

2026 DEC CONFERENCE

Session Descriptions and Objectives

MORNING KEYNOTE

Decoding Indicators of Drug & Alcohol Influence

Presented by Trooper Dylan Rasmussen, Drug Recognition Expert Instructor

In the constant change of trends of drug abuse, it can be difficult to put a finger on what may be contributing to certain behaviors observed in the workplace, schools, or in society in general. This presentation will provide attendees with a general working knowledge of commonly abused drugs and the expected observations of impairment that are associated with them by decoding often complex puzzle of drug and alcohol influence.

At the end of this session, attendees will be able to:

1. Recognize general indicators of drug & alcohol influence
2. Gain a basic working knowledge of commonly abused drugs and their effect(s) on the human body
3. Articulate supporting documentation of drug and alcohol influence in written and spoken word

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

A) Marijuana and Motherhood: Protecting Moms and Babies (session will be repeated in afternoon)

Presented by Chantel Lincoln, MPH, CPH

Marijuana use during pregnancy and postpartum carries serious risks for mothers and infants. THC, the psychoactive component, crosses the placenta and enters breastmilk, disrupting brain development and contributing to low birth weight, preterm delivery, and neonatal intensive care admission. Long-term impacts include impaired cognition, attention deficits, anxiety, and greater vulnerability to mental health and substance use disorders. Despite these risks, rising potency and targeted marketing normalize marijuana as a remedy for stress, nausea, or wellness, while many providers fail to screen or counsel. Research shows that supportive, nonjudgmental counseling can reduce use, yet stigma and misinformation remain barriers. Breastfeeding while using marijuana or CBD further exposes infants to THC and contaminants, weakening immune protection and growth. This session underscores that legalization does not mean safety and concludes with a statewide prevention initiative led by Drug Free America Foundation.

At the end of this session, attendees will be able to:

1. Explain the short- and long-term health risks of marijuana use during pregnancy and postpartum, including impacts on fetal development, birth outcomes, and breastfeeding
2. Identify how rising potency, targeted marketing, and gaps in provider counseling contribute to normalization and continued use among women
3. Discuss evidence-based prevention strategies, including a statewide initiative led by Drug Free America Foundation, to reduce prenatal marijuana exposure and support maternal and child health

B) Understanding the Parent Voice through Lived Experience

Presented by Melony Gravenish, Iowa Parent Partner State Operations Coordinator & Sara Persons, Iowa Parent Partner State Director

We will discuss strategies used to engage parents with substance use disorders who are involved in systems to promote advocacy and improve communication. Hear from a parent with lived experience in multiple systems and gain a better understanding of their journey. Discuss how parents with lived experience

become peer mentors and the benefits to the community by building relationships and promoting collaboration to keep families safe.

At the end of this session, attendees will be able to:

1. Learn strategic ways to engage parents
2. Gain understanding of families' perspective when struggling with substance use disorder, and hear from a parent with lived experience
3. Learn how you can leverage the Parent Partner program as an asset in your community

C) Power of Parents/MADD 101

Presented by Allie Houston, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

This session will combine the insights of MADD 101 with the strategies of Power of Parents to provide attendees with a comprehensive understanding of how impaired driving and substance misuse affect families and communities. Participants will learn about MADD's mission, programs, and resources, while gaining practical tools to educate, protect, and empower children and teens. Emphasis will be placed on the critical role parents play in prevention, from fostering open communication to modeling safe behaviors. Through real-life examples, interactive discussion, and actionable strategies, attendees will leave equipped to support youth, reduce risk, and advocate for safer communities. This session is designed for parents, caregivers, educators, and community leaders seeking to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children impacted by drug-endangered environments.

At the end of this session, attendees will be able to:

1. Explain MADD's mission and programs and how they support families affected by impaired driving and substance misuse
2. Identify strategies for parents and caregivers to prevent youth substance use and impaired driving, including communication and modeling safe behaviors
3. Apply practical tools and resources to empower children, reduce risk, and promote safer, drug-free communities

D) Deflection in Rural Areas: Supporting Children and Families

Presented by Hope Fiori, MPPA, Director of Special Projects & Koren VanderWeele, Senior Program Manager

Every encounter between first responders, youth, and families impacted by substance use or mental health challenges presents an opportunity. This opportunity is pivotal in rural communities where services are limited and stigma may be heightened. Rural deflection initiatives, led by law enforcement, fire/EMS, and community partners, help youth and families avoid arrest, trauma, and crisis by connecting them to treatment, recovery, and wraparound supports.

Substance use doesn't impact just one person; children growing up in households affected by addiction face higher risks of abuse and neglect, school disengagement, and justice involvement. By linking deflection and frameworks to support drug-endangered children (DEC), communities can identify at-risk youth early and intervene before harm occurs.

This session explores effective deflection models for youth and families, rural strategies to bridge service gaps, and partnership approaches that unite public safety, public health, and youth-serving systems to strengthen families and protect futures.

At the end of this session, attendees will be able to:

1. Identify key challenges and opportunities in rural deflection and the role of first responders in connecting youth and families to care
2. Explain how integrating drug endangered children (DEC) frameworks with deflection supports early identification and intervention for at-risk youth
3. Apply cross-sector strategies that unite public safety, public health, and youth systems to strengthen families and reduce substance-related harm

MORNING KEYNOTE

Substance Use in Iowa

Presented by Susie Sher, Bureau Chief

This presentation will highlight current substance use trends in Iowa. Awareness and education on current and emerging drug trends are essential for every professional working with drug endangered children and their families.

At the end of this session, attendees will be able to:

1. Identify the most often used substances in Iowa
2. Gain an understanding of long-term drug trends in Iowa
3. Utilize the information learned in their local professional capacity

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

A) Marijuana and Motherhood: Protecting Moms and Babies (repeat of morning session)

Presented by Chantel Lincoln, MPH, CPH

B) Creating a Continuum of Prevention through the Safe Babies Approach

Presented by Judy Norris, Sr. Training and Technical Assistance Specialist

Prevention opportunities for families exist in nearly every milestone of their life experience. Trauma, substance use disorders, neglect, community and cultural barriers are what bring families to the attention of our courts and child welfare systems. Explore the responsive approach of Safe Babies Court Teams and how addressing prevention and promotion efforts through a continuum of care can support families before, during, and after court intervention. Learn how states and communities are developing new partnerships with early childhood systems, prenatal and family medical clinics, hospitals, and community networks of care.

At the end of the session, attendees will be able to:

1. Develop an awareness of Zero To Three ZTT Safe Babies work in court teams, prevention, and multi-system shifts to best support families
2. Re-Imagine ways their work can impact families through innovative partnerships
3. Discover how cross system connections between multi-disciplinary providers and persons with lived experiences can create a continuum of care to address challenges and opportunities families face

C) From Survival to Support: A Drug-Endangered Child's Journey and the Path Forward

Presented by Laticia Aossey, AMP Program Manager

This presentation weaves together a firsthand account of growing up as a drug-endangered child with national and state-level outcome statistics that highlight the long-term impacts on safety, trauma, education, and mental health. Participants will gain both a human and data-driven understanding of the challenges children face in drug-affected environments. The session concludes with practical tools, evidence-based support programs, and multidisciplinary resources that professionals can use to identify, intervene, and support drug-endangered children more effectively.

At the end of the session, attendees will be able to:

1. Personal lived experience of an adult who was a drug-endangered child
2. Impacts and outcome statistics for drug-endangered children
3. Support programs/resources for drug-endangered children as they get older

D) Seeing Potential in the Pain: Recognizing Brilliance Amid Hardship and Trauma

Presented by LaDrina Wilson, PhD, Entrepreneur and Speaker & Donald Hinton, Entrepreneur & Author

Dr. LaDrina Wilson and Donald Hinton, author of *From Prison to Properties*, share powerful personal stories of surviving childhoods marked by substance abuse, drug trafficking, and generational poverty. Despite the odds, both transformed hardship into leadership and purpose. This session bridges the worlds of law enforcement, human services, and education to explore strategies for identifying and empowering high-potential youth who lack safety, security, and consistent adult guidance. Attendees will learn how to exercise professional discretion and navigate the “gray areas” to build trust, foster resilience, and connect drug-endangered children to opportunity. Through authentic storytelling and practical insight, participants will gain tools to see beyond risk-taking behavior, recognize brilliance in struggle, and become catalysts for change in the lives of those who are experiencing adverse childhood experiences.

At the end of the session, attendees will be able to:

1. To illustrate the impact of generational poverty & substance abuse and its impact on the trajectory of youth
2. Strategies to quickly establish trust with youth who have adverse childhood trauma and have been negatively impacted by neglect and institutions have caused harm
3. To support law enforcement, human services professionals and others in creating a path to success for high potential youth who lack support systems at home, but are likely to be justice impacted or illustrate risky behaviors

Afternoon Keynote

Rebuilding Hope

Presented by Matt Anderson Special Agent in Charge

This presentation will be truthful, honest, difficult, yet joyful. Real experiences from a narcotics agent point of view. Real life struggles from a potential adoption of drug endangered children. Sincere happiness and tears in the journey of both.

At the end of this session, attendees will be able to:

1. Understand multi-leveled challenges
2. Sense a need for compassion
3. Be challenged to take action