



Illinois Pioneer Coalition Summit Sessions

August 5th & 6th, 2026

Day 1

9:00am – 9:30am **Coffee and Conversation**

Come early to the Summit to network and share a cup of coffee with your colleagues.

9:30am – 9:45am **Welcome / Culture Change Champion of the Year Award**

Greetings from the Illinois Pioneer Coalition President

Angie Simmons, LNHA, Senior Home Administrator, Illinois Veterans' Affairs

Come join us for the opening message. The culture change champion of the year award will also be presented.

9:45am – 10:45am **State of the State**

State of the State: Legislation Impacting Long-Term Care

Jessica Belsly, Ombudsman Specialist, LTCOP, Illinois Department on Aging

This presentation provides an overview of legislation passed during the 2026 spring legislative session that impacts the long-term care industry. From electronic monitoring expansion, mandated reporting cleanup, to many other areas, attendees will gain insight into which issues were sent to the Governor's desk for signature. Participants will also receive a brief introduction to the legislative process, including how bills move through both chambers before becoming law.

10:45am - 12:30pm **Session I**

Is It Really a Behavior or Is It a Reaction?

Lee Moriarty, Deputy State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, Illinois Department on Aging

When supporting people living with dementia or mental health needs, they are often labeled as having "behaviors". Instead of seeing these actions as negative or problematic, what if we reframed them as adverse reactions - responses to unmet needs, confusion, fear, or environmental stressors? In this session, we will examine how changing our language and thought process places responsibility on us as caregivers and professionals to look beneath the surface. Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a guiding framework, we will explore what individuals may be reacting to and how unmet needs can show up in unexpected ways. By understanding the root of these reactions, we can better support individuals, strengthen connections, and ultimately improve quality of life.



Day 1, continued

12:30pm - 1:30pm Lunch and Trade Show

Poker Run! Visit the vendors to get a playing card; best hand wins! Game ends at Happy Hour.

1:30pm – 3:30pm Session II

Using Person Directed Care Practices to Avoid Citations

Richard J. Molloy, Nationally Recognized Speaker

Executive Director, Long Term Care Community Coalition

In this session participants will be able to recognize commonly cited nursing home deficiencies and explore the care-system challenges that may contribute to them. How staffing levels and staff competencies can influence areas frequently associated with citations, including infection control, accident prevention, quality of care, care planning, ADL support, resident rights, and abuse prevention will be discussed. Participants will also become familiar with approaches to assessing whether staffing levels are aligned with residents' needs, including the use of resident acuity and Case-Mix Index (CMI). This session will explore person-directed practices – such as individualized care planning, honoring resident preferences, consistent assignment, and effective communication – that can support quality improvement and reduce risk. Participants will walk away with a strengthened understanding of how staffing, care practices, and survey preparedness connect to supporting residents' dignity, safety, and overall well-being.

3:30pm – 3:45pm Break

3:45pm - 5:15pm Session III

Bridging the Gap Between Community-Based Services and the Long-Term Care Community

Susan C. Real, Chief Executive Officer, East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging

The Illinois Area Agencies on Aging Network serves over 421,000 older Illinoisans by serving as the local leader in the delivery of community-based services. This presentation is on ways the agencies on aging and the long-term care community can better collaborate to serve older adults living in both the community and long-term care settings. Resources, programs and best practices will be shared that have a positive impact on health and social outcomes.

5:15pm - 6:30pm Happy Hour and Trade Show

Vendor Showcase / Raffle Prizes / Best poker hand will be announced and awarded!



Day 2

8:00am - 12:00pm Workshop Intensive

Building Person Centered Care Plans with Meaning and Value for All!

Leslie Pedtke, MHA, Author, Founder – Dignity Quotient

“Sympathizing with someone? That’s the easy part. To truly learn empathy you have to walk in their shoes.” I wrote those words after my team and I experienced life in long-term care from a dependent perspective. That experience continues to shape the lens in which I see care supports.

Too often, care plans rely on labels like poor mobility, combative, or frequent faller. These terms create stigma and can reduce a person to a condition rather than recognizing them as an individual. We use this language out of habit—but it creates distance, encouraging us to care for rather than with people.

By choosing more human, everyday language, we break down barriers and create care plans that empower the people we support and empower the staff that support them. Language has power. It changes minds, shapes our thoughts and brings worlds together in one community.

In this intensive, together we will create care plans where our actions match our words consistently over time. They will reflect the lives of our older adults rather than just checking the boxes of compliance. With a truly collaborative approach based on relationships and empathy we can build a care plan that everyone can be excited to be part of.



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Meet the Presenters:

Angie Simmons, Senior Home Administrator, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs



Angie Simmons was born and raised in Southern Illinois. She graduated from nursing school in 1997 and then went on to earn a bachelor's degree in business. In 2006 she became the Administrator of an 83-bed skilled nursing facility and began her Culture Change/Pioneering journey. In 2013 she was appointed Senior Public Service Administrator with the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) and assigned to the Anna Veterans Home. In 2015 she won the Illinois Pioneering Culture Change Champion of the Year. In 2017, through the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners, she received her Certified Dementia Practitioner certification. In 2021 she was promoted to Senior Home's Administrator overseeing all IDVA's Veterans Homes across the state. In 2022 Angie was appointed to the Illinois Commission on LGBTQ Aging and serves as the co-chair for the Healthcare subcommittee and sits on the Older Adult Services Advisory Committee. Additionally, she is a member of Illinois Nursing Home Administrators Association, Southern Illinois Pioneer Coalition, and is the President of the Illinois Pioneer Coalition Board of Directors. Angie presents educational seminars throughout the state on topics such as the Importance of Person-Centered Care, Dementia Care training, Disaster Preparedness and Veteran benefits. She is dedicated to changing the culture of long-term care into more of a homelike "think outside the box" environment.

Jessica Belsly, Ombudsman Specialist, Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, Illinois Department on Aging



With over two decades of dedicated advocacy in the field of long-term care, Jessica Belsly brings expertise and an unwavering commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of individuals living in long-term care settings. Currently serving as the Ombudsman Specialist at the Illinois Department on Aging, Jessica provides training, technical assistance, and policy guidance to support the work of long-term care ombudsmen. Known for her practical insight and collaborative approach, Jessica is a trusted resource for ombudsmen across Illinois. She regularly contributes to program development initiatives, quality improvement efforts, and public policy issues impacting long-term care.

***Lee Moriarty, Deputy State Long Term Care Ombudsman, Illinois
Department on Aging***



Lee works with the State of Illinois as the Deputy Long-Term Care Ombudsman. In her role as the deputy Ombudsman, Lee works with the Regional Ombudsman throughout the state to promote the mission of advocacy for those who live in long-term care communities. Lee's past roles include working as a consultant for Nursing Homes, Assisted Living and Continuing Care Communities, where she promoted person-centered/directed care by focusing on quality of life, dementia care, and life enrichment. As an educator, Lee has provided continuing education programs and seminars both statewide and nationally on a variety of timely topics. Lee also serves on the Board of Directors for the Illinois Pioneer Coalition, where she is a founding member and past president.

***Richard J. Mollot, Executive Director, Long Term Care Community
Coalition***



Richard Mollot is the Executive Director of the Long Term Care Community Coalition (LTCCC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving care and quality of life for older adults and people with disabilities through research, policy advocacy, and public education. He works at the intersection of data, law, and consumer advocacy to advance transparency, accountability, and resident-centered care in nursing homes and other long-term care settings. He has authored and contributed to numerous studies, reports, and educational resources on long-term care issues, with a particular focus on nursing home financing, staffing, and oversight. His work has helped inform policymakers, advocates, and the public on systemic challenges and opportunities for reform. He has also served on numerous state and national advisory bodies focused on long-term care quality, financing, and oversight, and regularly develops and presents trainings for stakeholders on issues including nursing home standards and enforcement, assisted living policy, dementia care, and the rights of long-term care residents. He is a graduate of Howard University School of Law and a member of the Maryland Bar.

***Susan C. Real, Chief Executive Officer, East Central Illinois Area Agency
on Aging***



The East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, also known as ECIAAA, was created through the national Older Americans Act. ECIAAA is a planning and funding agency to support programs which advance the mission of empowering older adults and persons with disabilities to live with independence and dignity. ECIAAA serves 16 counties in east central Illinois. Susan C. Real earned her B.S. in Music Therapy in 1979 at Illinois State University, and has worked in the field of aging for 40 years and is recognized as a proven leader in the planning, development and implementation of Older Americans Act and Illinois General Revenue Fund programs serving over 23,000 older adults, caregivers, grandparents raising grandchildren, and persons with disabilities in east central Illinois. ECIAAA has sponsored the Illinois Regional Long Term Ombudsman Program, serving 16 counties in East Central Illinois, since 1977.

Leslie Pedtke, MHA, Author, Founder – Dignity Quotient



Leslie Pedtke, MHA, LNHA is currently the owner and founder of Dignity Quotient a long-term care consulting company and Trenton Village Assisted Living and Memory Care – King Management Company. She is also an adjunct instructor for Maryville University of St. Louis.

Leslie was recently the owner of three skilled and two other assisted living communities. From 1994-2017 she was the Administrator of Aviston Countryside Manor. Through this experience, she has built a foundation of person directed care.

She is an author for Health Professions Press. Her book, *What Living as a Resident Can Teach Long-Term Care Staff: The Power of Empathy to Transform Care*, was released in October, 2017 and is a teaching tool for long term care professionals, families and students.

During her time as administrator, Aviston Countryside Manor was featured in the 2013 Spring/Summer LTC Today, “Aviston Staff Walk in the Resident’s Shoes”, March 2012 Issue of McKnight’s Long-Term Care News, “You’re Hired”, Spring, 2011 LTC Today publication, “Consistent Assignments”, the April 2010 issue of McKnight’s Long-Term Care News in the article, “Empathy Crash Course” and the HCCI Members Only newsletter for the Intergenerational program, “Bringing Resident’s Stories to Life.” She was named one of the HCCI’s 2010 Heroes in Long Term Care. In 2018, she was selected the Illinois Pioneer Coalition’s Culture Change Champion of the Year.

Leslie is a national speaker on topics including dementia, culture change and workforce development and teaching empathy.

She was a board member of the Illinois Pioneer Coalition from 2010 to 2023. in which she has served as the summit coordinator, Vice-President and President. She graduated from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale with a Bachelor’s Degree in Speech Communication and Maryville University with a Master’s in Health Administration.