

AL-APSE 2025

Course Content

Continuing Education

TARGETED AUDIENCE: Social Workers, Rehabilitation Professionals etc.

The AL-APSE Conference is intended to disseminate a wide variety of information that would be of interest to professionals in the disability arena as well as individuals with disabilities and their families.

CRC Hours pending with one hour approved for ethics.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this program, participants will be able to:

1. Describe how a cheerful outlook and accepting life challenges head on rather than blaming others can help in recovery.
2. Identify how proposed budget changes may impact services at the state and federal level, and how the disability community can stay informed and prepared.
3. Understand self-employment and ways to assess whether it is a good option for people.
4. Identify potential ethical issues and how to follow an ethical decision-making model when assisting individuals in the employment process.
5. Identify signs of substance use disorders and how to recognize stigma/biases.
6. Understand how social media can help with job searches, networking, and showing off skills when used wisely, explain “personal brand” and how to present oneself online.
7. Explain substance use models for treatment and recovery for people with co-occurring needs.
8. Identify practical tools and advocacy strategies that will empower individuals to overcome barriers, secure the right accommodations, and achieve sustainable employment.
9. Understand how generational traditions, cultures, or traumas can have a dramatic effect on reaching the next generation.
10. Describe how AI (artificial intelligence) could act as a helpful sidekick—assisting with clearer, more accessible communication, generating creative support ideas, and even helping organize your day-to-day tasks.
11. Identify key signs and symptoms of stress and burnout specific to helping professions.
12. Describe how the IPS Supported Employment model is distinguished from other supported employment models.

13. Describe how effective communication can be the difference between a job seeker getting a job, an employee keeping a job as well as how communication impacts the ability of people to get along on a job.
14. Identify seven valuable lessons for personal and professional growth.

Wednesday June 25, 2025

Life Is Like...

Kadarian Hill

Room: Bon Secour II & III

In this opening session, former Ole Miss football standout Kadarian Hill, recipient of the prestigious Chucky Mullins Award, will share how he embraced a spirit of defiance rather than despair when his life changed following a motor vehicle accident just days before NFL training camp in 2023. Rather than questioning “why me” he famously says, “try me.” Since the accident in 2023, KD has shared his journey of overcoming adversity and how he maintains a positive mindset even in the face of life’s toughest challenges. At the end of this session, participants will understand how a cheerful outlook and accepting life’s challenges head on rather than blaming others can help in recovery. In addition, participants will be able to list ways to cope with challenges that impact life, including their career track.

Thursday General session: 8:30 A.M. – 9:30 A.M.

Federal Cuts Impacting Disability Services in Alabama

Erin Prangley, Policy Director, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

Room: Bon Secour II & III – Presented present via Zoom

This session will provide stakeholders—individuals with disabilities, family members, service providers, and advocates—with a clear, nonpartisan update on the status of federal funding for programs that support people with developmental disabilities. The session will outline current and proposed budget changes, the services potentially affected, and ways communities can stay informed and prepared.

Thursday General Session: 10:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Self-Employment while Autistic magi-talk

Cody Clark

Room: Bon Secour II & III

Since self-employment is a popular option for the disability community, Cody uses his experience of being self-employed for eleven years to give students an honest look at its ins and outs. He shares why he feels it was the right decision for him, the steps he took to launch/maintain his career, and will help attendees decide whether it is a good fit for them.

Breakout Sessions: Thursday, June 26 11:15 a.m. -12:15 p.m.

Ethical Decision Making and Professional Boundaries

Yvette Q. Getch, Ph.D., CRC

Room: Bon Secour I

Rehabilitation counselors, employment professionals, and job coaches may be faced with ethical dilemmas as they assist individuals with disabilities in preparing for, seeking, acquiring, and maintaining employment. At the end of this session, participants will be able to identify potential ethical issues and follow an ethical decision-making model when assisting individuals in the employment process.

Hope and Recovery: Understanding Substance Use Disorders and the Vocational Rehabilitation Process

Jonathan Sanders

Room: Mobile I & II

This session will provide a brief overview of substance use disorders (SUDs), as defined by the DSM, working with individuals suffering from SUDs and the Vocational Rehabilitation Process, overcoming stigma, and the story of hope. This session will provide a basic understanding of SUDs, including identifying signs of SUD, how to recognize their own stigma/biases, and be equipped to provide treatment options/resources, realistic expectations, setbacks, and hope for tomorrow.

Oh, Be Careful.... What you Do!

Daniel Spencer

Room: Mobile III

This presentation will be a demonstration of job readiness that teaches and focuses on communication. Participants will be able to experience job readiness, which helps teach students (teens and adults) how to gain a better understanding of non-verbal communication, both intended and unintended and how this communication can be interpreted by others as well as the effect of this form of communication. Effective communication could be the difference between a job seeker getting a job, an employee keeping a job as well as how communication impacts the ability of people to get along on a job.

Using Social Media to Build Your Personal Brand

Derek Greer and Virginia Mattox

Room: Grand Bay Ballroom

In today's job market, social media is more than just a way to stay connected with friends — it is also a powerful tool for building your personal brand and opening doors to employment opportunities. This session will help participants understand how the way they present themselves online can impact how potential employers, coworkers, and job coaches view them. The session will explore the difference between personal and professional content, introduce platforms like LinkedIn, and discuss practical strategies for creating a positive, confident online presence. Participants will learn how to highlight their strengths, share their interests, and stay safe online, while also gaining insight into how social media can support networking, advocacy, and career growth. Whether you are new to social media or looking to use it more effectively, this session will equip you with tools to stand out and take control of your digital reputation.

At the end of this session, participants will understand how social media can help with job searches, networking, and showing off skills when used wisely, explain “personal brand” and how to present yourself online, understand how employers often look at social media profiles when hiring and distinguish between platforms, LinkedIn, Facebook and TikTok for social life.

Breakout Sessions: Thursday June 26 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Technology in Support & Care Work USA

Adam Barnes

Room: Bon Secour I

In a world where professionals are stretched thin while supporting clients with unique and evolving needs, artificial intelligence can often feel like just another buzzword. But what if it could act as a helpful sidekick—assisting with clearer, more accessible communication, generating creative support ideas, and even helping you organize your day-to-day tasks. In this conversational, hands-on session, participants will explore how free, or low-cost AI tools can complement existing work—no tech expertise required. From simplifying job coaching materials to brainstorming support strategies, we will look at practical ways AI might support your approach to serving individuals with disabilities. Participants are encouraged to bring their own devices to explore prompts together, walk through real-world scenarios, and reflect on how AI could fit into their workflow. Whether you're brand new to AI or just looking for a fresh perspective, this session offers a welcoming space to experiment, connect, and reimagine your toolbox—one idea at a time.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS)- Supported Employment Myth Busters- Peers

Charles Haslerig, Antwoinette Ware, Nikkia Tisaby, Denise Bern

Room: Mobile I & II

The IPS Myth Busters presentation will share information about the importance of employment while dispelling myths that surround work, for example, individuals can work and retain Social Security benefits.

Myth busters will be an interactive session that defines a number of benefits to employment and addresses misconceptions using the evidence-based practice, IPS-Supported Employment Eight Practice Principles.

The IPS Certified Peer Specialists, AKA Myth Busters, will share their personal stories of recovery and the value of employment.

At the end of this session, attendees will: be familiar with IPS Supported Employment and how it is distinguished from other supported employment models, understand the 8 IPS

practice principles, the foundation of IPS and understand the value of employment in recovery.

Understanding our generation so we can reach the next

Micah Harris

Room: Mobile III

Understanding our own generational traditions, cultures, or traumas can have a dramatic effect on how we reach the next generation. The audience will be challenged to open their minds to the traditions, cultures, and traumas of the generations to come. Presenter will look to engage audience with generation specific topics to enlighten their own understanding of their generation. Presenter will give tools to willing professionals that seek to help their clients reach their maximum potential.

Revealing the Secrets Behind Essential Skills Magi-talk

Cody Clark

Room: Grand Bay Ballroom

Cody breaks the magician's code by revealing some secrets.... but not of magic tricks! Instead, he will be sharing the secrets behind essential life skills. These can seem harder for disabled people than everyone else, which is why Cody offers simple, easy to remember techniques for personal management skills, handling conflicts, and taking care of your emotions.

Breakout Sessions: Thursday June 26 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Reducing Stress and Preventing Burnout

Sa'Mya Jones

Room: Bon Secour I

Burnout does not usually arrive all at once—it creeps in slowly, often disguised as “just being tired” or “pushing through.” For professionals working in education, employment services, advocacy, and care roles, the risk of burnout is high—but so is the opportunity to

build practices that protect your well-being over time. This session introduces Daily Detox, a framework designed to help professionals take small, intentional steps each day to manage stress before it becomes overwhelming. Rather than promoting a “perfect” self-care routine, Daily Detox encourages participants to tune in, reset, and create sustainable habits that support both personal and professional longevity. Attendees will explore the emotional, physical, and mental signs of burnout, learn why traditional stress relief strategies often fall short, and walk away with personalized tools they can use in their daily lives—without needing to add more to their already full plates. Through interactive reflection, storytelling, and practical exercises, participants will be invited to reimagine wellness not as a luxury, but as a non-negotiable part of showing up fully for others.

Session Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: Identify key signs and symptoms of stress and burnout specific to helping professions. Understand the difference between reactive self-care and proactive burnout prevention. Explore the Daily Detox model and how it can be adapted to fit individual needs and work styles. Engage in practical exercises to develop a personalized “wellness check-in” routine. Leave with accessible strategies that can be implemented immediately to support emotional regulation, energy management, and overall well-being. This session is ideal for professionals who are passionate about their work but are beginning to feel the weight of emotional fatigue, compassion fatigue, or simply want tools to stay grounded.

Substance Use Treatment: Accessing Services for People with Co-Occurring Disorders

Elana M Parker Merriweather

Room: Mobile I & II

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview of the substance use treatment continuum for people with co-occurring disorders in Alabama. An interactive discussion will occur on how to refer and link individuals with co-occurring needs to ADMH certified treatment programs. Information will also be provided on statewide resources that are available to assist people with substance use, mental health, and co-working disorders.

Objectives: At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain the substance use model for treatment and recovery for people with co-occurring needs
- Discuss the co-occurring culture of substance use and mental health disorders including the process for screening, assessment, and treatment placement.
- List and describe ADMH resources that are available to support and treat individuals with co-occurring needs in Alabama

The Regional Autism Network (RAN) Supports Individuals with Disabilities Across the Lifespan

Doris Hill

Room: Mobile III

At the end of this session, participants will understand how RAN works closely with early intervention services across the state to support families with children from birth to age three. Further, participants will be able to describe how RAN works closely with schools and families to support students with disabilities transition to school and how the program continues to support families (to include underserved populations) through the school years and transition to adulthood and beyond.

Self-Advocates Placeholder

Learning the Ropes of Employment Self-Advocacy

Andrea Mixson and Tammy Blue

Room: Grand Bay Ballroom

ADAP's presentation will explore the key advocacy strategies and employment-related services that help individuals with disabilities overcome employment barriers. We will introduce ADAP and highlight our critical role in providing support through programs such as the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS). ADAP works directly with individuals who face challenges with requesting necessary accommodations, whether in educational settings, the workplace, or during the job search process. We will provide practical guidance on how to advocate for accommodations, what documentation is needed, and how to handle situations where accommodations may be denied. For transition-aged youth, we will explore how to make a smooth transition from school to work and how to access the right support during this important phase including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and VR Case Services. We will also discuss self-employment, covering how to develop a business plan, access benefits counseling, and meet the necessary requirements for case closure. Finally, we will address special situations that may impact employment, such as how waiver services and mental health services intersect with vocational rehab and how ADAP can help in these complex cases. Our goal is to equip attendees with practical tools and

advocacy strategies that will empower individuals to overcome barriers, secure the right accommodations, and achieve sustainable employment.

Friday June 27, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

7 VALUABLE LESSONS: Look, Listen, Learn, Laugh, Lean, Let Go, and Love

Jenny Nolen

Room: Bon Secour II & III

This session will review seven valuable lessons for personal and professional growth. At the conclusion, attendees will be able to list the impacts of each:

LOOK: Break away from the dullness of AUTO-PILOT living. Learn how to focus on the present and re-energize your hopes, dreams, and desires.

- LISTEN: Become an engaged listener. Hear other people's desires, hopes and dreams.
- LEARN: Revisit the joy of doing new things, taking challenges, accomplishing those things long set aside.
- LAUGH: Having humor in your life is your single greatest asset. The ability to laugh, particularly at yourself, will keep you young, happy, and healthy.
- LEAN: Re-evaluate the importance of delegation. It is far more effective to work as a team than to be an individual hero.
- LET-GO: The best way to let go of a negative situation is to quit visiting it repeatedly. It is not only unproductive; it also robs you of your present moment, joy, and energy.
- LOVE: As the song goes...it is what the world needs now! We will close this session with words of encouragement and hope they will ignite you starting anew on your own personal mission.