

2025 CNY YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

PRESENTED BY



THURSDAY

OCT 23

EMBASSY SUITES AT DESTINY USA
HIAWATHA BLVD SYRACUSE, NY



A Message from the event organizer



Dear Summit Participants,

Welcome to the second annual Youth Mental Health Summit. This year's theme, *Youth Voices Rising: Strength in Every Voice*, reminds us of the power and resilience found in the voices of our young people. When youth are heard, supported, and uplifted, our entire community grows stronger.

At Contact, we are honored to create space for these conversations and to partner with each of you in building a future where mental health is supported, stigma is reduced, and every voice matters.

Thank you for joining us in this important work. Together, we are raising voices, breaking barriers, and inspiring hope across our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antara Mitra".

Antara Mitra
Executive Director
Contact Community Services



Event Agenda

OCTOBER 23, 2025

7:30 - 8:30AM	Registration
8:30 AM - 9 AM	Video Remarks by John Mannion, Opening Remarks by Amy Cunningham & Awards Presentation
9 - 9:30 AM	Keynote by Travis Barr-Longo
9:30 - 9:45 AM	Music Exercise with Hannah Pietra, MS, LCAT, MT-BC
9:45 - 10 AM	Break
10 - 11 AM	Session 1 Breakouts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Power of Music for Teen Mental Health Hannah Pietra, MS, LCAT, MT-BC Room - Liberty I• The Body Project Afton Kapuscinski, Ph.D. Room - Liberty IV• SCORE: A Student-Led Workshop on Understanding Issues Impacting Youth Today Moderated by Monica Bacote, CDP Room - Liberty III• Understanding Grief & Trauma in Youth. Rachel Johnson, MSW, LMFT Room - Liberty II
11 - 12PM	Lunch
12 - 1 PM	Youth Panel: Amplifying the Rising Voice: Youth Speak on Mental Health. Facilitated by Dr. Reba Hodge, Ph.D.
1 - 1:15 PM	Break & youth depart
1:15 - 2:15 PM	Session 2 Breakouts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• From Burnout to Balance: Recognizing and Preventing Compassion Fatigue Rachel Johnson, MSW, LMFT Room - Liberty I• Panel Discussion: Amplifying Prevention: Transforming School Culture to Save Lives Dr. Terry Ward, Ed.D, Kristin Moses, LMSW, Jennifer Parmalee, Cheryl West, Rory Malone, Facilitator Dr. Maureen Patterson Ed.D. Room - Liberty II
2:15 - 2:30 PM	Break
2:30 - 3:30 PM	Session 3 Breakouts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let the Body Lead: An Embodied Approach to Healing Eating Disorders and Other Chronic Stress Responses Holly Lowery-Davis, Somatic Practitioner and Coach Room - Liberty I• Internet Generation and Adolescence: Cell Phones, Social Media, and Brain Development Matthew Mulvaney, Ph.D. Room - Liberty II



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Travis Barr-Longo

Vice President of Cazenovia Central

School District Board of Education

Founder & President of Cazenovia Pride

Co-owner of H. Grey Supply Co

Travis Barr-Longo made history in 2024 as the first drag performer elected to public office in the United States, now serving as Vice President of the Cazenovia Central School District Board of Education in Madison County, NY.

As comedian, vocalist, and emcee “beauty starlet” Anita Buffem, Travis spent over a decade as a celebrated entertainer and producer in New York City, earning critical acclaim from TimeOut NY, Gay City News, and the NY Daily News.

Returning to his hometown of Cazenovia to care for his disabled mother, Travis founded Cazenovia Pride and co-owns H. Grey Supply Co., a community gathering space, LGBTQ+ safe haven, 2022 winner of Small Business of the Year from the SBDC, and winner across multiple categories of the Best of CNY.

Travis demonstrates how authentic representation and strategic leadership through kindness can bridge cultural, generational, and political divides in unexpected places, advocating for youth mental health through his lived experience with ADHD, PTSD, and depression.

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YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AWARD WINNERS

Youth Mental Health Leadership Awards

Amanda Johnson

LaFayette Jr./Sr. High School

Leah Barone

East Syracuse Minoa
Central High School

Joshua Dupra

Innovation Tech High School

Youth Mental Health Community Leader Award

Wesley Sweetman,

Youth Services Director

The CanTeeN

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THE POWER OF MUSIC FOR TEEN MENTAL HEALTH

HANNAH PIETRA, MS, LCAT, MT-BC

Arts & Minds Coordinator and Clinician
Syracuse Jewish Family Service

Music has an important impact on the daily lives of teenagers. From personal listening and songwriting to structured therapeutic programs, music can be used as a powerful tool to improve mental health. This session will explore why music is therapeutic and how it can be used to manage emotions and provide a means of self expression. Participants in this session will take part in some music-based exercises (no prior music experience needed) including creating personal playlists which can be continued and used after the session.



Hannah Pietra is a board certified music therapist, licensed creative arts therapist, and a certified life coach. Hannah has experience working with children and teens in hospital, clinic, school, and community-based settings. Hannah completed a Bachelor of Music degree in string performance and a minor in music industry from Syracuse University, and a Master of Science degree in Creative Arts Therapy with a Music Therapy focus from Nazareth College.



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THE SPEAKERS



AFTON KAPUSCINSKI, PH.D.



AIDEE LEÓN LÚA



ALEXA DEYO



TONI HAMILTON

THE BODY PROJECT

AFTON KAPUSCINSKI, PH.D.

Clinic Director; Associate Teaching Professor
Syracuse University Psychological Services Center

Co-presenters:

AIDEE LEÓN LÚA; ALEXA DEYO;
TONI HAMILTON

The Body Project is an empirically-supported prevention program aimed at improving body image and related mental health problems. Participants will learn about the effects of trying to adhere to the “appearance ideal” and engage in exercises to help them practice body positivity and resisting pressure to adhere to the appearance ideal. Since girls and women are disproportionately affected by these pressures, cultural factors that put these groups uniquely at risk will be emphasized.

Syracuse University's Psychological Services Center (PSC) is pleased to have several graduate students and faculty presenting on The Body Project program for this year's Summit. Aidee León Lúa is a school psychology doctoral student with clinical and research interests in autism, specifically in promoting equitable access to research and clinical services for the Spanish-speaking Latine community. Alexa Deyo is a clinical psychology graduate student interested in developmental psychopathology and health behaviors, with a particular focus on sleep, eating, and related psychosocial factors in children and adolescents. Toni Hamilton is a clinical psychology graduate student with clinical and research interests in pediatric health behaviors, including eating disorders, body image, and sleep. Dr. Afton Kapuscinski is a licensed clinical psychologist and faculty member at Syracuse University with a passion for addressing health disparities surrounding poor body image and eating disorders.

Student-led Workshop

SCORE

UNDERSTANDING ISSUES IMPACTING YOUTH TODAY

MODERATED BY MONICA BACOTE

This creative and eye-opening experience invites youth to explore how equity, access, and opportunity show up in everyday life. Through an engaging hands-on activity and group dialogue, participants will reflect on their own and society's perceptions and expectations around resources and economic differences. It's a space to connect with peers, challenge how we think about fairness, and deepen our understanding of the world around us. Youth should come ready to create, collaborate, and expand how you see economic impact and equity in your community and beyond.



The Student Coalition on Race and Equity (SCORE) is a youth-led, locally rooted program in Onondaga County committed to the education, engagement, and empowerment of young people. With a mission to advance social justice and promote civic readiness, SCORE provides students with opportunities to elevate their voices, build leadership skills, and grow as scholars and change-makers.

Student Presenters

Aisha Mustafa

Youth Panelist
Sophomore at
Liverpool High School

Xin Yi Li

Youth Panelist
Sophomore at
Fayetteville-Manlius
High School

Emma Wilson-Hefti

Youth Panelist
Senior at East Syracuse
Minoa High School

Aryan Hatef

Youth Panelist
Senior at Liverpool
High School

Maryam Hatef

Youth Panelist
Sophomore at
Le Moyne College



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UNDERSTANDING GRIEF & TRAUMA IN YOUTH

RACHEL JOHNSON, MSW, LMFT

Half Hood Half Holistic

This workshop provides an overview of how grief and trauma impact children and adolescents. Participants will learn to recognize common emotional and behavioral responses, understand the differences between grief, trauma, and typical developmental challenges, and explore strategies for offering supportive, trauma-informed care. Whether you're a caregiver, educator, or helping professional, this session will deepen your understanding of how to show up with empathy, stability, and appropriate support for youth navigating loss and adversity.

FROM BURNOUT TO BALANCE RECOGNIZING AND PREVENTING COMPASSION FATIGUE

RACHEL JOHNSON, MSW, LMFT

Half Hood Half Holistic

This interactive workshop explores the signs, causes, and impact of burnout and compassion fatigue, particularly in high-stress and helping professions. Participants will learn how chronic stress affects the body and mind, how to differentiate between burnout and compassion fatigue, and how to recognize early warning signs in themselves and others. Through guided reflection and practical tools, attendees will identify personal and organizational strategies to restore balance, set boundaries, and build resilience. Whether you're supporting others or simply feeling stretched too thin, this session offers a space to reset and reconnect with what sustains you.



Rachel Johnson is a licensed mental health therapist, professor, doula, speaker, and the founder of Half Hood Half Holistic, a practice rooted in the healing of mind, body, and spirit. With a deep commitment to culturally affirming care, Rachel specializes in intergenerational and community-based trauma within the Black community, and has a particular passion for supporting couples and families. She is also the author of the Self-Love Workbook for Black Women, a powerful resource for healing and self-discovery.

In addition to her clinical work, Rachel is a wellness and leadership coach and an organizational consultant, helping individuals and institutions build more conscious, equitable, and trauma-informed spaces. She is the visionary behind the Come Get This Healing Therapy Fund, which provides financial support for therapy access among priority populations. Rachel's work is grounded in authenticity, cultural relevance, and radical care—with the motto, "Come for the vibes, stay for the healing."

Youth Panel Discussion

AMPLIFYING THE RISING VOICE

YOUTH SPEAK ON MENTAL HEALTH.

FACILITATED BY DR. REBA HODGE, PH.D.

A panel of students from Onondaga County High Schools share their perspectives on mental health

Amra Delic
Youth Panelist

Sources of Strength
ESM High School

Julia Armijo
Youth Panelist

Morgan's Message
Skaneateles High School

Emma Wilson
Youth Panelist

Hefti- SCORE
ESM High School

Zaniyah Williams
Youth Panelist
Varsity Athlete
Henninger High School

Mandy Johnson
Youth Panelist
Morgan's Message
LaFayette Jr/Sr High School

Moderated by Dr. Reba Hodge



DR. REBA HODGE

Dr. Reba Y. Hodge, PhD, is the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging for Syracuse City School District and an adjunct professor at Syracuse University's School of Education. Previously, she served as vice principal at Van Duyn Elementary, where she led initiatives in Culturally Responsive Education. A published children's book author under the pen name Yashema Stephens, Dr. Hodge's first book, Meeting Joy: A Story of Home and Friendship, reflects her passion for empowering educators to foster equity and inclusion.



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Panel Discussion

AMPLIFYING PREVENTION:

TRANSFORMING SCHOOL CULTURE TO SAVE LIVES

DR. TERRY WARD, ED.D, KRISTIN MOSES, LMSW, JENNIFER PARMALEE, CHERYL WEST, RORY MALONE, FACILITATOR DR. MAUREEN PATTERSON ED.D.

Join Dr. Maureen A. Patterson, Director of the Education Leadership Programs at Le Moyne College and Contact Community Services Board President, as she leads a panel of experts at the CNY Youth Mental Health Summit as they discuss the essential role of mental health screening tools in schools. These tools, including BIMAS, help identify at-risk students, enable timely interventions, and promote a positive school climate.

Panelists will share insights into how these tools are implemented and their impact on student well-being, academic performance, and stigma reduction. Additionally, the session will emphasize the importance of education and awareness activities in fostering a supportive environment, normalizing conversations about mental health, and empowering students and educators to act early.

This session is ideal for educators, mental health professionals, and school administrators seeking to integrate effective mental health strategies and awareness initiatives into their districts.



Dr. Patterson is the Director of Education Leadership Programs at Le Moyne College and has over 40 years of experience as a teacher, principal, and district leader. A Columbia University doctoral graduate, she is a respected mentor and advocate for educational leadership and innovation.

**DR. MAUREEN A.
PATTERSON,**

MEET THE PANEL



DR. TERRY WARD, ED.D.

Dr. Ward has extensive experience in educational leadership and a commitment to advancing academic achievement and inclusive school environments. Dr. Ward was previously the Superintendent of Schools for the Cato-Meridian Central School District, where he has served for more than six years.

KRISTIN MOSES, LMSW

Kristin Moses is the Coordinator of Student Support Services for Skaneateles Central School District. Kristin brings extensive experience in trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, social emotional learning, and school leadership. She is currently a doctoral candidate in Education Leadership at Syracuse University, with a research focus on equitable schools and mental health in education.



JENNIFER PARMALEE

Jennifer Parmalee, Deputy Commissioner and Director of Community Services at the Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services, leads the planning, operations, and resource allocation for the Mental Health Services and School Based Initiatives Divisions. Previously, as the Director of School Based Initiatives, Jennifer collaborated with school districts to integrate community supports, addressing social, economic, health, and emotional/ behavioral challenges hindering a child's success.



CHERYL WEST

Cheryl is the former Director of Counseling, Youth Development and Leadership. She is currently working part-time in the East Syracuse Minoa School District to support the Stronger Connection grant.



RORY MALONE

Rory serves as the Director of Instructional Systems and Technology Support for the Solvay Union Free School District. In this role, he oversees district instructional technology and coordinates MTSS initiatives, community partnerships, and mental health supports. A central focus of his work is leading the district's five-year Office of Mental Health grant. In May 2024, the New York State Office of Mental Health recognized Solvay at the What's Great in Our State event for its exemplary work in school-based mental health interventions.

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LET THE BODY LEAD

AN EMBODIED APPROACH TO HEALING EATING DISORDERS AND OTHER CHRONIC STRESS RESPONSES

HOLLY LOWERY DAVIS

This experiential workshop explores how reconnecting with the body can support healing from eating disorders and other chronic stress responses. Through the lens of somatics and nervous system regulation, we'll examine how survival-based coping patterns emerge and how they can shift with increased embodiment and self-awareness. Participants will be guided through grounding practices and learn tools to stabilize the nervous system, build capacity, and foster choice and agency. We'll explore creating conditions for healing that are sustainable, compassionate, and rooted in the body's innate wisdom. No prior experience with somatic work is required.



Holly is a certified somatic practitioner, group facilitator and educator with 7+ years of experience in the mental health sector. Holly offers body oriented one-on-one support to help clients gently heal unresolved trauma and chronic stress responses, learn to support their nervous system, and develop more presence, agency and consciousness. Prior to private practice, Holly spent 6 years working for Ophelia's Place, an eating disorder non-profit, where she oversaw development and implementation of educational and community support programming.

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INTERNET GENERATION AND ADOLESCENCE: CELL PHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

DR. MATTHEW MULVANEY

Associate Professor of Human Development
and Family Science
Syracuse University

In this session, we will explore some of the key themes emerging with respect to the impact of social media on young people's well-being and how adolescence has been impacted generally by the emergence of social media technologies.



Dr. Matthew Mulvaney received his Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of New Hampshire. He has taught at a variety of institutions, including carrying out a Fulbright Fellowship in Cyprus. He has been a faculty member in the department of Human Development of Family Science at Syracuse University since 2012. His teaching interests include Children and the Media, Family Development, Family Theories, and Child Development. His research interests include parenting beliefs, particularly across cultures and in the context of immigration, as well as parental determinants of educational success and discipline strategies.

Monica Merante & Brian Cornue

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About Us

Contact Community Services is a nonprofit organization based in CNY passionately committed to empowering community members of all ages through compassionate support. Our mission is to provide a lifeline for individuals in crisis, fostering mental well-being across communities.



For more information on our programs visit contactsyracuse.org

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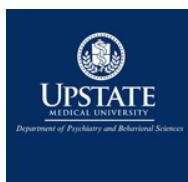
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