

2026 Combined Pain Care Skills & Substance Use Disorder Training Agenda

Motivational Interviewing for Pain and SUD

Presented by: Lt Col Daniel Cassidy

Offered: 18 August 2026; 0730-1130 AM ET

Location: National Union Building, Washington DC

Description: This session provides skills training in Motivational Interviewing (MI), which is an evidence-based method for promoting change and growth via a collaborative conversation designed to strengthen a person's own motivation and commitment to change and growth (Miller & Rollnick, 2023). MI is a critical interdisciplinary healthcare skill, which has particular relevance to caring for those with chronic pain. The workshop will review the foundational constructs related to MI with an emphasis on the Spirit of MI, which is grounded in a relationship of partnership, acceptance, compassion, and empowerment. Workshop participants will actively practice fundamental person-centered communication skills (OARS) across the four tasks of an MI encounter (Engage, Focus, Evoke, Plan), as well as how to give information in an MI aligned way (Ask-Offer-Ask). Videotaped examples of MI sessions with a focus on pain related care will be used. Participant engagement in real plays to demonstrate MI skills and openness to feedback on MI Skills is required for training completion.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the utility of Motivational Interviewing (MI) as an evidence-based, person-centered method for communicating and for fostering change and growth within a broad range of areas, including; patients, families, communities, systems and professionals in healthcare and other helping fields.
2. Apply the relational guiding relational spirit of MI to include the elements of partnership, acceptance, compassion and empowerment (PACE).
3. Demonstrate person-centered communication skills to include open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, summaries (OARS) across each of the four tasks (engage, focus, evoke, plan) of an MI-style conversation, with a focus on considerations for chronic pain.
4. Demonstrate recognition of change talk (DARNCATs) and enhance listening skills related to the language of change.
5. Integrate inviting, responding to, and strengthening change talk (DARNCATs) skills within a real play encounter.
6. Apply MI consistent guidance within the planning task, specifically discuss brief action planning (BAP), evoking confidence, and how to give information in an MI consistent way (Ask-Offer-Ask).
7. Develop skills for responding to discord and sustain talk within a clinical MI conversational style.

18 August 2026; 0730-1130 AM ET

- 0730–0830 Keys to MI Conversations about Change & Growth
 - o The Spirit of MI
 - o The 4 Tasks of MI
 - o Person-Centered Communication Skills
- 0830–0930 Practice Skills
 - o MI Example (Chronic Pain) Video / Discussion
 - o “Real” Play Groups / Discussion
- 0930–0945 BREAK
- 0945–1015 Change Talk Skills
 - o Listening for Change Talk
 - o Strengthening Change Talk
- 1015–1045 Responding to Sustain Talk & Discord
- 1100–1115 The Art of Advising / Avoiding “Fix It” Reflex
- 1115–1130 Putting It All Together