

2026 OPRA Annual Conference Speaker & Session Information

Day, Time & Track	Session # & Title	Session Description	Speaker First Name	Speaker Last Name	Job Title	Organization
Thurs., 10/22 9:00am - 10:00am Keynote Address	Keynote Session Mindset With Magie	In this powerful keynote, Magie Cook shares what it takes for leaders and teams to create a permanent mental shift for success, how to uncover and leverage their "why," and how to visualize their journey into the future. Drawing on research-based studies rooted in psychology and language, Magie skillfully weaves practical mental strategies together with the lessons of her own life experiences. Speaking to the pressures provider organizations face today, she shows how leadership and teams who understand their potential for greatness build organizations with happier employees, greater productivity, more creativity, and stronger leadership, the kind of resilient culture that sustains mission-driven work and the individuals with developmental disabilities these organizations serve. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Apply Magie's techniques for creating a lasting mindset shift when times get tough, so leaders can steady themselves and their teams through funding and operational pressure. 2. Explain research-backed examples of how mindset can make or break success, and connect those principles to stronger performance and continuity of care within their organizations. 3. Take greater accountability for performance at work and in life, and leave equipped to take action on behalf of their teams and the people they support.	Dr. Maggie	Cook	Keynote Speaker	Maggie Cook, LLC
Thurs., 10/22 10:15am - 11:15am Leadership Track	Breakout Session 1 From Pressure to Progress: A Fireside Conversation on Leading Through Uncertainty	Building on the keynote, this fireside chat creates space for deeper, real-time conversation between Magie and OPRA attendees. Through candid discussion and audience Q&A, Magie helps leaders translate mindset principles into immediate, practical action for the pressures they face right now, operational stress, workforce demands, and an uncertain funding and policy landscape. Drawing on her experience as a hands-on entrepreneur who had to "figure it out" under pressure, she works through the audience's own challenges alongside them, offering grounded, applicable guidance that leaders can bring back to their organizations and the people they serve. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Translate mindset and mental-conditioning principles into practical, immediately applicable leadership actions for navigating funding pressure and operational uncertainty. 2. Develop adaptable, real-world strategies, surfaced through guided Q&A of their own challenges, that strengthen team morale and continuity of service delivery. 3. Recognize early signs of burnout and depletion in themselves and their teams, and identify mindset-based approaches for protecting wellbeing and sustaining the people who carry out their organization's mission.	Dr. Maggie	Cook	Keynote Speaker	Maggie Cook, LLC
Thurs., 10/22 10:15am - 11:15am Business & Operations Track	Breakout Session 2 Funding the Gaps: Building a Philanthropy Program that Pays Off	Government funding, Medicaid reimbursement, and service contracts rarely cover the full cost of delivering high-quality services. As funding pressures grow, more nonprofits are turning to philanthropy—not just to close budget gaps, but to fuel innovation, expand access, invest in staff, and build long-term sustainability. But where should you start? And which fundraising strategies offer the greatest return on investment? This session explores the full spectrum of philanthropic opportunities available to nonprofits, from annual giving and grants to major gifts, planned giving, special events, and volunteer engagement. Participants will learn the purpose of each strategy, the typical investment required, and the industry-average outcomes to help determine which approaches are the best fit for their organization. Whether you're considering launching a philanthropy program or strengthening an existing one, you'll leave with practical guidance for making informed decisions that can expand your impact and better serve your community. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify key fundraising methods that contribute to a well-rounded philanthropy program. 2. Research the resources, timelines, and expected outcomes associated with each fundraising method. 3. Develop practical strategies for launching or expanding a philanthropy program, regardless of an organization's size or available resources.	Jodi	Bopp	Vice President, Advancement	I Am Boundless, Inc.
		Co-Speaker:	Kari	Roll	Director of Development & Major Gifts	Goodwill Columbus
Thurs., 10/22 10:15am - 11:15am ICF Track	Breakout Session 3 Navigation Essentials: Strategies for Individualized Support	Supporting people with complex needs starts with proactive, person-centered planning. This session introduces Navigation Essentials, a collection of evidence-based, practical toolkits designed to strengthen supports for youth with IDD and behavioral health needs residing in ICFs. Participants will explore the Considerations for Intervention and Support toolkit, which provides a proactive framework for developing individualized support plans. The toolkit highlights key areas for planning and decision-making, including biological factors, skill development, and planning supports. Emphasis is placed on meaningful collaboration, early planning, and ongoing skill building to promote learning, independence, and positive outcomes across environments. Through this session, participants will learn how these interconnected areas can better understand a person's strengths and needs, identify the appropriate level of support, and prioritize skill development across settings. Participants will leave with practical tools and resources to engage in proactive planning and create individualized supports that focus on what matters most. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify key factors that guide support planning and intervention decisions for individuals with complex needs. 2. Explain how Navigation Essentials supports proactive, individualized strategies for people with I/DD and behavioral health needs. 3. Apply Navigation Essentials tools and resources to improve team collaboration, strengthen staff skills, and promote positive outcomes.	Jen	Bavry	Program Director, Office of Strategic Connection	OCALI
		Co-Speaker:	Steve	Mentrek	Multi-System Youth & Family Coach Manager	OCALI
		Co-Speaker:	Matthew	Bavinka	Complex Needs Manager	DODD

2026 OPRA Annual Conference Speaker & Session Information					
Day, Time & Track	Session # & Title	Session Description	Speaker First Name	Speaker Last Name	Job Title Organization
Thurs., 10/22 10:15am - 11:15am Quality & Innovation Track	Breakout Session 4 Rethinking Independence: How Providers Are Using Assistive Technology to Reduce Supervision and Improve Outcomes	Providers are dealing with a tough balance right now. Staffing is harder to maintain, and expectations around independence keep going up. Because of that, a lot of organizations are starting to rethink how support is delivered in residential and community settings. This session is about what that shift actually looks like. We'll walk through how teams are introducing wearable monitoring tools, how staffing starts to change when you can rely on alerts instead of constant presence, and the kind of impact they're seeing day to day. Attendees will leave with practical ideas they can take back to their own programs, including where to start, what to expect early on, and how to build from there. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify at least two ways assistive technology can reduce the need for continuous supervision in residential and community settings. 2. Describe a practical strategy for integrating assistive technology into existing support models with minimal disruption. 3. Evaluate the impact of assistive technology on staff workload and individual independence. 4. Apply a decision-making framework to determine whether an individual is a good fit for a more independent, technology-supported service model.	Nick	Morin	Vice President BoundaryCare
Thurs., 10/22 11:30am - 12:30pm Leadership Track	Breakout Session 5 How to Have Difficult Discussions and Productive Disagreements	Conflict resolution and management is an essential skill of any leader. For an organization to grow and thrive, diverse opinions and thoughts must be welcomed and encouraged. These diverse opinions and thoughts will often result in conflict. Will this conflict propel your organization forward or bring it down? Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify strategies that promote healthy, respectful, and productive conflict. 2. Apply the HEAT method to de-escalate challenging situations. 3. Use the DESC method to address performance or behavioral concerns clearly and efficiently. 4. Demonstrate effective body language, tone, and presence while creating communication expectations that encourage candid and respectful discussions.	Tom	Speaks	Partner Impact Group
Thurs., 10/22 11:30am - 12:30pm Business & Operations Track	Breakout Session 6 AI Without Overwhelm: A SAFER Workflow Framework for I/DD Providers	I/DD provider organizations are being asked to do more while navigating workforce shortages, administrative demands, privacy concerns, and the responsibility to deliver safe, person-centered services. AI may help reduce parts of that workload — but only when organizations know where it belongs, where it does not, and how to keep qualified people accountable. Participants will first learn to classify workplace tasks as Human Only, AI-Assisted, or Potentially Automatable — recognizing that technical capability doesn't determine appropriateness. They'll then apply the SAFER Workflow Framework (Specific, Appropriate, Free of protected information, Evaluated by a qualified human, Respectful and person-centered) to a short stress-test exercise comparing a polished, generic AI-generated goal against a human-developed, person-centered one — exposing a critical risk: the most dangerous AI output is often the one that looks fine. Attendees will then watch a live, low-risk demonstration transforming an approved fictional procedure into staff-training materials, and evaluate the AI's output for accuracy, invented information, accessibility, and respectful language. Each participant will leave with a completed Workflow Planner identifying one AI-assisted task in their own organization, its required human-review points, and a seven-day pilot commitment. No technical background is required. No protected, confidential, or identifying information will be entered during the session. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Reduce administrative burden while protecting privacy, person-centeredness, and human judgment. 2. Classify workplace tasks as human-only, AI-assisted, or potentially automatable. 3. Apply the SAFER Framework to evaluate AI use for privacy, risk, human oversight, accuracy, and person-centeredness. 4. Design a small, responsible AI pilot with clear ownership, an approval process, and measurable success criteria.	Tamora	Lupton-Wilkinson	Founder Tamora Compass
Thurs., 10/22 11:30am - 12:30pm ICF Track	Breakout Session 7 ICF Reimbursement Update & Benchmarking Trends	This session will be focused on all things ICF Reimbursement! We will discuss the new ICF rate calculations for FY27 and implications for FY28 rates. As we proceed through the last year of House Bill 96 and enter a new state budget cycle, it will be crucial for providers to develop thoughtful strategies around spending that impacts the Direct Care Ceilings with the removal of the Professional Workforce Development add-on. Additionally, we will walk through examples of the capital fair rental value calculations and provide scenarios to demonstrate opportunities for providers. We will also share and discuss various statewide and peer group benchmarks based on the 2025 cost report data. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify key strategies and opportunities related to ICF reimbursement and provider rate setting. 2. Explain how reimbursement and rate-setting considerations affect provider operations and financial planning. 3. Apply relevant benchmarks and data to evaluate operational performance and support informed decision-making.	TJ	Ely	MBA, Senior Manager Plante Moran, PLLC
		Co-Speaker:	Denise	Leonard	CPA, Partner Plante Moran, PLLC

2026 OPRA Annual Conference Speaker & Session Information					
Day, Time & Track	Session # & Title	Session Description	Speaker First Name	Speaker Last Name	Job Title Organization
Thurs., 10/22 11:30am - 12:30pm Quality & Innovation Track	Breakout Session 8 RISE Remote Support Solution: Independence Without Isolation	Integrating remote support into and individual's support should enhance the lives of the people we support. This session explores how Agency Providers can utilize the RISE remote support platform by RMS to dramatically increase individual autonomy, self-determination, and privacy. We will move beyond the tradition of monitoring for problems to focus on how the right technology partner empowers individuals to control their own spaces and daily routines. RISE designs person-centered plans, match advanced sensors to unique independence goals, assign dedicated RSPs trained on each person's ISP, and maintain robust backup protocols that ensure continuous safety without sacrificing privacy or independence. Discover how a strategic remote support partnership shifts the care discussion from restrictive oversight to active interaction, personal freedom, and community involvement for the individuals you serve. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify key criteria for selecting a reliable remote support partner and distinguish RISE's interactive, DODD-certified DSP model from passive monitoring approaches. 2. Explain the process for integrating remote support technologies into person-centered Individual Service Plans through collaboration with SSAs, families, and provider agencies. 3. Evaluate how remote support can address staffing challenges while maintaining quality services, promoting safety, and supporting individual independence goals.	Jennifer	Galloway	COO RMS of Ohio
Thurs., 10/22 1:30pm - 2:30pm Sponsored Track	Giv. Sponsored Session 1 AI & Data: Tools for Today's Challenges	Artificial intelligence is rapidly changing how organizations manage information, make decisions, and support their teams. This session offers a straightforward, practical introduction to AI—what it is, how it works, and how it can help provider agencies address everyday operational challenges. Participants will explore realistic applications of AI and data while learning how to use these tools responsibly, securely, and in compliance with applicable privacy and organizational requirements. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Explain the basic concepts of artificial intelligence and how AI tools use data to generate information and support decision-making. 2. Identify practical ways AI can improve efficiency, communication, data analysis, and service delivery within their agencies. 3. Apply key principles for using AI safely and responsibly, including protecting confidential information, assessing accuracy, and maintaining regulatory compliance.	Alec	Fowler	Senior Director of Business Development Giv.
Thurs., 10/22 1:30pm - 2:30pm Sponsored Track	Gladegy Sponsored Session 2 Beyond the Communication Cascade: Using AI to Reach Every Employee, Every Shift, Every Time	Communication can easily break down as information moves across leadership levels, locations, departments, and shifts. For IDD providers, this can result in employees receiving important information late, inconsistently, or not at all. This session will explore how AI can help organizations strengthen the reach, consistency, and accessibility of internal communication. Participants will examine practical opportunities to reduce communication gaps, reinforce key messages, and create more reliable ways to keep employees informed across shifts, sites, and roles. The session will also address an important question for leaders: where can AI strengthen communication, and where does human connection remain essential? Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify common internal communication gaps across leadership levels, departments, locations, and shifts. 2. Explain how AI tools can improve the reach, consistency, and accessibility of organizational communications. 3. Evaluate when AI can support effective communication and when direct human interaction remains essential. 4. Apply practical strategies to use AI to reinforce key messages and keep employees informed across different shifts, locations, and roles.	Stacy	Sufka	MPA, MAC, MBAn, LSSBB, ODCP Gladegy Consulting, LLC
Thurs., 10/22 1:30pm - 2:30pm Sponsored Track	Kibu Sponsored Session 3 Prove It or Lose It: Why the Technology Ohio's I/DD Providers Use to Document Decides Whether They Survive the Next Decade	Ohio providers lose Medicaid revenue every month because of documentation problems that are entirely preventable. Missing fields, EVV mismatches in Sandata, notes submitted by staff whose DODD training isn't complete, service notes with no ISP goal linkage: these are the things CMS and DODD audit for, and they show up constantly. Most providers don't find out until a denial lands or an auditor calls. This session works through the numbers. Using CMS data and Ohio DODD billing rules across the most common service and waivers, attendees will learn how much annual Medicaid revenue an Ohio provider puts at risk when documentation systems have gaps. The figure is typically \$780,000 to \$1.17 million for a provider serving 100 individuals on roughly \$3 million in Medicaid revenue. That is not an audit outcome. That is the standing exposure before anyone walks through the door. The session also covers Ohio-specific developments attendees need to know: hard denials as recent as 2025 for changes like Remote Supports and Assistive Technology, and what the HCBS Settings Rule actually requires providers to document at the note level. The workforce piece gets its own time too. Documentation is the task DSPs report hating most, and the connection between documentation burden and staff turnover is real and measurable. Attendees leave with five specific actions they can take before the next billing cycle, and a clear picture of what compliant, purpose-built documentation technology does that spreadsheets and generic tools can't provide. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify the four CMS-defined root causes of HCBS payment errors and explain their application to Ohio DODD waiver documentation requirements. 2. Calculate their organization's annual Medicaid revenue at risk using the CMS framework and Ohio DODD hard-denial thresholds. 3. Describe Ohio's Electronic Visit Verification requirements, including Sandata's six required data elements and the consequences of mismatched visit records. 4. Evaluate service notes for compliance with the HCBS Settings Rule and identify corrective actions that reduce documentation-related revenue risk and support managed care readiness.	Heather	Janci	VP Compliance & Best Practice Kibu

2026 OPRA Annual Conference Speaker & Session Information

Day, Time & Track	Session # & Title	Session Description	Speaker First Name	Speaker Last Name	Job Title	Organization
Thurs., 10/22 1:30pm - 2:30pm Sponsored Track	SETWorks Sponsored Session 4 Stronger Together: SETWorks + Primary Solutions and the Future of IDD in Ohio	With nearly 30 combined years serving Ohio's IDD community, SETWorks and Primary Solutions have joined forces. In this session, Liz Thompson and Henri McCracken share the thinking behind the partnership, why two IDD-rooted organizations came together, and what it means for providers navigating a rapidly changing landscape. You'll also see where we're investing first: AI-assisted review that flags what needs attention before it becomes a finding, the ISP Checker for waiver and ICF programs, and expanded billing and revenue services that take administrative weight off your team. Come hear what's ahead for Ohio IDD software and what it means for the work you do every day. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Explain the strategic reasons behind the SETWorks and Primary Solutions partnership and its potential impact on Ohio's I/DD provider community. 2. Identify how AI-assisted review tools and the ISP Checker can help strengthen compliance and address documentation concerns before they become findings. 3. Describe how expanded billing and revenue-cycle services can reduce administrative burdens and support more efficient provider operations.	Henri	McCracken	CEO	SETWorks
		Co-Speaker:	Liz	Thompson	Director of Operations	Primary Solutions
Thurs., 10/22 2:45pm - 3:45pm Leadership Track	Breakout Session 9 Hold the Line: Staying True to Your Brand Through Change	Ohio's I/DD provider agencies are living through an unusual amount of organizational change right now: mergers, funding overhauls, leadership turnover, and a workforce shortage that isn't letting up. Each of these puts a provider's brand at risk in a way most leaders don't see coming until it's already a problem. It's rarely the logo or the name on the door. It's the trust families, regulators, and staff have built with a provider over years, and that trust can erode quickly when a transition is handled poorly. The need to distinguish between brand "constants" (mission, core promises, key relationships) and brand "variables" (name, structure, messaging, delivery model) is critical to move forward during these challenging times. This session gives executives and program leaders a practical framework for telling the difference between what must stay constant through change and what can safely flex. Attendees leave with a framework they can apply to whatever transition comes next, not just a fix for the one they're in now. Join us to become better prepared for active or upcoming organizational change. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Differentiate between brand "constants" that should be preserved and brand "variables" that can adapt during organizational change. 2. Identify how mergers, funding changes, leadership transitions, and workforce challenges can affect trust among families, employees, regulators, and other stakeholders. 3. Apply a practical framework to guide organizational transitions while protecting the agency's mission, core commitments, key relationships, and reputation.	Tim	Hindes	Chief Trail Officer	TrailBlaze Creative
		Co-Speaker:	Erin	Sogal	VP of Inspiration	TrailBlaze Creative
Thurs., 10/22 2:45pm - 3:45pm Business & Operations Track	Breakout Session 10 Fostering Accountability & Trust: OPRA's Just Culture Learning Collaborative	Creating a "Just Culture" in organizations helps balance accountability with learning and improvement. This panel will feature participants from OPRA's second Just Culture Learning Collaborative, sharing their experiences, key takeaways, and strategies for fostering a culture that supports employees while maintaining high-quality services. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Define Just Culture and its impact on service quality and workplace culture. 2. Learn real-world applications from organizations implementing Just Culture principles. 3. Identify steps to shift organizational culture toward accountability and learning.	Teresa	Kobelt	Chief Innovation Officer	OPRA
		Co-Speaker:	Scott	Marks	Vice President	OPRA
Thurs., 10/22 2:45pm - 3:45pm ICF Track	Breakout Session 11 The Hidden Rules of Class for DD Providers	Do your DSPs seem to have a hidden set of rules? Do people ignore procedures and make choices that leave you scratching your head, wondering "what were they thinking?" A workplace, just like any other place where people gather, has unspoken social rules. Many of the workforce challenges that impact us every day are exacerbated when front-line employees seem to be following a different set of "hidden rules" than management. Why and how people call off from work, how people respond to directions from different supervisors, how people plan ahead for challenges or leave things for the last minute: all of these are influenced by the "hidden rules of class," and different people in the same workplace are likely to follow different hidden rules, based on their own experiences growing up. We will focus on how to bring the hidden rules of social class out into the light, to facilitate respectful conversations between front-line employees and management, and to address workplace challenges from a place of mutual respect and cultural competence. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Describe how the hidden rules of socioeconomic class affect developmental disability providers and workplace interactions. 2. Examine how their personal experiences may have shaped their understanding of class-based expectations and behaviors. 3. Apply respectful, culturally responsive strategies when discussing written and hidden workplace rules.	Bradley	Wyner	Director of Education	Rose-Mary
		Co-Speaker:	Cierea	Watkins	HR Manager	Rose-Mary
		Co-Speaker:	Andrea	Jackson	HR Recruiter	Rose-Mary

2026 OPRA Annual Conference Speaker & Session Information						
Day, Time & Track	Session # & Title	Session Description	Speaker First Name	Speaker Last Name	Job Title	Organization
Thurs., 10/22 2:45pm - 3:45pm Quality & Innovation Track	Breakout Session 12 Expanding Possibilities: Bringing Enabling Technology into Person-Centered Planning	Person-centered planning is built on helping people live lives that reflect their goals, preferences, strengths, and desired outcomes. As enabling technology continues to evolve, it offers new opportunities to expand choice, increase independence, and reduce reliance on paid supports. Yet technology is often overlooked during planning conversations or considered only after traditional support strategies have been identified. This interactive session explores how enabling technology can naturally complement person-centered practices by expanding the range of support options available to people. Through practical examples and real-world scenarios, participants will learn how to incorporate technology into everyday planning conversations without needing to be technology experts. The session will focus on simple, person-centered strategies that help teams identify opportunities where technology can support greater autonomy, privacy, community participation, safety, communication, and quality of life. Participants will leave with practical questions, planning tools, and conversation strategies they can immediately apply to ensure enabling technology is thoughtfully considered alongside other support options during person-centered planning. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Explain how enabling technology promotes person-centered outcomes, including greater choice, independence, and self-determination. 2. Identify opportunities to incorporate enabling technology into planning based on an individual's goals, preferences, strengths, and support needs. 3. Apply practical questions and strategies to help teams consider enabling technology alongside human supports when developing individualized plans.	Patrick	Lane	Education Manager	Tech First SHIFT
Thurs., 10/22 4:00pm - 5:00pm General Session	Legislative Updates	Join The Success Group, Pete and Christine for a moderated panel discussion on all things General Assembly (GA). This session will explore some of the large looming questions as election day nears. What are the predictions for the election? How will the next GA work with a new Governor? Who will be the DD system's legislative champions in the next GA? How will the change of an administration impact budget negotiations? What should providers be doing now to prepare for budget advocacy? We hope you will join this informative session! Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Examine key election trends and potential outcomes that may shape Ohio's next General Assembly. 2. Explain how a new Governor and administration could influence legislative priorities, relationships, and state budget negotiations. 3. Identify potential legislative champions and opportunities to strengthen support for Ohio's developmental disabilities system. 4. Develop practical steps provider organizations can take now to prepare for effective budget and legislative advocacy.	Anthony	Aquillo	Lobbyist	The Success Group
		Co-Speaker:	Peter	Moore	President & CEO	OPRA
		Co-Speaker:	Christine	Touvelle	Director of Advocacy	OPRA
Fri., 10/23 9:00am - 10:00am General Session	Building Connections Connect, Collaborate & Engage: OPRA District Networking	Connect with fellow OPRA members during this interactive district networking session. OPRA members are organized into seven districts, each represented by OPRA Board Directors who help elevate regional perspectives, priorities, and concerns. Participants will meet their district representatives, build relationships with other providers, exchange ideas, and discuss issues affecting their organizations and communities. This session is designed to strengthen member engagement, encourage collaboration, and promote open communication between each district and OPRA leadership. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify their OPRA district and the Board Directors who represent their region. 2. Exchange ideas, challenges, and effective practices with fellow OPRA members from their district. 3. Identify opportunities to strengthen regional collaboration, member engagement, and communication with OPRA leadership.	Pete	Moore	President & CEO	OPRA
Fri., 10/23 10:15am - 11:15am Day & Employment Services Track	Session 13 Refueling the Frontline: A Trauma-Informed Framework for Staff Well-Being and Burnout Prevention	Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and frontline supervisors regularly navigate complex behavioral and medical crises, making them highly susceptible to secondary traumatic stress (STS). When staff burnout peaks, care quality suffers, and turnover spikes. This session flips the lens of trauma-informed care onto the workforce itself. Attendees will learn how to design a "trauma-informed workspace" that actively mitigates sensory overload and emotional exhaustion. We will move past generic self-care advice to deliver structural, agency-level strategies—such as post-incident peer debriefing and daily decompression protocols—that protect staff mental health, improve retention, and foster an environment of psychological safety. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Reframe employee burnout and workplace stress as organizational responsibilities requiring systemic solutions. 2. Apply trauma-informed strategies—including peer-led debriefings and environmental modifications—to support staff well-being and psychological safety. 3. Develop proactive workplace practices that strengthen workforce resilience, improve retention, and create a sustainable organizational culture.	Justin	Blumhorst	Chief Innovation Officer	Capabilities

2026 OPRA Annual Conference Speaker & Session Information					
Day, Time & Track	Session # & Title	Session Description	Speaker First Name	Speaker Last Name	Job Title Organization
Fri., 10/23 10:15am - 11:15am Healthcare Track	Session 14 Beyond Medication Passes: Leveraging the Nurse's Perspective to Improve Outcomes, Reduce Risk, and Strengthen Teams	This interactive session explores the unique role nurses play within interdisciplinary teams supporting people with developmental disabilities. While nurses are often viewed primarily as clinical experts, they also bring valuable observations, problem-solving skills, and real-world insights that can improve communication, identify emerging concerns, and strengthen person-centered supports. Participants will examine how nurses contribute beyond traditional medical responsibilities, discuss common barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration, and explore practical strategies for intentionally integrating nursing perspectives into organizational practices. Through case examples and facilitated discussion, attendees will leave with actionable ideas to better utilize nursing expertise, strengthen team communication, and improve outcomes for the individuals they support. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Describe the unique perspective nurses gain through home and community visits and how their observations support informed team decisions. 2. Explain how nurses contribute beyond medical care through behavior support, risk reduction, staff development, and improved quality outcomes. 3. Identify common communication gaps that limit interdisciplinary collaboration and apply practical strategies to strengthen teamwork. 4. Evaluate organizational practices and identify opportunities to better integrate nursing expertise into service planning and delivery.	Kristina	Watson	RN - Health Services Coordinator Dynamic Pathways
		Co-Speaker:	Mindy	Garverick	Lead HRC Consultant Dynamic Pathways
Fri., 10/23 10:15am - 11:15am Residential Waiver Track	Session 15 The New NADSP Code of Ethics	The NADSP Code of Ethics (COE) is 25 years old in 2026. It was decided in 2025 to do a complete update of the NADSP COE. The speakers will present the new Code of Ethics just approved by the NADSP Board and will instruct the audience on how to use the new COE along with a new companion document called the NADSP Ethics Practice Guideline. This session will focus on how to teach this new code of ethics to frontline staff and supervisors----- And the difference between this new Code of Ethic and our old COE. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Learn the new COE tenets and will apply the tenets to their current work setting. 2. Learn how to apply a teaching method for frontline staff and supervisors at their agencies. 3. Understand the importance of using ethical scenarios in teaching ethics to all staff.	Tony	Thomas	LISW-S NADSP
		Co-Speaker:	John	Raffaele	Director Educational Services NADSP
Fri., 10/23 10:15am - 11:15am Human Resources Track	Session 16 Conflict to Collaboration: Practical Strategies Every Leader Needs	Conflict is inevitable, but ineffective conflict management can damage trust, engagement, and team performance. This interactive session equips leaders with practical strategies to recognize the underlying causes of workplace conflict, respond before issues escalate, and facilitate constructive conversations. Participants will explore how communication styles, assumptions, power dynamics, and competing priorities influence conflict. Through realistic workplace scenarios, guided reflection, and skill-building exercises, leaders will practice shifting conversations from defensiveness and disagreement toward shared understanding, accountability, and collaboration. Participants will leave with practical tools they can immediately apply to navigate difficult conversations, strengthen working relationships, and create a workplace culture where differences can be addressed respectfully and productively. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Recognize common sources and early warning signs of workplace conflict. 2. Apply a practical framework—including active listening, reframing, and de-escalation techniques—to navigate difficult conversations. 3. Develop clear, collaborative agreements that promote accountability and follow-through.	Tniesha	Jones	HR Business Partner The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center
Fri., 10/23 11:30am - 12:30pm Day & Employment Track	Session 17 Building Your Super Squad: Developing the Next Generation of Human Service Professionals	At Riverview Industries (RVI), we have always believed that we are more than a service provider—we are a family. For years, when school was out of session, many of our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and administrative staff brought their children to our Adult Day Services programs. What began as an opportunity for youth to spend time with their parents quickly became something much more meaningful. These young people naturally formed friendships with the individuals we serve, assisted with activities, and brought an enthusiasm and energy that enriched our programs. As workforce shortages began impacting the human services field, we challenged ourselves to think differently. Rather than viewing youth simply as visitors, we recognized an untapped opportunity to develop future professionals while providing meaningful support to our existing staff. This innovative approach led to the creation of our Youth Activities Aide Program, hiring students ages 14–17 to work alongside experienced DSPs in Adult Day Services. The results have exceeded our expectations. Join us as we share how our “Super Squad” of Youth Activities Aides has transformed programming, strengthened our workforce, and created lasting benefits for the individuals we support, our organization, and the young people participating in the program. A panel of current and former Youth Activities Aides will share their experiences, discuss how the program has influenced their personal and professional growth, and answer questions about their journey. Attendees will gain practical insight into developing a youth employment program that benefits everyone involved. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify the benefits of a Youth Activities Aide Program for individuals served, youth employees, and the organization. 2. Develop strategies for recruiting, training, and supervising youth employees through partnerships with local schools and community organizations. 3. Apply practical tools to create a sustainable youth employment program that enhances services and develops the next generation of compassionate professionals.	Laura	Borows	CEO Riverview Industries, Inc.
		Co-Speaker:	Jaylin	Underwood	Program Coordinator Riverview Industries, Inc.

2026 OPRA Annual Conference Speaker & Session Information					
Day, Time & Track	Session # & Title	Session Description	Speaker First Name	Speaker Last Name	Job Title Organization
Fri., 10/23 11:30am - 12:30pm Healthcare Track	Session 18 Bold Connections and Innovations: A Community Care Model that advances support for people with IDD and mental health needs	NextGen Synergy operates similar to a traditional community care hub, uniting people, systems, and innovative solutions to transform support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and co-occurring mental health conditions. Join us to explore how bold collaboration, technology-driven strategies, and knowledge-sharing networks are reducing fragmentation, strengthening local capacity, and empowering people to thrive in their communities. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Describe how the NextGen Synergy model connects people, systems, and resources to improve support for individuals with I/DD and co-occurring mental health conditions. 2. Identify common causes of service fragmentation and opportunities to improve coordination across providers, community partners, and support systems. 3. Examine how collaborative partnerships, technology-driven strategies, and knowledge-sharing networks can strengthen local service capacity. 4. Apply practical strategies to build more coordinated, responsive, and person-centered systems that empower individuals to thrive in their communities.	Nick	Burton	MPA, Co-CEO Co-Founder NextGen Synergy
Fri., 10/23 11:30am - 12:30pm Residential Waiver Track	Session 19 Dementia & I/DD	This presentation provides an overview of dementia and its impact on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). It explains how dementia affects the brain, reviews the most common types of dementia—including Alzheimer’s disease, vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia, and frontotemporal dementia—and discusses risk factors, early warning signs, diagnosis, and treatment options. Special attention is given to the increased prevalence of dementia among people with I/DD, particularly individuals with Down syndrome. The presentation also offers practical caregiving strategies for managing common dementia-related challenges such as agitation, wandering, communication difficulties, sleep disturbances, personal care needs, and behavioral changes. Finally, it highlights prevention strategies, lifestyle factors that may reduce dementia risk, and resources available to support individuals, families, and caregivers. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Define dementia and describe how it affects the brain and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). 2. Identify and explain at least two common types of dementia, including their risk factors and early warning signs. 3. Apply at least two practical strategies to support individuals with dementia and I/DD experiencing communication, behavioral, or personal care challenges. 4. Identify at least one prevention or lifestyle strategy that may help reduce the risk of dementia.	Mary	Sentelle	Consultant Dynamic Pathways
Fri., 10/23 11:30am - 12:30pm Human Resources Track	Session 20 Breaking Leadership Bottlenecks: Grow Leaders, Strengthen Teams, and Retain Top Talent	Why do so many capable leaders find important decisions repeatedly landing back on their desk? Often, it isn't a people problem—it's a leadership systems problem. When leaders become the unintended bottleneck, decision-making slows, leadership development stalls, communication breaks down, and employee engagement and retention suffer. This fast-paced, engaging, and interactive session provides practical strategies for breaking leadership bottlenecks while growing leaders, strengthening teams, and building organizational capacity. Participants will learn how to recognize patterns that unintentionally create dependency, empower others to make sound decisions, strengthen cross-functional communication, and build greater accountability throughout the organization. The session includes opportunities for discussion, networking, and sharing practical ideas with peers. Attendees will leave with practical tools and strategies they can immediately implement to grow leaders, strengthen teams, improve collaboration, and retain top talent. Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify leadership behaviors and organizational patterns that create decision-making bottlenecks and limit leadership growth. 2. Apply practical strategies to strengthen decision-making, accountability, and communication across teams. 3. Develop approaches that build leadership capacity, reduce dependence on a single leader, and improve collaboration. 4. Implement techniques that increase employee engagement, support leadership development, and promote long-term talent retention.	Catherine	Bennett	Executive Communication Specialist Executive Coach Catherine Bennett Consulting, LLC