

VitAL Annual Conference

Care Across the Continuum

Tuscaloosa, AL - Bryant Conference Center

August 20-21, 2026



Thursday, August 20 Agenda

7:45 a.m.

Check-in/Breakfast

Room: Sellers Foyer

8:45 a.m.

Welcome & Announcements

Room: Sellers Auditorium

Plenary Sessions

9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

Room: Sellers Auditorium

Substance Use in the United States: Lessons We Need to Learn from the World

Dr. Lipi Roy

10:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Break

10:30 a.m. - 11:45 p.m.

Room: Sellers Auditorium

Community as the 8th C: Expanding the 7Cs Framework for Youth Prevention

Sarah Behm Guillén & Brian Maus

11:45 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Lunch

Room: Sellers Foyer

Breakout Session 1

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Cultivating a New Recovery Ecosystem in Alabama

Room: Central

From Exposure to Growth: Understanding and Supporting Posttraumatic Growth in

Firefighters Across the Care Continuum

Room: Mobile

From Stigma to Support: The Neuroscience of Change in Substance-Involved Clients

Room: Rast B

Meeting Student Mental Health Needs Across the Continuum:

A School Social Work Approach

Room: Rast A

Lived Experience, Lasting Change: The Impact of Certified Recovery Support Specialists

on Behavioral Health Outcomes in Alabama

Room: Birmingham

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Thursday, August 20 Agenda cont.

Strengthening Maternal Care Across the Continuum Through Cross-Sector

Collaboration in Rural Communities

Room: Mason

Understanding and Supporting Families Through Perinatal Loss

Room: Lackey

2:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

Break

Breakout Session 2

2:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Break the Cycle of Stress

Room: Central

Difficult-to-Treat Anxiety: Neuropsychiatric Evaluation and Treatment with Focus

on Brain Care Across the Continuum

Room: Birmingham

How Can I Help You? Navigating Ethical Challenges and Strategies When Working with

Complex Client Needs, Motivations, and Outcomes

Room: Rast B

Private Practice Preparation as a Behavioral Health Workforce Solution to Expanding

Access to Care in Alabama: Ethical, Operational, & Financial Lessons

Room: Lackey

Saving Lives, Strengthening Voices: Integrating Civic Engagement for

Successful Reentry and Recovery

Room: Rast A

Strategies for FASD Prevention, Intervention, and Care

Room: Mobile

When Care Doesn't Translate: Recognizing Neurodivergent Patterns of

Connection in Clinical Practice

Room: Mason

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7:45 a.m.	Check-in/Breakfast	Room: Sellers Foyer
8:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Welcome & Announcements	Room: Sellers Auditorium
	<u>Plenary Sessions</u>	
9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.		Room: Sellers Auditorium
	<i>Scars That Speak: My Journey Through Loss, Hope, and Purpose</i>	
	Brendan McDonough	
10:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Break	
10:30 a.m. - 11:45 p.m.		Room: Sellers Auditorium
	<i>Evidence-Based Practices Across the Continuum of Care for Medication for Opioid Use Disorder</i>	
	Saurabh Bipin Bhardwaj, MD, FAPA, DFASAM	
	* Sponsored by the Opioid Response Network (ORN)	
11:45 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Lunch	Room: Sellers Foyer
12:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.		Room: Sellers Auditorium
	<i>Beyond Fentanyl: The New Era of Adulterated Street Opioids</i>	
	Brent Boyett, DMD, DO, DFASAM	
1:45 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.		Room: Sellers Auditorium
	<i>Connect Alabama: Bridging Care Across the Continuum</i>	
	Ellen Robertson, PhD, MCHES	
	<u>Breakout Session 3</u>	
2:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.		
	<i>Addressing the Problem Before It's a Problem: Proactively Mitigating Behaviors in Autism Spaces</i>	Room: Mason
	<i>Empowering Leadership from Within: Supporting Families, Youth, and Communities Through Stress and Resilience</i>	Room: Central

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Enhancing Recovery, Rehabilitation, & Reentry: The Role of Certified Recovery Support

Services in Court Diversion Programs

Room: Birmingham

Every Step: Building a Compassionate, Stigma-Reducing System of Behavioral Health

Care for Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals in Alabama

Room: Lackey

I'm Ready! Now What? Accessing Substance Use Treatment: Where to Start When

You're Ready for Help

Room: Rast B

Invisible Wounds Beyond Trauma: Recognizing and Treating Moral Injury in First Responders,

Veterans, and Helping Professionals

Room: Rast A

Perimenopause, Hormonal Shifts, and Addiction Risk:

What Clinicians Need to Know

Room: Mobile