Virginia Association of School Social Workers

VASSW FALL CONFERENCE

Rooted in Purpose: Focused on The Future: 40 Years of Supporting Students, Families and Schools

Are you eager to learn alongside other professionals in the field of School Social Work in Virginia? Look no further! Join us for our Fall State Conference as we celebrate 40 years as an organization serving students, families and our schools.
Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity!

08:30 am - 03:30 pm
October 26-27, 2026

Hilton Fairfax
12777 Fair Lakes Circle
Fairfax, VA 22033

What to Expect :

- Continuing Education
- Interactive Activities
- Networking Opportunities
- Business Meeting

🏆 Earn up to 8.25 Continuing Education Hours (CEs)
ASWB ACE Approved Provider

www.vassw.org

info@vassw.org

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Strengthen the knowledge, skills, and leadership capacity of school social workers by providing evidence-based professional learning, fostering collaboration, and highlighting innovative practices that support student success, family engagement, and equitable school communities. Through a focus on emerging challenges and opportunities, participants will be equipped to advance the well-being, academic achievement, and social-emotional development of students across Virginia.

In this conference, participants will not only receive continuing education credits (including 2 in ethics) required for upcoming license renewal but will

- Learn about real-world topics that actually matter to school social workers
- Connect with other school social workers

TARGET AUDIENCE

The content of this conference was developed specifically for school social workers at all levels (from students to veteran clinicians). However, the content would also be relevant to all school-based clinicians, as well as licensed social workers practicing in settings serving youth.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Day / Time	Session / Activity
Day 1: Oct 26	
7:00 AM – 8:30 AM	Registration & Breakfast
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Welcome
9:00 AM – 10:45 AM	Keynote Speaker
10:45 AM - 11:00 AM	Break
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Beyond the Keynote - continuation of discussion on advancing the profession
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM - 1:15 PM	Awards & Recognitions
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM	Breakout Session I
2:30 PM – 3:00 PM	Snack Break
3:00 PM-4:00 PM	Breakout Session II

The Virginia Association of School Social Workers (VASSW), provider #2243, is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. ACE provider approval period: 10/15/2026-10/15/2027. Social workers participating in this conference will recieve up to 8.25 continuing education credits.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

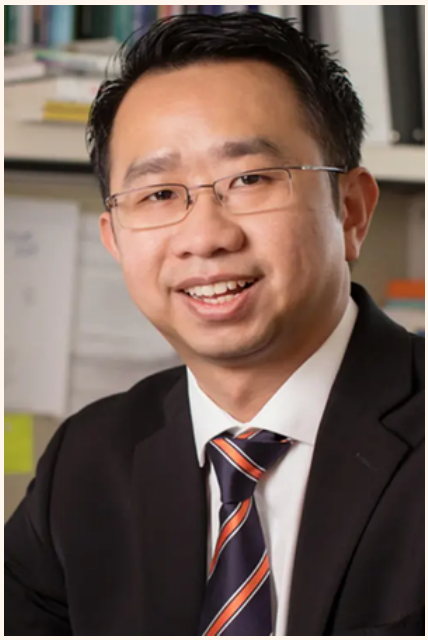
CONFERENCE AGENDA

Day / Time	Session / Activity
Day 2: Oct 27	
7:00 AM – 8:30 AM	Breakfast
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Welcome & Housekeeping
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	VASSW Business Meeting
10:00 AM - 10:15 AM	Break
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Keynote Speaker
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM	Breakout Session III
2:00 PM – 2:15 PM	Snack Break
2:30 PM-3:30 PM	Breakout Session IV

The Virginia Association of School Social Workers (VASSW), provider #2243, is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. ACE provider approval period: 10/15/2026-10/15/2027. Social workers participating in this conference will recieve up to 8.25 continuing education credits.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

DAY 1 : OCTOBER 26



Meet the Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Kevin Tan is an Associate Dean at the School of Social Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His work focuses on advancing social and emotional learning (SEL) in K–12 education through community-engaged, equity-centered approaches that emphasize identity, agency, and belonging. A former school social worker, Dr. Tan brings practice-informed insight to his teaching, research, and leadership. He serves as Editor-in-Chief of Children & Schools, the flagship journal of the National Association of Social Workers. His scholarship and partnerships span schools, community organizations, and interdisciplinary initiatives, with a strong commitment to fostering transformative change and building authentic, trust-based collaborations.

9:00 AM - 10:45 AM Keynote

Advancing the Profession: The Role of School Social Work in Today's Context

Presented by Dr. Kevin Tan

2.0 General CE credit

Session Description: This session begins by taking stock of the identity and direction of our profession, particularly within today's complex educational and social landscape. Participants will be introduced to the guiding principles behind the development of the National School Social Work Practice Model 2.0 and explore its core components. We will examine how the model can be applied in our daily practice to strengthen student support systems and lead to meaningful change within schools and districts. Participants will leave equipped with practical strategies, tools, and a deeper sense of purpose to elevate the profession in our communities.

Session Objectives: Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to: Describe the guiding principles and core components of the National School Social Work Practice Model 2.0; Analyze how the Practice Model can be applied to strengthen student support systems within their schools or districts; Identify at least three strategies or tools that support effective school social work practice and systems-level change; and Develop an action plan for integrating elements of the Practice Model into their professional practice.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

DAY 1 : OCTOBER 26

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM Beyond the Keynote

A Continuation of the Discussion on Advancing The Profession 1 General CE credit

Presented by Dr. Kevin Tan

Session Description: This interactive breakout session will build on the themes introduced in the keynote, offering participants an opportunity to reflect deeper into key ideas around equity, social and emotional learning, and community-engaged practice. Participants will receive additional supplemental materials and practical tools designed to support application in their own contexts.

Session Objectives: Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:
Evaluate the relationship between equity, social-emotional learning, and community-engaged practice within school social work; apply concepts introduced in the keynote to school-based practice situations; formulate actionable next steps for advancing equitable and community-responsive services within their schools; utilize supplemental tools and resources to support implementation of evidence-informed school social work practices.

1 General CE credit

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM Breakout I

Connection Is The Intervention: Restorative Circles in School Social Work

Presented by Brit Egan, LCSW

Session Description: Restorative circles are more than a conflict tool — they are a structure for belonging. This session introduces school social workers to the use of restorative circles as a community-building practice with meaningful implications for youth mental health. Drawing on Restorative Justice principles and the growing body of research connecting belonging and community to reduced anxiety and depression symptoms in young people, participants will learn the foundational elements of circle practice and experience a mini-circle firsthand. Attendees will leave with practical tools they can bring directly into their schools to support students' emotional wellbeing and sense of connection. For forty years, school social workers have understood something that research continues to confirm: young people don't just need academic support — they need to feel known, seen, and connected. Anxiety and depression among youth are at historic highs, and while there is no single solution, community is consistently one of the most powerful protective factors we have. This session explores how restorative circles — a structured, values-based practice rooted in Restorative Justice — can be used intentionally by school social workers to cultivate exactly that.

Session Objectives: Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to: Describe the foundational principles and key components of restorative circle practice; differentiate restorative circles from traditional group facilitation approaches; examine research linking belonging and community connectedness to positive youth mental health outcomes; implement restorative circle strategies designed to promote student connection, belonging, and emotional well-being.

DAY 1 : OCTOBER 26

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM Breakout I 1 Ethics CE credit

Rooted in Ethics, Ready for What's Next: Ethical Decision-Making for Real-World Practice

Presented By: Sharita Crawford, LCSW; Aminah Mellion, LCSW, LCSW-C

Session Description: School social workers are often called to make complex ethical decisions in fast-moving environments where the right answer is not always clear. Questions related to cultural humility, systemic inequities confidentiality, safety, mandated reporting, caregiver communication, documentation, administrator requests and digital boundaries, can place school social workers in challenging gray areas. This interactive session invites participants to slow down, examine ethical dilemmas through a school social work lens, and apply a culturally responsive ethical decision-making framework to real-world scenarios. Using brief teaching, small-group discussion, case vignettes, reflection, and documentation practice, participants will explore how professional ethics, student and family voice, power, culture, school systems, and legal responsibilities intersect daily practice. Aligned with the conference theme, "Rooted in Purpose, Focused on the Future," this session honors the foundational purpose of school social work while preparing practitioners to navigate the evolving ethical demands of schools. Participants will leave with a practical decision-making tool, case consultation prompts, and documentation language they can immediately use in supervision, multi-disciplinary team meetings, and direct practice.

Session Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will be able to: apply a culturally responsive decision-making model to analyze ethical dilemmas involving bias and professional boundaries in school settings; describe the four steps of the Transcultural Integrative Ethical Decision-Making Model and its application to social work practice; and examine how cultural identity and self-awareness impact ethical decision-making across various contexts.

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM Breakout I

Using the Dove Self-Esteem Project in Your Comprehensive School Social Worker Program

1 General CE credit

Presented by Dr. Britnee Weatherspoon

Session Description:This engaging and practical session prepares school social workers to implement the Dove Self-Esteem Project's Confident Me program as part of a comprehensive, whole-child approach to student wellbeing. Grounded in an evidence-based framework developed through global research on adolescent body confidence, Confident Me addresses the growing impact of appearance pressures, media influence, and comparison culture on students' mental health, participation, and sense of belonging. Participants will explore how body image concerns affect students across genders and developmental stages, including links to reduced classroom engagement, avoidance of activities, and increased social-emotional vulnerability. The session will provide an overview of both the single-lesson and six-lesson Confident Me formats, highlighting key topics such as appearance ideals, media literacy, confronting comparisons, reducing harmful body talk, student advocacy, and challenging appearance-based discrimination. Designed with school-based implementation in mind, this presentation demonstrates how the program aligns with national health education standards and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

DAY 1 : OCTOBER 26

Using the Dove Self-Esteem Project in Your Comprehensive School Social Worker Program Continued:

Session Objectives: Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:
Explain the impact of appearance pressures, media influences, and body image concerns on student social-emotional well-being; compare the single-lesson and six-lesson Confident Me program formats and their application within school settings; integrate body confidence education into Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 school mental health supports; apply culturally responsive facilitation strategies that promote inclusive and affirming learning environments; develop a plan for incorporating body confidence programming into existing school counseling or mental health frameworks.

1 General CE credit

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM Breakout II

Beyond the Referral List: Strategic Resource Mapping to Strengthen School Social Work Practice

Presented By: Dr. Alexandra Javna, LCSW

Session Description: School social workers provide a wide range of services, yet many schools lack a clear understanding of available interventions, resulting in duplicated efforts, service gaps, and underutilized expertise. This interactive session introduces resource mapping as a practical strategy for organizing supports, aligning interventions with identified student needs, and strengthening multidisciplinary collaboration. Participants will explore how role-specific and schoolwide resource maps can improve decision-making within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), clarify professional roles, and promote access to behavioral health services. Attendees will leave with practical tools and strategies to begin developing a resource map tailored to their own school or division.

Session Objectives: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:
Differentiate between a role-specific resource map and a comprehensive schoolwide resource map in school social work practice; develop a data-informed schoolwide resource map aligning behavioral health interventions with identified student needs; utilize resource mapping tools to increase the coordination, visibility, and impact of social work services within a school or division.

DAY 1 : OCTOBER 26

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM Breakout II — 1 General CE credit

Self-Care, I Don't Have Time For That!

Presented by: Dr. Brittny Gainey, LCSW

Session Description: This interactive presentation examines self-care as a foundational mindset rather than a checklist of activities, inviting participants to reconsider how their identity, beliefs, and thought patterns influence their overall well-being. Attendees will explore common barriers to self-care—particularly within demanding professional roles—and engage in practical strategies for integrating self-care into daily routines when time and resources are limited. Through guided reflection, discussion, and the use of a self-care assessment, participants will begin developing a personalized self-care plan for the 2026–2027 school year. Grounded in the ethical responsibilities outlined in the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, this session emphasizes the importance of professional self-care as a means of maintaining competence and supporting ethical practice. Participants will be encouraged to view self-care not as optional, but as essential to sustaining their capacity to effectively serve others. The session will incorporate a PowerPoint presentation featuring videos and graphics to enhance engagement, along with opportunities for participant interaction through discussion and reflective sharing.

Session Objectives: Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to: Examine how personal beliefs, professional identity, and thought patterns influence self-care practices and overall well-being; identify barriers that interfere with effective self-care in demanding professional roles; apply practical strategies for incorporating self-care into daily personal and professional routines; develop an individualized self-care plan that supports ethical and sustainable professional practice; explain the relationship between professional self-care and the ethical responsibilities outlined in the NASW Code of Ethics

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM Breakout II — 1 General CE credit

The Foundation of Equity Work in School Social Work Practice

Presented by Dr. M. Annette Clayton, ACSW

Session Description: There is a growing consensus that persistent educational disparities can only be addressed by first understanding various factors associated with different educational outcomes among groups of students (Hanover Research, 2022). Many also argue that knowledge is not enough, more skills and deliberate actions are needed to effectively redress entrenched inequities and challenge embedded policies and unexamined practices that contribute to those educational disparities (Barton & Tan, 2020; Gorski & Swalwell, 2023). Hence, this workshop will provide information to and solicit feedback from participants to help them hone their equity skill set and evaluate existing education equity toolkits.

Session Objectives: Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:
Describe how the National School Social Work Practice Model 2.0 and the NASW Code of Ethics inform equity-focused school social work practice; analyze trend data related to persistent and emerging educational disparities among diverse student populations; evaluate the role of social work standards and ethical principles in addressing educational inequities; assess school or district practices that may contribute to inequitable outcomes for students; develop deliberate actions that advance educational equity and align with school- and district-level strategic goals.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

DAY 2 : OCTOBER 27

Meet the Keynote Speakers:



Christina Devers is a National Certified School Social Worker at a large middle school in Prince William County, Virginia. She has practiced in the field of social work since 2001 and has been with Prince William County Schools since 2011. Christina transitioned to school social work after spending 10 years working with children in foster care. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has also worked as a private practitioner providing therapy to children and adolescents. Christina was named the VASSW School Social Worker of the Year in 2026. She is certified as a Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor as well as an ACE Interface Instructor and Healing Centered Engagement Specialist. She was elected to the SSWAA Board of Directors as the Southern Representative in 2026.



Susan Daly has been a School Social Worker in Fairfax County Public Schools since 2021. Prior to that, she was the only School Social Worker in Fluvanna County for 25 years. Susan served two terms as the president of VASSW and is currently the state Parliamentarian and Co-Chair of the Northern Region. Susan achieved National Certification in August of 2025 and clinical licensure in May of 2026.



Sara Duckery is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and Nationally Certified School Social Worker (NCSSW) who has been serving Fairfax County Public Schools since 2022. With a career in school social work spanning over a decade and a half, including 13 years with DC Public Schools, Sara has dedicated 99% of her professional journey to her true passion: middle school students. She specializes in supporting adolescent mental health and helping students and families navigate the unique challenges of the middle school years. She has presented at county and national level and is a peer reviewer for the National Certification process through SSWAA.



Joanne Hartle is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and Nationally Certified School Social Worker (NCSSW) who has been serving Fairfax County Public Schools since 2019. She is a proud military spouse and sports mom. She currently serves students in the comprehensive services site in an elementary school. She has presented at county and national level and is a peer reviewer for the National Certification process through SSWAA.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

DAY 2 : OCTOBER 27

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM Keynote

Navigating the National Certified School Social Worker (NCSSW) Process

Presented by: Christina M. Devers, LCSW, NCSSW; Sara Duckery, NCSSW; Susan Daly, LCSW, NCSSW; Joanne Hartle, NCSSW

1.5 General CE credit

Session Description: Virginia leads the nation in Nationally Certified School Social Workers (NCSSWs). This session prepares you to confidently navigate and map out the NCSSW certification pathway. Attendees will master application logistics and procedural requirements to build a comprehensive process outline. By breaking down these technical steps, the session equips you to serve as a peer mentor—enabling you to clearly communicate the certification journey to colleagues or supervisors and foster professional growth within your district. Are you looking to elevate your practice, stand out in your district, and gain national recognition for your expertise? Achieving national certification is a powerful professional milestone, but navigating the application process can feel overwhelming. This workshop is designed to demystify the journey and provide a clear, manageable roadmap to success. Led by National Certified School Social Workers, this session offers firsthand insights, practical tips, and strategies to stay motivated from start to finish.

Session Objectives: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:
Articulate the application requirements and national certification process for school social workers to colleagues or leadership; apply strategies to link daily school social work practice directly to national practice standards; analyze the professional benefits and challenges of the certification process to construct a personalized action plan.

DAY 2 : OCTOBER 27

1 General CE credit

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Breakout III

Use of Movement and Rhythm Based Social Emotional Learning Models in Elementary Populations

Presented By: Kristin Kantner, LCSW

Session Description: Use of evidence based and trauma informed movement and rhythm based models of social emotional learning have been found to impact students', staff, and parents' engagement, emotional regulation skills, classroom success, and attendance. The presentation will discuss and demonstrate the use of breathing techniques, yoga movement, and drumming circles as tools to enhance student outcomes. Techniques demonstrated and discussed will be modifications of the Breathe for Change, mindfulness, SEL, and yoga teacher training built by educators for educators and Beat the Odds, an evidence based, trauma informed program harnessing the power of drum circles to build focus and listening, team building, leadership, emotional expression.

Session Objectives: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:
Identify the core components and clinical rationale of "Beat the Odds," a drum-based intervention; demonstrate rhythm and movement-based techniques to foster student focus, emotional expression, and group cohesion; ntegrate movement-based SEL interventions into individual, group, and school-wide social work practices.

1 Clinical CE credit

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Breakout III

Depression Education In Suicide Prevention

Presented by Dr. Britnee Weatherspoon

Session Description: Research shows that school connectedness is a key protective factor for youth mental health. This session reviews current data and strengthens Tier 1 mental health education strategies to support schoolwide well-being. Participants will learn how to build a comprehensive universal program that creates shared language, encourages meaningful conversations, and promotes a positive culture for students in grades 4–12. Attendees will also explore the free, flexible mental health, depression, and suicide awareness resources available through Erika's Lighthouse and leave with practical tools for implementation. Research shows that feeling connected to the school community plays a significant role in supporting student mental health. This session will review the data behind youth mental health and will enhance your building's tier 1 intervention strategies around mental health education.

Session Objectives: Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:
Summarize current data regarding youth mental health, school connectedness, depression, and suicide prevention; design Tier 1 mental health education strategies that promote schoolwide well-being and prevention efforts; implement approaches that create a shared mental health vocabulary and encourage meaningful conversations within school communities; utilize Erika's Lighthouse resources to enhance mental health, depression, and suicide awareness programming for students in grades 4–12.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

DAY 2 : OCTOBER 27

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Breakout III

Applying a Trauma-Informed Framework to the Special Education Process: Evaluations & Practice Implications

Presented By: Anne Marshall, MSW

1 General CE credit

Session Description: Centered around a book study to promote trauma-infromed practices in special education, this outlines how school evaluators can integrate trauma-informed care into the special education process. It details the neurological, academic, and behavioral impacts of trauma on learning, highlighting how symptoms can overlap with traditional IDEA disability categories. The session provides practical strategies to reduce stress during assessments, with an emphasis on creating welcoming testing environments, improving family and student engagement, writing jargon-free evaluation reports, and developing trauma-sensitive Functional Behavior Assessments. Ultimately, it aims to foster supportive, equitable, and comprehensive student outcomes.

Session Objectives: At the end of this session participants will be able to:
Describe the effects of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on student learning, behavior, and development. Differentiate trauma-related responses from disability-related characteristics when participating in special education evaluation and planning processes. Apply trauma-informed strategies to increase student and family engagement during the assessment and evaluation process. Develop strengths-based, trauma-informed evaluation reports and Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) that support equitable educational decision-making.Implement practices that promote psychological safety, reduce stress, and improve outcomes for students impacted by trauma.

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM Breakout IV

Using AI Without Losing the Social Work Lens: SMART Prompting, Ethics and Boundaries for School Social Workers

Presented By: Sharita Crawford, LCSW

1 Ethics CE credit

Session Description: Participants will be introduced to SMART Prompting, a familiar school-based goal framework adapted to help school social workers create clearer, safer, and more useful AI prompts. The framework encourages participants to consider whether a prompt is specific, measurable, appropriate, relevant, and grounded in tone and time, while also pausing to ask whether the use of AI is ethical and aligned with social work values. Through discussion, examples, and school-based scenarios, participants will consider where AI may be helpful, where caution is needed, and where human judgment must remain central. This session is not about replacing the skill, presence, advocacy, or relationship-based work of school social workers. It is about helping practitioners think critically about a changing tool and make thoughtful decisions about if, when, and how to use it.

Session Objectives: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:
Apply an ethical decision-making framework when incorporating artificial intelligence tools into school social work practice; identify key ethical, privacy, and risk-management boundaries surrounding AI usage in school environments; formulate clear communication strategies to discuss ethical AI practices and guidelines with colleagues, school leadership, and multidisciplinary teams.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

DAY 2 : OCTOBER 27

1 General CE credit

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM Breakout IV

Adapting to the Classroom: Circles Complete, Understanding Social Boundaries in the Functional Life Skills Classroom

Presented By: Natalie Edwards, LCSW & Catherine Hall, LCSW

Session Description: Circles Complete is a widely known social skills curriculum using a color-coded method to teach relationships, social distancing and boundaries for children six and older. Catherine Hall and Natalie Edwards, while keeping the core of the curriculum, make adjustments to themes of each color-coded circle to meet the developmental needs of the Functional Life Skills (FLS) classroom. They introduce concepts of problem solving and social trust within different levels of connection, geared toward IEP goal achievement. They will provide a breakdown of the tailored, reflect how it targets key behaviors in a FLS classroom and how it increased student empowerment.

Session Objectives: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:
Identify evidence-based curriculum adjustments designed to support students with multiple disabilities in the classroom; align school social work clinical themes with the Self, Health, and Relationship Education (SHaRE) model; evaluate how specific curriculum adaptations impact student classroom engagement.

1 General CE credit

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM Breakout IV

Paws for Healing: Utilizing Therapy Dogs to Support Students Impacted By Trauma

Presented By: Dr. Melanie Brown, LCSW

Session Description: Students affected by trauma often experience challenges with emotional regulation, engagement, and relationship-building in school settings. Therapy dogs offer a unique, trauma-informed intervention that can promote feelings of safety, connection, and emotional well-being. This presentation will examine the role of therapy dogs in supporting students impacted by adverse experiences and explore the research behind animal-assisted interventions in schools. Participants will learn practical strategies for incorporating therapy dogs into individual counseling, small groups, crisis response, and school-wide wellness initiatives. Real-world examples, implementation considerations, and lessons learned will provide attendees with tools to enhance trauma-responsive school social work practice.

Session Objectives: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:
Identify clinical applications for therapy dogs across individual sessions, small group work, crisis intervention, attendance support, and school-wide wellness initiatives; evaluate logistical, and administrative considerations necessary for operating a school-based therapy dog program; review implementation tips to integrate or expand therapy dog services within a school setting.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

MEET THE PRESENTERS

Dr. Alexandra Javna
Dr. Alexandra Javna is the School Social Work Specialist in the Office of Behavioral Health and Student Safety at the Virginia Department of Education. Prior to her current role, Alex worked as a school social worker and as a middle school teacher. She is also an adjunct instructor for the Master of Social Work program at Virginia Commonwealth University, teaching courses on school social work and human behavior. Alex is passionate about improving student attendance, community schools, and school social work.

Anne Marshall
Anne Marshall is a dedicated school social worker and aspiring educational leader with 20 years of K-12 experience, specializing in special education support, equity-centered interventions, and collaborative leadership. Throughout her career, she has focused on bridging the gap between school and home by integrating trauma-informed practices directly into the special education process. She strives to humanize the student evaluation process, transforming it into an accessible, relatable, and collaborative experience for both parents and educators.

Dr. Britnee Weatherspoon
Dr. Britnee Weatherspoon is a nationally recognized public health leader, school wellness strategist, and educator with more than a decade of experience advancing student wellbeing, mental health, and health equity across K–12, higher education, healthcare, and community systems. She currently serves as Curriculum Director at Erika's Lighthouse, where she leads the development of evidence-informed, trauma-informed mental health curricula for schools nationwide.

Dr. Brit Egan
Brit Egan, DSW, LCSW, is a Staff Clinician and Sexual Assault Specialist at Georgetown University, restorative justice practitioner, and adjunct professor at George Mason University. She founded Restorative Georgetown, a campus-wide initiative embedding restorative justice across the Georgetown community through circle resolutions, circle keeper training, and classroom integration. Brit's clinical work centers survivors of sexual harm and people doing the deeper work of identity, self-worth, and coming back to themselves.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

MEET THE PRESENTERS

Dr. Brittny Gainey
Dr. Brittny Gainey is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over fifteen years of experience. She currently serves and supports students in Hampton City Schools as a school social worker. Her areas of expertise include mental health support, self-care, restorative practices, crisis intervention, student and family advocacy particularly in the realm of special education services.

Kristin Kantner
Kristin Kantner, LCSW, has been a school social worker in Prince William County elementary schools since 2021. In addition to working in schools, over the last 20 years, Kristin has worked in behavioral health prevention, child welfare, mental health, and medical social work within active duty, Veteran, and civilian populations. She has completed mental health and SEL trainings including a 200- hour mindfulness, SEL, and yoga teacher training, an intensive 30-hour Yin yoga certification, Beat the Odds, and Somatic and Attachment Focused EMDR (SAFE). She has practiced these techniques within schools and broader community settings, generating positive feedback from students, teachers, and parents.

Dr. M. Annette Clayton
Dr. Clayton recently retired from full time academic work as an Associate Professor of Social Work at Virginia Wesleyan University (VWU). Prior to VWU, she was an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the United Arab Emirates University for two years. She is currently an adjunct faculty member in the School of Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University. Before entering academia full time, Dr. Clayton worked as a School Social Worker for many years and was a Lead School Social Worker five years in an urban school district. She earned her MSSW degree from The University of Texas at Austin and completed her PhD studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Clayton's scholarship thus far has primarily focused on school social work practice, the overarching issue of practice efficacy, ethical practice, and the influence of risk and protective factors on adolescents' educational outcomes.

Aminah Mellion, LCSW
Aminah Mellion (she/her) obtained her Masters in Social Work from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and a Bachelors in Social Work from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. For more than 20 years, she has dedicated her career to serving children and families from diverse communities in various clinical settings. She currently works as a School Social Work Supervisor for Fairfax County Public Schools. Her range of experience including working in private, public, and charter schools in urban, rural, and suburban settings. She led a federally funded treatment program that was recognized as a national model for a holistic approach to effectively treat substance use and reduce recidivism during the height of the Opioid epidemic. She is most passionate about advancing culturally responsive practices and leading organizational change to promote inclusivity. She is the founder of Mahogany Counseling and Consulting services, where she specializes in multicultural counseling and clinical supervision. She is a board approved clinical supervisor in Virginia and also holds a clinical license to practice in Maryland.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

MEET THE PRESENTERS

Dr. Melanie Brown
Dr. Melanie Brown is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Virginia and a school social worker for Prince William County Public Schools. Prior to becoming a school social worker in 2017, she was a Therapist II with Prince William County Community Services (PWCCS) in the New Horizons program. The New Horizons school and clinic-based program provides substance abuse prevention and mental health services in high schools within Prince William County and outpatient therapy in the PWCCS offices in Manassas and Woodbridge. She has prior experience working with children and adolescents in the mental health field as a Regional Coordinator for Therapeutic Day Treatment and as an intensive in-home therapist in Virginia and North Carolina. She recently earned her Doctorate of Social Work degree from Barry University in August 2025. While in graduate school, Melanie interned as a school based Mental Health Therapist, worked as an Alcohol and Other Drug Counselor in a shelter for homeless and runaway youth, and interned as a Behavioral Health Consultant for the first year of the pilot program, B-HIPP (Maryland Behavioral Health in Pediatric Primary Care Program).

Natalie Edwards
Natalie has been a practicing clinician for ten years. She has extensive experience with expressive and play therapy techniques. She values her experience working in many social work fields including a psychiatric hospital setting, emergency crisis management, play therapy, foster care and victim's advocacy. She settled in School Social Worker where she covets her time shared between with families and in sessions with students. She is the Lead School Social Worker in Arlington County, where she leads the SSW team with Clinical Supervision, professional development and field practicum collaborations. She graduated from George Mason in 2010 with a MSW.

Sharita Crawford, LCSW
Sharita V. Crawford, LCSW, is a School Social Work Supervisor with Fairfax County Public Schools. Prior to moving into supervision, she served as a school social worker for 15 years, supporting students, families, and school communities through direct service, crisis response, family engagement, consultation, and multidisciplinary collaboration.

In her current role, Sharita supports school social workers in navigating the complex realities of school-based practice, including ethical decision-making, student mental health, culturally responsive family partnership, documentation, consultation, and systems-level advocacy. Her work is grounded in a commitment to centering student and family voice while helping school social workers respond thoughtfully to the competing responsibilities that often arise in educational settings.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

REGISTRATION & INFORMATION

EARLY BIRD RATES: August 1-Aug 31, 2026

Current Member (26-27) $125	**NonMember** (not currently a member. Includes membership for 26-27) $225
Current Member + (already a member for 25-26 but would also like to include membership for 26-27 cycle) $175	
Student/Retiree Rate $50	**Presenter** (does not include membership) $100

REGULAR REGISTRATION: September 1-October 2, 2026

Current Member (26-27) (paid the $50 membership fee for 26-27 cycle) $150	**NonMember** (not currently a member. Includes membership for 26-27) $250
Student/Retiree Rate $50	**Presenter** (does not include membership) $100

Registration includes access to all 15 sessions, breakfast & lunch, and 8.25 CE credits.

Registration: Opens August 1, 2026 closes October 2, 2026

How to Register: Visit vassw.org to complete online registration.

Space is limited. Cancellations must be received **no later than 3 weeks prior to the event** date to be eligible for a refund.

Attendees are required to sign-in and sign-out of the CE course via paper attendance sheet. Post-session evaluations should be completed immediately following a session via a paper form. The conference evaluation should be completed by the final day of the conference via paper form. The attendee must complete the evaluation questions and submit their name via the attestation in order to receive credit.

Attendees are responsible for understanding the CE course requirements for each state with which they hold a license, and should contact their licensure board(s) with any questions regarding allowances for ASWB approved continuing education.

Bibliographies are available upon request submitted to info@vassw.org

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

IMPORTANT DETAILS

Course Completion & CE Information

To earn CE credit, attendees must fully attend each session chosen, complete a session evaluation for each session attended, and complete an overall conference evaluation. Certificates of completion will then be emailed within 10 business days to attendees who meet these requirements. The cost to attend this conference includes a CE certificate.

Where identified, sessions in this conference are approved by Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program as part of the individually approved conference, *Rooted in Purpose: Focused on the Future: 40 Years of Supporting Students, Families and Schools*, offered by the Virginia Association of School Social Workers. Regulatory boards are the final authority on conference sessions accepted for continuing education credit. ACE conference approval period: 10/15/2026-10/15/2027. Social workers participating in this conference will receive up to 8.25 continuing education credits.

Course Interaction

Cancellations & Refunds

Written cancellation requests received on or before October 5, 2026 will receive a full refund minus a $15 administrative fee. No refunds will be issued after October 5, 2026.

Accessibility

ADA Accommodations: VASSW is committed to accessibility. To request special accommodations, please contact Jessica Hawkins at Hawkins.jl@augusta.k12.va.us. at least 14 days prior to the event. We will make every effort to ensure your needs are met.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

GRIEVANCES

The Virginia Association of School Social Workers will comply with all legal and ethical responsibilities to be non-discriminatory in promotional activities, program content and in the treatment of program participants. This procedural description serves as
a guideline for handling such grievances.

When a participant, either orally or in written format, files a grievance and expects action on the complaint, the following actions will be taken.

- The Social Work Consultant (Christina Devers) who supported development of the conference will be involved in all grievance resolutions for social workers.
- If the grievance concerns the Course Instructor, the content presented by the Course Instructor, or the style of presentation, the individual filing the grievance will be asked to put their comments in written format via the post-session evaluation.
- If the grievance concerns the level of presentation or the facilities in which the workshop is offered, the Course Instructor or Session Moderator will:
    - Attempt to resolve concerns/requests in the moment and will follow-up at the conclusion of the session to understand if the concern was appropriately and fully addressed.
    - If the concern was filed after the conclusion of the session, review and follow-up within 72 hours.
- For questions, concerns, or formal grievances regarding this conference, please contact Jessica Hawkins at Hawkins.jl@augusta.k12.va.us.

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

SERVICE PROJECT







Virginia Association of School Social Workers

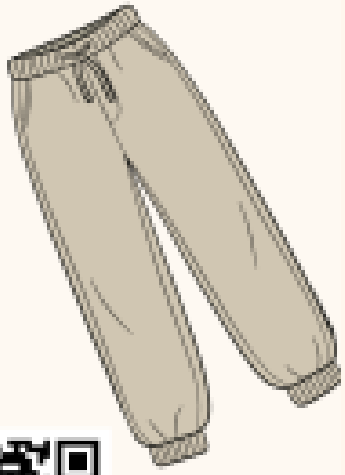
Service Project





October 26 & 27, 2026

Please bring new or gently used clothing items (sizes Newborn to 16 Youth) to the State Conference. New undergarments and socks are also needed. All items will be donated to Boxes of Basics





BOXES OF BASICS

Boxes of Basics is an IRS 501(c)3 nonprofit charitable organization. Federal Tax ID #81-1661092
https://boxesofbasics.org/

Items can be purchased from the Amazon Wishlist and shipped directly to Boxes of Basics

Virginia Association of School Social Workers

40 ACTS OF SERVICE



Virginia Association of School Social Workers

SPONSORS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Youth For Tomorrow
Joe Gibbs Founder

SNACK BREAK SPONSOR

Compass

MONDAY LUNCH SPONSOR

THANK YOU TO THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGION FOR HOSTING OUR BI-ANNUAL VASSW STATE CONFERENCE!