

**WS 23: Practical Mental Health Tools for Forensic Toxicologists and Toxicology Educators: Communication, Leadership, and Organizational Strategies**

Audience Knowledge: Basic

**Workshop Chairs**

Kristen Burke

M.S., MBA

[Kristen@soft-tox.org](mailto:Kristen@soft-tox.org)

Regional Toxicology Liaison Program

Regional Toxicology Liaison

Sabra Jones

PhD, D-ABFT

[Sabra@soft-tox.org](mailto:Sabra@soft-tox.org)

Regional Toxicology Liaison Program

Regional Toxicology Liaison

**Abstract**

Forensic toxicologists routinely absorb difficult material and experiences such as crime scene photographs, graphic case narratives, and traumatic death investigations while managing chronic stressors unique to the field: case backlogs, adversarial courtroom testimony, and the cumulative toll of high-stakes, high-volume work. Burnout is common, and these challenges are difficult to address. This workshop is designed to fill that gap for forensic toxicology professionals and educators.

The first half provides participants with foundational information on stress physiology and trauma exposure research most relevant to forensic settings, then introduces practical regulatory tools, focusing on what the evidence supports and how they translate to a workplace context. The second half explores communication across personality types, team dynamics, and leadership approaches that support psychological safety, while also attending to the realities of hierarchical structures and resource-limited forensic settings. Participants leave with a practical, adaptable toolkit and a concrete implementation framework.

## **Speakers**

Kristen Burke

M.S., MBA

[Kristen@soft-tox.org](mailto:Kristen@soft-tox.org)

Regional Toxicology Liaison Program

Regional Toxicology Liaison

Dee DeLeon

DeLeon, LPCC, NCC, TPMC

[Dee@strawberryvalleycounseling.com](mailto:Dee@strawberryvalleycounseling.com)

Strawberry Valley Counseling

Licensed Psychotherapist/Clinical Counselor

Rebecca Grondel

MA, LMFT

[Grondeltherapy@gmail.com](mailto:Grondeltherapy@gmail.com)

Abundance Family Therapy

Licensed Family Therapist

Sabra Jones

PhD, D-ABFT

[Sabra@soft-tox.org](mailto:Sabra@soft-tox.org)

Regional Toxicology Liaison Program

Regional Toxicology Liaison

Karen Scott

PhD

[Karenscott@uabmc.edu](mailto:Karenscott@uabmc.edu)

University of Alabama, Birmingham

Director of Forensic Toxicology, Medical Toxicology & Associate Professor of Laboratory Medicine

## Workshop Agenda

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
<b>08:00 AM - 08:05 AM</b>	Welcome, Objectives, and Framing Mental Health in Forensic Toxicology	Burke
<b>08:05 AM - 08:20 AM</b>	Brief Foundations: Stress Physiology, Vicarious Trauma, and Cumulative Exposure	DeLeon
<b>08:20 AM - 08:40 AM</b>	Academic Toxicology, Global Perspectives, and Student Disclosures	Scott
<b>08:40 AM - 09:00 AM</b>	Building a Mental Health Framework + Action Commitments and Closing Reflections	Jones
<b>09:00 AM - 10:00 AM</b>	Practical Regulation Tools for Laboratory Professionals	Grondel and Burke
<b>10:00 AM - 10:30 PM</b>	Break	N/A
<b>10:30 AM - 10:45 AM</b>	Personality Style Differences, Team Dynamics, and Communication Under Pressure	DeLeon and Grondel
<b>10:45 AM - 12:00 PM</b>	Role-Based Breakout Sessions: Bench-Level, Supervisory, and Leadership Scenarios, Debrief and Closing Reflections	All Speakers