

Conference Speakers



Emily Cason

Emily Lazenby Cason, LICSW, is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and founder of Cason Counseling and Consulting, LLC. With more than 15 years of experience in medical, hospice, behavioral health, and community settings, she provides individual and couples therapy and delivers trainings on stress management, resilience, and workplace well being. She also teaches graduate social work courses at National University and Western New Mexico University, equipping individuals and organizations with practical tools for emotional wellness.



Heather Cole

Dr. Heather S. Cole is the Assistant Dean of Simulation at the University of Alabama Capstone College of Nursing. A certified healthcare simulation educator and nurse scientist, her work centers on growth mindset, resilience, and innovative learning strategies. She leads initiatives integrating psychological safety, competency-based learning, and AI enhanced simulation to strengthen healthcare teams. A national presenter and published scholar, she promotes evidence based approaches that support adaptability, well being, and readiness to practice.



Camille Cumuze

Camille Cumuze, M.S., is a Montgomery native with bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from Auburn University and Auburn University Montgomery. Her early clinical work included research roles and experiential training with Head Start and the Mt. Meigs program. Before joining the Alabama Division of Developmental Disabilities, she spent 14 years in private practice focusing on evaluation and treatment planning. At ADMH Division of Developmental Disabilities, she has served as Psychological and Behavioral Evaluator, Director of Community Programs, and now Associate Commissioner.

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Steve Davis

Steve Davis is a 50 year employee of Alabama DMH and has served as Departmental Historian since 2008. His previous roles include Assistant and Acting HR Director at Bryce Hospital, HR Director at Taylor Hardin, and Director of Public Relations, among others. He is active in multiple historical and mental health organizations and has received NAMI's 2009 Media Award and 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award. He was also featured in Tuscaloosa Magazine as one of the city's most intriguing individuals.



Jennifer Doty

Jennifer Doty, MS, LMFT, ICADC, is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and clinical leader specializing in trauma informed systems, substance use treatment, and workforce resilience. She is the founder of Gold Stars & Grace, LLC, and Executive Director of Fire Within Therapy, Inc. With extensive public sector and community mental health experience, she integrates trauma theory, Motivational Interviewing, cognitive behavioral approaches, and leadership strategies. She is also an educator and consultant known for translating research into practical, actionable guidance.



Kacie Duncan

Dr. Kacie Duncan is an Assistant Professor and critical care specialist with expertise in resilience, team communication, and professional development in high acuity healthcare settings. Her work focuses on strengthening team dynamics, promoting adaptability, and supporting well being among healthcare professionals. She brings extensive clinical and academic experience to her teaching and presentations, providing practical tools that help teams collaborate effectively and thrive in demanding environments.

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Tyseha Durr

Tysesha Durr is a licensed professional counselor and the State Reflective Practice Coordinator for the Alabama Department of Mental Health. She specializes in relationship based, trauma informed care for infants, young children, and families. Trained in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and Child Parent Psychotherapy, she was among Alabama's first clinicians qualified to provide CPP. She holds the F5A Clinical Mentor Endorsement and provides reflective supervision and statewide training on trauma informed, relationship centered practice.



Kim Hammack

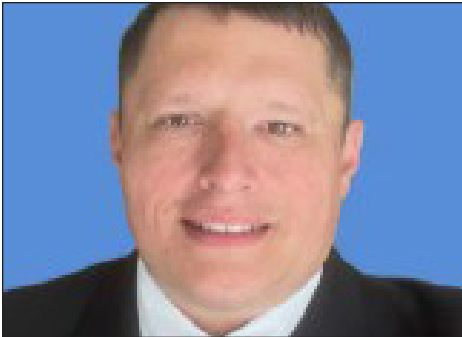
Kim Hammack, Director of Mental Illness Community Programs, has 32 years of experience serving individuals with mental health needs, including 24 years with ADMH. She oversees planning and program development for adults with serious mental illness, Medicaid liaison work, community service contracts, and coordination with families, providers, and state partners. She also develops and monitors the Mental Health Services Block Grant. Kim holds a master's degree in counseling and psychology from Troy University.



Kristen Henderson

Kristen Henderson, Benefit Advisor with the State Employees Insurance Board. Kristen has been with SEIB for 2 years as a benefit advisor.





Isaiah Hileman

Isaiah Hileman is a Retirement Plan Advisor for Empower, providing on site and virtual enrollment support and Retirement Readiness Reviews for employees across 22 central Alabama counties. He joined Empower in 2023 and holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Phoenix. Isaiah maintains the FINRA Series 6 registration and holds Series 63 and 65 state securities licenses.



Beverly Johnson

Beverly Johnson, Director of Child & Family Services, has 30 years of experience supporting children and families across behavioral health, military, juvenile justice, and child welfare systems. With 22 years at ADMH and prior work with a certified provider, she brings a strong service and policy perspective. She also studied prevention science and serves on CADCA's Coalition Advisory Committee, contributing to national efforts that strengthen community well being.



Brooke Phillips

Brooke Phillips holds a master's degree in Community Mental Health Counseling from UAB and is a Licensed Professional Counselor and National Certified Counselor. She has served as a Program Manager and Mental Health Specialist in ADMH's Office of Substance Use Treatment Services since 2019 and became Women's Services Coordinator in 2020. She oversees coordination and clinical monitoring of state funded substance use treatment services for women, pregnant and postpartum women, women with children, and other adult populations.



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Carolyn Pickett

Carolyn Pickett, LMSW, is the Clinical Manager for Therapeutic Services at Gateway, a nonprofit serving Alabama children and families since 1891. With over a decade of experience supporting trauma impacted youth and families, she leads Gateway's Trauma Systems Therapy implementation, including program development, staff training, and cross system collaboration. Her work focuses on translating trauma science into practical, sustainable treatment, and she regularly trains professionals in behavioral health, child welfare, and education statewide.



Joe Rittner

Joe Rittner serves as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer for the Alabama Department of Mental Health's Office of Law Enforcement Services. He has 33 years of experience in law enforcement, including 20 years with ADMH, where he has worked as a Special Agent I and Special Agent III.



Cindy Shrum

Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass but learning to dance in the rain—a lesson Cindy embraced growing up on a Tuscaloosa farm. Her path led from nursing school to discovering a talent for computers, earning degrees in Business Management, Computer Science, and later an MPA/MIS from Troy University. She found a passion for teaching while working at Bryce Hospital and later taught at Shelton State and UA. She now serves as Deputy CIO for the Alabama Department of Mental Health and still loves traveling, gardening, genealogy, antiques—and dancing in the rain.





Sounds of Joy

The Sounds of Joy choir, founded in 1998, has been a beloved part of the West Alabama community for more than 27 years. Under Vickie Brown's direction since 2014, the choir has expanded its reach with weekly performances and appearances at events such as the Special Olympics and the Statehouse in Montgomery. Their joyful music is especially popular during the Christmas season, making them a cherished and enduring musical presence across the region.



Brandy Sponsler

Brandy Sponsler has 26 years of HR experience with the State of Alabama working at State Personnel, Alabama Forestry Commission and the Examiners of Public Accounts. She possesses MBA and a BS in Human Resources from Auburn University.



Zynnica Zafra

Dr. Zafra is the Clinical Director of the Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center, a 96 bed geriatric psychiatric hospital within the Alabama Department of Mental Health. She has worked with ADMH since 1999, bringing extensive clinical leadership to the facility. In her spare time, Dr. Zafra enjoys playing golf, traveling, and cheering for Alabama football.