

Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency Newsletter



January 2026



Here's what's been happening on the board and what is to come!

Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency's mission is to offer free addiction education programs and recovery resources to families, churches, and communities seeking a better understanding of addiction disease and its many related problems. As a faith-based organization we call upon God for help, guidance, and purpose in fulfilling our mission.

We kicked off 2025 with Medication-Assisted Treatment as the topic. Dane Minnick, USF Assistant Professor, moderated the panel of six local professionals, including providers, academia, and peer counselors with lived experience. Based on the community response, this panel was invited to present the program again on November 5th at the University of South Florida's Duvall Initiative's Inaugural Training Institute. A video of the January 14th Panel is available for online public viewing - go to www.sicd-fl.org/online > Online Resources > SICD MAT Assisted Treatment Panel.

SICD has facilitated "Responding to Addiction Training" with ten local groups including: Centerstone, Second Heart Homes, Nar Anon, Hope Recovery Church since January 2024. Local community participants including members of the Sheriff's Department, Safe Children's Coalition employees, NAMI peer counselors, family, and clergy since introducing the program in January 2024.

We kick off 2026 with "Responding to Addiction" February 26, 2026, at the Betty J. Johnson Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd, North Sarasota 5:30-7:30 PM. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Reserve your seat with today, via email: Lschris10sen@icloud.com. More details on upcoming 2026 events and collaborations lead by Director of Education Linda Christensen on page 2.

SICD's first Annual November Tea Party Fund Raiser was a tremendous success thanks to our donors, volunteers and Tea Party attendees, See page 4 you will not want to miss the November 2026 SICD Tea Party Fundraiser. Hope you can join us for a cup of tea, auction and community cheer.

Looking for an opportunity to make an impact in our community, we welcome volunteers and donors. Text Robin Hain today at 610-213-1341.

Warm wishes of gratitude,
Robin Hain, President

*Suncoast Institute on
Chemical Dependency Board*

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you can expect:

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Education Program Updates

Our education efforts continue to grow through strong partnerships, thoughtful collaboration, and an expanding vision for the future. Below is a snapshot of recent background activity as well as upcoming education initiatives.

Building Strategic Partnerships

As Director of Education Programs, I actively network with organizations in the fields of addiction, behavioral health, and ministry. These include groups such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), treatment and recovery providers like Centerstone and New Season, and ministerial organizations including the Sarasota Ministerial Association and Center of Hope Church. Through these connections, SICD continues to strengthen its role in community education, prevention, and compassionate care.



National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare

Suncoast In-Depth Technical Assistance (IDTA) Initiative

Through my involvement with the Behavioral Health Consortium, I was invited to join a work group with the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare for an initiative called Suncoast In-Depth Technical Assistance (IDTA).

I serve on the Anti-Stigma Work Group, which is focused on reducing stigma related to Substance Use Disorder—particularly for pregnant mothers receiving Medication-Assisted Treatment. Rather than reinventing existing resources, the group chose to learn from successful programs already in place.

The Addiction Policy Forum (APF) was selected to present to the work group. In September, Kayla Zawislak from APF and I provided an overview of APF and its Responding to Addiction training. The work group approved APF to provide education and training to affiliated organizations and community groups identified through a Community Values Inventory. This initiative is scheduled to roll out in April, with updates available on our website under Events.

Collaboration with USF Duvall Institute

During a Behavioral Health meeting last October, Dr. Dane Minnick, the newly appointed Chair of the Duvall Institute at the University of South Florida, reached out to begin a collaboration with SICD. Dr. Minnick moderated SICD's Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) panel at the Fruitville Library last year and invited me to serve on the planning committee for the inaugural Duvall Conference. The conference focuses on how best to deliver compassionate care to Sarasota-Manatee residents experiencing substance addiction and explores how USF can support the local behavioral health system. The goal is to foster collegiate and community collaboration.

I am currently serving on the planning committee for the upcoming Duvall Conference on April 2, 2026. Additional details will be posted on our website as they become available.



2026 Education Program Line-Up

March 25 | 5:30–7:30 PM | Shelby Library, Sarasota

Panel Discussion: **The Impact of Alcohol on the Body: Cancer, Heart, Brain, and Children**

February 26 & April 30 | North Sarasota Library
In-person **Responding to Addiction** training sessions

Additional options under consideration include:

- **What Parents Should Know About Youth and Substance Use Disorder**
- **What Youth Need to Know About Substance Misuse and Disorder**

Both presentations focus on prevention. Final details shared on our website as they are confirmed.

Community Collaboration

Teen Court: We hope to collaborate by offering SICD programs as the education component for Teen Court participants. Next steps include attending a Teen Court hearing, followed by a Zoom feedback meeting.

Harvest House: We are exploring opportunities to align our programs with their education offerings and are hopeful that one or two Harvest House associates may be trained to present the Responding to Addiction program.



ADDICTION POLICY FORUM

Responding to Addiction

A Comprehensive Training on Addiction

2/26/26 Thursday 5:30-7:30 PM
North Sarasota Library
2801 Newtown Blvd
Sarasota, FL 34236

As the addiction and overdose crisis reaches troubling milestones – 80391 overdose fatalities last year alone – all leaders and key stakeholders in the community are needed to address the problem. The Responding to Addiction training is designed to increase knowledge about addiction and develop skills and strategies to help your community.

The training and participant manual was developed by the Addiction Policy Forum with an Expert Review Panel composed of prominent researchers and physicians in the addiction field.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEARN

- The Science of Addiction
- The Signs and Symptoms of Addiction
- Evidence-Based Treatment Options
- Medications to Treat Addiction
- Engagement Strategies

WHO SHOULD GET TRAINED?

- Families, Friends, & Caregivers
- Clergy
- First Responders
- Employers
- Educators
- Health Care Providers
- Community-Based Service Providers
- Other Community Members

Free Education Program

OPEN TO PUBLIC

Brought to you by:

Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency

To register email:
Lschris10sen@icloud.com

Our education initiatives continue to grow in both scope and impact. Thank you for supporting our mission as we work to strengthen prevention, reduce stigma, and expand compassionate care throughout our community.
-Linda, Director of Education

Meet Our Newest Volunteers

Mia Gomez,
Media Team and Fundraising



As a person in recovery and a master's of social work student, I joined SICD for its commitment to reducing the stigma surrounding addiction and substance misuse. With my lived experience and family history of addiction, I have become deeply passionate about supporting individuals to thrive in their recovery. I am currently in training to become a therapist and have started initiatives at the university I attend to reduce stigma and support college students who have been impacted by addiction. Education is a powerful tool, both for loved ones and communities who don't know where to start, and I hope to help shift the narrative of addiction from one rooted in shame to one grounded in hope and healing.



Interested in Joining the Board?

- We are looking to continue to build our board and our volunteers.
- Positions we are looking to fill:
 - Outreach
 - Website Management
 - Fundraising
 - Grant Writing
 - Family Support Groups
 - Crossroads Career Program Facilitator
 - Treasurer
- Volunteers are always welcome to support events in the community!



Community News -

Centerstone Life;Story 5K/10K Run/Walk

On Saturday, September 20, 2025, Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency proudly participated in Centerstone's 23rd Annual Life;Story Run/Walk. Before dawn, vendors arrived to set up tents, tables, and signage, with brochures, flyers, business cards, and free giveaways filling tabletops in anticipation of the 7:30 am race start.

As Benderson Park came to life, participants gathered at the starting line—many holding signs honoring loved ones lost and sharing messages of hope for brighter futures. Individuals from across the community came together as one, united in support and committed to bringing light to even the darkest days.

Throughout the morning, connections were made as stories of resilience and hope were shared. As racers crossed the finish line, conversations continued and a strong sense of community was built. We are grateful for everyone we were able to connect with and look forward to continuing these meaningful connections in the future.

-Maggie, Director of Communication



Upcoming Community Event:

Visit our Table at the 15th Annual Bridge-A-Life SuperHero Run,
Benderson Park, Sarasota, February 7, 2026



A Heartfelt Success: Our Inaugural Charity Tea Party

On November 8th, the Suncoast Institute on Chemical Dependency marked a milestone with our first-ever Charity Tea Party. We are overjoyed to share that, thanks to the generous support of the ladies in attendance, our tireless volunteers, and our dedicated donors, we raised a remarkable \$11,700. This amount will now help us to operate our organization in the coming year, directly supporting our mission to provide free, cutting-edge educational programs on the disease of addictions as it relates to alcohol and drug abuse, prevention and recovery. These funds ensure we can continue our vital work in providing this much needed education. We are humbled by the incredible outpouring of support of all those that attended. The Clubhouse at Sandhill Preserve provided an elegant backdrop for our charming afternoon, offering a beautiful space for celebration, friendship and information. Our guests enjoyed a traditional high tea experience, sipping from delicate china cups and enjoying a delicious assortment of finger sandwiches, scones, and other sweet delights. The room was filled with a sense of whimsy, thanks in large part to the unique, handcrafted centerpieces that adorned every table and became one of the stars of the event when they were auctioned off. To complete the atmosphere, we enjoyed live harp music during the event and of course all the ladies who arrived in their high tea dresses, hats and fascinators.



Harpist - Tasha Robinson



The excitement continued with our silent auction, which proved to be a sensational success. The curated collection featured original paintings by ten gifted local artists, as well as beautiful handmade quilts, cozy afghans, jewelry and a host of other items. With high-demand articles like rounds of golf and restaurant certificates also on the line, the auction was a total sell-out. Rounding the event was a 50/50 draw which netted one of the attendees a handsome \$375.00, the winner reinvested the funds in an auction painting she had her eye on.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed to this success. Your ongoing support is the heartbeat of our organization, and we thank all the attendees for helping us turn a beautiful afternoon into an impact for recovery and education. Our organization operates entirely on the generosity of your donations and fund raising events like this. On the heels of this one we want to let you know that we are already in the preliminary planning stages for similar event this time next year. Mark your calendars and stay tune for additional information to follow. We hope to see you all there.

-Denise, Director of Strategic Planning



SICD's financial growth in 2025 far exceeded expectations. It increased 250% this year primarily as a result of our tea party fundraiser. Likewise our donor growth also improved. It grew by 350%. Again this growth is mainly due to our tea party. This was an extremely successful year.

-Surry, Treasurer



Best Hat Contest Winner



Thank you!

<p>SUNCOAST INSTITUTE ON CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY</p>	<p>941-479-0520</p>
 <p>www.sicd-fl.org</p>	<p>Bible Verse of the Quarter: <u>Isaiah 43:18-19</u></p>