Participants will be able to demonstrate at least three strategies & tools to utilize when downsizing, decluttering and organizing.
- 4) Participants will be able to identify how emotional attachment, sentimentality, grief/loss and guilt can influence decision making when addressing personal items and clutter.

Presenter: Susie Marsh, LBSW, Professional Organizer, Susie's Organization Solutions LLC

Safer Med Passing Happier Residents, Using AI to Reduce Med Errors

Using AI-powered tools makes medication administration way safer and easier. A typical resident can be on a dozen or more medications, each with a different dose, route, and schedule. Managing thousands of daily medications means even one mistake can be devastating. Join us for a discussion on how AI is changing the game in both eMAR innovation and resident safety, helping senior living communities and their residents live healthier and happier lives.

1. Understand the Role of AI in Medication Administration:

- Learn how AI-powered tools help staff manage multiple medications and complex dosing schedules, tackling common issues in medication administration to improve medication safety, compliance, and clinical outcomes.

2. Identify Key AI-Powered Features:

- Quickly recognize how AI assists in duplicate medication prevention, PRN over-dispensing prevention, and the auto-identification of controlled substances, enhancing medication safety and efficiency.

3. Evaluate the Impact of AI on Clinical Outcomes:

- Assess the overall impact of AI on medication safety and resident health and explore how these innovations can be implemented to transform healthcare delivery in your community.

Presenter: Loren Odom, National Sales Consultant, ECP

Beyond the List: The Value of Professional Placement Services

Senior placement services play an increasingly important role in helping families navigate complex and often emotional care decisions. As the senior living landscape continues to evolve, a variety of placement models have emerged to support families in their search for the right community.

This session will provide an overview of the placement industry and explore how different referral approaches support families and providers throughout the decision making process. Attendees will gain insight into how relationship based placement professionals work alongside providers to help guide families, improve alignment between needs and services, and support more informed decisions.

Presented by leaders from the Michigan chapter of the National Placement and Referral Alliance, this session will highlight industry standards, ethical best practices, and the important role professional placement advisors play in supporting families while strengthening partnerships with senior living providers.

Presenters: Charlotte Thibault, NPRA Board Member, Founder, A Place For You, Nick Wake, NPRA, Board Member, Co-Owner, Director of Business Development, CarePatrol Western Michigan-Capitol Region

Facility Safety Hazards

This presentation focuses on hazards typically found in assisted living, senior residence, and long-term care facilities. The session is geared towards improving your overall safety culture by helping identify workplace safety exposures. It covers a wide range of topics including life safety equipment, bloodborne pathogens,

personal protective equipment, slips and falls, housekeeping practices, kitchen safety, hazard communication and chemicals, and electrical safety. You'll learn about best-practices and training topics that can help impact and reduce workplace injuries. You'll find this presentation to be educational and beneficial for your safety program.

Presenter: Ken Smylie, Vice President Loss Control, Comprehensive Risk Services

Back By Popular Demand

Compassion Fatigue: Helping Professionals

Helping professionals often share many of the emotions experienced by the vulnerable populations they serve. Intended or not, individuals who serve in the helping professions are affected by the work they do. Compassion fatigue can be one of the outcomes of the work of helping professionals. This presentation will introduce the concepts of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction. Participants will understand these concepts and will learn methods for addressing risk and promoting resilience in the work they do with vulnerable populations. This topic is one that revolves around self-care in helping professions. Participants will understand the concepts of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction as well as learn methods to address reducing the risk for compassion fatigue.

Presenter: Dr. Catherine Macomber, LMSW, Assistant Dean of the College of Health & Human Services, BSW Program Director, and Professor in the Social Work & Youth Services Department of Saginaw Valley State University

Holistic Hospice and Dementia Care

In this session, you will come to understand the impact of caring for the whole person at the end of life. You will be able to recognize the benefits and value of holistic, non-pharmaceutical interventions in hospice care. You will also explore challenges and interventions in caring for hospice patients with dementia while simultaneously integrating the concepts and interventions of holistic care.

Presenter: Kaitlyn Dawson, LMSW, APHSW-C, Emmanuel Hospice

Supervisors' Role in Safety

This course is designed for first line supervision, safety and health committee members, and management personnel. Topics covered include employee safety and health training, accident investigation, hazard recognition, and self-inspection techniques. This course gives tips to supervision on methods to integrate health and safety into their daily duties and responsibilities.

Presenter: Lynn Totsky, MA, Senior Industrial Hygienist, MIOSHA, CET Division

Understanding and Improving Your Safety Culture

This course will provide knowledge and tools for participants to gain an understanding of the factors that affect culture and how it impacts safety performance. The topics covered include techniques to improve safety culture, and examine what good, positive safety culture looks like.

Presenter: Lynn Totsky, MA, Senior Industrial Hygienist, MIOSHA, CET Division