



SMART



SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH BY
ADVOCATING FOR RESOURCES TOGETHER

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT 2025





SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH BY ADVOCATING FOR RESOURCES TOGETHER

WHAT IS SMART?

Nearly 80% of chronic mental health conditions emerge in childhood. While mental health concerns are frequently seen in public schools, the pandemic's combination of isolation plus other mental health issues, has exacerbated the need for added supports.

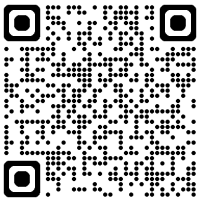
The Erie County SMART Collaborative is a professional learning community established to prioritize P-12 student mental health and social emotional learning. Comprised of Erie County School Districts, educators, community agencies and representatives from Erie County, SMART serves as a vital link between available mental health resources and students.

CONNECT

smart@e1b.org
e1b.org/smart

RESOURCES

e1b.org/smartresources



We believe that our community deserves to be...

SAFE



Students and caregivers feel safe and accepted when seeking mental health supports at school and in their community.

INFORMED



Aware and knowledgeable about mental health and wellness understanding all supports provided within the community.

ACCESSIBLE



Advocating and improving connections to community supports by addressing individual community needs and reducing barriers.

CONNECTED



Students and caregivers are connected to resources and supports that foster relationships to promote a sense of belonging and wellness.

EMPOWERED



Uplifting the community to promote growth and wellness.

Conference at a Glance

8 AM

Registration/Light Breakfast/Networking

Register in the Lobby, then join us for breakfast in Room 106

9 AM

Welcome and Keynote

Room 106

10:15 -11 AM

Breakout Sessions #1

- The Ripple Effect: How Family Separation and Divorce Impact Children and Adolescents' Mental Health
Room 103
- Putting the "Good" in Goodfella; Building young men of character in your school
Room 104
- Behind Happy Faces
Room 106
- Getting into SHAPE: Improving the Quality of Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems
Room 108
- Prioritizing Mental Health and Wellness... It Matters!
Room 109

11:15 -12 PM

Breakout Sessions #2

- Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Latinx Youth Identity: Language, Literacy, and Belonging as Mental Health Pathways
Room 103
- Reframing the Narrative: Empowering Youth through the 40 Developmental Assets
Room 104
- Grief Support is Not Nice It's Imperative
Room 106
- Connecting for Kids (C4K) Collaborative Dialogue: Advancing Cross-Sector Partnerships for Whole Child Wellbeing
Room 108
- What is the Essence of Being a Human?
Room 109

12 -1 PM

Lunch + Awards Ceremony

Room 106

1 -1:45 PM

Breakout Sessions #3

- Where County Supports Youth and Families
Room 103
- Providing Supportive Environments for Trans and Nonbinary Young People
Room 104
- Understanding Immigrant and Refugee Experiences
Room 106
- Food for Thought: Spotting the Signs of Eating Disorders in Schools
Room 108
- Understanding Social Media and Internet Safety
Room 109

2 -2:45 PM

Breakout Sessions #4

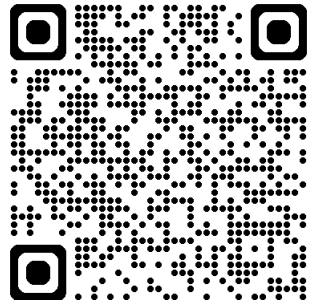
- Honoring Family Funds of Knowledge
Room 103
- Building Resilient Schools: Compeer Buffalo's Approach to Student Mental Health
Room 104
- Building a Culture of Holistic Support for Families and Students in the Lackawanna City School District
Room 106
- Panel Discussion On Disability Studies and Mental Health: Aspiring Teachers Envision the Accessible Classrooms of the Future
Room 108
- Leading with Our Resilience Everyday (LORE)
Room 109

3 - 4 PM

Poster Sessions and Networking

Lobby

Digital Agenda
e1b.org/smartconference





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for Western & Central New York

About Our Keynote: Ross Szabo

Ross Szabo is a nationally recognized mental health advocate, author, and educator transforming how youth learn about mental health. He is the Wellness Director at Geffen Academy at UCLA and founder of the Human Power Project. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder at 16, Ross uses personal storytelling to reduce stigma and empower help-seeking. He blends humor, vulnerability, and practical tools to foster emotional resilience in students nationwide. Author of *Behind Happy Faces* and *A Kids Book About Anxiety*, Ross inspires communities to prioritize mental wellness with empathy, education, and action.



PLAY BINGO!

1. Grab your BINGO Board
2. Mark each table you visit
3. Try and get 5 in a row
4. Submit your BINGO card by 1pm for a chance to win a prize

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Play SMART BINGO! Mark each table or activity you complete and try to get 5 in a row! Submit this BINGO sheet to the green box by 1:00 PM for a chance to win!

S	M	A	R	T
Horizon Health Services	Homeless Alliance of WNY	Mental Health Association in NYS	Office of Mental Health	BAND Against Bullying
UB Alberti Center	Gateway Longview	New Directions	Clarence Family Support Center	PATH Enrichment Center
Share a resource	First Tee of WNY	★	UB School of Social Work	OLV Human Services
Envision Wellness WNY	Catholic Charities of Buffalo	Help Me Grow WNY	Learn something new	Compeer of Greater Buffalo
The Prevention Council of Erie Co	Cradle Beach, Inc.	Connect with a district or agency	Erie County Mental Health	Buffalo Public Schools

Learning Tracks



Embedding
Best Practices



Leading and
Reducing
Barriers



Mental Health
as a School
Safety Strategy



Supporting
Families

Agenda

8 AM

**Registration/Light
Breakfast/Networking**

Lobby/Room 106

9 AM

**Welcome and Keynote
Mental Health Starts With Me:
Practical Tools to Take Care of
Yourself and Help Students**

Ross Szabo

Room 106

10:15 - 11 AM

Breakout Sessions #1



**The Ripple Effect: How
Family Separation and
Divorce Impact Children
and Adolescents' Mental Health**
Room 103

*Stephanie Wagner, LMHC-DP, Endeavor
Health Services*

The goal is to enhance understanding of the emotional and psychological effects of family separation on youth, highlight developmental differences in their responses, and explore effective assessment and intervention strategies. We will also examine the benefits of family therapy in promoting resilience.



**Putting the "Good" in
Goodfella; Building young
men of character in your
school | Room 104**

*Paul Thompson, Hamburg Central
School District*

In 2021 I created a club at Hamburg High School that was exclusive to young men in the population. I did this because I saw no healthy outlet for them to express their social emotional concerns that also overcame the stigma of mental health. Now in 2025, we find ourselves with 50 members that are constantly giving back to their community, creating a culture where students support each other in social situations, and conduct peer mentorship on a daily basis. It has been proven that the mental health of our young men requires a very unique approach; one that allows for understanding that young men struggle with mental health issues, but also is sensitive to the stigma around mental health for some of these young men.



Behind Happy Faces
Room 106

Ross Szabo

Continue the conversation from Ross' keynote address during a roundtable workshop discussion!



Getting into SHAPE: Improving the Quality of Comprehensive School

Mental Health Systems

Room 108

Melissa Heatly, Ph.D.; Jessica Stanis, MS; Kailin Kucewicz, LMSW

This breakout session will identify how the NYS System of Care (SOC) team has partnered with regional BOCES and school teams to advance the SHAPE System across Erie County. SHAPE Up New York is the state-wide implementation of a 6-month learning collaborative (LC) focused on advancing high-quality school mental health systems and supports within K – 12 school districts across NYS. The SHAPE Up New York Learning Collaborative was hosted by the NYS Office of Mental Health System of Care Project, in partnership with the Expanded School Mental Health team at the University of Rochester Medical Center.



Prioritizing Mental Health and Wellness... It Matters!

Room 109

Dr. Mai Nguyen, Director Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) Dept. of Social Emotional and Wellness Supports; Aundrea Sanders, Director BPS Crisis Prevention and Intervention Supports

Explore how the Buffalo Public Schools addresses mental health challenges through creative and effective strategies. Our goal is to provide participants with actionable insights and resources that can be implemented in other school districts. BPS uses data to drive our mental health interventions: we rely resources such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and a Social Emotional Screener to gather relevant data. Through the use of the Multi-Tiered

Systems of Support, BPS uses this data to support student mental health at Tier 1-what we do for all; Tier 2- what we do for some, and Tier 3: what we do for individuals.

11:15 -12 PM Breakout Sessions #2



Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Latinx Youth Identity: Language, Literacy, and Belonging as Mental Health Pathways

Room 103

Claribel González, Ph.D., RBERN West
This session explores how Latinx cultural frameworks can illuminate resilience, agency, and belonging among youth. Rather than framing students as “at risk” or deficient, the session positions cultural knowledge, linguistic identity, and creative survival strategies as protective mental health assets. Participants will engage with activities that reveal how youth navigate school and life challenges in culturally sustaining ways, and will leave with actionable strategies to recognize, affirm, and leverage these practices in their own organizations or classrooms.



Reframing the Narrative: Empowering Youth through the 40 Developmental Assets | Room 104

Anna Kleyman, Buffalo Public Schools Department of Guidance and Counseling, School Counselor Coordinator
Much of today’s dialogue surrounding the youth mental health crisis centers on the barriers and deficits young people face. Recently, a high school student shared with me her deep desire to make

a positive difference in the world—yet expressed feeling powerless and lacking the internal resources to effect meaningful change.

After guiding her to recognize the strengths and potential she already possessed, it became clear to me that both young people and the adults who support them would benefit from a deeper understanding of the Developmental Assets Framework. This evidence-based model identifies 40 key experiences and qualities that are proven to support healthy youth development and foster resilience, purpose, and success.

By the end of the session, participants will leave with a deeper conceptual understanding of youth development and a personalized plan to support positive change—making youth more likely to thrive now and in the future, more resilient in the face of challenges, and less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors.



Grief Support is Not Nice It's Imperative

Room 106

Gwen Mysiak, Executive Director P.U.N.T. Pediatric Cancer Collaborative

We recently opened our WNYCC grief center at 3966 Walden Ave., Lancaster. We provide support to children and families for several origins of death and will discuss the need for grief literacy throughout the WNY Community. We will review grief literacy and the do/don'ts when supporting someone who has lost someone close to them. This will include the difference between empathy and sympathy, and the detrimental use of "at least". It is a practical demonstration for everyday use.



Connecting for Kids (C4K) Collaborative Dialogue: Advancing Cross-Sector Partnerships for Whole Child Wellbeing | Room 108

*Allison Stiles PhD & Anna Cieri,
PhD*

Presenters will guide participants through a Connecting for Kids (C4K) Collaborative Dialogue focused on a) identifying shared goals and values related to supporting students' mental and physical health and academic well-being, b) reflect on strengths and barriers that their systems currently exhibit related to cross-sector collaboration, and c) identify actionable next steps to enhance cross-sector partnership. The goals of the session are twofold. First, we aim to create synergy across participants and identify steps that they can bring back to their systems to enhance collaboration. Second, we seek to introduce and familiarize participants with the C4K model as a potential tool for engaging their systems in enhancing cross sector collaboration.



What is the Essence of Being a Human?

Room 109

Moon Evans, Ph.D. candidate, Jiahe WangXu, Ph.D., Hannah Rapp, Ph.D., and Robert Enright, Ph.D.

This proposal presents a demo lesson from a forgiveness intervention program developed by Enright and the Human Development Group (Knutson & Enright, 2002). It is intended for teachers and mental health professionals and tailored for elementary students in grades K–2. The lesson is titled "A Person is a Person, No Matter Who and No Matter How."

12 -1 PM Lunch + Awards Ceremony

The **Mental Health Impact Awards** individuals and organizations that have demonstrated exceptional dedication and made a significant positive impact in promoting mental health within our region. These impact and leadership award categories are for a person in higher education, P-12 schools, agencies (public or private), community, government/policy, journalists. There will be one award recipient per category.



**1 PM TURN IN
YOUR BINGO
BOARDS!**

1 -1:45 PM Breakout Sessions #3



Where County Supports Youth and Families Room 103

Marie Sly LMSW, Erie County Coordinator of Children Mental Health Services

This session will educate the audience on the cross-departmental work which occurs within the county departments. This includes Children's Single Point of access, Family Services Team, and Juvenile Delinquency Services Team. The audience will become familiar with times a family would benefit from County level services, as well as learn about youth/family focused community services accessed through County entry points and/or direct community referral. This includes services funded through Social Services, Department of Mental

Providing Hope and Recovery



Office of
Mental Health

Health and the State Office of Mental Health, and State Department of Health. This session will identify and explore the benefits of System of Care values to assist families to gain necessary resources and skills to promote youth success in home, school, and community.



Providing Supportive Environments for Trans and Nonbinary Young People | Room 104

Sare Martin (they/them), MSW and Begonia/Zeke Garcia (they/them), MSW

This presentation will provide attendees with a better understanding of practices that can support transgender and nonbinary young people in schools, service-providing organizations, and the community. Using an intersectional lens, we will discuss administrative practices

that can help provide accessibility to services for trans and nonbinary young people, as well as share practical tips for creating affirming and welcoming environments.



Understanding Immigrant and Refugee Experiences Room 106

Elizabeth Kuttesch, RBERN West

Our WNY school districts are home to a large number of refugee and immigrant youth. Understanding their experiences, including push factors for leaving home, resettlement trauma, and the tenuous, and often contentious, immigration pathways their families face, is important for supporting these students in their educational endeavors. In this session, we will ground in the NYSED CRSE Framework to consider tier 1 trauma-sensitive procedures that can

be implemented at the district, building, and classroom levels to meet the mental health needs of newcomer students and families.



Food for Thought: Spotting the Signs of Eating Disorders in Schools Room 108

Jennifer Haak, MD, Kristen Cercone, PhD, Lisa Razenhofer, PhD

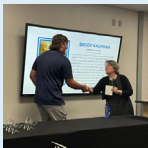
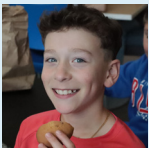
Eating disorders have ballooned in frequency since the COVID pandemic. Schools see students more frequently than their pediatricians and can play an integral role in early detection, which affects recovery and prognosis. Staff might feel unsure of how to support a student, or how to talk with families to get students the help they need outside of school. This talk will also provide information to help schools play a supportive role and provide accommodations for students with eating disorders. The presentation will educate about eating disorders, early detection and the pivotal role that schools can play. It will also discuss resources in the community and how to access them, and ways to communicate with parents, families and adolescents about eating concerns.



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www.e1b.org/about-us/educational-foundation



Understanding Social Media and Internet Safety Room 109

Julie Palmer, Executive Director, Kamyia Jacobs, Youth Social Worker

This session will cover topics related to trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), including warning signs, how to engage effectively, and strategies for providing support. It will also address internet safety, child exploitation prevention, and the impact

of social media. Participants will learn how to identify risk factors and engage in promoting safe practices.

2 -2:45 PM Breakout Sessions #4



Honoring Family Funds of Knowledge Room 103

Catrice Huff

This session will explore the concept of Family Funds of Knowledge—the rich cultural, experiential, and practical knowledge that families bring to their children’s education. Participants will learn how to identify and honor these assets to build stronger, more inclusive partnerships between schools and families. The session will offer practical strategies for integrating family knowledge into classroom instruction, school culture, and engagement practices, with the goal of fostering equity, trust, and meaningful collaboration. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how these assets contribute to student identity, engagement, and academic success.



Building a Culture of Holistic Support for Families and Students in the Lackawanna City School District Room 104

Jennifer English (District Principal); Judy Faircloth (Parent, Family, Community Resource Center Coordinator); Jill Dougherty (Attendance Teacher); Amanda Kulinski (Attendance Teacher); Ashli Krotz (Principal of Special Education); Keith Kwiatkowski (School Resource Officer)

The Lackawanna City School District

(LCSD) has embraced a district-wide commitment to holistic support for our students and families, rooted in the understanding that academic success is only possible when basic needs are met. Guided by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, we recognize that students and families facing challenges such as food insecurity, unstable housing, lack of transportation, or other barriers cannot be expected to focus on learning without first addressing these foundational needs. Through this holistic approach, LCSD is creating a school community where every student and family knows they are seen, supported, and valued. By aligning district resources with community partnerships, we are fostering a network of care that addresses immediate needs while also inspiring meaningful engagement in education.

University at Buffalo
School of Social Work

**Social work
is vital**

and our research
makes life better

**EXPLORE
HOW**





Building Resilient Schools: Compeer Buffalo's Ap- proach to Student Mental

Health | Room 106

Hayley Kasprzycki (MSW), School Program Coordinator; Lisa Johnson, Chief Strategy Officer

Compeer Buffalo is dedicated to supporting the mental and emotional well-being of youth through innovative, relationship-focused programming and evidence-based training. This 45-minute breakout session will highlight two impactful approaches:

1. School-Based Mentoring Program
2. Mental Health First Aid (Youth and Teen)

The goal of this session is to leave attendees with both a conceptual understanding of how mentoring and MHFA can transform school environments and practical strategies they can adapt to

strengthen youth mental health initiatives within their own schools and organizations.



Panel Discussion On Dis- ability Studies and Mental Health: Aspiring Teachers

Envision the Accessible Class- rooms of the Future

Room 108

Dr. Ajitpaul Mangat, Assistant Professor of English (Niagara University); Celena Barone, Adam Lombardi, Grace Elson, Julia Nielsen (English Education majors at Niagara University)

This panel brings together future educators to consider the barriers that prevent the flourishing of the mental health and wellness of young students. Locating barriers in the external environment will allow these practitioners and burgeoning experts to critique

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understandings of mental disability as an individual problem while offering concrete strategies for creating a more accessible classroom. Some urgent questions that the panelists will consider include, how can we accommodate not only physical but also sensory and cognitive disabilities? How does gender affect the lived experience of disability? What does accessible teaching – from lesson plans to relationships with students to the physical classroom – look like?



Leading with Our Resilience Everyday (LORE) Room 109

Andrew Prinzing & Courtney Santasero

Our presentation uses a Restorative Practice format, with shared values and guidelines. We introduce a topic, and invite people to reflect on their personal connection to the content, then share in pairs or small groups, then share out with a larger group.

3 - 4 PM **Poster Sessions and Networking | Lobby**

A Review on the Effects of Cell-phone Restrictions in Schools: Are bans beneficial for students?
Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse

Bridging Mental Health and Puberty Education : A Trauma-Informed Approach
University at Buffalo School of Social Work

Conjoint Behavioral Consultation: A Tool for Family Engagement
University at Buffalo School of Social Work

Exploring the Role of Activity in the Lives of Refugee Youth
University at Buffalo School of Social Work

Bridging Social Work and Occupational Therapy: Sensory-Informed Approaches to Youth Resiliency
University at Buffalo School of Social Work

Community Care Specialists
Erie 2 BOCES

Bridging the Gap: Addressing Depression and Anxiety in Young People with Chronic Illness
University at Buffalo School of Social Work

A Piece of the Puzzle: Facilitating Collaboration and Measuring Impact with SHAPE
Erie 1 BOCES Community Schools COSER

Insights from Peer & Family Support Programs
Mental Health Advocates of WNY

Do Community Schools Work for High-Needs Students? Evaluating Integrated Student Support Services and Outcomes for Equity.
University at Buffalo

Ethnic-Racial Identity and Critical Consciousness Development in Youth of Color
University at Buffalo

SMART



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**This event would not be possible without the
vision, hardwork and dedication of the
SMART Steering Committee**

Ann Linder, Orchard Park Central School District
Anna Cieri, Suicide Prevention Coalition Of Erie County
Annahita (Anna) Ball, University at Buffalo, School of Social Work
Candace Reimer, Erie 1 BOCES
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Lisa Chimera, Erie County
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- Peaceful Schools
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- New Directions Youth and Family Services
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- Erie County Department of Mental Health

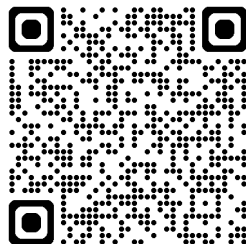


Erie Path is Erie County's smartphone app that helps parents and caregivers address the mental and behavioral health challenges faced by children and adolescents.

- Find available programs and services
- Access information
- Explore practical strategies

Erie Path also includes resources for adult mental and behavioral health services. This includes resources for housing, employment, childcare, food pantries, medical care, social services and senior services.

**DOWNLOAD
THE APP**



SMART



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