



2026

# EASTERSEALS MIDWEST VIRTUAL AUTISM SUMMIT

NOVEMBER 5, 2026 | 8:30 AM - 11:45 AM

NOVEMBER 6, 2026 | 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM

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# REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Scan the QR code to register.



## Conference Dates:

November 5, 2026 | 8:30 AM - 11:45 AM

November 6, 2026 | 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM

## Cost for Attendees:

Professionals: \$55 for both days

Watch Party Rate: \$275 for groups of six or more professionals

Families and Individuals: Free

All sessions will be recorded and available for registrants to view for six months after the event.

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# SCHEDULE

## November 5

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### Welcome and Opening Keynote | Dr. Jed Baker

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

A Neuroaffirmative Approach to Increasing Quality of Life  
Outcomes for Individuals with ASD

### Break

10:00 AM – 10:15 AM

### Breakout Session 1

10:15 AM – 11:45 AM

**Session A:** Building Emotional-Regulation, Supportive Environments,  
and Fostering Social Connection

**Session B:** Is it ADHD? A Parent's Guide to Attention, Focus, and  
Distractibility in Children and Teens

## November 6

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### Breakout Session 2

8:30 AM – 9:30 AM

**Session A:** Preparing Yourself and/or a Loved One with Autism  
for Contact with Law Enforcement

**Session B:** Making SENSE of Puberty in Autistic Girls and Boys

### Break

9:30 AM – 9:45 AM

### Breakout Session 3

9:45 AM – 10:45 AM

**Session A:** How Kids Grieve and Supporting Grieving Kids with Autism

**Session B:** Moving Outside the ABA Bubble: Transitioning from a  
Comprehensive ABA Program

### Break

10:45 AM – 11:00 AM

### Closing Keynote | Lyla Novakowski

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Boxes or Bridges: The Art of Effective Advocacy



# A Neuroaffirmative Approach to Increasing Quality of Life Outcomes for Individuals with ASD

*Opening Keynote*

**Presented by: Dr. Jed Baker**, PhD, Director of the Social Skills Training Project

Thursday, November 5 | 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

## BIOGRAPHY

Jed Baker, PhD is the director of the Social Skills Training Project, a private organization serving individuals with autism and social communication differences. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from SUNY-Binghamton and went on to receive the Presidential Fellowship from SUNY-Albany, where he completed his doctorate in clinical psychology. He writes, lectures, and provides training internationally on the topic of social skills training and managing challenging behaviors. He is an award-winning author of numerous books, including:

- Social Skills Training 20th Anniversary Edition: For Children and Adolescents with Autism and Social Communication Differences
- Social Skills Training for Children and Adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome and Social Communication Problems
- Preparing for Life: The Complete Handbook for the Transition to Adulthood for Those with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome
- The Social Skills Picture Book
- The Social Skills Picture Book for High School and Beyond

- No More Meltdowns: Positive Strategies for Managing and Preventing Out-of-Control Behavior
- No More Victims: Protecting those with Autism from Cyber Bullying, Internet Predators, and Scams
- Overcoming Anxiety in Children and Teens
- School Shadow Guidelines

His work to support individuals with ASD has also been featured on ABC World News, Nightline, the CBS Early Show, and the Discovery Health Channel.

## SESSION DESCRIPTION

This presentation outlines Dr. Jed Baker's neuroaffirmative framework focused on helping clients reach their goals rather than trying to make clients look "neurotypical." Predictors of successful outcome are reviewed, informing caregivers on what kinds of supports to focus on throughout life. Finally, specific ways caregivers can think about and respond to challenging moments in order to get better outcomes are outlined.



# Building Emotional-Regulation, Supportive Environments, and Fostering Social Connection

*Breakout Session 1, Session A*

**Presented by: Dr. Jed Baker**, PhD, Director of the Social Skills Training Project

Thursday, November 5 | 10:15 AM – 11:45 AM

## SESSION DESCRIPTION

This presentation details ways to deescalate meltdowns and prevent challenging moments by altering common triggers and building coping strategies. In addition to addressing challenging emotional moments, this session details ways to help clients make meaningful connections with others through shared interests and developing relationship skills to reach their goals.



# Is it ADHD? A Parent's Guide to Attention, Focus, and Distractibility in Children and Teens

*Breakout Session 1, Session B*

**Presented by: Dr Robert Kline, PhD, Licensed Psychologist**

Thursday, November 5 | 10:15 AM – 11:45 AM

## BIOGRAPHY

Robert Kline, PhD, is a pediatric psychologist with more than 25 years of clinical experience specializing in ADHD, neurodevelopmental disorders, and brain-based assessments. He directs a specialty ADD/ADHD clinic in Columbia, Missouri. He has conducted approximately 4,000 quantitative qEEG, brain scans or assessments, in addition to his work with SPECT brain imaging, clinical research, and FDA-approved clinical trials.

Dr. Kline has authored more than 10 scientific publications on ADHD, anxiety, brain imaging, psychophysiology, and pediatric Irritable Bowel Syndrome, including research published in the *Journal of Pediatrics*. His pioneering FDA-approved research on peppermint oil for childhood Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) contributed to a treatment now available over the counter internationally.

Known for translating complex science into practical, understandable guidance for families, Dr. Kline has appeared in more than 100 television broadcasts and 375 radio programs and has been featured or cited in *People*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *WebMD*, *Newsday*, *Pittsburgh Tribune*, *Sunday Mirror*, *Reuters*, *Harvard University Integrative Medicine Magazine*, *Medscape*, and *Health Talk* along with hundreds of other print media.

His TV appearances have included fielding questions concerning the show *Supernanny* on ABC and Fox News. His expertise granted him an interview for *People* magazine. He has also been on a monthly syndicated radio show about childhood concerns. In addition, he co-contributed on a TV show with actress Dawn Wells, who played Mary Ann on *Gilligan's Island*, on miracles and children.

## SESSION DESCRIPTION

Why can a child with ADHD struggle to focus on homework, but concentrate for hours on something they enjoy? Why do ADHD and autism so often occur together? Drawing on more than 25 years of clinical experience, neuropsychological testing, and thousands of electroencephalograms (qEEG) brain studies, pediatric psychologist Dr. Robert Kline will help parents understand what may be happening behind their child's behavior. He will explain how dopamine, motivation, rewards, and brain pathways influence attention, impulsivity, and "dopamine-seeking" behavior. This session will also explore the overlap between ADHD and autism and discuss practical treatment options, including behavioral strategies, medication, and newer non-medication approaches, such as external trigeminal nerve stimulation (eTNS) and prescription digital therapeutics (video games). Parents will leave with a better understanding of why their child struggles with attention and what they can do to help.



# Preparing Yourself and/or a Loved One with Autism for Contact with Law Enforcement

*Breakout Session 2, Session A*

**Presented by: Alison Anderson, LBSW**

Friday, November 6 | 8:30 AM – 9:30 AM

## BIOGRAPHY

Alison Anderson is a retired Deputy Sheriff who served the citizens of Johnson County, Kansas from 2002 to 2017. During this time, she trained over 1,000 police officers on how to recognize and interact with people who have autism and implemented the Take Me Home program in Johnson County. Alison received her master's certificate in Autism Spectrum Disorders from the University of Kansas in 2017. She is a licensed social worker in both Kansas and Missouri and has worked in numerous capacities as a social worker. She currently works as an Education Coordinator for the Children's Mercy Kansas City Autism Clinic. She is also a parent of two young adults with autism and is committed to making law enforcement interactions safer for both citizens and officers.

## SESSION DESCRIPTION

During this session, you will learn tips to prepare for law enforcement interactions prior to a contact occurring. You will be provided with practical steps you can take to help identify yourself or your loved one as a person with autism during a law enforcement contact. We will also discuss steps you can take to keep yourself or loved one safe during law enforcement interactions. This session includes viewing a video scenario of actors with autism during an encounter with law enforcement.



## Making SENSE of Puberty in Autistic Girls and Boys

*Breakout Session 2, Session B*

**Presented by: Dr. Blythe Corbett, PhD**

Friday, November 6 | 8:30 AM – 9:30 AM

### BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Blythe Corbett is the James G. Blakemore Chair and professor at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. She is the Director of the Social Emotional NeuroScience Endocrinology (SENSE) lab, a translational research program focused on better understanding and treating social competence and stress in children, adolescents, and adults with autism spectrum disorder. Dr. Corbett has published over 100 original peer-reviewed articles in leading academic journals. Since 2005, her research has been consistently funded by the National Institute of Health, which includes randomized clinical trials and longitudinal developmental studies examining the impact of pubertal development on stress, mental health, and social functioning in youth with autism and typical development.

### SESSION DESCRIPTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurodevelopment disorder characterized by social challenges and difficulty with transitions. Puberty—a time of remarkable physical, psychosocial and physiological changes—is a pivotal and precarious transition for autistic youth, especially girls. Dr. Corbett will discuss insights from comprehensive, multilevel, longitudinal studies to elucidate, educate, and support this vital developmental period.



# How Kids Grieve and Supporting Grieving Kids with Autism

*Breakout Session 3, Session A*

**Presented by: Kaitlyn A. Paton, ATR-BC, LPC, NCC**

Friday, November 6 | 9:45 AM – 10:45 AM

## BIOGRAPHY

Kaitlyn Paton is a Board-Certified Art Therapist, a Licensed Professional Counselor in Missouri, and a National Certified Counselor. She is the Director of Programs at Annie's Hope—The Center for Grieving Kids, a St. Louis community nonprofit that provides comprehensive grief support services to children, teens, and families. Kaitlyn has been in the Childhood Bereavement field for over eight years. As Director of Programs, Kaitlyn oversees all 10 programs offered by Annie's Hope, program staff, volunteers, and interns. Kaitlyn's focus is on developing community partnerships, grief education, program growth, and maintaining program integrity.

Kaitlyn has provided numerous presentations and training sessions on childhood bereavement for professionals, volunteers, families, and kids. Kaitlyn coordinates and leads Annie's Hope Annual four-day Comprehensive Grief Workshop.

Kaitlyn's career focuses on providing support services to children, teens, and adults experiencing grief and on working to eliminate barriers that prevent families from participating in grief support. Kaitlyn is passionate about using art-making and expressive tools for self-expression and self-growth.

## SESSION DESCRIPTION

Children of all ages experience grief, but it may look different depending on their developmental age. This presentation will explore how children grieve across developmental age ranges, common grief-related behaviors, and key considerations for supporting children and teens with autism. Resources will also be shared for families and professionals supporting grieving neurodiverse children.



# Moving Outside the ABA Bubble: Transitioning from a Comprehensive ABA Program

*Breakout Session 3, Session B*

**Presented by: Amanda Prater and Lindsay Muncey**

Friday, November 6 | 9:45 AM – 10:45 AM

## BIOGRAPHY

### **Amanda Prater, MA, BCBA, LBA**

Amanda is a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst and an ABA clinical director at Kaufman Children's Center. She earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology and master's in Applied Behavior Analysis, both from Western Michigan University. Before joining the Kaufman Children's Center, Amanda was a behavior analyst in a residential treatment facility, conducting functional analyses and developing clinical programming for children with severe challenging behavior.

### **Lindsay Muncey, MA, BCBA, LBA**

Lindsay is a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst and an ABA clinical director at Kaufman Children's Center. She earned her bachelor's degree in Speech Pathology and Audiology from Western Michigan University and her master's in ABA from Ball State University. Before becoming a BCBA at Kaufman Children's Center, she worked at the center for many years as an ABA tech.

## SESSION DESCRIPTION

Knowing what the available paths are after attending a comprehensive early intervention Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program can feel stressful. This session aims to address the following considerations and details of potential pathways to explore including a transition to school:

- Potential paths after being in an early intervention ABA program
- How to know if your child is ready for school
- Steps to a smooth transition to school
- Steps of the IEP process
- Preparing for success in school
- Troubleshooting a difficult transition to school
- Importance of a team approach

Parents are the most important members of the child's team. We will also discuss the importance of a team approach to maximize areas of expertise for all involved.

# Boxes or Bridges: The Art of Effective Advocacy

*Closing Keynote*

**Presented by: Lyla Novakowski**, Owner of We Rock the Spectrum and Family Training and Resource Coordinator with MPACT

Friday, November 6 | 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM



## BIOGRAPHY

Lyla Novakowski is a disability advocate, family trainer, author, business owner, and mother whose work is shaped by the intersection of professional and lived experience. As an autistic adult and parent of neurodivergent children with varying support needs, Lyla brings a unique perspective to the systems families are often asked to navigate.

She serves as a Family Training and Resource Coordinator with MPACT, Missouri Parents Act, and as Vice President of the Family Support and Respite Coalition of St. Louis. She is also the owner of We Rock the Spectrum Fenton, an award winning inclusive sensory gym.

Lyla is the author of the forthcoming book, *Find Your Space: A Christian Neurospicy Guide to Navigating a World Not Designed for You or Your Kids*, which draws from her own journey to explore neurodivergence, advocacy, faith, parenting, identity, and what it means to find, and sometimes create, spaces where people can truly belong.

Across her work, Lyla is passionate about helping people move beyond labels and assumptions to better understand the person in front of them. Her approach to advocacy centers on relationships, communication, collaboration, and the belief that meaningful change happens

when we stop simply placing people into existing boxes and start building bridges to greater opportunity, understanding, and belonging.

## SESSION DESCRIPTION

What happens when the systems created to support people become the very boxes that limit them, and what becomes possible when we choose to build bridges instead? In this session, Lyla Novakowski combines lived experience, storytelling, and practical advocacy skills to explore how the way we see, communicate with, and advocate for people can shape the opportunities available to them.

Through her own journey and experiences, Lyla challenges attendees to consider the impact of labels, assumptions, and systems that can sometimes focus more on fitting people into existing boxes than understanding the individual in front of them. Attendees will explore practical foundations of effective advocacy, including understanding communication styles, preparing for important conversations, organizing records and information, and communicating needs clearly and effectively.

This session invites us to look differently at advocacy, not simply as fighting a system, but as learning how to navigate it, communicate within it, and build bridges toward greater opportunity, understanding, and belonging.