



MINNESOTA

**Brain Injury  
Alliance**

APRIL 24, 2025 • HERITAGE CENTER

**BRAIN INJURY**

**20 40TH ANNUAL 25**

**CONFERENCE**

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# Keynote Speaker

## Keynote Address

### Substance Use and Brain Injury: You Know More Than You Think

Carolyn Lemsky, PhD, C.Psych, ABPP-Cn, Clinical Director, Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS) of Toronto

As many as half of all individuals living with the effects of brain injury could benefit from education or intervention related to substance use. Dr. Carolyn Lemsky will provide an overview of the intersection between substance use and brain injury, highlighting essential skills for rehabilitation professionals. Attendees will learn practical approaches for engaging clients in discussions about substance use, implementing brief interventions, and supporting addiction intervention efforts. Dr. Lemsky will demonstrate how clinicians already possess applicable skills for the prevention and treatment of substance use following brain injury. The session will conclude with a review of key resources for continued learning.

Dr. Carolyn Lemsky is a board-certified neuropsychologist with over 25 years of experience in rehabilitation across the U.S. and Canada. She serves as the Clinical Director at Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS) of Toronto, a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care-funded agency dedicated to supporting the community reintegration of individuals living with acquired brain injury (ABI). Additionally, she is an adjunct professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Lemsky leads the Substance Use and Brain Injury (SUBI) Bridging Project, a research and knowledge transfer initiative funded by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation. In collaboration with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), she has developed workshops and webinars for addiction and ABI providers across Canada. Key resources from the SUBI project include the Brain Injury Toolkit and the SUBI Client Workbook, Second Edition.

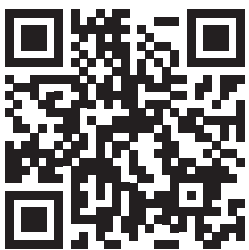
Specializing in neuropsychological assessment and intervention, Dr. Lemsky focuses on individuals with moderate to severe brain injury who also experience mental health challenges or problematic substance use. She has played a pivotal role in advancing accessible addiction care through consulting with brain injury and addiction programs, as well as research teams in the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

Dr. Lemsky is a frequent presenter at national and international conferences and has authored book chapters and peer-reviewed articles in neuropsychology and brain injury literature. Her expertise is widely sought after for training sessions and conference presentations, particularly on the SUBI Project's integration of brain injury and addiction care.



### Tracks

This year we are adding something new to our conference layout to help you find the sessions that will be most beneficial for you. We are adding 'Tracks' that are listed to the left of the presenter and give you an idea of what audiences might best benefit from the session. You are still able to choose whatever session you like, there is no requirement to follow a certain track. In fact many of our sessions have multiple tracks associated with them.



Register Today

Mental Health

Rehab

Youth

Social Services

Public Health

Research

For more information or to register, please visit [www.braininjurymn.org/conference](http://www.braininjurymn.org/conference)

# Schedule for the Day

8 – 9 a.m. ....	Registration and Exhibits Open Exhibits are open 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
8:45 – 9 a.m. ....	Opening Remarks
9 – 10:30 a.m. ....	Keynote Address
10:30 – 11 a.m. ....	Break – Exhibits Open
11 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. ...	Session 1
12 – 1:00 p.m. ....	Lunch
1 – 2:00 p.m. ....	Session 2
2 – 2:30 p.m. ....	Break – Exhibits Open
2:30 – 3:30 p.m. ....	Session 3

*Enjoy Your Day!*

## Thank You to Our Gold Sponsors



## Partnerships for Better Care

Mental Health

Research

Dr. Carolyn Lemsky, PhD, C.Psych, ABPP-CN, Clinical Director, Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS) of Toronto

For clients experiencing significant harm due to substance use, collaboration with addiction service providers is crucial. Brain injury professionals play a vital role in fostering productive partnerships with these providers. This session will explore strategies for strengthening cross-sector collaboration and provide an overview of freely available educational materials designed to improve understanding of the intersection between brain injury and substance use. Attendees will gain insights into best practices for adapted care and practical steps they can take to build meaningful partnerships across sectors.

## Understanding the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Early Life Stress on Outcome After TBI

Youth

Research

Dmitry Esterov, DO, MS, Physician, Assistant Professor, PM&R, Mayo Clinic; Hillary Hook, MSW, LICSW, Social Worker, Mayo Clinic

This session will present research on the connection between adverse childhood experiences, early life stress, and recovery following traumatic brain injury. The discussion will cover the biological mechanisms that link early adversity to prolonged recovery and chronic symptoms. Attendees will gain insight into screening methods and intervention strategies to improve outcomes for individuals affected by TBI.

## Public Health Approach to Falls Prevention

Public Health

Rehab

Kaytlin Hanson, CCC-SLP, Trauma Prevention Coordinator, Hennepin Healthcare

Falls are an increasing public health crisis among adults aged 65 and older due to demographic shifts in aging populations. This session will outline key patient risk factors, review current fall prevention programs, and discuss actionable steps for reducing fall-related injuries at individual care levels.

## Autonomic Dysfunction in the Setting of TBI - Rehab Focused

Rehab

Megan Meyer, DPT, WCC, Physical Therapist, Hennepin Healthcare; Miranda Langford, DPT, Physical Therapist, Hennepin Healthcare

Autonomic dysfunction, a disorder of the nervous system that affects involuntary bodily functions, is frequently seen in individuals recovering from TBI. This session will examine its symptoms, impact on rehabilitation, and studies linking Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) with a history of TBI.

## Low-Level Blasts as a Mechanism for Brain Injury

Research

Rehab

James Plunkett, MD, Medical Director, Minneapolis VA Outpatient TBI/Polytrauma; Brionn Tonkin, MD, Chief, PM&R-Neurorehabilitation, Minneapolis VA Medical Center; Matthew Puderbaugh, DO, Staff Psychiatrist, Hennepin Healthcare

While high-level blast injuries from explosive devices (eg. IEDs, mortars) are widely recognized as a cause of traumatic brain injury, emerging research suggests that low-level blast/overpressure exposure from heavy artillery and breaching explosives may also contribute to TBI-like cognitive and emotional impairments. This session will explore the latest findings in blast-related TBI research.

## Community Reentry After TBI: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Preparing Patients and Families for Discharge from Acute Rehab Setting Following TBI

Social Services

Rehab

Annie Dahlquist, MSW, LICSW; Laura Barrett, Recreation Therapist; Kristina Keillor, Speech-Language Pathologist; Diane Schretzman Mortimer, MD, MSN, FAAPMR, Minneapolis VA Medical Center

Members from the Minneapolis VA Polytrauma Acute Rehab team will discuss different ways to work as an interdisciplinary team to assess, treat and educate patients and their families during inpatient rehab stay following a brain injury. Their team has identified interventions to help prepare patients and families to re-enter community settings following TBI.

## Suicide: Challenges After Brain Injury

Mental Health

Dr. Robert Karol, PhD, LP, ABPP-RP, CBIST-R, President, Karol Neuro + Rehab Consulting

Grieving after loss is to be expected. However, grief is often misunderstood after brain injury. Dr. Robert L. Karol examines the unique aspects of grief following brain injury, highlighting the factors that influence the grieving process and the importance of understanding these dynamics.

## Brain Injury in Early Childhood

Youth

Social Services

Katherine A. Elwell, MS, CCRP, Clinical Research Coordinator - Neuroscience, Children's Minnesota; Amy M. Linabery, PhD, MPH, MS, Senior Scientific Investigator, Neuroscience, Children's Minnesota; Heather Sesma, PhD, LP, Neuropsychologist, Director Concussion Program, Children's Minnesota

Traumatic brain injuries occur at higher rates in early childhood, but they often go unrecognized due to differences in symptom presentation compared to older children and adolescents. This session will explore the unique characteristics of TBI in children ages 0-5, typical recovery timelines, and common but overlooked symptoms. Attendees will gain an understanding of how to identify and support young children with TBI.

## Strategies to Improve Meaningful Delivery of Care and Services to Native American Nations Population

Public Health

Social Services

Rebekah J. Fineday, BSN, RN, PHN, Senior Native American Community Advocate, Sanford Health

Understanding the historical and cultural context of Native American Nations is essential for providing effective healthcare. This session will explore best practices in cultural competency and humility, share successful strategies implemented at Sanford Health of Northern Minnesota, and discuss challenges and barriers in implementing change and bridging healthcare gaps between enterprises and Indigenous communities.

## Neuro-Optometry: Eye and Vision Sequelae After Traumatic Brain Injury

Rehab

Dr. Michael Wallerich, Doctor of Optometry, Neuro-Optometrist, Swoop Eye Care

The majority of TBI patients are anticipated to experience eye and vision-related issues, affecting their rehabilitation and quality of life. This session will explore the role of neuro-optometry in brain injury recovery, common visual impairments, and therapeutic interventions.

## Brain Injury and its Complex Co-Occurring Conditions: Supporting Individuals and Management of Symptoms

Research

Rehab

Mental Health

Erwin Concepcion, PhD, Clinical psychology; Neuropsychology Post-Doctoral residency; Licensed Psychologist; Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Clinical Services Director, MN DHS/Direct Care and Treatment

This session will examine the common mechanisms underlying moderate to severe TBI and strategies for managing its effects on mental health, cognition, and behavior. Attendees will gain insights into practical approaches for supporting individuals with co-occurring conditions.

## Helping Paws: Furthering Independence and Quality of Life Through the Use of Assistance Dogs

Mental Health

Social Services

Rehab

Tony Craidon, Veteran and First Responder Coordinator, Helping Paws; Alyssa Golob, Executive Director, Helping Paws

Helping Paws is an ADI accredited nonprofit organization dedicated to raising and training assistance dogs to support individuals with physical disabilities, veterans and first responders with PTSD, and facility-based therapy programs. This session will explore the impact of service dogs on quality of life, the training process, and how these partnerships foster greater independence.

## Having But Not Having: Navigating Ambiguous Loss as a Survivor of Brain Injury

Mental Health

Social Services

Rehab

Courtney Sand, MS, LBA, BCBA, CBIST, Training and Education Coordinator, Brain Injury Alliance of Iowa

Ambiguous loss is a unique form of grief experienced by brain injury survivors who mourn the life they once envisioned for themselves. This session will provide an overview of ambiguous loss, its emotional impact, and coping strategies for survivors and caregivers. Attendees will learn how to foster resilience, adapt to new realities, and find meaning amid uncertainty, empowering survivors and caregivers to embrace hope and adapt to new possibilities.

## Understanding TBI in the Context of Motor Vehicle Crash, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Injuries in Minnesota

Youth

Research

Public Health

Ericka Welsh, Injury and Violence Epidemiology Unit Supervisor, MDH; Leslie Seymour, Senior Epidemiologist, MDH; Anna Gaichas, Research Scientist, MDH

This session will present data from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) on TBIs associated with motor vehicle crashes, bicycle accidents, and pedestrian injuries. Attendees will learn who is most affected, where and when these injuries are most likely to occur, and how MDH's updated Crash Outcomes Data Evaluation System (CODES) dashboard can provide insights into costs and health outcomes. Presenters will share opportunities for traffic safety prevention programming, including Toward Zero Deaths state and regional initiatives.

## Brain Injury and Domestic Violence

Public Health

Mental Health

Social Services

Alec Wendelboe, BS Neuroscience, Education & Community Outreach Coordinator, Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance

This session will explore the connection between acquired brain injury (ABIs) and domestic violence/intimate partner violence (DV/IPV). Attendees will learn how brain injuries occur in DV/IPV situations, the long-term effects on survivors, and available resources to support individuals affected by DV/IPV in their own work.

## Cardiovascular Health in Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury

Research

Public Health

Rehab

Sarah Mahasin, MD, Board Certified in Brain Injury Medicine

Emerging research suggests a link between TBI and increased risk for cardiovascular disease, regardless of injury severity. This session will discuss current findings, screening methods, prevention strategies, and best practices for managing cardiovascular health in brain injury survivors.

## A Review of Disorders of Consciousness, Unpacking (some) of the Mystery

Research

Rehab

Matthew Puderbaugh, DO, Staff Psychiatrist, Hennepin Healthcare; Briana Schifsky, MS, OTR/L, MLD/C, Occupational Therapist, Hennepin Healthcare

Disorders of Consciousness is a term used to describe patients who sustain a brain injury that disrupts the brain's arousal and awareness system. This can be manifested as comatose, unresponsive wakefulness syndrome, or minimally conscious state. This session will focus on the identification, treatment, and prognosis of DOC patients and address the element of mystery in DOC which can create challenging situations for clinicians, families, and caregivers.

## From Provider to Patient

Social Services

Mental Health

Rehab

Mandi Dickey, FNP-BC, MSN, RN, Nurse Practitioner

This session will feature Mandi Dickey's personal experience transitioning from brain injury professional to brain injury survivor. She will discuss the challenges and insights gained through her recovery and share how her journey has shaped her role as host of the Brain Wellness Podcast, both before and after her injury.

# Conference Overview

The conference is designed for physicians, psychologists, rehabilitation therapists, social workers, case managers, nurses, educators, special education directors/administrators, mental health and chemical health therapists, residential staff, policy makers, state agency personnel, as well as program administrators. All interested professionals who serve individuals living with brain injury are welcome to attend.

The purpose of this professional conference is to highlight new research, trends, practice strategies and collaborative models of care. Innovative approaches and new systems of care for individuals living with brain injury will be presented through discussion, lecture, case studies and exhibits.

## Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

Continuing Education Units will be emailed following the completion of the Conference. Verify approval with your affiliated Board. Generally accepted board approvals include, but are not limited to, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, nursing, and social work. This conference offers a total of 4.5 CEUs per day and could include up to 5.5 CEUs per day.

In an effort to offer additional CEU opportunities, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in short 15-minute vendor presentations offered during breakfast/registration, between breakout sessions, and during lunch. Each presentation attended will provide an additional 0.25 CEU, with the potential to earn additional CEUs by attending multiple sessions throughout the day (total number of available CEUs to be determined from number of vendors participating in this program.). Vendors will track attendance for each presentation to ensure CEU credits are awarded.

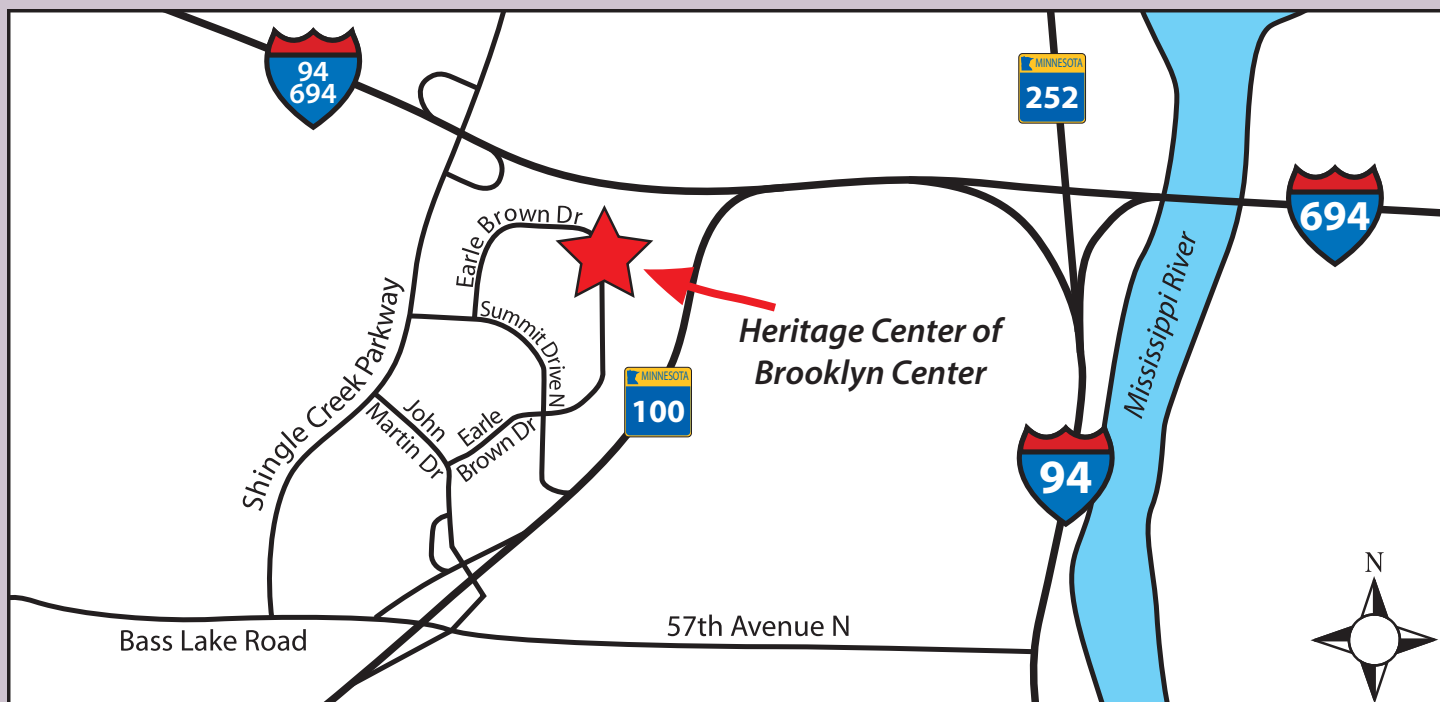
## Registration

Use the QR code here or go to [braininjurymn.org/conference](http://braininjurymn.org/conference).

The mission of the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance is to raise awareness and enhance the quality of life for all people affected by brain injury.



Register Today



**Each attendee is responsible for printing handouts for each presentation attended.** Before attending the conference, please view and print out session handouts by going to: [www.braininjurymn.org/handouts.html](http://www.braininjurymn.org/handouts.html).

### For Your Comfort

Please be responsible for your own comfort during the conference. Layering is recommended given the temperature ranges of large conference center settings.

### Additional Information

Video or audio taping during the conference requires pre-approval by the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance. If you have questions please call 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442.

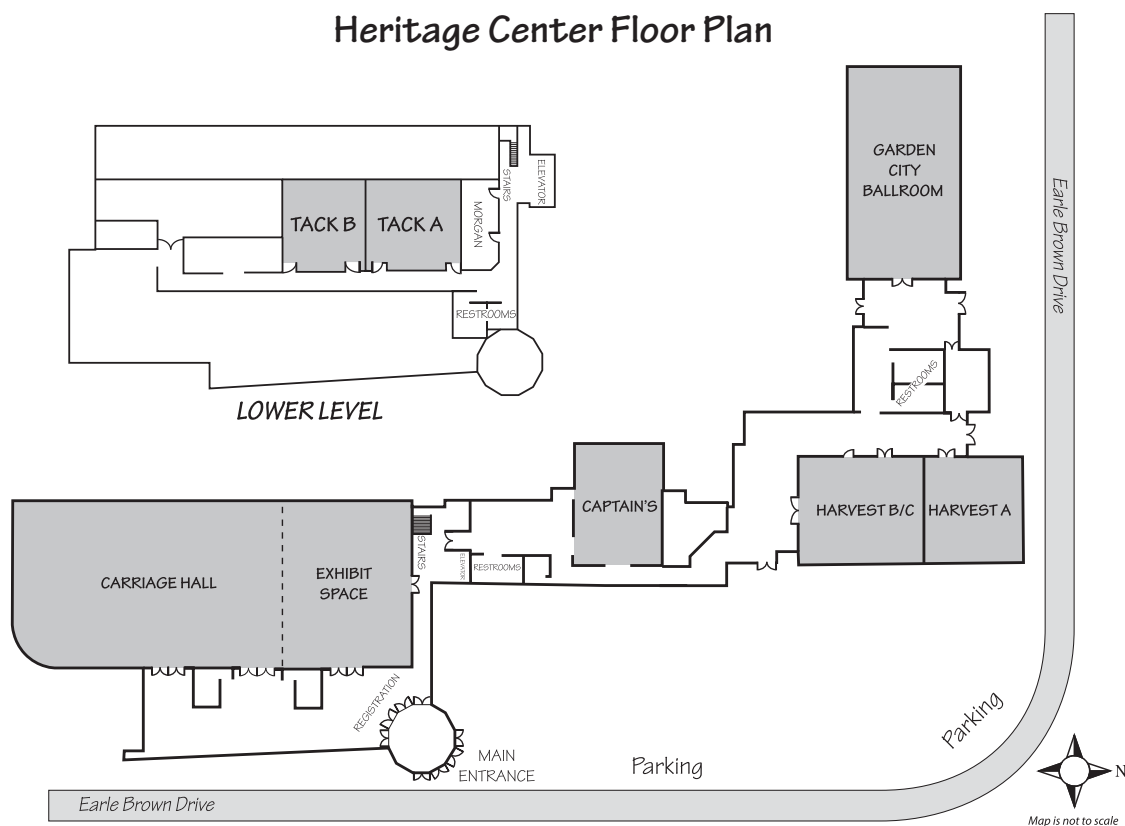
If you require a reasonable accommodation to access this conference please contact the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance **by April 5, 2025** and specify your needs.

Parking is available at the Heritage Center at no cost.

### Lodging

**Embassy Suites**  
**6300 Earle Brown Dr**  
**Brooklyn Center, MN 55430**  
**763-560-2700**

If you have any questions, please contact the Education department by calling 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442.





# Registration

Registration for the 40th Annual Conference for Professionals in Brain Injury, is online at  
**[www.braininjurymn.org/conference](http://www.braininjurymn.org/conference)**  
**Tuesday, April 22, 2025 at 12 p.m.**

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## Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be emailed to you following the completion of the Conference. See Conference Overview page for complete CEU description.

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## Pricing

The cost for attending the 2025 Annual Conference for Professionals in Brain Injury is \$150. All registration is available online at [braininjurymn.org/conference/](http://braininjurymn.org/conference/)

Payments may be made online with credit card, or you may choose to be invoiced.

***Cancellations received less than 15 days before the Conference are subject to a \$35 fee.***

If you require a reasonable accommodation to access this Conference, please inform us by April 5, 2025 and specify your needs.

## CONFERENCE SELECTION COMMITTEE

Dr. Thomas Bergquist, Kelly Bredeken, Kary Briner,  
Kayla Brinkman-Theimer, April Cerqua, Dr. Erwin Concepcion,  
Dr. Robert Karol, David King, Donna Lindsay,  
Katrina Meyer, Sara Schlegelmilch, and Alec Wendelboe

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For more information or to register, please visit [www.braininjurymn.org/conference](http://www.braininjurymn.org/conference)