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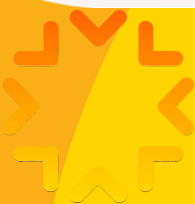
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**The Alliance
for Rights
and Recovery**

Advocate | Educate | Innovate | Celebrate

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@Alliance4RR



Our Moment Our Moment **Alliance 44th Annual Conference** **September 23-25, 2026 Albany Marriott**

The wait is over! We're excited to share the first look at the draft program for the Alliance for Rights and Recovery's 44th Annual Conference, Our Movement, Our Moment, taking place September 23-25, 2026, at the Albany Marriott. This year's conference brings together advocates, peers, providers, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders from across New York and the nation for three days of hope, healing, connection, and readiness to take action.

Wednesday September 23

10:00 am Hotel and Conference Registration, Multi-Cultural Exhibition Opens

11:30 am Welcoming Remarks, Lunch

1:00 pm Trailblazer Sessions

- **Dr Jorge Petit** Executive Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Mental Hygiene
- **Dr. Haner Hernandez**, Independent Recovery Consultant

2:30 pm Round 1

Another Brick in the Wall...How Can the Peer Workforce Thrive Without Being Co-opted? Jeremy Reuling and Melissa Wettengel, Hands Across Long Island

TBA Kai Cronk, Recovery Options Made Easy

Partnership to Support Aging in Place

Karen Choens and Tony Trahan, NYS Office Mental Health

Work, Works! WRAP in Your Work Life

Regina Kaiser, Greg Parnell Crestwood Behavioral Health

Building the Capacity for an Inclusive Peer Support Service Continuum-Through the Lens of Equity Sara Taylor, Positive Steps and the BIPOC PEEEEEEK project

Embrace the Gathering: How Understanding Culture Supports Sustained Mental Health Recovery and Wellness Within Organizations and Communities

Deborah Wilcox, Confluency Consultants

Communities Not Cages: Prison and Sentencing Reform

Thomas Gant and Ismael Diaz Jr, Center for Community Alternatives and Franchesca Capellan, TheraCorp, Fairleigh Dickinson University

4:00 pm Round 2

Olmstead Panel Clarence Sundram and panel

The Art of Recovery Gayle Bluebird, Bluebird Consulting; Sharon Wise, Wise Workz; Michael Skinner, Surviving Spirit; Bryant Pugh, Mental Health Empowerment Project; Moderator: Andrea Wagner, NYS Office of Mental Health

Holding the Line: Prevention of Peer Drift and Honoring Peer Fidelity

Matthew R. Federici, Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery

Vote as if Your Life Depends on It! Moderator: Phyllis Vine and Luke Sikinyi

Ethnic Inequities, Discrimination and Stigma in the Workplace

Karen Broadway-Wilson, Norman Kim and Raymond Gregory, Center for Practice Innovation

Strengthening Interdisciplinary Teams in Crisis Care

Betty Czitrom and Chackupurackal Mathai, Center for Practice Innovation

From Principles to Practice: Applying the Strategies of Psych Rehab

Britt Higgins, Steve Nawotniak, Hannah Taber, Kirk Cooper-Johnson, New York Psychiatric Rehabilitation Training Academy, Alliance for Rights and Recovery

Implementing Peer Services in Local Jail Settings

Karen Boliver, Stamatina K. Stamatakis Northern Regional Center for Independent Living

Thursday September 24

8:30 am

Round 3

A Candid Look at Recent Federal Initiatives and Orders

Livia Davis, C4 Innovations; Harvey Rosenthal, Alliance for Rights and Recovery, and Panel

Beyond Burnout: Creating Cultures Where People Stay, Grow, and Lead

Joessie Mathews, Stoneybrook University

The Power of Connection: Peer Support as an Overdose Defense

Daniel Galvin and Christopher Weber, Spectrum Health and Human Services

The Power of Health and Wellness: How Active Engagement Shapes Your Wellness Journey

Dwayne Mayes and Chloe-Elyse Fasanmi, Center for Practice Innovations

Let's Talk About Love: How to Support People Around Dating and Romance

Emily Grossman, Rutgers Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling

Peer Leadership in Practice: Maintaining Mutuality in Roles of Authority

Melissa Wettengel Hands Across Long Island; Edye Schwartz, Edye Schwartz Consulting

Resilience: Personal Management, Communication: Healthy Boundaries

Ryan Tempesco and Katie Wilson Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery

Rhythms for Resilience and Resistance! Chrys Ballerano, Chrys Ballerano Consulting

10:00 am

Round 4

Coming Together for Rights and Recovery

Cherene Caraco, Promise Resource Center; Kris Locus, On Our Own of Maryland; Phyllis Vine, Historian and Author; Chris Assini, FOR-NY; Moderator: Luke Sikinyi, Alliance for Rights and Recovery

Our Movement. Our Moment: From Lived Experience to Leadership!!

Mona Lisa McEachin and Bethany Morgan, BestSelf Behavioral Health

Trauma-Informed Community(ies) Engagement – What is it? What Does it Take? Where do I Start?

Clarencetine (Teena) Brooks, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, James Rodriguez, McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research; Aida Y Ortiz

Reimagining Crisis Response: Lessons from National Models and NYC's B-HEARD Initiative Christina Sparrock, William Juhn, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest; Jennifer Hadlock

Peer Job Retention: Update on Compensation, Satisfaction, and Education Issues for Peers Joanne Forbes, PhD, consultant Rutgers University; Rita Cronise, Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions, Rutgers University

Methadone Maintenance 101

Douglas C. Meyer, Mental Health Association in Essex County

Care, Not Criminalization: A National Movement for a Homeless Bill of Rights

Heather Simms and Anne Thieling, Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey; Michael Callahan, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs

11:30 am

KEYNOTE

Hollywood 2.0 is an L.A. County pilot program that brings the revolutionary, community-based mental health care model from **Trieste, Italy** to the Hollywood neighborhood. It prioritizes "radical hospitality", shifting focus from a medical diagnosis to a holistic approach of **People, Place, and Purpose**. By focusing on holistic, peer-driven recovery, the program has successfully helped slash Hollywood's street homelessness by nearly half.

- **Sapna Mendon-Plasek** Rand Corporation
- **Kerry Morrison**, Heart Forward Founder and Project Director, Hollywood 2.0. Department of Mental Health, LA County and Panel

2:00 pm

Trailblazer Sessions

- **A Culture of Peer Innovations**, Cherene Caraco, Promise Resource Center
- **Passing The Torch: Sharing Our Success and Learning from the Global Disability Rights Movement** Eric Rosenthal, Disability Rights International
- **Social Care Network Panel** Moderator: Luke Sikinyi, Alliance for Rights and Recovery

3:30 pm

Round 5

State and Federal Policy Community Dialogue Harvey Rosenthal and Luke Sikinyi, Alliance for Rights and Recovery

Working with Aging Community Members: Becoming Agents of Change

Teresa Theophano, Service Program for Older Adults

Building Better Outcomes: Community Experience in Integrated Care & Recovery

Sarah Gilliard, Chavez and York, Services for the Underserved

Alternatives to Suicide: The Hope of Harm Reduction and the Wisdom of Lived Experience

Caroline Mazel-Carlton, Wildflower Alliance

The Science of Connection: How Peer Support Engages the Brain, Heals the Heart

and Awakens the Soul Bryant Pugh, Mental Health Empowerment Project

Beyond Stabilization: Building Mental Wealth in a System That Wasn't

Designed for It Katherine Hewlett, Infinite Potential Hub LLC

SoulCare Beyond Self-Care: Reflective Writing, Narrative, and Restoration in

Peer Support Space

Luis Lopez, Marissa Headley and Samantha Messiah, Center for Practice Innovation

Re-Entry and Recovery

Skip Skipper NYC Justice Peer Initiative; TBA Correctional Association of NYS; Charles Corbin, Treatment not Jail Coalition

Friday September 25

8:30 am

Round 6

Care That Connects: CHWs, Peer Support & Mental Health for Hearing Loss

Marina Fanshteyn and Tara Tobin-Rogers, United Hands

From Support to Empowerment: Integrating Spirituality into Behavioral Health for Staff and Those We Serve

Patricia Blum and Ruth P. Gonzales, Crestwood Behavioral Health

Understanding and Reducing Stigma in the Community

David Ferencz, Enrica Paladino & Larry Hochwald, Training and Technical Assistance Facilitators for The Alliance

An Update on INSET Innovations

Baltic St, ROME, Hands Across Long Island, Greater Mental Health of New York, Mental Health Empowerment Project; Em Wasserman, NYS Office of Mental Health

Measuring what Matters: Quality-of-Life and Participatory Research

Kevin Rice and Grace Williams, Fountain House

Maximizing Partnerships in Rural Communities to Reduce Barriers to Access to Services

Dorothy Fenske and Mark Christensen, Clarity Wellness Community

Sacred Stories

Lori Tatarski, *I Dare You to Walk in My Shoes*; Len Statham, *5 Greatest Moments and* Michael Skinner, *The Lunchbox Theory: Lessons Learned from Trauma and Abuse*

10:00 am

Keynote: OMH Town Hall with Commissioner Ann Sullivan

11:30 am

Round 7

Distorted Narratives in Psychiatry: Anosognosia and the Construction of a Scientific "Fact"

Jesse Mangan, Committable and Jim McQuaid

Empowering Youth Systems Advocates through Youth-Guided Practices

Kristin Rivera, Families Together in NYS

NYSDOH Disability and Health Program Health-Needs Assessment

Shirley Madewell, NYS Department of Health; Pat Dowse, Dowsefactor

Sharing Our Experience Across the Generations

Gayle Bluebird, Bluebird Consulting; Lovely Lily

The Future is Now: Preparing for the AI Workforce and Finding Employment in a Changing World

Rob Statham, Alliance for Rights and Recovery

The Cultural Competence Trap: How Humility Transforms Peer Support

Joy Taylor

12:45 pm

Thanks and Farewell

Lunch to Go

Register Today!

Follow the Alliance for more announcements and updates @Alliance4RR on all platforms

Take advantage of our limited time offer:

Register 5 attendees and receive 1 complimentary registration.