



# BRAIN INJURY FLORIDA

Support ● Prevention ● Education ● Advocacy

[BrainInjuryFL.org](http://BrainInjuryFL.org)

## Guiding Systems of Change in Brain Injury Rehabilitation 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Educational Conference



Earn up to 9 CE/CEUs  
Thursday May 22<sup>nd</sup> & Friday May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

University of Florida Research & Academic Center  
at Lake Nona  
6550 Sanger Road, Orlando, FL 32827



Register here:  
[BIF 2025 Conference Registration](#)

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION BROCHURE

**Thursday May 22<sup>nd</sup> & Friday May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025**  
**University of Florida Research & Academic Center at Lake Nona**

**Brain Injury Florida (BIF)** is an advocacy/service non-profit organization operating statewide in Florida that represents and serves the over 899,924 Floridians living with Brain Injury from all causes – traumatic and non-traumatic. **BIF** is a chartered state affiliate of the **Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA)**.

**BIF's** purpose is to improve the quality of life for residents of the state of Florida who have sustained an acquired brain injury (from either traumatic or non-traumatic causes) by promoting effective awareness, education, outreach, treatment, prevention, advocacy, and support.

Please plan to join us for **BIF's** 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Brain Injury Education Conference – all are welcome, including people with brain injury, family members, support groups, brain injury professionals, advocates, state agency staff, legislators, and vendors.

**FEATURING:**



**Aliyah Snyder, PhD**  
Assistant Professor  
Clinical & Health Psychology  
University of Florida



**Nelson Gonzalez, OTR/L, CHHC, CCT, CPMT, CORE, CLT**  
Executive Director  
Florida Rehab Without Walls



**Michael Pizzi, MD**  
Associate Professor  
Neurology & Neurosurgery  
University of Florida



**Jessica Kirwan, MA**  
Assistant Director Research Administration  
University of Florida BRAIN Center



**Drew Nagele, PsyD, ABPP, CBIST-AP**  
Vice President  
Brain Injury Florida



**April Turner, MS, CRC**  
State Head Injury Coordinator  
ADRS Traumatic Brain Injury Program



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## THURSDAY May 22, 2025

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### 8:00 AM REGISTRATION & EXHIBITS

Arrive early and check out Exhibitors from around the state of Florida, providing brain injury rehabilitation and related services – coffee and pastries will be served

### 8:45 AM WELCOME by Denny Armington, MHA, Founding Board President, *Brain Injury Florida*

### 9:00 AM OPENING KEYNOTE

**Speaker: Aliyah Snyder, PhD**

Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical & Health Psychology, University of Florida

#### **Stress to Strength: Lessons Learned from a TBI Journey**

This session will highlight the importance of addressing the stress system in traumatic brain injury (TBI), presented through the author's personal experience with repeated TBIs and professional career as a neuropsychologist. As an Olympic hopeful in the sport of skeleton, she experienced multiple concussions that ultimately ended her Olympic career. Dr. Snyder will share evidence-based insights that improved her recovery and are applied in her practice today. Subtopics include stress management techniques—breathing exercises, mindfulness, activity pacing, and self-compassion—that promote healing and resilience. Attendees will gain practical strategies and a deeper understanding of the connection between stress regulation and TBI recovery.

### 10:00 – 10:15 Break with the Exhibitors - Message from Premier Exhibitors

### 10:15 AM Concurrent Workshop 1 – Emily E. Linck, PhD, CCC-SLP, CBIS

#### **Preparing Families to Manage Agitation after Traumatic Brain Injury: The Role of the Interdisciplinary Team**

This presentation will discuss how healthcare professionals manage agitated behaviors in adults with acquired brain injuries and how those professionals prepare families to manage such behaviors both during admission and after discharge across the continuum of care.

### Concurrent Workshop 2 – Gerald C. Imaezue, PhD, Celine Davis, MS, CCC-SLP, and David Ajayi, MEd

**Bridging Aphasia Care: Revolutionizing Self-Directed Treatments for Aphasia** - Aphasia disrupts communication and quality of life of brain injury survivors. Aphasia care is limited by a shortage of clinicians to meet communicative needs of survivors, necessitating innovative self-directed aphasia treatments for real-world settings. This presentation will describe innovative procedures that integrate mobile health, self-feedback training and AI.

### 11:15 – 11:30 Break with the Exhibitors - Message from Premier Exhibitors



# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## **11:30 AM Concurrent Workshop 3 – Peter Shepis, CRC, CWIC, MA & Jesse Riddle, CRC, CWIC, MA**

### **Vocational Rehabilitation and the World of Work After Brain Injury**

This session will review the evidence-based research about return to work, and provide an overview of the services and programs available through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to assist individuals with brain injury to become successfully employed, including Supported Employment, Customized Employment, Assistive Technology, and Pre-Employment Transition services.

## **Concurrent Workshop 4 – Trevor Persaud, MD**

### **Chronic Stroke Recovery: Vagal Nerve Stimulator**

A vagal nerve stimulator (VNS) is an implantable device that delivers mild electrical pulses to the vagus nerve, enhancing neural plasticity and facilitating motor recovery in chronic stroke patients. Paired with rehabilitative exercises, VNS helps strengthen the brain's ability to relearn motor skills by promoting synaptic changes in the motor cortex. VNS can significantly improve upper limb function, offering new hope for those with persistent deficits years post-stroke.

## **12:30 PM LUNCH & Visit with Exhibitors**

## **1:30 PM AFTER LUNCH PLENARY**

**Speakers: Gordon J. Horn, PhD** National Director of Analytics and Clinical Outcome, NeuroRestorative  
**Frank D. Lewis, PhD** National Director of Clinical Outcomes Services, NeuroRestorative

### **Neurobehavioral outcomes with acquired neurologic injuries: A behavioral intervention workshop**

It has long been recognized that cognition, mood, and behavior are among the most limiting aspects in brain injury recovery. An estimated 11-34% of patients remain with persistent agitated behaviors 9 months post-injury, causing disruption and a major source of family stress. Neurobehavioral disorders include impaired impulse control, explosive outbursts, verbal and physical aggression, poor planning, poor judgment, and poor self-awareness. This workshop reviews current research findings with open discussion regarding home and facility-based behavior management strategies.

## **2:30 PM Break with the Exhibitors - Message from Premier Exhibitors**

## **2:45 PM Concurrent Workshop 5 - Dorian Rose, PT, MS, PhD, FAPTA**

### **Beyond Gait Speed: Steps to Restore Health in the Presence of Post-Stroke Disability**

Approximately 75% of stroke survivors consider community ambulation as an essential but unmet goal of their recovery. Recent evidence suggests that personal and environmental factors may impact community ambulation, even beyond physical impairments. Identification of factors that pose as facilitators or barriers to community ambulation may serve to guide health-care professionals in designing relevant and evidence-based interventions for improving community ambulation. This session will explore the oft-observed disconnect between capacity and performance including the use of appropriate assessments to differentiate each, and the less visible cardiorespiratory impairments present post-stroke, and will discuss avenues to address these often forgotten impairments.



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### Concurrent Workshop 6 – Fiona Caroline Crawford, PhD

#### Identification of Novel Therapeutic Targets for Traumatic Brain Injury

This presentation will cover the current state of basic preclinical research into TBI using laboratory models, including development and characterization of those models, ensuring that they have relevance to the human patient population, and how this work leads to the identification of novel therapeutic targets. Subsequent efforts to validate those new targets and translate the findings into clinical application will also be discussed, as well as the hurdles encountered when translating from mouse to man, and specific examples of new therapeutic targets.

**3:45 PM Break with the Exhibitors – Message from Premier Exhibitors**

**4:00 PM DAY 1 CLOSING PLENARY**

**Speaker: April Turner, MS, CRC**

Alabama State Traumatic Brain Injury Director/State Head Injury Coordinator

#### The Intersection of Behavioral Health and TBI Programs

This session describes the intersection of behavioral health (BH) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) to include the veteran population. The prevalence of individuals with traumatic brain in Indiana and within the Alabama Department of Mental Health System will be described, as well as outcomes and recommendations from TBI and BH programs. Alabama has created a TBI Navigation System/TBI System of Care and online screener that is supporting both systems to advocate for better individualized care. This partnership increased participation and implementation of the online screener across systems such as BH, Vocational Rehabilitation, Veterans, The Unhoused and Foster Care Systems.

**5:00 PM WRAP UP DAY 1**

## FRIDAY May 23,2025

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**8:00 AM REGISTRATION & EXHIBITS**

**8:30 AM Brain Injury Florida Annual Meeting – All are welcome!**

Review of BIF 2024 Annual Report, highlighting accomplishments of the year. Nominations and elections for new Board Directors/Officers will be conducted.

**9:00 AM DAY 2 OPENING PLENARY**

**Speaker: Nelson Gonzalez, OTR/L, CHHC, CCT, CPMT, CORE, CLT and Panel**

Executive Director, Rehab Without Walls and Wellness

#### The Healing Mat: How Jiu Jitsu Supports Brain Injury Rehabilitation

Jiu Jitsu offers a transformative approach to brain injury rehabilitation by harnessing the power of neuroplasticity and cognitive engagement. Through dynamic physical movement, balance training, and strategic problem-solving, practitioners stimulate critical brain regions involved in motor skills, coordination, and cognitive processing. The sport fosters mental resilience, emotional regulation, and social connection, key factors in overcoming the challenges of brain injury. Jiu Jitsu activates the cerebellum, prefrontal cortex, and dopaminergic pathways, supporting recovery in areas such as memory, focus, and mood. This holistic discipline not only aids physical recovery but empowers individuals to reclaim their lives.

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## 10:15 AM Concurrent Workshop 7 – Rigoberto Nunez, MD

### **Transdisciplinary Care in Acute Brain Injury Rehabilitation**

Transdisciplinary team is the most effective and efficient means of multidiscipline care in the acute rehab setting. Using the knowledge of multiple specialties to address the challenges of complex rehab patients, allows for improved care. During this presentation we will address the differences between care models, designing a team/implementation, and effectiveness.

## Concurrent Workshop 8 – Karina Seda, Health & Life Coach

### **The Missing Link: Integrating Emotional Neuroscience in Brain Injury Recovery Systems**

This evidence-based presentation explores the critical intersection of neurological recovery and emotional regulation in brain injury rehabilitation. Drawing from current neuroscience research and clinical observations, this session examines how emotional processing impacts recovery outcomes and introduces a framework for understanding the brain-emotion connection in rehabilitation systems.

## 11:15 – 11:30 Break with the Exhibitors - Exhibitor Prizes

## 11:30 AM CONFERENCE CLOSING PLENARY

*Speakers:* Jessica Kirwan, MA, Assistant Director Research Administration, University of Florida BRAIN Center

Drew Nagele, PsyD, Vice President, Brain Injury Florida

Michael Pizzi, MD, Associate Professor, Neurology & Neurosurgery, University of Florida

### **The Florida Action Plan for Brain Injury**

The University of Florida has a federal grant from the Administration on Community Living, which requires the Florida Brain Injury Advisory Board to conduct a needs assessment and develop a State Plan for advancing brain injury care in the state of Florida. This presentation will describe the results of the Needs Assessment, the subsequent Florida Brain Injury Action Plan that was developed by the Brain Injury Advisory Board, and the importance of moving forward with evidence-based care to better support those living with brain injury in Florida.

## 12:30 PM – CONFERENCE WRAP UP

### **Special Thanks to our 2025 BIF Conference Committee**

Teah Gulley Co-Chair

Drew Nagele Co-Chair

Denny Armington

Cynthia McMahon

Erika Unger

Jaimie Gant

Pamela Rowe

Wendy Carranco



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## HOW TO REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE

### Complete Registration Form

- **Online** at EventBrite  
[BIF 2025 Conference Registration](#)  
Registrations must be submitted with a credit card payment. Please provide your email address on the registration form to receive an electronic confirmation.



OR

- **Complete and E-Mail** the Conference Registration/Payment form found below to: *Brain Injury Florida* c/o Denny Armington – [DArmington@BrainInjuryFL.org](mailto:DArmington@BrainInjuryFL.org)
- **Scholarships** – for survivors or family members who are not able to pay the full cost of Conference registration/travel fees to attend the Conference, partial scholarships may be available by completing the Scholarship Application, which can be found at <https://www.braininjuryfl.org/2025-brain-injury-florida-conference/> and click on the fillable Scholarship Application form.

## UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA RESEARCH & ACADEMIC CENTER, LAKE NONA

This year's **BIF** Educational Conference will be held in-person on Thursday May 23 from 8 AM to 5 PM and Friday May 23 from 8 AM to 12:30 PM, at the University of Florida's Research and Academic Center at Lake Nona, located at 6550 Sanger Road, Orlando, Florida, 32827. Free parking is available right outside!

For those who require overnight accommodations, a special conference rate is available at the nearby hotels listed below if you **book by May 14, 2025**. Reservations for Wednesday and Thursday nights can be made by clicking on the link below to get the special BIF Conference rate or if you want to book fewer or more room nights, call the hotel and ask for the Brain Injury Florida Group Rate:

### [Book your group rate for Brain Injury Florida Annual Education Conference](#)

- SpringHill Suites Orlando Lake Nona  
13700 Boggy Creek Road, Orlando FL 32824  
\$140 per night (407-313-3012)
- Residence Inn Orlando Lake Nona  
6955 Lake Nona Boulevard, Orlando FL 32827  
\$169 per night (407-888-9974)
- Courtyard Lake Nona  
6955 Lake Nona Boulevard, Orlando FL 32827  
\$169 per night (407-856-9165)

## BENEFITS OF ATTENDING

- Network with the Florida brain injury community
- Learn the latest advances in brain injury rehabilitation
- Learn about cutting edge acquired brain injury research
- Learn about brain injury rehabilitation services and supports in your community
- Connect to brain injury support groups in your area
- Conference attendance includes:
  - Annual Membership in *Brain Injury Florida*
  - Participation in Annual **BIF** Annual Meeting
  - Light breakfast Day 1 & Day 2
  - Luncheon Buffet Day 1

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## REGISTRATION FORM

Please Register on-line at  
[BIF 2025 Conference Registration](#)

If you cannot register on-line, you may copy this page and complete one page for each person attending:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any medical/dietary restrictions:

\_\_\_\_\_

Registration Type	Cost	Total
Survivor/Family Member	\$75	\$
Professional	\$200	\$
CEU Fee	\$50	\$
Psychology CEU Fee	\$75	\$
Additional contribution to support Survivor Scholarships		\$
Total		\$



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**Payment Options (only if not doing on-line registration)**

**1. Credit card:**

Card No: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Scan form: [DArmington@BrainInjuryFL.org](mailto:DArmington@BrainInjuryFL.org)

**2. Pay by check, send copy of Registration Form and Check in Regular US Mail:**

Checks should be made out to **Brain Injury Florida, Inc.** and sent to:

Brain Injury Florida, Inc.  
19321 US Hwy 19 North, Suite 307  
Clearwater, FL 33764

**Opt-Out Notice**

You have received this email and 2025 BIF Conference information because your email was on a database of people who had previously expressed interest in brain injury. If you do not wish to continue to receive emails from **Brain Injury Florida**, please send us an email at [info@BrainInjuryFL.org](mailto:info@BrainInjuryFL.org) and type "opt out" and you will be taken off the BIF email list.

**Brain Injury Florida, Inc., is a 501(c) (3) tax exempt organization incorporated in Florida.**

The official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Department of State at <https://search.sunbiz.org/Inquiry/CorporationSearch/ByName>. Registration does not imply endorsement.

# BIF CONFERENCE CE/CEU INFORMATION

Continuing education credits or contact hours have been applied for and are pending approval for the disciplines listed below. To receive CE/CEU credits in a specific discipline or a general attendance certificate, you must register, attend, and complete an evaluation after each session. BIF is not responsible for individual CE credits if this process is not followed, and refunds will not be given.

**CEU FEES | \$50**

**PSYCHOLOGISTS CE FEE | \$75**

**Certified Brain Injury Specialists**

**Certified Case Manager**

**Rehab Nursing**

**Occupational Therapists\***

**Certified Rehabilitation Counselors**

**Physician CME Category 2**

**Physical Therapists\***

**Psychologists (APA)\*\***

**Social Workers\***

**Speech Therapists\***

BIF is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. BIF maintains responsibility for this program and its content.



\* Florida CEUs only; all other CEUs are national.

\*\* This conference includes 9 APA CEs. APA Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology) approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. APA Division 22 maintains responsibility for this program and its content. For more information about Division 22 or to inquire about membership, please visit [www.div22.org](http://www.div22.org).

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