



**BRAIN INJURY
ASSOCIATION**

OF NORTH CAROLINA



Conference

Handbook

2025





BIANC

Welcome Message

Welcome to the 2025 Brain Injury Conference hosted by the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina!

We're excited to have you join us for this year's event, where we come together as a community to expand our knowledge, strengthen support networks, and drive meaningful progress in brain injury prevention, treatment, and advocacy.

Your presence reflects a shared commitment to improving the lives of those affected by brain injuries—whether you are a survivor, caregiver, healthcare professional, researcher, or advocate, your voice and engagement are invaluable to this mission.

This year's conference features a dynamic lineup of speakers representing diverse disciplines and topics that impact the brain injury community. A special thank you to our sponsors and exhibitors, whose generous support makes this conference possible.

Over the next two days, we encourage you to immerse yourself in the sessions, connect with fellow attendees, and exchange ideas that can inspire real change. To learn more about the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina and the programs and training we offer, visit www.bianc.net.

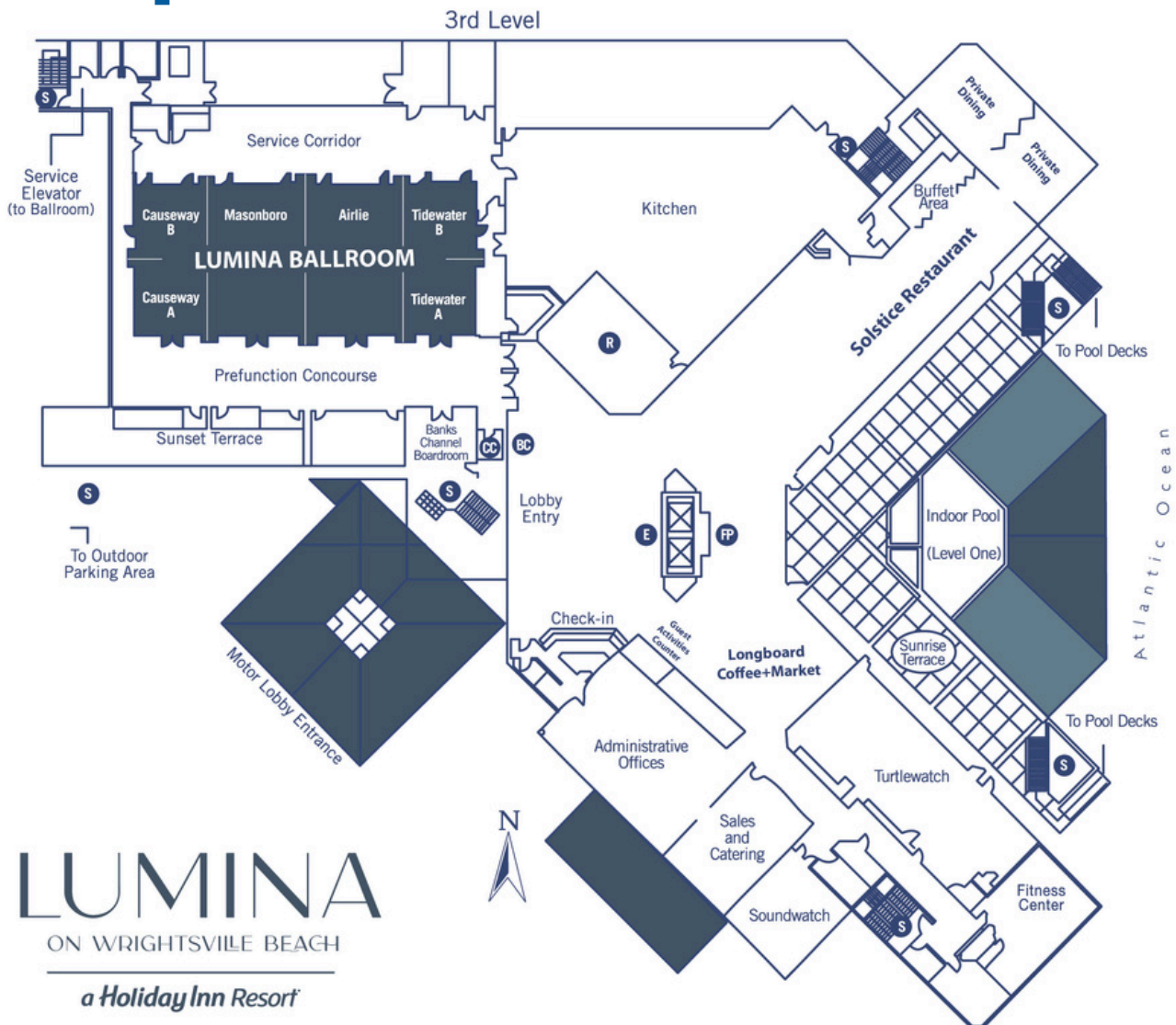
Together, we can continue making a lasting impact in the brain injury community!



**Scan the QR Code To Learn More
About our Conference Speakers!**

Wrightsville Beach

Map



About the Map

All sessions, exhibits, and meals will be held on the hotel's third floor. Should you need further assistance, please contact:

Molly Hastings: (828)214-7297 or **Libby Wilhelmson: (919)249-5442**

Quiet Room

The **Banks Channel Boardroom** will be utilized as the quiet room for those who need a break from the conference. Should you need ear plugs, please visit the conference registration desk.



Acknowledgement

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors and exhibitors whose generous support has been instrumental in making this conference possible. Their commitment and contributions have provided the essential resources to create an enriching and impactful event. We invite you to join us in recognizing and thanking them for their dedication to advancing the field of brain injury support and research.

Presenting Sponsors



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Check out all of our Provider Market Exhibitors listed on the back of this program!

Session	Pre Conference Activities
5:00 PM	Registration and Provider Market (Ballroom Prefunction Concourse)
5:30 pm - 6:30 PM	Bridget Hearne (Love Your Brain): Yoga Nidra Guided Meditation for Sleep & PTSD After Brain Injury (1 hr. CEU) (Soundwatch Room)
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM	Conference Networking Reception (Ballroom Prefunction Concourse)

MONDAY, APRIL 14

Session	Track 1 (Monsonboro Room)	Track 2 (Airlie Room)
Registration 7:00 AM Breakfast 7:15 AM- 8:45 AM Plenary Session 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Daniel Fenton: AI in TBI Care: Practical Tools for Providers, Patients, and Caregivers (1 hr. CEU) (Lumina Ballroom)	
Session 1 9:15 AM - 10:15 AM	Libby Grimes & Jennifer Reed Proving the Invisible Injury: TBI Caused by Motor Vehicle Accidents-A Comprehensive Review of Legal Challenges in Proving Brain Injury and Related Disabilities (1 hr. CEU)	Kay Reyna & Kayli Reyna Supporting the Supporters: Addressing the Needs of Brain Injury Caregivers (1 hr. CEU)
Session 2 10:20 AM - 11:20 AM	Kara Noronha & Jennifer Myatt Mental Health Following Brain Injury (1 hr. CEU)	Dorian Sylvester Practical Tools for Decision-Making Support (1 hr. CEU)
Break 11:20 AM - 11:30 AM	Break and Provider Market (Ballroom Prefunction Concourse)	
Session 3 11:35 AM - 12:35 PM	Juan Serrano & Antonio Puenta Neuropsychological Assessment of TBI: What, Why, and How (1 hr. CEU)	Libby Grimes & Jennifer Reed Proving the Invisible Injury: TBI Caused by Motor Vehicle Accidents-A Comprehensive Review of Legal Challenges in Proving Brain Injury and Related Disabilities (Repeat of Track 1, Session 1) (1 hr. CEU)
Lunch 12:50 PM - 2:00 PM Plenary 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Robert Baric & Frances Meredith: Beyond the Brain: Exploring the Systems Affected by TBI (1 hr. CEU) (Lumina Ballroom)	
Session 4 2:15 PM - 3:15 PM	Brittany Albert & Melissa Kandel Better: A TBI Transitional Care Program (1 hr. CEU)	Rhonda Waterhouse & Michael Ramos Repairing and Reforging: How Creative Writing Can Heal Brain Injury (1 hr. CEU)
Session 5 3:20 PM - 4:20 PM	Yasmarie Lucca & Juan Serrano Brain Injury, Social Determinants of Health, and Rehabilitation (1 hr. CEU)	Brien Lassiter The Behavioral Change Stairway Model (1 hr. CEU)

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

Session	Track 1 (Monsonboro Room)	Track 2 (Airlie Room)
Breakfast 7:15 AM - 8:45 AM Plenary Session 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Kimberly Morris, Andrea Briggs, Megan Powell and Moderator Kitty Barringer Panel: How to Thrive After a Brain Injury (Lumina Ballroom)	
Session 6 9:15 AM - 10:15 AM	Desiree Gorbea-Finalet & Lisa Nesbitt Where Are We Now? Revisiting the 2021 Report on “Shamefully Inadequate: NC’s Service System for People with TBI” (1 hr. CEU)	Heather Smith Empowering Independence: Harnessing Commercial Assistive Technology for Enhanced Daily Living (1 hr. CEU)
Break 10:15 AM - 10:25 AM	Break and Provider Market (Ballroom Prefunction Concourse)	
Session 7 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM	Heidi Greaata, Wes Cole & Beth MacIntosh A Well Balanced Approach to Post-Traumatic Headache: Integrative Approaches to Evaluation and Treatment (1 hr. CEU)	Ashley Thomas Adapted Sports: Connecting the Dots
Session 8 11:35 AM - 12:35 PM	Katie Hoover SLP Who? The Speech Language Pathologist’s Role in Brain Injury Annie Lane Conversation Groups: The Critical Role of Community in Recovery (1 hr. CEU)	Ryan Platt Special Needs Planning: An Overview (1 hr. CEU)
Lunch 12:50 PM - 1:50 PM Plenary Session 1:15 PM - 1:45 PM	Ginger Yarbrough, NC DHHS Strategic Plan in Action: Progress and Updates on North Carolina Brain Injury Initiatives (Lumina Ballroom)	
Session 9 2:05 PM - 3:05 PM	Ashlee Taylor, Lynn Makor Supporting Students with Pediatric Brain Injury Kimberly Sellinger & Hannah Allen Bridging Gaps: Experiences of an Interdisciplinary Pediatric Rehab Consult Team (1 hr. CEU)	Beth Callahan, Hinds Feet Farm Workshop: Unmasking Wellness: Presentation and Hands-on for mask creation (2:05 PM - 4:10 PM)
Session 10 3:10 PM - 4:10 PM	Susan White & Catherine Alek Assessment: A Tool to Measure Outcomes of Specialized Consultative Services of the NC TBI Waiver (1 hr. CEU)	

The University of Denver, Graduate School of Professional Psychology (GSPP) is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. GSPP maintains responsibility for this program and its content.



This conference is approved for up to 13.0 hours of continuing education credits for psychologists, physical therapists, and social workers, and certificates of attendance are also available for up to 13.0 hours for occupational therapists, speech/language therapists, and certified brain injury specialists, and any other individuals seeking general certificates of attendance.

Registration Opens - 5:00 PM

Pre Conference Activities

Yoga Nidra guided Meditation for Sleep & PTSD 5:30PM - 6:30PM
After Brain Injury Workshop (RSVP Required)

This engaging workshop will offer education about how sleep and mental health are impacted after TBI, and how Yoga Nidra guided meditation has been proven to help.

PRESENTER: Bridget Hearne, ERYT-500, RYS

Community Networking Reception (RSVP Required) 6:30PM - 8:00PM

Kick off the conference with a lively networking reception where attendees can connect, share ideas, and build relationships in a relaxed setting. Enjoy light refreshments and engaging conversations with fellow community members before the main event begins.

Restaurants Near Wrightsville Beach

Shark Bar and Kitchen \$\$
13 E Salisbury St - 12pm - 9pm

South Beach Grill \$\$
100 S Lumina Ave - 11am - 9pm

22 North (French/Creole) \$\$
22 N Lumina Ave - Hours Vary

Jerry's Food Wine and Spirits (Seafood) \$\$
7220 Wrightsville Ave - Hours Vary

Ceviche's (Central American) \$\$
7210 Wrightsville Ave - Hours Vary

Tower 7 (Baja Mexican Grill) \$\$
4 N Lumina - 11am - 10pm

Bluewater Grill (Seafood) \$\$
4 Marina St - 11am - 10pm

Poe's Tavern (Burgers) \$\$
212 Causeway Dr - 11am - 10pm

Bridge Tender (Seafood/Steak) \$\$\$
1414 Airlie Rd - Hours Vary

Brent's Bristo (Seafood, Steak) \$\$\$
7110 Wrightsville Ave - Hours Vary

Topsail Steamer (Seafood) \$\$
30 Causeway Dr - Hours Vary

Fish House Grill (Seafood) \$\$
1410 Airlie Rd - Hours Vary

Oceanic (Seafood) \$\$
703 S Lumina Ave - 11am-10pm

Dockside Restaurant and Bar (Seafood) \$\$
1308 Airlie Rd - 11:30am-8:30pm

Sweet n Savory (Breakfast/Brunch) \$\$
1611 Pavilion Place - 10am-8pm

Soundside Bar & Grill (Seafood) \$\$\$
2025 Eastwood Rd - 4pm-9pm

Port City Chop House (Steak) \$\$\$
1981 Eastwood Rd - 4:30pm-9:30pm

Gulfstream Restaurant \$
114 Causeway Dr - 6am-8:30pm

Monday, April 14

08

Plenary Breakfast Session

8:00AM - 9:00AM

AI in TBI Care: Practical Tools for Providers, Patients, and Caregivers

Daniel Fenton, MS, CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist at UNC THRIVE Program and UNC Brain & Body Program

Daniel Fenton serves as a speech-language pathologist for the UNC THRIVE and Brain and Body programs, where he works with veterans, first responders, and retired NFL players affected by mild-to-moderate TBIs. He earned his B.A. in psychology at UNC Chapel Hill and his clinical master's degree in communication sciences & disorders at East Carolina University. Daniel's prior experiences include graduate training in intensive neurological rehab at Atrium Health in Charlotte, NC, as well as a clinical fellowship in intensive inpatient neurological rehab at UNC Nash Hospital. Daniel also spent over 4 years working in outpatient neuro rehab at WakeMed Hospital in Raleigh, NC, with a focus on multidisciplinary post-TBI rehab.



His areas of expertise include concussion, TBI, stroke, neurodegenerative disorders, dysphagia, and post-COVID rehab. He has also engaged in advocacy and education for patients affected by TBI and stroke through local TV and radio appearances, as well as engagement with local non-profits.

This session explores the transformative potential of AI, including models like ChatGPT, in TBI-focused rehab care. These tools empower providers to deliver hyper-personalized treatment and education to patients. Attendees will learn how AI can increase life participation for TBI patients and maximize the chances for return to baseline activities. The presentation will showcase practical applications in clinical work, where AI assists in tailoring treatment to patients' real-life activities and helps patients and caregivers practice cognitive-communication skills in a supportive, low-stakes setting. This presentation will also examine promising advancements on the horizon, such as conversational voice models, discourse analysis, and automated documentation, highlighting the future of AI in TBI care.

Concurrent Session 1

9:15AM - 10:15AM

Proving the Invisible Injury: TBI Caused by Motor Vehicle Accidents-A Comprehensive Review of Legal Challenges in Proving Brain Injury and Related Disabilities

This session explores the complexities of proving traumatic brain injuries (TBI) in cases where medical imaging appears normal. Through the analysis of a real case that resulted in a significant settlement, we'll examine the key legal strategies, medical evidence, and expert testimony used to establish cognitive disability despite initial skepticism. The presentation will outline the case facts, challenges, and successful approach.

PRESENTERS: **Elizabeth Grimes**, Attorney and Managing Partner of Grimes Yeoman, PLLC
Jennifer Reed, Associate Litigation Attorney of Grimes Yeoman, PLLC

Supporting the Supporters: Addressing the Needs of Brain Injury Caregivers

This session examines the vital role of caregivers for brain injury survivors and the impact on their well-being. We'll explore common challenges, such as stress and burnout, share personal stories, and highlight research on caregiver health. Attendees will gain insight into unmet needs, available resources, and advocacy efforts to strengthen caregiver support systems.

PRESENTERS: **Kay Reyna**, EdD, Research Associate, Family Caregiver Expert

Kayli Reyna, EdD, UNCG Clinical Assistant Professor of the Department of Information, Library and Research Services, Certified Librarian, Previous NC Public Library, Brain Injury Family Caregiver Director

Concurrent Session 2

10:20AM - 11:20AM

Mental Health Following Brain Injury

Brain injury affects individuals physically, cognitively, and emotionally, making mental health a crucial part of recovery. This session explores the emotional impact of brain injury and strategies to support mental well-being in inpatient rehabilitation and beyond, ensuring a more holistic approach to healing.

PRESENTERS: **Kara Noronha**, PT, DPT, MBA, CBIS Clinical Coordinator, Brain Injury Program Coordinator, Carolinas Rehabilitation

Jennifer Myatt, LCMHC Lead Psychotherapist, Carolinas Rehabilitation

Practical Tools for Decision-Making Support

Navigating healthcare and financial decisions can be challenging for adults with brain injuries. This session explores legal tools like guardianship, powers of attorney, special needs trusts, and representative payee services. Attendees will learn practical strategies to support decision-making while prioritizing autonomy and long-term stability.

PRESENTERS: **Dorian Sylvester**, MSW, Executive Director of Guidance Carolina

Concurrent Session 3

11:35AM - 12:35AM

Neuropsychological Assessment of TBI: What, Why, and How

This session will provide an overview of current best practices in the neuropsychological assessment of traumatic brain injury (TBI). Key topics will include evidence-based assessment methods, interpretation of test results, and strategies for translating findings into understandable evidence and actionable recommendations. Participants will learn about emerging technologies and assessment tools designed to improve accuracy, reliability, and sensitivity, especially for culturally disadvantaged individuals. The session will also cover strategies for effective communication of assessment results to patients, families, and other healthcare providers to optimize care coordination and community reintegration.

PRESENTERS: **Antonio Puente**, PhD, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Antonio E. Puente, PhD Private Practice

Juan A. Serrano-Salcedo, PsyD, Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Clinical Neuropsychology, UNCW Antonio E. Puente, PhD Private Practice

Proving the Invisible Injury: TBI Caused by Motor Vehicle Accidents-A Comprehensive Review of Legal Challenges in Proving Brain Injury and Related Disabilities

This session explores the complexities of proving traumatic brain injuries (TBI) in cases where medical imaging appears normal. Through the analysis of a real case that resulted in a significant settlement, we'll examine the key legal strategies, medical evidence, and expert testimony used to establish cognitive disability despite initial skepticism. The presentation will outline the case facts, challenges, and successful approach.

PRESENTERS: **Elizabeth Grimes**, Attorney and Managing Partner, Grimes Yeoman, PLLC
Jennifer Reed, Associate Litigation Attorney, Grimes Yeoman, PLLC

Plenary Lunch Session

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Beyond the Brain: Exploring the Systems Affected by TBI

Dr. Frances Meredith and Dr. Robert Baric will explore how traumatic brain injuries (TBI) trigger complex immune responses, often leading to autoimmune conditions. By priming the immune system into a heightened state, TBIs can contribute to classic autoimmune symptoms. Case examples will highlight the importance of comprehensive diagnostics, while discussion of treatment strategies—both established and emerging—will focus on achieving remission. Long-term management and ongoing monitoring are key to helping patients navigate these challenges and improve their health.

Dr. Frances T. Meredith, MD

Dr. Frances Meredith has provided intuitive, heart-centered patient care in the Raleigh, NC area for over 25 years, including Primary Care, Infectious Disease, and Functional Medicine. She has focused on optimal wellness and has a reputation for creating deep connections with her patients, as well as empowering and educating her patients for them to truly be experts in their own wellness journey. With her many years of training and practice in traditional medicine, she is well known as a provider who “thinks outside the box”, her Functional Medicine training and experience informing her traditional allopathic expertise. Her passions in the realm of wellness include healing the total body effects of concussion and TBI, brain health, and autoimmunity. Her interest in both brain health and autoimmunity have been fueled by TBI as well as autoimmunity in both family members and herself.



Her medical training began at the University of Virginia Medical School, followed by a residency in Internal Medicine and a fellowship in Infectious Disease and Clinical Microbiology at Duke University Hospital. After 20 years of allopathic practice in primary care and Infectious Disease, she shifted to what she realized was the future of wellness, completing a Functional Medicine certification with the Institute of Functional Medicine. She has practiced Functional Medicine in the Raleigh, NC area since 2017. Her passion for optimal care of patients with TBI and concussion has blossomed from her experience with patients, family members, and herself, who suffered a chemical TBI in May 2024. This has led to the co-creation of MyConcussionDr with Dr. Robert Baric.

She is a mother of three amazing kids (two of whom have suffered concussions), enjoys communing with nature, skiing, dancing Argentine tango as well as exploring other cultures and the ancient wisdom of plants.

Dr. Robert Baric, DC, BCN



Dr. Robert Baric, with over 30 years of experience, is a passionate advocate for holistic health, focusing on root causes rather than just symptoms. In 2016, he introduced Neurofeedback Therapy to West Cary through MyBrainDR, showcasing his commitment to innovative care. Dr. Baric also founded MyConcussionDr, where he developed Concussion911, an acute concussion recovery supplement blend. With certifications in acupuncture, nutrition, pediatric chiropractic care, and various therapeutic techniques, his expertise spans diverse healing methods. Driven by his experiences with concussion patients, Dr. Baric's work emphasizes early intervention to reduce both short- and long-term effects. As a board member of the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina (BIANC), he is dedicated to guiding patients toward recovery and overall well-being.

Concurrent Session 4

2:15 PM - 3:15 PM

Better: A TBI Transitional Care Program

BETTER (Brain Injury Education, Training, and Therapy to Enhance Recovery) is a promising, new TBI transitional intervention that significantly improved physical QOL among younger patients. There exists an opportunity for OTPs to take a larger role in TBI transitional care in ways that are not currently being addressed. Findings can be used to inform OTPs and other allied healthcare providers about furthering the role of OTPs in TBI transitional care. This short course will describe the findings of our pilot study and inform OTPs on this emerging area of practice.

PRESENTERS: **Brittany Albert**, OTRL, Duke Health Care

Melissa Kandel, OTRL, BCPR, Duke University Hospital

Repairing and Reforging: How Creative Writing Can Heal

This session explores writing as a healing tool for brain injury. Ms. Waterhouse and Professor Ramos will share their experiences, discussing how writing helps them understand their injuries, explore treatments, manage memory lapses, and track progress. They will also present research on writing as a healing practice. Participants will receive a writing prompt and tips for using writing to support recovery.

PRESENTERS: **Rhonda Waterhouse**, M.Ed, MFA Candidate, Graduate Teaching Assistant, UNCW Department of Creative Writing

Michael Ramos, MFA Assistant Professor of Creative Writing UNCW Department of Creative Writing

Concurrent Session 5

3:20 PM - 4:20 PM

Brain Injury, Social Determinants of Health, and Rehabilitation

This session explores the complexities of proving traumatic brain injuries (TBI) in cases where medical imaging appears normal. Through the analysis of a real case that resulted in a significant settlement, we'll examine the key legal strategies, medical evidence, and expert testimony used to establish cognitive disability despite initial skepticism. A presentation will outline the case facts, challenges, and successful approach.

PRESENTERS: **Yasmari Lucca**, PsyD

Juan A. Serrano-Salcedo, PsyD, Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Clinical Neuropsychology, UNCW Antonio E. Puente, PhD Private Practice

The Behavioral Change Stairway Model

This presentation will cover how to verbally de-escalate someone that is in a crisis due to a mental health issue, intellectual/developmental disability, substance use disorder and/or traumatic brain injury. Topics to be covered are Active Listening, Empathy, Rapport and Influence to reach Behavior Change. We have to connect with people before we direct them to a safe outcome.

PRESENTER: Brien Lassiter - Training Coordinator, Trillium Health Resources

Corporate Members

We sincerely thank our Corporate Members for their generous annual support, which helps advance BIANC's mission and programs. Their commitment provides vital resources to support the brain injury community.

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Tuesday, April 15

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Plenary Breakfast Session

8:00AM - 9:00AM

Panel - How to Thrive After a Brain Injury - Moderated by Kitty Barringer

Andrea Briggs

Andrea Briggs is originally from Denver, Colorado, and earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Colorado at Denver in 2021. Her journey took an unexpected turn in 2011 when she sustained a traumatic brain injury in a car accident during her sophomore year of college. With the unwavering support of her family, friends, dedicated therapists, and her own perseverance, Andrea was able to complete her degree.

Now living independently in North Raleigh, she stays active in her recovery by attending weekly physical therapy sessions and incorporating home exercises into her daily routine. She is excited to soon resume volunteering at WakeMed Raleigh, a role that aligns perfectly with her passion for helping others—a driving force behind her studies and personal mission.



Kimberly Morris

Kimberly Morris believes in the power of resilience—her name serves as a reminder to keep it moving. Her journey has been one of perseverance, overcoming challenges with traumatic brain injury (TBI), substance use, and mental health struggles.

Looking back, there were moments of doubt, times she thought she had won, only to face another battle. Yet, through faith, love, and the support of those around her, she found strength in recovery. She learned to listen—and to listen to learn. By embracing natural supports and the power of community, she discovered an inner love that fuels her passion for helping others.

Now, Kimberly gives back what was so freely given to her, living in the present and accepting life on its terms. Her story is one of transformation, hope, and the belief that recovery is possible for everyone, no matter where they come from.



Megan Powell

Megan Powell is an Associate Professor of Mathematics at UNC Asheville and a traumatic brain injury (TBI) survivor. An avid hiker and cyclist, she explores the Asheville area whenever possible.

In 2020, Megan sustained a TBI after falling while hiking, hitting her head on a rock and landing in a river. She returned to teaching with a renewed passion for accessibility advocacy. At UNCA, she leads accessibility research projects, develops equity and inclusion modules, presents on accessibility in math education, and collaborates with the American Mathematical Society to improve screen readers for mathematical symbols.

Her experience with TBI also led her to Warrior Canine Connection in Asheville, where she helps support veterans with PTSD, TBI, and mobility challenges. She is currently raising Bill, a service dog in training.



Concurrent Session 6

9:15AM - 10:15AM

Where Are We Now? Revisiting the 2021 Report on “Shamefully Inadequate: NC’s Service System for People with TBI”

This session explores the complexities of proving traumatic brain injuries (TBI) in cases where medical imaging appears normal. Through the analysis of a real case that resulted in a significant settlement, we’ll examine key legal strategies, medical evidence, and expert testimony used to establish cognitive disability despite initial skepticism. A PowerPoint presentation will outline the case facts, challenges, and successful approach.

PRESENTERS: **Desiree Gorbea-Finalet**, MA, Project Director, Disability Rights North Carolina

Lisa Nesbitt, Supervising Attorney, Disability Rights North Carolina

Empowering Independence: Harnessing Commercial Assistive Technology for Enhanced Daily Living

This session examines the vital role of caregivers for brain injury survivors and the impact on their well-being. We’ll explore common challenges, such as stress and burnout, share personal stories, and highlight research on caregiver health. Attendees will gain insight into unmet needs, available resources, and advocacy efforts to strengthen caregiver support systems.

PRESENTERS: **Heather Smith**, OTR/L, ATP, Occupational Therapist, Carolinas Rehabilitation

Concurrent Sessions 7

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

A Well Balanced Approach to Post-Traumatic Headache: Integrative Approaches to Evaluation and Treatment

Chronic headaches after TBI are explored in two parts. First, the session examines how different sensory responses—linked to the vestibular and somatosensory systems—affect headache development, offering practical ways to differentiate between visual-vestibular and somatosensory-vestibular headaches. Second, it covers a dietary intervention where a high omega-3, low omega-6 (H3L6) diet was shown in a clinical trial to reduce headache frequency and severity. A licensed dietitian will provide practical tips on implementing this diet to help manage headaches and other TBI symptoms.

PRESENTERS: **Heidi Greata**, PT, DPT, Physical Therapist, THRIVE Program, UNC Health

Wesley Cole, PhD, Neuropsychologist, THRIVE Program, Research Associate Professor, Matthew Gfeller Center, UNC-CH

Beth MacIntosh, MPH, RD, LDN, Clinical Nutrition Manager of the UNC Health Metabolic and Nutrition Research Core

Adapted Sports: Connecting the Dots

Adapted sports support brain healing using current stats and research. The session includes a short, interactive demo where audience members experience adapted activities firsthand. It also highlights the impact of Bridge II Sports on veterans and stroke survivors.

PRESENTER: **Ashley Thomas**, Founder and CEO Bridge II Sports, Wheelchair user, Competitive Kayaker

Sessions

15

Concurrent Session 8

11:35 AM - 12:35 PM

SLP Who? The Speech Language Pathologist's Role in Brain Injury & Conversation Groups: The Critical Role of Community in Recovery

This lecture explores the vital role that speech-language pathologists play in diagnosing and rehabilitating individuals with acquired brain injuries. It covers their work across the continuum of care—from early intervention in the hospital to supporting transitions back home, returning to work, and reintegrating into community life.

The second part focuses on the Triangle Aphasia Project and its implementation of community-based conversation groups. It highlights how these groups are designed to improve rehabilitation outcomes for individuals with aphasia, emphasizing the benefits of community engagement and ongoing conversational practice.

PRESENTERS: **Katie Hoover**, CCC-SLP, CBIS, Atrium Health

Annie Lane, Executive Director, Triangle Aphasia Project

Special Needs Planning: An Overview

This interactive, exciting experience will help you learn more about Special Needs Planning, including Special Needs Trusts, ABLE Accounts, Guardianship, Government Benefits, Tax Implications, Future Caregiving and more!

PRESENTER: **Ryan Platt**, MBA, ChFC®, ChSNC™, CFBS, CEO, CoFounder, A Special Needs Plan

Plenary Lunch Session

1:15 PM - 1:45 PM

Strategic Plan in Action: Progress and Updates on North Carolina Brain Injury Initiatives

Ginger Yarbrough, MPA, NADD - DDS, CPHQ **Chief Clinical Officer, NC DDHS**

Ginger Yarbrough is the Chief Clinical Officer for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Olmstead for the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services. She has over 24 years of experience as a Direct Support Professional, Care Manager, and Quality manager. Ginger has been with the state since March 2023.

This talk will be centered around updates to the initiatives outlined in the NC DDHS Strategic Plan. This includes work specifically geared toward increasing access to services for those with brain injury in North Carolina.



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Sessions

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Concurrent Sessions 9

2:05 PM - 3:05 PM

Supporting Students with Pediatric Brain Injury & Bridging Gaps: Experiences of an Interdisciplinary Pediatric Rehab Consult Team

This first part of this session provides information on NC DPI's support for students with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), offers an overview of training resources for educators, families, and professionals. Attendees will explore the TBI Online Curriculum and "Return to Learn" policies, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary support and evidence-based practices for successful classroom reintegration.

The second part of this session highlights the UNC Children's REACH Team, formed to provide coordinated inpatient education and support for families of children with brain injury, spinal cord injury, multi-trauma, and other disabling conditions. These families often face fragmented care and limited guidance. This presentation will share lessons learned and progress from the team's first year.

PRESENTERS: **Ashlee Taylor Layton**, M.Ed, NCSP - NC DPI
Lynn K. Makor, MA, CAGS, NC DPI
Kimberly Sellinger, MS, CCC-SLP, UNC Children's Hospital
Hannah Allen, Phd, UNC Chapel Hill

Workshop: Unmasking Wellness: Presentation and Hands-on for mask creation (RSVP Required)

2:05 PM - 4:10 PM

Inspired by a National Geographic article on masks created by soldiers with PTSD, the Unmasking Brain Injury initiative was born in North Carolina. It raises awareness, gives survivors a voice, and highlights the importance of dignity, respect, and community inclusion. Join us for a workshop to learn about the program, its benefits, and the art of mask-making.

PRESENTER: **Beth Callahan**, Executive Director, Hinds Feet Farm

Concurrent Session 10

3:10PM - 4:10PM

Assessment: A Tool to Measure Outcomes of Specialized Consultative Services of the NC TBI Waiver

Specialized Consultative Services focuses on training and education of members, caregivers, and natural supports on the NC TBI Waiver. To date, there have been no outcome measurement tools that assess the educational knowledge, confidence in providing care, or quality of life of the caregiver or member involved in the NC TBI Waiver program. These assessments are necessary to ensure that SCS therapists are providing relevant education to caregivers that will improve both member and caregiver quality of life. Innovative OT Solutions, Inc. and Cognitive Tx Solutions, Inc. collaborated with an OTD graduate student from Baylor University and created the "Needs Assessment," which measures the effectiveness of the SCS education and training provided to caregivers of TBI Waiver members.

PRESENTERS: **Susan White**, OTR/L, CBIS Innovative OT Solutions, Inc.

Catherine Alex, Occupational Therapy Doctoral student/Baylor University



**Scan the QR Code For A Full Listing of
Conference Speakers and Their Bios**

Provider Market Exhibitors

Thank you to all our exhibitors for supporting the brain injury community!
Be sure to visit their tables and join the fun with Exhibitor BINGO. Stop by the registration desk for details!



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