

# Post-Acute Partners in Care Conference

2026

A Century Strong  
Rocking the future of Care

March 31 - April 1

Sioux Falls

A CENTURY STRONG  
**100** South Dakota  
Association of Healthcare Organizations



# Schedule At-a-Glance

## MARCH 31

**12:00 - 1:00 pm**

Keynote: Attracting Tomorrow's Talent with Today's Leaders, Steve Bench

**1:15 - 2:15 pm**

- From Surviving to Thriving: Strategies to Eliminate Toxic Workplaces
- Foundations of QAPI and Moving Beyond Compliance
- SNF Regulations and Surveys: Recent Developments and Trends
- Enhancing the Dining Experience in LTC
- To Be or Not To Be, That is the Specialty Hospice and Palliative Care Question

**2:30 - 3:30 pm**

- South Dakota Department of Health panel
- Systems Thinking, Root Cause Analysis, and Sustainable Improvement
- Intentional Speaking: Communicating with Purpose and Impact
- Arts in Health: Creative Aging Approaches for Care Teams
- Working in Healthcare: The Natural Impact of the Work on Ourselves, Teams & Institutions

**3:45- 4:45 pm**

- From Visitor to Key Partner: Elevating Medical Leadership in Long-Term Care
- Rockin' the Future of Antibiotic Stewardship: Project STAMP Kickoff
- Strategies for Handling Turnover in Senior Living and Long-Term Care
- The Role of Guardians in Protecting Rights and Promoting Well-Being
- Healthcare Provider Debriefings: A Long-Term Strategy for Sustainability

**4:45- 6:00 pm**

Vendor Social & Art Show

## APRIL 1

**8:00 - 9:00 am**

- Ensuring Compliance and Quality: Nursing Home Surveyor Process, Role, and Training
- Dementia Communication Skills to Prevent Challenging Behavioral Symptoms
- Caution Ahead: Hot Point Compliance Issues in Home Health
- Long Term Care Medicaid Eligibility & Assisted Living Tiers
- It's Never Too Late, Until It Is - Creating Advance Directives

**9:15 - 10:15 am**

- AI in Senior Living: Real Progress, Real Pitfalls, Real-Time Demos
- Creating a Culture of All-Team Coaching for Dementia Care Excellence
- Solutions to Succeed with Managed Care in South Dakota
- Bringing Palliative Care to LTC

**10:30 - 11:00 am**

Post-Acute Partners in Care Awards

**11:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Keynote: Choices Matter, David Francisco

## Venue

Sioux Falls Convention Center  
1201 N. West Ave  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

# Keynote Speakers



**Steve Bench**

**Opening Keynote:**  
Attracting Tomorrow's Talent  
with Today's Leaders

This keynote session focuses on talent attraction and workforce retention by building understanding of who we are, how we were raised, and how each generation views “work” as a part of their identity. Learn talent attraction and retention strategies to overcome generational differences and attract Millennial and Gen Z employees and keep them from leaving! Adulthood has changed, and depending on my life stage, I might prioritize my lifestyle over my career... So how do you manage and motivate someone who may not be as committed to their job as previous generations? This session will give you the answers, energize your group and get people talking!



**David Francisco**

**Closing Keynote:**  
Choices Matter

From tragedy to triumph, David’s incredible journey from paralysis to walking —and inspiring millions along the way—will leave you speechless. After a devastating crash at age 24, doctors said he’d never walk again. But David defied the odds. His story of resilience, hope, and healing touched the world on American Idol, and now he’s bringing it to SDAHO’s 2026 Post-Acute Care Conference. With powerful storytelling, live music, and video from his recovery, David delivers a message you won’t forget.

# A Century Strong - Rocking the future of care

## Registration

To register click the button to the right or visit [sdaho.org](http://sdaho.org). If you need assistance with registration, please contact the SDAHO office at 605-361-2281 or email [info@sdaho.org](mailto:info@sdaho.org). Registration closes March 23.



Registration includes education sessions, vendor social, lunches and snacks, and continuing education hours for nursing home administrators and social workers.

<b>Member</b>	\$200
<b>Member Facility Package</b>	5 for \$600
<b>Non-Member</b>	\$375

## Venue

Sioux Falls Convention Center  
1201 N. West Ave  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

## Cancellation/Refund policy

Policies regarding refunding of registration fees for the SDAHO Post-Acute Partners in Care Conference are 1) Full Refund if cancellation is received 2 weeks (March 17 or earlier) prior to SDAHO Post-Acute Partners in Care Conference; 2) NO REFUND if cancellation is received less than 2 weeks prior (March 18 or later) to the SDAHO Post-Acute Partners in Care Conference; 4) NO REFUND for "No-Shows." Exceptions to this policy may be made in unusual circumstances at the discretion of the SDAHO President.

## Continuing Education

### Licensed Nursing Home Administrator

SDAHO is the South Dakota Affiliate of LeadingAge, an approved provider of continuing education in nursing home administration by the South Dakota Board of Nursing Facility Administrators. There are up to 8.4 contact hours available to nursing home administrators at this conference.

### Social Worker

SDAHO is approved as a provider for continuing education by the South Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners, 135 East Illinois, Suite 214, Spearfish, SD 57783, Provider #1000. Social workers will receive up to 8.4 continuing education contact hours at this education.

### \*New\* Certified Dietary Manager (CDM) and Certified Food Protection Professional (CFPP)

SDAHO is approved as a CE provider, approval number #169729, for the CDM, CFPP by the Certifying Board of Dietary Managers. Certified dietary managers will receive up to 7.0 continuing education contact hours at this education.





# Schedule

CE's: Licensed Nursing Home Administrator (LNHA), Social Worker (SW)

Tuesday, March 31

**11:00am**

**Registration Opens**

**12:00 - 1:00pm**

**Lunch & Opening Keynote**

**Attracting Tomorrow's Talent with Today's Leaders** | Steve Bench | CE: LNHA, SW, CDM/CFPP

**1:15 - 2:15pm**

**Breakout Sessions:**

**From Surviving to Thriving: Strategies to Eliminate Toxic Workplaces** | Jill Weisensel | CE: LNHA, SW, CDM/CFPP

From Surviving to Thriving: Strategies to Eliminate Toxic Workplaces equips post-acute care professionals with practical strategies to address difficult workplace behaviors and build stronger team relationships—regardless of role or title. This session explores common contributors to toxic work environments, including unclear expectations during busy shifts, unaddressed conflict, and harmful behaviors such as gossip, exclusion, dismissive communication, and inconsistent accountability. Participants will gain realistic tools for speaking up respectfully, setting healthy boundaries, supporting coworkers during stressful moments, and protecting their own well-being amid heavy workloads and constant change, leaving with actionable skills they can immediately apply to improve teamwork, communication, and patient care.

**Foundations of QAPI and Moving Beyond Compliance** | Ralph Peterson | CE: LNHA, SW

Quality Assurance Performance Improvement (QAPI) is a regulatory requirement across many care settings, yet too often it becomes a routine meeting focused on reporting problems rather than improving systems. This session introduces the foundational principles of QAPI and explores how organizations can move beyond compliance to create meetings that drive meaningful improvement. Participants will learn how to structure QAPI discussions, identify key work processes, and focus on the systems that influence quality outcomes.

**SNF Regulations and Surveys: Recent Developments and Trends** | Sean Fahey | CE: LNHA, SW

Regulatory changes and survey trends impact all skilled nursing facilities (SNF) across the nation. This session will review and evaluate significant regulatory developments from the past year. The presenter will provide updates on the minimum staffing standards and other long-term care regulations. He will also identify current survey trends by reviewing the top survey citations issued regionally and nationally. Throughout the session, participants will be encouraged to discuss common regulatory challenges in skilled nursing and share best practices related to regulatory developments and survey trends.

**1:15 - 2:15pm continued**

**Enhancing the Dining Experience in Long-Term Care** | Scott Eisenbeisz | CE: LNHA, SW, CDM/CFPP

A positive dining experience is central to quality of life in long-term care. Beyond providing nutrition, mealtimes offer opportunities for dignity, social connection, and enjoyment. This session explores approaches to transforming the dining environment in long-term care communities. Participants will examine the physical, social, and operational factors that shape residents' mealtime experiences. This session will highlight best practices in meal service, staff-resident interaction, environmental design, and computer software that supports residents' dining experience.

**To Be or Not To Be, That is the Specialty Hospice and Palliative Care Certification Question** | Katie Huff- DNP; Aubrey Hensch, RN; Bethany Scarson, LPN; Michele Snyders, MSW; Carol Breitkreutz, PharmD | CE: LNHA, SW

This interdisciplinary panel will present the current landscape of specialty certified hospice and palliative care healthcare professionals in South Dakota and the need to grow this specialty to make care for those living with serious illness more accessible in the state. Each discipline will speak to the process of becoming specialty certified and what organizations can do to encourage their teams to become certified.

**2:30 - 3:30pm**

**Breakout Sessions:**

**South Dakota Department of Health panel** | Shelly Walstead; Maurine Ford; and Carrie Christopherson | CE: LNHA, SW, CDM/CFPP

This panel will be presented by Public Health Advisors from the South Dakota Department of Health's Office of Licensure and Certification. The advisors will provide an overview of frequently cited infection control concerns identified during surveys of long-term care facilities, assisted living centers, and hospice/home health agencies. Attendees will gain insights into common compliance challenges and have the opportunity to engage in a Q&A session with the advisors.

**Systems Thinking, Root Cause Analysis, and Sustainable Improvement** | Ralph Peterson | CE: LNHA, SW

Sustainable improvement in healthcare requires leaders to look beyond individual mistakes and focus on the systems that shape daily work. This session explores how systems thinking can strengthen QAPI efforts by helping organizations identify underlying process failures rather than assigning blame. Participants will examine practical tools for root cause analysis and learn how leadership decisions influence operational outcomes. Drawing on concepts from W. Edwards Deming and proven quality improvement frameworks, this session will demonstrate how organizations can redesign key work processes to prevent recurring problems and build a culture of continuous improvement that supports safer care and better outcomes.

# Schedule

CE's: Licensed Nursing Home Administrator (LNHA), Social Worker (SW)

Tuesday, March 31

**2:30 - 3:30pm continued**

**Intentional Speaking: Communicating with Purpose and Impact** | *Danielle Pierotti, PhD, RN* | CE: LNHA, SW

Everyone talks all day. It is how we share information and build relationships. Talking is the root of bad feelings, mistakes, and conflicts. Talking is perceived as easy. It is not. Anyone who has ever felt misunderstood, surprised by someone's anger, or confused leaving a conversation knows this. We start to talk as toddlers, but when do we learn to communicate? Caregivers and leaders need to communicate in complex, sensitive, and evolving situations. Communicating with families and team members can be challenging. Navigating intergenerational workforce perspectives, rising family expectations, managing difficult conversations, setting boundaries, and building a positive, trusting relationship is all based on communication skills. This session will explore common communication pitfalls, practical strategies to improve effectiveness, and hands-on techniques to transform conflict into trust.

**Creative Aging Approaches for Care Teams** | *Ariadne Albright* | CE: LNHA, SW

This session provides a clear introduction to the national and rapidly growing field of Arts in Health, with a focus on how creative practices can support older adults across aging services. Attendees will learn best practices aligned with Creative Aging principles, including meaningful engagement, skill-building, social connection, and quality-of-life enhancement in residential and community-based settings. The session also includes a preview of a three-part Creative Aging SDAHO webinar series launching summer 2026. This series is designed to help caregivers, activities staff, and healthcare professionals integrate sustainable arts-based strategies into daily care routines.

**Working in Healthcare: The Natural Impact of the Work on Ourselves, Teams & Institutions** | *Vickie Leff* | CE: LNHA, SW, CDM/CFPP

It is expected that healthcare providers working in post-acute care will face challenges related to the emotional and psychological impact of their work. Recognizing occupational hazards such as empathic strain, burnout, secondary trauma, and moral distress helps validate provider experiences and allows us to tailor strategies that support long-term sustainability in healthcare. The question is not how to eliminate this impact, but how individuals, teams, and organizations can mitigate its effects to sustain both caregivers and the workforce as a whole. While the work will always be demanding, there is a shared responsibility to provide ongoing understanding, validation, and support in all its forms to ensure those doing this vital work can continue to thrive.

**3:45 - 4:45pm**

**Breakout Sessions:**

**From Visitor to Key Partner: Elevating Medical Leadership in Long-Term Care** | *Dr. Victoria Walker* | CE: LNHA

This session highlights how medical directors can maximize their impact in nursing homes through effective leadership, collaboration, and clinical oversight. Participants will explore strategies for building strong interdisciplinary relationships, meeting CMS requirements for antipsychotic and antimicrobial prescribing, and supporting compliance through appropriate documentation and ongoing evaluation. The session also covers practical approaches to quality improvement, including monitoring key indicators such as medication use, transfers, and vaccination rates, and applying tools like diagnostic stewardship, 72-hour antibiotic time-outs, and staff education to promote safe, evidence-based care.

**Rockin' the Future of Antibiotic Stewardship: Project STAMP Kickoff** | *Cheri Fast* | CE: LNHA

This session introduces Project STAMP, a statewide initiative designed to help long term care facilities enhance antibiotic stewardship through education and quality improvement. Attendees will learn how simple antibiotic tracking, tailored facility-specific education, and flexible focus areas can support each facility's stewardship priorities while improving resident safety.

**Strategies for Handling Turnover in Senior Living and Long-Term Care** | *Bob Lane* | CE: LNHA, CDM/CFPP

The senior living and long-term care industry continues to face unprecedented staffing challenges in the post-COVID landscape, leaving many organizations struggling to maintain essential operations across clinical, revenue cycle, and financial departments. Join the Forvis Mazars team as they share actionable strategies and best practices for developing robust contingency plans and operational safeguards. Whether you're navigating current staffing gaps or preparing for future transitions, this discussion will offer tools and insights to strengthen your organization's long-term sustainability.

**The Role of Guardians in Protecting Rights and Promoting Well-Being** | *Amy Hansen* | CE: LNHA, SW

This presentation will provide an overview of guardianship, including when it may be necessary, how the process is established, and the responsibilities involved in serving as a guardian. Attendees will develop a clearer understanding of key guardianship functions and how guardians advocate for individuals who are unable to make independent decisions. This session will also offer general insight into how guardianship professionals collaborate with post-acute facilities and providers to support the dignity and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals.

# Schedule

CE's: Licensed Nursing Home Administrator (LNHA), Social Worker (SW)

## Tuesday, March 31

**3:45 -4:45pm continued**

**Healthcare Provider Debriefings: A Long-Term Strategy for Sustainability** | *Vickie Leff* | CE: LNHA, SW

Decades of research show that working in healthcare is inherently stressful, due to exposure to trauma, death, crises, and intense emotional situations. This distress can contribute to burnout and even drive professionals to leave the field. Providing deliberate and intentional social support is a proven strategy to mitigate these harmful effects. This workshop will present evidence-based support for the Debriefing strategy and provide practical guidance on implementing a Debriefing Program in your workplace to support staff well-being and resilience.

**4:45 -6:00pm**

**Exhibitor Social & Art Show**

Explore inspiring art projects and cast your vote on your favorites. Connect with industry problem solvers, enjoy delicious appetizers and refreshing beverages, and win exciting prizes. It's the perfect opportunity to network and have some fun!

## Wednesday, April 1

**8:00 - 9:00am**

**Breakout Sessions**

**Ensuring Compliance and Quality: Nursing Home Surveyor Process, Role, and Training** | *Rachel Luke, MS, RD, LN & Jennifer Maeschen, RN* | CE: LNHA, SW

This presentation provides an in-depth overview of the Long-Term Care Survey Process, highlighting its role in promoting regulatory compliance and quality of care in nursing homes. Attendees will gain insight into the responsibilities of surveyors as neutral third-party observers dedicated to objectively assessing facility performance. The session will also explore the comprehensive training required for new surveyors, which includes extensive field experience and completion of the federally mandated Surveyor Minimum Qualifications Test (SMQT). Emphasis will be placed on the standards that guide survey activities and the importance of consistency and integrity in the oversight process. This session is ideal for professionals seeking to understand the structure and significance of long-term care oversight.

**8:00 - 9:00am continued**

**Dementia Communication Skills to Prevent Challenging Behavioral Symptoms** | *Erin Bonitto* | CE: LNHA, SW, CDM/CFPP

We often say that "It's all about the approach" when talking about dementia and behavioral care, but what does that really mean in daily practice? In this session, we'll break down clear, observable, proven communication skills that can be used to prevent frustration, reduce agitation, and help avoid behavioral symptoms before they escalate. Participants will hear from Erin Bonitto, a nationally known dementia communication coach. Erin will highlight communication skills known to prevent and reduce the intensity of challenging behavioral symptoms in dementia care, with relevance for other cognitive and mental health differences as well. Participants can expect practical, real-world examples, and will learn how these approaches have been linked to measurable reductions in off-label antipsychotic use for persons with dementia in skilled nursing facilities – with lessons that can be applied in any setting where people living with dementia are served.

**Caution Ahead: Hot Point Compliance Issues in Home Health** | *Sean Fahey* | CE: LNHA

This session offers a current overview of the most pressing compliance challenges facing home health providers. The presenter will discuss recent enforcement trends and examine common operational risk areas, including medical director agreements and marketer payment arrangements. The session will highlight key issues arising in UPIC audits and address compliance pitfalls related to kickbacks involving discharge planners and case managers, offering attendees practical insights for navigating an increasingly complex regulatory landscape.

**Long Term Care Medicaid Eligibility & Assisted Living Tiers** | *Caitlin Clarey & Kristin McNeely* | CE: LNHA, SW

This session will provide an overview of the South Dakota Medicaid coverage groups and programs, general eligibility criteria, and facility cost shares. Information will also be presented on what goes into determining tiers for participants in an assisted living through the HOPE Waiver.

**It's Never Too Late, Until It Is - Creating Advance Directives** | *Michele Snyders; Dr. Amanda Sedlacek; Cameo Anders, JD, MA, CAP, CTFA* | CE: LNHA, SW

This panel presentation will feature a review of the four legally recognized advance directives in South Dakota. Case studies will be used to demonstrate when to complete, who can complete and why to complete to avoid ethical and legal dilemmas. The panelists will present a flow-chart to help attendees determine which advance directive to use when multiple documents exist.

# Schedule

CE's: Licensed Nursing Home Administrator (LNHA), Social Worker (SW)

Wednesday, April 1

**9:15 - 10:15am**

## Breakout Sessions

**AI in Senior Living: Real Progress, Real Pitfalls, Real-Time Demos** | *Steven VanderVelde* | CE: LNHA, SW, CDM/CFPP

AI isn't just coming to senior living, it's already here. In this powerful session, we'll cut through the hype to show where AI is delivering measurable results and where it's falling short. You'll hear real stories from communities using tools like ChatGPT to improve documentation, resident engagement, marketing, and operations, alongside cautionary tales where blind trust in AI led to unintended consequences. Then, we'll take things to the next level with a live demo where ChatGPT joins the stage as an interactive participant, solving real-world challenges, answering tough audience questions, and revealing what it really means to lead in an AI-enabled future.

**Creating a Culture of All-Team Coaching for Dementia Care Excellence** | *Erin Bonitto* | CE: LNHA, SW

Too often, ongoing dementia education and coaching sit with a few "go-to" people instead of becoming part of the everyday habits of the whole team. This session looks at a different approach: building an all-team coaching culture where leaders, supervisors, and frontline team members across dining, housekeeping, maintenance, recreation, administration, and clinical care all play a steady, important role in sustaining excellence in dementia care. Through short, real-life snapshots, Erin Bonitto — a nationally recognized dementia coach — will share how brief coaching huddles and skill exercises, built into the fabric of daily routines, can fit into busy days with stretched staffing — and how to draw on the strengths of a multicultural, multilingual team while you do it. This fast-paced hour is designed for administrators, department leaders, dining services, nurses, social services, life enrichment, and interested frontline team members, and will offer practical ideas and sample coaching prompts to help you grow a deep bench of dementia-focused coaches back home.

**Solutions to Succeed with Managed Care in South Dakota** | *Susie Mix* | CE: LNHA

Managed care contracts continue to place increasing financial pressure on post-acute and long-term care providers. In this session, South Dakota operators of Skilled Nursing Facilities, Home Health agencies, Hospice agencies, and Assisted Living facilities will gain practical insights into how managed care business practices impact reimbursement and operations. Participants will explore proven strategies to optimize revenue, strengthen billing processes, and implement operational solutions that support long-term financial sustainability. This session will equip attendees with actionable tools to navigate a complex payor mix while continuing to deliver high-quality care.

**9:15 - 10:15am continued**

**Bringing Palliative Care to Long-Term Care** | *Marin Schaefer*, APRN-CNP | CE: LNHA, SW

Palliative medicine plays a critical role in enhancing quality of life for individuals living with serious illness, yet it is underutilized in long-term care settings. This session explores practical approaches for integrating palliative care into long-term care environments, including skilled nursing and assisted living. Attendees will learn how palliative care can complement existing services, support residents and families, and improve care coordination across the continuum.

**10:30 - 11:00am**

**Excellence in Long-Term Care Awards Ceremony**

Our 2nd Annual Post-Acute Awards will recognize the accomplishments and achievements of professionals that excel in long-term care.

**11:00am - 12:00pm**

**Closing Keynote**

**Choices Matter** | *David Francisco* | CE: LNHA, SW, CDM/CFPP

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# Speakers

- **Ariadne Albright**, Director, Creative Care, LLC
- **Cameo Anders, JD, MA, CAP®, CTFA**, AVP Trust Officer, Plains Commerce Bank
- **Erin Bonitto, M.S. A.D.C.**, Founder & Lead Coach, Gemini Consulting, Inc.
- **Carol Breitreutz, PharmD**, BCOP Pharmacist Avera Mckennan Hospital
- **Carrie Christopherson, RN**, Public Health Advisor and Western Regional Manager, SD Department of Health
- **Caitlin Clarey**, HCBS Program Manager, SD Department of Human Services
- **Scott Eisenbeisz**, CEO/Administrator, Bethesda Home of Aberdeen
- **Sean Fahey**, Attorney, Hall, Render, Killian, Health & Lyman, P.C.
- **Cheri Fast, RN**, Healthcare Associated Infection Program Manager, SD Department of Health
- **Maurine Ford, RN**, Public Health Advisor, SD Department of Health
- **Amy Hansen**, Executive Director, Dakota Guardianship
- **Aubrey Hensch, MSN, RN, CHPN**, Clinical Manager, Sanford Health Ava's House
- **Katie Huff, DNP, FNP-BC, ACHPN**, Palliative Care Provider, Avera Medical Group Palliative Medicine
- **Bob Lane**, Director, Long-Term Care & Senior Living, Forvis Mazars
- **Vickie Leff, MSW, LCSW, APHSW-C**, Palliative Care Consultant, UNC School of Social Work
- **Rachel Luke, MS, RD, LN**, Senior Health Facilities Surveyor, SD Department of Health, Office of Licensure & Certification
- **Jennifer Maeschen, RN**, Public Health Advisor, SD Department of Health, Office of Licensure & Certification
- **Kristin McNeely**, Medicaid Eligibility Program Specialist, SD Department of Social Services
- **Susie Mix, BS, MBA, NHA**, CEO, Mix Solutions, Inc
- **Ralph Peterson**, Owner and Operator, Ralph Peterson Management Services
- **Danielle Pierotti, PhD, RN**, Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer, Mount Marty University
- **Bethany Scarson, LPN**, Sanford Health Ava's House
- **Marin Schaefer, APRN-CNP**, Sanford Health
- **Amanda Sedlacek, DO, MSA, FACOI, FAAHPM**, Palliative Care Physician, Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C.
- **Michele Snyders, MSW, CSW-PIP, APHSW-C**, Hospice and Palliative Care Program Manager, SDAHO
- **Steven VanderVelde**, Director of Senior Living Partnerships, ProviNET Solutions
- **Victoria Walker, MD, FAAFP, CMD**, Medical and Clinical Officer, Senior Care, Avel eCare
- **Shelly Walstead, RN**, Public Health Advisor, SD Department of Health
- **Jill Weisensel**, Founder and Principal Consultant, Atlas Training and Consulting LLC



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