Hattiesburg Psychologist Dr. Geralyn Datz Named 2026 Work Comp Changemaker for Leadership in Mental Health & Recovery

Southern Behavioral Medicine Associates founder recognized for advancing the role of psychology in pain, injury recovery, disability and return to work



Hattiesburg, Mississippi Nov 6, 2026 (Issuewire.com**)** - Geralyn Datz, PhD, MP, clinical and medical psychologist and founder of Southern Behavioral Medicine Associates, has been named a **2026 Work Comp Changemaker**, an industry recognition honoring professionals whose leadership, innovation and influence are helping move the workers' compensation system forward.

Datz received the recognition during the ELEVATE Conference at the historic Hotel del Coronado in Coronado, California, on September 22. She was honored alongside a select group of professionals from across the workers' compensation industry.

The Changemaker Awards recognize emerging and established professionals who have demonstrated courageous leadership and innovation, measurable impact and industry-wide influence, integrity, collaboration and resilience, and a commitment to meaningful systemic improvement. Honorees are selected through a multi-stage process that includes peer nominations, individual advocacy and interviews, committee discussion, and ranked scoring.

For Datz, the recognition highlights an area of healthcare she has spent more than two decades working to advance: the often-overlooked role of psychological and behavioral factors in medical recovery.

“Mental health is not separate from physical health, and that becomes particularly clear when someone is trying to recover from an injury, chronic pain or a major disruption in their ability to work and function,” Datz said. “Psychology can help us understand not simply why someone is struggling, but what may help that person move forward. I’m very honored to have that work recognized and to be included among this year’s Changemakers.”

Datz founded **Southern Behavioral Medicine Associates (SBMA)** in Hattiesburg in 2011. The specialty psychology practice serves patients and organizations across Mississippi and the surrounding region, with a focus that includes behavioral medicine, chronic pain, trauma and PTSD, psychological injury, disability, neuropsychological and psychological assessment, and return-to-work evaluation and treatment.

Her work extends well beyond the clinical setting. Datz consults with healthcare professionals, employers, insurers, attorneys, and workers’ compensation stakeholders on complex issues involving mental health, recovery, function, and workplace performance.

A national speaker and educator, she has delivered more than 500 scientific and professional presentations to medical, psychological, legal, insurance and business audiences. Her work has addressed topics including chronic pain, trauma and PTSD, psychological injury, opioid risk, suicide prevention, occupational mental health, burnout, resilience, psychological safety, disability and return to work.

Datz has also authored or co-authored more than 100 publications, scientific abstracts, book chapters and other scholarly contributions. Her professional leadership has included service with the American Academy of Pain Medicine and as a past president of the Southern Pain Society.

While the Changemaker Award comes from the workers’ compensation community, Datz says the underlying issues of mental health, recovery and function extend far beyond any single industry.

“Whether we are talking about an injured worker, someone living with chronic pain, an employee experiencing psychological stress, or an organization trying to support its workforce, the ultimate goal is not simply acknowledging mental health,” Datz said. “It is actually teaching people how to regain confidence, have less distress, and increase their ability to function and have meaningful participation in their lives.”

The 2026 Work Comp Changemaker Awards were created by the hosts of the *Deconstructing Comp* podcast to recognize professionals making a positive difference within the workers’ compensation system and helping shape its future.

Datz continues to practice in Hattiesburg while speaking and consulting nationally on mental health, pain psychology, and workforce recovery.

About Geralyn Datz, PhD, MP

Geralyn Datz, PhD, MP, is a clinical and medical psychologist, founder and CEO of Southern Behavioral Medicine Associates, national speaker and consultant. Her work focuses on translating psychological science into practical strategies for mental health, pain management, injury recovery, function,

resilience, and workforce performance. She earned her PhD in Clinical Psychology from Stony Brook University, completed residency in Behavioral Medicine at the New Orleans Veterans Affairs Medical Center and a postdoctoral fellowship at LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center, and later earned a Master of Science in Clinical Psychopharmacology.

About Southern Behavioral Medicine Associates

Southern Behavioral Medicine Associates is a specialty behavioral medicine and psychology practice based in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, serving clients in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. The practice provides psychological treatment, specialized assessment, and consultation in areas including chronic pain, trauma, psychological and neuropsychological assessment, behavioral medicine, work injury, and return to function.



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