

# Everyday Lives

2026  
Virtual  
Conference

***Breaking Barriers and Building Futures***

May 6-16, 2026

## **Conference Program**



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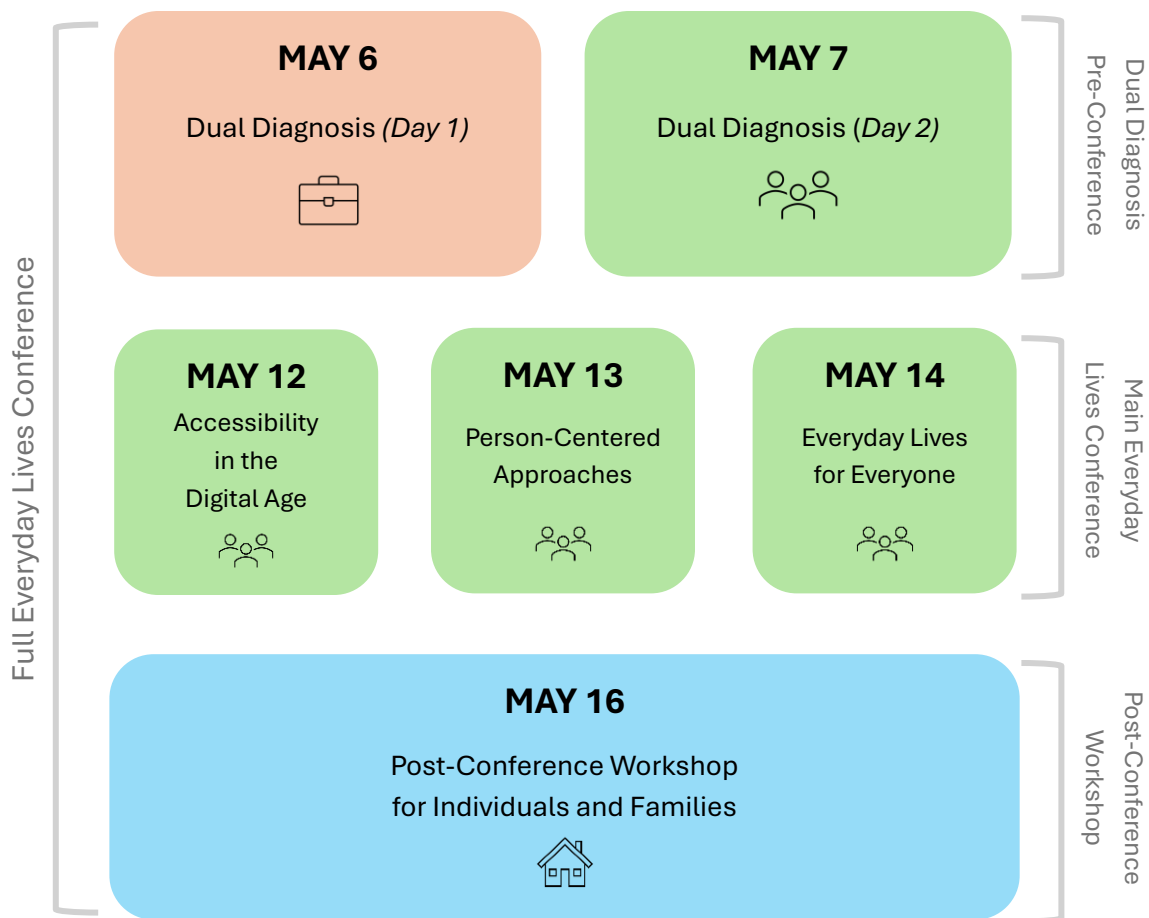
# Overview


The biannual Everyday Lives Conference, hosted by the Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), invites individuals with a disability and/or autism (ID/A), family members, caregivers, and support professionals to engage in presentations and panels focused on sharing information that empowers the everyday lives of individuals with disabilities throughout Pennsylvania.


The 2026 Everyday Lives Conference (EDL) will be held virtually throughout the first two weeks of May 2026. The conference theme for 2026 is “*Breaking Barriers and Building Futures*”.


## 2026 Everyday Lives Schedule

*at-a-Glance*



 for all audiences

 for individuals with ID/A, self-advocates, and families

 for professionals

## What to expect

The virtual conference will be hosted through the online platform **Whova**. The conference program is broken into three sections:

- **The Dual Diagnosis Pre-Conference**  
Theme: The Brain and Body Connection: Understanding the Vagus Nerve  
*May 6 – May 7, 2026*
- **The Main Everyday Lives Conference**  
Theme: Breaking Barriers and Building Futures  
*May 12 – May 14, 2026*
- **The Post-Conference Workshop for Individuals and Families**  
Theme: Finding Your Power  
*May 16, 2026*

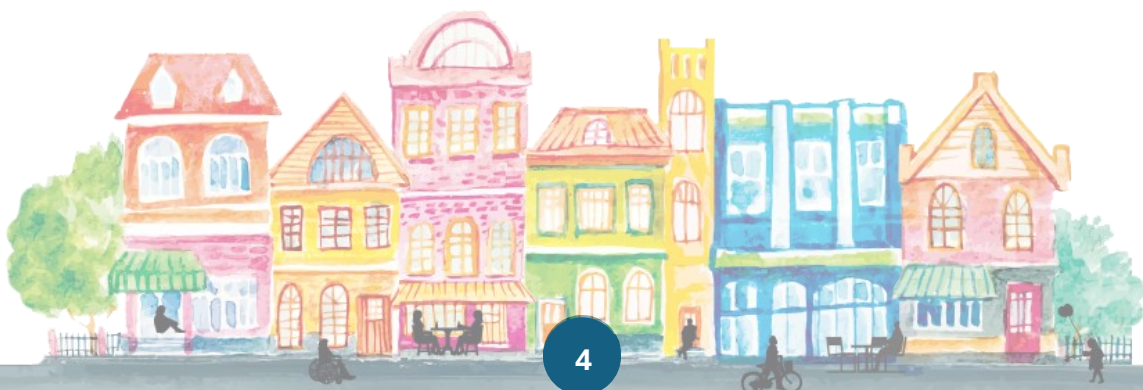
Each section (excluding the post-conference) will include presentations for all ODP stakeholders, but some sessions may cater more to one audience than another. Regardless, we invite *all* audiences to attend *every* session. Content will be accessible and relevant to all.

While we encourage attendees to attend as much of the conference as possible, ODP understands that schedules may only permit someone to attend select sessions. That's okay! We welcome you to join when you're able. Session recordings will be available in the Whova app for conference attendees to view for up to three months after.

Separate certificates of attendance will be issued for the Dual Diagnosis Pre-Conference and The Everyday Lives Conference.

## Accessibility Accommodations

All conference sessions will have American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and closed captioning. If you need language translation or any other ADA accommodation, please include them in your registration form.



## Conference Tracks

Each conference section will feature daily tracks that highlight a topic related to the section theme. Tracks include:

- **The Dual Diagnosis Pre-Conference**
  - **May 6 - Understanding the Vagus Nerve**  
A program to introduce professionals to Polyvagal Theory and its applications to therapies.
  - **May 7 - Technology and Mental Health**  
A program for individuals and families to explore the intersection of technology, independence and mental health.
  
- **The Main Everyday Lives Conference**
  - **May 12 - Accessibility in the Digital Age**  
A clear-eyed look at how technology affects our everyday lives and how we may harness it for good.
  - **May 13 - Person-Centered Approaches**  
Presentations highlighting the importance of person-centered planning throughout every step of the journey – from systems changes to individual support plans.
  - **May 14 - Everyday Lives for Everyone**  
Discussions of advocacy, resilience, and building networks of natural supports in your community.
  
- **The Post-Conference Workshop for Individuals and Families**
  - **May 16**  
An opportunity for individuals and family members to discuss EDL presentation materials and form connections.



# Conference Agenda

## Dual Diagnosis Pre-Conference

*The Brain and Body Connection: Understanding the Vagus Nerve*

### Understanding the Vagus Nerve

May 6, 2026, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM



- **Trauma-Informed Behavior Support Through a Polyvagal Lens Practical Tools for Safety, Regulation, and Connection**

Presented by Ellen A. Black, LCSW and Lynn Haller, MSW, LCSW

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

This presentation explores how Polyvagal Theory informs Trauma-Informed Behavior Support in dual diagnosis and intellectual disability settings. Participants will learn how nervous system states shape behavior, how trauma-informed supports promote regulation and safety, and how these principles translate into meaningful, real-world outcomes. A case study, possible brief video, and adapted therapeutic tool will illustrate application across clinical and support environments.



- **The Auditory Portal: Accessing the Vagus Nerve through Sound**

Presented by Rebecca Knowles, Clinical Director, Unyte Health

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Sound is a portal to the nervous system, helping us respond to danger in our environment and support safe, attuned connection with others. Join this session to learn the many ways sound influences nervous system regulation, and strategies to access the vagus nerve and enhance your clinical toolbox.



- **Healing with the Brain in Mind – An Introduction to the Neurosequential Model**

Presented by Michelle Maikoetter, MA, NCC, LPC-S, NCC

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Brain function and brain development, particularly how early experiences disproportionately affect this development, is instrumental in our work. In looking at the brain, from the bottom to the top, and the inside out we can better determine what types of interventions may be helpful. This experiential, multi-sensory training will provide takeaway information which will be helpful in every area of your life - personal as well as professional. Case examples will be used to show how looking at past history of relationships and adversity along with presenting challenges can create a NMT Metric – a clinical problem-solving tool which helps individualize the sequencing of interventions for each client. Traditional types of interventions will be discussed including their limitations and possibilities.



- **Connection-Centered Trauma Therapy**

Presented by Hela Baer, LCSW, E-RYT, C-NIT, Integrative Trauma Therapist

*2:30 PM – 3:30 PM*

In this session, participants will be introduced to an integrative approach to trauma therapy that incorporates mindfulness and somatics, nature-based approaches, and intentional horse-human interactions. Connection-Centered Trauma Therapy focuses on healing through embodied and mindful connection with self, others, animals, nature, and community.

## **Technology and Mental Health**

May 7, 2026, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM



- **Is Virtual Therapy Right For Me? Exploring The Benefits And Challenges Of Therapy Through Telehealth**

Presented by Dr. Keely Hirsch, PsyD

*9:00 AM – 10:30 AM*

In this presentation, we will discuss the specific advantages and disadvantages of working with a mental health provider through telehealth. In particular, we will discuss the topics of convenience, access to providers, effectiveness of treatment, technical issues, and privacy concerns.



- **Internet, Social Media, and Communication**

Presented by Erin Sass, Provider Educator, Acentra

*11:00 AM – 12:00 PM*

This session will explore the positives and negatives of the internet and social media, examine what content is appropriate for public and private sharing, and examine ways to be safe online.



- **Promoting Independence Through Technology Panel**

Facilitated by Shea Tanis, Ph.D., FAAIDD

Panelists: Dylan Bacon, Self-Advocate; Robert Zoytnia, Self-Advocate

*12:30 PM – 1:30 PM*

The rapid evolution of technology is fundamentally reshaping how we live, move, and connect. Despite advancements, the digital revolution has not been felt equally. Persistent structural, societal, and economic barriers continue to exclude people with disabilities from fully participating in this new environment. This panel brings together individuals with lived experience to bridge that gap. By sharing their personal journeys, our speakers will identify the specific challenges and benefits of modern technologies, highlighting the systems that currently support or hinder technological inclusion, and paint a picture of a world where equitable access is part of everyday living.



- **You Are Not Alone – Let’s Talk About Mental Health**

Gretchen Laudenslager, Professional Self Advocate and Lead Power Coach, SAU1  
Joe Chandler, Professional Self Advocate and Power Coach, SAU1  
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Let's talk about mental health for people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism (ID/A). We'll learn the facts that disprove the myths. Hear about the history, some of it quite terrible, that people with ID/A lived. Get practical steps to take if you, or someone you know, is having a tough time. Find out what a WRAP and a crisis plan is, and how to get one. When you leave, you'll have a better understanding of mental health concerns and a list of resources to learn even more!

## The Everyday Lives Conference

*Breaking Barriers and Building Futures*

### Accessibility in the Digital Age

May 12, 2026, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM



- **Keynote - An Inclusive Everyday Future**

Presented by Robin Christopherson MBE, Head of Digital Inclusion, AbilityNet  
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Packed with practical examples, in this presentation we will look at how truly inclusive technology has helped empower every user, and how AI-fueled future tech promises to enable every one of us to reach our full potential in our everyday lives.



- **Mindful Content Consumption: Cyberspace Resiliency**

Presented by Imani Barbarin  
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Your attention has turned into an invaluable resource. Logging onto social media can leave you feeling drained and deprived. When algorithms are incentivized to pull your eyeballs toward divisive content for views and clicks, it can be incredibly difficult to sift through the noise to figure out what truly deserves your attention. This session – part one of two sessions on making social media work for you – will reveal click-bait tactics, explore content creator motivations, and provide tips for protecting your peace while not looking away.



- **Building a Cyber Strong America**

Presented by Derek Mueller, Cyber Security Advisor  
12:30 PM – 1:30 PM

This session will emphasize the importance of enhancing cybersecurity resilience across the nation. The session will focus on empowering individuals with the knowledge and tools to protect against evolving cyber threats and safeguard personal info and protect the community.



- **Keynote - Artificial Intelligence: Risks, Benefits, and Recommendations for People with Disabilities**

Presented by Amy Nieves, AGSD, MHR, Public Affairs Specialist, U.S. Access Board  
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Artificial intelligence is increasingly shaping how people work, learn, communicate, and access essential services. For people with disabilities, its impact can be both transformative and challenging. This session explores the benefits, risks, and real-world implications of AI for people with disabilities, drawing on the U.S. Access Board’s community engagement, hearings, and recommendations. Attendees will learn how AI can break down digital barriers through assistive technologies and accessible development, while also examining how inaccessible systems and unchecked automation can reinforce existing barriers in the everyday lives of people with disabilities. The session concludes with practical, cross-sector recommendations to help ensure AI is developed and deployed in ways that build a more accessible digital future for all.

### **Person-Centered Approaches**

*May 13, 2026, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM*

- **Introductory Remarks from the Deputy Secretary**

Kristin Ahrens, ODP Deputy Secretary



- **Keynote - The Road Less Taken is Under Construction: Building the Highway from Goals to Outcomes**

Presented by Bob Sattler, Partner, Support Development Associates  
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Supporting people to have a meaningful life has been a practice for over 40 years, yet how many people do you know that have the life they want? Our practice has focused, much like the road less taken, on one person at a time. The result? Thousands of people who are stuck in a traffic jam and never get to see the road. In 2014, Centers for Medicaid/Medicare made an effort to change that by requiring everyone to have a plan focused on each specific individual. Here it is, 2026, and the traffic jam is still there. People’s lives aren’t moving forward because the focus is still largely on health and safety instead of happiness and satisfaction. It’s time to reroute the road less taken and turn it into a highway that makes sure people are happy and healthy, satisfied and safe. It requires us to make a detour from goals to outcomes. The PA system is constructing change with its Performance Based Contracting Model where outcomes are the destination and goals are the roads that will take us there. Let’s take a road trip and discover how to get the adventure started for people supported.



- **Panel - Communication Tips for Speaking with your Support Team**

Facilitated by Tim Greusel, Director, Quality Enhancement Support Team

Panelists: Jane Gonzalez, Family Member; Harold Gordon, Self-Advocate; Cherron Garland, Advocate; Nicholas Smith, Direct Support Professional; Mary Kate Parsons, Supports Coordinator

*11:00 AM – 12:00 PM*

This is a panel discussion consisting of: people who use supports and services, direct support professionals, supports coordination, family members, and independent advocacy. Panelists will discuss the challenges each encounters during team meetings and ideas and strategies for improving the quality of team interactions.



- **Start With the Person: Rethinking Support Through Technology**

Presented by Arc Human Services and SPIN, Inc.

Craig Douglass, Chief Administrative Officer, Arc Human Services; Diana Petschauer, Assistive Technology Professional; Travis Fiem, Enabling Technology Implementation Specialist, Arc Human Services; Andrea Consigny, Employment Division Director, SPIN; Laura Silsby, Community Participation Support Director, SPIN; Judy Dotzman, President & CEO, SPIN

*12:30 PM – 1:30 PM*

This session explores how support can be reimaged by starting with the person and using technology as part of everyday life, not as an add-on, but embedded in meaningful activity and choices. Through real stories and two complementary approaches, SPIN and Arc Human Services will share how culture, process, and intentional design can expand independence, strengthen the workforce, and create more sustainable, person-centered services.



- **Keynote - Improving Individual Outcomes Through Data: Turning person centered values into measurable practice**

Presented by Scott Bachik, CEO & Co-founder, The BI Collaborative

*2:00 PM – 3:30 PM*

This session examines how providers and Supports Coordinators can use data to turn person-centered values into measurable practice. Grounded in Everyday Lives and connected to the quality improvement goals of Performance-Based Contracting, this session focuses on moving beyond compliance and reporting toward proactive, data-driven improvement. Attendees will learn practical ways to measure meaningful outcomes, strengthen decision-making, and build organizational cultures that improve the lives of individuals and families.

## Everyday Lives for Everyone

May 14, 2026, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM



- **Plenary Panel - From Lived Experience to Collective Leadership: Building Everyday Lives for Everyone**

Facilitated by Dr. Josie Badger DHCE, CRC

Panelists: Shawn Aleong, Advocate; Gretchen Laudenslager, Professional Self Advocate, SAU1; Matt Smith, Self Advocate Peer Mentor

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

People with disabilities and families change systems every day by sharing their stories. In this opening keynote, Dr. Josie Badger will explore how lived experience, self-determination, and storytelling can turn challenges into action and hope, with practical tips for framing stories for providers, policymakers, and community partners. A panel of self-advocates will then share real examples of how using their voices has influenced services, policy, and community life. Together, this session highlights how individual stories, when shared collectively, can strengthen advocacy and help build Everyday Lives for Everyone.



- **Mindful Content Creation: Harnessing the Conversation for Good**

Presented by Imani Barbarin

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Social media platforms originally promised to bring the world together. While it is harder than ever to make connections in-person and online, it is still possible. Online communities are still flourishing, and it is possible to find unity and belonging which can turn into positive action. This session – part two of two sessions on making social media work for you – will provide examples of online community building, appropriate content creation, and tips for finding your voice and place in cyberspace.



- **Keep Your Medicaid: A Helpful Guide for ODP Participants**

Presented by Lynn Pascoa, Director of the Bureau of Supports for Autism and Special Populations (BSASP), Jenelle Oberholtzer, ODP Functional Architect, and Marcia Mikos, Office of Income Maintenance (OIM) Program Specialist

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM

In 2025, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), also known as H.R. 1, was passed. OBBBA is a federal law that changes what the County Assistance Offices (CAOs) must do to determine Medical Assistance, SNAP, and TANF eligibility. OBBBA may impact what the CAO is requesting from the individual and/or Representee Payee and how often the CAO is requesting documentation. In Pennsylvania, ODP waiver recipients must maintain Medicaid (called 'Medical Assistance' in Pennsylvania) eligibility to receive ODP services. In this session, we will walk families through the changes, expectations, and roles for you or your loved one to continue receiving vital ODP services.



- **Closing Keynote - All Of Us... All The Time**

Presented by Reverend Sally Jo Snyder, Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community  
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

In this closing call to action, participants will learn the “why”, the “how”, the “what” and the “who” of building coalitions, creating alliances and growing in community. Individuals and families who attend this session can expect to expand on this topic during the Post-Conference Workshop on Saturday, May 16.

## **Post-Conference Workshop for Individuals and Families**

### ***The Just-Us League***

May 16, 2026, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

This interactive session invites participants to join in conversations to help build community and find collective purpose.



- **Introduction: What is your ‘Why’?**

Led by Lisa Tesler, Executive Director, PA Developmental Disabilities Council; Matt Smith, SAU1 Power Coach; Sonny Callaghan, SAU1 Power Coach; Francine Hogan, Director, PA Family Network

Introductory remarks from Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, ODP  
9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

In this introductory session, we will discuss purpose and passion. The hosts will share why they work in the disability service and advocacy fields. Participants will be encouraged to share their purpose to help build connections and community.



- **No Cape Needed: Finding your Power**

Led by Reverend Sally Jo Snyder, Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community  
10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Led by EDL’s closing keynote speaker, Reverend Sally Jo Snyder, this session will explore finding sources for our individual power. Participants will break out into group discussion.



- **Even Supergirl Gets Rocks in Her Boots: Stronger Together**

Led by Reverend Sally Jo Snyder, Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community  
11:00 AM – 12 PM

In this closing session, we will talk about building networks of support in trusted communities to empower one another. Participants will break out into group discussion.

## Presenter Biographies

**Shawn Devon Aleong** is a talented and ambitious young African American man who lives with cerebral palsy. He is a human rights, disability rights, and civil rights advocate. Shawn is a self-proclaimed trend-setter and known for breaking down barriers and stereotypes that marginalize black males and individuals with disabilities. Shawn is currently a Legal Studies and a Finance student in the Fox School of Business where he is pursuing an undergraduate degree in Business Law and Finance with a minor in real estate. Shawn prides himself in being actively engaged both on and off campus. Shawn is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.

Shawn occupies his spare time by supporting off-campus activities of which one of his positions includes an appointed citizen member of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID) by the Biden administration. He also previously served an appointed role within the Office of the Mayor as a commissioner for the Philadelphia Police Advisory Commission. In addition, Shawn is a strong advocate for underserved minority populations and individuals with and without disabilities. Shawn enjoys traveling and has served as the keynote speaker for various conferences and organizations. He often travels to Harrisburg and Washington D.C. for speaking engagements and to promote discussions where he advocates for various underserved communities to U.S. Congressman, State Congressmen, and Legislators. Shawn has taken on public speaking opportunities where he has addressed the importance of the Able Act for Senator Bob Casey and spoke at a press conference for Senator Casey on Medicaid. Shawn has also had an opportunity to speak outside of the Supreme Court for Senator Casey to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act. During the summer months, Shawn interns at the Disability Rights of Pennsylvania, a law firm where he was recently promoted to be the 2023 legal undergraduate intern.



**Scott Bachik** is CEO & Co-founder of The BI Collaborative. Scott brings over 30 years of healthcare leadership experience, specializing in strategic planning, organizational performance improvement, and the design of Business Intelligence (BI) and Decision Intelligence systems. An accomplished entrepreneur and senior executive, he has led healthcare, IT, and consulting firms—consistently driving innovation through analytics and data-enabled decision-making. Scott has designed and implemented BI and Decision Intelligence solutions in more than 400 healthcare organizations nationwide, helping leadership teams improve performance outcomes and operational efficiency through actionable reporting and insights. As co-founder and leader of The BI Collaborative, Scott partners with Human Service and Behavioral Health providers to deliver tailored BI solutions that strengthen analytics capabilities and advance data-driven cultures. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Management from Carnegie Mellon University and a Master of Administrative Sciences, with a technology concentration, from Johns Hopkins University.



**Dr. Josie Badger** received her Bachelor's degree from Geneva College in Disability Law and Advocacy, a Master's from the University of Pittsburgh in Rehabilitation Counseling, and a Doctorate from Duquesne University in Healthcare Ethics. In 2012, Dr. Badger was crowned Ms. Wheelchair America. In 2014 Josie founded J Badger Consulting Inc. where she provides youth development and disability consulting services. She is the National Transition Director for SPAN Parent Advocacy Network, working with RAISE and the National Healthcare Transition Center for Youth with ID/DD. She is the lead Field Organizer and co-chair for the Family Care Act that supports paid family and medical leave, and is the developer of SAIL, a statewide advocacy and lobbying training program. She also works on the Beyond Diagnosis project. She serves on the ACHIEVA board. Josie also founded PEACOCK a nonprofit that will further support the needs of the disability community. Recently she was contracted by the FISA Foundation to lead their Health Care Access initiatives.



**Hela Baer, LCSW, E-RYT, C-NIT** (she/they) is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker specializing in trauma-informed, relational therapy that integrates mindfulness, body-based practices, and human-animal-nature connection. Using an LGBTQIA+ celebratory and neuro-affirming approach, Hela works with teens and adults who want to better understand themselves, process trauma and loss, alleviate symptoms of anxiety and/or depression, manage stressors with more ease, heal relational wounds, and cultivate meaning and joy in everyday life. Hela currently works as a psychotherapist at Alexandria Place Therapy and Cloverleaf Equine Center, and as a consultant and facilitator in intercultural, educational, and therapeutic settings.



**Imani Barbarin** is a disability rights and inclusion activist and speaker who uses her voice and social media platforms to create conversations engaging the disability community. Born with cerebral palsy, Imani often writes and uses her platform to speak from the perspective of a disabled black woman. In the last few years, she has created over a dozen trending hashtags that allow disabled folk the opportunity to have their perspectives heard while forcing the world to take notice. #PatientsAreNotFaking, #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow, #AbledsAreWeird and others each provide a window into disabled life while forming community. Imani is from the Philadelphia area and holds a Masters in Global Communications from the American University of Paris, her published works include those in Forbes, Rewire, Healthline, BitchMedia and more. She runs the blog CrutchesAndSpice.com and a podcast of the same name.

**Ellen A. Black**, MSW, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker with over 38 years of experience supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities and co-occurring mental health diagnoses. She brings a deeply trauma-informed, person-centered, and strengths-based approach to both psychotherapy and behavioral supports, with a longstanding commitment to self-determination, community inclusion, and healing. Ellen has worked across a wide range of settings, including private practice, outpatient mental health services, behavior support within the Office of Developmental Programs system, and person-centered planning and supervision. She is trained in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Internal Family Systems (IFS), and is especially known for her thoughtful integration of best practices with real-world, relational work with individuals and teams. In addition to her clinical and systems-level expertise, Ellen is a passionate advocate for ethical, humane, and collaborative services for dually diagnosed individuals and their families. Outside of her professional work, Ellen enjoys kayaking, hiking, and spending time outdoors walking her dog—activities that help keep her grounded, curious, and connected.

**Lynn A. Haller**, MSW, LCSW, is a trauma-informed psychotherapist, behavior specialist, educator, and author based in Pennsylvania. Lynn has worked within Pennsylvania’s Intellectual Disability system since 2010, serving in multiple roles including Direct Support Professional, Supports Coordinator, Supports Broker, and Behavior Specialist. This diverse systems experience allows her to bridge clinical insight with real-world application, supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in ways that honor autonomy, dignity, and nervous system safety. Her professional path began in the juvenile justice system, where she provided counseling and crisis intervention to incarcerated youth and their families. It was there she witnessed the power of storytelling firsthand, creating an award-winning newsletter with teens that used writing, photography, and journalism to help young people reclaim their voices. Lynn holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Pennsylvania. Since 2018, she has maintained a private practice specializing in complex trauma. She has trained in Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy, a framework that recognizes we all have parts inside us, each with its own job and story. She is the author of the upcoming book *The Hallway of Doorknobs: A Journey to the Feelings Inside*, which explores the protective parts we all carry and resonates with readers of all ages.

**Joe Chandler** has spoken up for himself for many years. Joe has dual diagnosis and has helped people understand what that is like. He joined Self Advocates United as 1 in 2019, and has helped people learn about being a volunteer, how to speak up, and about their rights. He’s been a guest speaker for the last 3 years for the Capacity Building Institute to help professionals from the intellectual disabilities and mental health communities learn how to better support people with dual diagnosis. He has used what he’s learned through SAU1 to speak up with his provider and have his rights respected.



**Robin Christopherson MBE** - Recognised as a leading expert on accessibility and digital inclusion, Robin Christopherson MBE of UK tech charity AbilityNet is a global speaker on the power and potential of technology to transform people's lives. Being blind himself, he is a passionate supporter of products that are inclusive and also easier to use by all.

A founding member of AbilityNet - an organisation that specialises in advising companies and individuals on digital accessibility - Robin is also very active in advocacy and policy, advising the government's committees on Disability and Assistive Technology.

Robin was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Suffolk, was named in the 2020 'Power 100' list of most influential people with disabilities in the UK, as well as in the 2019 WHO list of the 'World's 100 Most Influential People in Digital Government'. He was also fortunate to receive a medal from His Royal Highness Prince William in 2017 and is now a Member of the Order of the British Empire' (MBE) for his services to digital inclusion.

Robin also has extensive experience as a judge in several notable awards - including the Digital Leaders 100, the Tech4 Good Awards and the Global Mobile Awards at Mobile World Congress.

**Andrea Consigny** is the Division Director of Employment Services and Community Connections and leads People First Technology at SPIN. She holds a master's degree in educational leadership and CESP and ACRE certifications and serves on the PA APSE board.

**Craig Douglass** is the Chief Administrative Officer at Arc Human Services, a Pennsylvania organization that supports people with intellectual disabilities and autism. He started his career as a direct support professional and has more than 25 years of experience working alongside people with complex needs, including those with dual diagnoses. Today, Craig focuses on helping organizations connect their operations, technology, and strategy so they can provide high-quality, sustainable services. He leads Arc's Smart Living work, which uses everyday and assistive technology to support people in building skills, increasing independence, and having more control over their lives. Craig cares deeply about helping communities think differently about support, focusing on what's possible and making sure people have access to tools and solutions that truly fit their lives.

**Travis Fiem** is an Enabling Technology Implementation Specialist at Arc Human Services, bringing hands-on expertise to the design, deployment, and training of smart home and assistive technologies that support independence, safety, and self-direction in everyday life. With more than a decade of experience in the intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism field, Travis works at the intersection of direct support, technology, and systems innovation. His work includes integrating AT with electronic health records, leading pilot initiatives that explore the use of robotics in direct care, and implementing the rollout of medication dispensing technologies to improve safety and promote greater independence in medication management. Travis is known for his practical, person-centered approach and his ability to translate emerging technologies into meaningful, real-world supports aligned with individual goals and organizational operations.

**Lynn A. Haller, MSW, LCSW**, is a trauma-informed psychotherapist, behavior specialist, educator, and author based in Pennsylvania.

Lynn has worked within Pennsylvania's Intellectual Disability system since 2010, serving in multiple roles including Direct Support Professional, Supports Coordinator, Supports Broker, and Behavior Specialist. This diverse systems experience allows her to bridge clinical insight with real-world application, supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in ways that honor autonomy, dignity, and nervous system safety.

Her professional path began in the juvenile justice system, where she provided counseling and crisis intervention to incarcerated youth and their families. It was there she witnessed the power of storytelling firsthand, creating an award-winning newsletter with teens that used writing, photography, and journalism to help young people reclaim their voices.

Lynn holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Pennsylvania. Since 2018, she has maintained a private practice specializing in complex trauma. She has trained in Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy, a framework that recognizes we all have parts inside us, each with its own job and story. She is the author of the upcoming book *The Hallway of Doorknobs: A Journey to the Feelings Inside*, which explores the protective parts we all carry and resonates with readers of all ages.



**Dr. Keely Hirsch** is a licensed psychologist who has been working with Autism and the neurodivergent community for the past 15 years. Dr. Hirsch is a clinical psychologist within the Division of Autism Services at Penn State Health in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health. She is also an assistant professor with the Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey. In her role as a psychologist, she conducts Autism diagnostic evaluations to individuals across the lifespan and provides psychotherapy to adolescents and adults with Autism and co-occurring mental health disorders. As an assistant professor, she

supervises and teaches medical students, psychology doctoral interns, and psychiatry medical residents and fellows. Lastly, in addition to her clinical work and teaching, part of her time is funded by the Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT) grant, where she provides training and workshops related to Autism across the state of Pennsylvania and is conducting research to improve therapy services for Autistic individuals.



**Rebecca Knowles**, OTD, OTR, RYT is an occupational therapist and yoga instructor specializing in sensory processing and mental health. She is a clinical leader with diverse experience across the lifespan and continuum of care, including work in hospitals, schools, and community settings. She has lectured in clinical graduate programs, authored publications, and spoken at conferences around the world on sensory processing differences in mental health populations and addiction treatment. Through a strengths-based, trauma-informed lens, Rebecca is passionate about changing the paradigm in

healthcare delivery to be more human-centered, holistic, and effective not only at reducing symptoms, but promoting health and wellbeing.

**Gretchen Laudenslager** has been speaking up for herself all her life! She got a job with Self Advocates United as 1 as a Power Coach in 2017. Since then, she has engaged thousands of people with disabilities through her work, and she is a leader for self advocacy on many workgroups, committees, and advisory boards. She is also a yoga instructor and live a full life in my community.



**Michelle Maikoetter**, MA, NCC, LPC-S - Michelle Maikoetter's lifelong interest in helping others led her to become one of the foremost trauma-informed professional childcare specialists in the United States. Ms Maikoetter's professional experience includes working in domestic violence/sexual assault, after school programming, wilderness programming, juvenile justice and residential, educational, and community-based settings. From 2007-2024, Ms. Maikoetter led the transformation of Cal Farley's Boys Ranch in (a large residential facility in Texas) from a behavioral modification program into a trauma-

informed, healing community. Through training with Dr. Bruce Perry in his Neurosequential Model, Ms. Maikoetter became a certified clinician, trainer and mentor. She was among the first Child Trauma Academy Fellows selected by Dr. Perry in 2012 and led Boys Ranch to becoming a Phase II certified facility. For the last 15 years, Ms Maikoetter has worked collaboratively with the Neurosequential Network to distill the clinical concepts of the Model into applicable, actionable and understandable terms in order for those working and living with children in their shared life space to make the biggest impact.



**Derek Mueller** serves as the Cyber Security Advisor, Cyber State Coordinator for Pennsylvania at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), where he leads the effort to protect and advance the resilience of the nation's cyber infrastructure within the critical infrastructure while working with federal, state, local, and other stakeholders to maximize collaboration and minimize risk on matters of homeland security or emergency management.

**Amy Nieves** serves as the Public Affairs Specialist in the Office of Executive Director at the United States Access Board. She is a nationally recognized facilitator, keynote speaker, and community leader, dedicated to advancing accessibility. In 2024, Government Technology recognized her as one of the Top 25 Doers, Dreamers & Drivers, celebrating her transformative leadership in government and technology. Prior to her appointment to the Access Board, Nieves served as the Executive Director of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities in the City of Philadelphia, where she spearheaded initiatives to enhance accessibility. She is also a Governor-appointed Council Member of the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council, advocating for policies that empower disabled communities. Nieves holds a bachelor's degree from York College of Pennsylvania, a master's degree in human relations from the University of Oklahoma, and an advanced graduate studies degree from Eastern University. She is a PhD Candidate at Eastern University focusing her research on disabled leadership in public service.



**Diana Petschauer, ATP** - Diana is a seasoned Assistive Technology Professional (ATP) and Technology Integration Specialist with over 25 years of dedicated experience advancing assistive technology integration and service provision across the lifespan, in diverse environments—including the workplace, community, residential and independent living settings, education, and the home. Throughout her career, Diana has led innovative technology initiatives that foster independence, inclusion, and accessibility. She has contributed her expertise on numerous boards and industry committees and is recognized as both a national and local speaker and presenter. Diana is an ATP at Arc Human Services' Smart Living-Assistive & Enabling Technology program, and along with her team of colleagues, provides AT services statewide, including assessments, consultation, training, implementation, workshops and webinars for all individuals and stakeholders.

**Erin Sass** is a provider educator at Acentra Health Southwestern PA Health Care Quality Unit (HCQU). She has been providing education to providers and self-advocates for over 20 years on topics including Positive Approaches, mental illnesses, Trauma-Informed Care, and Sexuality.



**Bob Sattler** is a Partner with Support Development Associates and for over the past 40 years his career has focused on building person centered community supports. He began his career as a direct support professional and early on redesigned residential programs for fewer people to live together. His career has allowed him to gain first-hand experience ranging from creating supported employment programs as options to sheltered work, coordinating supports as a case manager, and focusing on administrative and executive roles at the county and state level. This eventually led to establishing a service agency to support people with co-occurring developmental disabilities and behavioral health labels to demonstrate how person centered practices could truly be provided within traditional structures and practices. Mr. Sattler's work has provided him unique opportunities to work and train in partnership with professionals from the fields of mental health, law enforcement and criminal justice, aging, vocational rehabilitation and state operated services to better support people with complex support needs. He currently consults internationally to help people realize their autonomy and move to more community integrated settings by assisting systems and organizations in creating sustainable person centered systems and processes.

Mr. Sattler is a Person Centered Thinking, People Planning Together and Person Centered Plan Facilitation Mentor Trainer through the Learning Community for Person Centered Practices and a Charting the LifeCourse Ambassador.

**Laura Silsby** is the Division Director of Community Participation Supports at SPIN. She holds a master's degree in education specializing in Special Education and leads a team that supports over 300 people to live a life of possibilities through community engagement.

**Matt Smith**, Self Advocate peer mentor/leader (SAU1 Power Coach) – Matt Smith is from Greenville, Pennsylvania. He is a Lead Power Coach at Self Advocates United as 1. Matt speaks to individuals with disabilities across the state, educating and empowering them to get more choice and control in their lives and engage in self advocacy. Matt is passionate about disability advocacy, and enjoys spending time with his cat.



**The Reverend Sally Jo Snyder** is an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. Currently she is the interim pastor at Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community in the Hazelwood neighborhood of Pittsburgh. Snyder answers and lives her calling through a social justice lens. A community organizer for over 28 years she has directed campaigns on local, state, regional and national efforts on issues including economic justice, public education reform, children, race, the inclusion and rights of the LGBTQ community, public education reform and the health, wellness and inclusion of persons with disabilities. She has founded social justice initiatives and ministries and served on regional and national boards. As a parishioner had told her, “Honey, stir it up!” Snyder is a published writer, a gifted communicator and a frequent speaker at rallies, public forums and a guest lecturer. Sally Jo is a YINZER by birth and wisdom, a loyal Pittsburgh Pirates fan, a lifelong member of Steelers Nation, believes Mister Rogers is a saint in a cardigan and that community is all of us in lived reality and effective advocacy.



**Shea Tanis, PhD**, is currently an Associate Research Professor at the Kansas University Center on Disabilities, Life Span Institute, University of Kansas. She has published articles and investigated the definition of intellectual disability, the measurement of adaptive behavior and support need, the construct of self-determination, accessible data visualizations, cognitively accessible technology solutions, federally funded supports and services for people with IDD and their families, and self-directed employment strategies. She is nationally recognized for her expertise on the Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access, which includes national data collection on technology use and barriers for people with disabilities, technology-related policy, innovative technology solutions for community living, data agency, and the development of the Technology First Systems Change model. Dr. Tanis also serves as Principal Investigator for the State of the States in Developmental Disabilities Ongoing Longitudinal Data Project of National Significance (PNS) authorized by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act) and overseen by the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For over 40 years, the project has investigated determinants of public spending for Intellectual and Developmental Disability Services and Supports in the United States. The project reveals the impact of federal, state, and local government fiscal policy over time. Dr. Tanis has been involved with The State of the States in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities project since 2011.

**Robert Zotynia** is a 39-year-old artist, self-advocate, and change-maker. Robert was born with cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, communication challenges, and a visual impairment, but he never let these labels define him. He was educated in an inclusive classroom and was the first person in his school district with significant disabilities to graduate in cap-and gown alongside his peers. He is employed by Self Advocates United as 1 (SAU1) as a Power Coach and Values Into Action as a self-advocate advisor. He is a member of Values Into Action’s True Friendships Project team and previously chaired the Person Directed Housing Project Advisory Committee. Robert uses the Participant Directed Services model to manage his paid supports with the assistance of a Supports Broker. He uses a variety of technology for mobility, communication, and to enhance his independence. Robert is a member of The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports, The Arc, and holds a certificate of completion from Amnesty International in Human Rights: The Right to Freedom of Expression.

*The 2026 Everyday Lives Conference Steering Committee  
is comprised of ODP stakeholders and staff including:*

<i>Kristin Ahrens</i>	<i>Sally Gould-Taylor</i>	<i>Emily Saich</i>
<i>Amy Alford</i>	<i>Francine Hogan</i>	<i>Devon Speelman</i>
<i>Shauna Blee</i>	<i>Lauren House</i>	<i>Lisa Tesler</i>
<i>Jamie Bonser</i>	<i>TaWanda Jackson</i>	<i>Dana Thompson</i>
<i>Christine Breakstone</i>	<i>Malobika Khanra</i>	<i>Alicia Torres</i>
<i>Sonny Callahan</i>	<i>Andrea Layton</i>	<i>Catherine Traini</i>
<i>Gregory Cherpes</i>	<i>Lori Milcic</i>	<i>Rochelle Troutman</i>
<i>Thomas Flynn</i>	<i>Dan Miller</i>	<i>Candida Walton</i>
<i>Alexander Gawn</i>	<i>Julie Mochon</i>	<i>Jeremy Yale</i>
<i>Rhonda Gengler</i>	<i>Lynn Pascoa</i>	<i>Shannon Rico</i>
<i>Katrina Harris</i>	<i>Lea Sheffield</i>	<i>Matt Smith</i>

*ODP thanks the EDL Steering Committee, the event presenters, and all attendees for participating in the Everyday Lives 2026 Conference!*

