



48th Annual Philadelphia Regional Conference on Developmental Disabilities

Monday, October 26, 2026

Morgan Center for Research and Innovation

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The 48th Annual Philadelphia Regional Conference on Developmental Disabilities is a forum to discuss areas of mutual concern, foster partnerships and keep abreast of current programs. The conference will be held at the Morgan Center for Research and Innovation, 2716 South St., Philadelphia, PA 19146.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Attendees must register online at www.chop.edu/48thAnnualDDConference. Pre-registration is required; the registration deadline is **October 22, 2026**. If you need assistance with registering for the event, please call Bernadette Burton at 215-590-6336.

REGISTRATION FEES

Professionals\$75
CHOP Employees\$50
Students and Family Members\$10

Tickets will not be sold at the door. Please register online in advance to secure your spot.

ACCREDITATION STATEMENT

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia is a preapproved provider of continuing education credits for Pennsylvania Licensed Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors. Participants licensed in Pennsylvania who attend the full workshop and complete the required evaluation are eligible for 5 Continuing Education Credits. Participants licensed in other states should check with local licensing boards to determine continuing education approval.

SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Participation by all individuals is encouraged. If arrangements are required for an individual with special needs to attend this meeting, please contact Bernadette Burton at burtonb@chop.edu or 215-590-6336.

CONFERENCE LOCATION

The Morgan Center for Research and Innovation's 17 stories expand CHOP's laboratory research capacity while creating synergies with clinical research activities conducted in the neighboring Roberts Center for Pediatric Research.

DIRECTIONS

Driving from I-76 and points west, take the South Street Bridge east. You'll pass the Morgan Center on your right. At the traffic light at S. 27th Street, turn right and make an immediate right on Schuylkill Avenue. The parking lot is on your right. From points east, take Lombard Avenue west. It will become S. 27th Street. Cross over South Street and take an immediate right on Schuylkill Avenue. The Morgan Center parking lot will be on your right. If you are using GPS on your mobile device, the address to the parking lot entrance is 734 Schuylkill Ave.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/PARKING

Regional Rail, Penn Medicine Station. Bus route 40. Parking vouchers are available for \$5.00 via Venmo or the registration form.

PROGRAM WORKSHOPS

8 – 9 A.M. REGISTRATION

**9 – 10 A.M. KEYNOTE ADDRESS • Minority Leader Kendra Brooks,
Council Member At-Large for the City of Philadelphia**

Council member Brooks has worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant, a recreational therapist for people with traumatic brain injuries, and a program director at Easter Seals, where she oversaw programming for people with disabilities. In the wake of the murder of Walter Wallace, she fought for and won historic funding for mobile crisis teams, which are trained to respond appropriately when a person with disabilities is experiencing a mental health crisis. As Chair of City Council's Committee for People with Disabilities, she introduced legislation to make the Office for People with Disabilities permanent and held a hearing on accessibility for the major events of the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026. Each year, her office hosts the Autism Playdate at Smith Memorial Playground and takes an active role in citywide Disability Pride celebrations. As the mother of a child with a disability and a longtime parent organizer, she has partnered with Public Interest Law Center to host workshops to help families understand the rights of students with disabilities. Finally, she partnered with Lift Every Voice, a parent-led advocacy organization, on a campaign that resulted in the school district's first-ever student wellness policy, guaranteeing recess, bathroom breaks and movement breaks for young children.

10:15 – 11:30 A.M. SESSION 1

WORKSHOP 1 • Disability Is Part of the Equity Equation • *Transition to employment for youth with disabilities and chronic illness*

This presentation will highlight the critical importance of supporting successful transitions to employment for youth with disabilities. Participants will explore the challenges and opportunities associated with workforce readiness and learn about community-based resources that can help them achieve meaningful employment outcomes. The session will provide practical guidance on identifying, accessing and leveraging local support and services to promote career development, independence and long-term success.

***Presenters:** Carly Lezynski, Senior Job Coach, Career Path; Yesenia Rodriguez Reyes, Job Coach, Career Path*

WORKSHOP 2 • Working While Sick and Neurodivergent • *Neurodivergence, chronic illness and the hidden costs of staying at work and school*

Neurodivergent individuals navigate the dual demands of diagnosed or suspected chronic illness at almost seven times the rates of neurotypical populations. This talk will examine what we can learn from the challenges of neurodivergent individuals navigating these dual demands to improve workplace and educational supports. Findings will be presented within the context of a broader, ongoing Participatory Action Research (PAR) study of neurodivergent healthcare, sponsored by the Stony Brook Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND). Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of the barriers faced by neurodivergent individuals who also identify as disabled or chronically ill, and their needs. They will reflect on participant-generated suggestions for supporting individuals navigating these challenges.

***Presenter:** Anna Holt, PhD*

WORKSHOP 3 • Dual Diagnosis in Real Life • Lived experience, family perspectives and adapted treatment

This one-hour panel will introduce the basics of the co-occurrence of mental health conditions and developmental disabilities (dual diagnosis), including autism, intellectual disability and Tourette syndrome. Panelists will share lived, family and clinical perspectives on how mental health needs may present differently in neurodivergent people and how treatment can be adapted for greater success. Two panelists will discuss their experiences accessing and working with therapists. Two clinicians will highlight concrete, sensory-based, self-regulation strategies that support meaningful participation in therapy. The discussion will emphasize practical, respectful, person-centered approaches for improving mental health care across diverse communication and support needs.

Presenters: Tim Olson, B.S., NADD-DSP; Maleita Olson, LCSW, NADD-CC; Patricia Gonzalez, LPC, Mt-BC, NADD-CC

WORKSHOP 4 • Compassion in Action: Next Steps • Behavioral health support and the transition to adult services

This one-hour workshop will help youth, young adults, families, caregivers and support teams understand how to provide compassionate behavioral health support while preparing for the transition from children's services to adult services. Participants will learn:

- How behavior communicates needs
- The four functions of behaviors
- Person-centered support strategies
- Adult waiver options
- Available services
- Required documents
- Practical next steps for planning adulthood

Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) will identify the four main waivers: Adult Autism Waiver, Consolidated Waiver, Community Living Waiver, and Person/Family Directed Support Waiver. They each support eligible individuals with intellectual disability, autism or developmental disability in both home and community-based settings.

Presenters: Jamil Mayo; Kyle Ford; Karma Watson, MS, LPC, LBS

11:45 A.M. – 1 P.M. SESSION 2

WORKSHOP 5 • Building Better Bridges • Unlocking concrete support through strong relationships and support systems

Building Better Bridges will explore how strong relationships and healthy support systems create the foundation for accessing concrete support. This interactive presentation will highlight the connection between social relationships, trust-building, resilience and resource access. Participants will examine why social connections are essential protective factors. Families and will be introduced to the Seven Keystones of Support, a practical framework for identifying the different types of relationships needed for a balanced and supportive network. Through guided discussion, real-life examples and reflective activities, attendees will gain strategies to help families strengthen relationships, expand support systems and increase access to practical resources.

Presenter: Icylee L. Basketbill, B.S., Mentor, Educational Consultant & Advocate

WORKSHOP 6 • Beyond the Therapy Room • How caregiver partnership creates inclusive futures for children with autism

Children become included in their communities through participation in the routines, relationships and experiences that matter most to their families—not through therapy alone. This presentation will explore how meaningful caregiver partnership can transform intervention planning in early childhood by incorporating motivational interviewing to develop values-based goals. Attendees will learn practical strategies for identifying family priorities, building collaborative treatment goals and supporting skill generalization within natural environments. By centering caregiver voices and family values, clinicians can create more meaningful opportunities for community participation today while laying the foundation for lifelong inclusion, independence and quality of life.

***Presenter:** Julie Meter, MS, BCBA, LBS, Regional Director of Clinical Quality at Helping Hands Family*

WORKSHOP 7 • Identifying and Funding Assistive Technology

Our presenters will provide real-life examples of the way assistive technology (AT) has impacted major aspects of our lives or the lives of those we know (e.g. work, education, community living, etc.). We will then transition to explaining how to identify the assistive technology that might work for you and how to fund its purchase.

***Presenters:** Lisa Bryant, Freelance Writer; Monique Chabot, Associate Director of Assistive Technology at the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University; Will Hall, CEO, Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation; Bob Shillinh, Retired, Formerly Community Relations Manager for Pennsylvania School for the Deaf*

WORKSHOP 8 • In Motion, In Community • Increasing community engagement and learning about healthy lifestyles for people with IDD/A

We will share the ways we are bringing people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities/Autism (IDD/A) together with their supporters to learn about health and wellness topics including healthy beverage and nutrition choices, exercise, and stress management, while building connections in person and virtually.

The Jefferson FAB Center for Complex Care received a grant from the Eagles Autism Foundation for the project 'In Motion, In Community: Wellness for people with IDD/A and their supporters'. This project is ongoing from March 2026 to 2027. We will hear about the creation of the project and the impact on participants. We will also learn how to support wellness in accessible, fun ways.

***Presenters:** Karin Roseman, LCSW, Co-Director, Jefferson FAB Center for Complex Care; Jordan Dorsey*

1 – 2 P.M.

LUNCH AND POSTERS/RESOURCES

VISIT OUR RESOURCE TABLES ON THE SECOND FLOOR

See the full list below

WORKSHOP 9 • Transitioning to Adulthood • Disability services

We will walk parents and providers through topics that will support them when individuals with disabilities transition to the adult system. We will cover:

- The history of disability services
- Medicaid waivers
- Home/community-based services
- Social Security income
- Financial planning
- Guardianship vs. power of attorney
- Long-term planning

Throughout this session, we will focus on crafting an argument for disability services eligibility and teach parents how to best advocate for their children. All the presenters have lived experience as a family member, are individuals with lived experience, or connect clients to disability services in their professional role.

***Presenters:** Christine Lederer, LSW, Associate Director of Adult Advocacy, Arc of Philadelphia; Shane Janick, MPH, Executive Director, Arc of Philadelphia; Michael Anderson, Legislative Advocate, Arc of Philadelphia*

WORKSHOP 10 • Beyond the IEP • Practical strategies for families supporting the transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities and special healthcare needs

For many families, transition to adulthood can feel like standing at the edge of a cliff. Graduation is only one milestone. At the same time, families are navigating healthcare, employment, adult services, benefits, education and the emotional reality of preparing their child for the next chapter. Drawing from both professional expertise and lived family experience, presenters will share practical strategies that help families move from feeling overwhelmed to feeling more confident and organized throughout the transition journey. Through real-world examples, participants will have an opportunity to reflect on where they are in their own transition journey and identify meaningful next steps.

***Presenters:** Jackie White, MPH; Meredith Peterson, MA*

WORKSHOP 11 • My Money Journey

This workshop will introduce Sara Nye's experience budgeting for needs and wants like assistive technology and concert tickets. It will weave in the financial education concepts found in the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation's (PATF) Cents and Sensibility: A Guide to Money Management.

***Presenters:** Bethany Flaughner, Program Director at Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF); Sara Nye, Member of the Governor's Advisory Commission on People with Disabilities*

Resource Tables

Philadelphia Coordinated Health Care
VUnited Scholars, Villanova University

Moringa Institute

Spectra Support Services LLC

My Neuro Family

Diversified Home & Community Services LLC

Independence At Home Central

The ARC Alliance

Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation

The PEAL Center

Carela's Community Healthcare Training & Sales
Associates LLC

Vision for Equality

Elwyn

3 P.M.

ADJOURN

REGISTER ONLINE:

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If you need assistance registering for the event,
please call Bernadette Burton at 215-590-6336.



A Special Thank You to the Developmental Disabilities Conference Planning Committee Members

Bernadette Burton – CHOP, LEND Program Manager

Anthony Casillas - DD Conference Self-advocate

Christine Cuvo, MSS, LSW – HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy

Rachel Honore – CHOP, DBP Community Health Worker

Shani Jackson, BS – PMHCC

Stanley Jones, MSW – CHOP Compass Care

Isabel Kats, MSS, LSW – Elwyn Family Resource Center Coordinator

Kaitlin McHenry, DNP, CRNP-PC, PMHS, Planner – CHOP

Judith Miller, MS, PhD – CHOP, LEND Associate Director

Jamiel Owens – CHOP, Family Relations Coordinator

Marisol Ramos – Parent, Vision for Equality

Susannah Reimer, LCSW – CHOP, Community Education Program Manager, Center for Autism Research

Allison Simms, BS, CESP – CHOP, Program Manager, Career Path Program

Maureen Sullivan, MSW, MBA - CHOP Center for Rehabilitation, Director of Physician Practice and Rehabilitation Administration