

C&R NEWS

Counseling & Rehabilitation Program Newsletter

(Red brick pathways leading to a metal and brick gate. Behind the gate lie trees and a red brick building)

June is PTSD Awareness Month: Understanding, Supporting, and Healing Together

As part of our ongoing commitment to mental wellness and inclusive care, USC's Counseling and Rehabilitation Program joins the national movement in recognizing



An infographic with hands holding a teal ribbon for PTSD awareness month.

June as **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month**. This month serves as a vital reminder to elevate conversations around trauma, reduce stigma, and provide resources for healing and hope.

What is PTSD?

PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. While it is often associated with veterans and combat exposure, PTSD can affect anyone — including survivors of abuse, accidents, natural disasters, or other life-threatening events. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and emotional detachment, often interfering with a person's ability to function in daily life.

Why Awareness Matters:

Despite increased understanding of mental health, PTSD is still widely misunderstood. Many individuals suffer in silence due to shame, stigma, or lack of access to culturally competent care. By promoting awareness, we foster empathy and create a space where survivors feel safe to seek help.

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(Students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

Save the Date

July 31st, 2026:

Ollie Johnson Memorial
Interstate 95 Annual Health
Fair

August 14th, 2026:

New and Returning Student
Orientation Event

August 18th, 2026:

First Day of Fall '26 Classes

October 10th, 2026:

Learning Community
Saturday Event

CHECK OUT OUR
SOCIALS!



June is PTSD Awareness Month: Understanding, Supporting, and Healing Together

How You Can Get Involved:

- Learn the signs and symptoms of PTSD and how to support someone who may be struggling.
- Share information through social media, community talks, or personal stories (with permission), to help normalize conversations around trauma.
- Encourage individuals to seek support. USC students can access free and confidential counseling through the Office of Student Health and Well Being.



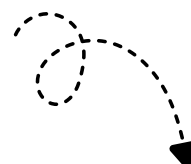
A teal ribbon to represent PTSD
awareness month.

**24/7 Mental Health Support
from the Office of Student
Health and Well Being at USC:
833-664-2854**

The Clinic for Counseling and Assessment Welcomes Newest Student Staff Members

The CCA, as you've been reading, is growing. We are excited to welcome three newly hired Graduate Assistants, **Shaunarey Harris-Amos**, **Bellrica Williams** and **Colette Costello** who will assist in staffing and operating the clinic. Each of these talented students bring in a rich skillset along with their own unique perspectives.

Read on to hear from our new GAs!





(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

Meet a Few of Our New CCA Graduate Assistants!

“As someone who is from a rural community, I appreciate the opportunity to be a graduate assistant at the CCA. It is great to see the progress that is being made in rural communities as it relates to mental health services. As a GA, I am gaining a deeper understanding of what it means to actively advocate for clients to address rural community mental health stigma and provide them with the resources that they deserve. I am recognizing how crucial it is to navigate dual relationships professionally in the community. The CCA is also helping me to expand my counseling skills to address the complexities of co-occurring disorders and to promote client safety. I look forward to learning about more ways to provide telehealth services and apply theoretical frameworks in counseling sessions in my future work.” - **Bellrica Williams**



Bellrica Williams.



Colette Costello.

“I am so excited to be a part of the Clinic for Counseling and Assessment! As a graduate assistant, my hope is to continue to utilize my skills and learn more about serving rural communities. This opportunity allows me to continue increasing my confidence as a counselor in training as I move through Practicum and Internship. I am looking forward to working with my fellow graduate students in increasing our awareness and serving those with limited access to services. With my specialization being in addictions counseling, my work at the CCA is broadening my horizons to work outside the scope of Substance Use Disorders, while still also bringing that knowledge into my work. My hope is to continue to work in my own underserved community in Georgetown County and provide access to resources for those who need it.” - **Colette Costello**



(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

Celebrating Pride Month

Each June, Pride Month offers an opportunity to celebrate the resilience, diversity, and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual and gender minority (LGBTQ+) communities. It is also a time for reflection—recognizing the progress that has been made while acknowledging the work that remains to ensure equitable access to affirming mental health care.

For counselors and rehabilitation professionals, LGBTQ+ awareness extends far beyond a single month of recognition. It is a fundamental component of ethical, culturally responsive practice. Every client deserves to feel seen, respected, and understood, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Creating affirming counseling spaces helps foster trust, strengthens the therapeutic alliance, and ultimately leads to more effective treatment outcomes.

Research consistently demonstrates that LGBTQ+ individuals experience higher rates of anxiety, depression, trauma, substance use, and suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. These disparities are not inherent to LGBTQ+ identities but are often the result of chronic stress associated with discrimination, stigma, family rejection, bullying, and barriers to accessing competent healthcare. Understanding these unique stressors allows counselors to provide care that is grounded in empathy rather than assumption.



A happy pride month sign in front of a rainbow flag.

As we celebrate Pride Month, let us reaffirm our commitment to creating counseling relationships rooted in respect, compassion, and inclusivity. By embracing diversity and continually expanding our cultural awareness, we strengthen not only our professional competence but also our ability to empower clients to live authentic, meaningful lives

Happy Pride Month! May this month inspire continued learning, advocacy, and a renewed dedication to providing affirming care for every individual we have the privilege to serve.





(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

Alumni Spotlight: Spring '26 Graduate Aileen Pagan-Welch Published on CarterHears

The University of South Carolina Counseling and Rehabilitation Program is proud to highlight a recent publication by **Spring 2026 program graduate Aileen Pagan-Welch**, whose paper, **"Reframing Self Advocacy: A Global Inclusion Approach for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students,"** was recently featured in the **Pulse & Praise** section of CarterHears.com—a space dedicated to celebrating the voices, achievements, and values that make their team and community so special.

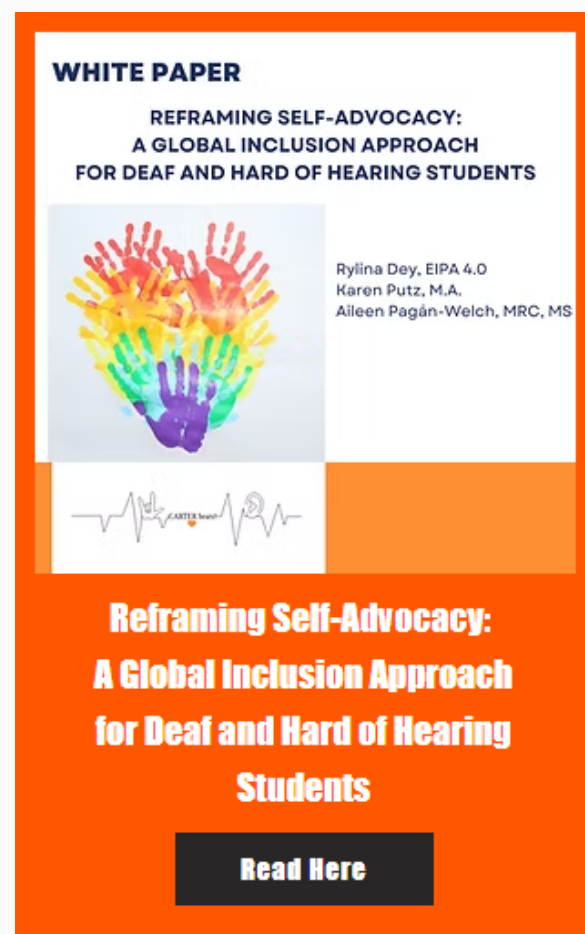
In this thoughtful and empowering paper, Aileen explores the importance of reframing self-advocacy through a global lens that emphasizes inclusion, accessibility, and empowerment for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. Rather than viewing self-advocacy solely as an individual responsibility, she encourages educators, service providers, and communities to foster environments where accessibility, collaboration, and shared responsibility make inclusion the norm. Her work highlights the value of recognizing Deaf and Hard of Hearing students' strengths while promoting equitable access to educational opportunities and meaningful participation. These themes reflect current conversations in the field regarding communication access, identity, and inclusive educational practices

Aileen's publication reflects the values of advocacy, cultural humility, and person-centered practice that are central to the Counseling and Rehabilitation profession. Her scholarship demonstrates how emerging professionals can contribute meaningful perspectives that promote equity and improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities both locally and globally. We congratulate Aileen on this outstanding accomplishment and are proud to celebrate her continued contributions to the profession. We encourage our students, alumni, site supervisors, and community partners [to read her inspiring article](#):

"Reframing Self Advocacy: A Global Inclusion Approach for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students."



Aileen Pagan-Welch.



An orange cover of Aileen's article.



(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

2026-2027 CRSA Officer Nominations Now Open

The Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association (CRSA) is an organization run entirely by student representatives with oversight from staff member, Patrick Demery. Our most recent CRSA Officers have hosted numerous fundraising and student life events throughout their tenure including food and clothing drives, Safe Space Workshops, participation in the EdVenture Sensory Night, USC Writing Center workshops and Student Power Hour sessions just to name a few.

Each academic year, the CRSA elects a new group of officers to serve as student representatives for the organization and the selection process is officially underway. All current Counseling and Rehabilitation students within the program are invited to reach out to Patrick at patrick.demery@uscmed.sc.edu to either express your interest in a CRSA position or to nominate a peer colleague who you think has the potential to represent their peers during the '26-'27 academic year.

Please join us as we thank the officers for 2025-2026 year: **Tricia Mueller - President, Leah Limbaugh - Vice President, Haley Hartsfield - Treasurer, and Skylar Linder - Secretary** and begin the search for the new guard.

SC-CATER Summer Hours and Donation/Gift Site

The [South Carolina Center for Assistive Technology and Educational Research \(SC-CATER\)](#) is a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment of faculty, professionals, persons with disabilities, and the community working together to enhance the lives of persons with and without disabilities in the areas of school and transitioning to work. At the heart of the Center are the core values of equality, equity, and access. We hold the belief that no person should be deprived of services, benefits, or opportunity due to a disability.

As part of the SC-CATER mission, it is a goal to produce and provide training on assistive technology and related educational resources to graduate students in the School of Medicine's (SOM) rehabilitation counseling program, and allied helping and health professions at the University of South Carolina. To this end, the SC-CATER Facility is open to the public every **Sunday afternoon from 1:00pm-5:00pm**. During these times, you can find C&R Graduate Assistants working with people of all ages, with and without disabilities, to provide a free, supportive community of exploration, empowerment, and belonging.

Please consider making a small donation or sharing this site's information with friends, family, churches, organizations, businesses, and any recent lottery winners.

[Donation/Gift link](#)

[SC-CATER Website](#)



Two students interact with assistive technology at SC-CATER.



(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

Blackboard: Did You Know?

Don't forget to check out the new Alumni mentorship feature on blackboard! Students of the C&R Program are now able to access the contact information of select alumni at any time by navigating to the **"Professional Development"** tab in Blackboard, found under the **"Rehabilitation Learning Community"** organization. Students are encouraged to reach out to the listed mentors directly to set up a time for a mentorship session.



Blackboard

Upon opening the list of alumni, you will see each previous students' contact information and typical availability, as well as their current role, credentials, and practice focus. This is a great and efficient way to make real-world connections in the field, learn more about what to expect as a future counselor, and receive guidance from individuals who have gone through the program as well as the practicum and internship process.

Wellness Corner

The 4-7-8 breathing technique is a simple yet powerful practice to reduce stress and promote relaxation. To do it: inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale slowly through your mouth for 8 seconds. Repeat this cycle up to four times. This method helps calm the nervous system, lower anxiety, and improve sleep by encouraging deep, mindful breathing.



A graphic depicting calm breathing.

Writing Tip: Citing Electronic Sources

Some electronic citations necessitate the use of brackets. APA style dictates that brackets should directly surround their content without spaces (e.g., [bracketed content] should look like this). When possible, include the year, month, and date in references. If the month and date are not available, use the year of publication. Additionally, APA 7th edition no longer requires the use of "Retrieved from" before URLs or DOIs; special exceptions, however, are made for resources that are unarchived. Including the retrieval date for these sources indicates to readers that the version of the work they retrieve may be different than what was originally used. (Source: <https://owl.purdue.edu>)

Pet of the Month

Meet our Pet of the Month, Bánh Bèo! "Bánh Bèo became a part of our family 3 months after the sudden passing of my first cat Appa. Her sister Bánh Mì grieved Appa so hard and was so lonely, now the house feels less empty with a new friend to play with. Bánh Bèo is a Vietnamese rice cake and Bánh Mì is a vietnamese sandwich. They are two peas in a pod." - C&R Student, Cece Mai



Bánh Bèo sits on her grey cat tree.

Show us your pet by filling out the form below:

Pet of the Month

Save the Date

Ollie Johnson Memorial Interstate 95 Annual Health
Fair - July 31st

****Mandatory**** New and Returning Student
Orientation Event – Friday August 14th from 8:30am-
4:30pm

First day of Fall '26 classes – Tuesday, August 18th

****Mandatory**** Learning Community Saturday Event
– Saturday, October 10th from 8:30am-4:30pm