## EARLY INTERVENTION & PRESCHOOL CONFERENCE

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2026

## 9:30 - 10:30 KEYNOTE (60 min.)

**Becoming Shatterproof**

*Lauren Sisler*
Wynfrey A/B/C/D/E

Becoming Shatterproof is a keynote centered on resilience, ownership, and the power of presence in high-pressure environments. Through personal storytelling and practical frameworks, attendees will explore how adversity shapes performance, how shame and silence impact decision-making, and how to lead with authenticity in both personal and professional settings. Participants will leave with actionable tools to strengthen resilience, improve emotional awareness, and show up more fully in the moments that matter most.

## 10:30 - 11:00 BREAK AND EXHIBITORS

## 11:00 - 12:00 BREAKOUT SESSION A (60 min.)

**My Feelings Toolbox: Tools to Empower Emotional Regulation in Little Learners**

*Kimberly McAnnally*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey A/B*

Do you know how to handle every emergency that arises in your classroom? How do you help the children in your care feel safe and secure in their environment so they can relax and learn all they need to learn? Teachers need a "toolkit" they can pull out when they have a child dealing with big emotions. Learn how to teach children what that big feeling is by naming emotions but also giving them tools that will allow them to handle those emotions. It is important that children understand that having emotions and big feelings are okay, but there are appropriate ways to handle them without hurting others in the process.

**Building Bridges Between Home and Preschool: Strengthening Family Partnerships to Support Early Development**

*Brandy Black*
*Audience: HVs* *All levels*
*Wynfrey C*

Strong partnerships between families and early childhood professionals are essential to supporting young children's development and school readiness. Drawing on experience in home visiting and parent education, the presenter will share approaches that help professionals better understand the family perspective, build trust with caregivers, and empower parents to support developmental learning through everyday routines. Participants will learn how to strengthen communication with families, reduce barriers to engagement, and create collaborative relationships that promote positive developmental outcomes for young children.

**Developing Functional Outcomes**

*Debra Florea & Shannon Foster*
*Audience: EI* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey D/E*

This session will explore how Early Intervention Service Coordinators can develop and implement functional Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes that align with family priorities, daily routines, and evidence-based practices. Participants will learn strategies to move beyond deficit-based goals toward outcomes that promote engagement, independence, and social relationships.

**What's New in the Follow-Up Care for Premature Infants (11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.)**

*Kimberlly Stringer, MD, MPH; Amelia Schuyler, MD, MPH; Chantel Jno-Finn, PT, DPT; Maegan Guven, MS, RD; & Margaret Summersell, MS, RD*
*Audience: PTs & OTs, SLPs, GENERAL* *Introductory*
*Riverchase A*

This presentation will include the latest medical and developmental issues facing infants born prematurely. Presenters will describe how early medical and developmental interventions can improve the trajectory of infants born prematurely. A panel of speakers from the UAB Newborn Follow-up Multi-Disciplinary Team (e.g. medical, psychology, nutrition, physical therapy, and audiology) will describe their role in our team clinic and how they address common issues facing infants with prematurity.

**Developmentally Responsive Practices: Moving Beyond Misconceptions to Authentic Learning**

*Jennifer L. Kilgo, EdD*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *Introductory-Intermediate*
*Riverchase B*

This session will examine commonly held misconceptions about developmentally responsive practices for young children with delays and disabilities. Participants will explore persistent misconceptions that can shape early learning experiences and limit meaningful engagement. Through practical examples, the session will demonstrate how to reimagine classroom rituals and routines such as circle time and morning meetings, as well as widely used content and strategies like "letter of the week," themes, and calendar activities. Emphasis will be placed on designing contextually relevant approaches that support authentic learning, participation, and inclusion for all young children.

**Unlocking Possibilities: Play, AT, and AAC for Children with Visual Impairment**

*Rebecca Harris, MS, CCC-SLP, CLC & Katherine Seal, MS, CCC-SLP*
*Audience: EI, HVs, SLPs, PTs & OTs Introductory-Intermediate*
*Wyndsor I*

This session will begin with identification of common characteristics of visual impairment. We will explore how to adapt home and daycare environments and materials to support engagement in play. We will discuss strategies to integrate Assistive Technology (AT) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) into everyday routines, supporting meaningful opportunities for communication and participation. This session aims to provide practical, play-based strategies that can be immediately applied in early intervention contexts.

**ABLE Accounts and Special Needs Trusts: What Practitioners and Parents Need to Know**

*Jennifer McInerney, JD*
*Audience: GENERAL Introductory*
*Wyndsor II*

Parents and professionals working with families will learn the importance of ABLE Accounts and Special Needs Trusts (SNTs) in protecting eligibility for SSI, Medicaid, and other means-tested benefits while giving individuals with disabilities greater financial security and autonomy. The presentation outlines the key differences between ABLE accounts and SNTs, including contribution limits, permissible uses, and long-term planning considerations. The session also covers when each tool is most appropriate and how families can use them together to build a comprehensive, flexible benefits-preservation strategy.

**Nourishing Development: Building Healthy Eating Habits in Early Childhood**

*Casey Willis & Emily Campbell, MPH, CHES*
*Audience: EI, HVs, CLASSROOM Introductory-Intermediate*
*Yorkshire*

Early childhood is a critical window for establishing lifelong eating habits, yet many families struggle with picky eating, mealtime stress, and how to support healthy nutrition. Early intervention providers, home visitors, and early care professionals are uniquely positioned to guide families in creating positive, developmentally appropriate feeding environments. This interactive session explores the role of nutrition in early brain development and introduces Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility to reduce mealtime power struggles and support healthy relationships with food. Participants will also learn practical strategies such as family-style meals, consistent routines, and involving children in food preparation to increase acceptance and independence. Through real-life scenarios, role-playing, and discussion, attendees will gain tools they can immediately use to support families and promote healthy eating habits.

## 12:00 – 1:30 LUNCH (ON YOUR OWN)

## 1:30 – 2:30 BREAKOUT SESSION B (60 min.)

**The Inner Child is Speaking**

*Sabrina Robinson & Stacey Robison*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs, GENERAL Intermediate*
*Wynfrey A/B*

In this session, the presenter will explore how early wounds shape adult patterns and how compassion, awareness, and gentle inner work can begin to restore what pain once silenced. Through trauma-informed guidance and practical tools, participants will learn to listen inward, honor their stories, and take meaningful steps toward emotional freedom and wholeness.

**Tiny Steps, Big Progress: Tracking Growth in Early Childhood**

*Barbie Jones, MEd; Stephanie De Bear; & Kimberly Morris*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs All levels*
*Wynfrey C*

This session will showcase how early childhood educators can use data cards and interactive data walls to organize student information, monitor progress, and support instructional decision-making in meaningful ways. Participants will explore practical strategies for creating visual systems that help teachers track an individual student's developmental growth, identify student needs, and strengthen collaboration among staff and families. Real examples, tools, and implementation ideas will be shared to help programs build a positive data culture that supports student success in early learning environments. *Samples provided to the first 50 attendees.*

**Ensuring a Seamless Transition from Early Intervention (Part C) to Preschool Special Education (Part B)**

*Katrina Lipscomb, MEd; Kathy Wilkins; & Stephanie Bear, Ed S, CCC-SLP*

*Audience: EI, CLASSROOM (PART B) All levels*
*Wynfrey D/E*

This session focuses on creating a smooth and effective transition from Early Intervention to Preschool Special Education. Participants will review required documentation for transition planning meetings, and communication processes critical to timely and compliant transitions. Alabama Early Intervention Systems (Part C) and Alabama State Department of Education, Special Education Services (Part B) preschool team will share how teams can collaborate in alignment with IDEA requirements to support a positive and smooth transition experience for children and families, and ensure the child has no disruption in services.

**Proceed With Care: Ethics and the Use of AI in Early Intervention and Preschool Practice**

*Danielle Rich, PhD, CCC-SLP, ASDCS*
*Audience: SLPs, PTs & OTs, ADMIN* *Intermediate*
*Riverchase A*

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already in our workplaces — whether we realize it or not. This practical, evidence-informed session cuts through the hype and helps professionals who work in EI and preschool settings to answer the questions that actually keep us up at night: Can I use AI to write my documentation? What about HIPAA? Do I have to tell families? Grounded in professional Code of Ethics and current federal guidelines, participants will leave with a clear, ready-to-use framework for deciding when, where, and how AI is appropriate in early childhood practice — and the confidence to use it well.

**Feeding Therapy Before the Food: A Look at Precursors for Beginning Feeding Intervention**

*Fran Frost, OTR/L*
*Audience: EI, HVs* *Introductory - Intermediate*
*Riverchase B*

In this session, we will discuss the basic elements of readiness for feeding intervention including aspects of motor control and necessary positional supports, sensory regulation and ideas for providing necessary supports, and developmental skills like attention and engagement that are all crucial in effective feeding intervention. We will also include some appropriate questions to ask regarding mealtime structure, schedule, and overall nutritional status.

**Life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit: Where the Earliest of Interventions Begin**

*Jane Burton Keith, MSPT, CNT, NTMTC & Alicia Peeples, DPT, CNT, NTMTC*
*Audience: EI, SLPs, PTs & OTs* *Intermediate-Advanced*
*Wyndsor I*

During this session the presenters will discuss therapy care in the NICU. They will cover the various populations they serve and the diagnoses they address. Presenters will discuss various treatment modalities that are used and the various tests/assessments utilized and their outcome meanings. They will discuss the problems they are identifying and the ways they are intervening to optimize long-term outcomes. Finally, presenters will open discussion for common concerns the early intervention therapist is seeing that affect development and ways we can intervene to improve outcomes.

**Threats to Healthy Early Brain Development**

*Joseph D. Ackerson, PhD & Greta Conlon*
*Audience: SLPs, PTs & OTs* *Intermediate*
*Wyndsor II*

Dr. Ackerson will inform attendees regarding the long-term outcomes from gestational and perinatal complications including intrauterine exposure to toxins, prematurity, very low birthweight, inadequate oxygen flow, infectious processes, and medical misadventure. Associated brain changes may include intraventricular hemorrhage, hypoxic ischemic injury, stroke, and periventricular leukomalacia. Proper identification and quantification of early brain injury can allow for appropriate interventions that may improve long-term trajectories, as well as provide families with the knowledge they need for long-term planning.

**Navigating the New Early Intervention Landscape: A Leadership Roundtable Discussion**

*Facilitated by Jessica Letson; Abby Hicks, MA CO; Carla Darby; & Angie Weldon*
*Audience: EI Administrators, Directors, Supervisors*
*Yorkshire*

This session brings together Early Intervention program administrators, directors, and supervisors to discuss common issues encountered in providing EI services. EI program leaders will address critical funding and operational changes impacting programs today and share strategies that others may find beneficial as well. Key systemic changes affecting EI service delivery and staffing will be discussed, as well as ways supervision may be changing with more remote workers and/or staff in the field. *Please note: This session is not eligible for ABESPA or ASHA CEUs.*

## 2:30 – 2:45 BREAK AND EXHIBITORS

## 2:45 – 3:45 BREAKOUT SESSION C (60 min.)

**Let Them Lead Through Learning Centers**

*LaTonya Sibley, PhD, NBCT*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey A/B*

Join us to explore how Montgomery Public Schools (MPS) First Class Pre-K classrooms use interactive learning centers to support young children with diverse learning needs in inclusive, developmentally appropriate environments. Participants will experience practical strategies that promote child choice, engagement, and meaningful participation aligned with early intervention best practices. This session demonstrates how intentional center design strengthens communication, social-emotional develop-ment, and early academic skills for all learners. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use strategies for creating responsive learning environments where every child can actively participate and succeed.

**Service Provision for Families with Minimally Verbal Children**

*Blaklie H Blevins, MS, CCC- SLP & Autumn M. Bobo, OTR/L*
*Audience: EI, HVs* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey C*

This session will explore strategies that can be utilized to assist families who have children with minimal verbal skills. It will assist the learner in exploring the difference in receptive and expressive language skills. We will explore a variety of communication strategies that the child may be utilizing and how we can assist the family in building off of these strategies.

We will further discuss activities/play routines that we can utilize within our sessions and leave with families.

**Introduction to Teaming in Preschool: A Collaborative Approach between Teachers and Therapists**

*Kate Stribling, PT, DPT, PCS*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey D/E*

Interprofessional collaboration provides the safe, high quality and student-centered care desired by all, but consistently practicing this in a preschool setting can be challenging. This session will outline the interdisciplinary process used to plan and implement inclusive adapted programming in one urban preschool environment. The presentation will describe different teaming approaches as well as the challenges versus benefits of each as supported by research. Examples of adapted activities as well as guidance in initiating similar interdisciplinary programs will be provided. Case studies will be available to enhance understanding and provide an interactive opportunity for attendees.

**Engaging Diverse Families: Building Responsive and Respectful Partnerships**

*Jennifer L. Kilgo, EdD*
*Audience: GENERAL* *Introductory*
*Riverchase A*

Families come to early childhood settings with a wide range of experiences, identities, and needs, including teen parents, grandparents serving as primary caregivers, families experiencing housing instability, and those navigating concerns related to immigration, culture, or family structure. This session explores practical, respectful strategies for building authentic partnerships with diverse families across settings. Emphasis will be placed on understanding family contexts, recognizing strengths, and responding in ways that promote trust, communication, and meaningful relationship development. Participants will also consider strategies for connecting families with relevant supports and resources while maintaining a strengths-based, culturally responsive perspective.

**Pause, Perceive, Play: Deepening Your Connection Through a Nervous System Perspective**

*Emily Tester LPC, NCC*
*Audience: GENERAL* *All levels*
*Riverchase B*

This session will provide space to explore how "showing up" and having a developmentally appropriate framework shape attachment and felt-sense of safety. The goal of this presentation is to guide participants in understanding how relationships are the core of connection and development. Participants will learn about tuning in to self, others, and the environment. How our bodies experience the world around them encodes more than the words spoken, so let's make it playful, loving, and attuned.

**Embracing the Unexpected: One Parent's Journey through Early Intervention Services and Beyond**

*Hallie Thuenen, MSN CPNP-PC SANE-P*
*Audience: GENERAL* *All levels*
*Wyndsor I*

Parents have been told—or maybe started to suspect—that their child may have developmental delays. Suddenly, terms like early intervention, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy enter their world, often without much explanation. What follows can feel overwhelming: unfamiliar medical language, uncertain or even frightening diagnoses, subtle societal pressures, and the realization that their child's path may look different than once imagined. It's a lot—and it's completely normal to find oneself asking, "What do I do now?" This session is designed to meet parent in that exact moment. From one parent to others, we'll walk through what this journey really looks like—beyond the clinical terms and into real life. The goal is to ease uncertainty, answer the questions parents may not even know how to ask yet, and help them feel more grounded and confident moving forward. Most importantly, this is about empowerment. They are their child's greatest advocate, support, and source of strength. While the path may feel unpredictable, they don't have to navigate it alone—and parents are more capable than they may feel right now.

**Neuropsychological Outcomes in Common Diagnoses**

*Joseph D. Ackerson, PhD & Greta Conlon*
*Audience: SLPs, PTs & OTs* *Intermediate*
*Wyndsor II*

This session builds upon the earlier session "Threats to Healthy Early Brain Development". Dr. Ackerson will inform attendees regarding the long-term outcomes from gestational and perinatal complications including intrauterine exposure to toxins, prematurity, very low birthweight, inadequate oxygen flow, infectious processes, and medical misadventure. Associated brain changes may include intraventricular hemorrhage, hypoxic ischemic injury, stroke, and periventricular leukomalacia. Proper identification and quantification of early brain injury can allow for appropriate interventions that may improve long-term trajectories, as well as provide families with the knowledge they need for long-term planning.

**Bridging the Gap from Screening to Intervention**

*Mary Ellen Whigham, ADN, RN & Amy Williamson, AuD, CCC-A*
*Audience: GENERAL* *All levels*
*Yorkshire*

The Joint Committee on Infant Hearing (JCIH) has established the following guidelines for states: 1-month initial hearing screens completed in the hospital or outpatient setting; 3-months diagnostic testing completed; and at 6 months the baby is enrolled in early intervention to improve language acquisition. How can we bridge gaps in 1-3-6 in Alabama between the hospital, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI), audiologist, and Early Intervention? Identifying your role in 1-3-6 and closing gaps in systems will be discussed. Collaboration is the key to everything!

## 3:45 – 4:00 BREAK AND EXHIBITORS

## 4:00 – 5:00 BREAKOUT SESSION D (60 min.)

**Compassionate Conversations: Communicating with Families About Sensitive Topics**

*Kimberly Hile, PhD & Fan Yang, PhD*
*Audience: EI, HVs* *All levels*
*Wynfrey A/B*

Engaging families in conversations about developmental concerns, diagnoses, and sensitive histories is a critical, yet often challenging, part of early intervention/early childhood special education practice. This session will explore practical, relationship-centered strategies for approaching these discussions with empathy, clarity, and cultural responsiveness. Participants will learn how to recognize verbal and nonverbal cues that signal family stress, resistance, or readiness, and how to adjust their communication in real time. Through real-world examples and guided reflection, attendees will build skills in using supportive language that maintains dignity while conveying essential information. By the end of this interactive session, professionals will feel more confident navigating difficult conversations in ways that strengthen partnerships and promote positive outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.

**More Play, Less Screen: Practical Strategies for Home Visitors to Promote Healthy Habits in Early Childhood**

*Casey Willis & Emily Campbell, MPH, CHES*
*Audience: EI, HVs* *Introductory - Intermediate*
*Wynfrey C*

Screen time is a common part of early childhood, but excessive use can impact physical activity, sleep, language development, and social-emotional growth. Home visitors are uniquely positioned to support families in creating balanced routines that prioritize movement, connection, and hands-on learning. This interactive session provides realistic, family-friendly strategies to reduce screen time and replace it with meaningful alternatives such as active play, music and movement, shared reading, outdoor exploration, cooking, and daily routines. Participants will also learn current physical activity recommendations for children ages 0–5 and simple, low-cost ways families can incorporate movement into everyday life. Attendees will leave with practical, ready-to-use tools and activities they can immediately implement during home visits to help families build healthier habits.

**Planning for Transition from Early Intervention to School-Based Services for the Child with Complex Motor Needs**

*Kate Stribling, PT, DPT, PCS & Whitney Lugo*
*Audience: EI, PTs & OTs* *Intermediate*

*Wynfrey D/E*

We know that the transition between Early Intervention and school-based services can be stressful for many families and especially for those with children who experience complex motor needs. But what can be done to help decrease stressful factors and improve outcomes? Join us as we explore evidence guided transition planning when moving from Part C (Early Intervention) to Part B (school-based) services. We will also hear from a family about their experience during this process.

**Setting the Stage for Inclusion: Classroom Design, Routines, and Supports**

*Hannah Kennedy, PhD & Kate Scarborough, PhD*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *Introductory*
*Riverchase A*

In this interactive session, presenters will share practical, evidence-based strategies to support preschool teachers in creating inclusive early childhood classrooms. Grounded in research-based frameworks such as Conscious Discipline and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), this session will highlight proactive approaches to classroom management, guidance, and inclusive practices. Participants will gain actionable tools for collaborating with interdisciplinary professionals, establishing effective classroom routines and procedures, and differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of all learners in early childhood settings.

**Achieving Infant Regulation: Calm is Contagious**

*Mary Beth Moses, PT, MS, PCS, NTMTC; Christy Moran, OTD, OTR/L; Cindy Florence, MA, ECSE; & Kristen Wilhite, MA, CCC-SLP*
*Audience: HVs, SLPs, PTs & OTs* *Introductory - Intermediate*
*Riverchase B*

Through a transdisciplinary model, presenters will provide Early Intervention providers and home visitors with tools they can use to educate families and caregivers on the importance of infant regulation. Infant regulation is key to infant learning and development. Providers and families will learn practical strategies to achieve a calm, regulated state for interaction. Providers will learn to identify situations when additional referrals may be beneficial for the family and child.

**Developmental Differences Birth to Age Three: Detection and Advocacy**

*Allison Cavender, MD*
*Audience: GENERAL* *Introductory*
*Wyndsor I*

In this session, the presenter will discuss the early signs and symptoms of developmental differences and the importance of referring early for evaluation and services. She will also discuss red flags in development that should prompt immediate referral. Additionally, the presenter will talk about building a team of advocates to support the child and their caregivers.

**Start Strong: Transforming Outcomes for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students**

*Kathryn C. Duncan, EdS; Kimberly Moon, MA; & Linnea Elliott, EdS*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs* *All levels*
*Wyndsor II*

"Start Strong: Transforming Outcomes for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students" explores how early intervention, guided by

meaningful data, can significantly improve developmental and educational outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing (Deaf/HH) learners. This session highlights current data collected on Deaf/HH students. Attendees will gain insights into how early language impacts academic success and strategies for translating data into action to strengthen early intervention programs, school-based programs, and long-term success.

**Transdisciplinary Perspective on Early Feeding Milestones**

*Rachel Kassel MD, PhD & Lynzee Head, DO*
*Audience: SLPs, PTs & OTs Intermediate*
*Yorkshire*

Presenters will share their approach to diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of infants with developmental delays, highlighting how global development impacts feeding and swallowing. Presenters are subspecialists from multiple specialties who see patients in transdisciplinary settings, both inpatient and outpatient.

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2026

## 8:00 – 8:45 EARLY SESSIONS (45 min.)

**The Many Hats of Service Coordination: Practical Tips, Resources and Encouragement for Service Coordinators!**

*Abby Hicks, MA CO & Lindsey Dean, LBSW*
*Audience: EI All levels*
*Riverchase A*

Early Intervention Service Coordination can be a complicated job. At many points throughout the week Service Coordinator can feel like counselors, data entry specialists, project managers, and billing clerks all at the same time! This session is intended to provide practical support, tips, and encouragement for Service Coordinators and will include topics about building relationships, staying on track, involving the team, and accessing resources. Join the conversation because we carry it better together--it takes a village.

**Connecting the Dots: From Early Signs of Autism to Everyday Support**

*Laura Hansen, PhD & Rebekah Whitt, MS, CCC-SLP*
*Audience: GENERAL Introductory - Intermediate*
*Riverchase B*

Current research shows that 1 in 31 eight-year-olds are identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Shaw, 2025). Action signs for ASD include but are not limited to delayed communication, limited pretend play, and decreased interest in other children. While these traits are indicative of ASD, they may also reflect other diagnoses such as Global Developmental Delay and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). In this session, attendees will distinguish between diagnoses that may present as similar to ASD, create a process for how to talk to caregivers about ASD, and discover behavioral and communication supports to help autistic children thrive.

**Traumatic Brain Injury - Identifying Supports Along the Road of Recovery**

*Scott Powell*
*Audience: PTs & OTs, SLPs, GENERAL Introductory*
*Wyndsor I*

In this session we will discuss the causes and prevalence of Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs), especially within children, and how nonprofit organizations or other agencies can complement the existing support structures available. Participants will learn what resources are available in the community to families living with the effects of TBI, how caregivers can find unique supports for themselves, and what the continuum of care looks like for TBI survivors as they grow and develop alongside their recovery from injury.

**Creation and Implementation of a Disability-Inclusive Children's Literature Database**

*Katie Beth Sharp Staggs, OTD, OTR/L & K. Megan Carpenter, OTD, OTR/L, SCFES*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs Introductory*
*Wyndsor II*

A major gap exists in children's literature. Although 1 in 6 children have developmental disabilities (CDC, 2025), only 3.4% of books feature a main character with a disability (Tyner, 2020). To address this gap, a free, centralized database of disability-inclusive children's books (DICB) for ages 0-18 was developed and hosted by the University of Alabama at Birmingham, containing over 500 titles. Each entry includes age ratings, disability categories, summaries, and access links. Early user feedback showed strong engagement and suggested the database promotes inclusion, awareness, and understanding of diverse experiences among children.

**Little Moments, Big Discoveries: STEM in Everyday Early Childhood Routines**

*Savannah Loudin*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs Introductory - Intermediate*
*Yorkshire*

STEM learning in early childhood does not require special materials or complicated experiments—it can be naturally embedded into everyday routines. In this session, educators will explore how moments like mealtimes, transitions, and daily classroom activities can become meaningful opportunities for science, technology, engineering, and math learning. We will challenge common misconceptions about early STEM and highlight its importance in building critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Participants will gain practical, easy-to-implement strategies that turn ordinary interactions into engaging learning experiences for young children. *Make-and-take kits provided for the first 50 attendees.*

**Signal in the Static: Supporting Caregivers Through Parenting Evolution, Digital Clutter, and Information Overload**

*Kimberly Hile, PhD & Loretta Hayslip, PhD*
*Audience: EI, HVs, GENERAL* *All levels*
*Ivory's*

Caregivers today are caught in a generational "squeeze," navigating a massive shift from traditional, compliance-based parenting to modern, empathy-driven approaches. For families of young children with disabilities, this transition is often complicated by a 24/7 stream of digital "perfection," viral misinformation, and the heavy weight of unmet expectations. This interactive session explores how the move from "stopping the behavior" to "understanding the why" has increased the mental load on families, often leaving them paralyzed by conflicting advice and cultural pressures. Professionals will gain practical coaching strategies to help caregivers quiet the noise, manage the "comparison trap" of social media, and build confidence in evidence-based, developmentally appropriate practices that fit their unique child.

## 9:00 – 9:15 WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## 9:15 – 10:15 KEYNOTE (60 min.)

**From Challenge to Possibility: Early Intervention Strategies for Infants and Toddlers with Prenatal Substance Exposure (PSE)**

*Christy Isbell, PhD, OTR/L* *Wynfrey A/B/C/D/E*

Infants and toddlers with prenatal substance exposure (PSE) are a growing and important population in early intervention, and they bring both unique challenges and powerful potential for growth. Attendees will explore how prenatal substance exposure (PSE) can influence early brain development, self-regulation, and participation. Through practical examples and applied strategies, this keynote will highlight how early childhood professionals can use simple, powerful tools within daily routines to support development and caregiver confidence. Participants will leave with shared understanding and renewed confidence in their ability to make a lasting impact on the development of infants and toddlers with PSE and their families.

## 10:15 - 10:45 BREAK AND EXHIBITORS

## 10:45 - 12:00 BREAKOUT SESSION E (75 min.)

**Ghosts in the Classroom: Transforming Trauma Through Reflective and Relationship-Based Educational Systems**

*Johnece Smith, MS, Eds, LPC, NCC, IMH-E*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *All levels*
*Wynfrey A/B*

Behind every behavior is a story—and often, that story began long before a child entered the classroom. "Ghosts in the Classroom" explores how intergenerational trauma and lived experiences shape children's behavior, relationships, and capacity to learn.

**Partnering with Families: Interprofessional Strategies to Support Infants with Prenatal Substance Exposure (PSE) Through Everyday Routines**

*Christy Isbell, PhD, OTR/L*
*Audience: PTs & OTs, SLPs, HVs* *Introductory - Intermediate*
*Wynfrey C*

This interactive session engages EI professionals in a case-based learning experience focused on supporting infants with prenatal substance exposure (PSE). Participants will explore how everyday caregiving routines and learning environments can be used to promote motor, cognitive, and emotional development. Participants will work in small interprofessional groups to analyze a detailed case of an infant with PSE and their family. Attendees will actively examine the infant's routines and environment, and family perspectives and understanding of development to design family-centered strategies. Participants will leave with practical strategies and tools for collaborative decision-making that can be immediately applied in home and childcare settings.

**Fostering Positive Feeding Experiences Using Supportive Cues**

*Candace H. Cook, MS, CCC-SLP & Mary H. Bryan, MEd, CCC-SLP*
*Audience: EI, HVs, SLPs, OTs* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey D/E*

Using the diagnostic framework for pediatric feeding disorders, basic characteristics of feeding challenges and contributing factors will be briefly reviewed. Case scenarios will be utilized to help participants identify variables leading to both positive and negative feeding experiences for clients. Supportive cues for facilitating positive feeding experiences will then be presented according to the subcategories of visual, verbal, and tactile cues, with hands-on materials for participants to explore. Finally, participants will work within small groups to identify which types of supports are utilized in various case studies provided to them.

**"Can't Wait to Regulate": The Sensory System as the Foundation to Therapeutic Success in Toddlers**

*Mary Laura Day, OTR/L; Angela Anselmo, MA; Lori Williamson, OTR/L; & Noelle Nicholson, MS, CCC-SLP*
*Audience: EI, HVs, CLASSROOM* *Introductory*
*Riverchase A*

In this session, presenters will discuss the significance of achieving toddler regulation in order to thrive across multiple settings. The sensory system is the groundwork for children to connect, engage, and learn. By learning about the sensory system and practical strategies, participants will be able to support children's regulation and growth.

**When Words Don't Come Easily: Supporting Social Communication in Young Children**

*Kendall Hampton*
*Audience: EI, HVs, CLASSROOM Introductory - Intermediate*
*Riverchase B*

Strong communication develops through warm, responsive interactions, but some children need extra support to engage, connect, and communicate. This session introduces the FACTS framework from Project ImPACT and offers play-based strategies caregivers and professionals can use during everyday routines. Participants will learn how to follow a child's focus, adjust their communication, create opportunities for interaction, and support new skill development in natural, supportive ways. Strategies such as talking, reading, singing, and playing are woven throughout to support social communication in toddlers and preschoolers at home or in the classroom.

**Snow Globes and Airport Codes: Amplifying Autistic Voices through Special Interests**

*Rebekah Whitt, MS, CCC-SLP & Laura Hansen, PhD*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, SLPs Introductory - Intermediate*
*Wyndsor I*

Client-centered care is a critical component of evidence-based practice and should prioritize clients' personal preferences (Gaddy, Crow 2023). Special interests are prominent in autistic children, and it is estimated that between 75% and 95% of autistic individuals exhibit special interests (Grove et al., 2018; Klin et al., 2007; Uljarevic, Alvares, et al., 2021). Accounts from autistic individuals indicate the importance of these interests on their livelihood (Davey, 2020). Through education and case studies, this session will demonstrate how professionals and families can practice cultural responsiveness to consider the learning styles and motivation of autistic children and incorporate meaningful treatment materials related to clients' special interests to drive momentum to participate, engage, and excel in intervention and daily life.

**Neurologic Music Therapy® in Early Intervention: Clinical Applications**

*Lydia Lowery, MT-BC, NMT™ & Abby Whitlock, MT-BC, NMT™*
*Audience: GENERAL All levels Wyndsor II*

Early childhood is a period of unparalleled neuroplasticity, where the brain is uniquely primed for growth through multisensory engagement. This session explores the transformative impact of Music Therapy (MT) and Neurologic Music Therapy ® (NMT™) within birth-to-five settings. While often grouped under the same umbrella, MT and NMT™ offer distinct clinical pathways, ranging from social-emotional development and communication to the targeted "hard-wiring" of motor and cognitive pathways through a neuroscience-based model.

**Child Outcomes Summary (COS)**

*Tabitha Perry, MS; Amy Fisher, MS; Katrina Lipscomb, MEd*
*Audience: EI Introductory – Intermediate Yorkshire*

Participants will accurately describe the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) process in Early Intervention, analyze child functioning using multiple sources of information, and assign justified ratings on the 7-point scale through collaborative team discussion. The COS process requires input from all Early Intervention team members as they work together to reflect on and discuss the child's development and functioning across settings and situations.

**Access Creates Communication: Using Assistive Technology and APT AT to Expand Environmental Interaction in Early Intervention**

*Lynn Roebuck, MS, CCC-SLP*
*Audience: HVs, PTs & OTs, SLPs All levels*
*Ivory's*

Access to the environment creates opportunities for engagement, exploration, and communication. This session will demonstrate how assistive technology can help young children interact with toys, activities, and routines in ways that support participation and communication development. Participants will learn practical strategies for embedding assistive technology into early intervention settings to expand environmental interaction and engagement. The session will also highlight resources and services available through APT AT: Alabama's Assistive Technology Act Program to support families and providers.

## 12:00 – 1:30 LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

## 1:30 – 3:00 BREAKOUT SESSION F (90 min.)

**Alabama State Department of Education Preschool Updates**

*Stephanie Bear, Ed S, CCC-SLP & Kathy Wilkins*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, SLPs Intermediate*
*Wynfrey A/B*

This presentation will focus on sharing the most recent information from the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Special Education Services, on topics geared specifically toward preschool special education service providers, including IEP development, eligibility considerations, the transition of students from Early Intervention to Preschool Special Education, SMARTTEACH™ GOLD® implementation, monitoring, and more!

**Science of Reading: What Does It Look Like for Children Birth to Age 3**

*Gay Finn*
*Audience: EI, HVs, SLPs Introductory - Intermediate*
*Wynfrey C*

This session explores the foundational stages of early literacy development and the Science of Reading as it applies to children from birth to age 3. Participants will examine how the reading brain develops during these critical years, the role of phonological sensitivity, early oral language, social interaction, sound play, and positive, language-rich reading experiences lay the groundwork for later reading success. Practical strategies for supporting early literacy will be shared.

**Sleep Strategies for Children with Autism**

*Karen Lea Martin (Hyche), OTD, OTR/L*
*Audience: GENERAL* *All levels*
*Wynfrey D/E*

This presentation will address sleep concerns in children with Autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions. Current research regarding sleep concerns and sleep disorders will be reviewed. Strategies to address poor sleep will be addressed in detail.

**Meet Them Where They Live: Culturally Responsive Strategies for Behavior Challenges in Early Childhood**

*Danielle Rich PhD, CCC-SLP, ASDCS*
*Audience: EI, HVs, CLASSROOM, SLPs* *Intermediate*
*Riverchase A*

Every behavior tells a story — but are we reading it through the right lens? This evidence-based, hands-on session invites early interventionists, preschool teachers, and SLPs to examine how cultural background shapes the way young children express needs, regulate emotions, and respond to adults. Grounded in current research, participants will explore the critical distinction between behavior that is different and behavior that is disordered, reflect on their own cultural lens, and practice concrete strategies for building trust with families across cultural differences.

**Positive Parenting and the Brain: What Helps, What Hurts, and What We Often Miss**

*Joy Winchester*
*Audience: GENERAL* *Introductory*
*Riverchase B*

What we say and do with young children shapes brain development—but not always in the ways we think. This session explores the neuroscience behind common parenting and caregiving responses, examining both the positive and negative impacts on a child's developing brain. Participants will move beyond surface-level ideas of "positive parenting" to understand how predictability, clarity, emotional tone, and environmental context influence behavior and regulation. Through a brain-based lens, attendees will learn to evaluate everyday interactions more intentionally. This session provides a deeper understanding of how adult responses shape both immediate behavior and long-term development.

**Fine Motor Activities on a Budget**

*Katasha Hughes, MAECEL*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *Introductory*
*Wyndsor I*

During this training participants will learn the importance of fine motor skills in early development, as well as hands on activities that can be utilized at little to no cost for their program. Participants will also have the opportunity to create a make-and-take fine motor activity to take home with them. Presenter will be utilizing materials that you may already have access to but are unsure of how to incorporate with children to help with their development. The presenter has added new ideas and activities for an updated, more engaging training. *Make-and-take kits provided for the first 50 attendees.*

**Why Early Intervention: What It Is and Why It Works**

*Marc Hultquist, DO. FAAP*
*Audience: EI, GENERAL* *All levels*
*Wyndsor II*

In this session, the presenter will discuss where the Early Intervention program fits in the big picture (responsibilities, funding, and service models). He will also talk about how having an awareness of the system and its policies allows providers to create the appropriate and comprehensive treatment plan for patients. Illustrating the important impact Early Intervention has on families at the operational level will also be covered. He will also discuss how Early Intervention works in the gray area between healthcare and non-medical intervention to optimize child development and outcomes—Early Intervention's unique capabilities other services can't match. Finally, the presenter will discuss how to help families understand Early Intervention's role and their own role in their child's development.

**The Six Needs of Mourning: Special Needs Parents**

*Belinda Kock, LPC, FT*
*Audience: GENERAL* *Introductory*
*Yorkshire*

This presentation explores the unique grief experiences of parents raising children with special needs through the framework of Dr. Alan Wolfelt's Six Central Needs of Mourning. Participants will examine how chronic sorrow, identity shifts, fear, helplessness, and ongoing emotional losses impact caregivers across the lifespan of parenting a child with disabilities or complex needs. Using a companioning model of grief support, this training encourages compassionate understanding, emotional validation, meaning-making, and healthy support systems for parents navigating both visible and invisible losses. Attendees will leave with practical reflection tools and a deeper understanding of how grief and resilience can coexist in the journey of special needs parenting.

**Seeing Beyond the Eyes: Understanding Cerebral Visual Impairment**

*Karen Harpster, PhD, OTR/L*
*Audience: PTs & OTs, GENERAL* *All levels*
*Ivory's*

This session will introduce Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI), the most common cause of childhood visual impairment in developed countries, with a focus on brain-based differences

in visual processing and their functional impact. The presenter will review the neurological foundations of CVI, characteristic visual behaviors, and associated medical risk factors. The session will outline assessment approaches for visual function and functional vision, including caregiver questionnaires, clinical observations, and standardized tools.

## 3:00 – 3:15 BREAK AND EXHIBITORS

## 3:15 – 4:45 BREAKOUT SESSION G (90 min.)

**Cracking the Code: Understanding Why Young Children Engage in Challenging Behavior**

*Savannah Loudin*
*Audience: HVs, CLASSROOM* *All levels*
*Wynfrey A/B*

Young children often communicate their needs through behavior when they do not yet have the words or skills to express themselves. This session helps participants learn how to look beyond the behavior and identify the reason it is occurring. Participants will explore common reasons children engage in challenging behaviors such as seeking attention, escaping difficult tasks, gaining access to preferred items, or meeting sensory needs. The session will include real classroom examples and practical strategies for responding in ways that support skill development and reduce frustration. Participants will leave with tools that promote positive behavior while strengthening communication and relationships. *Make-and-take kits provided for the first 50 attendees.*

**Picture This: Using Visuals to Support Early Learners**

*Barbie Jones, MEd; Stephanie De Bear; & Kimberly Morris*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs* *All levels*
*Wynfrey C*

This interactive session will provide early childhood educators with practical strategies for creating and using visual supports to strengthen classroom management, student engagement, and daily routines. Participants will explore tools such as focus walls, first/then boards, token boards, choice boards, and core communication boards while learning how to design visuals that meet the diverse needs of young learners. Real classroom examples and ready-to-use ideas will help attendees implement visual systems that promote independence, communication, and positive behavior in early learning environments. *Samples provided for the first 50 attendees.*

**Partners in Progress: Understanding Parent Perspectives in Early Intervention**

*Kelli Ellis, MS, CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert AVT; Tammi S. Dahle, PhD, NCC, LPC, LPC-SC; Matt & Kelly Weekley; Yariely Hernandez; & Caroline Leak, JD*
*Audience: GENERAL* *All levels*
*Wynfrey D/E*

This presentation highlights the evolving relationship between families and professionals. Panelists will reflect on personal stories and experiences, which emphasize the importance of trust, communication and education for building successful partnerships. Parents will share their perspectives on navigating early intervention (and beyond!) with their children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. Attendees will gain insight into ways to support and empower parents and caregivers, promote child development, and improve outcomes through collaborative, family-centered care.

**When Sleep Becomes a Struggle: Coaching Families Toward Better Sleep**

*Kendall Hampton*
*Audience: EI, HVs* *Introductory - Intermediate*
*Riverchase A*

Sleep challenges are one of the most common concerns families share with early childhood professionals. This session focuses on practical ways to support families during conversations about sleep, with an emphasis on toddlers and preschool-aged children. Participants will learn how to identify common sleep challenges, ask meaningful questions to better understand each family's situation, and guide them toward manageable next steps. The session also introduces high-impact strategies that promote healthy sleep habits, including routines, environment, and ways to build independent sleep skills. Participants will leave with tools and resources to support families with confidence while recognizing when referrals for medical or specialized support may be needed.

**How Full Is Your Bucket? - Practical Strategies for Self-Care and Nervous System Regulation**

*Jessica D. Strickland, BSE, LICSW*
*Audience: GENERAL* *All levels*
*Riverchase B*

Ever feel like you're running on empty - physically, mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually? When your internal bucket is empty, performance and well-being suffer. Whether you're a parent or a provider, you cannot pour from an empty cup. Join this practical breakout session to discover how true nervous system regulation can reset your capacity for stress. We will clarify why "self-comfort" isn't always "self-care" and explore immediate, actionable strategies to calm your mind and body. Finally, you will design your own customized self-care plan to ensure you leave equipped to handle life's daily demands with sustainable energy and clarity.

**Move, Move, Move Your Body but Which Way**

*Katasha Hughes, MAECEL*
*Audience: CLASSROOOM* *Introductory*
*Wyndsor I*

During this training session participants will learn the importance of moving through the day in all ways and not just when the music is on. Movement in the classroom is key to having an engaging classroom and can help with challenging behaviors as well. Many children with disabilities love the movement and it can help them concentrate more throughout the day. *Make-and-take kits provided for the first 50 attendees.*

**Safety in the Field** (Session will be repeated on Wednesday)

*Johnny Lee*
*Audience: HVs, GENERAL; ADMIN* *All levels*
*Wyndsor II*

This workshop focuses on equipping field workers with practical safety protocols for conducting home visits in potentially unpredictable environments. The emphasis is on proactive risk assessment, situational awareness, and personal safety strategies — from pre-visit preparation and route planning to in-home positioning and safe exit techniques. Key learning objectives include building habits around thorough destination research, coded communication systems for emergencies, cautious interpersonal interactions, continuous environmental scanning, and the critical importance of trusting one's instincts to recognize and respond to red flags. Overall, the training aims to foster a safety-first mindset that empowers workers to maintain control, minimize vulnerability, and confidently navigate challenging situations while still effectively performing their duties.

**Supporting Children's Mental Health Through Literature**

*Gwendolyn Miniard, MS, CAMS-I, CGP, ALC*
*Audience: HV, CLASSROOM* *Introductory - Intermediate*
*Yorkshire*

Books can play a key role in supporting children's mental health by helping them understand emotions, become more resilient, and develop empathy, especially through approaches like bibliotherapy. Stories offer a safe space to talk about feelings, worries, grief, and social skills, allowing kids to better recognize and manage their feelings.

**Supporting Functional Vision: Engagement, Exploration, and Participation in Children with Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI)**

*Karen Harpster, PhD, OTR/L*
*Audience: PTs & OTs, HVs, CLASSROOM* *All levels*
*Ivory's*

This presentation will focus on treatment strategies that support visual development across early, middle, and later stages in children with Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI). Presenters will describe common functional challenges observed at each stage of visual development and outline developmentally appropriate goals that emphasize participation in meaningful daily activities. The sessions will highlight practical, evidence informed intervention strategies to "turn on" and strengthen visual engagement, including environmental modifications, graded use of light, color, and movement, and systematic approaches to managing visual complexity. Case informed examples will illustrate adaptations for self-care, play, leisure, mobility, learning, and social participation across home, school, and community settings. Together, these presentations underscore the role of occupational therapy in promoting functional vision, increasing independence, and enhancing access and participation for children with CVI across environments.

## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2026

## **8:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. –AUTISM LEARNING COLLABORATIVE TRAINING (210 minutes)***

*Two 15-minute breaks will be provided
**Pre-registration required, and class size limited to 50

**Practical Early Intervention Strategies for Young Children with Autism: An Interactive Learning Collaborative**

*Training conducted by the Alabama Community Autism Mentors*
*Facilitator: Mary Beth Vick*
*Yorkshire*

This interactive session is designed for professionals working in early intervention, preschool programs, home visitation, and speech-language services who support young children with autism (or suspected autism) and their families. The session will focus on practical, relationship-based strategies that can be embedded into daily routines and natural environments. The session will also address how to have supportive, family-centered conversations with caregivers when developmental concerns arise.

## 8:00 – 9:00 BREAKOUT SESSION H (60 min.)

**Fine Motor Skills Task Boxes**

*Leanna Stephens*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey A/B*

Attendees will learn the science behind how fine motor skills influence later reading success, the hierarchy of fine motor development, how to design fine motor task boxes for their classrooms/therapy, and how to use data to drive instruction. They will leave with ideas for new activities and ways to use their own materials. Finally, attendees will brainstorm accommodations and modifications for their own students.

**A Father's Perspective: Strengthening Father Engagement in Early Intervention**

*Panel Moderated By: Andrew Stevens, OTR/L - United Ability*
*Fathers' Panel: Ben Gravlee; Stephen Hill; & Chris Collins*
*Audience: EI, GENERAL* *All levels*
*Wynfrey C*

Attendees will hear from three fathers as they share their personal experiences of having a child in Early Intervention. Through their unique perspectives, these dads will discuss their involvement throughout the EI journey, the challenges and successes they encountered, and the impact of being actively engaged in their child's services. Participants will gain insight into how service coordinators and providers can intentionally include, engage, and support fathers throughout the Early Intervention process, helping to strengthen family-centered practices and improve outcomes for children and families.

**Seeing Through Their Eyes: Understanding Belonging from a Child's Perspective Through Photo Elicitation** *Loretta Hayslip, PhD*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey D/E*

Belonging is often defined by adults through environment, inclusion policies, or participation, but young children experience belonging in deeply personal, relational, and often unspoken ways. This session explores findings from photo-elicitation research, in which children share their daily experiences to reveal what makes them feel included, valued, and connected. Through these visual narratives, participants will gain insight into how preschool children, especially those with disabilities, interpret belonging beyond surface-level inclusion. The session highlights key themes from the research and translates them into actionable strategies for educators and caregivers to foster authentic belonging rooted in relationships, agency, and identity.

**An Inverted Pyramid: The 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Implications for Early Intervention Practice**

*Aida Miles, EdD, MMSc, RDN, LD, CSP, FAND*
*Audience: EI, CLASSROOM, HVs, GENERAL* *Introductory*
*Riverchase A*

The January 2026 release of the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans generated significant national attention and discussion across news and social media outlets due to significant differences from prior iterations, including a new inverted pyramid visual. This presentation will introduce early childhood professionals to the structure, development, and public health role of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, with specific attention to pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood. We will compare historical guidance with the current edition, highlighting key changes and examining the strength of the evidence underlying selected recommendations. Emphasis will be placed on translating guideline-level recommendations into developmentally-appropriate, family-centered feeding guidance for diverse populations.

**How to Become a More Effective Leader: Five Essential Practices for Managers, Supervisors, and Leaders at Every Level**

*Kevin D. Moore, Sr.*
*Audience: ADMIN, GENERAL* *All levels*
*Riverchase B*

Effective leadership is not defined by a job title, position, or rank. Whether you are an administrator, manager, supervisor, emerging leader, or someone who influences others without formal authority, developing effective leadership skills can strengthen workplace relationships, team performance, and organizational success. This session will explore five essential practices for becoming a more effective leader, including establishing shared purpose, building trust, communicating expectations, promoting accountability, understanding differences, and developing others. Participants will gain insights and identify practical actions they can apply to strengthen their leadership effectiveness and positively influence those around them.

**Children's Rehabilitation Services and Community Resources for Equipment Billing and Coverage**

*Billy Ronilo, MS, PT*
*Audience: PTs & OTs* *Introductory - Intermediate*
*Wyndsor I*

Choosing the right piece of equipment for a child and their family is a complex task for any treating therapist. Getting that piece of equipment covered by insurance can be even more complex and frustrating. Come learn about the adaptive equipment billing process and go in-depth regarding covered equipment, equipment coding, and alternative community resources.

**A Deeper Path to Understanding: How Hearing Loss May Be Overlooked in Children**

*Heather Jackson, AuD, CCC-A; Ashley Campbell, AuD, CCC-A; & Morgan Cord*
*Audience: GENERAL* *Introductory - Intermediate*
*Wyndsor II*

This session will help participants better understand how different types of hearing losses in children can affect their ability to learn, communicate, and stay engaged. It will explore how temporary issues, such as fluid in the ears, as well as mild or unilateral hearing losses, can impact speech development, attention, and classroom performance. Participants will learn how to recognize signs that a child may be struggling and when it is appropriate to refer them for a full hearing evaluation, even if they passed their newborn hearing screening. The session will also explain how listening with one ear differs from using both ears together and why supportive devices can be helpful in certain cases. Attendees will leave with practical guidance to support early identification and timely intervention for children with hearing concerns.

## 9:00 – 9:15 BREAK

## 9:15 – 10:15 BREAKOUT SESSION I (60 min.)

**Active Play for All Abilities: Inclusive Movement Ideas for Early Childhood**

*Sarritha Scales, MEd & Dalauna Dates*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey A/B*

Physical play is a cornerstone of early development—but access to movement is not always equitable. This session provides early educators with practical, inclusive strategies that make physical play flexible, meaningful, and developmentally supportive for all young children. Participants will explore the "why" behind active play and practice movement activities they can implement in their program.

**Born Ready University: Preparing Parents for the Journey of a Lifetime-Raising Children**

*Liletta Jenkins, MS, CPM*
*Audience: CLASSROOM, HVs* *Introductory*
*Wynfrey C*

Children thrive when they have positive, supportive parents and caregivers in their lives. This session will highlight how the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education's (ADECE) Born Ready University program partners with community organizations to equip parents with practical tools and resources. Participants will learn how these collaborative efforts support families in raising children who are healthy, happy, and prepared for school success.

**Exploring AAC Apps and Tools: An Interactive Roundtable Discussion**

*Lynn Roebuck, MS, CCC-SLP*
*Audience: SLPs* *All levels*
*Wynfrey D/E*

This interactive session is designed for early intervention and classroom providers interested in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools, apps, and products that support individuals with communication needs. The session will begin with a brief facilitated overview of selected AAC apps, tools, and implementation strategies across a variety of settings and access methods. Following this introduction, participants will engage in a collaborative roundtable discussion to share experiences, ask questions, and explore real-world applications of AAC solutions.

**Foster Care: Working with Foster Parents to Mitigate Impact Upon Children Birth to Five Years of Age**

*Sandy Donovan, MSN, RN, CASA & Autauga County District Judge Jessica Sanders*
*Audience: EI, HVs, CLASSROOM* *All levels*
*Riverchase A*

Annually, five to six thousand children experience foster care in Alabama. At any age, the trauma of being separated from their biological family creates developmental challenges. Children ages five and younger are exceptionally vulnerable. Foster parents stand in the gap for these children in a unique and special way. This session will discuss the developmental challenges for children in foster care, explain the legal process that occurs when a child enters the system, and assist early childhood interventionists in developing strategies for working with foster children and parents.

**Becoming an Effective Advocate for Your Child**

*Glenda Grbac, M Ed, BCBA, LBA & Samantha Pate, M Ed, BCBA, LBA*
*Audience: GENERAL* *All levels*
*Riverchase B*

This presentation empowers parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to become confident, effective advocates for their children across medical, educational, and community settings. It emphasizes that advocacy is not just for conflict situations, but an ongoing, collaborative process grounded in communication, preparation, and informed decision-making. The session will also address how early childhood professionals can support and share advocacy strategies with families to promote collaboration and empowered decision-making. This session is a mixed lecture and panel discussion with participants.

**ABCs of Supported Standing and Stepping**

*Wendy Harris Altizer PT, ATP*
*Audience: PTs & OTs* *Intermediate-Advanced*
*Wyndsor I*

There are many published research articles that recognize the benefit of supported standing and stepping. This session brings a fresh perspective summary to these research articles and offers knowledge translation that can impact our interventions as practitioners. Evidence-informed practice that focuses on participation-based intervention and incorporates supported stepping and standing will be discussed. Content will include an overview of the research, and attendees will learn simple ways to link research to practice. This presentation bridges the "know-do" gap by translating research into relatable, actionable, and context-specific formats. The attendees will also learn how to share that knowledge with their colleagues and families in a way that is easy to understand.

**Practical Strategies for Social-Emotional Learning in Inclusive Early Childhood Settings**

*Erica O. Lee, PhD & William Harper-Hooper, IV*
*Audience: CLASSROOM* *All levels*
*Wyndsor II*

Many educators know that social-emotional learning is important, but struggle to find the time to teach it. This session focuses on how to build these skills into what teachers are already doing each day, rather than adding something new. Participants will learn practical ways to support young children in inclusive classrooms through everyday routines like play, read-alouds, and transitions. The session also explores how to adjust these strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners. Attendees will leave with simple, realistic ideas they can immediately use in their classrooms.

## 10:15 – 10:30 BREAK

## 10:30 – 12:00 CLOSING SESSIONS (90 min.)

**Why What Works…Stops Working: The Neuroscience of Inconsistent Behavior**

*Joy Winchester*
*Audience: GENERAL* *Intermediate*
*Wynfrey A/B*

Why does a strategy work one day and fall apart the next? This session explores the neuroscience behind inconsistent behavior in young children, showing how shifts in stress, environment, and brain system activation impact performance in real time. Participants will move beyond strategy-based thinking to understand behavior through a brain-forward lens. By reframing inconsistency as a systems issue rather than

defiance, attendees will gain a practical way to interpret behavior and respond more effectively. This session reduces frustration and builds confidence in navigating unpredictable moments.

**When Practice Doesn't Make Perfect: Understanding & Treating Childhood Apraxia of Speech in Early Intervention**

*Shauna Ashley, PhD, CCC-SLP*
*Audience: SLPs* *Intermediate*
*Wynfrey D/E*

Childhood apraxia of speech (CAS) is one of the most misunderstood diagnoses in early childhood — frequently mistaken for a severe phonological delay, a "late talker," or ordinary articulation difficulty. Yet CAS is a motor speech disorder with a distinct profile and a distinct treatment path, and identifying it early changes a child's trajectory. This session gives professionals and families a clear, shared framework: where speech breaks down, how CAS differs from other speech sound disorders, and which early red flags warrant referral. The second half turns to treatment, translating the principles of motor learning into practical, evidence-based strategies — including integral stimulation and Dynamic Temporal and Tactile Cueing, the role of practice intensity, and how family coaching and AAC support spoken communication. Participants leave able to recognize, refer for, and reinforce effective intervention for the youngest children with CAS.

**Safety in the Field (Repeated session from Tuesday)**
*Johnny Lee*
*Audience: HVs, GENERAL, ADMIN* *All levels*
*Riverchase A*

The workshop focuses on equipping field workers with practical safety protocols for conducting home visits in potentially unpredictable environments. The emphasis is on proactive risk assessment, situational awareness, and personal safety strategies — from pre-visit preparation and route planning to in-home positioning and safe exit techniques. Key learning objectives include building habits around thorough destination research, coded communication systems for emergencies, cautious interpersonal interactions, continuous environmental scanning, and the critical importance of trusting one's instincts to recognize and respond to red flags. Overall, the training aims to foster a safety-first mindset that empowers workers to maintain control, minimize vulnerability, and confidently navigate challenging situations while still effectively performing their duties.

**Torticollis: Evidence Based Assessment and Treatment Strategies for Early Intervention**

*Mary Beth Moses, PT, MS, PCS, NTMTC & Christy Moran, OTD, OTR/L*
*Audience: PTs & OTs, SLPs* *All levels*
*Wyndsor I*

This session reviews current evidence-based assessment and treatment strategies for torticollis including screening for associated diagnoses and secondary conditions that often accompany Torticollis. The focus will be on family-friendly practical treatment strategies to help families improve their infant's head and neck motion and symmetry of movement. Presentation of stretching and strengthening activities that can be implemented by families through play, positioning, carrying positions, and daily routines will be shared. Participants will have an opportunity to practice these strategies on dolls during the session.