



KENTUCKY
SCHOOL
COUNSELOR
ASSOCIATION

Fall Conference



ILLUMINATE THE PATH

Counselors as Beacons of HOPE

September 9-11, 2026 • Griffin Gate Marriott Resort and Spa • Lexington, KY

SPONSORED BY



Wednesday, September 9, 2026 | 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The Pre-Conference Learning Sessions are an additional opportunity for more professional development and CEU contact hours. The sessions generally cover more in-depth information and allows more opportunity for discussion. These sessions are not included in the conference registration fee and have a minimal fee. Space is limited. Interested participants are encouraged to register early. Sessions run concurrently, so only one may be chosen.

1. Building Empathy, Resilience, and Independence in our Anxious Generation Students

Karin Pulliam

ABOUT THIS SESSION: In this relaxed, interactive session I will share some key insights from *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt about how phones and social media have impacted our students and their capacity for empathy. We will explore real-life strategies recommended by psychologist Michelle Borba and the program “Let Grow” to help students become more resilient and independent. Participants will leave with ready-to-use resources.

SPEAKER BIO: I have been a School Counselor for 12 years and currently serve at Hawthorne Elementary, the only Spanish Immersion Magnet School in Jefferson County Public Schools. Prior to becoming a School Counselor I was a teacher for 13 years. I’ve taught in Borton and Louisville, on all grade levels. My special interests include social justice and incorporating the arts in counseling. I am excited to explore the ways School Counselors can help students and families navigate the challenges of our phone-based, social media-based culture while remaining compassionate, empathetic, resilient, and independent.



2. Groups, Groups, Groups!!! The Key to Comprehensive School Counseling!

Loren Dittmar

ABOUT THIS SESSION: Counseling groups are one of the most effective ways school counselors can reach more students, yet many face barriers such as time, competing demands, or lack of confidence. This practical session provides clear structures and ready-to-use tools that make group implementation realistic, sustainable, and impactful, helping counselors expand student support while strengthening their overall program effectiveness.

SPEAKER BIO: Once an at-risk youth, Loren Dittmar, PhD, is now a nationally recognized speaker and consultant specializing in school mental health, suicide prevention, and the well-being of the adults who serve youth. He partners with schools and organizations nationwide to expand mental health supports, strengthen staff resilience, and build cultures where people feel seen, supported, and empowered to live authentically.

With over 25 years of combined experience in clinical and educational settings, Loren brings a rare blend of frontline insight and scholarly depth. His background includes five years in the mental health field, 18 years as a school counselor, including service as a Director of School Counseling, and 13 years as an adjunct professor. He served as a Lead Professional Learning Specialist with Hatching Results, supporting districts in implementing data-driven, ASCA-aligned comprehensive school counseling programs. He was also the lead expert for the mental health section of the international resource covid19k12counseling.org. Loren has held various leadership roles within multiple state school counselor associations and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Palmetto State School Counselor Association.

Through courageous conversations and healthy vulnerability, Loren equips audiences to ignite purpose, inspire change, and transform the way they lead, live, and connect.

Loren will also be presenting one breakout session.



3. Taming the Beast: Effective 504 Organization, Creation & Implementation

Lacey Piersol

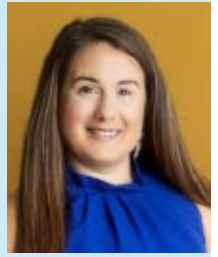
ABOUT THIS SESSION: The 504 process at any grade level can be overwhelming, especially for those new to the role of 504 coordinator. In this session, a high school counselor at Franklin County High

School will share her experiences using the 504 Dashboard in Infinite Campus to effectively organize documents and resources. She will also discuss practical strategies for staying organized, providing appropriate accommodations, and meeting the needs of students.

SPEAKER BIO: Lacey Piersol, Ed.S. in School Counseling, is in her third year as a school counselor in Franklin County Schools and is dedicated to supporting students through advocacy, guidance, and equitable access to education. She has extensive experience coordinating and managing 504 Plans to ensure students receive the accommodations and support they need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Lacey works collaboratively with families, teachers, administrators, and support staff to develop student-centered plans that meet individual needs and remove barriers to learning. She has also begun traveling to assist fellow Kentucky school districts with the implementation and effective use of the IC Dashboard to better support student services and data management.

Lacey is highly involved with the Kentucky School Counselor Association (KSCA), where she serves on the board, and is also a member of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). She is an active member within her school community and local board, continually seeking opportunities to support students, staff, and families. Through strong organization, communication, and a passion for helping others, she strives to create inclusive environments where all students can thrive.

Participants are encouraged to bring a current 504 Plan to use during the training for hands-on practice implementing plans within the IC Dashboard.



Thursday, September 10, 2026 • 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

You Can Get In the Way!

John Hodge



ABOUT THIS SESSION: Resilience has never been more important than it is right now in America's schools and communities, many of which are still recovering from the risk-factors exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, and in the near future, schools must be purposeful in their efforts to foster resilience in students and staff. In the book, *You Can Get in the Way*, Dr. Hodge defines resilience in the following way: "Resilience refers to the ability to avoid, navigate, bounce back from, get through, get over, go around, or survive adversities of all kinds." This session is the perfect way to inspire your school district, schools and/or community stakeholders to take action. In this session, Dr. Hodge provides an overview of the book along with very practical solutions to help buffer the risk-factors that traditionally hold kids back. It's the perfect launch for a new school year, or a needed boost during the tough months that follow. After being shared with over 800 educators in a state-wide conference, this session has already been described as "life-changing" by many of those lucky enough to hear it.

SPEAKER BIO: Dr. John W. Hodge stands out as one of America's most sought-after speakers in K-12 education. He is renowned for his ability to transform research into practical strategies for academic success. His journey in education began after serving with distinction in the 7th Infantry Division of the United States Army, laying the foundation for a career dedicated to empowering educators and students.

After beginning his journey in education at North Carolina A&T, Dr. Hodge continued his training at Virginia Tech, where he conducted extensive research on student resilience and factors influencing the academic outcomes of children from struggling families. This academic foundation, combined with his hands-on experience in various educational roles, has shaped his unique approach to education reform.

Throughout his career, Dr. Hodge has worn many hats – from reading and English teacher to school administrator and education consultant. Dr. Hodge served as an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) teacher, and later became Associate Director of AVID Center Eastern Division where he helped expand the program to 13 states. His tenure as Director of An Achievable Dream Academy, a high-performing school in an economically challenged area, provided him with invaluable insights into effective educational interventions, particularly for schools serving impoverished children. This experience led him to co-found the Urban Learning and Leadership Center (ULLC), an organization dedicated to student achievement and reducing the achievement gap.

Today, Dr. Hodge serves as the Chief Inspirational Officer of AADULLC, following a strategic merger between ULLC and An Achievable Dream. This union has amplified their collective ability to assist school districts across the United States. What sets Dr. Hodge apart is his remarkable ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice. He has a proven track record of helping educators in diverse settings – rural, urban, and suburban – implement necessary changes to meet and exceed rigorous academic standards. His expertise in creating and sustaining academic excellence has made him an indispensable resource for schools nationwide.

Dr. Hodge's top-selling book, *You Can Get in the Way: How You Can be a Roadblock to Risk Factors* has been used as a guide by thousands of educators to galvanize the efforts of entire school staffs to help students reach their full potential. This influential work brings together those who support students regardless of their job title, creating unified teams focused on student success.

As one of America's most respected voices in education, Dr. John W. Hodge continues to inspire and guide educators, helping them overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. His presentations and consultations serve as catalysts for continuous improvement in schools across the country, solidifying his position as a transformative figure in American education.

John will also be presenting one breakout session.

Friday, September 11, 2026 • 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

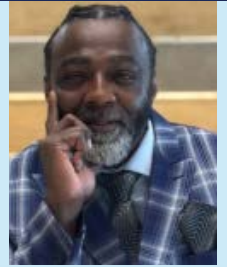
Finding My Way

Gerald "Geo" Gibson

ABOUT THIS SESSION: Throughout this presentation, attendees will hear about the process and power of change Gerald GEO Gibson worked through to build Operation Making A Change. Participants will learn about the school to prison pipeline and articulate violence prevention and intervention strategies. Through the lens of GEO's own life story, participants will leave feeling more empowered to address their own concerns in their communities.

SPEAKER BIO: Gerald Gibson was born and raised in Waukegan, IL. He was lacking direction and encouragement in his life, so he took to the streets seeking identity and purpose. After witnessing countless family and financial hardships, his family was forced to move to Wisconsin. GEO became more intrigued with life on the streets which led him down a path of destruction, despair, and desperate measures. As this cycle continued repeatedly, GEO was forced to look at his own life and make a critical decision to change. While on this journey of self-worth, renewal, and purpose, he created a course of action called Operation Making A Change (OMAC). This program teaches self-worth, encouragement, and motivation with effective and positive results. GEO was the first student of OMAC and has proven his program to be an effective tool of change. His days of allowing life on the streets to perpetrate and dictate his path are over!

Today, GEO is a motivational speaker and advocate of the streets. He volunteers countless hours in schools, prisons, churches, colleges, universities, and peace rallies. He is committed to the cause of helping people in his local community of Lexington, Kentucky and around the world. He has chosen to pay it forward. His philosophy is when you know better, you do better. His mission of stopping the violence, breaking the cycle, and making a change OMAC is in full effect and changing lives. Choose purposely to reach back and pull others forward has catapulted him into a recognizable force of reckoning across America today!



~ TENTATIVE SCHEDULE ~

Wednesday, September 9, 2026

- 1:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Registration & Information Center Open
- 1:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Exhibits Open
- 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. KSCA Bookstore Open
- 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Pre-Conference Sessions

Thursday, September 10, 2026

- 7:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Registration & Information Center Open
- 7:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Exhibits Open
- 7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Light Breakfast with Exhibitors
- 8:15 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Conference Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Opening Keynote Session – John Hodge
- 9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Break with Exhibitors
- 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Breakout Session 1
- 11:00 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Break with Exhibitors
- 11:20 a.m. – 12:20 p.m. Breakout Session 2
- 12:20 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. Box lunches or cold cut buffet
- 1:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Break with Exhibitors
- 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Breakout Session 3
- 2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Break with Exhibitors
- 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Breakout Session 4

Friday, September 11, 2026

- 7:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Registration & Information Center Open
- 7:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Exhibits Open
- 7:45 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. Coffee Break with Exhibitors
- 8:15 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. Breakout Session 5
- 9:15 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Break with Exhibitors
- 9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Breakout Session 6
- 10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Transition Break
- 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Awards Luncheon & Keynote – Gerald “Geo” Gibson

REGISTRATION



REGISTRATION FORM (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

NAME (as it should appear on name badge) _____

JOB TITLE - (REQUIRED PLEASE) _____

ORGANIZATION/SCHOOL DISTRICT _____

WORK ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

CELL PHONE () _____ WORK PHONE () _____

ATTENDEE EMAIL (REQUIRED FOR CONFIRMATION) _____

1. Is this your first time attending: ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Will you be attending the Awards Brunch: ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Level: ☐ Elementary School Counselor ☐ Middle School Counselor ☐ High School Counselor ☐ Post-Secondary School Counselor Educator
☐ Grad Student ☐ Other _____
4. How long have you currently worked as a Certified Professional School Counselor? ☐ N/A ☐ First Year ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 4-8 years ☐ 9-15 years ☐ 15+ years
5. Role: ☐ Professional ☐ Student ☐ Retiree
6. ☐ Member # _____ ☐ Non-Member

A. Main Conference Attend both days (Sept. 10-11)

- ☐ **Early Register** (by July 31, 2026)*
☐ **Regular Registration** (August 1, 2026 - Sept. 4, 2026)
☐ **Final Registration** (after Sept. 4, 2026)

Professional/Affiliate MEMBER**

\$205
\$225
\$255

Graduate Student/ Retiree/Emeritus MEMBER**

\$95
\$115
\$145

Non-Members

\$300

**BECOME A
KSCA MEMBER
OR RENEW
MEMBERSHIP!**
**\$40 FOR
PROFESSIONALS OR
\$25 FOR STUDENTS
& RETIREES!****

B. Pre-Conference Learning Session (Sept. 9) Please choose one.

- ☐ **1. Building Empathy, Resilience, and Independence** – Karin Pulliam
☐ **2. Groups, Groups, Groups!!!** – Loren Dittmar
☐ **3. Taming the Beast** – Lacey Piersol

Professional/Affiliate

\$50

Graduate Student/ Retiree/Emeritus

\$40

Main Conference (A) \$ _____

Pre-Conference (B) \$ _____

Add Membership (C) \$ _____

Total Due (A + B + C) \$ _____

* To qualify for the Early Registration Rate, your registration form AND payment (copy of your purchase order, check, or credit card) must be received or postmarked by the Early Registration cutoff date.
 ** Membership must be good through September 11, 2026 to qualify for membership rates.

REGISTRATIONS CANNOT BE PROCESSED WITHOUT PAYMENT. PLEASE SEND PAYMENT AND REGISTRATION FORM(S) TOGETHER.

How and Where Do I Pay?

	WEBSITE	EMAIL	FAX	PHONE	MAIL
CREDIT CARD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
PURCHASE ORDER		✓	✓		✓
CHECK					✓

WEBSITE: www.ncyionline.org/ky-scac

EMAIL: registrations@ncyi.org

FAX: 423-899-4547

PHONE: 866-318-6294

MAIL: National Center for Youth Issues
 P.O. Box 22185
 Chattanooga, TN 37422-2185

Please make your check or purchase order
 payable to: **National Center for Youth Issues.**

A W-9 is available on the website.

PAYMENT METHOD

- ☐ **PURCHASE ORDER** A COPY OF THE PURCHASE ORDER IS REQUIRED.
 (PAYABLE TO NATIONAL CENTER FOR YOUTH ISSUES, P.O. BOX 22185, CHATTANOOGA, TN 37422-2185)
☐ **CHECK ENCLOSED** (MADE PAYABLE TO NATIONAL CENTER FOR YOUTH ISSUES)
☐ **CREDIT CARD** ☐ PERSONAL ☐ CORPORATE

CARD NO. _____ EXP. DATE _____ CID# _____

NAME ON CARD (PLEASE PRINT) _____

CREDIT CARD BILLING ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE _____ EMAIL _____

CANCELLATION POLICY: If we are forced to cancel the KSCA Conference because of a "force majeure" event, such as a government restriction on large gatherings that cover the intended size of the conference, then we will issue full refunds of the registrations. Otherwise, our normal cancellation policy will be upheld: There will be no refunds after August 9, 2026. All cancellations before August 9, 2026 will be refunded less a \$25 handling fee. The conference is not responsible for and cannot give refunds due to problems beyond its control such as weather or school closings. The sponsors of the conference receive registrant contact information.

On social distancing and other health and safety measures, the regulations/guidelines that apply to hotels and conference centers may change. The KSCA Conference will conform to all necessary regulations/guidelines that are in place as of the date of the conference.

PLEASE NOTE: The attendee will receive a confirmation to the email address provided when their registration is processed (make sure to check Junk/Spam folders). Please allow ample time for processing.

The Kentucky School Counselors Conference will take place at the Griffin Gate Marriott Resort and Spa, Lexington, KY 1800 Newtown Pike, Lexington, KY 40511



All events of the conference will be located at the Griffin Gate Marriott Resort & Spa. Standard rooms at the hotel may be reserved at a special **conference rate of \$172 per night, plus tax**. This rate is **valid through August 20, 2026**.

Please note that when reserving your stay you will be charged an additional \$20.00 daily resort fee on top of the nightly rate of \$172 plus taxes. However, this charge will be modified to \$10.00 upon check out. Guests are not charged when making a reservation.

To make hotel reservations:

CALL: (800) 228-9290 or (859) 231-5100.

Be sure to mention the group code KSCCKSCA or the Kentucky School Counselor Association.

REGISTER ONLINE: Go to www.ncyionline.org/ky-scac and scroll to the “Accommodations” section. Click on “Book a Room.”



Come Learn and Play!

In the evening, make sure you take time to relax and enjoy the surrounding area.

Visit www.ncyionline.org/ky-scac to see the things to do around the beautiful Griffin Gate Marriott Resort and Spa.

Visit the Hamburg Pavilion, just minutes away from the Marriott!

- You can sit back and relax at the many restaurants at the Hamburg Pavilion, such as Logan’s Roadhouse, Tekka, and Old Chicago, along with others.
- At the Hamburg Pavilion enjoy shopping at the White House / Black Market, DSW, Bath & Body Works, and many more!



We hope this conference will educate and equip you to do your job well, and we also hope you will take advantage of the wonderful ways you can relax and be refreshed!