



# Difficult Conversations in Regulations

## Symposium Program

9:00-9:15 **Welcome Remarks**

9:15-10:15 **Opening Keynote: The How and When of Difficult Conversations: Data, Empathy, and Professional Accountability**

Dr. William Cooper | *President, Vanderbilt Health Center for Patient and Professional Advocacy, and Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy*

Difficult conversations are a defining responsibility of leaders - especially when professional behavior, public trust, and safety are at stake. Knowing how and when to engage is essential to driving meaningful change without escalating conflict. In this keynote, Dr. William Cooper will present a proven framework for initiating and escalating difficult conversations, grounded in over three decades of research and practice from the Vanderbilt Center for Patient and Professional Advocacy (CPPA). Drawing on national comparative data and an empathic, peer-led approach, Dr. Cooper will demonstrate how structured dialogue can effectively address concerns, change behavior, and reinforce professionalism across regulated professions.

Participants will explore:

- How to recognize patterns that warrant intervention
- When and how to initiate conversations that lead to reflection and change
- The role of data in supporting credibility and clarity
- Strategies for escalation when initial efforts are unsuccessful

This session will offer practical, cross-disciplinary insights for leaders navigating complex conversations in regulatory environments - highlighting the power of empathy, timing, and evidence-based tools to promote accountability and improve outcomes.

10:15-10:30 **Break**

10:30-11:30 **Across Jurisdictions: The Conversations you Wish you Didn't Have to Have**

Jacqueline Arcelin | *Deputy Division Director of Program Operations, Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies*

Dr. Raymond Healy | *Director of Registration, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland*

Graeme Keirstead | *Deputy Registrar / Chief Legal Counsel, College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC*

Regulators around the world face difficult conversations—those moments when competing priorities, limited authority, or public pressure make communication especially challenging. This panel brings together representatives from multiple jurisdictions to share how they've approached tough regulatory discussions in their own contexts, what they've learned, and how cultural, structural, and legislative differences shape the way these conversations unfold.

**11:30-12:15 The Effectiveness Question: A Difficult Conversation About Regulation**

Dr. Rebecca Haw Allensworth | David Daniels Allen Distinguished Chair of Law, Vanderbilt University Law School

Vanderbilt Law Professor Rebecca Haw Allensworth will share some of the insights from her new book, *The Licensing Racket: How We Decide Who is Allowed to Work and Why It Goes Wrong* (Harvard University Press 2025). The book is a bottom-up investigation of the pathologies of the most important labor regulatory institution in the US - the state professional licensing board. Her discussion will describe the problems she discovered when she attended dozens of licensing board meetings in Tennessee and interviewed scores of board members, professionals, politicians, and law enforcement officers involved in professional regulation. She will also identify some key reforms and best practices that point to a way forward for professional licensing. A copy of her book will be made available for each conference attendee prior to the session.

**12:15-1:15 Attendee Lunch****1:15-2:15 Speed Rounds: Let's Have the Difficult Conversations**

This highly interactive session invites participants to engage in a series of rapid, small-group discussions on some of the tough issues regulators face today. Each “speed round” will tackle a different challenge ranging from balancing transparency and confidentiality to maintaining public trust and navigating polarized perspectives. The session will give attendees the chance to share insights, test ideas, and practice having the difficult conversations that define regulatory work.

**2:15-2:45 Networking Break****2:45-3:45 Using Difficult Conversations to Build Trust**

Dr. Chris Hacker | *Registrar and CEO, BC College of Oral Health Professionals*

Daniel Hereth | *Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services*

Difficult conversations aren’t just inevitable in regulation, they’re opportunities to strengthen relationships and credibility. This session will explore how regulators can use moments of tension or disagreement to foster understanding, demonstrate accountability, and build lasting trust with stakeholders, licensees, and the public.

**3:45-4:15 Q&A with day's speakers and program synthesis****5:00-6:00 Symposium Attendee & Committee Member Reception**