



2025

New York State ID/DD Nurses Association Annual Conference

Laughter is the Best Medicine

Laughter Is the Best Medicine

In a field where compassion meets complexity, nurses are the heart of care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This year, we honor your dedication with a theme that reminds us of the healing power of joy:

Laughter is the Best Medicine



Over two and a half days, you'll hear from inspiring speakers, choose from 20 educational sessions, and connect with fellow professionals who understand both the challenges and the deep rewards of this work.

Together, we'll learn, grow, & hopefully– laugh, because true resilience doesn't just come from knowledge; it comes from nurses supporting one another.

This conference is more than just education—it's a chance to refill your cup, reconnect with your purpose, and give yourself the same care you give so freely to others.

Come Join Us– you deserve it!

Conference Snapshot



Location:

Albany Marriott, NY



Dates:

September 15–17, 2025



Speakers:

20+ sessions, keynote
and capstone



Nurses are the Heart of Healthcare – Laughter is its Soul.



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CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MESSAGE:

We're excited to welcome you to the 2025 NYSIDDDNA Annual Conference, returning to the Albany Marriott! This year's program offers fresh insights, clinical updates, and practical tools to support your work in I/DD nursing, whether you're new to the field or a seasoned professional.

Our keynote and capstone speakers are here to inspire, and our sessions will leave you energized with strategies you can use right away.

Be sure to visit our exhibitors, they're valuable partners in your practice and in making this conference possible. Ask questions, explore what's new, and take advantage of all they have to offer.

And lastly, be sure to connect with colleagues from across the state, and if you're not already a member, we encourage you to join NYS ID/DD Nurses association and be part of a growing, dedicated community.

We can't wait to see you in Albany!



Warmly,
Karen Jarvis RN
Conference Chair



Best regards,
Cindy Pross MS,RN,CDDN
NYSIDDDNA President-elect

CONFERENCE MISSION:

- NYS ID/DD Nurse Association is dedicated to promoting the professional development of nurses who support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, empowering them to deliver informed, compassionate, and person centered care.

CONFERENCE ATTENDEES:

- Nurses practicing in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Licensed healthcare professionals working in IDD settings.
- Professionals committed to improving care and outcomes for individuals with IDD.

CONFERENCE PURPOSE:

- Timely, immersive education on the pressing issues shaping IDD care today.
- Learn from respected leaders and thought-provoking presenters.
- Creating space for nurses to pause, reflect, and grow in their practice.
- A welcoming space to connect, share, and grow with fellow colleagues from across the state.

CONFERENCE CREDIT:

- NYS ID/DD Nurses Association will provide up to **15 hours** of quality education over two and a half days. Approval for continuing education contact hours through the Montana Nurses Association is pending (an accredited approver by the ANCC). To earn contact hours, participants must complete an evaluation for each session attended. Certificates will be generated upon completion.

CONFERENCE MEMBER PRICING

- \$395 through 8/15/25
- \$420 after 8/15/25
- \$226 **ONE DAY** through 8/15/25
- \$251 **ONE DAY** after 8/15/25

NON MEMBER

- \$460 through 8/15/25
- \$485 after 8/15/25
- \$258 **ONE DAY** through 8/15/25
- \$283 **ONE DAY** after 8/15/25



Keynote- Biography



Kate Davis

Kate Davis is an award-winning Canadian comedian, author, actor, and professional speaker who brings warmth, wit, and insight to every stage she graces. Theatrically trained in England at the prestigious London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), Kate began her career on the stage before shifting to comedy after a single open mic revealed her unique power to connect through laughter.

A 12-time nominee at the Canadian Comedy Awards, including recognition for the Phil Hartman Award, Kate has headlined major festivals such as Just for Laughs, the Winnipeg Comedy Festival, and the Kitchener-Waterloo Comedy Festival. She has performed alongside comedy greats like Lewis Black and Seth Meyers, and was invited to open for global leaders including President Bill Clinton and journalist Barbara Walters, an experience she calls “a surreal reminder that humor transcends status and stage.”

Kate has also appeared in her own hour-long comedy special on CTV and The Comedy Network and is a regular guest on CBC’s The Debaters, SiriusXM, and other national media. Her comedy album House Arrest was a hit during the pandemic, showcasing her ability to find meaning and levity even in life’s toughest moments.

Capstone-Biography



John Dickerson

John Dickerson has dedicated his career to supporting people with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). He has a long and inspiring journey in the field of disability advocacy, with a commitment to empowering individuals with IDD.

Career Highlights:

- **The Arc:** Dickerson began his career with The Arc of South Dakota in 1973. He was involved in the early stages of drafting statewide rules for special education. He later served in leadership roles with The Arc of Indiana and The Arc of the US.
- **Advocacy for Change:** He has been a lifelong advocate for systemic change, helping to design the first Medicaid Waivers in Indiana. He also supported people transitioning from institutions and developed solutions to waiting lists for services.
- **Founder of Red Road Ventures and Quillo:** After retiring from The Arc, Dickerson founded Red Road Ventures. He developed Quillo, a unique communication platform focused on microlearning and positive psychology. Quillo aims to improve staff retention for organizations supporting people with I/DD and provides a communication platform for families and individuals with IDD. Quillo is currently used in 15 states.

Focus on Staff Well-being: Dickerson recognizes the importance of supporting direct support professionals and addresses issues like staff turnover and communication gaps through Quillo. He emphasizes the need to help staff build their "good life".

Contributions and Recognition:

- Dickerson is recognized as a visionary and innovator in I/DD advocacy.
- He is known for his insights on advocacy, positivity, and finding joy in everyday moments.

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities recognized him as one of the top 200 influencers in the field over the past 20 years.

Pre-conference ⌚ 8:15-9:30 ★ 1.25 hours

- Steven M. Asofsky, MA, SLP-CCC/TSHH

Swallowing Disorders

Understanding Swallowing Disorders: Diagnosis, Safety & Support. This session offers a clear, clinical overview of swallowing disorders, including key signs, symptoms, and common causes. Participants will explore the anatomy and physiology of the swallowing process, diagnostic procedures, and evidence-based treatment approaches. Special focus will be given to diet texture modifications and strategies to support safe, effective nutritional intake, especially for individuals with complex needs. You will leave better equipped to recognize swallowing issues and advocate for timely interventions.

Pre-conference ⌚ 10:00-11:15 ★ 1.25 hours

- Daleigh Tallent MSN, RN, CDDN

Fatal Five

Managing the Fatal Five+ in I/DD Care: Best Practices & Emerging Approaches: This session explores evidence-based strategies and evolving interventions for managing the Fatal Five+ conditions in individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Participants will review both foundational and innovative approaches to identifying and addressing these high-risk medical concerns. Emphasis will be placed on proactive nursing interventions that promote early recognition, timely treatment, and improved long-term outcomes, empowering nurses to elevate the safety, quality of life, and well-being of those they support.

Keynote Speaker ⌚ 1:00-2:15 ★ 1.25 hours

- Kate Davis BA

Laughter is the Best Medicine

Healing through Humor-finding Balance, Resilience & Connection: Research shows that laughter and levity are among the most powerful tools for building connection, reducing stress, and enhancing engagement, and few deliver this lesson better than award-winning comedian and wellness speaker Kate Davis. In this entertaining and enlightening keynote, Kate explores how humor creates authentic connections, builds trust, and supports mental well-being in demanding professional environments. She'll guide participants through the art of "de-risking" humor, using storytelling and evidence-informed insight to show how levity can strengthen communication, increase resilience, and foster a healthier workplace culture. Expect to laugh, reflect, and walk away with practical techniques to level up how you connect with clients, colleagues, and yourself.

Concurrent Session (Pick 1) ⌚ 2:45-4:00 ★ 1.25 hours

- Nanette R Wrobel, BS, RPh

Sleep Disturbances

Sleep Disturbances in the I/DD Population: Causes, Risks & Interventions: Sleep disorders are common, and often underrecognized, among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This session explores the causes of sleep disturbances, particularly in relation to specific syndromes and diagnoses. Participants will gain insight into common types of sleep disorders, risk factors, and behavioral and medical treatment options. You will leave better prepared to assess sleep-related concerns and implement strategies that support healthier rest, improved behavior, and overall well-being for individuals with I/DD.

- Nancy Nealon, MSW

Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's Disease in Individuals with I/DD: Recognizing and Responding to a Progressive Condition: This session focuses on the presentation and progression of Parkinson's disease in individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Participants will explore early signs, care challenges, and strategies to support individuals across care settings. Emphasis will be placed on adapting communication, routines, and interventions to meet changing needs over time. Resources, tools, and interdisciplinary supports will be highlighted to help you improve quality of life and promote safety, dignity, and engagement for people living with PD and I/DD.

- Victoria Clingan, MLIS & Cailin Connors Brennan,

End of Life

Navigating End-of-Life Decision-Making in the I/DD Population: This session provides a clear overview of the legal requirements for end-of-life decision-making for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Participants will learn how to navigate surrogate decision-making, including the 1750-b process and the role of the Surrogate Decision-Making Committee, ensuring timely, ethical, and person-centered care.

Concurrent Session (Pick 1) ⌚ 4:15-5:30 ★ 1.25 hours

- Rita Marie Bilello, DDS & Serena Simone DDS, MPH

Oral Healthcare

Oral Health & the I/DD Population: Recognizing the Unspoken Signs: Poor communication between individuals, caregivers, and healthcare providers can lead to undiagnosed dental issues, often contributing to pain, behavioral changes, and health complications. This session highlights the critical importance of recognizing subtle signs of oral discomfort in individuals with I/DD and provides strategies for improving interdisciplinary communication, early identification, and collaboration to reduce unmet dental care needs and improve overall health outcomes.

- Frederick Wetzel RN, PhD, LNC, NCC

Survey Success

Preparing for Survey Success: What to Expect and How to Excel in OPWDD Health Care Reviews: This session offers a clear overview of healthcare service survey requirements for agencies under the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Participants will gain insight into the three core components of the survey process: observation, staff interviews, and record review. Practical guidance will be shared to help attendees prepare staff, understand documentation expectations, and avoid common pitfalls.

Speakers & Sessions

Tuesday September 16, 2025

General Session ⌚ 9:00-10:15 ★ 1.25 hours

- George Shaw RN BSN & Susan B. Prendergast, RN, MS

Hot Topics

Hot Topics in I/DD Nursing: Updates, Challenges & Evolving Best Practices: Stay informed and prepared in an ever-changing care environment. This session explores current trends, emerging policies, clinical priorities, and system-level updates impacting the care of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Designed to spark discussion and share practical insights, participants will leave better equipped to respond to shifting expectations, regulatory changes, and the evolving role of the nurse and care team in the I/DD field.

Concurrent Session (Pick 1) ⌚ 10:45-12:00 ★ 1.25 hours

- Anne C Campbell FNP.BC

Identifying/Treatment Anemia

Understanding Anemia in the I/DD Population: Diagnosis, Types & Treatment Strategies: Anemia is a common yet often overlooked condition affecting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the lifespan. This session will guide participants in identifying different types of anemia, interpreting key CBC values, and understanding how to determine the root cause. Discussion will include acute blood loss anemia, iron deficiency, B12 deficiency, and thalassemia, equipping participants with practical tools to support accurate diagnosis and treatment for individuals with I/DD.

- Harsh Kothari Pharm D

Beyond the Prescription

Safe Medication Management in I/DD. This session provides a foundational overview of medication management for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). It explores key challenges nurses face, including assessing medication effects in individuals with limited communication, preventing medication errors, and training support staff. Designed for both new and experienced IDD nurses, this session reinforces evidence-based best practices and advocates for safe, person-centered medication administration. Participants will gain practical tools to enhance medication safety and support quality care for individuals with I/DD.

- Tracey Sosa MA, Martu Jahbateh BS, BA & Brandi Young MA, BA, CA

Choking Prevention

Choking Prevention: Best Practices for Staff and Policy: Between January 2020 and June 2022, nearly 1,000 food-related choking incidents were reported to the Justice Center. Choking remains a leading cause of accidental injury and death in the U.S., according to the National Safety Council. This session introduces the Choking Prevention Spotlight and Toolkit, designed to help agencies reduce risk. Participants will learn to apply best practices in staff training, food preparation, supervision, and observation. The session will also cover guidance on updating policies and procedures to strengthen prevention efforts and improve safety outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Concurrent Session (Pick 1) ⌚ 2:00-3:15 ★ 1.25 hours

- **Anne C Campbell FNP, BC**

You are my Person

The Power of Connection: Recognizing the Nurse-Individual Relationship in I/DD Care: This session explores the deep, often life-changing relationships that form between nurses and the individuals they support in I/DD settings. Participants will reflect on the emotional and professional significance of being “that person” for someone – an anchor, advocate, and trusted presence. The presentation will highlight the rewards of building meaningful connections rooted in person-centered care, health goals, and life planning. Discussion will focus on the unique aspects of the I/DD nursing role that foster long-term relationships, promote personal growth, and offer a level of fulfillment rarely experienced in other nursing specialties.

- **Allison Ramsey MD**

Skin Deep

Recognizing Rashes: What’s Normal, What’s Not, and When to Act: This session offers a practical look at common rashes encountered in daily care settings, especially when supporting individuals with I/DD. Participants will learn how to differentiate between benign, self-limiting skin conditions and those requiring urgent medical evaluation. Through real-world examples and clinical visuals, the presentation will highlight key features, red flags, & patterns that help nurses assess rashes more confidently. Whether you’re new to skin assessments or seeking to sharpen your diagnostic eye, this session will build your confidence and clinical judgment in identifying and responding to dermatologic concerns.

- **Mary Jane Vogel RN, Justin Glasser BS, Tara Kenney RN, Sara Del Marter BS ,MS**

Could this Happen?

Understanding Mortality Reviews: Improving Outcomes Through Collaboration. This session will explain how OPWDD and the Justice Center conduct mortality reviews to better understand health issues, service delivery challenges, and patterns of risk. Attendees will learn how these reviews lead to actionable recommendations aimed at improving care and preventing future deaths. The presentation will also highlight how the two agencies collaborate to support individual providers and share findings that inform system-wide improvements in the field of I/DD services.

Concurrent Session (Pick 1) ⌚ 3:30-4:45 ★ 1.25 hours

- **Shahzad Mustafa MD**

Unmasking Allergies

Understanding and Managing Allergic Diseases: Allergic conditions are on the rise, now affecting up to 20% of the U.S. population. This session provides an up-to-date overview of common allergic diseases including asthma, allergic rhinitis, and food allergies. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the underlying immune mechanisms, risk factors, and clinical presentations of these conditions. Evidence-based strategies for diagnosis, treatment, and long-term management will be explored, with a focus on improving nurse confidence in recognizing, supporting, & educating individuals with allergic conditions across care settings.

- **Melinda Dolezal MA**

TRAID/Telehealth

Assistive Technology & Remote Healthcare Access: This session focuses on equipping healthcare providers with tools and strategies to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in using telehealth more effectively. Participants will learn about general tablet features, accessibility options, and assistive technology that can increase comfort and independence during virtual care. The session also introduces a Telehealth Video Project aimed at building familiarity with online medical services. By addressing barriers to access, this training promotes more inclusive and flexible healthcare delivery for people with I/DD across care settings.

- **Jennifer Grant RPH, BCGP**

Menopause Demystified

Understanding Change and Treatment Options: This session explores the physiological foundation of menopause, what it is, the hormonal changes involved, and the common symptoms that individuals may experience. Attendees will learn about treatment options with a focus on menopausal hormone therapy (MHT), also known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT). The session will address the risks, benefits, and evolving research behind these therapies, while debunking common myths and misunderstandings. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of individualized care plans that respect each person’s goals, history, and symptom profile. Nurses will gain tools to better educate and support individuals through this natural life transition.

General Session ⌚ 8:45-10:00 ★ 1.25 hours

- Mary Jane Vogel RN, Zachary Saccocio BSN, BA, Nyah Smith BSN, BA, Mary McClasky A.A.S, Letitia Kelly PMC,MSN,MBA

Regulatory Expectations & Best Practices

Regulations in Practice: What Nurses Need to Know: This session offers a practical look at regulatory expectations and common healthcare findings identified during certification surveys of programs across New York State. Participants will explore how these findings intersect with nursing roles in certified, person-centered care settings. The session emphasizes the nurse's essential role in promoting safety, quality, and compliance. By examining real-world regulatory outcomes, attendees will gain a clearer understanding of how nursing practice not only supports daily care but also drives adherence to standards that protect and empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Concurrent Session (Pick one) ⌚ 10:15-11:30 ★ 1.25 hours

- Adam Kessler RN,BSN,CDCES

Diabetes/Technology

Modern Diabetes Management: As diabetes technology continues to advance, devices such as continuous glucose monitors (CGMs) and insulin pumps are transforming diabetes management. These tools offer improved accuracy, greater independence, and better protection against hypo- and hyperglycemia. This session will explore how these technologies work, their benefits, and how they impact care planning and daily health decisions. Attendees will gain a foundational understanding of how to support individuals with diabetes, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, by promoting safe, informed, and person-centered use of these life-changing tools.

- Brittany Miske RN,AGNP-BCAS, BSN, MBA-in progress

Hospital Discharge

Smooth transition: Improving Hospital-to Home Care: Hospital discharges are a critical and often complex point in care, especially for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) supported in Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA) settings. This session shares transition practices gathered from diverse stakeholders-including hospital systems, clinical staff, and support teams-to highlight effective, person-centered approaches. Attendees will examine common discharge barriers, the clinical implications of recurrent hospitalizations, and how to initiate meaningful conversations about disease progression, quality of life, and end-of-life care. By strengthening transition planning, healthcare providers can improve outcomes, reduce avoidable readmissions, and support dignity throughout the care continuum.

Capstone ⌚ 12:00-1:00 ★ 1.0 hours

- John Dickerson BA

Building a Good life

Inspiring change through connection. This session challenges attendees to rethink what it truly means to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. With a focus on person-centered approaches, participants will explore how systems can either elevate or limit quality of life, and how meaningful change begins through connection, inclusion, and cultural leadership. The session will examine the role of both formal supports and everyday relationships in building a good life, not only for the individuals we serve but also for the professionals and caregivers who support them. Attendees will leave with renewed perspective and strategies to promote dignity, inclusion, and lasting impact.

Disclosure Statement

None of the planners or presenters for this educational activity have relevant financial relationships with ineligible companies to disclose except for the following speakers: • "Allison Ramsey, MD who is on the speakers bureau for GSK, Astrazeneca and Sanofi/Regeneron," • Harsh Kothari, PharmD, who is the President of Capital Regional Pharmacy Services. • Jennifer Grant, BS, Pharm, who is a consultant pharmacist for Health Direct Pharmacy Services. All of these relevant financial relationships have been mitigated before this activity.

This nursing continuing professional development activity was approved by Montana Nurses Association, an accredited approver with distinction by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation."

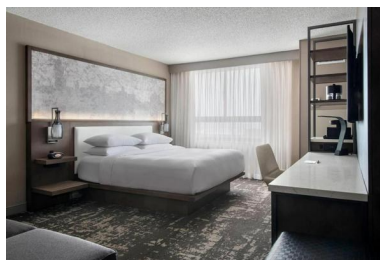


Hotel Accommodations

Sunday September 14, - Wednesday 17

Conference Hotel:

Marriott Albany
189 Wolf Road
Albany, NY 12205



Amenities Included

- Free parking
- 24-hour fitness center
- Indoor and outdoor pools
- Complimentary Wi-Fi
- On-site Starbucks
- 24-hour room service.
- 2.1 miles to the airport

Reservations

- Group Rate: \$141 per night
- Check-in: 3:00 PM | Check-out: 11:00 AM
- Reservation Deadline: August 25, 2025 (A limited number of rooms are reserved at a special conference rate)
- Stay Dates: September 14 - September 17, 2025

Website: [Marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com/Reservations) [Reservation-Link](#)

Vendors & Exhibitors

Monday September 15, & Tuesday 16



Our exhibitors and vendors **play a vital role** in supporting both the conference and the important work we do every day in the field of I/DD.

They offer tools, products, and services that enhance practice and improve the care you provide.

We **strongly encourage** all attendees to visit the exhibit area, engage with our vendors & exhibitors, and explore what they have to offer. Your participation helps foster valuable partnerships that benefit both our profession and this event.

We extend our sincere thanks to all of our exhibitors and vendors for their support and commitment to the ID/DD community.



