



Counseling Connections Spring 2026

Beyond Competence: Responding to a Changing Profession



Friday, March 27, 2026
8:00 am - 4:15 pm



Courtyard by Marriott
in Cromwell, CT

In an ever-changing world, counselors are called to move beyond mere competence. This conference responds by taking a reflective, interactive approach to professional development, equipping counselors to engage in context-aware, liberation-oriented, ethically innovative, and culturally responsive practices. Participants will leave ready to strengthen their clinical work while sustaining themselves in the profession.

Earn up to 5.5 continuing education clock hours!

- Education Sessions
- In-Person Networking
- Division Updates
- Poster Presentations
- Hot Executive Meals
- Exhibitors & Sponsors

Are You a Student Member?

Apply for a [Student Scholarship](#) to help defray the cost of attendance!

Not a CCA Member?

[Join today](#) and take advantage of the best rates to attend the conference!



Conference Agenda

7:30 am – 8:00 am	Registration Opens & Hot Executive Breakfast
8:00 am – 8:15 am	Opening Remarks
8:15 am – 9:45 am	Complex Connection Between Trauma and Addiction and How It Affects the Brain (1.5 hours)
9:45 am – 10:30 am	Conference Exhibitors/Sponsors & Poster Presentations
10:30 am – 12:00 pm	Beyond Multicultural Competence: Toward a Liberation-Oriented Counseling Practice (1.5 hours)
12:00 pm – 12:30 pm	Division Meetings (CACES/CMHCA)
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Hot Executive Lunch, Division/Committee Updates, & Awards
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	AI and Counseling: What We Need to Know (1.5 hours)
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	Break & Dessert
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm	Practicing What We Preach: Creating Balance in Clinical Work (1 hour)

**Schedule is subject to change.*

Continuing Education Information

Connecticut Counseling Association has been approved by NBCC as an approved Continuing Education Provider, ACEP No.2007. Programs that do not qualify for NBCC credit are clearly identified. Connecticut Counseling Association is solely responsible for all aspects of the programs. (Policy J.4)

Up to 5.5 clock hours of continuing education may be earned.

Clock hours are awarded for sessions attended in full, documented with confirmed attendance at the start and end of the session and submission of a completed evaluation form.

No exceptions will be made.



1. Sign in **and** out for **each** session attended. Please **print** your name **clearly** (no signatures).
2. Complete the electronic evaluation for **each** session attended by the deadline.
3. CCA will email certificates within 1 month of the event (check spam/junk mail).

Session Information

Complex Connection Between Trauma and Addiction and How It Affects the Brain

This workshop examines the intersection of trauma and addiction, exploring their biological impact on the brain and behavior. Participants learn trauma-informed care principles, history taking, and treatment planning. Emphasis is placed on early recovery challenges, coping strategies, and compassionate, context-aware clinical practices that support resilience, healing, and sustained recovery outcomes. Learning objectives: (1) describe how trauma is connected to the vulnerability for addictions; (2) identify and describe how to provide trauma informed care; and (3) identify and describe how the brain changes with trauma and addiction, and how to improve those changes in recovery.

Sarah Osborne, LPC, LADC, NCC, is a compassionate counselor specializing in addiction, complex trauma, and dissociation. She is a Certified EMDR Therapist, EMDRIA Approved Consultant and Advanced Credit Provider, and HAP Accredited Facilitator. With over 10 years of EMDR experience across community mental health and addiction treatment settings, Sarah is dedicated to integrating trauma-informed EMDR into addiction care. She provides EMDR consultation, advanced trainings, and community presentations, supports local EMDR clinicians, and collaborates with a trauma response team to support first responders.

Beyond Multicultural Competence: Toward a Liberation-Oriented Counseling Practice

Multicultural competence has long served as a foundational ethical framework in counseling. Yet competence alone does not fully address the power, systems, and lived realities that shape clients' lives and clinical outcomes. This presentation invites counselors to move beyond competence toward a liberation-oriented approach that reshapes how we understand identity, diagnosis, assessment, ethics, human development, helping relationships, and advocacy across all aspects of counseling. Participants will explore how liberation shifts the counselor's orientation from knowing to unlearning, from neutrality to accountability, and from individual change to systemic awareness. Through reflection and applied examples, this interactive session examines how liberation-oriented counseling deepens therapeutic presence, disrupts harm, and fosters more authentic, ethical, and transformative client outcomes.

River Ginicola, Ph.D., LPC | Cheri Smith, Ph.D., NCC | Uchenna Nwachuku, Ph.D., LPC: The presenters are graduate Clinical Mental Health Counseling faculty at Southern Connecticut State University who have infused liberation-oriented frameworks across the curriculum. As seasoned counselors, educators, and supervisors, they bring diverse identities, clinical experience, and lived realities to their work. Liberation is not only taught, but actively practiced within their professional, educational, and personal lives.

AI and Counseling: What We Need to Know

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is creeping into every aspect of our lives, including the counseling profession. But what is AI? This beginner-friendly, interactive presentation is designed specifically for counseling professionals. It assumes no technical background and focuses on ethics, practice impact, client safety, and professional identity. Using clear, plain language, the session explores what AI is, how it is already influencing counseling and psychology, and what counselors must consider ethically and professionally. Participants examine real-world practice implications, learn to evaluate AI tools from a counselor perspective, and build confidence discussing AI questions and concerns with clients in modern clinical settings.

Brigid Carney, MS, LPC, MBA, is a PhD candidate and a seasoned international insurance leader with over 20 years of experience in health care. She focuses her private practice on care for first responders and veterans. Carney is an adjunct psychology professor at two local universities.

Practicing What We Preach: Creating Balance in Clinical Work

The session will explore work life balance as an ethical, cultural, and professional imperative for mental health providers. Grounded in social and cultural foundations and counselor identity development, the presentation integrates current research on burnout, compassion fatigue, and sustainability in practice. Participants will examine how systemic factors, cultural expectations, and professional norms shape balance and well-being. Evidence-based techniques including boundary setting, values clarification, and reflective practice will be introduced, along with practical resources for individual and organizational support. Clinicians will leave with research-informed strategies to support sustainable, culturally responsive professional lives.

Sarah Biniasz, LPC and **Jeff Harris, LPC** are Licensed Professional Counselors working in both educational and clinical settings. Together, they bring over 20 years of experience in the helping professions. They are passionate about sustainability and work-life balance, believing these practices foster more attuned, effective therapists.

Conference Registration

<https://www.ccacounseling.com/conference.html>

Registration Type	Ticket
Professional Member	\$90
Professional Non-Member	\$135
Student/Retiree Member	\$50
Student/Retiree Non-Member	\$70

Come Ready to Win Prizes at the Graduate Student Scholarship Raffle!

All proceeds go to a dedicated fund that helps defray conference costs for students.

Bring cash or credit card for tickets.

Cancellation Policy

All requests for refunds must be made in writing through email. Written notice of cancellation received by email or mail sent via email by **March 19, 2026** will be issued a full refund. Any written notice of cancellation received by email after March 19, 2026 will be refunded 33% of the original payment.

All requests should be directed to cca_exec_dir@msn.com. Transfer of registration to another individual may be done at any time without a fee.

Questions or Needs

All requests related to dietary, ADA, or any other needs should be directed to CCA:

Connecticut Counseling Association

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1-888-818-1110

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www.CCAcounseling.com