



DD DAY

OF **DAWNY**
AWARENESS AND CELEBRATION



Tuesday, May 21, 2025

Doors open at 8:00 am

The Conference Center Niagara Falls

101 Old Falls Street - Niagara Falls NY 14303

Visit www.ddday.org to register online

2025 Features

Innovative Workshops - Concession Service - Agency and Vendor Fair
Pop-up Art Gallery - Healthy You - Awards Luncheon Open Reception
Laughter Yoga - Therapy Dogs

Event Sponsor



2025 Schedule

8:00 am – 9:00 am	Registration – Vendor Fair begins
9:00 am – 9:30 am	Announcements and Awards
9:10 am – 9:30 am	Laughter Yoga
9:45 am – 10:35 am	Keynote Presentation
10:15 am – 12:00 pm	Cataract Room: Open session Zumba and Nutrition - all are welcome!
10:35 am – 10:45 am	Break and Fair
10:45 am - 11:45 am	Morning Workshops; Executive Meeting
11:45 am – 12:00 pm	Break and Fair; Lunch seating begins
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Awards Luncheon
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Break and Fair
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Afternoon Workshops
3:15 pm – 5:00 pm	Reception (Entertainment/Food/Basket Raffle)

OPENING PRESENTATION

9:45 AM – 10:35 AM

Keah Brown, Journalist, Author, Screenwriter

Keah Brown is an award-winning journalist, author, and screenwriter. She is the recipient of Ulta Beauty's Muse 100 award, which is a celebration of 100 inspirational voices around beauty, she is one of The Root's 100 most influential African Americans of 2018. Keah is the creator of the viral hashtag, #DisabledAndCute. Her work on disability, identity, and pop culture has appeared in Town & Country Magazine, Teen Vogue, Elle, The LA Times, Marie Claire UK, And The New York Times, among other publications. Her essay collection, The Pretty One, picture book, Sam's Super Seats and a young adult novel titled The Secret Summer Promise are out now.



Keynote Presentation

Award-winning author and journalist, Keah Brown will be discussing what her life has been like as a disabled person, Journalist and author as well as what steps she took to get to where she is today and what it is like to choose joy in the face of a world that does not always see joy as a possibility for disabled people. She believes that joy is not only our right as disabled people, but it is revolutionary and in such trying times, we deserve to find and bask in as much joy as possible!

Intended Audience Key: I=Individual, F=Family, P=Professional, E=Everybody

#1. OMIG Audits and Enforcement Trends-What Every Provider Needs to Know.

William Busler, Of Counsel, Barclay Damon LLP, Margaret Surowka, Partner, Barclay Damon LLP.

This presentation will focus on what member agency executives, managers, administrators and clinicians need to know in the event they are the subject of an OMIG audit or other type of OMIG review. The presentation will also cover member agency obligations concerning self-disclosure of Medicaid overpayments and requirements for Compliance plans. This presentation will provide information on revised Audit Protocols for various program areas. In January 2025, OMIG released a new Audit Protocol for Community Habilitation services which will impact many of the DDAWNY member agencies. In addition, according to OMIG, Self-Disclosure and Compliance Plan obligations will be emphasized by the agency in the calendar year 2025. The presentation will provide valuable information to member agencies on how to prepare for the above interactions with OMIG. There will be a Q & A from the audience. **(P) Red Jacket Room**

#2. Let's Connect!

Elena Van Voorhis, Care Coordinator Supervisor, Person Centered Services, Melissa Rokitka, Care Coordinator, Person Centered Services, Paige Chernogorec, Care Coordinator, Person Centered Services, Kathleen Sparacio, Care Coordinator Ambassador, Person Centered Services, Kimberly Neyman, Care Coordinator Support Specialist, Person Centered Services.

This workshop is intended as a space to begin to envision how people with I/DD can create opportunities to meet and form relationships. This will be a conversation, facilitated by Person Centered Services, with the intent of creating a group driven by individuals. We are looking for input from individuals who want to strengthen their social connections in an environment that is comfortable and enjoyable! All you need to bring is an open mind and any ideas you might have to achieve this outcome. **(I,F) Ball Room 1**

#3. Bridging the Gap: Linking "Learn the Signs. Act Early." (LTSAE) and the DEC Recommended Practices (RPs) for Families.

Ann Kinney, Centralized Access Coordinator, Help Me Grow WNY/Parent Network of WNY, Erin Reisdorf, Early Childhood Resource and Referral Specialist, Parent Network of WNY.

We will look closely to tools and strategies, from the CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." (LTSAE) program, as well as the Division of Early Childhood's (DEC) (of the Council of Exceptional Children CEC) Recommended Practices (RP's) that professionals can use with families to help them engage directly in the early identification and early intervention process. **(F,P) Adams Room**

#4. Reflection vs Rumination: Using Mindfulness to Move our Mindset.

Liam Doherty, Manager of Learning and Development, Person Centered Services.

Mindfulness is a powerful practice that can help us transform our ruminating thoughts to reflective ones. Ruminating thoughts involve repetitive, negative thinking that increases stress and anxiety. Reflective thoughts are balanced and objective, promoting problem-solving and emotional regulation. Mindfulness encourages self-awareness and acceptance, allowing people to observe their thoughts without judgement. This shift in perspective enables us to focus on constructive and reflective thoughts. **(E) Porter Room**

#5. Bridging Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities: Practical Strategies for Support.

Darla Carter, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, Northern VA Support Services/Sound Mind Health.

This presentation explores the intersection of mental health and developmental disabilities, offering practical de-escalation techniques and medication insights. Attendees will learn how to recognize emotional distress, adapt communication strategies, and support individuals experiencing crises. The presentation will also cover common psychiatric medications, the side effects, and best practices for monitoring. **(E) Hennepin Room**

#6. Making the Art of Advocacy Work for You: Becoming a Change Agent

BJ Stasio, Co-Creator, Art of Advocacy, Inc., Max Donatelli, Co-Creator, Art of Advocacy, Inc.

Art of Advocacy “It’s not a program, it’s a way of life.” Presenters will provide an overview of the model; as well as, taking the more seasoned advocates to the next level by offering various strategies on how to become a credible advocate, including how to take the initiative, how to tell your story, how to stay on message, how to collaborate with others, how to build lasting relationships with elected officials, and how to tell you are really making a difference. **(E) DeVeaux Room**

#7. Adaptive Care Planning: Improving Healthcare Delivery for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Dr. Desi R. Carozza, MD FAAHPM HEC-C, Medical Director for Geriatrics and Bioethics, Department of Palliative and Supportive Care, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Institute, Alex Kemp, MS, Disability Advocate and Sibling of Individual with DD, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Science at the University at Buffalo.

We are developing an Adaptive Care Pathway with developmental disabilities at Roswell Park Comprehensive Care Center. Adaptive Care Plans serve as an “IEP” for healthcare, taking into consideration the unique support needs of each patient. Our goal is to improve the quality of healthcare individuals with developmental disabilities receive and reduce inequities in the provision of care. We hope session participants will share their stories and insight into how we can improve our process to best serve this population, as we hope to make this a replicable model that has application across settings and institutions. **(E) Governor’s Room**

#8. START and Humanism

Dr. Rose Hazlitt, Licensed Psychologist and Clinical Director of START/CSIDD, Chelsea Borowski, Program Director of START/CSIDD.

START/CSIDD is a systemic program supporting people with Developmental Disabilities experiencing a behavior health crisis. This presentation will discuss the systemic approach START/CSIDD uses to stabilize people and help them experience wellness through humanistic and positive approaches. **(F,P) Whitney Room**

#9. An Alternative to Guardianship: A Discussion on Supported Decision-Making.

Craig Mennig, Member Relations Manager/Supported Decision-Making Facilitator, Person Centered Services.

An overview of Supported Decision Making that will include a brief background, an explanation as an alternative to guardianship, the three-phase SDMNY model, the Supported Decision Making agreement, what SDM is and isn't, misconceptions, and an opportunity for Q & A. **(E) Tubman Room**

#10. Addressing Sexual Education for People with Disabilities.

Desiree Walkowski, License Master Social Worker, People-Inc.

Why Sexual Education should be addressed. What if we don't address Sexual Education? Are there dangers in not addressing this topic? Understanding Consent, basics to navigate bodily autonomy. What to look for in a curriculum for teaching Sexual Education and where to start. How much support and education are required by NY State schools? **(E) Olmsted Room**

#11. Making Sense of Sensory-A Practical Guide for Families and Caregivers.

Ashley Arnone, Occupational Therapist, The Children's League.

A brief overview of sensory processing and the sensory systems followed by practical strategies for families and caregivers to identify sensory-based strengths and challenges. Strategies will have a neurodiversity-affirming lens. **(F) Telsa Room**

#12. TIES (Together Including Every Student)

Jennifer Rautenstrauch, TIES WNY Program Manager, Starbridge, Karen Polizzi, TIES Coordinator for Springville, Griffith Institute.

Together Including Every Student (TIES), a program of Starbridge, promotes the participation of students and young adults who have developmental disabilities in inclusive, organized, extracurricular and community activities, with the natural support of trained peer volunteers. TIES has been implemented in several school districts in the WNY region. The presentation will include: the value and benefits of inclusive experiences for people with and without disabilities, perspectives from parents, participants, peer volunteers and school administrators. **(F) Schoellkopf Room**

PM BREAKOUT SESSIONS 2:00-3:00 PM

#13. OPWDD Strategy Session: Updates and Future Planning.

Willow Baer, Acting Commissioner of OPWDD, Jessica Pidgeon, Ph.D., Director of Strategic Planning and Engagement of OPWDD.

In this workshop you'll hear key updates on OPWDD's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan progress, share your thoughts on how far we've come, and help shape where we need to go as part of a discussion on the future vision of OPWDD services and supports. **(E) Ballroom 2**

#14. The Intersection of Intellectual/Developmental Disability and Domestic Violence.

Stephanie Saunders, Director of Domestic Violence Programs, Community Services for Every1, Maggie Benjamin, Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator, Community Services for Every1.

People with disabilities are at 4-10 times higher risk for being victimized than those without a disability. The objective(s) for this presentation include: For the audience to be able to 1. Identify additional risks for victimization 2. Barriers to seeking help 3. The signs and ways in which someone with a disability may be experiencing abuse 4. How to help. **(E) Red Jacket Room**

#15. SANYS U-Self Advocacy University: A Learning Journey

Michael Rogers, Regional Organizer, Self Advocacy Association of NYS, Sophia Roberts, Regional Coordinator, Self Advocacy Association of NYS, Hannah Brecher, SANYS U Graduate, Jonathan Fratantonio, SANYS U Graduate.

A fresh and focused look at what it means to be an effective self-advocate, by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities. Come get a taste of this dynamic, free course that can be brought to your group, agency or classroom. SANYS U is a 6-12 session course that includes a student leadership project and graduation ceremony, brought to you by self-advocacy leaders from the Self Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYS), one of the largest self-advocacy organizations in the U.S. **(I,F) Schoellkopf Room**

#16. Supporting Individuals with Multiple Diagnoses: How Tri-D Bridges the Systems Silos.

Elizabeth Caton-Burm, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner and Program Manager, Catholic Charities Family and Community Services.

Navigating our complex healthcare and social services systems is complicated enough when you have one diagnosis. When several are layered, things become exponentially more difficult. Tri-D is an innovative new program specifically targeting individuals in the nexus of complexity where mental health issues. Intellectual or developmental disability, and substance use problems converge. This presentation will provide an overview of Tri-D and its unique approach to complex service provision. **(F,P) Olmsted Room**

#17. How to make the most out of Care Coordination Services.

Katelyn Luke-Moore, Provider Relations Manager-East, Person Centered Services. Maria Kirkpatrick, Provider Relations Manager-West, Person Centered Services.

An overview of Care Coordination Services to include: Life Plan Literacy, what a Care Coordinator can do for you, how to best work with your care coordinator, Person Centered Services Portal (brief overview) for members and providers, working with health care providers.

(E) Whitney Room

#18. Building for a Lifetime: Enhancing Residential Supports for People with IDD

Mark Zawacki, Executive Director, Heritage Christian Services Foundation, Marisa Geitner, President and CEO, Heritage Christian Services, Chuck Collard, VP Western New York Operations, Heritage Christian Services.

Ensuring people with IDD can age in place with dignity takes commitment and creativity. Through The Homes with Heart Campaign, we are replacing 13 aging two-story homes with fully accessible residences, using private resources to create sustainable, person-centered housing. Navigating uncertainty, we adapted to evolving care needs and found solutions beyond government funding, ensuring people have the choice to remain at home through end of life.

(E) DeVeaux Room

#19. Empowering Abilities: Unlocking Wellness for Adults with Disabilities.

Rebecca Champlin, Wellness Coordinator, Beyond Support Network, Vito Gigante, Associate Director of Clinical Services, Beyond Support Network.

This presentation explores how wellness is implemented for adults with disabilities, focusing on physical, mental, and social well-being. We'll highlight how tailored programs empower individuals to engage in activities that promote independence, health, and professional growth. Additionally, we'll discuss the importance of supporting staff wellness, ensuring that those who care for and support individuals with disabilities are also equipped with the tools to thrive through a holistic approach. **(E) Governor's Room**

#20. The Power of Vulnerability: Sharing, Sustaining, and Connecting.

Carlie Arnone, Senior Manager, Inclusion and Belonging, Person Centered Services, Erin McGee, Director, Learning and Development, Person Centered Services.

In this session, we'll discuss ways to encourage openness and vulnerability in story telling, provide strategies for staying engaged when sharing personal stories repeatedly, and discuss ways that we foster deeper connections amongst all of us as humans. **(E) Hennepin Room**

#21. Healthy You Experience: Kenpo Eagles Adaptive Karate

Nick and Toni Chimento, lead teachers, trainers ; Adaptive Yoga Amanda Squires, Yoga Six Instructor, 500 Hour E-RYT.

Continuing with our Healthy You Experience, we bring you an afternoon of physical and mental wellbeing. During this session you will be introduced to Adaptive Martial Arts and Fitness, focusing on strengthening muscles, improving range of motion, balance and most importantly, confidence. You will then be taken on a journey of self-awareness and rejuvenation all well reaping the benefits of Chair Yoga. From the physical benefits of enhancing strength and decreasing joint pain, to the mental and emotional benefits of stress reduction, improved mind set, increased self-awareness and everything in between. Come join the fun and be the best Healthy You, U can be. **(E) Porter Room**



Event Features

Art Gallery

Pop-up Art Gallery – Back by popular demand! Art Programs throughout WNY will display the many talented works of the artists who join them in their studios. Located throughout the building you will enjoy original and celebrated artwork while having the opportunity to learn more about these unique programs. Enjoy the show!



Laughter Yoga (NEW THIS YEAR!)

Unlike traditional yoga, Laughter Yoga doesn't involve complicated poses or extensive meditation. Instead, it's based on the idea that voluntary laughter can provide the same health benefits as natural laughter. During a Laughter Yoga session, participants engage in intentional laughter exercises and breathing techniques, often in a group setting where laughter becomes contagious.

Agency and Vendor Fair

A wide variety of agencies and vendors who serve people with developmental disabilities will be on hand to provide information and linkage for everyone in attendance. Some vendors may be selling some of their products at the conference, so be sure to bring some extra money for shopping!



Therapy Dogs

Throughout the public areas of the convention, there will be therapy dogs and their owners on hand who can help provide general information about therapy dog programs and answer questions you may have. There will also be items for sale to promote their program.

DD Day Merchandise (Cash and Credit accepted)

Make sure to stop by our Souvenir MERCH SHOP to pick up your 2025 DD DAY swag. Don't miss out!!!! Specialized tees. The winning DD Day logo design can be found on this year's Tee shirts so get them while they're hot. Tees (S, M, L, XL) \$15 * * Tees (XXL, XXXL) \$20



Reception – 3:15 pm – 5:00 pm

Please join us for a reception featuring the hip sounds of **Universal Mind**. There will be free pop and appetizers, along with a basket raffle and cash bar. You must be present to win the basket raffle.

A Healthy You

Mind, Body & Soul



MORNING SESSION:

10:15 am - 12:00 noon

Healthy You Corner - Join us in the CATARACT ROOM for a morning of HEALTHY YOU activities, from ZUMBA classes to fun and educational Nutrition Classes where you actually get to eat your homework. What a great way to jump start your day.

Maria Kirkpatrick - Certified ZUMBA Instructor

Grace Anstett - SNAP-Ed New York Nutrition Educator



Find us on social media!



Facebook: DDDay- Developmental Disability Awareness Day

Website: www.DDDay.org

Email: devdisday@gmail.com

2025 DD Day Registration Form

Name: _____

Agency (if appropriate): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email address: _____ Phone: _____

Please check all that apply:

☐ Person with Disability ☐ Family Member ☐ Professional ☐ Other _____

How did you hear about DD Day?

☐ Print Advertisement ☐ Social Media ☐ WNY Family Magazine

☐ School ☐ Parent Network ☐ SANYS

I am registering for:

☐ Workshops and Lunch (\$50) ☐ Lunch Only (\$25) ☐ Workshops/Fair Only (\$30)

Lunch Choices:

☐ Tomato and Mozzarella Arancini over a bed of Wilted Spinach with a Red Pepper Vinaigrette served with a Caprese Salad (vegetarian)

☐ Balsamic Marinated Grilled Chicken over a Caprese Salad with Romaine Lettuce, served with a Pesto Vinaigrette and crostini (gluten free without crostini)

☐ Cornflake Crusted Chicken with a House Remoulade served with a Sweet Potato Hash and Broccolini

Scholarships are available on a first-come-first-served basis on EventBrite.

Workshop attendance will be on a first-come basis.

For Event Special Rate Parking of \$5

TO GET THIS DISCOUNT, BRING YOUR PARKING SLIP INTO THE EVENT TO GET VALIDATED!

- Registration deadline is **5/9/2025**.
- Register online at <http://www.ddday.org>
- Registration on the day of conference is \$35 – **No lunch provided. Cash or credit ONLY. No invoicing will be done.**
- Mail this registration form (above) with your payment (checks must be made out to DD Day) to:

DD Day 2025 – 960 West Maple Court, Elma, NY 140059

Additional accommodations: If you need an interpreter, FM loop, or other accommodations, please contact **Stacey Gura** at Stacey.gura@sasinc.org