



*Strengthening Families Through Clinical Practice
A Professional Training Conference for Counselors, Social
Workers, and Helping Professionals*

June 11-12, 2026

Trussville Civic Center—Trussville, Alabama

Hosted by **New Direction Counseling, Inc.**



Table of Contents

Welcome Letter.....	3
Why Attend?.....	4
Who Should Attend?.....	5
Board of Directors/Planning Committee.....	6
About the Conference.....	7
Continuing Education.....	9
Conference at a Glance.....	10
Courses at a Glance.....	11
Courses in Detail.....	12
Speakers.....	22
How to Register.....	24



NEW DIRECTION COUNSELING

Dear Colleagues and Professionals,

We are excited to invite you to the 2nd Annual Bridging the Gap Conference, hosted by New Direction Counseling. This year's theme, "Bridging the Gap in Working with Families," highlights the vital role family systems play in both mental health and addiction recovery.

The conference features two learning tracks with 15 sessions available:

Track 1: Addiction and Family Recovery

Track 2: Family Therapy and Blended Family Work

Over two days, participants will engage in practical, clinically focused workshops designed to strengthen skills, expand perspectives, and support meaningful work with families. In addition to high quality training, the conference provides opportunities to connect with colleagues, build professional relationships, and strengthen the regional network of professionals serving families.

We look forward to learning and growing together. Don't miss a great time for growth and networking.

Warm regards,

Steve Mason, LPC-S, ADC
Executive Director
New Direction Counseling, Inc.

Why Attend?

Why Attend the Bridging the Gap Conference?

Participants will gain:

- Practical clinical tools for working with complex family systems
- Strategies for addressing addiction within relational contexts
- Approaches for working with adolescents and blended families
- Neurobiological insights into attachment and relational regulation
- Ethical decision-making strategies for modern clinical practice
- Opportunities to network with regional clinicians and organizations

Comments from the 2025 Conference:

“Amazing speakers and content”

“I received information from amazing presenters that I could use for my family and my clients”

“Definitely attending again next time”

Who Should Attend?

The 15 sessions to attend in 2 learning tracks will be an excellent opportunity for:

- Licensed Professional Counselors
- Social Workers
- Marriage and Family Therapists
- Addiction Counselors
- Behavioral Health Professionals
- Graduate Students in Counseling or Social Work
- Professionals working with families in clinical or community settings

New Direction Counseling Board of Directors and Conference Planning Committee

Board Members

Steve Mason—Founder/Executive Director

Terry Mashburn—Vice President

Zollie Holt—Secretary

Tina Mason—Treasurer

Brian Smith—Development Director

Kip Hubbard—Member-at-large

Planning Committee Members

Bethany Tyree—B. Tyree Counseling and Services, LLC

Terry Mashburn—New Direction Counseling, Inc.

Kimberly Marable—Marable Counseling and Consulting

Steve Mason—New Direction Counseling, Inc

About the Conference

The conference offers a unique opportunity for professional development, information exchange, and networking. It is designed to address the need for knowledge and skill development through advanced training and will begin on Thursday, June 11, 2026, at 8:00am and end on Friday, June 12, 2026, at 4:45pm.

Conference Registration Fees

Registration Type	Early (By April 11)	Regular (April 12-June 2)
1 Day	\$50	\$55
2 Day	\$80	\$100

Student Rate: 50% discount with valid ID

SCHOLARSHIP OPTIONS

A limited number of scholarships will be offered closer to the conference date based on funding availability. To be considered for a scholarship you must email info@newdirectionweb.com prior to May 31, 2026 and you will be notified of approval by June 2, 2026.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Participants may register online at www.newdirectionweb.com/conference. Registrations will also be accepted by mail or email if there are difficulties. Organizations may mail or email a purchase order or request and invoice to submit. To request a registration form, contact New Direction Counseling, Inc at 205-207-5688 or email info@newdirectionweb.com.

INDIVIDUAL COURSE REGISTRATION*

Every effort will be made to ensure participants are enrolled in their first choice; however, enrollment is limited and reservations are made on a first-come, first-serve basis. New Direction Counseling reserves the right to cancel any course for which minimum enrollment is not reached. If a course is cancelled and a transfer is not possible, a full refund of conference fees will be made.

ONSITE REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Onsite registration will be offered at the Registration table at the Civic Center each morning of the conference. However, we highly recommend registering online in advance, as course and session availability cannot be guaranteed and the rate will be \$20 higher. Register early to ensure your spot and save!

Food and Refreshments

Light snacks, coffee, tea, soft drinks, and water will be served in the mornings and afternoons. Lunch will be served from 12:30-1:30p on both days. More details about lunch options will be posted on www.newdirectionweb.com/conference closer to the event.

Handouts/Slides

Participants must go to www.newdirectionweb.com/conference starting 1 week prior to the conference start date to download and/or print course-specific handouts/slides. The handouts/slides will be available until 30 days after the conference.

Special Needs

Please indicate any accommodations needed when registering for the conference, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. For additional assistance, please contact Steve Mason at (205-207-5688) or email info@newdirectionweb.com.

Lodging/Hotel

There are hotels available in the Trussville area that are 5-10 minutes away from the conference location. There was no special rate negotiated as they are all comparable prices.

Quality Inn 844-535-3809	Courtyard Marriott 833-325-1342	Holiday Inn Express 205-594-6364
Hilton Garden Inn 866-306-0945	Comfort Inn 844-535-3809	Hampton Inn 205-655-9777

Please note these are “some” of the lodging options available to you. Certainly, look for others if these do not fit your needs.

Exhibitors/Sponsorship

There are opportunities to sponsor the conference and/or sponsor attendees that may not be able to afford the conference. There will also be exhibitors selected to match the conference needs as exhibitors must match the vision of the conference. You can contact Steve Mason at smason@newdirectionweb.com for more information.

Continuing Education

Continuing Education Hours

Continuing education (CE) acknowledges the commitment of individual attending approved educational programs. Conference participants can earn up to 13 continuing education hours based on documented attendance.

Continuing Education Professional Associations

National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC)—ACEP #7863

Alabama State Board of Social Work Examiners--#0827

Alabama Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association

Continuing Education Provider Statements

New Direction Counseling, Inc has been approved by NBCC as an Approved Continuing Education Provider, ACEP No. 7863. Programs that do not qualify for NBCC credit are clearly identified. New Direction Counseling, Inc is solely responsible for all aspects of the programs.



New Direction Counseling, Inc. has been approved as a Continuing Education Provider with the Alabama Board of Social Work Examiners, Provider #0827.

To qualify for continuing education credits, participants must:

- **Register:** Ensure you identify the type of CE requested when registering of the conference.
- **Attend Sessions in Full:** CE credit is awarded based on full attendance at approved sessions; partial credit will not be given.
 - **Participants are responsible for selecting the course that meets the requirements of their certifying/licensing body for contact hours and renewal needs**
- **Completion of Evaluations:** Submit the required conference/session evaluations by the specified deadline to receive credit. If an evaluation is not completed, no credit will be provided.

Verification of Attendance

Attendance will be monitored through sign-in sheets. Be sure to follow the specific procedures outlined during the conference.

Certificate Distribution

Continuing education certificates will be issued via email within 4 weeks following the conference, provided all signature and evaluation requirements have been met. In accordance with CE granting authority guidelines, certificates cannot be issued early, transferred or awarded for unapproved courses.

Conference at a Glance

Thursday and Friday Agenda

7:30a-8:15a	Registration
8:15a-9:15a	Opening Session
9:15a-9:30a	Break
9:30a-12:30p	Morning Workshops
12:30—1:30p	Lunch
1:30p-4:45p	Afternoon Workshops

Course registration is available on a first-come, first-serve basis, so be sure to register early. If you need any assistance during the conference, visit the Registration table.

No Partial Credits will be awarded. You MUST sign in/out of each course.

Tracks for the Conference

The conference will be split into 2 tracks that can be followed.

Track 1 will be addressing Addiction and Family Recovery. Focusing on substance use, relapse prevention, and recovery within family systems. Those courses are denoted by T1 being at the end of the course number.

Track 2 will be focused on Family Therapy and Relational Work. Focusing on modern family structures, adolescents, blended families, and relational healing. Those courses are denoted by T2 at the end of the course number.

Participants are not required to stay within one track, but the tracks are there if participants want to follow easily aligned set of related topics.

Courses at a Glance

Thursday Opening Session 8:15-9:15am What Makes a Family? Presenter: Steve Mason		
June 11, 2026 9:30am-12:30pm (3 hours)		
TAM01-T1	Addicted Family Systems	Steve Mason
TAM02-T1	HIV Awareness	AIDS Alabama Prevention Staff
TAM03-T2	Modern Family Systems: Diversity, Change, and Implications	Rebecca McKinney
TAM04-T2	Working with Adolescents in Family Therapy	Megan Bridges
1:30p-4:45p (3 hours)		
TPM01-T1	Ethics for Addiction and Mental Health Professionals	Stephanie Galbreath
TPM02-T1	Neurobiology of Family Relationships	Steve Mason
TPM03-T2	Holding the Whole System: Managing Stress, Boundaries, and Burnout in Family and Recovery Work	Maureen Schuster
TPM04-T2	Family Grief and Loss: Healing After Change or Separation	Cindy Sharp
June 12, 2026 9:15a-12:30p (3 hours)		
FAM01-T1	Addressing the Addicted Family System	David Cole
FAM02-T1	Parenting in Recovery	Stephanie Galbreath
FAM03-T2	Conflict Resolution and Boundary Setting in Families	Megan Bridges
FAM04-T2	Working with Blended Families	Steve Mason
1:30p-4:45p (3 hours)		
FPM01-T1	Integrating the Whole System-Family Based Relapse Prevention	David Cole
FPM02-T1/T2	Faith and Meaning-Making in Family Recovery	Steve Mason
FPM03-T2	Working with Children and Families in the Foster Care System	Rebecca McKinney

Courses In Detail

TAM01-T1 Addicted Family Systems-Identifying Core Problem Areas and Practical Interventions

Addiction rarely affects just one individual—it reshapes the entire family system. This training is designed for both new and experienced clinicians seeking a clearer, more confident approach to working with families impacted by substance use and addictive behaviors.

Participants will explore addiction as a systemic issue, examining how family roles, boundaries, communication patterns, and shame-based dynamics develop and are maintained within addicted family systems. The training will highlight common clinical challenges therapists encounter, including denial, enabling behaviors, parentification, attachment disruptions, and chronic crisis cycles.

Emphasis will be placed on practical, immediately applicable interventions that help stabilize the family system, support non-using family members, and guide treatment planning when addiction is present but not always the identified presenting problem. Clinicians will learn how to assess family roles, address boundary confusion, manage therapist rescue impulses, and set realistic, ethical treatment goals across varying stages of change.

Through case examples and clinical discussion, this course will help therapists strengthen their systemic lens, increase confidence in complex family dynamics, and apply foundational interventions that support safety, accountability, and healthier relational functioning

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain how addiction impacts family systems, including the development of roles, boundary disruptions, and communication patterns within families.
2. Identify common dynamics in families affected by addiction, including denial, enabling behaviors, parentification, attachment disruptions, and shame-based interactions.
3. Assess family roles and boundary patterns that contribute to the maintenance of addictive behaviors within the family system.
4. Develop treatment goals that address both individual substance use concerns and broader family system dynamics

TAM02-T1 HIV Awareness and Clinical Practice for Addiction and Mental Health Professionals

This training provides addiction and mental health professionals with essential knowledge and practical clinical tools for working with individuals impacted by HIV. Participants will explore current HIV trends, transmission and prevention strategies, and the complex intersection of HIV with substance use disorders and mental health challenges. Emphasis will be placed on reducing stigma, utilizing trauma-informed approaches, and integrating HIV-informed care into everyday clinical practice. Through case examples and practical application, clinicians will strengthen their confidence in screening, psychoeducation, ethical considerations, and collaborative care to support improved client outcomes.

Learning Objective:

1. Describe current HIV trends, modes of transmission, and prevention strategies relevant to behavioral health practice.
2. Explain the intersection of HIV with substance use disorders and mental health conditions and how these factors impact treatment engagement and outcomes.
3. Identify strategies for reducing stigma and incorporating trauma-informed approaches when working with clients impacted by HIV.
4. Recognize ethical and collaborative care considerations when supporting individuals living with or at risk for HIV.

Courses In Detail

TAM03-T2 Modern Family Systems: Diversity, Change, and Implications

Families today look different than they did even a decade ago. Blended families, co-parenting across households, multigenerational homes, LGBTQ+ family systems, digital-era stressors, and cultural shifts all influence the way clinicians must conceptualize and treat family dynamics.

This dynamic and practical training explores how modern diversity and societal change impact family systems and clinical practice. Participants will revisit core family systems concepts through a contemporary lens while learning how to assess, conceptualize, and intervene effectively with diverse family structures.

Through case examples, discussion, and applied interventions, clinicians will strengthen their ability to navigate cultural responsiveness, shifting roles, technology-related stressors, trauma patterns, and evolving relational dynamics in today's families.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe how contemporary family structures (e.g., blended families, co-parenting households, multigenerational homes, and LGBTQ+ family systems) influence family functioning and clinical conceptualization.
2. Identify at least three societal or cultural factors—including technology use and shifting social norms—that impact modern family dynamics.
3. Assess family system roles, boundaries, and relational patterns within diverse and evolving family structures.
4. Apply culturally responsive and family-systems-informed interventions when working with families experiencing role shifts, trauma patterns, or relational stressors.

TAM04-T2 Working with Adolescents in Family Therapy

Working with adolescents in family therapy requires clinicians to balance developmental understanding, family dynamics, and practical engagement strategies. This training explores adolescent development, including identity formation, autonomy, brain development, and the impact of trauma, substance use, and social media on behavior and family relationships.

Participants will learn how to conceptualize family therapy sessions using a family-as-a-group framework while distinguishing between oppositional behaviors and neurodevelopmental presentations such as Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). Practical strategies for engaging adolescents and families will be introduced, including approaches from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Motivational Interviewing, and play-based interventions.

Ethical considerations, cultural competence, and the role of caregivers within the family system will also be addressed. Through discussion and applied strategies, clinicians will strengthen their ability to effectively engage adolescents and families in therapy.

Courses In Detail

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe key developmental tasks of adolescence, including identity formation, autonomy development, and neurological changes that influence behavior and family relationships.
2. Differentiate between common adolescent oppositional behaviors and neurodevelopmental presentations such as Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA).
3. Assess family dynamics and developmental roles when working with adolescents, including the influence of caregivers, multigenerational households, and caregiver stress.
4. Apply at least three clinical strategies for engaging adolescents and families in therapy, including approaches drawn from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Motivational Interviewing, and play-based interventions.
5. Identify ethical and cultural considerations relevant to conducting family therapy with adolescents, including scope of practice, confidentiality, and family system dynamics

TPM01-T1 **Ethics for Addiction and Mental Health Professionals**

This 3-hour continuing education course provides a comprehensive review of ethical standards and decision-making practices essential for today's helping professionals. Grounded in real-world clinical challenges, this training is designed to deepen participants' understanding of professional ethics and enhance their ability to navigate complex situations with clarity and confidence.

The course will explore key ethical principles including confidentiality, dual relationships, informed consent, boundaries, professional competence, and cultural responsiveness. Using case examples and interactive discussion, participants will examine how ethical codes (such as those from NBCC, and NASW) apply in various practice settings and how to manage ethical dilemmas while maintaining client trust and professional integrity.

Participants will also gain practical tools for ethical decision-making and documentation, especially when dealing with high-risk clients, technology in practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Learning Objectives:

1. Participant will increase knowledge about emerging trends and news that impact the helping profession.
2. Participant will increase knowledge about ethical conflicts and considerations in the helping profession.
3. Participant will increase knowledge about boundary setting, dual relationships, and the role of technology in boundaries.

TPM02-T1 **Neurobiology of Family Relationships: Understanding Attachment, Regulation, and Interpersonal Brain Development**

Family relationships are shaped not only by communication patterns and learned behaviors, but by the wiring of the nervous system itself. This dynamic 3-hour training explores the neurobiology underlying attachment, emotional regulation, trauma responses, and relational patterns within family systems. Participants will gain a practical understanding of how brain development, nervous system states, and co-regulation influence conflict, connection, and generational patterns. Clinicians will leave with immediately applicable, neurobiologically informed interventions to enhance safety, regulation, and relational repair in their family work.

Courses In Detail

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the role of neurobiology in family relationships, including the impact of attachment systems, nervous system regulation, and interpersonal brain development.
2. Explain how trauma, stress, and early attachment experiences influence emotional regulation, relational patterns, and conflict within family systems.
3. Identify key nervous system states (e.g., regulation, hyperarousal, hypoarousal) and their influence on family interactions, communication, and behavioral responses.
4. Integrate knowledge of attachment and interpersonal neurobiology into clinical conceptualization of family dynamics and generational relational patterns.

TPM03-T2 Holding the Whole System: Managing Stress, Boundaries, and Burnout in Family and Recovery Work

Clinicians working with complex family systems—particularly in addiction and recovery settings—often carry intense emotional, relational, and systemic demands. This session explores how ongoing exposure to crisis, grief, and family dynamics can contribute to burnout, compassion fatigue, and boundary erosion over time.

Using a strengths-based, systems-informed lens, participants will examine common stress points in family and recovery work and learn practical strategies to recognize early signs of burnout, establish and maintain healthy professional boundaries and sustain effective, compassionate care. Clinical examples and reflective exercises will support immediate application to participants' own practice settings.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify common sources of burnout, compassion fatigue, and boundary challenges that occur when working with complex family systems in addiction and recovery settings.
2. Describe the impact of chronic exposure to crisis, grief, and systemic family dynamics on clinicians' emotional well-being and professional functioning.
3. Recognize early warning signs of burnout and compassion fatigue in themselves and colleagues within clinical practice.
4. Apply at least three practical strategies to establish and maintain healthy professional boundaries when working with families impacted by addiction and recovery.
5. Develop a strengths-based self-care and professional sustainability plan to support long-term effectiveness when working with high-demand family systems.

Courses In Detail

TPM04-T2 Family Grief and Loss: Healing After Change or Separation

Grief within families often extends far beyond the experience of death. Families navigating separation, role changes, addiction recovery, estrangement, and other relational disruptions frequently experience profound loss that may surface indirectly through conflict, anxiety, withdrawal, or shifts in family roles. This interactive training helps clinicians recognize how grief manifests within family systems and how unacknowledged loss can shape communication patterns, emotional regulation, and relational dynamics.

Participants will explore the systemic impact of grief, learn how to assess grief at the family level, and practice trauma-informed, family-systems-informed interventions that promote emotional safety and healthy expression. The training will also address strategies for supporting regulation, coping, and stabilization while helping families integrate loss into their shared narrative and move toward relational repair. Through clinical examples, reflection, and practical tools, clinicians will leave with actionable strategies to help families navigate grief with greater compassion, resilience, and connection.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify overt and ambiguous grief within family systems following change or separation.
2. Assess how grief impacts family roles, communication, and boundaries.
3. Apply trauma-informed, family-systems-informed interventions to support healing.
4. Facilitate meaning-making, resilience, and relational repair within families.

FAM01-T1 Addressing the Addicted Family System

Families affected by addiction often develop patterns that maintain stability within the system, even when those patterns contribute to ongoing dysfunction. This three-hour training explores how addicted family systems maintain homeostasis through relational dynamics such as enmeshment, emotional fusion, cutoff, and unspoken family rules. Drawing from family systems theory and addiction-informed practice, participants will examine how individual histories, emotional needs, and covert relational agreements shape behavior within the family.

Participants will learn how clinicians can interrupt maladaptive patterns while maintaining respect for each family member's subjective experience. The session emphasizes de-pathologizing family behaviors, identifying the emotional needs driving behavior, and helping families shift from power struggles toward more effective relational interactions. Through experiential techniques such as enactments, reframing, and curiosity-driven questioning, clinicians will learn practical strategies to help families make covert dynamics overt, develop healthier relational language, and create shared goals that support recovery and connection. Case examples and small-group discussion will allow participants to apply these concepts directly to clinical practice.

Courses In Detail

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe how family system homeostasis operates within addicted family systems and how patterns such as enmeshment, emotional fusion, and cutoff contribute to maintaining dysfunctional relational dynamics.
2. Identify the role of individual family rules, emotional needs, and personal histories in shaping behaviors and interactions within families affected by addiction.
3. Explain how clinicians can de-pathologize family behaviors while helping family members understand the emotional motivations underlying their actions.
4. Apply family-systems-informed interventions, including enactments, reframing, and curiosity-based questioning, to help families recognize and modify ineffective relational patterns.
5. Demonstrate strategies for helping families shift from “right versus wrong” thinking to evaluating behaviors based on relational effectiveness and emotional impact.

FAM02-T2 **Parenting in Recovery**

Parenting while in recovery presents unique challenges and opportunities for growth. Parents navigating recovery from substance use often face the dual task of maintaining personal sobriety while rebuilding trust, structure, and connection within their families. This training explores the complex intersection of recovery, parenting, and family healing.

Participants will examine the impact of addiction and recovery on family roles, attachment, and communication patterns, while also exploring common parenting challenges such as rebuilding trust with children, establishing healthy boundaries, managing guilt and shame, and creating consistent structure in the home. The training will emphasize a strengths-based and recovery-informed approach that supports both parental growth and child well-being.

Clinicians will learn practical strategies to help parents strengthen emotional regulation, improve parent-child communication, and foster resilience within the family system. Through discussion, clinical examples, and practical tools, participants will gain interventions that support parents in recovery as they work toward healthier relationships, stable family environments, and long-term recovery for the entire family system.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe how substance use and recovery can impact parenting roles, attachment, and family dynamics.
2. Identify common challenges faced by parents in recovery, including issues related to trust rebuilding, boundaries, emotional regulation, and communication with children.
3. Apply recovery-informed and family-systems-based strategies to support parents in strengthening healthy parent-child relationships and establishing consistent structure within the home.
4. Implement practical clinical interventions that promote resilience, accountability, and long-term stability for families navigating parenting during recovery.

Courses In Detail

FAM03-T2 **Conflict Resolution and Boundary Setting in Families**

Conflict is a natural part of family life, yet unresolved conflict and unclear boundaries can lead to ongoing stress, emotional dysregulation, and strained relationships. This training equips clinicians with practical tools to help families understand and navigate conflict in healthier ways. Participants will explore how family structure, developmental stages, trauma history, and spoken and unspoken family rules influence patterns of conflict and communication within family systems.

The workshop will examine how conflict affects the brain, particularly in families impacted by trauma, and how clinicians can support both self-regulation and co-regulation to promote safer and more constructive interactions. Participants will also learn how to help families identify underlying emotional needs driving conflict and develop age-appropriate strategies for resolving disagreements and establishing clear, healthy boundaries. Through case examples, role-play, and practical discussion, clinicians will gain actionable skills they can immediately apply when working with families experiencing relational conflict.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe how family dynamics, developmental stages, trauma history, and implicit family rules influence patterns of conflict and communication within family systems.
2. Explain the role of self-regulation and co-regulation in managing family conflict and supporting emotionally safe interactions.
3. Assess underlying emotional needs, relational patterns, and strengths within families experiencing recurring conflict.
4. Apply age-appropriate conflict resolution and boundary-setting strategies that promote healthier communication and relational functioning within families.

FAM04-T2 **Working with Blended Families**

Blended families are increasingly common and bring unique relational, developmental, and systemic challenges that differ from traditional nuclear family structures. When families combine households following divorce, separation, or remarriage, clinicians often encounter complex dynamics such as loyalty conflicts, role confusion, differing parenting styles, and boundary uncertainty. These transitions can create stress for both adults and children as they adjust to new family roles, expectations, and relationships.

This training equips therapists with practical, family-systems-informed strategies for working effectively with blended families. Participants will explore the developmental stages of stepfamily formation, common adjustment challenges for children and adults, and the impact of previous family experiences on current relational dynamics. The training will highlight clinical approaches that help therapists support healthy co-parenting, clarify family roles and boundaries, and facilitate connection between stepparents, biological parents, and children. Through clinical examples, discussion, and practical interventions, clinicians will gain tools to help blended families navigate conflict, strengthen relationships, and develop a shared family identity that promotes long-term stability and resilience.

Courses in Detail

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe common developmental stages and relational dynamics involved in the formation of blended families.
2. Identify common challenges experienced by blended families, including loyalty conflicts, role confusion, parenting style differences, and boundary issues.
3. Assess relational patterns and systemic factors that contribute to conflict or adjustment difficulties within blended family systems.
4. Apply family-systems-informed interventions that support healthy communication, co-parenting collaboration, and relationship development among biological parents, stepparents, and children.

FPM01-T1 Integrating the Addicted Family System-Family Based Relapse Prevention

Relapse prevention is often approached as an individual process, yet recovery outcomes are strongly influenced by family dynamics and relational needs within the broader family system. This three-hour workshop helps therapists understand how integrating the family into relapse prevention planning can strengthen long-term recovery and reduce relapse risk. Participants will learn how to engage family members in meaningful conversations about emotional and relational needs while respecting each person's narrative and perspective.

The training introduces a framework for identifying Individual Emotional Needs (IEN) and Relational Emotional Needs (REN) and explores how unmet needs can contribute to substance use and relapse patterns. Clinicians will learn strategies to help families normalize emotional needs, reduce shame, and develop healthier ways of meeting those needs through authentic connection and supportive relationships. The workshop also explores how emotional needs are expressed across key life contexts—including relationships, purpose, spirituality, and recreation—and how therapists can help families create environments that support recovery. Through case examples and group discussion, participants will develop practical tools for integrating the entire family system into relapse prevention planning.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the role of family dynamics and relational emotional needs in relapse vulnerability and long-term recovery.
2. Identify individual and relational emotional needs (IEN and REN) expressed within family narratives and interactions.
3. Apply clinical strategies that help families normalize emotional needs, improve communication, and support recovery-oriented relational patterns.
4. Integrate family-based interventions into relapse prevention planning to strengthen connection, accountability, and support within the family system.

Courses In Detail

FPM02-T1/T2 **Faith and Meaning Making in Families**

Faith and spirituality often play a central role in how individuals and families interpret life events, cope with suffering, and construct meaning. For many families, spiritual beliefs influence relational expectations, parenting approaches, responses to crisis, and pathways toward healing. When clinicians understand how faith shapes meaning-making processes, they can more effectively support clients navigating grief, addiction, trauma, conflict, and life transitions.

This training explores the role of faith and spiritual frameworks in family systems and provides clinicians with practical strategies for ethically integrating faith discussions into therapy. Participants will examine how families use spiritual narratives to interpret hardship, develop resilience, and define identity. The training also addresses potential challenges, including spiritual conflict, differing beliefs within family members, and ethical considerations when addressing religion in counseling.

Through case examples, discussion, and applied interventions, clinicians will learn ways to assess spiritual influences within families, facilitate constructive meaning-making conversations, and utilize clients' faith traditions as strengths within the therapeutic process. This workshop is appropriate for counselors, therapists, and helping professionals working with individuals, couples, and families.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the role of faith and spirituality in family meaning-making and how it influences coping, identity, and relational dynamics.
2. Identify ways spiritual beliefs and religious narratives shape family responses to stress, trauma, addiction, and life transitions.
3. Apply at least two assessment strategies for exploring faith, spirituality, and meaning-making processes in family therapy.
4. Utilize practical clinical interventions that incorporate clients' spiritual beliefs and values into therapeutic work while maintaining ethical counseling practice.

FPM03-T2 **Working with Children and Families in the Foster Care System**

Children and families involved in the foster care system often present with complex trauma histories, disrupted attachments, and challenging family dynamics. Therapists working with these families must navigate not only the clinical needs of the child but also the broader system that includes biological parents, foster parents, caseworkers, courts, and other professionals. This training provides clinicians with a practical overview of the foster care system and the unique clinical considerations involved when providing therapy to children and families in care. Participants will explore the impact of trauma, removal, and placement instability on child development and family relationships while learning strategies to effectively engage caregivers and collaborate with multidisciplinary teams. Practical interventions and ethical considerations will be discussed to help therapists support stabilization, healing, and permanency outcomes for children and families involved in foster care.

Courses In Detail

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the structure of the foster care system and the roles of key professionals involved in child welfare cases.
2. Explain the impact of trauma, attachment disruptions, and placement instability on the emotional and behavioral functioning of children in foster care.
3. Identify clinical strategies for engaging biological parents, foster parents, and children within the therapeutic process.
4. Apply trauma-informed and family-centered interventions when working with children and families involved in the foster care system.

Speakers

Megan Bridges, ALC

Megan graduated from Jacksonville State University with a Master's degree in Criminal Justice in 2010, and a Master's degree in Counselor Education in 2011. She started her career working in community mental health and substance abuse treatment programs. She later ran the Calhoun County Family Drug Court, earning statewide recognition for its adherence to program guidelines while keeping participants safe during the pandemic in 2020. Megan then took a position working for a juvenile court program in St. Clair County before opening her own private practice in 2025. She incorporates play and animal assisted interventions into her current work with families and children. She is currently under the supervision of Dr. Melanie Drake Wallace, LPC-S.

Dr. David Cole, DMFT, LPC

Dr. Cole is a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist who owns a private practice in Arab, Alabama. He has spent nearly 20 years working with individuals and families affected by addiction, trauma, and relational conflict.

Dr. Cole contracts with the Alabama Department of Human Resources to provide individual and family therapy for parents whose children have entered foster care due to addiction or domestic violence. In addition to his clinical practice, he offers therapy to the broader community, addressing addiction, co-occurring disorders, and a wide range of mental health concerns.

For a decade, Dr. Cole owned and operated a group home for emotionally disturbed adolescents, gaining extensive experience in crisis stabilization and youth development. He also consults with businesses on topics such as threat management, employee satisfaction, and workforce retention.

His therapeutic approach centers on identifying emotional needs to increase motivation, reduce resistance, and help individuals and family's function at their highest potential.

Stephanie Galbreath, LPC

Stephanie Galbreath is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Alabama with over 17 years of experience helping individuals and families navigate life's challenges. At The University of Alabama at Birmingham, she works closely with adults and adolescents in the Family Court System, guiding them toward healthier choices and stronger futures. In addition to her university role, Stephanie provides counseling through New Direction Counseling, where she supports clients facing a variety of concerns such as substance use, stress, major life changes, and personal growth. Known for her supportive and down-to-earth approach, Stephanie is passionate about walking alongside her clients as they build resilience and create meaningful change in their lives.

Steve Mason, LPC-S, ADC

Steve is a highly experienced Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CADC), and approved Supervising Counselor (LPC-S) with more than 20 years of clinical experience. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (2003) and earned his LPC in 2007. Steve provides counseling services to individuals ages 12 and older, working with adolescents, adults, and older adults, as well as couples and families, addressing a broad range of mental health, substance use, relational, and life-transition concerns.

Steve has presented at numerous professional conferences on a variety of clinical topics and regularly provides training and consultation for businesses, organizations, and nonprofit agencies. He previously served as an adjunct faculty member at Alabama A&M University and remains deeply committed to counselor education, frequently training and supervising counseling interns and clinicians in training. His passion lies in helping clients navigate life's challenges and experience meaningful growth, while also investing in the development of future professionals in the counseling field.

Speakers

Rebecca McKinney, LPC

Becca is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) who enjoys working with children, adolescents, parents, and adults across a wide range of concerns. Her areas of special interest include trauma, anxiety, depression, neurodivergent support, and parenting challenges.

She earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Liberty University in 2021, her Master's degree in Counseling from Liberty University in 2023, and her Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree in Community Care with a focus in Marriage and Family Care from Liberty University in 2025.

Becca values collaboration and believes in walking alongside clients through difficult seasons of life. She takes a personalized, strengths-based approach to treatment, helping clients develop practical tools and strategies to reach their mental health and life goals. Becca believes no one has to navigate their journey alone and is committed to providing a supportive, compassionate, and empowering therapeutic environment.

Maureen Schuster, LICSW-S

Maureen is a licensed clinical social worker with extensive experience in geriatric care, hospice, affordable housing and private practice. Her work focuses on supporting individuals and families navigating life transitions, caregiving stress, grief and loss, and complex family dynamics. Maureen brings a practical, strengths-based approach to her presentations, emphasizing resilience, empowerment, ethical boundary setting, and sustainable clinical practice. She has presented to social work students, professional audiences and community organizations and is committed to equipping helping professionals with tools they can immediately apply in their work.

Cindy Sharp, LICSW-S

Cindy is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and supervisor specializing in relational trauma, attachment dynamics, and family systems. Her clinical work includes supporting individuals and families navigating separation, identity transitions, and experiences of grief and loss through a trauma-informed lens.

She is the founder of Reset Counseling and Consulting and creator of the RESET Method (Restore, Educate, Support, Empower, Transform), an integrative framework designed to promote emotional regulation, resilience, and relational healing. Cindy is the author of three books and provides clinically grounded, practical insights for professionals working within family systems.

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