

# NAVIGATING THE WAVES OF INNOVATION

**OCTOBER 14-16, 2026**

EMBASSY SUITES & HAMPTON ROADS  
CONVENTION CENTER  
HAMPTON, VA

Visit [www.ncyionline.org/vscac](http://www.ncyionline.org/vscac) for more information.

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**schoolinks**



*Pre-conference sessions are not included in the conference registration fee. Additional fee applies, see registration section.*

**Wednesday, October 14 | 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

## **1. From Stuck to Ready: Motivational Interviewing for Conversations That Heal**

**Loren Dittmar**



**ABOUT THIS SESSION:** When young people are in pain or struggling, caring adults naturally want to make things easier and solve the problem, yet real meaningful change begins when students feel understood and empowered. In this engaging session, Dr. Loren shares Motivational Interviewing strategies to support students who seem stuck or resistant. Learn how to reduce power struggles, build trust, and spark genuine motivation that moves young people toward true growth and healing.

**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](https://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 a breakout session.*

**Wednesday, October 14 | 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

## **2. Solution Focused Counseling for Anxious Children and Teens: Strategies for School Counselors**

**Natalie Spencer Gwyn**



**ABOUT THIS SESSION:** Counselors often find themselves in situations where they seek interventions to best meet the needs of children and adolescents. When assisting children and adolescents, feelings and behaviors can change very quickly and many children and teens are already equipped to solve minor and routine behavioral problems. Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) has proven to be a great tool for anxious children and teens as they learn to manage challenges at school and home. This interactive presentation will introduce creative and effective SFBC techniques counselors can use in both individual and group counseling, with an emphasis on helping anxious children and teens.

Attendees will gain a better understanding of emphasizing solutions instead of problems, learn the 12 basic assumptions of SFBC, discover strategies to implement SFBC in small and individual group counseling, and develop techniques to help anxious children with developmentally appropriate techniques.

**SPEAKER BIO:** Dr. Natalie Spencer Gwyn is an Assistant Professor at North Carolina A&T State University. She was previously a high school counselor and student assistance counselor (SAP) for many years before moving into higher education. She received her undergraduate and master's degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She later earned a doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision from North Carolina State University. Dr. Spencer is the author of *Mindful Practices for Helping Troubled Teens* and the co-author of *15-Minute Focus: Diversity, Bias, and Privilege: Addressing Racial Inequities to Create Inclusive Learning Environments*. She is also a licensed professional counselor (LPC) in the state of North Carolina, and owns her own private practice, Natalie Spencer Counseling and Consulting. Dr. Spencer Gwyn has presented her research on the local, state, and national level.

***Natalie will also be presenting a breakout session.***

## OPENING SESSION KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Thursday, October 15 | 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

### Staying Relevant while Remaining Resilient

#### Lisa King



**ABOUT THIS SESSION:** In a world that changes so quickly, how can educators remain relevant and up-to-date on current trends when our plates are already so full? And as we strive to learn about innovative practices how can we remain resilient? This keynote session will provide inspiration as well as some practical ideas as we explore both the quest for learning and the need for self-care.

**SPEAKER BIO:** Lisa has worked with students developing and using innovative practices as a school counselor for 20 years. She has won numerous awards in her district and presented her programs at local, state and national conferences. Lisa has authored seven books including her latest book, *Be Your Own Hero*. Her other books include *Mindset Matters*, *Integrating Growth Mindset In Schools*, *Academic Advisement Program*, *Teaching Career Essentials* and *How to Create A College Day*. Lisa attended Tufts University for her undergraduate degree and Georgia State University for her graduate degrees. She lives in Marietta, GA (Atlanta suburb) with her husband and daughter.

*Lisa will also be presenting a breakout session.*

## LUNCHEON KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Friday, October 16 | 12:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.

### The Ripple Effect

#### Dan St. Romain



**ABOUT THIS SESSION:** When you throw a stone into a pond, sometimes it simply sink – “plop.” However, if thrown just right, the rock skips. Instead of the singular “plop”, the skipping rock reaches more water, leaving ripples on the surface – and this energy changes the entire pond. As educators, we throw the stone. In this dynamic opening session, educators will learn simple ways we create ripples in the school setting that positively impact the students we serve.

**SPEAKER BIO:** Dan St. Romain is a national independent educational consultant who provides staff development and consultative services to educators and parents working with children at all developmental levels. Dan is passionate about helping individuals shift their perspective on discipline, understanding the best ways to provide support given the challenges posed in today’s society.

After receiving his master’s degree in education, Dan worked in both private residential and public school settings, as well as at the Region 20 Education Service Center in San Antonio, Texas. His work as a self-contained behavior unit teacher, educational diagnostician, behavior consultant, and director of a learning resource center has afforded him experience at all levels, in both general and special education settings. Dan is now enjoying semi-retirement after having worked in the school system for the past 30 years.

Dan’s overwhelming strength is his skill as a presenter. Although his sessions are exceedingly interactive, his greatest asset lies in his ability to offer participants rich insight into the connectedness between educational practices and student behavior. He is the author of *Lessons from LaRoux: How Needs Shape Behavior in Developing Brains*, *Teach Skills and Break Habits: Growth Mindsets for Better Behavior in the Classroom*, *Positive Behavior Principles: Shifting Perspectives* and *Aligning Practices in Schools*, and several resources for teaching social skills, featuring his chameleon, Juan Pablo.

*Dan will also be presenting a breakout session.*

## *Tentative Schedule*

### **Wednesday, October 14, 2026**

- 1:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Registration & Information Center Open
- 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Pre-Conference Sessions
- 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Exhibits Open
- 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. “Meet and Greet” Welcome Reception (Embassy Suites Manager’s Reception)

### **Thursday, October 15, 2026**

- 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Registration & Information Center Open
- 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Exhibits Open
- 7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast (available in the Exhibit Area)
- 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Opening Session with Featured Speaker and Keynote Speaker – Lisa King
- 10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Transition Break
- 10:15 a.m. – 11:05 a.m. Breakout Session 1
- 11:05 a.m. – 11:35 a.m. Break with Exhibitors
- 11:35 a.m. – 12:25 p.m. Breakout Session 2
- 12:25 p.m. – 1:25 p.m. Box Lunch (available in the Exhibit Area)
- 1:25 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. Breakout Session 3
- 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Grad Student Meet & Greet
- 2:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. Break with Exhibitors
- 2:45 p.m. – 3:35 p.m. Breakout Session 4
- 3:35 p.m. – 3:50 p.m. Transition Break
- 3:50 p.m. – 4:40 p.m. Breakout Session 5
- 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Networking Social (Embassy Suites Manager’s Reception)

### **Friday, October 16, 2026**

- 7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Registration & Information Center Open
- 7:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Exhibits Open
- 7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast (available in the Exhibit Area)
- 8:30 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. Breakout Session 6
- 9:20 a.m. – 9:35 a.m. Transition Break
- 9:35 a.m. – 10:25 a.m. Breakout Session 7
- 10:25 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Morning Break & Exhibit Area – Last Chance!
- 11:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. Breakout Session 8
- 11:50 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Transition Break
- 12:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m. Awards Luncheon & Closing Keynote Speaker – Dan St. Romain



# REGISTRATION



## Become a VSCA member and save!

Before registering for the conference, visit [www.vsca.org](http://www.vsca.org) and click "Join Us" to become or renew your annual membership.

Or you can bundle your membership with your conference registration. See those rates below.

NAME (as it should appear on name badge) \_\_\_\_\_

ATTENDEE EMAIL (REQUIRED FOR CONFIRMATION) \_\_\_\_\_

JOB TITLE - (REQUIRED PLEASE) \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION/SCHOOL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

WORK ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

CELL PHONE ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

VEGETARIAN/GLUTEN FREE MEALS? Yes ☐ No ☐ ATTENDING THE AWARDS LUNCHEON ON FRIDAY? Yes ☐ No ☐

Current VSCA member? Yes ☐ No ☐ Member # \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE **CIRCLE** ALL RATES THAT ARE APPLICABLE AND PLACE THE TOTAL IN THE GRAY BOX.

|                                                                                                         | MEMBER***<br>Professional              | MEMBER***<br>Retiree | GRAD STUDENT      | NON-MEMBER |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <b>Pre-Conference Learning Session - Oct 14 (circle only one)</b>                                       |                                        |                      |                   |            |
| 1. From Stuck to Ready – Loren Dittmar                                                                  | \$50                                   | \$40                 | \$40              | \$80       |
| 2. Solution Focused Counseling for Anxious Children and Teens – Natalie Spencer Gwyn                    | \$50                                   | \$40                 | \$40              | \$80       |
| <b>Main Conference – Oct 15-16</b>                                                                      |                                        |                      |                   |            |
| Early Registration* (by 9/14)                                                                           | \$160                                  | \$70                 | \$70              | \$230      |
| Regular Registration* (9/15-10/11)                                                                      | \$180                                  | \$80                 | \$80              | \$250      |
| <b>Thursday ONLY – Oct 15</b>                                                                           |                                        |                      |                   |            |
| Early Registration* (by 9/14)                                                                           | \$120                                  | NA                   | NA                | \$120      |
| Regular Registration* (9/15-10/11)                                                                      | \$140                                  | NA                   | NA                | \$140      |
| <b>Friday ONLY – Oct 16</b>                                                                             |                                        |                      |                   |            |
| Early Registration* (by 9/14)                                                                           | \$120                                  | NA                   | NA                | \$120      |
| Regular Registration* (9/15-10/11)                                                                      | \$140                                  | NA                   | NA                | \$140      |
| <b>VSCA Membership</b>                                                                                  |                                        |                      |                   |            |
| Membership is good for one year.                                                                        | \$50 (\$25 for first-year counselors.) | \$25                 | Included**        | NA         |
| Registration after October 11, 2026 will be onsite and will add \$20 to the Regular Registration rate.* |                                        |                      | <b>TOTAL DUE:</b> |            |

\* To qualify for the Early or Regular Registration rates, your registration form AND payment (copy of your purchase order, check, or credit card) must be received or postmarked by the Early or Regular Registration cutoff dates.

\*\* All Grad Students receive a free VSCA Membership.

\*\*\* Must be a VSCA Member where noted. Membership must be good through October 16, 2026.

**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          |         |       |     |       | ✓    |

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**WEBSITE:** [www.ncyionline.org/vscac](http://www.ncyionline.org/vscac)

**EMAIL:** [registrations@ncyi.org](mailto: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.

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.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** If we are forced to cancel the VSCA 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 September 14, 2026. All cancellations before September 14, 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. There will be no refunds if you register as a NonMember and then later become a member. Please become a Member or renew your membership before registering for the conference. 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 VSCA Conference will conform to all necessary regulations/guidelines that are in place as of the date of the conference.



## The Virginia School Counselors Conference will take place at the Embassy Suites & Hampton Road Convention Center

1700 Coliseum Drive Hampton, VA 23666

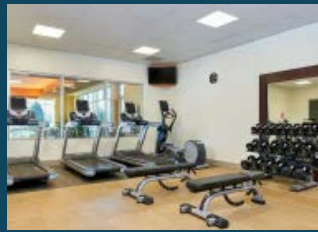
The Embassy Suites, the Conference's host hotel, has a **conference rate of \$165**. This rate is valid while rooms are available. The price includes full, cook-to-order breakfast and evening Manager's Reception. This rate is valid through **September 12, 2026**, while rooms are available.

### To make hotel reservations:

**CALL:** (757) 827-8200 or (800) 362-2779. Be sure to mention the Group Code: **93X**.

**REGISTER ONLINE:** Go to [www.ncyionline.org/vscac](http://www.ncyionline.org/vscac) and scroll to the "Accommodations" section to book a room.

**The Embassy Suites conference rate includes a full,  
cook-to-order breakfast and an evening Manager's Reception!**



## Come Learn and Play!

In the evening, make sure you take time to relax and enjoy the surrounding area. Visit the Peninsula Town Center, less than a mile from the Embassy Suites!

At the Town Center, enjoy shopping at Bath & Body Works, JCPenney, H&M, Barnes & Noble, and many more. You can sit back and

relax at the many restaurants, such as Buffalo Wild Wings, Canvas Social Cuisine, Five Guys Burgers & Fries, and Sushi King, along with others. The Peninsula Town Center has a premium movie theater with leather recliners and gourmet food, so you can finally watch that movie you have been wanting to see.

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!

