

American College of Forensic Psychology
41st Annual Symposium
March 19-22, 2026
San Diego • The Westgate Hotel

OVERVIEW

The American College of Forensic Psychology is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The American College of Forensic Psychology maintains responsibility for this program and its content. This program will offer a maximum of 25 hours of Continuing Education credits. To earn CE credit for each session, attendees must attend the entirety of the session and sign in and out at the registration desk.

Goal: The goal of this symposium is to keep forensic psychologists abreast of important issues which lie within the interface of psychology and law, recent developments in psychology that require new knowledge for expert witnesses, and new case law affecting forensic practice. **Target Audience:** The program is intended to benefit practicing forensic psychologists, psychologists in other subspecialties, and attorneys who litigate civil and criminal cases involving psychological evaluations and expert testimony. **Objectives:** Participants should improve their knowledge and skills in the following areas: (a) evaluation or treatment of forensic litigants and individuals with other forensic psychological issues; (b) new and ongoing research and developments in the field of forensic psychology; (c) relevant concepts useful in testifying and educating the court on mental health issues, and in working within the legal system; (d) changes in the law that affect clinical and forensic practice; (e) legal and psychological aspects involving inmates in correctional facilities with psychological disorders. All CE sessions are taught at an intermediate level, building upon psychologists' foundational knowledge.

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest or Relevant Financial Relationships: The American College of Forensic Psychology does not receive financial or commercial support. All instructors were asked to disclose potential conflicts of interest, or relevant financial relationships with any commercial interest. All instructors reported that they have nothing to disclose.

The meetings each day will be in the Versailles Ballroom. Registration and continental breakfast each day will be outside the meeting room. Thursday night's welcome reception will be in the Riviera Room and Terrace, and the student poster session on Thursday will be held in Embassy Room, Riviera Room, and the surrounding hallways. The student poster sessions on Friday and Saturday will be in the Versailles Foyer. The events described in this paragraph are **not** CE events.

Although no changes are anticipated, it is possible that changes will be necessary to the program.

PROGRAM

Wednesday, March 18

4:00-5:30 PM **Name badge pick-up for registrants/late registration** — foyer outside of Versailles Ballroom

Thursday, March 19

7:15-7:55 AM **Name badge pick-up/CE sign-in** – Versailles Foyer
7:15-7:55 AM **Continental Breakfast** – Versailles Foyer

7:55-8:00 AM **Welcome and Announcements** – Versailles Ballroom

8:00-12:15 **Addressing Trauma and Abuse in Forensic Psychology** – Versailles Ballroom

8:00-10:00 AM (2 CE)

Human Trafficking, #MeToo, and the Epstein Files: Sexual Violence in the Age of Social Media and the Court of Public Perception

Rebecca Smith-Casey, J.D., Psy.D., and Erica Jennett, M.A.

The #MeToo movement is a global awareness campaign against sexual abuse, sexual violence, and rape culture that gained prominence in 2017 following the Harvey Weinstein scandal. While the movement has empowered survivors and increased public discussion of sexual misconduct, these issues are often debated in the court of public opinion, where survivors—particularly women—may still face stigma. High-profile cases, including that of Jeffrey Epstein, have further heightened attention to human trafficking, a complex global crime often described as a contemporary form of slavery. This presentation examines human trafficking within the broader #MeToo context and considers implications for forensic evaluations of survivors and perpetrators, as well as challenges faced by law enforcement, healthcare providers, and the justice system in identifying and responding to trafficking.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Define human trafficking and identify risk factors for human trafficking.
2. Analyze information related to social media in the context of sexual assault allegations and criminal cases.
3. Explain the challenges present in the justice system for survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking involved in criminal matters against their perpetrators.

Rebecca Smith-Casey, J.D., Psy.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, a certified school psychologist, and a professor in the Master's in forensic psychology program at The Chicago School. She is the author of the New Jersey Competency Assessment Tool (NJ-CAT). Dr. Smith-Casey is the principal psychologist at River Valley Psycholegal Consulting, where her work focuses on assessment in civil and criminal forensic matters, trauma, law enforcement evaluations, diagnostic assessment, and providing gender affirming care for transgender youth.

Erica Jennett, based in Gallatin, TN, is the Program Coordinator for Sumner County Behavioral Health Court. She ensures participants receive appropriate mental health treatment and support. She holds dual bachelor's degrees in criminal justice/political science and psychology (2017), a master's in forensic psychology (2021), and completed her licensure certificate in 2024. Currently pursuing her LPC-MHSP, Erica has earned her temp license through the State of Tennessee and is working on her post-master's professional hours. Erica is also an Adjunct Faculty member at The Chicago School and enjoys sharing her expertise and knowledge with others.

10:00-10:15 AM **Coffee Break**

10:15-11:15 AM (1 CE)

The Association Between Trauma and Juvenile Delinquency

Savannah J. Woods, M.S., Ph.D. Candidate

This presentation explores the association between trauma exposure and juvenile delinquency within the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice system. Attendees will examine how acute, chronic, and complex trauma, along with associated factors such as emotion regulation difficulties and internalizing disorders, increase risk for delinquency. Using case studies and research, the presentation highlights assessment practices, system implications, and trauma-informed approaches that support successful rehabilitation and community reintegration.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe the history, mission, and population served by the Department of Juvenile Justice system.
2. Identify and analyze forms of trauma exposure among youth involved in the juvenile justice system.
3. Describe methods used by Department of Juvenile Justice psychologists to define and assess trauma exposure in justice-involved youth.
4. Explain the relationship between trauma exposure, delinquency risk, and mitigating factors among youth in the juvenile justice system.

Savannah J. Woods is a doctoral student at the University of South Carolina's Clinical Community Psychology Program and a Temporary Mental Health Professional at the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice through UofSC and SCDJJ's externship program. Ms. Woods obtained her B.S. in Psychology from Florida State University and her M.S. in Psychology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Ms. Woods's research focuses on addressing childhood maltreatment as a risk factor for social phobia and associated behaviors and negative self-perceptions that further contribute to this association. She also focuses on recognizing potential protective factors to these negative outcomes. Ms. Woods's clinical and evaluation services target youth to young adult populations by supporting mechanisms of change while considering ecological systems and early childhood experiences that may impact modes of change.

11:15-12:15 PM (1 CE)

Assessing Allegations of Child Abuse in High Conflict Domestic Relations Cases

Shawn Wygant, M.A.

Allegations of child abuse in divorce and custody litigation present difficult questions for courts, child protective services (CPS), and forensic custody evaluators. This presentation synthesizes evidence from multi-jurisdictional case law and peer-reviewed research to examine how often abuse allegations arise in custody disputes, how frequently they are substantiated, and how often they are deemed unfounded or intentionally false. The discussion emphasizes the distinction between "unsubstantiated" and "false," and reviews the different burdens of proof used by courts, CPS, and forensic evaluators. Using a scientific-method framework and de-identified case examples, the presentation illustrates how competing hypotheses and discriminant evidence can guide careful evaluation and communication of findings in abuse allegations.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the relevant case-law and scientific literature concerning estimated prevalence rates of true and false claims of abuse in divorce litigation.
2. Differentiate and apply the burdens of proof used by courts in determining abuse allegations.
3. Operationalize the scientific method for data collection, data analysis, and hypothesis testing in the assessment of abuse allegations.

Shawn Wygant practices as a forensic psychologist in Michigan with expertise in child abuse and child custody assessment. He is an expert witness known for his ability to navigate complex family dynamics in high-conflict domestic relations cases. His specialization lies in the diagnosis and assessment of child psychological abuse, parental alienation, and domestic violence, making him a trusted authority in these areas. Shawn is frequently called upon to provide expert testimony that clarifies complicated behavioral science evidence, aiding courts in making well-informed decisions about child custody and family law matters.

12:15-1:30 PM **Lunch Break** (on your own)

1:30-4:45 PM **Forensic Psychology Essentials** – Versailles Ballroom

1:30-2:30 PM (1 CE)

Malingering: How our Understanding has Changed Over Time

Stephanie Olson, Ph.D.

Malingering is a critical and unavoidable topic in forensic psychology, both as it relates to treating forensic patients as well as being a forensic evaluator. It is imperative that forensic psychologists stay up-to-date on research about malingering and response bias presentations and avoid subscribing to misconceptions about the label of malingering. Pitfalls to avoid and ways to improve your ability to accurately identify malingering, along with how to best communicate your findings with others (e.g., legal personnel, medical team members, other mental health providers, etc.) will be discussed. This seminar will also include a review of malingering assessment instruments, old and new, and their limitations, and the differences between types of feigning and malingering.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe the main differences between different response styles in forensic settings.
2. Analyze the impact of applying a label of “malingering” to a case and how to avoid pitfalls related to the label.
3. Identify methods of effectively communicating findings of response styles to members of multidisciplinary teams.

Stephanie Olson, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist with over twenty years of experience in the mental health field. She has earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology and criminology, two master’s degrees in counseling and clinical psychology, and completed a forensic concentration during her doctoral work. She also has four years of experience completing suitability evaluations for entry and specialty positions with the U.S. Air Force, as well as four years’ experience in forensic settings such as forensic psychiatric hospitals, state prison, and civil forensic private practice.

2:30-3:30 PM (1 CE)

Preparing for, Starting, and Building a Forensic Psychology Practice

Mark Burdick, Ph.D., Baljit Atwal, Ph.D., and James W. Schutte, Ph.D.

Many psychologists aim to start or grow their own practice but do not receive specific training or expert advice about doing so. This is especially true within specialties such as forensic psychology. In this panel discussion, forensic psychologists will share their experiences and recommendations about preparing for, starting, and building a forensic practice. Panelists will also answer audience questions.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Summarize methods for starting a forensic psychology practice.
2. Describe useful approaches for building a forensic psychology practice.
3. List factors to consider when preparing for, starting, and building a forensic psychology practice.

Dr. Mark Burdick is a Board-Certified Forensic Psychologist, with decades of experience in delivering opinions before Santa Cruz Superior Courts as an expert evaluator. Dr. Burdick has served as Chair of the Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) State of California, as well as the American College of Forensic Psychology (ACFP).

Dr. Atwal has been providing forensic and clinical psychological services to the community for the past 25 years. Dr. Atwal has been retained for multiple mental health diversion evaluations in northern California, and has provided expert testimony in mental health diversion, competency, and risk assessments. She has a specific interest in conducting culturally competent forensic mental health evaluations. Dr. Atwal also has expertise in completing evaluations for professional licensing boards, adult and juvenile courts, and immigration/administrative courts. Additionally, Dr. Atwal has testified of psychological research in the following areas: child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome, memory, suggestibility, and best practices for interviewing child victims. In addition to providing forensic mental health evaluations for the legal community, Dr. Atwal provides the following services: psychotherapy/counseling, training for pre-licensure psychology students, court testimony, and consultation to attorneys.

James W. Schutte, Ph.D., is a bilingual psychologist in private practice in El Paso, Texas. His practice primarily involves psychological assessments for matters of Social Security disability, child protection, vocational rehabilitation, criminal and civil litigation, readiness for admission to the Catholic seminary, and evaluation of autism spectrum disorder and ADHD.

3:30-3:45 PM **Break**

3:45-4:45 PM (1 CE – diversity)

Cultural Assessment in Forensic Psychology: Lessons from Nuremberg and the Rorschach in Cross-Cultural Evaluations

Mark Burdick, Ph.D.

This presentation examines proper cultural assessment protocols in forensic psychological evaluations, drawing from a recent case involving a German father where cultural competency was critical to the Rorschach administration and interpretation. Using clips from the film "Nuremberg"

(starring Rami Malek), the presentation will illustrate the ethical imperatives and practical considerations when conducting cross-cultural forensic assessments in custody and competency evaluations.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Identify key cultural considerations when administering psychological assessments to individuals from different cultural backgrounds.
2. Describe ethical obligations in cross-cultural forensic evaluations as established by professional standards.
3. Apply culturally informed assessment protocols to improve validity and reliability in forensic contexts.

Dr. Burdick is a well-known and respected forensic psychologist, dual licensed (education / clinical) in the State of California, Registered in Netherlands, and Chartered Psychologist in the United Kingdom. Sixty years living, studying, traveling and working in United Arab Emirates, Lugano Switzerland, Amsterdam Netherlands, and Balearic Islands in Spain, he observed and ultimately presents on resiliency for families and youth; and publishes with child custody evaluator Jon Gould and others. Dr. Burdick has served as member and Chair of State of California Board of Behavioral Sciences, and now continues his work in the ethical pursuit of standards of assessment and practice with cross-cultural populations.

5:30-6:30 PM **Student Poster Session** - Embassy Room

5:30-7:30 PM **Welcome Reception** - Riviera Room and Terrace

Friday, March 20

7:15-7:55 AM **Name badge pick-up/CE sign-in** – Versailles Foyer

7:15-7:55 AM **Continental Breakfast** – Versailles Foyer

8:00 AM - 12:15 **Ethical and Professional Issues in Forensic Psychology** – Versailles Ballroom

8:00-10:00 AM (2 CE - ethics)

Understanding Cognitive Bias in Professional Judgment

Stephanie Nelson, Ph.D., ABPP, ABPdN

Clinical and forensic professionals make complex decisions under conditions of uncertainty, incomplete information, and time pressure. This presentation reviews research on cognitive biases that systematically influence human judgment, including confirmation bias, overconfidence, narrow framing, and base-rate neglect. Drawing on findings from psychology, behavioral economics, and decision science, the talk illustrates how even highly trained experts can make predictable errors. Participants will learn practical, evidence-based strategies for improving clinical reasoning, reducing bias, and increasing the accuracy and reliability of professional judgment.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Identify major cognitive biases that affect clinical and forensic decision-making (e.g., confirmation bias, overconfidence, narrow framing).
2. Describe how “wicked environments” and limited feedback increase error in professional judgment.
3. Apply evidence-based strategies to reduce the impact of cognitive bias in case conceptualization and diagnostic reasoning.

Dr. Stephanie Nelson is a pediatric neuropsychologist who specializes in complex differential diagnosis. She is board certified in both clinical neuropsychology (ABPP) and pediatric neuropsychology (ABPdN), and she is currently the president of the American Academy of Pediatric Neuropsychology. Dr. Nelson earned her undergraduate degree at Williams College and her doctorate in clinical psychology at the University of Vermont. She completed her internship and postdoctoral fellowship in pediatric neuropsychology at the University of Minnesota Medical Center. Dr. Nelson has a private practice in Seattle, WA. She also has a consultation practice called The Peer Consult, through which she provides consultation to psychologists and neuropsychologists.

10:00-10:15 AM Coffee Break

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM (1 CE – ethics)

Ethics, Deception, and Diversion: Court Mandated Counseling

Michael G. Ditsky, Ph.D.

This presentation focuses on three elements integral to navigating court mandated counseling (CMC): ethics, client deception, and California’s use of diversion as an alternative to traditional prosecution. All three require special attention by treatment providers. All mental health professionals are bound by ethical standards but with CMC clients, client care includes the obligation of the provider to report to third parties the client’s progress in treatment while preserving the client’s autonomy. Clients may perceive CMC as coercion. The role of practitioners is impacted by their values and biases regarding this population. Deception and resistance appear to be especially prevalent with this population. Deception may be seen as a form of resistance to therapy but also a method of self-preservation. Finally, California has several major diversion pathways, but the two most important statewide programs are: Judicial Misdemeanor Diversion (Penal Code §1001.95) and Mental Health Diversion (Penal Code §1001.36). The goals of diversion programs are addressed. The most influential cases interpreting these Penal Codes are reviewed. These cases are the backbone of how trial courts now make diversion decisions.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Explain the unique ethical issues related to counseling court mandated, involuntary clients, especially limits of confidentiality and the ethical principle of client autonomy.
2. Describe deception and resistance in counseling mandated clients and explain how to effectively navigate them with clients.
3. Discuss California diversion pathways and how these codes have been interpreted in the most influential cases.
4. Describe how trial courts make diversion decisions.

Michael G. Ditsky, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist specializing in forensic services. He also conducts ministry candidate evaluations. His M.Ed. is in group dynamics with an emphasis in Jungian Analytic Psychology. He is a Board-Certified Fellow of the American College of Forensic Psychology. He now calls San Diego his home.

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM (1 CE)

Expert Opinion Testimony: Suggestions on Preparation, Report Writing, and Interactions with Counsel

John Philipsborn, M.Ed., M.A.S., J.D.

This presentation will discuss the framework for an effective presentation of an expert opinion, covering the pertinent literature, attention to legal standards for the admissibility of expert testimony, as well as the pertinent professional standards and guidelines. The discussion will include the importance of ensuring that the report prepared for the case at hand provides a useful basis on which the pertinent opinions can be offered and defended should there be a motion to exclude them brought by one of the parties, or should there be a vigorous and well-prepared cross examination. The presentation will also contain recommendations for dealings with counsel (on all sides).

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe the legal requirements for a qualified expert to provide opinion testimony.
2. Describe those parts of a report that will help convince Judges and lawyers that the expert is aware of the difference between reliable and unreliable opinions under California and Federal standards.
3. Summarize the instructions that an expert should provide to counsel for the parties prior to any hearing or trial.

John Philipsborn has been a criminal defense lawyer for almost 50 years. During that time, he has defended a number of complex cases, including death penalty cases, involving testimony from mental health professionals. He has authored more than 90 publications, many of which are focused on aspects of mental health and the law. He has contributed, or assisted in, briefing files before the United States Supreme Court, many of the Federal Circuits, and all of California's reviewing courts. His work has been recognized by the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, California Attorneys for Criminal Justice, and the Forensic Mental Health Association of California. He has presented to the ACFP for many years.

12:15-1:30 PM **Lunch Break** (on your own)

1:30-4:45 PM **Ethics and Correctional Psychology** – Versailles Ballroom

1:30-2:30 PM (1 CE - ethics)

Forensic Skills Workshop: Addressing Ethical and Practice Issues in Forensic Psychology

Kristine M. Jacquin, Ph.D. (Moderator), Autumn R. Ascano, Ph.D., and John White, Ph.D.

This forensic skills workshop focuses on issues in civil and criminal law that interface with psychology and expert testimony by psychologists. This is an interactive session involving moderator, panelists, and audience on advanced ethical and practice issues confronting the

forensic psychologist. Vignettes submitted to the panel by practicing forensic psychologists are read aloud and discussed. The vignettes describe problems and experiences that forensic psychologists often confront in their practices and in court. Attendees are exposed to a wide variety of forensic cases and problems in civil and criminal areas.

At the end of this workshop, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe how to approach ethical and professional issues in practice and in court.
2. Explain how to address ethical dilemmas that arise in difficult cases.
3. Analyze forensic case dilemmas from an ethical perspective.

Kristine M. Jacquin, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist with a private practice as a forensic neuropsychologist. Dr. Jacquin is also a Professor of Psychology and Dean at Fielding Graduate University. She has conducted research, presented, and published on practice issues related to psychology ethics.

Autumn R. Ascano, J.D., Ph.D., is a licensed professional counselor in Colorado. During her time as an attorney, her practice was child-focused as a guardian ad litem and custody investigator. She has continued this child-focused practice as a counselor with an emphasis on traumatic stress and adverse childhood experiences. Dr. Ascano currently provides direct therapy services for young children, consultation for attorneys as it relates to developmental psychology and legal issues, and training in areas where there is overlap between developmental psychology and law.

John White, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology at Stockton University where he developed the forensic psychology programs. He is a licensed psychologist who has a private practice where he specializes in forensic neuropsychology. He has written numerous articles in professional journals and has written two books.

2:30-3:30 PM (1 CE)

Unleashing Potential: Dog Training Programs as Correctional Interventions

Erica Jennett, M.A., and Rebecca Smith-Casey, J.D., Psy.D.

Correctional facilities worldwide are exploring rehabilitation strategies that extend beyond traditional cognitive-behavioral interventions. Among the most promising are dog-training programs that pair incarcerated individuals with shelter dogs in need of socialization and obedience training. Grounded in attachment theory, learning theory, and research on the human-animal bond, these programs provide opportunities to foster empathy, trust, responsibility, and self-regulation. Caregiving interactions with dogs may create corrective emotional experiences for individuals with histories of insecure attachment, while operant conditioning techniques reinforce adaptive behaviors in both dogs and handlers. Research suggests benefits including improved emotion regulation, reduced loneliness, increased employability after release, and lower recidivism, while also highlighting practical and ethical considerations for program implementation.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. List at least three psychological theories that inform dog training programs in correctional settings (e.g., attachment theory, learning theory, human-animal bond).
2. Describe the key psychological and behavioral outcomes associated with canine-assisted interventions in prisons.

3. Discuss ethical and logistical considerations in implementing animal-assisted interventions in correctional facilities.
4. Analyze empirical findings to evaluate the effectiveness of dog training programs as rehabilitative strategies.
5. Apply lessons from prison-based dog training programs to broader forensic and clinical contexts, including trauma-informed practice.

Erica Jennett, based in Gallatin, TN, is the Program Coordinator for Sumner County Behavioral Health Court. She ensures participants receive appropriate mental health treatment and support. She holds dual bachelor's degrees in criminal justice/political science and psychology (2017), a master's in forensic psychology (2021), and completed her licensure certificate in 2024. Currently pursuing her LPC-MHSP, Erica has earned her temp license through the State of Tennessee and is working on her post-master's professional hours. Erica is also an Adjunct Faculty member at The Chicago School and enjoys sharing her expertise and knowledge with others.

Rebecca Smith-Casey, J.D., Psy.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, a certified school psychologist, and a professor in the Master's in forensic psychology program at The Chicago School. She is the author of the New Jersey Competency Assessment Tool (NJ-CAT). Dr. Smith-Casey is the principal psychologist at River Valley Psycholegal Consulting, where her work focuses on assessment in civil and criminal forensic matters, trauma, law enforcement evaluations, diagnostic assessment, and providing gender affirming care for transgender youth.

3:30-3:45 PM Break

3:45-4:45 PM (1 CE)

Isolation and Mental Health: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic and Solitary Confinement

Rebecca Smith-Casey, J.D., Psy.D., and Kyle Blanchard, B.S.

Social isolation is both a marker of certain mental health conditions and a consequence of situational or environmental factors. While research on isolation existed before 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created a global experience of prolonged social isolation, with studies documenting sharp increases in anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic distress. Even with access to online interaction, many individuals experienced significant declines in psychological well-being. Solitary confinement—restrictive housing in which incarcerated individuals spend 22–24 hours per day in isolation—has similarly been linked to serious physical and mental health consequences. Drawing on research from both contexts, this presentation examines the psychological impact of imposed isolation and discusses implications and ethical considerations for forensic mental health practice in correctional settings.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe impacts of social isolation on physical and mental health.
2. Explain the effects of long-term social isolation on functioning, health, and long-term health.
3. Discuss the ethical, treatment, and diagnostic concerns that may exist following social isolation.

Rebecca Smith-Casey, J.D., Psy.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, a certified school psychologist, and a professor in the Master's in forensic

psychology program at The Chicago School. She is the author of the New Jersey Competency Assessment Tool (NJ-CAT). Dr. Smith-Casey is the principal psychologist at River Valley Psycholegal Consulting, where her work focuses on assessment in civil and criminal forensic matters, trauma, law enforcement evaluations, diagnostic assessment, and providing gender affirming care for transgender youth.

Kyle Blanchard, B.S., is a graduate of Radnor University presently working on a master's in forensic psychology at The Chicago School, with an expected graduation date of June 2026. Following graduation, Kyle plans to pursue a PsyD in Clinical Psychology with a goal of understanding the complexities of the human mind, supporting individuals in need, and helping to de-stigmatize mental health, particularly within forensic and clinical settings.

4:45-5:30 PM **Student Poster Session** - Versailles Foyer

Saturday, March 21

7:15-7:55 AM **Name badge pick-up/CE sign-in** – Versailles Foyer

7:15-7:55 AM **Continental Breakfast** – Versailles Foyer

8:00 AM - 12:15 PM **Forensic Psychological Assessment** – Versailles Ballroom

8:00-9:00 AM (1 CE)

Violence Risk Assessments

Stephanie Olson, Ph.D.

Violence risk assessments are requested in a variety of forensic settings for multiple types of forensic populations. An overview of the use of violence risk assessments will be covered with a focus on violence risk assessment of individuals charged with violent offenses in inpatient psychiatric settings. A review of relevant instruments will be discussed, along with how to exercise caution when considering risk factors in light of cultural factors. How to best answer the referral question, and the pros and cons of using various violence risk assessment measures and a clinical interview, will be covered. Misconceptions about what violence risk assessments are and are not will also be reviewed.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe the types of instruments that can be used for assessing risk for violence and discuss important cultural considerations when using different assessment measures.
2. Discuss misconceptions about violence risk assessments.
3. Explain how violence risk assessments can be applied to inpatient psychiatric individuals who have pending charges or have been found not guilty/responsible in a court of law for a violent offense.

Stephanie Olson, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist with over twenty years of experience in the mental health field. She has earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and criminology, two master's degrees in counseling and clinical psychology, and completed a forensic concentration during her doctoral work. She also has four years of experience completing suitability evaluations for entry and specialty positions with the U.S. Air Force, as well as four years experience in forensic settings such as forensic psychiatric hospitals, state prison, and civil forensic private practice.

9:00-10:00 AM (1 CE)

Law Enforcement Evaluations in the Context of #ACAB

Rebecca Smith-Casey, J.D., Psy.D.

In recent years, law enforcement agencies have increasingly recognized psychological assessment as an important tool in hiring and fitness-for-duty decisions, particularly for identifying candidates at risk for problematic on-the-job behavior. At the same time, high-profile cases of police misconduct have shifted public perceptions of policing, reflected in movements such as #ACAB (“All Cops Are Bad”). Research suggests that successful officers tend to demonstrate high levels of self-control, responsibility, conscientiousness, and discipline. Standardized assessments such as the MMPI and PAI include norms for law enforcement populations and can help identify risk factors associated with misconduct, citizen complaints, and interpersonal difficulties. This presentation uses case examples to review best practices in police psychological evaluations, including assessment considerations, impression management, and ethical issues.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. List and describe several appropriate assessment tools for use with law enforcement pre-employment candidates and/or return to duty referrals.
2. Identify and analyze risk factors for various types of police misconduct.
3. Discuss best practices related to police evaluations, with specific considerations of differences in best practices related to return to duty evaluations and pre-employment evaluations for law enforcement.

Rebecca Smith-Casey, J.D., Psy.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, a certified school psychologist, and a current professor in the Master's in forensic psychology program at The Chicago School. She is the author of the New Jersey Competency Assessment Tool (NJ-CAT). Dr. Smith-Casey is the principal psychologist at River Valley Psycholegal Consulting, where her work focuses on assessment in civil and criminal forensic matters, trauma, law enforcement evaluations, diagnostic assessment, and providing gender affirming care for transgender youth.

10:00-10:15 AM **Coffee Break**

10:15-11:15 AM (1 CE - diversity)

Autism Spectrum Disorder in Forensic Evaluations

James W. Schutte, Ph.D., and Christopher W. Schutte, M.S.Ed.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is becoming of increasing interest in forensic psychological settings and should be considered both for possible contributory connections to criminal offending, as well as for mitigation purposes. This presentation will discuss the importance of screening and assessing ASD, particularly in cases of alleged online sexual offending, and will

present current diagnostic criteria, as well as assessment techniques which are practical and valid for forensic assessment. Suggestions will be made for discussing links between ASD symptomatology and offending behavior, as well as treatment recommendations and mitigation issues. Preparation for cross-examination will be discussed, as will a consideration of what current research allows us to say or not say about this condition.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. List current DSM-5-TR diagnostic criteria for ASD.
2. Describe links between ASD symptomatology and offending behavior, particularly in online sexual cases.
3. Plan a valid ASD screening and/or assessment as part of a forensic psychological evaluation, and summarize the data into a defensible report.

James W. Schutte, Ph.D. is a bilingual psychologist in private practice in El Paso, Texas. His practice primarily involves psychological evaluations for Social Security disability assessment, Child Protective Services matters, and civil and criminal litigation in both state and federal courts. He conducts pediatric and adult autism spectrum disorder evaluations on a daily basis, and also performs psychological fitness evaluations for candidates wishing to entering Catholic seminary and for those wishing to carry a firearm as part of their job duties.

Christopher W. Schutte, M.S.Ed. is a bilingual doctoral student in counseling psychology at Fordham University. He graduated with honors with a bachelor's degree in psychology from Brown University, and was a postgraduate associate in computational psychiatry at Yale University. His current research interests include examining predictors of mental health help-seeking behavior in Latino men.

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM (1 CE)

Workers' Compensation Review and Discussion

Albert Kastl, Ph.D., and William K. Marek, Ph.D.

This presentation will review workers' compensation. We will cover the long and colorful history of workers' compensation in the world and how to become a provider in that system. Interesting landmark and unusual cases will be discussed as will issues of fraud and deception. Several local cases will be reviewed and analyzed with the assistance of the attendees.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. List three features of the history of Workers' Compensation.
2. Describe three features of Workers' Compensation case law specific to the United States.
3. List three rules/regulations of Workers' Compensation that apply specifically to California.

Albert Kastl, Ph.D., is a California psychologist, a member of the ACFP Advisory Board and an ACFP Fellow. He has performed hundreds of workers' compensation evaluations.

William K. Marek, Ph.D., is a California psychologist. He is retired from the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Dr. Marek teaches at two local universities and has a private practice.

12:15-1:30 PM **Lunch Break** (on your own)

1:30-4:45 PM Technology in Forensic Psychology – Versailles Ballroom

1:30-3:30 PM (2 CE - ethics)

Digital Mastery for Forensic Psychologists: Streamlining Professional Demand & Self-Care Tools

Judy Ho Gavazza, Ph.D., ABPP, ABPdN, CFMHE

In today's fast-paced clinical and academic environments, forensic and neuropsychologists face increasing professional demands, from managing patient care and assessments to research, teaching, and administrative responsibilities. Simultaneously, the integration of digital tools presents both opportunities and challenges in optimizing workflow efficiency and maintaining personal well-being. This presentation provides an evidence-based framework for digital mastery—leveraging cutting-edge technology to enhance clinical practice, improve efficiency, and promote self-care. Attendees will explore digital tools for streamlining assessments, automating administrative tasks, optimizing clinical documentation, enhancing patient engagement, and managing workload to prevent burnout. The seminar will also focus on self-care strategies supported by digital solutions, including mindfulness applications, AI-assisted cognitive training, and behavior-tracking tools. Through interactive demonstrations, case studies, and hands-on application exercises, participants will leave with practical, actionable strategies to integrate into their professional and personal routines. By embracing digital tools thoughtfully, forensic and neuropsychologists can enhance productivity, reduce cognitive overload, and maintain a sustainable and fulfilling career.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Evaluate the latest evidence-based digital tools designed to improve assessment, report writing, and administrative workflow.
2. Identify technological strategies to streamline documentation, optimize communication, and enhance patient engagement.
3. Analyze research-based self-care interventions that leverage digital platforms to reduce burnout and improve well-being.
4. Develop a personalized digital toolkit to enhance work efficiency and support self-care, based on individual practice needs.
5. Apply ethical considerations related to digital integration in neuropsychology, including confidentiality, HIPAA compliance, and AI limitations.

Dr. Judy Ho, Ph.D., ABPP, ABPdN is a triple board certified and licensed Clinical and Forensic Neuropsychologist, a tenured Professor at Pepperdine University, and author of Stop Self-Sabotage and The New Rules of Attachment. An avid researcher and a two-time recipient of the National Institute of Mental Health Services Research Award, Dr. Judy maintains a private practice where she specializes in comprehensive neuropsychological assessments and expert witness work. She is often called on by the media as an expert psychologist and is also a sought-after public speaker for universities, businesses, and organizations. Dr. Judy received her bachelor's degrees in Psychology and Business Administration from UC Berkeley, and her master's and doctorate from SDSU/UCSD Joint Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology. She completed a National Institute of Mental Health sponsored fellowship at UCLA's Semel Institute.

3:30-3:45 PM Break

3:45-4:45 PM (1 CE)

Using an Advanced, Computer Adaptive Screener to Enhance Measurement of Mental Health Problems in a Large Public Defender Office

Jared Minkel, Ph.D., and Jeremiah Reece, J.D.

This seminar introduces the Computerized Adaptive Testing – Mental Health (CAT-MH®), a validated self-report assessment for efficient, large-scale mental health screening. Participants will learn how one public defender office implemented this screener for over 700 clients in one year. The presentation will cover clinical oversight, interpretation of multi-domain severity scores, incorporation of this information into legal reports, and practical applications for criminal defense strategy. Strategies and data related to program evaluation will also be presented.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Explain the advantages and limitations of computer adaptive testing over traditional mental health screening in the public defense context.
2. Describe the process used at Kalamazoo Defender to provide large-scale mental health screening.
3. List three ways mental health screening can be used to enhance representation of indigent clients with criminal charges.

Dr. Jared Minkel, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist with extensive experience in computerized adaptive testing and digital mental health assessment. He is currently employed as the Principal Investigator for a state-funded grant awarded to Kalamazoo County Defender, Inc. (KCDI), examining the implementation of comprehensive mental health screening in public defense practice. Dr. Minkel earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and completed postdoctoral training at Duke University. Through his leadership roles as Chief Science Officer and Senior Director of Clinical Science at digital therapeutics companies (Happify Health, PredictView, Sharpen), Dr. Minkel has developed specialized expertise in the CAT-MH system, including successful FDA breakthrough device designation for AI-powered mental health assessments. He has utilized the CAT-MH for over three years in private practice, developing innovative approaches for patient feedback on assessment results. Through his collaboration with Kalamazoo Defender in implementing large-scale CAT-MH assessment of clients' psychosocial functioning, Dr. Minkel has accrued significant insight into the benefits and challenges of validated psychological assessment technology in enhancing forensic evaluation triage while supporting criminal defense strategy development.

Jeremiah W. Reece, J.D., is a licensed attorney with extensive experience in civil rights and unlawful discrimination litigation. He is currently employed by Kalamazoo County Defender, Inc. (KCDI), a non-profit public defense firm, in the role of Research Attorney for a grant-funded special project examining the intersections of mental health, indigency, and the criminal legal system. Through his involvement in the implementation and administration of rapid mental health screening with KCDI's client population, as well as the coordination of forensic expert services, Mr. Reece has accrued significant insight into the benefits and challenges of population-wide mental health screening in the public defense context.

4:45-5:30 PM **Student Poster Session** - Versailles Foyer

Sunday, March 22

7:15-7:55 AM **Name badge pick-up/CE sign-in** – Versailles Foyer

7:15-7:55 AM **Continental Breakfast** – Versailles Foyer

8:00 AM - 12:15 PM **Psychology of Murder** – Versailles Ballroom

8:00-10:00 AM (2 CE)

On Becoming Evil: The Idaho Four Murders and Other College Mass Murders Targeting Women

John White, Ph.D.

Using a life-cycle analysis, this presentation examines the developmental patterns and inferred fantasy processes associated with Bryan Kohberger, who killed four University of Idaho students in November 2022. Because fantasies cannot be directly observed, they are inferred from behavioral patterns across development. The presentation situates this case within broader research on mass and serial murders involving college populations and clarifies distinctions between these forms of violence. Kohberger's social development, personality traits, and experiences of isolation and rejection are considered alongside concepts such as leakage, victim selection, and pre-attack behaviors. Post-crime actions, forensic evidence, and potential prevention strategies—including the theory of planned behavior and social-ecological approaches—will also be discussed.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe differences between mass and serial murder.
2. Identify possible warning signs and leakage displayed by Kohberger and other mass murderers., including the decoding of shooter manifestos.
3. List the personality characteristics of most mass murderers.

John White, Ph.D., is a former Investigator Sergeant with the Dallas police Department, where he worked numerous positions, including patrol, Psychological Services, Internal Affairs, and the Fugitive and Special Investigations Unit. He is presently a professor of psychology at Stockton University in Galloway, New Jersey where he developed the forensic psychology programs. He is a licensed psychologist who has a private practice where he specializes in forensic neuropsychology. He is a former member of The Academy Group, a forensic behavior analysis organization, and continues to consult with law enforcement on homicide and sex crime cases. He is also a member of the Vidocq Society, a cold case homicide group, in Philadelphia. He has written numerous articles in professional journals regarding sex crimes and serial murder. He was the technical advisor for the documentary series, "Killer Profile," and contributed material to the writers of the CBS TV show "Criminal Minds." He has written two books.

10:00-10:15 AM **Coffee Break**

10:15-12:15 PM (2 CE)

Criminally Charged: When the Unperceived Pregnancy Leads to Murder

Diana Barnes, Psy.D.

When a woman fails to perceive her own pregnancy, serious developmental risks to the fetus can occur and, in extreme cases, the death of the neonate may lead to criminal charges. In the United States, reproductive mental health disorders are often misunderstood, and women in these cases may face severe charges, including murder. Unperceived pregnancy is a clinical syndrome occurring in approximately 1 in 475 pregnancies by 20 weeks and 1 in 2,500 through birth. Research identifies recurring clinical markers, including the absence of typical pregnancy symptoms and dissociative experiences during labor. Using case examples, this seminar examines diagnostic features, risk factors, demographic patterns, and how such cases are argued in both defense and prosecution.

At the end of this seminar, the learner will be able to:

1. List at least 5 symptoms that meet diagnostic criteria for an unperceived pregnancy.
2. Describe how dissociative processes distort behavior and lead to neonaticide.
3. Summarize the numerous diagnostic patterns that exist in cases of unperceived pregnancies.
4. Explain how defense and prosecution typically argue unperceived pregnancy cases.
5. Discuss the role of the specialized expert in the courtroom in unperceived pregnancy cases.

Diana Barnes is a past president of Postpartum Support International and has been practicing in the field of women's reproductive mental health for 30 years. She is the Chair of the International Marce Society's special interest group on forensics and maternal mental illness. She also sits on the board of the North American Society of Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynecology. An internationally recognized trainer and speaker on all facets of child-bearing related illness, Dr. Barnes edited and contributed to the definitive text Women's Reproductive Mental Health Across the Lifespan (Springer, 2014). She also authored two chapters for the text on Infanticide and Filicide: Foundations in Maternal Mental Health Forensics (APA, 2020). In addition to a private clinical practice specializing in women's mental health, Dr. Barnes is frequently retained by legal counsel as a perinatal expert on criminal cases involving postpartum psychosis and infanticide, unperceived pregnancies, child abuse causing injury or death to a child in addition to cases where the birth of a child has been the catalyst for the onset of serious mental illness leading to homicide among other cases involving serious mental illness related to child-bearing. Dr. Barnes is a recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award for her outstanding contributions to the field of reproductive mental health given by the Eli Lilly Foundation. She practices in Los Angeles, California.

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

PO BOX 1774

ESCONDIDO, CALIFORNIA 92033

Telephone: 805-613-7090

Email: acfp@forensicpsychology.org • Web site: www.forensicpsychology.org