

19TH ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE

A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO CHILD MALTREATMENT

MAY 13-14, 2026
FARGO, ND



RED RIVER
CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY CENTER





OUR MISSION

To facilitate healing and justice for victims of sexual and physical abuse, neglect, and exploitation and to engage the community to protect and support children.

Venue
Sponsor:









Food and Beverage
Sponsor:





CONFERENCE INFORMATION

<p> Who Should Attend</p> <p>Multidisciplinary Team Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Advocates · Child Protection/Social Services · Forensic Interviewers · Law Enforcement · Parole & Probation · Prosecution/Attorneys · Judges · Mental Health Providers · Health Care: Advanced Practice Providers, Physicians, Registered Nurses · School Personnel · Case Management 	<p> Location</p> <p>Dakota Medical Foundation 4321 20th Ave S Fargo, ND 58103</p>
<p> Registration Cost</p> <p>Before 03/27/2026: Early Bird Registration \$125</p> <p>After 03/27/2026: General Registration \$150</p> <p>Register at: https://onecau.se/training2026</p>	<p> Continuing Education</p> <p>Approval for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ND, MN Social Work CEUs ND, MN Law Enforcement Post Credits ND Counselors CEUs ND, MN Attorney CLEs
<p> Lodging</p> <p>STAYBRIDGE SUITES 4300 20th Ave S Fargo, ND 58103</p> <p>Click HERE to reserve your room. or call 701-281-4900</p> <p>Individuals have until April 28th by 5p CST to secure reservations at the group discount</p>	<p> Snacks and Meals</p> <p>Coffee and pastries will be provided in the morning.</p> <p>Light refreshments will be provided in the afternoon.</p> <p>Lunch is on your own, with many restaurants in walking distance.</p>

Wednesday, May 13th

- 8:00am - 8:30am** Registration
- 8:30am - 8:45am** Welcome
- 8:45am - 10:15am** Keynote: Michael Johnson - *It Takes a Team to Protect a Child: The Experience of Little Suzy*
- 10:15am - 10:30am** Break
- 10:30am - 12:00pm** Breakout Sessions 1:
- Faye Seidler - *Suicide Prevention Efforts for LGBTQ+ Youth*
 - Barbara Huewe and Heather Barnack (RACC) - *Domestic Violence and Post-Separation Abuse: Understanding the Ongoing Impact*
 - Kayla Travis - *Pay \$500 or Your Life is Ruined: The Financial Sextortion of Minors, an analysis of this alarming trend*
- 12:00pm - 1:30pm** Lunch
- 1:30pm - 3:00pm** Breakout Sessions 2:
- Jill Krone and Jesse Smith - *Evolving Threats: Online Grooming, Extortion & AI-Driven Crime in North Dakota*
 - Hannah Pavek, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC, SANE-P - *Abuse or Not Abuse, That is the Question*
 - Michael Johnson - *Making the Case: MDT Investigative Corroboration*
- 3:00pm - 3:15pm** Break
- 3:15pm - 4:45pm** Keynote: Kayla Travis - *A Global Landscape: Current Threats and Trends in Online Child Sexual Exploitation*

Thursday, May 14th

8:00am - 8:30am	Registration
8:30am - 10:00am	Breakout Sessions 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Schimmelpfennig, PhD - <i>Recantation in Child Sexual Abuse: Bridging Research and Multidisciplinary Practice</i> • Skyler Manney (FirstLink), Sarah Hasbargen (SENDCAA), Anna Frissell (Youthworks) and Victoria Konidaris (Legal Services of ND) - <i>Service Panel</i> • Kayla Travis - <i>Cleaning Up the Internet: New Image Takedown Possibilities and Realities through NCMEC</i>
10:00am - 10:15am	Break
10:15am - 11:45am	Breakout Sessions 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brëanna McMullen - <i>Shifting Thoughts: A Collective Journey Inward</i> • Jessica Hoeper, MSW, LISW - <i>Bringing an IECMH Lens to CW Practices</i> • Michael Johnson - <i>Is Minimal Facts Interviewing Really Best Practice?</i>
11:45am - 1:15pm	Lunch
1:15pm - 2:45pm	Breakout Sessions 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faye Seidler - <i>Navigating Safety for LGBTQ+ Youth</i> • Hannah Pavek, DNP, APRN, CNP - <i>Non-Fatal Strangulation: How You Can DO MORE</i> • Carly Bentley and Cindy Schmit (HSI) - <i>Keeping Your Sex Crime Investigation Victim-Centered</i>
2:45pm - 3:00pm	Break
3:00pm - 4:30pm	Closing Keynote: Jessica Hoeper, MSW, LISW and Brëanna McMullen - <i>The Space between Intention and Impact: When Felt Experience Finally Has a Name</i>
4:30pm	Closing and Evaluations

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS**Opening Keynote Day 1, 8:45a-10:15a*****It Takes a Team to Protect a Child: The Experience of Little Suzy* – Michael Johnson**

While all CACs and MDTs are involved in a practice, Best Practice recognizes the importance of utilizing a victim-centered, trauma-informed, collaborative multidisciplinary response to child maltreatment and exploitation. But what does this really mean to our cases? This presentation will walk you through the disclosure/outcry process of victims before and after MDT intervention, using “Lil’ Suzy” as an example of what can happen after multiple uncoordinated interviews. This practical, interactive, demonstrative presentation will expose the most common problems and challenges faced by MDTs and CACs in a frank, yet humorous way, and offer solutions. We will highlight the cause of the obstacles in the response process and how to address them. We will also discuss best practice principles needed to attain our goal of a functional multidisciplinary team. Participants will learn the “Investigative Windows of Opportunity” present in every case, as well as techniques designed for better MDT coordination and collaboration. Critical areas of interdisciplinary cooperation, team response to outcry, and investigative corroboration will also be covered.

Michael Johnson

Michael Johnson (Detective Mike) is an internationally recognized expert on all aspects of child abuse and exploitation and specializes in abuse investigation, detection, and prevention efforts for organizations serving youth. Michael Johnson was the Youth Protection Advisor/Director for the National Office of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) from July 2010 to December 2020, where he advised on efforts to improve youth protection policies, training, and procedures to ensure the safest possible environment for BSA youth. Johnson is credited with acting as a change agent to strengthen BSA’s “Youth Protection” program, and he spearheaded the BSA’s efforts to provide ongoing support to survivors and a trauma-informed response to victims of abuse in the organization. Prior to BSA, Johnson served 24 of his 28 years as the Lead Detective and Family Violence/Abuse Investigator in the Criminal Investigation Division of the Plano, Texas Police Department. In that role, he focused exclusively on interviewing victims, interrogating perpetrators, and investigating child abuse cases, including child sexual abuse, interpersonal violence, and exploitation. An early pioneer and visionary in the field, Johnson was at the forefront of promoting the multidisciplinary team investigative approach and the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) movement in the early 1990s. In 2019, the American Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) recognized Detective Michael Johnson as “one of the most influential pioneers in the investigation of suspected child maltreatment”. Johnson holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a minor in psychology from Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. He lives in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area of Texas.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Breakout Sessions Day 1, 10:30a-12p

LGBTQ+ Suicide Prevention Efforts in North Dakota - Faye Seidler

This presentation focuses on the data relevant to suicidality with LGBTQ+ populations in North Dakota. It explores risk and protective factors that may be unique to LGBTQ+ populations. It also covers the current efforts and organizations that are working to prevent and reduce suicidality across North Dakota. Participants will gain a better understanding of state data, the unique ways suicidality can be experienced for queer populations, and resources to help mitigate suicidality in our state.

Faye Seidler

Faye Seidler is an award winning advocate that specializes in suicide prevention, LGBTQ+ populations, and state data. She was born and raised in North Dakota and has a decade of experience in community organizing, public speaking, and professional development training. She is known for connecting and uplifting others, bringing communities together, and always keeping hope in focus.

Domestic Violence and Post-Separation Abuse: Understanding the Ongoing Impact - Barbara Huewe and Heather Barnack, RACC

Domestic violence does not end when a relationship ends. For many survivors and their children, separation can mark the beginning of new and often intensified forms of abuse. Post-separation abuse frequently occurs through custody disputes, manipulation of parenting time, financial control, legal system misuse, coercive control, and the ongoing psychological harm directed at children. This session explores how abusive partners continue patterns of power and control after separation and how children are uniquely impacted. Participants will examine the dynamics of coercive control, trauma responses in children, systems-based harm, and the ways institutions may unintentionally enable continued abuse. The presentation will also provide trauma-informed, survivor-centered strategies for providers working with families navigating custody, child protection, advocacy, mental health, and legal systems.

Barbara Huewe - Rape and Abuse Crisis Center

Barbara Huewe is currently the Advocacy Supervisor at the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center, where she leads a team of advocates providing trauma-informed services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. A certified domestic violence and sexual assault advocate herself; she brings extensive experience in crisis response, systems advocacy, and survivor-centered care. Barbara is also currently pursuing her Master of Social Work degree with a focus on systems change within the domestic violence field. Her academic and professional work centers on strengthening coordinated community responses, addressing systemic inequities, and advancing policies and practices that promote survivor safety, autonomy, and long-term healing.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Breakout Sessions Day 1, 10:30a-12p

Domestic Violence and Post-Separation Abuse: Understanding the Ongoing Impact (cont.)

Heather Barnack - Rape and Abuse Crisis Center

Heather Barnack is a certified domestic violence and sexual assault advocate at the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center and recognized expert witness with over a decade of experience in the field. As an expert witness, she offers clear, research-informed testimony to educate courts and professionals on the complex realities of domestic and sexual violence. Throughout her career, she has provided trauma-informed support to survivors, led advocacy initiatives, and collaborated with multidisciplinary partners to strengthen systemic responses to violence. Heather brings extensive expertise in victim dynamics, post-separation abuse, and the intersection of legal systems and survivor safety.

Pay \$500 Or Your Life is Ruined: The Financial Sextortion of Minors, an analysis of this alarming trend - Kayla Travis, NCMEC

The financial sextortion of minors - where child victims are threatened with exposure of intimate images if they don't pay the perpetrator - became a global crisis in 2022 and remains a critical danger to today's youth. In 2024, NCMEC saw its highest number of annual reports related to this harm, over 30,000 reports. In 2023, NCMEC and Thorn partnered on a research project examining CyberTipline reports related to the financial sextortion of minors in order to identify findings to assist both the prevention and investigative responses. An in-depth review of the resulting research findings - released in June 2024 - will be covered, sharing insights on victimology, modus operandi, ESP engagement, and next steps to better protect children from this high-stakes threat. In addition, NCMEC services and resources related to content take-down will be covered, highlighting the tools available to children who have unwanted imagery posted online.

Kayla Travis - National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Kayla Travis is a CyberTipline Supervisor at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, NCMEC. In her current role, Mrs. Travis manages a team of Support Specialists and Analysts, while overseeing the critical processing and continual improvement of the CyberTipline. Mrs. Travis began her career with NCMEC in 2019, initially serving as a CyberTipline Analyst and throughout her tenure has worked closely on various special projects focusing on quality assurance. In addition to serving as a Manager, Mrs. Travis currently leads the Training Team spearheading the development of personnel newly joining the CyberTipline in its mission to reduce child sexual exploitation.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS**Breakout Sessions Day 1, 1:30p-3:00p*****Evolving Threats: Online Grooming, Extortion & AI-Driven Crime in North Dakota – Jill Krone and Jesse Smith***

This session updates MDT members on North Dakota's shifting online exploitation landscape: platform-based grooming, sextortion surges, AI-created CSAM, and teen self-generated content. Using local cases and trends, it introduces the Vigilant Parent Initiative—a parent-focused tool highlighting the top 5 apps seen in ND cases and guiding crucial conversations with kids. Attendees will explore collaborative prevention, reporting, and support strategies tailored for law enforcement, advocates, interviewers, medical/social services, and business leaders.

Jill Krone

Jill Krone is a Victim Witness Specialist for Eastern North Dakota currently employed with the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Victim Services Unit (VSU) and is a member of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force. Prior to her working for BCI, she was a Parole Officer for the State of North Dakota for 14 years and before that worked at the Clay Co Jail as a Correctional Officer for 8 years. Jill is a graduate from the University of Minnesota-Duluth with a Bachelor of Arts with a double major of Sociology and Criminology. Jill's work with the Human Trafficking Task Force, Cyber Crimes Unit, and Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) statewide teams includes, providing training, technical assistance, and crisis support for victims of crime to include exploitation and trafficking. In her role as a Victim Witness Specialist for the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) covering the Eastern region of North Dakota, Jill provides direct services to victims of violent crimes ensuring that the needs and the rights of crime victims and witnesses are met through compliance with the law, and with respectful, trauma-sensitive, and fair treatment.

Jesse Smith

Special Agent Jesse Smith started his law enforcement career in 2005 as a Deputy in Ramsey County North Dakota. During that time as a Deputy, Special Agent Jesse Smith joined the North Dakota Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force in 2008 and started working proactive luring cases, (Catch a Predator). In 2010 Special Agent Jesse Smith was hired by the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation and assigned to the Cyber Crime Unit. Special Agent Smith remains a member of the ICAC task force and actively investigates Cyber crimes involving the sexual exploitation of children. Since 2008, Special Agent Smith has participated in thousands of investigations involving the exploitation of children here in North Dakota. Special Agent Smith's investigations have led to the arrest of individuals from around the world exploiting children in North Dakota and identifying children from around the world that have been exploited by people living in North Dakota.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Breakout Sessions Day 1, 1:30p-3:00p

Evolving Threats: Online Grooming, Extortion & AI-Driven Crime in North Dakota (cont.)

Jesse Smith

In 2020, Special Agent Smith was assigned a special partner Special Agent Jib. K-9 Jib is a 8-year-old Black lab trained as an electronic scent detection canine. K-9 Jib is used to locate items such as cellphones, hard drives, thumb drives, SD and Micro-SD cards that are sometimes hidden or missed by investigators. K-9 Jib has assisted on numerous search warrants and has located items of evidence that would have been missed without him.

Abuse or Not Abuse, That is the Question - Hannah Pavek

In this session, participants will be able to identify medical mimics of sexual abuse and physical abuse and better understand the signs and symptoms that are non-specific to sexual abuse and physical abuse. Participants will learn appropriate next steps in cases where the findings are non-specific for abuse.

Hannah Pavek, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC, SANE-P

Hannah is a former Sanford pediatric ICU nurse and pediatric sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE). Hannah attended graduate school at the University of Minnesota, where she obtained her doctorate of nursing practice in pediatric primary care. Hannah is a board-certified pediatric nurse practitioner and certified pediatric SANE at the Sanford Children's Child Abuse Referral & Evaluation (CARE) Clinic in Fargo, providing care for children with concerns of sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect.

Making the Case: MDT Investigative Corroboration - Michael Johnson

MDT Investigative Corroboration is not a departure from, but an addition to, the traditional Who, What, When, Where, and Why of an investigation. It seeks to place the law enforcement or DHS/CPS investigator inside the mindset of prosecutors who are required to corroborate every statement, element, and point made in the case.

Corroborative elements have different "values." Some, such as a detailed confession, can stand alone. Others, such as theme pornography, may not prove an offense, but they are still supportive of the allegation. Better yet, Constellations of Corroborative Points, though individually circumstantial, can – and have – the ability to prove cases. An MDT's effectiveness is rooted in its ability to know and utilize the advantages and disadvantages of these techniques and, with consideration of certain Windows of Opportunity, administer them in a timely manner. Multidisciplinary skills-based training in our communities should focus instruction on these "skill sets." Although geared toward investigators, MDT coordinators, forensic interviewers, advocates, and forensic medical professionals will find this presentation fruitful in identifying team strengths, weaknesses in team dynamics, inter-communication, team protocol, intervention strategies and procedures of the attending disciplines.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Closing Keynote Day 1, 3:15p-4:45p

A Global Landscape: Current Threats and Trends in Online Child Sexual Exploitation - Kayla Travis, NCMEC

Responding to tens of millions of CyberTipline reports concerning offenders and child victims around the world, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) will share the current landscape of online child sexual exploitation. Emerging threats include a staggering increase in online enticement, child sex trafficking, financial sexual extortion of children, sadistic and violent exploitation groups, and challenges ahead with the rise of generative artificial intelligence. NCMEC's response, support of survivors, and resources for child serving professionals will be highlighted.

Breakout Sessions Day 2, 8:30a-10a

Recantation in Child Sexual Abuse: Bridging Research and Multidisciplinary Practice - **Anna Schimmelpfennig**

Recantation in child sexual abuse cases presents complex challenges for multidisciplinary teams, influencing investigative outcomes, prosecution decisions, and long-term child safety. Even when corroborating evidence exists, children may retract their disclosures due to various pressures. Using empirical research and applied practice frameworks, this presentation will review dynamics of disclosure and recantation. The session will explore key predictors of recantation, including caregiver response and support, familial dynamics, placement decisions, and systemic decision-making. It will also examine the evolving role of expert testimony in court, contrasting evidence-based approaches with outdated models. The presentation provides a multidisciplinary strategy for minimizing recantation risk, protecting the integrity of disclosures, and supporting children through the investigative and judicial process. This presentation is designed for professionals in child advocacy, law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, and mental health disciplines seeking to strengthen trauma-informed, evidence-based responses to child sexual abuse.

Anna Schimmelpfennig, PhD

Dr. Anna Schimmelpfennig, PhD is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist who specializes in working with children and families impacted by trauma. She is the Director of Mental Health Services at the Red River Children's Advocacy Center. She is passionate about making trauma-specific, evidence-based treatment accessible for children and families impacted by abuse, neglect, and exploitation. She is trained in many evidence-based treatments for trauma and also provides training, consultation, and expert witness testimony on issues related to child abuse. She is also trained in evidence-based treatments for children and adolescents with problematic or illegal sexual behavior and provides training and consultation related to problematic sexual behavior.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS**Breakout Sessions Day 2, 8:30a-10a*****Service Panel - FirstLink, SENDCAA, Youthworks, Legal Services of North Dakota***

This services panel will feature representatives from key local community agencies who will provide an overview of the programs and supports available to individuals and families in the region. Panelists from FirstLink, Youthworks, Southeastern North Dakota Community Action Agency (SENDCAA), and Legal Services of North Dakota will highlight their core services, eligibility requirements, and referral processes. The session is designed to increase awareness of community resources, clarify how and when to access services, and strengthen connections among service providers and referral partners. Attendees will gain practical information to better support clients, navigate referrals, and collaborate effectively across agencies to address needs related to housing stability, youth and family support, legal assistance, and crisis and community resource navigation.

Skyler Manney - FirstLink

Skyler Manney is the Community Engagement Coordinator at FirstLink. She graduated from North Dakota State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Human Development and Family Science, and from Minot State University with a Bachelor of Social Work and is a Licensed Social Worker in the state of North Dakota. Skyler spends most of her time in the community, connecting with people and doing education and outreach work. She also provides crisis intervention and listening and support to callers on FirstLink's 2-1-1 Helpline and the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Sarah Hasbargen - SENDCAA

Sarah Hasbargen is a Licensed Masters Social Worker and has worked in the social work sector for 16 years. Sarah has professional experience with Community Action Agencies, the North Dakota Continuum of Care, mental health and substance abuse co-morbidity case management and private non-profit management. Sarah has years of experience coaching teams, developing, and implementing programs, and writing federal, state and local grants.

Anna Frissell - Youthworks

Anna is an advocate for children and youth. She has worked in several capacities including at the Red River Children's Advocacy Center, prosecutor's offices and presently at Youthworks.

Victoria Konidaris - Legal Services of North Dakota

Victoria is a Supervising Attorney at Legal Services of North Dakota in Fargo, ND. She graduated from The University of Winnipeg with a BA in Criminal Justice and further graduated from the University of North Dakota School of Law in 2018. Victoria previously worked at Gjesdahl Law as a family law attorney.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Breakout Sessions Day 2, 8:30a-10a

Cleaning Up the Internet: New Image Takedown Possibilities and Realities through NCMEC – Kayla Travis, NCMEC

Image and video distribution is a continual threat for every victim of child sexual abuse material and with the onset of new generative AI technologies, exploitative distribution is a larger threat than ever before but the pathways for takedown and removal can seem daunting and fruitless. This session will review NCMEC's Notice and Takedown Program and will cover step-by-step methods for image/video notification to websites, companies, registrars, registries and more, including utilizing the new Take It Down service. Presenters will cover the different types of notices – from survivor PII to CSAM material and the range in between. Learn how to apply these resources to your cases and how you can give children and young adult victims hope by changing the narrative on image distribution, giving them tools to take content removal into their own hands or connecting them to NCMEC notice tracking advocates to notify companies on their behalf.

Breakout Sessions Day 2, 10:15a-11:45a

Shifting Thoughts: A Collective Journey Inward – Brëanna McMullen

Shifting Thoughts offers an introspective journey through internal thoughts, habits, and professional mindsets shaping helping work. Through guided reflection and dialogue, participants explore personal ecosystems, cognitive patterns, and conditioned responses while building strategies that support well-being, relational awareness, and sustainable practice — strengthening both self-understanding and compassionate engagement with the families and communities they serve.

Brëanna McMullen

Brë brings extensive experience supporting children, families, and professionals across social services, mental health, and nonprofit systems. Her work centers on supporting individuals and organizations in building reflective practice, relational engagement, and cultivating sustainable workforce practices. Her approach blends research-informed frameworks with authentic conversation and experiential learning. Drawing from reflective supervision principles, relational neuroscience, and somatic awareness practices, she creates collaborative learning environments where professionals can explore difficult realities with honesty, humor, and compassion — fostering growth that is both personally meaningful and professionally applicable.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Breakout Sessions Day 2, 10:15a-11:45a

Bringing an IECMH Lens to Child Welfare Practice - Jessica Hoeper

Child welfare work moves fast, but infants and young children develop faster. This breakout helps participants slow the moment down just enough to notice what matters and use Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) knowledge to guide everyday decisions. Together we'll translate IECMH principles into practical child welfare skills: developmental attunement, reading behavior as communication, understanding stress and trauma in the early years, and centering the caregiver-child relationship as a key pathway to safety and healing. This session emphasizes relationship-based practice that requires IECMH knowledge, reflective capacity, and self-awareness, especially when working in high-stakes, high-stress system contexts.

Jessica Hoeper, MSW, LISW

Jess is a licensed independent social worker, Reflective Consultant, Author, Mother, Wife and Founder of Ray of Hope, LLC. With over 20yrs of human service experience; in the roles of reflective coach/consultant/supervisor, child and family services supervisor, child protection social worker, juvenile justice social worker, and mental health practitioner. Jess works nationally with Human Service Professionals and Leaders, enhancing their self+awareness through reflection, providing Reflective Coaching/Consultation/Supervision. Jessica has a passion for reflection and making it accessible to practitioners. Jessica's Reflective Coaching strategy is informed by and draws from her training in professional coaching and infant mental health's reflective consultation/supervision model. Personally, Jess and her husband are raising their five kids on a farm in central Minnesota.

Is Minimal Facts Interviewing Really Best Practice? - Michael Johnson

Instead of a CAC meeting its mandate of a coordinated multidisciplinary response and conducting child interviews in a trauma-informed, victim-friendly, neutral setting by a trained forensic interviewer, a growing number of CACs and Multidisciplinary Teams are engaging in the practice of requiring First Responders to conduct Minimal Facts Interviews (or Essential Facts Interviews, Pre-forensic Interviews, Protective Interviews, "Rogue" Interviews or Protective Assessment Interviews) by responding Law Enforcement officers and CPS/DHR investigators in the field before a forensic interview can be conducted. Many of these interviews, once scheduled, occur days and, in many cases, weeks later. Additionally, many CACs use this practice to prescreen victim interviews to determine if forensic interview appointments should be scheduled. There is ZERO research to support this practice. There are, however, research and practice implications detailing the negative and cascading impact of untrained interviewers, duplicative and multiple interviews, forensic medical evaluation, crime scene evidence and evaluation, non-offending caregiver support and cooperation, success of perpetrator

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Breakout Sessions Day 2, 10:15a-11:45a

Is Minimal Facts Interviewing Really Best Practice? - (cont.)

interrogation and, most importantly, impact of perpetrator and other influences on the victim. All factors impacting subsequent MDT intervention, investigation and prosecution, often leading to retractions and recantations. This issue will be examined and solutions for better practice provided.

Breakout Sessions Day 2, 1:15p-2:45p

Navigating Resources for LGBTQ+ People in North Dakota - Faye Seidler

This training is designed to give individuals a comprehensive overview of the state resources that can be utilized to help and protect LGBTQ+ individuals. Participants will learn how to utilize the North Dakota LGBTQ+ Directory to find all of the states affirming providers and support groups. Participants will also be taught how they can get involved in these support networks and what to do when there isn't local support. This training will give professionals and LGBTQ+ allies and family members confidence in making referrals to LGBTQ+ folks of any age.

Non-Fatal Strangulation: How You Can DO MORE - Hannah Pavek

In this session, participants will be able to recognize the potential signs and symptoms of strangulation and understand what information is necessary when obtaining history from a strangulation survivor. Participants will be able to identify appropriate interventions for strangulation survivors.

Keeping your Sex Crime Investigation Victim Centered - Carly Bentley and Cindy Schmit

By the end of this presentation, given examples of trauma informed techniques, victimology, and presenting evidence, participants will be able to apply techniques to their investigations and use best practices when an interview of a victim of a sex crime is needed. Key topics include familiarization of victim centered language, best practices for documentation, the forensic interview, and utilizing a victim centered approach while presenting evidence to victims.

Carly Bentley

Carly Bentley is a Forensic Interview Specialist for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), assigned to the St. Paul, MN field office, covering Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota respectively. Although this her area of responsibility, she conducts interviews across the nation, and internationally, of victims and witnesses (both child and adult) that are involved in a federal investigation. This includes (but is not limited to) cases of human trafficking, child exploitation, child sexually abusive material (CSAM), human rights and war crimes and traveling sex offender cases. Carly has conducted over 1800 interviews and is trained in multiple nationally recognized forensic interviewing protocols/methods. She recently began her 13th year as a forensic interviewer.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Breakout Sessions Day 2, 10:15a-11:45a

Keeping your Sex Crime Investigation Victim Centered - (cont.)

Carly Bentley

She assists Human Trafficking Task Forces and aids Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) on case consults and forensic interviews. Carly has been a trainer domestically and internationally, primarily focusing on topics related to forensic interviewing, trauma informed approaches, human trafficking, and Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). Carly holds a Bachelor's Degree from Central Michigan University in Sociology with a concentration in Youth Studies and a minor in Psychology. She has been employed within the field of child abuse and neglect since 2010. Carly is a strong supporter of the vision and mission of Children Advocacy Centers (CAC), working at two local CACs throughout her career. She is a proponent for the multi-disciplinary approach to assisting victims and their families and considers forensic interviewing to be a true passion. Carly's favorite place to be is on the shores of Lake Michigan at the Sleeping Bear Dunes and is native to Northern Michigan. She enjoys spending time with her husband and their active son.

Cindy Schmit

Cindy Schmit is a Victim Assistance Program Specialist (VAPS) for Homeland Security Investigations. Her area of responsibility covers primarily North and South Dakota and assisting in Minnesota and elsewhere as requested. These national and international federal cases involve investigations into human trafficking, child exploitation, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), identity theft, and financial crimes. She has also assisted on cases involving homicide, kidnapping, sexual assault, aggravated assault, child abuse and maltreatment, vehicular homicide, elder abuse, abuse of the disabled, and domestic violence cases. Cindy is a graduate from the University of South Dakota with a degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in Drug & Alcohol Abuse Studies and has been a Victim Specialist for twenty-nine years. She has attended many hours of training during those years, along with the Homeland Security Victim Assistance Academy, the Instructional Development Course, and is trauma-informed, and crisis response trained. She not only sits on two Sexual Assault Response Teams and two Human Trafficking Taskforces, but is also a Planning Committee member and presenter for the SD Victim Assistance Academies (Basic and Advanced), a member of the SD Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault, and chairs the SD Victim Witness and Allied Partner Subcommittee Meetings. For over sixteen years, Cindy had educated a myriad of professionals, students, and community organizations on the topics of victim services, trauma responses, navigating the criminal justice system, impact of crime on victims, internet safety, understanding and knowing your why, and self-care. She is passionate about victim services, teamwork, and navigating victims and their families through the federal investigative process, understanding their rights, identifying resources, and providing support toward healing. She has also been honored in her career to be the recipient of the Distinguished Service

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Breakout Sessions Day 2, 10:15a-11:45a

Keeping your Sex Crime Investigation Victim Centered - (cont.)

Cindy Schmit

Award, the Outstanding Civilian of the Year Award, Employee of the Month, recognition by the HSI VAP leadership for her work efforts, and recognition by the US Department of Justice, District of South Dakota, "For Creating an Environment Where Victims of Crime Have the Confidence They Will be Heard, Believed, and Supported". Cindy believes that victim services is work of great meaning and responsibility and finds her balance in spending time with her family and friends. Her life is blessed with her wonderful husband and two sons, family, and all her friends in and out of the work. If she's not working, you will find her with her family enjoying the outdoors, camping, walking the dogs, hitting the trails on their UTV's, or being a bleacher mom at all their son's high school sporting events.

Closing Keynote Day 2, 3p-4:30p

The Space Between Intention and Impact: When Felt Experience Finally Has a Name - PD Collective

There's a quiet undercurrent in human services work—a tension between our best intentions and the impact that actually unfolds. It's the weight we carry, the moments we know something isn't landing right, but haven't had the words to describe...until now.

In this closing keynote, Jessica Hoeper and Brëanna McMullen take you on a playful, story-driven journey—a tale of two social workers—sharing honest, relatable experiences from their own practice. Through humor, reflection, and insight, they invite participants to recognize the invisible patterns that quietly shape our work, patterns most of us have felt but rarely named. Blending laughter with aha moments, this session shows how naming these unseen forces opens the door to greater awareness, professional resilience, and intentional change. You'll leave with a fresh lens for understanding your work, your impact, and the invisible currents that flow between intention and outcome.

PD Collective - Jessica Hoeper and Brëanna McMullen

Jessica Hoeper and Brëanna McMullen bring extensive experience presenting to diverse audiences across systems and disciplines. With backgrounds in human services, reflective consultation, and research, they create an engaging, relational space where participants feel safe to explore complex and vulnerable topics. Their co-facilitated style blends shared storytelling, practice-based examples, and reflective invitations that foster connection, curiosity, and professional resilience.

