

WS01: From Crisis to Calm: Mental Health in Forensic Science Workplaces**Date:** Monday, October 27**Time:** 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM**Audience Knowledge:** Basic – suitable for individuals new to the field, requires little prior knowledge to the subject matter**Rates:**

Membership	Early Bird (June 25 - Sep 10)	Late (Begins Sept 11)	Onsite (Begins Oct 9)
Member	\$150	\$175	\$200
Student	\$150	\$175	\$200
Non-Member	\$200	\$225	\$250

Workshop Chairs:

Kristen Burke, MS, MBA,

kristen@soft-tox.org

SOFT - Supporting Western Region

Regional Toxicology Liaison

Sabra Jones, PhD

sabra@soft-tox.org

SOFT - Supporting Northeastern Region

Regional Toxicology Liaison

Abstract

This half-day workshop addresses the critical yet often overlooked stress and its impact on mental health in forensic science workplaces. This session will explore the unique stressors faced by forensic professionals, including vicarious trauma, high-pressure testing environments, court testimony pressure, and workload challenges. Through four focused segments, participants will examine workplace mental health challenges specific to forensic settings, learn to identify signs of burnout and compassion fatigue, and develop practical strategies for both management and bench staff to create healthier work environments. The workshop will address the challenges faced by toxicologists and other forensic scientists who deal with sensitive cases, strict methodological requirements, and the pressure of legal proceedings. Participants will gain practical tools for implementing mental health support systems within forensic laboratories and offices, with special attention to strategies that can be implemented regardless of laboratory size or resource constraints. The session will culminate in a panel discussion that encourages open dialogue about creating supportive workplace cultures that prioritize mental wellness alongside scientific excellence.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the unique stressors and mental health challenges experienced by professionals in forensic science environments, including vicarious trauma, high-pressure testing scenarios, and courtroom pressures.
2. Recognize early warning signs of burnout, compassion fatigue, and other mental health concerns in oneself and colleagues within the forensic workplace setting.
3. Implement evidence-based strategies and support systems to improve mental health outcomes for both management and bench staff in forensic laboratories and related settings.

Speakers

Kristen Burke, MS, MBA,
SOFT - Supporting Western Region
Regional Toxicology Liaison

Sabra Jones, PhD
SOFT - Supporting Northeastern Region
Regional Toxicology Liaison

Dee DeLeon, LPCC, NCC, TPMC
Strawberry Valley counseling
dee@strawberryvalleycounseling.com

Agenda

Time	Topic	Speaker
8:00 - 8:15 AM	Welcome and Introduction	Kristen Burke
8:15 – 8:45 AM	Segment 1: Unique Stressors in Forensic Science - Identifying the Challenges	Kristen Burke
8:45 - 9:15 AM	Segment 2: The Forensic Toxicologist's Experience - From Bench Work to Testimony	Sabra Jones
9:15 – 10:00 AM	Segment 3: Signs and Symptoms of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in the Laboratory	All Speakers
10:00 – 10:30 AM	Break	
10:30 - 11:15 AM	Segment 4: Practical Strategies for Mental Wellness - Tools for Management and Staff	Dee DeLeon
11:15 – 11:45 AM	Panel Discussion: Creating Supportive Forensic Workplaces	All Speakers
11:45 AM – 12:00 PM	Closing Remarks	Sabra Jones