



VOICE *IN ACTION*

Agenda

August 13-16, 2026

The Oncenter
800 S State St,
Syracuse, NY 13202



Thursday, August 13: 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. – Gala Check-In

Thursday, August 13: 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. – Welcome Gala: Under the Stars - Advocacy on the Hour (OCFS: 3, 5)

Friday, August 14: 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. – Breakfast

Friday, August 14: 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Registration and Vendors

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. - Welcome

8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. - Opening Session

Thriving Through Uncertainty

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 10

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Mike's high energy, practical strategies, and real-world wisdom teach audience members not just to survive but truly thrive today – in spite of the rapid change and constant pressure that they face. With his dynamic style and relatable stories, he equips the audience with the tools to navigate stress, build resilience, and turn uncertainty into an opportunity for growth and strength. This isn't just talk – it's a roadmap to reclaiming emotional wellness and stepping boldly into the future with confidence. Be prepared for drumming, movement, and truth that unleash new levels of growth!

Presenter: Mike Veny

9:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (choose one)

Teach & Sign: ASL for Preschool Classrooms

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: This practical workshop helps child care educators use sign language during routines, transitions, social-emotional learning moments, and early literacy activities to reduce frustration, increase engagement, and build calmer, language-rich classrooms. Participants will leave with ready-to-use strategies they can immediately apply in preschool settings.

Presenter: Lillian Hubler Tobin

Child Care – What We Need from State and Federal Government and How to Get It

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 5

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Public investments in child care are essential. With level federal funding in recent years and cuts to other programs impacting NY's budget, it's clear that the current system isn't working. This workshop will provide an overview of:

- Current public investments in child care
- How the gears turn to make change
- What CSEA and AFSCME are doing to improve funding and programs that support child care educators and working families.

Our discussion will identify current funding and policy shortfalls, solutions and how CSEA/VOICE can engage to make a difference.

Presenters: Yvonne Bramble & Becky Levin - AFSCME

From Big Ideas to Everyday Realities: Shaping Child Care, Communities and Change

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 7

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: OCFS will provide an overview of all child care work and initiatives included in the Executive budget, share out about the work of the NYS OCFS Impact Project, and provide updates and data on how recent initiatives have impacted child care availability, the workforce, and the trajectory of the Child Care Assistance PROGRAM.

Presenter: Briane Tice

Meet Your ELC

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 5

Description: Come meet your Early Learning and Care Representative as they share information about what is going on in your region, chapter, and county. They will share wins and successes and what the goals are to advocate and increase membership and leadership in your chapters.

Presenters: ELC STAFF



9:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (choose one) (continued)

Active Supervision in Child Care

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3, 4, 7

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: The safety of children is the driving force behind the New York State Child Day Care Regulations and it's at the root of everything you do. The foundation of keeping children safe is providing competent supervision at all times. During this training you will learn about creating a culture of safety in your program, ways to implement the six Head Start active supervision strategies to keep children safe and prevent injuries in your program, and how this information aligns with NYS Child Day Care Regulations.

Presenters: Katharine Manning & Casey Becker

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. (choose one)

Wired for Calm or Alarm

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 10

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: It is important to acknowledge how much impact our everyday interactions with our children can have on their developing brains and long-term wellness. Our children's brains are like a computer, at times offline. The wiring is dependent upon the experiences it receives. When stress or distress is induced, and not reduced or regulated, challenges ensue. This session addresses the question: "How do my caregiving or teaching choices affect the long-term chemical balance and higher order thinking of children?" The truth is our children's brains only come online and develop effective regulatory systems with effective caregiving and teaching over time.

Presenter: Jeanine Fitzgerald

Bridging the Gap

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 5, 6, 7

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: It's frustrating to operate a successful family childcare program only to continually hear that whatever you do, never seems to be "good enough". Concerns about the inconsistent and often selective application of regulations, as well as administrative policies that disadvantage family and group family childcare educators, are explanations frequently given by hundreds of educators leaving the profession. How do educators 'bridge the gap'; the gap that separates thousands of family childcare educators from the often-unrealistic administrative expectations imposed on them. This workshop provides doable strategies to help educators offer excellent care, while allowing them to protect the integrity and sustainability of their small businesses.

Presenter: Sharon Woodward

CSEA VOICE Legal Representation

OCFS Topic Code: 4, 5, 7

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: OCFS has many forms of enforcement in their licensing process. CSEA attorneys will help educators protect themselves and navigate the various forms of enforcement through OCFS and CPS.

Presenter: Eric Wilke

Meet Your ELC

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Presenters: ELC STAFF

Benefits Overview

OCFS Topic Code: 4, 5, 7

Description: Educators will learn about insurance needs and what is available to protect themselves and their businesses.

Presenter: Scott Futia



2:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. (choose one)

7 Biggest Financial Mistakes Childcare Business Owners Make

OCFS Topic Code: 5

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Many childcare business owners are working hard but still not seeing the profit or clarity they expected. In this session, we break down the most common financial mistakes that impact cash flow, taxes, and long-term growth—and more importantly, how to correct them. Attendees will walk away with practical strategies they can implement immediately to improve their financial position and make more confident business decisions.

Presenter: Shanita Jones

Getting Organized

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 5

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Child care educators are responsible for a lot of paperwork. This workshop will help participants get and stay in compliance with the Office of Children and Family Services, Child Care Assistance Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program regulations and procedures. Tips will be shared to set up a system that will make it easier for educators to manage documents.

Presenters: Armett Barnes & Nancy Cordero

Peek A Boo, I See You!

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3

Description: In this 1.5-hour workshop we will discuss the challenges family childcare educators face in completing observations and assessments within their programs. From the distractions of being the only caregiver to difficulties in securing the proper framework to complete quality assessments for all birth to 5 children. The recommended frequency of both anecdotal observations and formal assessments is important. Completing observations for both developmental milestones and social emotional development. How to create your own budget friendly assessment tool kit for each age group (infant, toddler, preschool), Jessica will bring sample toolkits for reference as well as an item

list for each kit. Several kits will be raffled during the session for attendees. We will also discuss how to create individualized development plans for each child in your care to ensure that the specific educational and social emotional needs of each child are addressed and met. The final part of this discussion will be how to create open communication and respectful dialogue with parents/caregivers to ensure that concerns or questions can be openly discussed.

Presenter: Jessica Dean

Building High-Quality Environments: Using FCCERS-3 & QUALITYstarsNY to Strengthen Practice

OCFS Topic Code: 4, 5, 8

Description: During this interactive workshop, participants will explore how to structure and sustain high-quality environments in family child care settings. Using the FCCERS-3 tool as a framework, participants will gain an understanding of how environmental quality is assessed and how it connects to intentional program planning and continuous quality improvement. The session will also highlight alignment with QUALITYstarsNY standards, helping educators see the connection between assessment practices and statewide expectations for high-quality care.

Presenter: Rachel Zielinski - QSNY

Active Supervision in Childcare

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3, 4, 7

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

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Presenters: Katharine Manning & Casey Becker

4:30 pm – 5:30 p.m. Keynote Session

Emotional Etiquette™ for Early Childhood Education

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 10

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Emotional Etiquette™ is the intentional practice of recognizing, regulating, and responding to emotions, yours and the children's, with calmness, dignity, and professionalism. It is knowing that you have the power to steward your presence regardless of your mood, your stress level, or even the adverse childhood experiences and adult challenges you have endured. Your history may explain you, but it does not get to control you. In early childhood settings, your emotional presence becomes the emotional thermostat of the room. Children do not just hear what you say; they feel who you are. Your tone, posture, patience, presence, and pauses shape the safety, trust, and learning environment for every child in your care.

Presenter: Dr. Pamala Brown-Grinion



7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. – Breakfast

7:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. – Registration and Vendors

8:00 am – 9:30 a.m.

Activating and Embracing Joy

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 10

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: No dark fate determines the future. We do. Each moment we are able to create and re-create our lives and the quality of humanity we contribute to life. We can live in joy even in the face of life inevitable adversities. Joy is what makes the human experience fulfilling. This session leads us to the discovery of how joy differs from happiness and where joy is truly found. We also identify how happiness can be a barrier to a life of joy.

Presenter: Jeanine Fitzgerald

9:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (choose one)

Childcare Profit Systems

OCFS Topic Code: 5

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Strong childcare programs don't just rely on hard work—they rely on systems that support consistent financial performance. In this session, we walk through the key financial systems every childcare business should have in place to improve cash flow, increase profitability, and create long-term stability. Attendees will gain clarity on how their numbers should work together and walk away with practical ways to begin strengthening their financial foundation.

Presenter: Shanita Jones

Unleash Your Groove

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3, 4

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Get ready to feel the beat, break down barriers, and build powerful connections. This electrifying, hands-on experience uses the universal language of rhythm to bring people together, spark creativity, and ignite a true sense of togetherness. No drumming skills are required. Attendees just need to bring their energy and an open mind so that they can discover how making music side by side creates trust, teamwork, and belonging like nothing else can. By the end, audience members won't just hear the rhythm - they'll feel it, and then they'll leave more connected, energized, and in sync than ever before!

Presenter: Mike Veny

The Calm, Connected Classroom: Using Sign Language to Support Positive Behavior and Emotional Regulation

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: When communication breaks down, behavior often escalates. This workshop shows educators how to use sign language, visual supports, and

predictable routines to strengthen regulation, reduce power struggles, and create emotionally safe learning environments.

Presenter: Lillian Hubler Tobin

Compassionately Confronting Conflict

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3, 4

Description: Conflict is inevitable, but it doesn't have to be intimidating or destructive. This empowering workshop equips participants with the tools to approach conflict with confidence, empathy, and compassion. Learn how to shift your perspective on conflict from something to fear into an opportunity for growth, understanding, and collaboration. Through reflective exercises, practical strategies, and role-playing scenarios, participants will explore how to communicate effectively, manage emotions, and address disagreements without escalating tension. By the end of the workshop, you'll be prepared to approach difficult conversations with clarity and care, fostering healthier and more productive relationships in personal and professional settings.

Presenter: Paula Mills

CCTA

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 5

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Child Care Educators will learn how to use the Child Care Time and Attendance (CCTA) KinderConnect Program to track time and attendance for children on the Child Care Assistance Program.

Presenters: Armett Barnes & Nancy Cordero



1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. (choose one)

All About Boundaries

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3, 7

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Any confusion of responsibility and ownership is a problem of boundaries. So, children need to develop physical and emotional boundaries to distinguish what their responsibility is and what it isn't. When a child does not learn to take responsibility for his behavior and emotions, his opportunities in life become very limited and pain becomes perpetual. This session navigates through the setting of effective boundaries and what to do when children or adults choose to resist or ignore them.

Presenter: Jeanine Fitzgerald

Using Loose Parts to Create Meaningful Experiences in our Learning Environment

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: This course explores how loose parts—open-ended, movable materials such as natural objects, recyclables, and everyday household items—can be used to foster creativity, problem-solving, and exploration in early childhood environments. Participants will learn strategies for intentionally integrating loose parts into learning spaces to support cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development while encouraging child-led discovery. Emphasis will be placed on creating safe, inclusive, and engaging environments where children can experiment, collaborate, and construct meaningful learning experiences across mixed-age groups.

Presenter: Keshon Mack-Brown

DSS 101

OCFS Topic Code: 3, 5

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Come learn how to navigate the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) with tips, tricks and information on program updates.

Presenters: Nancy Cordero & Wendy Nashid-Jackson

Urban Daycares Grow Food Too, E I E I O

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 2

Description: In this focused follow-up training to At My Daycare There's a farm EIEIO. We focus specifically on incorporating gardening practices and sourcing local food. No prior course attendance or knowledge is necessary to attend this course. Love Farm to ECE concepts but live in an urban area? Is lack of land for a garden or restrictive city building code preventing you from creating a gardening space for your daycare? Let's talk about alternative strategies. In this 1.5-hour workshop we will look at creative ways to incorporate gardening, obtain locally sourced foods, grow it, try it, like it and other farm to ECE concepts in urban spaces.

Presenter: Jessica Dean

Having Tough Conversations with Families of Children who Require Additional Support

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 4, 8

Description: This workshop supports early childhood professionals in confidently and professionally communicating with families when a child may need additional support. Participants will learn how to approach sensitive conversations with empathy, clarity, and cultural responsiveness while maintaining strong family partnerships. The training includes practical strategies, sample language, and real-life scenarios to help educators discuss concerns related to behavior, development, and learning in a supportive and solutions focused way.

Presenters: Gaby Paulino & Yohaina Martinez



2:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. (choose one)

Plug the Money Leaks in Your Childcare Business

OCFS Topic Code: 5

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Revenue is coming in—but where is it going? This session helps childcare business owners identify hidden financial leaks that are quietly draining their profits. We walk through how to uncover gaps in pricing, expenses, and financial management, while also identifying opportunities to increase revenue so they can retain more of what they earn and grow more intentionally. This topic can be delivered as a single session or expanded into a workshop-style training. I've taught it across one, two, or five sessions depending on the level of depth and support desired. It includes a workbook for implementation, and some of the exercises can be completed live during the session to help attendees begin applying what they're learning right away.

Presenter: Shanita Jones

Gentle Hands, Safe Hearts: Calming a Crying Baby Without Harm

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 2, 9

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: This is engaging, trauma-informed training that explores how to calm a crying baby safely while recognizing that a caregiver's response is often shaped by their own lived experiences. This is referred to as "ghosts in the nursery." Participants will learn how to interpret infant crying as communication, apply evidence-based soothing techniques, and understand the serious risks of harmful responses such as shaking. The session also guides educators in developing self-awareness and emotional regulation strategies so they can pause, process, and respond intentionally rather than react to stress or past triggers. Grounded in culturally responsive practices, this training empowers participants to create nurturing, safe environments where infants feel secure and where caregivers feel confident, regulated, and equipped to handle even the most challenging moments with care and professionalism.

Presenter: Dr. Pamala Brown-Grinion

Hands-On SEL: Positive Preventive Activities

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: This interactive workshop gives child care educators proactive, practical activities that build resilience, cooperation, self-awareness, and positive relationships before challenges escalate. Participants will learn engaging strategies they can use immediately to strengthen social-emotional development, support classroom climate, and promote success for all children.

Presenter: Lillian Hubler-Tobin

Let's Celebrate What You are Doing Right!

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3, 4

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: So much emphasis on what needs to be 'improved' and not enough acknowledgment of what you're doing right. This workshop allows educators to celebrate all the successes they've experienced along the way. Come share some of the creative solutions you've introduced to deal with the daily challenges you encounter in a typical family childcare setting. For example: How do you successfully meet the needs of all the children in a mixed age group? What does your daily routine really look like? What techniques do you use to maintain a positive attitude? How do you manage your group when a licensor makes an unannounced visit? Come share your expertise!

Presenter: Sharon Woodward

Put it in Writing

OCFS Topic Code: 4, 5, 7

Description: This session will enable Child Care Educators to establish a business relationship with parents, identify the key elements of policies and procedures and enforce agreements with parents.

Presenters: Nancy Cordero, Cheryl Oare, Nikki Johnson, Wendy Nashid-Jackson

4:30 pm – 5:30 p.m. Closing Session

Keeping it Home-Based, Not Classroom-Based: Designing Authentic Childcare Environments

OCFS Topic Code: 1, 3, 4

Traducción al español en vivo disponible.

Description: Family child care educators offer a unique, relationship-centered approach that can't be replicated in traditional classrooms – yet expectations often blur those lines. This engaging keynote invites educators to reflect on the strengths of home-based care, challenge one-size-fits-all practices. Participants will leave feeling affirmed, empowered, and equipped to deliver high-quality care rooted in the power of home.

Presenter: Keshon Mack-Brown

