

Panhandle Public Health District

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For immediate release

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2026 Prevention Symposium: April 23, 2026 at the Gering Civic Center

The Panhandle Prevention Coalition (PPC), proudly part of Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD), will host the 2026 Prevention Symposium: *United for Change – Strengthening Minds and Communities* on Thursday, April 23, 2026, at the Gering Civic Center.

This full-day symposium will bring together community members, educators, healthcare professionals, first responders, prevention specialists, and advocates from across the Nebraska Panhandle to explore timely topics related to behavioral health, substance use prevention, youth mental health, and community resilience.

The 2026 symposium features a diverse lineup of speakers offering a mix of personal experience, data-driven insight, and practical tools designed to support prevention and early intervention efforts across the lifespan.

Speakers include Jake Danielson, TEDx speaker and mental health advocate; Jay Martin, School Safety & Security Director with the Nebraska Department of Education; Kaitlyn Shannon, Miss Scottsbluff County's Teen 2025/2026 and youth mental health advocate; Justin S. Dillard, Assistant Special Agent in Charge with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); Kristine Benda, APRN, pediatric nurse practitioner and researcher with the University of Nebraska Medical Center; Miranda Stoll, Licensed Mental Health Provider And Substance Use Counselor; Jim Cowser, CEO of Central Wyoming Counseling Center; and Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers.

Highlights of the day include:

- A dynamic presentation focused on resilience, self-care, vulnerability, and hope
- An in-depth look at the impact of social media, digital platforms, and artificial intelligence on youth behavior and mental health
- Youth voice and advocacy centered on breaking stigma and supporting teen mental health
- Current drug trends presented by the DEA, paired with the interactive Hidden in Plain Sight exhibit for parents and caregivers



- Practical discussions on addiction, connection, and healing conversations
- Updates on Nebraska’s medical marijuana landscape and regional behavioral health systems, including the Crisis Stabilization and Substance Use Treatment Center in Kimball

The event runs from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with a light breakfast and lunch included. Registration is \$40, and participants will receive a certificate to apply for continuing education units (CEUs).

Space is limited, so get registered today at <https://tinyurl.com/8cbrcf9>.

For additional information about the Panhandle Prevention Coalition, visit <https://www.pphd.ne.gov/Pages/PPC.html> or call Crane at 308-672-9800.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.

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