

82ND PANJ CONFERENCE

"THE POWER OF INFLUENCE: SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER"

Keynote: Thriving Through Change: Leading with Resilience in High-Stress Roles

In today's fast-paced world, adaptability is key to success. This highly interactive keynote equips attendees with actionable strategies to navigate change with confidence, regulate emotions, and lead effectively under pressure. Through The Power of PAUSE, participants will explore how staying present, adjusting attitudes, and increasing emotional awareness can help them lead through uncertainty.

Empowering Your Team to Drive Results

Leaders often become the "go-to" for every decision, creating bottlenecks and limiting team growth. This session explores Humble Inquiry, a leadership approach that shifts the mindset from directive to inquisitive, empowering employees to think critically and take ownership. Participants will learn how to ask better questions, encourage problem-solving, and cultivate a culture of trust and accountability.

Bio: Monica Brooks is a high-energy motivational speaker known for her ability to inspire action and ignite positive change. With over a decade of experience in leadership, Monica has dedicated her career to empowering others to reach their highest potential through practical, impactful strategies. She's guided diverse teams through core development programs, emphasizing that small, intentional changes can lead to profound results. After being diagnosed with stage three cancer, Monica embraced her journey as an opportunity for transformation, choosing resilience and growth over fear. Her experience fuels her passion to help others navigate their own challenges and to use their energy intentionally in both thoughts and actions. A champion of self-improvement, Monica creates content that resonates on both personal and professional levels, blending authenticity with actionable insights.

Wellness in the Workplace: Developing Healthy Dietary Habits

This workshop will introduce participants to nutrition concepts detailing the impact of food on our bodies, energy levels, and the effect of food on work performance. We'll take a journey through the American food system, with a focus on health and wellness, connecting it all to the workplace. Considering we spend one-half of our waking day in our respective office space, making choices that will positively impact our health during this timeframe is of great importance. We'll also discuss the possible manifestation of physical issues relative to a career in a sedentary job and navigate different ways we can mitigate these problems. We'll finalize with specific health tips participants can readily incorporate into their lifestyles to begin making health-related changes NOW.

Bio: Norbert Niakas is currently the Probation Training Coordinator at the Office of Probation Services where he is responsible for the development and delivery of training for supervision probation officers and supervisors. Prior to that, he worked as a probation officer for 15 years in the Mercer County Vicinage. Outside of the Judiciary, Norbert worked for 19+ years with the homeless/runaway youth population as a counselor and case manager and holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from The College of New Jersey. Norbert has been a certified personal trainer since 2004 and nutrition/health coach since 2009. His current topics of interest include motivation, grit, passion, and purpose.

East Coast Latino Gangs

This workshop is specifically designed to give the attendee the initial tools in identification of the East Coast's most active Latino street & prison gangs by focusing on the distinctive ideologies, history, tattoos, graffiti, codes, and current trends.

Bio: Det./Cpl. Edwin Santana is a 25-year veteran of the Morris County Sheriff's Office Bureau of Corrections and a founding member of the Morris County Gang Intelligence Unit. Since 2008, Det./Cpl. Santana has been utilized by the Morris County Public Safety Training Academy to instruct academy recruits that are training under the Police Training Commission (PTC) Basic Police Class & Basic Correctional Classes. In addition, Det/Cpl. Santana has been utilized to testify as an Expert Gang Witness in both Federal and State courts.

PERS Retirement Planning Seminar (2 sessions, back-to-back)

This workshop will review the six retirement types for PERS members, the nine pension options for PERS members and MBOS Beneficiary Designation for active members. The presenters will demonstrate a step-by-step walkthrough of the PERS Retirement Application, review the retirement checklist, eligibility requirements, and estimate example retirement calculations. The workshop will close with a Q&A session.

Bio: Andra Hopson holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Rutgers University. She has been employed with the New Jersey Division of Pensions & Benefits for over 17 years. Currently, Andra is the Chief of Client Services and Communications. Throughout her career with the Division, Andra has served as a call center representative, a pension interview counselor, and as a supervisor in the Call Center and Education Unit. She has assisted members, retirees, beneficiaries and employers with various pension, retirement, and health benefit related issues and concerns. Andra's previous work experience in the medical field and her people skills allow her to provide professional and compassionate service to her clientele. She loves spending time with her family and friends and is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Deferred Compensation

This workshop will focus on the benefits of participating in the New Jersey State Employees Deferred Compensation Plan (NJSEDCP). Various NJSEDCP plan features will be discussed, such as: GoalMaker, automatic contribution increases, flexible ways to save in the plan, and the variety of investments available. In addition, participants will learn about the many tools and resources available, including the plan's dedicated Empower representatives who can meet with you to help you plan & prepare for retirement.

Bio: Melanie Brassell has more than 20 years of experience within the financial services industry. Her passion for helping others and strong communication skills have made her a great resource for educating participants about their retirement plans and how to help effectively set retirement income goals. Prior to joining Empower, Melanie worked with both nonretirement and retirement accounts. She has strong knowledge of mutual funds, asset allocation, and retirement income planning. Melanie has a degree in Finance from Drexel University. She also holds Series 6, 63, and 7 registrations and Life Insurance licenses.

Roadmap to Your Workplace

This session outlines a strategic guide for navigating our modern work environment, including avoiding discipline, understanding collective bargaining agreements, and emphasizing clear communication.

Bio: Ellen Cribbin has been the first Vice President of PANJ's Case Related Professional Unit since 2013. Previously, she was a Senior Probation Officer in the Monmouth Vicinage. When not at work, she enjoys spending time with her family, including her two dogs, Tillie and Rosie.

Early Identification as Prevention: Influencing Court Systems to Recognize IDD at First Contact

This training focuses on the critical role court professionals play in early identification of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Misidentification or lack of recognition can lead to harsher consequences or missed service opportunities. The session would provide practical tools—screening questions, red flags, and system collaboration strategies, that help professionals identify IDD early and connect individuals to appropriate services, ultimately influencing better outcomes.

Bios:

Robyn Holt, MSW, MA, LSW serves as the Director of the Criminal Justice Advocacy Program at The Arc of New Jersey, where she leads efforts to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who become involved in the criminal justice system. With a career dedicated to working with individuals facing significant mental health challenges, Robyn has extensive experience in both direct care and program leadership. She has previously supervised a partial care program, managed a Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) team, and served as a director for the largest Supported Housing program in New York State. Her expertise lies in bridging the gaps between mental health services, criminal justice, and disability advocacy to promote fair treatment and effective interventions. Robyn holds Master's degrees in Social Work and Counseling Psychology, as well as a degree in Psychiatric Rehabilitation. She is a Licensed Social Worker (LSW).

Hannah Noel is a Case Manager with The Arc of New Jersey's Criminal Justice Advocacy Program, where she specializes in providing case management and advocacy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities navigating the criminal justice system. Her work includes offering support at all stages of the legal process, from initial charges to court proceedings and community reintegration. With a strong foundation in sociology, Hannah brings a comprehensive understanding of the systemic barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in the justice system. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in social work at Rutgers University, further strengthening her ability to advocate for equitable and person-centered outcomes.

Karlee Salus is a Case Manager with The Arc of New Jersey's Criminal Justice Advocacy Program, dedicated to supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as they navigate the complexities of the criminal justice system. She provides case management services, advocates for individuals in court, and works closely with legal and support teams to ensure appropriate interventions and services are in place. With a background in criminal justice, Karlee combines her knowledge of legal systems with a passion for disability advocacy. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in social work at Rutgers University, deepening her expertise in social services and restorative justice practices.

Fair Chance in Housing Act

Today, nearly one-third of the adult working age population in the U.S. has a conviction record. Many of these people have been denied housing, though most pose no threat to their communities. New Jersey's Fair Chance in Housing Act (FCHA) remedies this form of discrimination by establishing a fair process for consideration of conviction histories during the application process. Join us for this interactive training that will provide an overview of FCHA, including effective implementation strategies and model forms that can be utilized by housing providers. Participants will also explore how conviction record screenings have disproportionately impacted communities of color and consider ways to create discrimination-free housing environments.

Bio: *Shanel Lewis* (she/her) is an Education and Training Specialist with the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights. She brings over a decade of experience in advancing equity through education, advocacy, and public engagement. Her professional work is rooted in a commitment to promoting inclusive practices. Prior to her current role, Shanel led state and local youth violence prevention initiatives in Virginia, focused on addressing the multifaceted and evolving challenges impacting young people. Her work in this area reflected a deep understanding of the social determinants affecting youth and long-term community well-being. She is passionate about empowering individuals and institutions to use their voices and influence to create change. Shanel holds a

Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Old Dominion University.

Building a Foundation for Client Success through the JOBS Program

This workshop will highlight best practices to foster empowerment, accountability, and growth, as well as provide practical strategies that assist probation clients, inclusive of child support clients, with overcoming challenges and achieving long-term positive outcomes. Valuable insights into the importance of mentorship, goal setting, community resources as well as the importance of accurate data collection and analysis will be provided.

Focusing on the powerful impact of the Judiciary Opportunities for Building Success "JOBS" program, the panel will provide real-life examples of transformation and resilience. Key elements of the JOBS Program that have proven to change the lives of probation clients for the better, will be discussed. Through these key elements, a strong foundation for supporting probation clients in their personal journey toward success has been created as Probation continues to strengthen and support communities across the state.

Bios:

Jaclyn Tortoriello earned a bachelor's degree in Sociology with a minor in criminology from Rutgers, The State University of NJ. She started with the Judiciary in 2011 as a JC3 in Recovery Court and was promoted to Probation Officer in Child Support Enforcement in 2015. She later transferred to Adult Supervision and after 7 years, she joined the Office of Probation Services, Ombudsman Unit, as the state-wide JOBS coordinator where she leads the AOC Employment Specialist group and is part of the JOBS presentation team.

Rob Tracy graduated from Kutztown University with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and earned a master's degree in Exercise Physiology from East Stroudsburg University. He began his career with the Judiciary in 2011 as a Probation Officer in Juvenile Supervision. In 2015, Rob transitioned to Recovery Court and was later promoted to Senior Probation Officer. In 2022, he became the first Employment Specialist for the Ocean Vicinage's JOBS program. Rob's achievements have been recognized with several awards. In 2014, he received the Ocean Award for his work in Juvenile Supervision, and in 2024, he was honored with the Probation Championship for his contributions to the JOBS program.

Crystal McClinton earned her bachelor's degree in education from Kean University. Crystal began her career in the Judiciary in 2018, as a Probation Officer in Adult Supervision. She has been a part of the JOBS Program since its inception where she provided the first JOBS presentation held in Middlesex County. Crystal later transferred to Camden County where she supervised PTI clients until she took on the role as the Employment Specialist in 2022. In 2023, she was promoted to Senior Probation Officer. Crystal also serves as a representative for Local 109 in Camden County.

Generative AI & the Courts

Artificial Intelligence (AI) includes a variety of rapidly evolving technologies that offer powerful capabilities alongside potential risks. As these tools become increasingly integrated into public and private sectors, the New Jersey Courts are committed to leveraging innovation responsibly while upholding our core values of *Independence*, *Integrity*, *Fairness*, and *Quality Service* and guarding against misuse.

This workshop will explore the role of Generative AI in supporting court staff in their day-to-day responsibilities. Attendees will gain a foundational understanding of how AI tools work, where they can be applied in court operations, and what safeguards must be considered. Through practical examples and

interactive discussion, participants will be better prepared to navigate the evolving landscape of AI in a manner that aligns with the mission and principles of the NJ Courts.

Bio: Dana Ortiz-Tulla is an Attorney in the Administrative Director's Office in Trenton, NJ.

Managing Mental Health in 2025 and Beyond

Addressing mental health issues in the workplace can be complex. Today's employees are taking control of preemptive discussions and outcomes of untreated and treated mental health issues. Today's workplaces now include ways to address burnout, manage stress, and anxiety. This workshop will also discuss the proper protocols of care when these issues are present.

Bio: Janet Gerhard serves as Director of Public and Community Relations for FHE Health. With a background in Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), she is a regular resource for unions, educating them on their legal rights and responsibilities in relation to drugs and alcohol, addiction and mental illness in the workplace. Ms. Gerhard is also a liaison for FHE Health and speaks nationally on issues related to bullying and hostile work environments, stress and anxiety in the workplace, and how to handle addiction and/or behavioral health crises in the workforce.

Navigating Difficult Interactions: Skills & Strategies for Working with Vexatious Litigants

Working with vexatious litigants—individuals who repeatedly engage in legal action without merit—can be challenging, stressful, and time-consuming. This interactive workshop provides legal professionals and court personnel with practical tools and proven strategies to effectively manage and de-escalate difficult interactions while maintaining professionalism and upholding procedural fairness. Participants will explore the psychological and behavioral patterns common among vexatious litigants, learn techniques for setting boundaries, and practice communication skills to defuse conflict and reduce stress.

Bio: Michelle M. Smith was appointed Clerk of the Superior Court of New Jersey in September 2013, after serving as the Assistant Chief of Court Processing Services for the Superior Court Clerk's Office. Before joining the Judiciary, Ms. Smith was the Associate Executive Director for Community Mediation Services (CMS), a New York based not-for-profit, that provides conflict resolution and alternative dispute resolution processes for litigants in the court systems. Ms. Smith earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from St. John's University in Jamaica, New York and a Juris Doctor from Touro Law Center, Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center in Huntington, New York.

Beyond Burnout

Burnout is more than just feeling tired—it's a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress, often tied to demanding, high-responsibility roles. For those in social service professions, the risk of burnout is particularly high due to the nature of the work: high caseloads, emotional labor, systemic challenges, and the constant drive to help others.

This workshop will help participants recognize what burnout looks like at various stages, understand the unique risk factors facing social service professionals, and explore protective factors that can support long-term well-being. Participants will learn about the progression of burnout, methods for prevention, and practical coping strategies to manage stress and sustain their commitment to service.

Bios:

Whitney Hendrickson is a Licensed Social Worker and a Coordinator/Trainer for the Career Connection Employment Resource Institute at the Mental Health Association of New Jersey . Her professional background includes over a decade in mental health, nonprofits, social work, case management, advocacy, grant writing, community engagement, trauma-informed care, resiliency, and sustainability.

Katie McGowan is a Trainer/Coordinator at the Career Connection Employment Resource Institute through the Mental Health Association in New Jersey. She holds a Master's degree in Elementary Education and Developmental Differences from Rutgers University. She is a Certified Recovery Support Practitioner and holds certification in Perinatal Mental Health. Katie previously served as Chair of the New Jersey Chapter of Postpartum Support International.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, or harboring of people by means of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of exploitation. It is one of the fastest-growing criminal enterprises in the world—and it can happen anywhere, to anyone, including within our own communities. This workshop will provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of the many forms of human trafficking, including forced labor, slavery, sexual exploitation, and organ trafficking. Attendees will learn how to identify the signs of trafficking, understand the methods used by traffickers, explore real-life case examples, and gain insight into current law enforcement efforts and interagency responses. The session will also cover practical steps individuals and organizations can take to help identify and protect victims.

Bio: Detectives Cassidy Egan and Jason Maloney serve with the New Jersey State Police Human Trafficking Unit where they investigate cases of human trafficking across the state. Detective II. Egan, a State Trooper for seven years, has spent the past two years specializing in human trafficking investigations. Detective I. Maloney has served for over nine years with more than four dedicated to combating human trafficking. Together, they approach each case with a victim-centered and trauma-informed perspective, focusing on building trust with survivors, strengthening interagency collaboration, and advancing proactive strategies to combat exploitation. Their combined experience reflects a shared commitment to identifying patterns of trafficking, fostering partnerships at the local and federal levels, and driving long-term solutions to disrupt and prevent human trafficking networks.

Drug Trends

This workshop will provide an in-depth look at the latest developments surrounding controlled dangerous substances, including synthetic cannabinoids, MDPV, Mephedrone, and others that have emerged in recent years. Participants will be introduced to the pharmacology and physiological effects of these drugs, and how they can impact, mimic, or exacerbate mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and psychosis. The session will also explore epidemiologic trends in substance use across both youth and adult populations. Attendees will also learn about patterns of use, detection methods such as urine testing, and the legal considerations surrounding these emerging drugs.

Bio: Detective Sergeant John Bardunias has been a New Jersey State Trooper for ten years. In 2018, Dt/Sgt. Bardunias was assigned to the Office of Drug Monitoring & Analysis at the Regional Operations & Intelligence Center. During this assignment, he supervised many narcotics-related investigations, providing situational awareness on all narcotics-related activities. Dt./Sgt. Bardunias implemented the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP) in New Jersey. He coordinates with all levels of county and local law enforcement regarding this program. Dt./Sgt. Bardunias also developed the Spike Alert Response Plan (SARP) to ensure fast and accurate relay of life-saving information to law enforcement partners as well as community and recovery source. Dt./Sgt. Bardunias is also a recovery coach and delivers the message that law enforcement cares about helping those who suffer from substance use disorders. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point and served two tours in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, receiving a Bronze Star Medal for his service.

Domestic Violence 101

Domestic violence is a complex and pervasive issue that impacts individuals and families across all communities. This foundational workshop will provide an overview of the key concepts, definitions, and legal frameworks surrounding domestic violence, with a focus on its impact within the court system. Participants will learn to recognize patterns of abuse—including physical, emotional, psychological, and financial control—and how these patterns affect victims' interactions with the legal system.

Bios:

Wil DuBose completed his education in Criminal Justice at Mitchell College and is also a graduate of the New Jersey District School of Ministry. Mr. DuBose has entrenched himself into the domestic violence community serving as former appointed representative to the State of New Jersey's Board on Domestic Violence Fatality and Near Fatality. He also served on the New Jersey Coalition for Battered Woman standards committee for Batterers Intervention Programs while holding a Senior Treatment Coordinator position at a local social service organization. Mr. DuBose, is currently the Prevention Coordinator for the New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence. He has worked in the domestic violence field for nearly 16 years providing Batterers Intervention services.

Nesmaida Baez is currently the Manager for Abuse Intervention Programs at the NJ Coalition to End Domestic Violence. Previously, she served as Associate Vice President of the Center for Family Services and as the Director of Program Operations at Gateway Community Action Partnership. She holds a Master's Degree in Organizational Development and Psychology from American InterContinental University.

Partners in Justice: Understanding the Work of NJ Pretrial Services

New Jersey's Pretrial Services Unit plays a vital role in promoting fair and efficient judicial outcomes by assessing risk, supporting informed release decisions, and monitoring compliance with court-ordered conditions. This workshop will provide an in-depth look at the mission, structure, and daily operations of the Pretrial Services Unit within the broader framework of the New Jersey Courts. Participants will learn how Pretrial Services works in concert with other divisions—including Criminal, Municipal, Family, and Probation—to ensure public safety, uphold due process, and reduce unnecessary detention. The session will explore the use of validated risk assessment tools, the supervision of released defendants, and the critical communication pathways that support a unified court approach. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of how interdivisional collaboration strengthens outcomes for court users, enhances procedural justice, and supports the court's commitment to fairness and integrity at every stage of the legal process.

Bios: *Diana Fonseca* is a Team Leader for the Honorable Ralph Amirata & Thomas Critchley in Morris County Criminal Division.

Jessica Rizkella, Esq. is a staff attorney at the Administrative Office of the Courts in the Criminal Practice Division.

Secondary Addictions

The focus in Recovery Court is on substance use, but many times, clients will pick up another "habit" which needs to be addressed. These other addictions can be just as detrimental to a client and their recovery. In this workshop, attendees will learn about other addictions, including how to recognize the signs of a secondary addiction as well as treatment options.

Bio: *Jennifer Carbone* is a Licensed Professional Counselor and currently employed as a Substance Abuse Evaluator (TASC) in Vicinage 15. She has 28 years of experience in the substance use and mental health fields. Prior to her current employment with the Courts, she worked in admissions at Chater-Fairmount Psychiatric Hospital; in outpatient, group, and individual treatment at Genesis Counseling Center; and maintained a private

practice treating adults with mental health and addictive disorders. She is passionate about helping others and enjoys sharing resources, experience, strength, and hope.

First Time Leaders: Shifting from High-Performing Employee to Empowering Leader

Stepping into a leadership role for the first time is both an exciting opportunity and a significant transition. What made you a successful individual contributor won't always translate to success as a leader. This workshop is designed to support new and emerging leaders in making the shift from doing the work to empowering others to do it well. Topics include building trust, delegating with confidence, giving constructive feedback, and navigating the challenges of leading former peers. By focusing on both the tactical and relational aspects of leadership, this session helps new leaders build a strong foundation for long-term success.

Bio: Janessa Rivera was born and raised in Mays Landing, NJ. She obtained a Bachelors in Sociology from William Paterson University, a master's in professional counseling from Grand Canyon University, and is currently pursuing her Doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership with concentration in Organizational Development. Ms. Rivera has 19 years of professional experience in social services, with 11 years focused on Senior Leadership. She currently serves as the Deputy Director for Concilio, a multi-service nonprofit agency in Philadelphia, in which she also co-leads the Leadership Skills Building training series to provide professional coaching and mentoring to middle management staff.