

*Practice and Research Initiatives at Eastern State Hospital (PRISE)*

# DISCOVERING UNIQUE APPROACHES TO INTEGRATED CARE



**March 12, 2026    9:00 AM- 3:30PM**  
**Virtual or In Person**

**Eastern State Hospital**  
MANAGED BY UK HEALTHCARE

## Practice and Research Initiatives Showcase at ESH

# AGENDA

## MARCH 12, 2026

|                 |                                           |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>8:30 AM</b>  | <b>Registration</b>                       |
| <b>9:00 AM</b>  | <b>Welcome: Zim Okoli, PhD</b>            |
| <b>9:15 AM</b>  | <b>Guest Speaker: Allen Brenzel, MD</b>   |
| <b>9:45 AM</b>  | <b>Keynote: Shannon Sauer-Zavala, PhD</b> |
| <b>10:45 AM</b> | <b>Break</b>                              |
| <b>11:00 AM</b> | <b>Research Presentations</b>             |
| <b>12:00 PM</b> | <b>Lunch and Networking</b>               |
| <b>12:35 PM</b> | <b>Posters</b>                            |
| <b>1:00 PM</b>  | <b>Keynote: Julie Cerel, PhD</b>          |
| <b>2:00 PM</b>  | <b>Break</b>                              |
| <b>2:05 PM</b>  | <b>Research Presentations</b>             |
| <b>3:20 PM</b>  | <b>Research Awards and Wrap Up</b>        |



# WELCOME

Welcome to this year's Practice and Research Initiatives Showcase at ESH (PRISE) Day at Eastern State Hospital! On behalf of the Eastern State Hospital Research Council, it is an honor to welcome each of you.

Today is an opportunity to reflect on our unwavering commitment to providing the best care for every individual who walks through our doors. Over the years, ESH has grown and evolved, but our mission remains the same—ensuring excellence in mental health care through innovation, collaboration, and dedication. In 2021, ESH became the first state psychiatric hospital to achieve Magnet status, the gold standard for nursing excellence. But beyond our nurses, we have a multi-disciplinary team of professionals who embody this same commitment to excellence in patient care, safety, and staff well-being.

Our theme this year, *Discovering Unique Approaches to Integrated Care*, speaks to one of the most pressing challenges in our field today. While we have made great strides, barriers to accessing quality mental health care persist.

Today, we have the privilege of hearing from colleagues who are advancing research, pioneering new care models, and shaping the future of behavioral health. As we engage in discussions, share insights, and explore innovative strategies, let us remain focused on our shared goal—breaking down barriers and building a more accessible, effective, and compassionate mental health system.

Thank you for being here and for your dedication to this vital work. Let's make today an inspiring and productive step forward in bridging the gaps in mental health care.

Sincerely,



Chizimuzo T.C. Okoli, PhD, MPH, PMHNP-BC, FAAN  
Chair, ESH Research Council

## 9:00 AM WELCOME



ZIM OKOLI

PHD, MPH, MSN, APRN, PMHNP-BC, NCTTP, FAAN

Dr. Chizimuzo Okoli is a Professor in the UK College of Nursing. He also directs both the Tobacco Treatment and the Research & Evidence-Based Practices services at Eastern State Hospital. His primary research focuses on enhancing substance use treatment (particularly tobacco use) among people living with mental and behavioral health challenges. He is internationally recognized for developing and integrating tobacco treatment approaches within mental and behavioral health systems as well as training tobacco treatment providers.

## 9:15 AM GUEST SPEAKER

### BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INITIATIVES ACROSS KENTUCKY



ALLEN BRENZEL

MD, MBA

Dr. Allen Brenzel serves as the Medical Director for the Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Development and Intellectual Disabilities (BHDID) within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS). Additionally, Dr. Brenzel is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Kentucky. With 30 years of experience working with medical providers, state government and payors, Dr. Brenzel has developed broad health policy expertise in many areas.



# 9:45 AM KEYNOTE

## TARGETING PERSONALITY AS A POTENT, PARSIMONIOUS, AND PERSONALIZABLE APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTHCARE



Shannon Sauer-Zavala  
PhD, MS

Shannon Sauer-Zavala, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Kentucky. Her research is focused on exploring emotion-focused mechanisms that maintain psychological symptoms and using this information to develop more targeted, easily disseminated intervention strategies. Dr. Sauer-Zavala has co-authored over 160 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and books.

### Objectives

1. Participants will be able to articulate how personality traits confer risk for most mental health conditions.
2. Participants will be able to explain how targeting traits represents a more potent and parsimonious approach to treating common mental health conditions.
3. Participants will be able to describe the therapeutic elements in personality-based cognitive behavioral therapy.

# 10:45 AM BREAK

# 11:00 AM RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

11:00-11:20

### ***THE UK HARM REDUCTION HUB: TRANSLATING DRUG SUPPLY DATA INTO CLINICAL CARE***

AMANDA FALLIN-BENNETT, PHD, MSN, BSN

The University of Kentucky Harm Reduction Hub (UKHRH) is a multidisciplinary initiative that brings together a team of health professionals and community-based scientists to provide early insights into Kentucky's street drug supply through analysis of drug residue in used syringes. The Hub translates these findings into clinically relevant information to support real-time decision-making by healthcare professionals and harm reduction service providers. Following this presentation, participants will be able to identify the top ten substances identified from July 2025-February 2026, recognize regional variations, and apply this information to adapt harm reduction counseling and clinical management strategies.

11:20-11:35

### ***MULTIDISCIPLINARY EFFORTS TO MINIMIZE MEDICATION ERRORS: A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE***

MADISON PERKINS, PHARM.D, HALEY RATLIFF, BSN, RN

Medication-related errors are a leading cause of preventable harm worldwide, contributing to an estimated \$42 billion in annual hospital costs, with geriatric patients at particularly high risk due to complex care needs. The geriatric psychiatric unit at Eastern State Hospital conducted a quality improvement study targeting nursing administration errors and medication renewal processes, implementing streamlined autogenerated order reports and updated administration methods. Initial results indicated that these interventions have shown a significant reduction in medication related errors.



11:35-12:00

**HEALTH CARE STIGMATIZATION OF SUBSTANCE MISUSE: BARRIERS TO THE THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE BETWEEN PROVIDERS AND PATIENTS**

RHIANE SHUPE, LCSW

Stigmatization of substance misuse in health care settings harms both health care providers (HCPs) and people who misuse substances (PWMS). Although substantial research has examined each group's experiences separately, few studies analyze their perspectives together. This narrative literature review synthesized 39 articles (24 focused on PWMS, 12 on HCPs, and 3 on both) to examine how stigma affects the therapeutic alliance. Stigma was linked to language, perceived severity of use, emotional experiences, power imbalances, and treatment engagement. Reducing stigma and strengthening therapeutic relationships are critical to improving patient outcomes and addressing broader health disparities related to substance use.

12:00 PM LUNCH

12:35 PM VIRTUAL POSTER PRESENTATIONS

**TOBACCO AND CANNABIS USE AND SHORT-TERM PSYCHIATRIC REHOSPITALIZATION: A MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION STUDY**

SARRET SENG, PHDC, BA, BSN, RN

This retrospective study of 7,803 adults hospitalized for serious mental illness found that although 67.1% used tobacco and/or cannabis, substance use was not associated with 30- or 60-day psychiatric readmission. Instead, primary diagnosis was the strongest predictor, with schizophrenia spectrum and psychotic disorders linked to higher 30-day risk and substance-related and adjustment disorders linked to lower risk. Findings suggest diagnosis, rather than tobacco or cannabis use, drives short-term readmission.

**FROM ACCESS TO ACTION: EXPANDING QPR SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING ACROSS KENTUCKY**

SYDNEY ADKISSON, MSM, JABDIEL ROSARIO-RAMIREZ

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Kentucky among individuals aged 10-34, reaching a seven-year high in 2024. In response, a statewide initiative promoted online Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training through a multi-channel marketing strategy. Evaluation data show substantial increases in participation and completion, with only nine counties remaining unengaged.

**TELEHEALTH USE AND INPATIENT PSYCHIATRIC VISITS AMONG MEDICAID BENEFICIARIES**

TIANYI WANG, PHDC, MS, ZIM OKOLI, PHD, MPH, MSN, APRN, PMHNP-BC, NCTTP, FAAN

This study examined Kentucky Medicaid data (2017-2022) to assess telehealth use and psychiatric hospitalizations before and after COVID-19. Among over 1.1 million beneficiaries, telehealth use increased sharply post-COVID, and users had lower hospitalization rates than non-users (1.1% vs. 6.1%). Results suggest telehealth is associated with reduced psychiatric hospitalizations and potential cost savings.



## **RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE SEVERITY OF DEPENDENCE SCALE-CANNABIS AND THE FAGERSTRÖM TEST OF NICOTINE DEPENDENCE IN A PSYCHIATRIC POPULATION**

SARRET SENG, PHDC, BA, BSN, RN, ZIM OKOLI PHD, MPH, MSN, APRN, PMHNP-BC, NCTTP, FAAN

This study evaluated the psychometric properties of the Severity of Dependence Scale-Cannabis (SDS-C) and the Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence (FTND) among 298 adults with mental illness. The SDS-C showed strong reliability, a clear one-factor structure, and strong correlations with DSM-5 cannabis symptoms, whereas the FTND demonstrated lower reliability, a weaker factor structure, and more moderate associations with nicotine symptoms. Overall, the SDS-C appears robust for assessing cannabis dependence in psychiatric populations, while the FTND may benefit from supplementation with DSM-5 measures.

## 1:00 PM KEYNOTE

### UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE EXPOSURE: IMPACTS ON CLINICIANS AND THE POTENTIAL OF CODE RED



Julie Cerel

PhD, MA

Dr. Cerel is a licensed clinical psychologist and Professor in the College of Social Work at the University of Kentucky. She is the director of the Suicide Prevention & Exposure Lab. Her research has focused on suicide exposure and bereavement, suicide attempt survivors and suicide prevention. She is the author of over 130 academic publications and co-author of *Seeking Hope: Stories of the Suicide Bereaved*.

#### Objectives:

1. Understand the general impact of suicide exposure
2. Identify the specific impact of suicide exposure on mental health clinicians and workers
3. Learn about CODE RED, a universal, upstream approach to safety planning that everyone can use before their worst day
4. Describe how Universal Safety planning with CODE RED can help clinicians prepare for a worst day

## 2:00 PM BREAK

## 2:05 PM RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

2:05-2:25

### **TOWARD EXCELLENCE IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE: INTEGRATING AND EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATES RESIDENCY PROGRAM**

NICOLE CLARK, BSN, RN, TERESA NELSON, MSN, RN

This study evaluates the Mental Health Associates Residency Program (MHA-RP) which was designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of MHAs following their initial orientation. The program lasts four months, with participants attending one eight-hour shift per month. At the conclusion of the program, MHAs are required to complete a project demonstrating what they have learned.



2:25-2:40

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**FROM BEDSIDE TO COMMUNITY**

TARA DEWEES, LPCA, AMBER STEPP, PSS

Integrating peer recovery coaches into the Emergency Department supports individuals with substance use disorders by providing lived-experience guidance during the ED visit and continuing into the community. Coaches connect patients to outpatient care and address social determinants of health such as housing, employment, and mental health needs. This ongoing support increases treatment engagement, promotes sustained recovery, and reduces repeat emergency visits and hospitalizations. Despite upfront costs, embedding peer recovery coaches creates a seamless support network that improves addiction treatment outcomes, addresses SDOH, and reduces healthcare utilization. This model exemplifies a comprehensive, cost-effective strategy that promotes long-term recovery and enhances the quality of care in the ED setting.

2:40-3:00

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**EMPATH EVOLUTION: MEASURABLE IMPACT AND A VISION FORWARD**

ERIN MORRIS, MSN, RN, CEN

Over the past 18 months, the EmPATH program has transformed behavioral health crisis care by improving patient flow, reducing emergency department boarding, and enhancing patient and staff experiences. This presentation highlights key outcomes, lessons learned, and the measurable impact on system performance. It will also outline strategic priorities for the next phase, including expansion of programming initiatives to further improve access, quality, and continuity of care.

3:00-3:20

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**FROM SURVEILLANCE TO STEWARDSHIP: REDUCING ENHANCED OBSERVATION WHILE BALANCING PATIENT SAFETY, DIGNITY, AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF RESOURCES**

MARC WOODS, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, KEVIN BRYANT, DNP, RN, NEA-BC

Enhanced observation practices such as 1:1 and 2:1 supervision are widely used in psychiatric settings to mitigate risk, yet they carry significant implications for patient dignity, staff workload, and financial stewardship. Eastern State Hospital implemented a structured, nurse-led oversight model that reframed enhanced observation from a default safety intervention to a time-limited, actively managed clinical strategy. Through daily review, multidisciplinary accountability, and clear utilization targets, the organization reduced sitter use from 11% to 8% of average daily census despite a 6% increase in census, resulting in projected annual savings approaching \$1 million while maintaining patient safety.

3:20 PM RESEARCH AWARDS & WRAP-UP



# THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

## GET IN TOUCH

Eastern State Hospital Research Council  
Dr. Chizimuzo Okoli, Chair  
Eastern State Hospital  
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*In partnership with Behavioral Health Wellness Environments for Living & Learning.  
To learn more visit [bhowell.uky.edu](http://bhowell.uky.edu)*

## COMPLETE EVALUATIONS FOR CE



Dr. Brenzel



Dr. Sauer-Zavala



Morning Research



Posters



Dr. Cerel



Afternoon Research



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