



NCJSA Spring Conference 2026

Bridging Communities, Building Resilience

March 4, 2026

Starting at 10:00am

203 Front St, New Bern, NC 28560



President's Message

Greetings, NCJSA Membership Body and Juvenile Justice Professionals:

On behalf of NCJSA, it is my distinct honor and privilege to welcome each of you to the NCJSA Spring 2026 conference. We are grateful that you have chosen to be here- professionals, advocates, educators, law enforcement, counselors, court personnel, community partners- each united by a shared commitment to the well-being of our youth.

The conference is an opportunity to learn from one another, to challenge ourselves, and to strengthen our collective impact. Over the next few days, we will engage with inspiring speakers, innovative ideas, and practical strategies that address the complex challenges facing our youth. But just as important as the sessions are the conversations in the hallways. The shared experiences and the connections remind us we are not alone in this work.

Thank you for being here, for the work you do, and the hope you bring to the youth and families we serve. May your time in New Bern be both professionally rewarding and personally refreshing.

With Gratitude,

Michelle Carey

Michelle Carey
NCJSA President

Wednesday, March 4, 2026



10am – Noon Registration/ Check in

Lunch is NOT provided/Outside food in the venue is NOT permitted
Concessions are available on site

Noon-12:30pm - Conference Opening

12:30pm - 1:30pm

*How does your Leadership Style Impact
Today's Juveniles and 2nd Chance Efforts*

Greg Singleton

2pm-3pm

*Post Incarceration Syndrome (PICS):
The unseen collateral consequence of incarceration*

Jesse Battle

3:30pm-4:30pm

The Grant Funding Community Melting Pot Experience

Hillary Nicholson

5pm-6:30pm

Dinner on Your Own

5pm-6pm

Vendor Reception

Courtyard Marriot Conference Room

6:00pm-Close

New Bern Networking Nightlife

Thursday, March 5, 2026



8am-8:30am Registration/Check-In

8:30am-9:30am
Breakout Sessions

** Internet Crimes Against Children*
Special Agent Kevin Roughton (*Ballroom A*)

** Stronger Together: Community Partnerships Supporting At-Risk Youth Struggling With Absenteeism*
**Ava Widmann, Mary Finley,
Clinton Johnson (*Ballroom B*)**

** Preventing the Harm of Exposure to Internet Pornography*
John Van Arnam (*Ballroom C*)

10:00am-11:00am
Trauma, Resilience, and Hope:
Making the Case for Trauma-Informed Juvenile Courts
Chief District Court Judge J.H. Corpening, II

11:15-Noon
If We Don't Advocate, Who Will?
Defending and Advocating for Juvenile Justice Programs
Mike O'Conner

Noon-1:30pm Lunch
Keynote
William "Billy" Lassiter (DJJDP)

2pm-3pm
The Power of Breath: Harnessing Our Potential for Stress Management and Emotional Regulation
Rebecca Wheeler

3:15-4:15pm
Standing in the Gap
Brandon Price

4:15pm-4:30pm NCJSA announcements
5pm-Close Dinner/Cornhole/Games/Karaoke

Friday, March 6, 2026



8:00 - 9:00am

NCJSA Members Breakfast

9:15-10:15am

Skill Start: Vocational Training and Partnerships

Featuring:

Youth Presentations and Panel

**Jeff Schulze- Dean VOLT center, Craven Community College, Tiffany Powell-
Methodist Home for Children & VOLT center program participants**

10:30-11:30am

NCJSA Updates and Conference Closing

SAVE THE DATE....

NCJSA Fall 2026 Conference Embassy Suites Hilton

Greensboro, NC

Oct 14-16th, 2026

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



William "Billy" Lassiter
Deputy Secretary, Division of JJDP

Mr. Lassiter plans and directs operations of the Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and serves as a member of the Department's senior leadership team. As Deputy Secretary of Juvenile Justice, he oversees juvenile facility operations, juvenile court services, juvenile community programs, and juvenile intervention and treatment programs. Mr. Lassiter received his master's degree in public administration from North Carolina State University, and has spent his whole career working in juvenile justice and school safety, and is devoted to creating safer schools and communities for all of our state's youth. Lassiter has co-authored *Preventing Violence and Crime in America's Schools: From Put-Downs to Lock-Downs*, which takes an in-depth look at the causes and solutions of youth violence. In 2025, Gov. Josh Stein appointed Lassiter to serve as co-chair of the Governor's Advisory Council for Student Safety and Well-Being, which is tasked with advancing North Carolina's commitment to safe, welcoming, and inclusive schools by proposing and implementing solutions to promote school safety and improve student physical, social, and emotional well-being. Lassiter also serves on several other boards and commissions, including the Governor's Crime Commission and the Juvenile Justice Planning Committee. He is a past chair of the Task Force for Safer Schools (disbanded in 2024) and served on the Chief Justice's Task Force on Trauma-Informed Courts and the Juvenile Jurisdiction Advisory Committee. Mr. Lassiter was honored to receive the prestigious National Service Award from the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence for his exemplary service to children, youth, and communities. In 2020, he was named a Defender of Justice from the North Carolina Justice Center for his exemplary work on policy and research, which paved the way for North Carolina raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction.

FEATURED PRESENTERS



Greg Singleton is a native of New York City, New York. As a youth, his family relocated to Aulander, NC. Greg holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Fayetteville State University and a Project Management Professional Certification from IT University. Greg completed his Paralegal studies in Corporate Law and Civil Litigation at the Professional Career Development Institute in Atlanta, GA. May 09, 1992, Greg was commissioned as a U.S. Army 2nd Lieutenant. Following his service in the Army, Greg worked in Corporate America for over 21 years in Telecommunication. His telecommunication areas of expertise are in Technical Support, Operation and Project Management. In November 2015, Greg relocated to Craven County, where he found and developed the **Craven Pamlico Local Reentry Council** in June 2016, in which he served as the Chairman. Greg has served on the NC Statewide Re-Entry Council Collaborative Legislative Implementation team and the Craven County local transportation advisory board. Greg became the **Director of Community Workforce Readiness at Craven Community College** in February 2017. In March 2021, when Craven Community College became the intermediary agency for the Local Reentry Council, Greg's role increased with the addition of **Director of Reentry Operations** to his title. May 02, 2022, Greg became the **Dean of Programs, Workforce, and Continuing Education** at Central Carolina Community College.



Jesse Battle, MSMHC, LCMHC, LCAS, CCS, MAC, CCJP, SAP is currently the Sr. Director of Community Partnerships and a member of the clinical counseling team at TROSA. Jesse accepted this position after serving as the Director of the Men's Program for 20+ years. TROSA is a 500+ bed residential SUD treatment facility that is considered an alternative-to-incarceration and a reentry resource. Facing a judge with habitual felon charges, Jesse was provided with an opportunity to attend the TROSA program in 1995. After graduating from the program in 1997, Jesse earned an MS degree in Mental Health Counseling. Being able to achieve professional goals has allowed Jesse to assist individuals trapped by the collateral consequences of past behaviors in obtaining the life they desire. Edward Louis Cole once said, "You don't drown by falling in the water; you drown by staying there."

FEATURED PRESENTERS



Hillary Nicholson is a respected community strategist, grant writer, and funding educator with over two decades of experience strengthening systems that serve at-risk youth and families. Starting shared companies in 2023, “*Cardelia Lane*” and “*322 Standing The Movement*” with Co-founder, the ingenious Shawn Pressley, and undisputed Lane Director, Khadejah Williams, Hillary's dynamic team's work centers on building powerful partnerships, cultivating diverse and sustainable funding, and ensuring programs are rooted in cultural competency and community trust. Hillary believes real impact happens when agencies, funders, and neighborhoods move with one clear voice and one shared purpose, improving the lives of children. Through her practical, relationship-driven approach, she challenges professionals to see grant funding not as paperwork but as a

responsibility to steward resources wisely, collaboratively, and consistently. Hillary's message to NCJSA professionals is both grounded and bold: when we align our goals, honor community voice, and invest together, we create lasting change for youth who need it most.



Kevin Roughton has been employed by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (NCSBI) and assigned to the Computer Crimes Unit (CCU) since 2007. Prior to that, he served with the Nash County Sheriff's Office for over 8 years in various divisions, attaining the rank of Sergeant. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from East Carolina University and a Master's degree in Criminal Justice from Liberty University.

In his current assignment, Kevin leads a team of agents and analysts that investigates crimes related to child sexual exploitation and child solicitation. He is the Commander of the North Carolina Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, which consists of approximately 230+

local affiliate agencies across the state. Kevin is an instructor and regularly speaks at conferences and events, as well as teaches other law enforcement officers in ICAC investigations and digital forensics.

FEATURED PRESENTERS



Ava Widmann is the School Social Worker and Project Rise Coordinator for McDowell County Schools. She has her BSW and SSW and is currently completing her MSW and CSW certification. She is passionate about creating systems where students are supported early, held accountable in developmentally appropriate ways, and kept connected to school.



Clint Johnson is a Law & Justice teacher at McDowell High School in Marion, NC. His Advanced Criminal Justice II Honors class collaborates with the county's Teen Court Coordinator to administer the county's Teen Court Program. Prior to teaching, Clint worked approximately twenty years at the North Carolina Department of Revenue and held the position of Supervisory Special Agent in the Department's Criminal Investigations Division before leaving the Department in 2023. Clint completed North Carolina Basic Law Enforcement Training in 2013, and, later in 2019, completed the Internal Revenue Service's Special Agent Investigative Techniques training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, GA.



Mary Finley serves as the Director of Career & Technical Education, where she is passionate about building strong school-to-career pathways for students. She works closely with educators, industry, and community partners to expand access to hands-on learning, credentials, and workforce opportunities that prepare students for life beyond graduation.

FEATURED PRESENTERS

John Van Arnam - For over 14 years in North Carolina, The Third Talk® has been providing a direct solution to the challenge of youth exposure to internet pornography in individual homes, schools, churches, statewide PTA events, community gatherings, and the state's largest back-to-school safety conferences. A known and trusted entity, with deep roots in the prevention of human sex trafficking, The Third Talk provides lectures to congregations large and small. By forsaking shame, blame, and colorful language, The Third Talk has connected parents and children, students and teachers, pastors and youth groups, and utilizes humor and real-world, family-friendly anecdotes that adults and children can "hear," absorb, and apply. A Tier-3 NGO on the North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission, the Pornography Prevention Committee Chair of the North Carolina Demand Reduction Task Force, and in collaboration with several state agencies including the state SBI, DPI, and Centers for Safer Schools, The Third Talk provides cyber safety for children in general including internet pornography, sexting, SA by teachers, Human Sex Trafficking and risky sexual behavior. Founder John Van Arnam uses real-world examples and an unapologetic delivery to protect children in schools, churches, PTA events, community gatherings, and safety conferences.



The Honorable Julius H. Corpening

J. Corpening began practicing law in Wilmington in 1979 after graduating from Wake Forest University, Undergraduate and Law Schools. He has served as a judge in New Hanover and Pender Counties since 1991. Since 2000, he has served as one of the three family court judges who hear all cases relating to families in civil and juvenile court in New Hanover County and is currently serving as Chief District Court Judge. He has volunteered on a daily basis in the New Hanover County Schools for the last 20 years and is active in the Boy Scouts of America at the local, state, regional, and national levels. Judge Corpening serves as an instructor for new judges at the School of Government in Chapel Hill. He currently chairs the North Carolina Child Custody Mediation Advisory Committee, serves on the North Carolina Court Improvement Program Advisory

Committee and the North Carolina Educational Stability Task Force, is a founding member of the New Hanover County Partnership for Fatherhood, and serves as a member of the Dropout Prevention Coalition Advisory Board. Judge Corpening helped form the Juvenile Attendance Council for New Hanover County nine years ago, which has contributed to improved attendance at the county's elementary schools.

FEATURED PRESENTERS



Mike O'Connor has been employed at New Hope Carolinas Inc. since 2010 and has led the Communications and Connections Team since 2012. Mike received his Bachelor of Psychology from Westfield State College in Massachusetts. Prior to joining the New Hope team, Mike enjoyed a 14-year career in the non-profit sector, working for Eckerd Youth Alternatives in their Wilderness Education Program. Here, he served in roles of direct care and ultimately as the director of a 200-acre facility in Vance, NC. Mike has served on numerous professional boards, community provider groups, Managed Care Collaboratives, and advocacy groups. Currently, he is a member of the North Carolina TIDE Committee (Training,

Instruction, Development and Education), and serves on the North Carolina Community Alternatives for Youth board. Outside of work, Mike delights in his role as a husband and father, as well as the occasional round of golf.



Rebecca Wenrich Wheeler has worked in the education field for 25 years, as a public high school teacher, health educator, elementary school counselor, and currently as a school-based care coordinator and a college adjunct instructor. She holds an MEd in Curriculum and Instruction and an MA in Professional Counseling. Rebecca is also a Registered Yoga Teacher. She is passionate about helping children and adolescents develop coping and stress management skills. She is the author of two picture books and a YA novel.

FEATURED PRESENTERS



Brandon Price, a native of Asheboro, North Carolina, graduated from Fayetteville State University, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in 2005. Price spent the first five (5) years of his eight-year career at Fayetteville Urban Ministry recruiting, training and screening mentors for their Find-A-Friend Youth Program. His remaining years at Fayetteville Urban Ministry were spent as the public relations arm of the organization. After leaving Fayetteville Urban Ministry in 2015, Price enrolled in law school. In 2018, Price graduated from Faulkner University, Thomas Goode Jones School of Law in 2018, earning a Juris Doctorate and Master of Law degree in Advocacy and Alternative Dispute Resolution. During graduation Price was recognized and awarded the Dean's Award. He later joined Fayetteville Area Habitat for Humanity, as their Advocacy and Compliance Officer. In 2021, Brandon Price was named as Fayetteville Area Habitat for Humanity's next Chief Executive Officer, where he continues to serve today. Price, a licensed attorney, is Licensed in both Alabama and Maryland. He serves as a member of the Fayetteville Rotary Club and has remained the Chair of the Fayetteville Rotary Christmas Parade since 2021. He serves on the boards of: H.Y.P.E Leadership Academy (Raeford, NC), Mount Shepherd Retreat Center (Asheboro, NC), and the Black Employee Success Team through Habitat International (Atlanta, GA). In 2025, Brandon moderated a discussion with Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, United States Supreme Court, on her personal memoir "Lovely One." He, and his wife, Carmen, have two children, Kaliyah (22) and Brandon, II (16).

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