



NATIONAL ASSESSMENT CENTER ASSOCIATION

NAC Symposium 2026

Three days in Memphis on what it takes to build, sustain, and scale youth assessment centers.

DATES

October 19–21, 2026

VENUE

The Westin Memphis Beale Street
170 Lt George W Lee Avenue

PROGRAM

4 plenaries • 10 breakout • 3 tracks



Shelby County Community Services

CO-HOST

Shelby County Youth & Family
Resource Center



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What it takes to build one, and to keep it running.

Three days, one question. Assessment centers are easy to describe and hard to build — and harder still to sustain once the founding energy has gone. This program takes that problem seriously, with the Shelby County Youth & Family Resource Center as a working case study you can walk through, practitioners who have started centers from nothing, and the young people the work exists for in the room rather than on a slide.

Keep this booklet with you. It is the schedule in brief — every session, every room, every presenter — and the Memphis guide at the back is there for the evenings.

How the program works

- **Plenaries bring everyone together** in the Mississippi Ballroom. No choice to make.
- **Breakout blocks run concurrently.** Pick one and go — the room is printed with every session, and you are welcome to switch between blocks.
- **Three tracks** run through the breakouts. The coloured label on each session tells you which. You do not need to stay inside one track.
- **Arrival day is optional.** Nothing on Monday is required.
- **Lunch is provided on Tuesday.** Wednesday is on your own — there is a walking guide at the back of this booklet.
- **There is a quiet room in the Tennessee Ballroom,** open all three days. A low-stimulation space with ear defenders, weighted lap pads and fidget objects — for anyone, for any reason, with no need to sign in or ask. Your tote also has a small pouch with ear plugs, a foam ball and an acupuncture ring.
- **Wi-Fi is Westin_Conference,** password **Westin2026.**

Where things happen

Mississippi Ballroom	8 sessions
Mississippi Ballroom A	4 sessions
Mississippi Ballroom B	3 sessions
Mississippi Ballroom C	3 sessions
Cumberland & Buffalo	2 sessions
Mississippi Ballroom foyer	2 sessions
Mississippi Ballroom, Tennessee Ballroom, and Cumberland & Buffalo	2 sessions

All rooms are inside The Westin Memphis Beale Street, 170 Lt George W Lee Avenue. Offsite locations are named with the session.



The live program

Rooms, speakers and times can change after this goes to print. Scan for the current version and full speaker biographies.
<https://nac.memberclicks.net/nac-symposium-2026-agenda>

BEFORE THE PROGRAM BEGINS

Three tracks, and one optional Monday.

The three tracks — and what runs in each

Peer to Peer

For Assessment Center staff and leaders to share experiences, address burnout, and learn from one another through practitioner-driven sessions.

Start Before You're Ready: Launching a Youth Assessment Center from Scratch
Tuesday · 1:00–2:30 PM

ACORN: Continuous Quality Improvement for Assessment Centers
Wednesday · 1:00–2:15 PM

Leading Beyond Burnout
Wednesday · 2:45–4:00 PM

The Various Applications of Trauma-Informed Care at Assessment Centers
Wednesday · 2:45–4:00 PM

Policy & Systems Change

Diversion strategies, probation transformation, state reform, and cross-system coordination to advance systemic change.

Probation Transformation Through Community-Led Innovation
Tuesday · 1:00–2:30 PM

Forward Thinking in Juvenile Diversion: Advancing the Role of Assessment Centers in Front-End System Transformation
Tuesday · 1:00–2:30 PM

The Design Challenge: A Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Innovation
Tuesday · 3:00–4:30 PM

Scaling Early Intervention Services for Youth — Part I: The Need and the Opportunity
Wednesday · 1:00–2:15 PM

Scaling Early Intervention Services for Youth — Part II: Lessons Learned from State Systems Reform
Wednesday · 2:45–4:00 PM

Youth & Family Engagement

Centering youth voice, family engagement, and community-centered approaches in Assessment Center design and practice.

Guided Site Tour — Youth Connect & the YFRC
Tuesday · 3:00–4:30 PM

The Design Challenge: A Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Innovation
Tuesday · 3:00–4:30 PM

Partners in Progress: A Conversation with Memphis's Mayor and Police Chief
Wednesday · 9:00–10:00 AM

Reimagining Your Assessment Center WITH Youth
Wednesday · 1:00–2:15 PM

The Various Applications of Trauma-Informed Care at Assessment Centers
Wednesday · 2:45–4:00 PM

BEFORE WE BEGIN — MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, OPTIONAL

3:00 Visit to the National Civil Rights Museum

Informal welcome for early arrivals

NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM — 10–12 MINUTE WALK FROM THE WESTIN

5:00pm Welcome Reception at Central BBQ Downtown

Heavy appetizers and networking

CENTRAL BBQ, DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS

Optional welcome events for attendees arriving ahead of the program. Nothing here is required.

Program at a glance

ARRIVAL DAY

Monday, October 19

3:00 PM – late

AFTERNOON & EVENING

3:00	Visit to the National Civil Rights Museum NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM — 10–12 MINUTE WALK FROM THE WESTIN
5:00pm	Welcome Reception at Central BBQ Downtown CENTRAL BBQ, DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS

DAY 1

Tuesday, October 20

7:30 AM – 4:30 PM

MORNING PLENARY PROGRAM

7:30	Registration & Breakfast CUMBERLAND & BUFFALO
8:30	Opening Remarks MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
8:55	Welcome to Memphis and Shelby County MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
9:00	The Journey of the Shelby County YFRC & Youth Connect MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
9:30	Stakeholder Panel: Building, Using & Sustaining the YFRC MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
10:15	Refreshment Break & Networking MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM FOYER
10:45	Neutral Ground: What You Already Have, and Who You Answer To MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
11:30am	Lunch Provided MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM, TENNESSEE BALLROOM, AND CUMBERLAND & BUFFALO

BREAKOUT BLOCK 1

1:00	Start Before You're Ready: Launching a Youth Assessment Center from Scratch MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM A
1:00	Probation Transformation Through Community-Led Innovation MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM B
1:00	Forward Thinking in Juvenile Diversion: Advancing the Role of Assessment Centers in Front-End System Transformation MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM C

BREAKOUT BLOCK 2 & SITE TOUR

3:00	Guided Site Tour — Youth Connect & the YFRC SHELBY COUNTY YFRC — COACH DEPARTS FROM THE WESTIN
3:00	The Design Challenge: A Framework for Multi-Stakeholder Innovation MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM A

DAY 2

Wednesday, October 21

7:30 AM – 4:30 PM

MORNING PROGRAM

7:30	Welcome & Networking Breakfast CUMBERLAND & BUFFALO
8:30	Centers of Excellence Recognition MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
9:00	Partners in Progress: A Conversation with Memphis's Mayor and Police Chief MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
10:00	Refreshment Break MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM FOYER
10:30	Cross-System Partnership Networking MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM, TENNESSEE BALLROOM, AND CUMBERLAND & BUFFALO
11:30am	Lunch on Your Own

BREAKOUT BLOCK 3

1:00	ACORN: Continuous Quality Improvement for Assessment Centers MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM A
1:00	Scaling Early Intervention Services for Youth — Part I: The Need and the Opportunity MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM B
1:00	Reimagining Your Assessment Center WITH Youth MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM C

BREAKOUT BLOCK 4

2:45	Leading Beyond Burnout MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM A
2:45	The Various Applications of Trauma-Informed Care at Assessment Centers MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM B
2:45	Scaling Early Intervention Services for Youth — Part II: Lessons Learned from State Systems Reform MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM C

CLOSING

4:00	Reflection, Key Takeaways & Closing Remarks MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
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Rooms are shown for sessions that need them. Where three sessions share a start time they run concurrently — pick one. Full detail on the pages that follow.

Tuesday, October 20

7:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Building the Foundation — Showcasing the Shelby County Model

MORNING PLENARY PROGRAM

7:30 8:30am	○	Registration & Breakfast Check in and collect your badge — the desk stays open past 8:30 for late arrivals CUMBERLAND & BUFFALO
8:30 8:55am	●	Opening Remarks Joshua Campbell Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, Louisiana · Molli Cook National Assessment Center Association · Karli Keator National Assessment Center Association Kickoff and welcome from NAC leadership. MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
8:55 9:00am	●	Welcome to Memphis and Shelby County Mickell M. Lowery Shelby County Government A welcome to the city and county hosting the 2026 Symposium. MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
9:00 9:30am	●	The Journey of the Shelby County YFRC & Youth Connect How the Shelby County Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC) and Youth Connect were built and sustained as a cross-sector alternative to justice system involvement — the political will, interagency collaboration, funding structure, and stakeholder relationships that hold the model together. The presentation sets up the panel that follows, and gives attendees a working framework for translating elements of this model to their own jurisdictions. MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
9:30 10:15am	●	Stakeholder Panel: Building, Using & Sustaining the YFRC Dorcas Young Griffin Metropolitan Interfaith Association · Amy Kalb Shelby County Youth & Family Resource Center · Dr. Bernard Williams Juvenile Court of Memphis & Shelby County · Colonel Lenora Armstead Memphis Police Department · Cathy Emerson The Braid · Sweetgrass Counseling & Consultation · Dr. Shaneika R. Smith The Braid Foundation · Sweetgrass Counseling & Consultation Partners from across the system talk about how they actually use the YFRC day to day — what it lets them do that was not possible before, and what it has taken to keep it running. The panel surfaces how each partner uses the Center, the benefits they have seen, the friction points they have worked through, and where the model needs to go next. MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
10:15 10:45am	○	Refreshment Break & Networking MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM FOYER
10:45 11:30am	●	Neutral Ground: What You Already Have, and Who You Answer To Karli Keator National Assessment Center Association This working session, facilitated by Karli Keator, helps Assessment Centers answer two questions. First, do we really know what's available in our community? Having a clear, current picture of local services, and the data to back it up, is what lets us name the real gaps and make a strong case for more local resources. Second, is anything in how we're funded, governed, or referring youth and families pulling us away from neutral ground? You'll leave with practical ideas and a starting place for mapping your community's resources and opening honest conversations about neutrality back home. MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
11:30am 1:00pm	○	Lunch Provided Lunch is provided today MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM, TENNESSEE BALLROOM, AND CUMBERLAND & BUFFALO

Tuesday afternoon

1:00 – 4:30 PM

BREAKOUT BLOCK 1 1:00–2:30 PM

1:00–2:30 PM

CHOOSE ONE OF THREE

PEER TO PEER

Start Before You're Ready: Launching a Youth Assessment Center from Scratch

Terrence Williams Washtenaw County, Michigan
 · Derrick Jackson Washtenaw County, Michigan ·
 Lisa Gentz Washtenaw County Community
 Mental Health

Participants will walk away with a practical understanding of what it takes to move a Youth Assessment Center from concept to implementation in a real-world environment. This session is designed for leaders and practitioners navigating complexity across systems, not just exploring theory.

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM A

POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE

Probation Transformation Through Community-Led Innovation

Dr. Bernard Williams Juvenile Court of Memphis
 & Shelby County

The Alternative Disposition Program (ADP) was designed to prevent youth from deeper involvement in the juvenile justice system. The initiative fosters collaboration among system partners from the Shelby County District Attorney's Office, the Shelby County Public Defender's Office, and the Youth Justice Division. ADP leverages age-appropriate interventions and provides victim support when necessary.

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM B

POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE

Forward Thinking in Juvenile Diversion: Advancing the Role of Assessment Centers in Front-End System Transformation

Brittany Neal Ohio Department of Youth
 Services · Corey Shrieve Ohio Department of
 Youth Services

This session explores how Resource and Assessment Centers serve as a critical front door to effective juvenile diversion from formal court processing, advancing system transformation through early, developmentally appropriate interventions.

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM C

BREAKOUT BLOCK 2 & SITE TOUR 3:00–4:30 PM

3:00–4:30 PM

CHOOSE ONE OF TWO

YOUTH & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Guided Site Tour — Youth Connect & the YFRC

Dana, Cordell & the Youth Connect Team — Shelby County YFRC

See the Shelby County Youth and Family Resource Center and Youth Connect in operation, with a panel from the team that runs them day to day. A chance to walk the space, ask working questions, and see how the model described in the morning plenary actually functions.

SHELBY COUNTY YFRC — COACH DEPARTS FROM THE WESTIN

POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE + YOUTH & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The Design Challenge: A Framework for Multi- Stakeholder Innovation

Adam Serlin Independent Variable

In this interactive workshop, participants apply practical human-centered design and innovation tools to strengthen early-stage interventions in their own communities. Rather than jumping directly to designing solutions, the session focuses first on clearly defining the problems participants aim to solve, understanding...

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM A

Wednesday, October 21

7:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Shared Power & Scaling – Partnership, Policy, and Sustaining the Work

MORNING PROGRAM

- 7:30**
8:30am ○ Welcome & Networking Breakfast
Check in and collect your badge
CUMBERLAND & BUFFALO
- 8:30**
9:00am ● Centers of Excellence Recognition
Awards & recognition ceremony
Recognizing assessment centers and jurisdictions whose practice embodies the NAC framework.
MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
- 9:00**
10:00am ● Partners in Progress: A Conversation with Memphis's Mayor and Police Chief
Dr. Tim McCuddy University of Memphis · Paul Young City of Memphis · Cerelyn "CJ" Davis Memphis Police Department
City leadership and police leadership rarely sit down together in public to talk about youth diversion. This conversation puts Memphis's Mayor and its Police Chief on the same stage to describe what the partnership behind the Youth & Family Resource Center actually requires of each of them.
Expect the practical substance rather than the podium version: where the money came from and what it displaced, how a police department and a city government agree on what counts as success, what changes for an officer on the street when a resource centre exists, and where the two of them have disagreed. Attendees leave with a clearer sense of what executive-level commitment to diversion looks like when it is real — and what to ask of their own city and department.
MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM
- 10:00**
10:30am ○ Refreshment Break
MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM FOYER
- 10:30**
11:30am ● Cross-System Partnership Networking
Dr. Stephen Phillippi LSU School of Public Health · Lisa Varon City of Philadelphia · Ronin Davis · Mark Houck Stoneleigh Foundation
Facilitated, sector-based conversations designed to build concrete partnerships rather than exchange business cards. Tables are organized by sector, each with a facilitator, and oriented around a shared question: what would it take to work together differently on the youth we both see?
MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM, TENNESSEE BALLROOM, AND CUMBERLAND & BUFFALO
- 11:30am**
1:00pm ○ Lunch on Your Own
Nearby restaurants — see the Memphis guide below

Wednesday afternoon

1:00 – 4:30 PM

BREAKOUT BLOCK 3 1:00–2:15 PM

1:00–2:15 PM

CHOOSE ONE OF THREE

PEER TO PEER

ACORN: Continuous Quality Improvement for Assessment Centers

Jeff Kretschmar Case Western Reserve University

A working session on the Assessment Center Outcome Reporting Network (ACORN) — what it does, how the system and dashboard function, and how to use it to run genuine continuous quality improvement rather than just reporting.

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM A

POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE

Scaling Early Intervention Services for Youth — Part I: The Need and the Opportunity

Josh Weber CSG Justice Center

Youth-serving systems across the country are navigating increasingly complex challenges, including rising concerns around youth violence, behavioral health needs, substance use, and school disengagement. These challenges are compounded by limited resources, staffing shortages, fragmented service delivery, and a lack of coordination across systems.

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM B

YOUTH & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Reimagining Your Assessment Center WITH Youth

Mahal Burr BRIDGES USA

Participants will learn about the youth voice ladder — a tool for measuring authentic youth engagement — and reflect on where youth voice currently sits within their own local assessment center. The workshop then moves into an overview of what the Youth Justice Action Coalition did in Memphis through a youth-centered...

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM C

BREAKOUT BLOCK 4 2:45–4:00 PM

2:45–4:00 PM

CHOOSE ONE OF THREE

PEER TO PEER

Leading Beyond Burnout

Meredith Velasquez Juvenile Assessment Center, Centennial, Colorado

Assessment Centers operate at the intersection of crisis response, clinical complexity, systems collaboration, and community accountability. Leaders in these environments carry both operational and emotional weight — often without structured support for sustainability.

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM A

PEER TO PEER + YOUTH & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The Various Applications of Trauma-Informed Care at Assessment Centers

Lisa Varon City of Philadelphia

When Philadelphia began the process of starting an assessment center, the team decided early that creating a genuinely trauma-informed center required a consultant who could ensure its policies, procedures, and design carried those principles throughout.

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM B

POLICY & SYSTEMS CHANGE

Scaling Early Intervention Services for Youth — Part II: Lessons Learned from State Systems Reform

Josh Weber CSG Justice Center

Building coordinated early intervention systems for youth requires more than strong ideas. It requires sustained leadership, cross-system alignment, and a clear implementation strategy. While many states and localities recognize the importance of early intervention, translating that vision into practice often presents...

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM C

CLOSING

4:00

4:30pm

● Reflection, Key Takeaways & Closing Remarks

Molli Cook National Assessment Center Association • Karli Keator National Assessment Center Association

The whole group comes back together to reflect on the three days, name key takeaways, celebrate the network's progress, and make concrete commitments to carry home.

MISSISSIPPI BALLROOM

Who you'll hear from

Karli Keator

LMSW, MPH — Executive Director
National Assessment Center Association

Mahal Burr

Bridge Builders CHANGE Coordinator
BRIDGES USA

Jeff Kretschmar

Ph.D. — Research Associate Professor; Managing
Director, Begun Center for Violence Prevention
Research and Education
Case Western Reserve University

Adam Serlin

Founder & Principal
Independent Variable

Lisa Gentz

LCSW — Program Administrator
Washtenaw County Community Mental Health

Paul Young

Mayor of Memphis
City of Memphis

Terrence Williams

Assistant to Administrator
Washtenaw County, Michigan

Cathy Emerson

Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director, The Braid; Co-
Owner & Lead Consultant, Sweetgrass Counseling &
Consultation
The Braid · Sweetgrass Counseling & Consultation

Mark Houck

Program Officer, Stoneleigh Foundation; NAC Board
Member
Stoneleigh Foundation

Molli Cook

Founder & Consultant
National Assessment Center Association

Lisa Varon

Deputy Director, Juvenile Justice Initiatives, Division
of Criminal Justice; NAC Board Vice Chair
City of Philadelphia

Brittany Neal

State Strategic Initiatives Administrator
Ohio Department of Youth Services

Meredith Velasquez

LCSW, LAC — Community Assessment Program
Director; NAC Board Member
Juvenile Assessment Center, Centennial, Colorado

Joshua Campbell

Assistant Director, Office of Juvenile Justice Services;
NAC Board Chair
Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, Louisiana

Cerelyn “CJ” Davis

Chief of Police
Memphis Police Department

Amy Kalb

Executive Director
Shelby County Youth & Family Resource Center

Dr. Shaneika R. Smith

PhD, LPC-MHSP — Co-Executive Director, The Braid
Foundation; Co-Founder & Lead Therapist,
Sweetgrass Counseling & Consultation
The Braid Foundation · Sweetgrass Counseling &
Consultation

Ronin Davis

NAC Board Secretary; Consultant

Dr. Bernard Williams

Chief Probation Officer & Youth Justice
Administrator
Juvenile Court of Memphis & Shelby County

Josh Weber

Director, Juvenile Justice Program
CSG Justice Center

Corey Shrieve

Bureau Chief, Community Reinvestment
Ohio Department of Youth Services

Derrick Jackson

Racial Equity Officer
Washtenaw County, Michigan

Mickell M. Lowery

Mayor of Shelby County
Shelby County Government

Dr. Tim McCuddy

PhD — Associate Professor & Director of Graduate
Studies, Department of Sociology
University of Memphis

Colonel Lenora Armstead

Unit Commander, External Relations Bureau
Memphis Police Department

Dorcas Young Griffin

President & CEO
Metropolitan Interfaith Association

Dr. Stephen Phillippi

PhD, LCSW — Chair, Community Health Science &
Policy; Jim Finks Endowed Chair of Health
Promotion
LSU School of Public Health

Full biographies are on the symposium website — scan the code on page 2. Presenters and sessions are subject to change.

Where to eat

Memphis Tourism Savings Pass — free to use, with discounts at participating restaurants and attractions including Graceland and the Stax Museum.
memphistravel.com/savings-pass

UNDER 5 MINUTES — ON BEALE, OUT THE FRONT DOOR

The Pig on Beale \$ L

Casual barbecue — pulled pork, ribs, nachos
The fastest and cheapest of the Beale barbecue options. Counter service.

King’s Palace Café \$\$ L D

Creole and Cajun — gumbo, jambalaya, po’boys
The most relaxed room on Beale and the easiest place to have an actual conversation.

Itta Bena \$\$\$ D

Upscale Southern, above B.B. King’s
Hidden entrance and a quiet, dim room directly above the loudest block in Memphis. Reserve ahead.

5 TO 10 MINUTES

Peabody Deli & Desserts \$ L

Counter-service sandwiches, salads, pastries
The fastest real lunch in this radius, and you can time it with the 11 AM duck march.

Charlie Vergos’ Rendezvous \$\$ L D !

Charcoal-broiled dry-rub ribs
The Memphis barbecue institution, down an alley off 2nd. Closed Sunday and Monday; no reservations for small parties, so lunch beats the dinner wait.

Aldo’s Pizza Pies \$\$ L D V

Pizza by the pie and the slice, craft beer
Slices make it lunch-viable, a full pie makes it dinner. Several meatless pizzas plus build-your-own.

Capriccio Grill \$\$\$ D

Italian steakhouse inside The Peabody
Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. The most dependable good dinner that needs no planning.

Flight Restaurant & Wine Bar \$\$\$ D !

Fine dining built around tasting flights
Dinner only from 4:30 PM and the most-requested nice dinner downtown. Book well ahead; reservations required for six or more.

10 TO 15 MINUTES

Central BBQ (Downtown) \$\$ L

Slow-smoked ribs, pulled pork, smoked wings
Many locals’ favourite barbecue, counter service with plenty of seating — the institution that actually fits a lunch break. Two blocks from the Civil Rights Museum, so pair them.

The Arcade Restaurant \$-\$\$ L V !

Memphis’s oldest café (1919) — all-day breakfast, Southern plates
Open 7 AM–3 PM only, so breakfast or lunch, never dinner. The vegetable plate is any four daily sides.

Dyer’s Burgers \$ L

Deep-fried burgers
Cooked in century-old grease, which is genuinely the selling point. Quick, cheap, only-in-Memphis.

Blues City Cafe \$\$ D

Ribs, catfish, tamales, steaks
A Beale institution with live blues next door. Takes reservations, which is rare on this street.

Huey’s Downtown \$\$ L D

Burgers — a Memphis staple since 1970
Reliably quick and casual. The safest choice when everyone in the group wants something different.

The Majestic Grille \$\$ L D V

American bistro in a 1913 silent-movie theater
Full lunch menu, reservations via Resy, and clearly marked vegetarian and gluten-free options. The best all-purpose pick downtown.

Kooky Canuck \$\$ L D

Big burgers and pub food
Large and loud — it can absorb a big group without a reservation.

Catherine & Mary’s \$\$\$ D !

Tuscan and Sicilian, house-made pasta
Dinner only from 4:30 PM. A genuine non-barbecue splurge close to the hotel; reservations recommended.

Belle Tavern \$\$ D !

Whiskey bar with upscale bar food
A hidden alley bar that opens at 4 PM, closed Sunday and Monday. Better for a small group after sessions than a full meal.

Gus’s World Famous Fried Chicken \$\$ L D

Spicy-crisp fried chicken
No reservations and it fills up. Go at 11:30 rather than 12:15 if you are on the clock.

L quick lunch D dinner V vegetarian options ! check days and hours \$ under \$15 · \$\$ \$15–30 · \$\$\$ \$30+

Things to do

Unusually walkable from Beale Street. If you do one thing, do the National Civil Rights Museum.

21
OCT

WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER · DAY 2 EVENING

Grizzlies vs Utah Jazz

The Grizzlies host the Utah Jazz at FedExForum on the evening of Day 2 — five minutes from the hotel, and about two hours after the symposium closes. The obvious way to spend a last evening with the people you have spent three days with.

5 min walk Tip-off 7:00 PM Tickets from ~\$25

One night only, and it sells — book before you travel.

National Civil Rights Museum

Optional symposium visit

Built around the Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was assassinated, tracing five centuries of history and ending at the preserved balcony and Room 306. The most important thing to do in Memphis.

Closed Tuesdays. The symposium includes an optional visit on Arrival Day — if you are joining it, do not buy separate tickets.

Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum

A Smithsonian-developed history of Memphis music, from rural field hollers through Sun and Stax, with a self-guided audio tour. The closest museum to the hotel by a wide margin — it is in the FedExForum plaza.

Open daily 10 AM–5 PM.

Blues Hall of Fame Museum

Ten galleries of Blues Foundation inductees with listening stations, guitars, costumes and rare album art. Much deeper on the music than Rock 'n' Soul, and rarely crowded.

Closed Sunday and Monday. Open Tue–Sat 10 AM–5 PM.

Old Dominick Distillery

A revived pre-Prohibition Memphis whiskey brand with a working downtown distillery, a tour and a tasting.

Book ahead through their site.

Mud Island River Walk

An island park whose centerpiece is a half-mile scale model of the lower Mississippi you can walk end to end, plus the 50-foot MEMPHIS sign and the marina.

The former river museum and monorail no longer appear among the park's attractions — go for the River Walk and the views.

Stax Museum of American Soul Music

Built on the original Stax Records site — Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, Booker T. & the M.G.'s, and Hayes's gold-trimmed Cadillac. Many people rate it above Rock 'n' Soul.

Closed Mondays. Last admission 4 PM. Discounted with the Memphis Tourism savings pass.

Beale Street

Three blocks of blues clubs, neon, buskers and barbecue, one block from the hotel. Best after dark, when the street closes to cars and every doorway has live music.

Individual clubs may charge a cover.

The Peabody Duck March

Five mallards ride the elevator down to the lobby fountain each morning and back up each afternoon, on a red carpet, to a Sousa march. Absurd, brief, and genuinely charming.

11 AM and 5 PM daily — arrive 30 minutes early, the lobby packs out.

Tom Lee Park & the riverfront

A rebuilt 30-acre riverfront park with sculpture, open lawns and big Mississippi sunsets, connected to a five-mile river trail. The best free hour downtown and an easy walk after sessions.

There is active construction along parts of the riverfront.

Orpheum Theatre

A restored 1928 movie palace hosting Broadway tours, concerts and comedy. Worth checking the calendar for an evening that beats another night on Beale.

Sun Studio

The room where Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison and B.B. King recorded, with a guide walking you across the original studio floor. Short, funny, and worth it even if you are not an Elvis person.

Tours hourly 10:30 AM–4:30 PM, no reservations. Avoid the 12:30 and 1:30 crush.

Graceland

Elvis's mansion plus a large complex of car, costume and airplane exhibits across the street. A half-day commitment rather than a side trip.

A cheaper exhibits-only ticket does not include the mansion. Discounted with the Memphis Tourism savings pass.



Thank you for being here.

Three days is not long. We hope you are leaving with something practical — a model you can borrow, a problem someone else has already solved, and the name of the person who solved it. Most of what is useful at a symposium like this turns out to be a phone number.

The National Assessment Center Association exists so that no community has to invent the assessment center model from scratch. We connect the people doing this work, hold the standards it is measured against, and make what one center learns available to every other. That continues well past this week, and you are part of it now.

Thank you to Shelby County, to everyone who opened a door, answered a hard question, or let two hundred strangers walk through their building — and to the young people whose work this is.

Before you go, please tell us how it went. Next year's symposium is shaped by what you say here more than by anything else we do.



Tell us how it went

The evaluation takes a few minutes and you can complete it before you leave the room. It asks what worked, what did not, and who you would like to hear from next year. Paper copies are available from any NAC Board member.

<https://forms.gle/dHsi2BfnJpA6mvDbA>

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