

AICDAC Recovery HUB

2026 RECOVERY SUPPORT WORKFORCE SUMMIT

REGION 7

Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, McKean, Venango, & Warren counties

May 21, 2026 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Conewango Club
201 Market Street
Warren, PA 16365



AGENDA AT A GLANCE

9:00 AM - 9:25 AM - WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

9:25 AM - 9:45 AM - OPENING REMARKS - MELISSA BAXTER, SCA DIRECTOR, FOREST-WARREN COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES

9:45 AM - 10:15 AM - BRIDGING THE GAP: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS IN RECOVERY

10:15 AM - 10:30 AM - BREAK/RAFFLE

10:30 AM - 11:00 AM - NETWORKING ACTIVITY

11:00 AM - 11:30 AM - SHATTER THE STIGMA: THE POWER OF VISUAL IMAGES TO SAVE LIVES AND INFLUENCE OTHERS

11:30 AM - 12:00 PM - ROOTED IN RECOVERY

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM LUNCH

1:00 PM - 1:30 PM - WHEN LOVE HURTS: ATTACHMENT, ADDICTION, ABUSE, AND THE PATH TO RELATIONAL RECOVERY

1:30 PM - 2:00 PM - NETWORKING ACTIVITY

2:00 PM - 2:15 PM - BREAK/RAFFLE

2:15 PM - 3:00 PM - FAMILY RECOVERY: SUPPORTING, HEALING, REDUCING STIGMA AND BUILDING HOPE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM - AWARD CEREMONY, RAFFLE, CLOSING REMARKS

AICDAC RECOVERY HUB | RECOVERYHUB@AICDAC.ORG | 724-762-3429 | AICDAC.ORG

This publication and project are made possible by SAMHSA FAIN 6H79TI085783-01M001 and by the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) Grant Number 4100095780. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of SAMHSA or DDAP. Individuals seeking treatment or supports for themselves or a loved one can call the toll-free PA Get Help Now helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or text 717-216-0905.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



NORTHWEST BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

Website: nw3rfp.sbhm.org

SOUTHWEST BEHAVIORAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Website: sbhm.org



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ALLIANCE OF RURAL PENNSYLVANIA

Website: bharp.org



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THANK YOU TO OUR VENDORS

- ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE SERVICES, INC. (ADAS)
- ARKVIEW BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
- CENCLEAR
- CENTER FOR FAMILY SERVICES, INC.
- CLEARFIELD-JEFFERSON DRUG AND ALCOHOL COMMISSION
- COMMUNITY CARE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ORGANIZATION (CCBHO)
- DEERFIELD CENTERS FOR ADDICTIONS TREATMENT
- ELLEN O'BRIEN GAISER CENTER
- FIRETREE, LTD.
- FOREST-WARREN HUMAN SERVICES
- GLENBEIGH
- GROWING WELLNESS
- OIL REGION RECOVERY
- PA DEPT. OF MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS
- PENNSYLVANIA CAREERLINK
- PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAMS (DDAP)
- PENNSYLVANIA RECOVERY ORGANIZATIONS ALLIANCE (PRO-A)
- PYRAMID HEALTHCARE, INC.
- RECOVERY CAPITAL (AICDAC)
- ST. JOSEPH INSTITUTE
- THE GROVE CITY RECOVERY RESOURCE CENTER
- THE LIFE CENTER, BETHEL LIFE WORSHIP CENTER
- THE TURNING POINT AT WASHINGTON

PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOTS

We are excited to offer free professional headshots to all conference attendees, courtesy of

JASON WALTENBAUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

"I am a modern lifestyle photographer living in the wonderful city of Pittsburgh. I have been photographing weddings since 2010 and am fortunate to have worked with a lot of incredible people along the way."

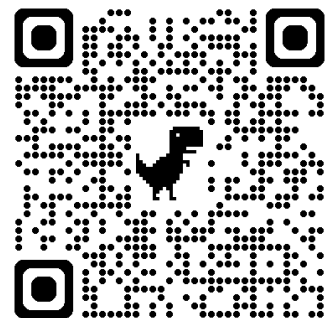
A professional headshot will help you make a strong first impression, build credibility, and strengthen your personal brand across resumes and professional profiles.

Headshots will be taken on-site during the conference from 10:00am - 1:00pm

jasonwaltphoto.com

Cell Phone: 724-859-5372

Email: jasonwaltenbaugh@gmail.com



**CLICK OR SCAN TO RESERVE
YOUR TIME SLOT**

OPENING REMARKS



MELISSA BAXTER

9:25AM - 9:45AM

Melissa Baxter has been employed with Forest Warren Human Services since 2011, beginning her career as a Children and Youth Caseworker. In 2015, she transitioned to the Forest Warren Single County Authority (SCA) as a Drug and Alcohol Case Manager, a role she held for five years. She was then promoted to Drug and Alcohol Case Management Supervisor, serving in that position for three years. For the past two years, Melissa has served as the SCA Director.

Originally from Edinboro, PA, Melissa attended General McClane High School. She continued her education at Mercyhurst College North East, where she earned her Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice, and later obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from the State University of New York at Fredonia. She lives in Warren County with her husband Eric, sons Luke and Caleb, and dog Zoey. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her family, going on vacation, and watching her sons play sports.

PRESENTATIONS



BRIDGING THE GAP: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS IN RECOVERY

9:45AM - 10:15AM

Recovery is not a journey that happens in isolation—it is built through connection, support, and access to the right resources at the right time. This presentation explores the vital role Community Health Workers (CHWs) play in bridging the gap between individuals in recovery and the systems designed to support them. Designed for both individuals with lived experience and recovery professionals, the presentation highlights how CHWs use trust, lived experience, and person-centered approaches to reduce stigma, improve access to care, and address barriers such as housing, food, and transportation. Attendees will gain practical insight into how CHWs empower individuals and support sustainable recovery.

Sondra Anderson serves as a Certified Community Health Worker (CCHW) Supervisor with Center for Family Services in Crawford County. With a lifelong passion for advocacy and a deep understanding of community needs, Sondra works daily to support individuals facing barriers related to health, housing, mental health, and substance use challenges. With over 30 years of experience in Crawford County, Pennsylvania's rural healthcare and social service fields, Sondra has built a career centered on service and compassion. Her diverse professional background includes roles as a Certified Nursing Assistant, Dialysis Technician, Chiropractic Office Manager, Early Head Start Data Coordinator, and now, as a Certified Community Health Worker. Sondra brings expertise in care coordination, outreach, health education, peer support, patient billing, & data collection and analysis. Over the years, she has developed strong collaborations with local service providers to ensure that participants feel seen, heard, and supported. Driven by the belief that every connection creates an opportunity for change, Sondra embodies the spirit of community health work — empowering individuals, strengthening partnerships, and uplifting the communities she serves.

PRESENTATIONS



SHATTER THE STIGMA: THE POWER OF VISUAL IMAGES TO SAVE LIVES AND INFLUENCE OTHERS

11:00AM - 11:30AM

Individuals who have overcome addictions resume productive lives. Through visual storytelling, this presentation aims to encourage people who have overcome tremendous obstacles in their lives to share their stories with the direct intent of shattering stigmas related to forms of addiction.

Gene Blair, Jr. is a filmmaker based in Sharon, Pennsylvania. He has served individuals with diagnosed physical and mental disabilities for 18 years. In 2016, Gene created an inclusive production company, "Get-2-Work Productions", in which individuals with diagnosed special needs are taught the language of filmmaking. Gene now works as a freelance filmmaker and is the cameraman and editor for The Casey Malone Show, a television program based in Youngstown, Ohio. He helps local businesses and organizations create industrial short films and visual content. Gene serves as a Board member for the Mercer County Creative Arts Foundation and volunteers with The George A. Romero Foundation, where he films and edits visual content for their online content and special events. Gene recently earned a Certified Recovery Specialist certification in Pennsylvania and is currently developing multiple documentary-style projects that focus on the endurance of the human spirit.



ROOTED IN RECOVERY

11:30AM - 12:00PM

Whether working one-on-one, in groups, or out in the community, this field is built on supporting people—and that work is both meaningful and impactful. This interactive, strength-based session invites participants into an experience that explores the role nature can play in strengthening connection, engagement, and recovery. Through shared reflection and conversation, participants will hear how programs across the region are already incorporating elements of nature to support the individuals they serve. Growing Wellness will highlight cross-county collaborations through Succulents & Self-Care™, an evidence-informed, nature-based wellness program. Through this lens, the session demonstrates how hands-on, low-barrier approaches can create welcoming spaces where individuals feel comfortable, open, and connected. Together, we will explore what this approach looks like in practice—how it integrates into real-world settings, how participants are responding, and three key lessons learned through implementation. Data-informed insights and real examples will highlight how small, intentional experiences can create meaningful impact, including increased engagement, self-care awareness, and connection through nature. Through interactive moments and shared dialogue, attendees will leave with ideas they can immediately connect to within their own work. This session is about more than one program—it's about creating spaces where people feel seen, where conversations happen naturally, and where recovery feels possible and supported.

Katie Gassner is the founder of Growing Wellness, a public health consulting service. Her signature mobile program, Succulents & Self-Care™, delivers nature-based experiences that create space for people to feel valued, safe, and open to connection—supporting well-being and recovery across the spectrum of care through shared experience. With over 20 years of experience in behavioral health, Katie holds a National Certificate in Tobacco Treatment Practice and serves as a consultant for Pennsylvania's Statewide Tobacco-Free Recovery Initiative. Her work is grounded in evidence-driven practices and brought to life through practical, real-world approaches—rooted in connection, nature, and meeting people where they are.

PRESENTATIONS



WHEN LOVE HURTS: ATTACHMENT, ADDICTION, ABUSE, AND THE PATH TO RELATIONAL RECOVERY

1:00PM- 1:30PM

Relationships play a central role in both addiction and healing. This one-hour session explores how attachment, trauma, abuse, and substance use intersect to shape relationship patterns and recovery experiences. Participants will learn how insecure attachment and trauma bonding can contribute to addictive or abusive dynamics, and why leaving these relationships is often far more complex than “making a choice.” Using a trauma-informed, recovery-oriented lens, this presentation examines addiction as a coping and regulation strategy within unsafe or unpredictable relationships. The session will also focus on recovery from relational trauma, including rebuilding safety, boundaries, self-trust, and connection.

Designed for peer support professionals, recovery specialists, providers, and individuals in recovery, this session emphasizes compassion, empowerment, and the role of supportive relationships in sustained recovery.

Kayla Tandarich, CMW, BS, is the Program Manager of the Training & Skill Enhancement Program at Wesley Family Services where she has worked for the past several years. Kayla is also a PA State Certified Family Based Therapist and Agency Wellness Ambassador. Kayla has over 19 years of experience in the social services industry, ranging from RTF’s, Group Homes, Autism Schools, Case Management and Clinical Services. She has spent her career working with individuals across the lifespan facing mental health, behavioral health, and substance use issues. Kayla graduated from Slippery Rock University in 2010 with her Bachelor’s degree in social services. Kayla has made it her life’s mission to impact and inspire others to change their lives for the better. Kayla has struggled with her own mental health challenges of ADHD, CPTSD and addiction. Kayla is a person in long term recovery from alcohol use disorder and will be celebrating 7 years of sobriety on 7/5/26.



FAMILY RECOVERY: SUPPORTING HEALING, REDUCING STIGMA, AND BUILDING HOPE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

2:15PM - 3:00PM

This presentation centers the family voice as a vital component of recovery-oriented systems of care, offering insight drawn from lived experience as a Certified Family Recovery Specialist and community advocacy across rural settings. It highlights how supporting families strengthens the recovery workforce, improves community wellbeing, and fosters long-term recovery outcomes. Participants will explore the realities families face, including ambiguous grief, isolation, and systemic barriers, while gaining practical tools to engage families with compassion, respect, and cultural humility. The session intentionally honors all pathways to recovery, recognizing that flexibility and inclusion are essential—especially in rural communities where access and choice may be limited. This session is story-centered, trauma-informed, and interactive, blending lived experience, workforce insight, and practical tools. Attendees will be invited into reflection and discussion while maintaining a respectful, emotionally safe environment. The tone is hopeful, inclusive, and grounded in real-world rural experience.

Angela Morton is the Consortium Director of the Recovery Is NWPA consortium, Project Manager, NIH R62 Grant Mercer, Erie, Venango, Crawford, and Clarion counties, and a Certified Family Recovery Specialist who is passionate about community advocacy in supporting families impacted by substance use disorders. With lived experience and workforce expertise, she brings a focus on reducing stigma, supporting family wellbeing, and strengthening recovery-oriented communities that honor all paths to healing.

AWARD HONOREES



RECOVERY ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

REBECCA SMITH

CERTIFIED RECOVERY SPECIALIST, CRAWFORD COUNTY DRUG & ALCOHOL EXECUTIVE COMMISSION (CCDAEC)

"Becca goes above and beyond the title of CRS with her involvement in our agency and throughout Crawford County."

"She advocates for a decrease in stigma everywhere she goes, supports all pathways, and will always fight for what she believes in."

"Becca embodies what true advocacy looks like. She leads with empathy, meets people where they are, and never turns away someone in need. Her willingness to step in, support others, and uplift those around her has made a lasting impact on countless lives."



RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

CENTER FOR FAMILY SERVICES, INC

CRAWFORD COUNTY

"I was placed at the Center for Family Services Thrift Store to do community service. Once I completed community service, I continued to work in a volunteer capacity because I was so impressed with what the organization does for people. I was offered a job in January. I don't think anyone knows just what this job will do for me and my daughter. I'm excited and honored to have the chance to be a part of it. As a recovering

person, you only pray that you can get a job one day that fills you with the kind of love, purpose, and pride that the store fills me with. Most of us never do because no one likes to take a chance on us, but Center for Family Services did and have never judged me and I'm so very thankful. They have not only become one of the strongest parts of my support system but also like my family."



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

ANGELA ECKSTROM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE SERVICES, INC (ADAS)

"Angie is the embodiment of dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to the recovery community. With over 30 years of service in the field, she has devoted her career to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by substance use and consistently goes above and beyond to ensure access to meaningful support and services. Formerly a case manager, Angie built a strong foundation rooted in compassion and direct client care. Today, as Executive Director, she continues to lead with that same client-centered focus, ensuring that every decision reflects the needs of those we serve. Her vision, persistence, and genuine care have strengthened the recovery community and created lasting change."

MONTHLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVES

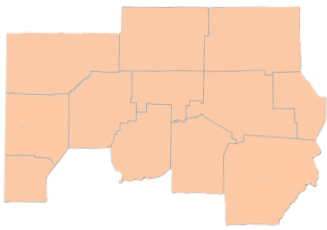
Join the Recovery HUB's monthly CRS/CFRS Learning Collaborative!
We meet the 4th Wednesday of every month at 9:00am to discuss topics related to delivery of Recovery Support Services and stay connected to each other. This space allows for shared experience of Recovery Support staff and volunteers to guide, support and celebrate the wins.

Join the Recovery HUB'S monthly RCO Collaborative Meeting!
We meet the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 9:00am to discuss topics related to Recovery Community Organizations and Recovery Community Centers. RCOs and RCCs can use this time to connect with and learn from each other by sharing ideas and experiences that support needs of your Recovery Community.

Join the Recovery HUB's monthly Recovery House meeting!
We meet the 2nd Monday of every month at 11:00am to discuss topics related to Recovery Housing. Whether you are thinking about opening a Recovery House or already have established Recovery Houses, this is your space to connect and support one another in the ventures of this vital resource.

LIVE MEETING LINKS ARE ON OUR WEBPAGE - [HTTPS://AICDAC.ORG/RECOVERYHUB/](https://aicdac.org/recoveryhub/)

STRATEGIC PLAN



REGION 7

Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango, Warren

PRIORITY 1 – LICENSED RECOVERY HOUSING

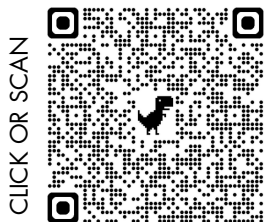
PRIORITY 2 - TRANSPORTATION

PRIORITY 3 – RSS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

PRIORITY 4 – RCO/RCC

PRIORITY 5 – RECOVERY FRIENDLY EMPLOYMENT

SUBMIT YOUR CONFERENCE EVALUATION HERE

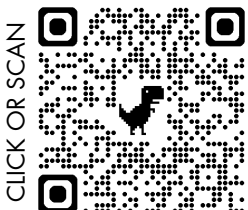


CLICK OR SCAN

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



CLICK OR SCAN



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VISIT OUR WEBPAGE TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER AND VIEW OUR TRAINING AND EVENTS CALENDER



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