



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEWS AND EVENTS

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the source for
**BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH IN
TENNESSEE**

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Volume 9, Issue 1

Message from the Executive Director



Experts have predicted that the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on behavioral health will be greater than the medical impact. The emotional toll from fear, isolation, financial strain and lack of social support will be felt for years to come. Behavioral health



*Elyn Wilbur,
Executive Director*

organizations continue to be leaders in responding to

these needs. At TAMHO’s 2020 Annual Conference, we had the opportunity to learn how this is being done through providing virtual service delivery, responding to the evolution of a safe and effective vaccine, and creating a culture of employee support.

Links to the presentations can be found here:

<http://www.tamho.org/tamho-annual-conference-2020>

We also had the opportunity to honor some spectacular individuals who make lives better each and every day. Learn more about the TAMHO 2020 award recipients on page 3 of this issue.

For more than 60 years, TAMHO has been at the forefront of promoting the advancement of effective behavioral health services. Our annual conference is one way we accomplish this and at the same time, honor the individuals who help make it happen. Congratulations to all the awardees and THANK YOU for your dedication!

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Special interest . . .

TAMHO Annual Conference

- Subject Matter Experts
- TAMHO’s Highest Honors and Recognitions
- TAMHO President’s Award
- TAMHO Service Award
- TAMHO Leadership Elections and Recognitions
- Sponsors and Exhibitors add Value to the Annual Conference

TAMHO is Moving!

Our New Temporary Address is:
**Post Office Box 1274
 Brentwood, TN 37024**

Subject Matter Experts

TAMHO 2020 Annual Conference



Roberta Montemayor, Director, Telehealth Innovation, United Healthcare Community Plan

Behavioral Virtual Visits: Using Telemental Health to Address Current and Future Behavioral Health Challenges



Mary C Shelton, Director, Behavioral Health Operations, Division of TennCare, State of Tennessee



Janice S Maurizio, VP Behavioral Health Services, BlueCare



Jeremy Mercer, Executive Director, Behavioral Health, UnitedHealthcare

Telehealth: Keeping Connected During COVID and Beyond



Renea Bentley, Ed.D., LPC-MHSP, Director of Behavioral Health, Amerigroup



Kristie Hammonds, President & CEO, Frontier Health

Visit [TAMHO Annual Conference 2020](#) to access and view presentations provided by our subject matter experts.



Brad Nunn, PhD, Vice President of Quality Improvement, Centerstone of Tennessee

COVID-19 Vaccine in Tennessee



Heather Gundersen, Deputy Commissioner, Administrative and Regulatory Services, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

A Culture of Change: Creating Support & Success for Employees and Yourself!



Susan Gillpatrick, LPC, CEAP

Congratulations to the TAMHO 2020 Award Recipients



TAMHO 2020 Annual Conference

TAMHO 2020 President's Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | The TAMHO President's Award is given at the discretion of the TAMHO President.

RECIPIENT FOCUS | TAMHO President Jimmie Jackson elected to bestow this award to two key TAMHO Board members to recognize their monumental contributions as they transition into retirement this year.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENTS:



Robert N. Vero, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer,
Centerstone of Tennessee



Robert D. Vaughn
Executive Director, Carey
Counseling Center, Inc.

[Click here](#) to view the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony overview of the accomplishments of Dr. Vero and Mr. Vaughn.

a TAMHO member organization, and/or to the community-based behavioral health industry.

RECIPIENT FOCUS | The award honors individuals or organizations who have provided exemplary lay leadership or outstanding volunteer service either directly or indirectly on behalf of TAMHO or a TAMHO member corporation. Individuals and organizations nominated for this award have provided effective community-wide leadership and have been responsible for accomplishments that directly or indirectly positively impact behavioral healthcare in Tennessee and support the service missions of TAMHO and TAMHO member organizations.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENT:



Joan Sivley
Nominated by Centerstone
of Tennessee

[Click here](#) to view Ms. Sivley's story from the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony.

outstanding professionalism in the field of behavioral health. It recognizes significant contributions made over an extended period of time to the behavioral health system or a single monumental contribution that will have far-reaching and long-lasting positive impact on the quality and/or scope of services delivered in the state.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENT:



Mary Katsikas
Nominated by McNabb
Center

[Click here](#) to view Ms. Katsikas' story from the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony.

TAMHO 2020 Frank G. Clement Community Service Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | Frank G. Clement, who served as Governor of Tennessee during the period 1953-67, created the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation as a result of his own personal concern for the welfare of the mentally ill. This award is open for recognition of both individuals or organizations within Tennessee who have made significant contributions to TAMHO,

TAMHO 2020 Dorothea Dix Professional Service Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | Dorothea Dix was a national and international champion of improved care for the mentally ill and is regarded as the most important force ever in bringing the issue of mental health to the public forum.

RECIPIENT FOCUS | This award honors

TAMHO 2020 Emerging Leader Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | Instituted in 2020, the Emerging Leader Award recognizes those who have made significant contributions to TAMHO, and/or a TAMHO member organization and have demonstrated significant potential for leadership and continued service.

RECIPIENT FOCUS | This award honors individuals who provide exemplary service directly to clients. It recognizes an outstanding therapist, case manager or other front-line staff whose contributions continue to benefit the community through client care. This award is intended to celebrate a person striving to grow professionally while continuing to impact those in need of care.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENT:



Chad Duncan

Nominated by Frontier Health

[Click here](#) to view Mr. Duncan's story from the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony.

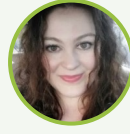
experienced recovery and overcome adversity related to their behavioral health needs.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENTS:



Samaria Leach

Nominated by Centerstone



Stacey Hurst

Nominated by Volunteer Behavioral Healthcare System

[Click here](#) to view Ms. Leach and Ms. Hurst's stories from the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony.

TAMHO 2020 Distinguished Service Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | Instituted in 1999, the TAMHO Distinguished Service Award recognizes an individual for extraordinary and long-standing dedication and achievement on behalf of TAMHO or a TAMHO member corporation.

RECIPIENT FOCUS | Recipient selection is based on: 1) longevity of service, and, 2) the significance of the nominee's overall contributions to TAMHO or a TAMHO member corporation.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENT:



Chris Wyre

Nominated by Volunteer Behavioral Healthcare System

[Click here](#) to view Mr. Wyre's story from the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony.

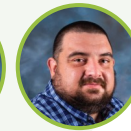
TAMHO 2020 Media Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | Historically, the Media Award category has recognized members of the print and electronic media who have made outstanding contributions through their professional activities to Tennessee's behavioral health system and the people it serves.

RECIPIENT FOCUS | Examples for consideration include, but are not limited to:

- Individual journalists and reporters who capture the essence of key behavioral health topics through storytelling;
- Local and statewide media outlets (TV, radio, print, online) that consistently report on behavioral health issues;
- Reporting that accurately and effectively brings behavioral health matters into larger community discourse; or,
- Media coverage that reduces the stigma surrounding mental illness and addiction.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENT:



Impact Stigma Podcast: Frontier Health Foundation | Jennifer Teague | Josh Moore

[Click here](#) to view the Impact Stigma Podcast story from the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony.

TAMHO 2020 Personal Courage Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | This award honors individuals across Tennessee who have demonstrated exceptional courage, strength, and leadership to overcome the personal challenges of advocating for their own mental health or supporting and advocating for their loved one with mental health needs.

RECIPIENT FOCUS:

Category 1: Courage to Overcome One's Own Mental Health Challenges

An individual who exemplifies courage in the face of serious personal challenges presented by a behavioral health disorder; and, as a result, provides effective leadership, advocacy, or support for other individuals with mental illness.

Category 2: Advocacy and Support of a Loved One Who Has Overcome Mental Health Needs

An individual who has directly supported and advocated on behalf of an individual in recovery from serious behavioral health challenges, as a result of his/her efforts, the individual has

TAMHO 2020 Outreach & Engagement Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | The Outreach and Engagement Award was instituted by TAMHO in 2020. 2020 being an unprecedented year, presented many challenges for the behavioral health community. More than ever before, it was necessary to be both creative and innovative in our efforts to ensure that needed services would continue and TAMHO member organizations would be accessible to the vulnerable population that we serve in the midst of an enormous public health crisis. This award recognizes TAMHO member organizations for their ongoing creative and innovative efforts utilized in outreach and engagement with their respective communities.

RECIPIENT FOCUS | This award honors individuals, programs, or organizations for the development, implementation and continuation of innovative and creative methods to deliver behavioral health services in their community.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENT:



[Click here](#) to view Tennessee Voices' story from the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony.

TAMHO 2020 Innovation & Creativity Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | Initiated in 2002 as the Program of Excellence Award and renamed in 2020, the Innovation & Creativity Award recognizes ways TAMHO member organizations have gone above and beyond the standard to find creative and groundbreaking ways to provide services. Honoring these programs demonstrates that excellence, innovation and quality are alive and well in the public behavioral health system.

RECIPIENT FOCUS | Examples for consideration include, but are not limited to, programs or initiatives that:

- Exemplify a commitment to recovery-oriented, consumer centered care;
- Foster the use of creative options in providing fiscal, administrative, or clinical services;
- Serve consumers through a comprehensive, community-based, coordinated system of care, or;

- Deliver services in a timely and cost-effective manner.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENT:



[Click here](#) to view the CARE Team story from the TAMHO 2020 Awards and Recognition Ceremony.

TAMHO 2020 Volunteer Leadership Award

AWARD OVERVIEW | The TAMHO Volunteer Leadership Award recognizes extraordinary leadership and service throughout the year. Recognition is given to a member of the TAMHO Board of Directors and a member of a TAMHO Section or Committee.

2020 AWARD RECIPIENTS:

TAMHO Board



Jimmie Jackson

Professional Care Services of West TN



E. Florence Hervery

CMI Healthcare Services, Inc.

TAMHO Section or Committee



Mary Katsikas

McNabb Center

TAMHO 2020 Service Award

2020 AWARD RECIPIENT:



E. Florence Hervery, CMI Healthcare Services, Inc. | *10 Years of Service on the TAMHO Board of Directors*

Thanks to our Sponsors

TAMHO Annual Conference 2020

OLD SPONSORSHIP LEVEL



SILVER SPONSORSHIP LEVEL



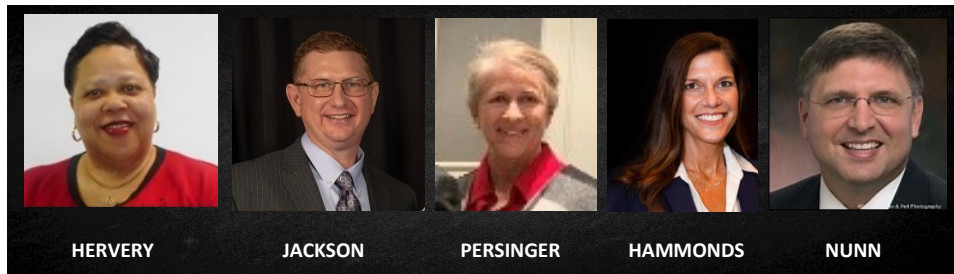
BRONZE SPONSORSHIP LEVEL



TAMHO elects leadership team for 2021

The Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (TAMHO) recently elected officers for 2021:

Florence Hervery, Executive Director, CMI Healthcare Services, Inc., Memphis, TN, will serve as **President**. She will succeed **Jimmie Jackson**, Executive Director, Professional Care Services of West TN, Covington, TN, who will remain on the Board as **Immediate Past President**. **Phyllis Persinger**, Executive VP/COO, Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System, Murfreesboro, TN, was elected **President Elect**. **Kristie Hammonds**, President & CEO, Frontier Health, Gray, TN will serve the second year of a two year term as **Treasurer** replacing **Brad Nunn, Ph.D.**, Vice President of Quality Improvement, Centerstone, Nashville, TN, was elected to serve a two year term as **Secretary**.



TAMHO Committee and Section Chairpersons recognized for their service during 2020

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE | Marlin Medlin, *Quinco Mental Health Center*

ADDICTIONS COMMITTEE | Michael Reynolds, *Centerstone*

COMPLIANCE AND QUALITY COMMITTEE | Gala Murray, *Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System*

CHILDREN & YOUTH SECTION | Mary Katsikas, *Helen Ross McNabb Center*

F&A SECTION | Julie Spears, *Centerstone*

F&A SECTION IT COMMITTEE | Richard French, *Carey Counseling Center*; and, Phyllis Persinger, *Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System*

CRISIS COMMITTEE | Sean Jones, *Carey Counseling Center*



Upper Left | Alysia Smith Knight & Gayla Murray; **Upper Right** | Alysia Smith Knight & Mary Katsikas; **Middle Left** | Julie Spears & Ellyn Wilbur; **Middle Right** | Sean Jones & Ellyn Wilbur; **Lower Left** | Ellyn Wilbur, Phyllis Persinger, Alysia Smith Knight & Richard French; **Lower Right** | Michael Reynolds & Alysia Smith Knight; **not pictured**: Marlin Medlin

TAMHO

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

Florence Hervery | CMI Healthcare Services

President Elect

Phyllis Persinger | Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System

Immediate Past President

Jimmie Jackson | Professional Care Services of West TN

Treasurer

Kristie Hammonds | Frontier Health

Secretary

Brad Nunn, PhD | Centerstone

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alliance Health Services

Memphis | Laurie Powell, Executive Director

Carey Counseling Center

Paris | Robert D. Vaughn, Executive Director

CMI Healthcare Services

Memphis | E. Florence Hervery, Chief Executive Officer

Centerstone of Tennessee

Nashville | Robert N. Vero, EdD, Chief Executive Officer

Cherokee Health Systems

Knoxville | Dennis S. Freeman, PhD, Executive Director

Frontier Health

Gray | Kristie Hammonds, CEO

Helen Ross McNabb Center

Knoxville | Jerry Vagnier, CEO

Pathways Behavioral Health Services

Jackson | Pam Henson, Executive Director

Peninsula-a Division of Parkwest Medical Center

Knoxville | Liz Clary, Vice Pres. – Behavioral Services

Professional Care Services of West TN, Inc.

Covington | Jimmie Jackson, Executive Director/CEO

Quinco Mental Health Center

Bolivar | Marlin Medlin, Executive Director

Ridgeview Behavioral Health Services

Oak Ridge | Brian Buuck, Chief Executive Officer

Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System

Murfreesboro | Phyllis Persinger, President/COO

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Vanderbilt Community Mental Health Center

Nashville | George Hunter, Executive Director

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

AIM Center

Chattanooga | Donna Maddox, President

Ballad Health

Gray | Tammy Albright, CEO

Generations Mental Health Center

McMinnville | Kathy G. Campbell, President/CEO

Park Center

Nashville | Will Connelly, CEO

Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association

Nashville | Anthony Fox, Executive Director

Tennessee Voices

Nashville | Rikki Harris, Chief Executive Officer

TAMHO STAFF

Executive Director | Ellyn Wilbur

Director of Policy and Advocacy | Alysia Smith Knight

Director of Member Services | Teresa Fuqua

Director of Administrative Services | Laura B. Jean

Project Manager TNCODC | Mariam Hashimi

Statewide Peer Wellness Coach | Dina Savenas

Project Assistant | Carrie Ligon

Member Organization Happenings

THDA grant helps Memphis resident find stable housing

[Click Here for Original THDA article](#)

Memphis resident Shirley Nelson has battled mental illness for years.

For the last four years, Nelson moved from place to place, living with different family members causing her to miss doctor appointments and have her prescribed medicine shipped to the wrong address.

“My doctor told me I needed to get somewhere and be still and that moving around so much wasn’t good for my health,” Nelson said.

In January, Nelson, 64, was the first resident to move into one of eight newly-renovated Boyette Memorial Apartments, a project aided in funding by a \$225,251 grant from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency’s (THDA) Housing Trust Fund (THTF) awarded to Memphis’ CMI Healthcare Services

The Tennessee Housing Trust Fund is financed by proceeds from THDA’s mortgage loan program and serves the needs of low- and very low-income elderly and special needs Tennesseans. Through a competitive process, grants are awarded to and administered by cities, counties, development districts, public housing authorities, and nonprofit organizations.

The THTF grant was awarded to CMI Healthcare to help house individuals experiencing or are at risk of homelessness, youth who are transitioning out of the State’s foster care system and individuals receiving treatment for mental illness or substance abuse, similar to Nelson.

“I am so glad that THDA gave CMI the grant to help get me a place like this, because it’s really important for me to take my meds because I have a bad heart,” Nelson said. “I take a lot of meds. I needed a place where I could get away from everything and everybody. My doctor told me I have to sleep, and that’s something I wasn’t doing before I moved here.”

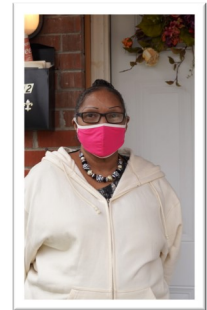
Florence Hervery, CMI Healthcare Services CEO, said that THDA’s grant was essential to finally getting the project complete.

“We’ve had that property for about 20 years and have been wanting to rehab it,” Hervery said. “We would have never been able to complete this project without the grant.”

Boyette Memorial upgrades included the restoration of all eight apartments, rewiring the building, replacing the roof and pipes and adding a sprinkler system, wheelchair ramps and central air and heat.

Nelson said she’s “thankful THDA awarded the grant also because it made it possible for me to have something to call my own.”

“Everything about this place is great, because it caters to me and my needs, especially being handicap accessible,” Nelson said. “I’m so grateful because I have a place during the pandemic and I can read my bible in peace and sit next to my Christmas tree.”



Centerstone earns five-year reaccreditation from American Association of Suicidology



Centerstone, a national leader in behavioral healthcare, has received a five-year reaccreditation from the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) for its Crisis Services line of care. The official accreditation recognizes Centerstone Crisis Services as meeting or exceeding all the criteria established by AAS to be named a nationally approved crisis

intervention program.

The AAS accreditation is based on rigorous examination of Centerstone’s administration, cultural competencies, use of technology, ethical standards and practices, and services in life threatening crises. Evaluation feedback described delivery of Centerstone Crisis Services as “exceptional” and its community integration methods as “the gold standard for crisis services.”

“Centerstone leadership, board members, and staff are clearly committed to the highest standards of suicide prevention,” said Colleen Creighton, AAS chief executive officer. “As our nation sees a rise in rates of suicidal ideation possibly due to issues surrounding COVID-19, Centerstone Crisis Services is a strong ally in our efforts to save lives.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in August 2020 that 25% of 18-24 year olds in the United States had seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days. More than 10% of all ages in the same survey reported having suicidal ideation, and rates were significantly higher among essential workers (21%), people of color (15%), and unpaid caregivers (30%).

“Suicide prevention measures are built into every line of service that Centerstone provides,” said Becky Stoll, Centerstone vice president for Crisis and Disaster Management. “We’re grateful to AAS for holding behavioral healthcare teams to the highest standards, and our organization is honored to receive this reaccreditation.”

McNabb Center celebrates groundbreaking on Mineral Springs Manor



The McNabb Center celebrated the groundbreaking of Mineral Springs Manor today. Mineral Springs Manor is a 50-unit rental housing complex, providing much-needed low-income housing to senior citizens in the Knoxville area.

This unique housing program will offer independent living to seniors experiencing issues with the aging process. It can offer supportive services that help seniors retain their independence and maintain

their safety.

This nearly \$8 million project is possible because of the financial support of Knoxville’s Community Development Corporation, the Helen Ross McNabb Foundation, the City of Knoxville, Knox County, Federal Home Loan Bank-Cincinnati, the Tennessee Housing Development Agency and numerous private donors.

“Knoxville is in need of housing options for low-income senior citizens,” said Jerry Vagnier, McNabb Center president and CEO. “We are excited to begin construction on this project and work to address that need in our community.”

The McNabb Center is the region’s leading nonprofit provider of mental health, substance use, social and victim services. By focusing on an individual’s “Well Mind, Well Being,” we provide a quality and compassionate approach to care from infancy through adulthood. Since 1948, the Center has proudly served individuals with the most needs and fewest resources. Today, the McNabb Center delivers support to more than 30,000 people throughout East Tennessee each year. For more information, visit www.mcnabbcenter.org or call 1-800-255-9711.

The trusted voice for Tennessee’s behavioral health system for sixty years.

TAMHO member organizations serve adults and children with a range of emotional disorders, mental illnesses, and addiction disorders.

ADOPTION SERVICES	OPIOID USE
CRISIS SERVICES:	DISORDER
CRISIS RESPONSE,	TREATMENT
CRISIS RESPITE,	OUTPATIENT
WALK-IN CENTER	TREATMENT:
SERVICES	PSYCHIATRIC
CRITICAL INCIDENT	EVALUATION,
STRESS	MEDICATION
DEBRIEFING	MANAGEMENT,
DISASTER RESPONSE	INDIVIDUAL
FAMILY SUPPORT	THERAPY, FAMILY
SERVICES	THERAPY,
ILLNESS	SUBSTANCE USE
MANAGEMENT	TREATMENT
AND RECOVERY	PEER RECOVERY
(IMR)	SERVICES
INPATIENT SERVICES	PREVENTION
INTEGRATED	SERVICES
MEDICAL CARE	PSYCHOSOCIAL
INTENSIVE	REHABILITATION
COMMUNITY-	RESIDENTIAL
BASED SERVICES:	TREATMENT
CONTINUOUS	SERVICES
TREATMENT TEAM	SCHOOL-BASED
(CTT),	SERVICES
COMPREHENSIVE	SPECIALTY
CHILD AND FAMILY	TREATMENT
TREATMENT	SERVICES
(CCFT), PROGRAM	SUPPORTED
OF ASSERTIVE	EMPLOYMENT
COMMUNITY	SUPPORTED HOUSING
TREATMENT	TENNESSEE HEALTH
(PACT)	LINK
INTENSIVE	THERAPEUTIC FOSTER
OUTPATIENT	CARE
SERVICES	TRAUMA FOCUSED
	TREATMENT

With the implementation of Tennessee Health Link in 2016, most TAMHO members also coordinate physical care as well as provide interventions for mental illness, addictions and co-occurring disorders.



Tennessee Co-Occurring Disorders Collaborative (TNCODC)

On October 20th 2020, TNCODC conducted a virtual basic training titled "Treatment and Practice in the

Treatment of Co-Occurring Disorders" which was taught by Dr. Vickie Harden. This training was conducted for



Mariam Hashimi

staff to comply with training requirements as required by the state. The training had over 130 live attendees and the recording has since been viewed 303 times.

On November 4th, 2020, TNCODC held a COMPASS-EZ Q&A Panel virtually on Zoom. The panel consisted of steering committee members from each region as well as TMDHSAS Program Specialist, Donathan Knowles. Learning Community members attended from all over the state, particularly those who are newer to the COMPASS-EZ. Panelists shared their experiences with the COMPASS-EZ as well as tips and best practices on COD implementation in their agencies.

In February, TNCODC will host regional learning community meetings. These will be hour-long meet and greets for members in each region to connect with each other and discuss issues relevant to them. Please contact Mariam Hashimi, TNCODC Project Manager at mhashimi@tamho.org for more information.



Cherokee Health Systems Earns Federal Quality Award Recognitions

Cherokee Health Systems was recognized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for its outstanding quality of care. Cherokee won four national awards as a Health Center Quality Leader, National Quality Leader, Advancing Health Information Technology for Quality and Patient-Centered Medical Home Recognition. The awards came with a check for \$320,012 to continue to support Cherokee's Quality initiatives.

Dr. Dennis Freeman, Cherokee's CEO, said "It's gratifying that our hard work is being recognized by the Federal government. To achieve this very high level of quality, we needed an excellent team of strong, highly skilled people committed to excellence for our patients and each other."

Dr. Parinda Khatri, Cherokee's Chief Clinical Officer, said "The care we provide our patients is a result of hundreds of tasks - decisions and actions, made thoughtfully and painstakingly, and implemented with compassion and energy - each day by clinical, operational, IT/data analytics, facility, finance, and administrative staff. To achieve this level of quality, we need a team of people, committed to excellence."

The four awards included:

National Quality Leader: Only the top 1-2% of all health centers in the nation receive this award for meeting or exceeding clinical quality that promotes behavioral health, diabetes health, and heart health. There are nearly 1,400 health centers across the country.

Health Center Quality Leader: Cherokee achieved the Best Overall Clinical Performance among all health centers nationally.

Enhancing Health Information Technology for Quality: Cherokee Health Systems won this award for optimizing Health Information Technology services for advancing digital health, patient engagement, interoperability, and collection of social determinants of health to increase access to care and advance quality of care.

Patient Centered Medical Home Recognition: Cherokee achieved Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) recognition at all its 24 locations in East Tennessee, Chattanooga and Memphis.

In her letter to Cherokee Health Systems, Lisa Mariani, HRSA Administrator for Region 4, said: "Congratulations, Cherokee Health Systems, on being recognized as a National Quality Leader and Health Center Quality Leader, as well as on your \$320,012 award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to continue strengthening your quality improvement activities.

We commend your health center on your achievements in improving cost-efficient care delivery while also increasing quality of care, reducing health disparities, increasing patients' ability to access comprehensive services, and advancing the use of health information technology."

Centerstone launches first known simulation training center for community-based behavioral health clinicians

Centerstone, a not-for-profit health system specializing in mental health and substance use disorder treatments, has announced the recent launch of the world's first known simulation training center for use by community-based behavioral health professionals.

"Simulation training has long been used in many high-risk high-reward fields, including physical health, aviation, and military, but this approach to learning and development has never been used in the community-based behavioral health space, which historically has relied on theory or role play for such training," says Dr. Bre Banks, director of clinical education for Centerstone's Research Institute and project lead for the Centerstone SIM Center.

Operated by Centerstone's Research Institute, the Centerstone SIM Center prioritizes training clinicians in evidence-based practices for rapid use in real world care environments by combining multiple learning formats. This provides a true simulated experience for the clinician while also minimizing any risks that could occur in real-life crisis situations. Format can vary depending on the topic being taught, but Centerstone SIM Center learners can expect to watch informational videos, interact with standardized patients, engage in interactive scenarios where they are able to apply learned information and provide feedback and proof of learned skills through open-ended questions and other clinical competency assessments.

The official launch of the Centerstone SIM Center occurred this past fall when approximately 65 of Centerstone's staff members participated in a simulated training exercise for cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for depression.

"We've already observed positive results from our early SIM Center users and are now in the process of developing new courses for our learners. We're particularly excited to be expanding our offerings in cognitive behavioral therapy for suicide prevention and motivational interviewing," says Tobin Richardson, manager of simulation education for Centerstone's Research Institute.

"There is a rich body of evidence supporting simulation learning, behavioral healthcare has largely failed to leverage this training technology for both graduate and professional clinical education. This is certainly something Centerstone's Research Institute is trying to change through the use of its SIM Center," says Dr. Bre Banks.

Centerstone's Research Institute is actively working to make the SIM Center accessible to as many behavioral health professionals as possible, and has recently inked a partnership with the University of Tennessee's School of Social Work to design curriculum to further train its interns on the use of telehealth in the delivery of behavioral health services. The group is also discussing a similar partnership with Indiana University's School of Social Work.

My Health, My Choice, My Life — Peer Wellness in Tennessee

My Health My Choice My Life had a virtual Quarterly Meeting on December 7th and the Peer Wellness Coaches reported that they are all staying busy in their respective agencies providing services in



Dina Savvenas

-person whenever possible, over the phone, and via Zoom and Telehealth. Wellness Coaching continues to be the main focus, with more and more peers needing that extra support for setting self-directed goals to improve their health and wellness in all 8 dimensions, with a focus on physical health. Several of us recently completed Intermediate Motivational Interviewing training with Hillary Bolter of Bolter Consulting, and we continue to sharpen our skills as a team in this interview style that we use to guide change talk in coaching. We had a lot of fun in a Watercolor Workshop on January 7th with artist Karen Renee Robb and we learned a new technique to share with peers who may use art as a replacement behavior, for stress relief, or simply for the fun of it. On December 29th, the USDA released their latest dietary guidelines for 2020-2025, "Make Every Bite Count," with a continued focus on choosing nutrient dense foods such as whole grains, a variety of fruits and vegetables, and low-fat dairy, while decreasing added sugars. You may visit www.dietaryguidelines.gov for more information. Stay well!



Ballad Health, Gov. Bill Lee Launch Effort to Provide Strong Futures For Women and Babies

Repurposed Greeneville hospital, with investment from State of Tennessee and Ballad Health, to house new addiction-treatment facility

As an organization committed to serving the needs of women and children throughout the Appalachian Highlands, Ballad Health announced today a major investment into serving the specialized needs of pregnant women, babies and families, who suffer from the pain of addiction.

The Ballad Health Strong Futures program, which will be housed at the former Takoma Regional Hospital in Greeneville, will provide residential and other care for pregnant women and mothers who suffer from addiction or need other behavioral health services. The program will provide a range of residential and outpatient behavioral health services, including addiction treatment, that will help ensure the strongest-possible new beginnings for women and their children.

“Ballad Health is proud to bring these much-needed services to women in the Appalachian Highlands,” said Tammy Albright, vice president and chief executive officer of Ballad Health Behavioral Health Services and former president of Greeneville Community Hospital.

“This is a big step in our efforts to bridge some of the gaps in care for our community. This program is an investment in our community that can also help break the cycle of poverty and bring brighter futures to families in the Appalachian Highlands.”

Ballad Health first announced its intent to repurpose the hospital last year, as it consolidated acute care hospital services for what is now known as Greeneville Community Hospital. The plans for development of this program were so compelling, the State of Tennessee made its own independent commitment to support the program for its first two years through a two-year, \$7 million grant furnished by the Tennessee Department of Human Services. And the Tennessee Department of Health officially decommissioned the acute care beds at Takoma Regional Hospital, a necessary step for the conversion to a residential facility.

“This is the promise of Ballad Health – that by listening to what our communities need, modernizing care delivery and working with state and national partners, we can strengthen our region and contribute to its success,” said Ballad Health Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alan Levine. “We know – and have known for a while – that to truly impact health, we have to look beyond medical care and reach into modifiable social determinants and behaviors.

“Addiction, poverty, health and education are all interrelated, and they all have far-reaching consequences that affect families for generations. For Ballad Health to address something as broad as a region’s health status, we must look into each of these elements and see how we can create positive change from the very beginning of someone’s life.”

Learn more at www.BalladHealth.org.

<p>NEW MEMBER WELCOME</p> <p>TAMHO welcomes our newest Affiliate member organization . . .</p>	 <p>Park Center <i>Will Connelly, CEO</i> parkcenternashville.org 615.242.3576</p>
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Bob Vero, Robert Vaughn, and Chris Wyre Announce Retirements



Centerstone, a national leader in behavioral health and addiction services, has announced that Dr. Robert "Bob" Vero, regional chief executive officer, will retire from his post effective May 2021.

Vero has spent 40 years of his career at Centerstone and helped the nonprofit grow from a relatively small organization into one of the largest community-based behavioral healthcare providers in the country. He has led Centerstone in its development of nationally acclaimed products and services, including an internationally-recognized crisis management strategies program.

"I've had the special privilege of working side-by-side with Bob for many years," says David Guth, chief executive officer for Centerstone. "I am proud to have witnessed his unwavering commitment to serving the people in our communities and to the advancement of the behavioral healthcare profession."

Vero's industry impact is also visible through his service as a volunteer board member for several not-for-profit organizations, including Cumberland University and the Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (TAMHO) where he served three terms as president. He has also extended service as co-chair of the Nashville-Davidson County Behavioral Health and Wellness Advisory Council and as a member of Tennessee Governor Bill Lee's Long Term Care Task Force (COVID-19).

Vero holds retired licenses as a Marital and Family Therapist, Licensed Professional Counselor and Licensed Psychological Examiner. He has worked in the behavioral health field since 1976, beginning his career at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska where he worked in the campus counseling center. His early work was followed by counseling positions in private and public sector practice, and he served as a psychological consultant to Nebraska State Highway Patrol and Metro Nashville Police Department.

Vero held several clinical positions at Luton Mental Health Services in Nashville, a legacy organization for Centerstone, before becoming its CEO. Along with his board, Vero brought Luton Mental Health Services into Centerstone in 1998, becoming Centerstone's chief operating officer and later ascending to regional CEO for Centerstone's Tennessee operations.

"While I look forward to the next season of my life, I plan to stay connected to this privileged work. It has given me purpose and meaning for more than four decades," Vero said. "My retirement will begin with fulfilling a promise to my family—I've promised not to over-commit to anything for at least six months."

As Vero nears his retirement next spring, Ben Middleton, Centerstone regional chief operating officer in Tennessee, will prepare to step into the role of regional CEO.



Dr. James Boerner, Chair of the Volunteer Behavioral Health (VBH) Board of Directors, announced at the annual meeting on August 7, 2020 that CEO, Chris Wyre, will be retiring in August of 2021.

After more than 43 years working with VBH, Chris' legacy of service to clients, staff, and the behavioral health field in Tennessee has been exemplary.

"I'm really proud of what we have been able to create with Volunteer in those 43 years," says Chris. "While I am really excited about my future endeavors, I am also still very invested in the mission and future of Volunteer."

Upon Chris' retirement announcement, the Board unanimously appointed Phyllis Persinger who has worked for VBH for 33 years to the President's role.

The Board acknowledged Phyllis' leadership as COO during the transition into the Tennessee Health Link program and expressed gratitude for leading the organization during recent challenges, especially through the difficult period of transformation and adjustment with COVID-19. VBH has no doubt she will be extremely successful in her future with the organization.

"I'm so humbled, honored, and grateful to be presented with such an opportunity," said Phyllis. "My passion for our staff and our clients only continues to grow. The entire team truly receives the credit for Volunteer's success, and I am so grateful every day to work both with them and for them."

Chris and Phyllis will continue to work together as she transitions into the CEO role effective August 2021.



Robert Vaughn has announced he will retire in June 2021. Under his leadership as CEO at Carey Counseling Center for the past 36 years, Carey has become well known for their high quality residential services, the First Episode program that was the first of its kind in a rural area, and their commitment to Same Day Services and Just in Time Scheduling to improve access for their clients. Robert has also held several leadership roles with TAMHO including serving as President 3 times. He has been a mentor and friend to many of us in the TAMHO family.

We look forward to helping Robert celebrate this milestone!



Planning and Policy Council

Schedules for the **Statewide Planning and Policy Council** and **Regional Council** meetings and information are available online at:

[Statewide and Committee meeting schedule](#)

[Regional Committee meeting schedule](#)

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TN Department of
**Mental Health &
Substance Abuse Services**

Statewide Happenings

Tennessee Medicaid block grant gets 11th-hour approval, but Biden can reverse

[Click Here](#) for link to original article by Brett Kelman for the Nashville Tennessean

In the waning days of the Trump administration, federal officials approved a plan to convert TennCare funding to a block grant, potentially overhauling the Medicaid program providing health coverage to about one in five Tennesseans.

But a TennCare block grant does not align with the health care proposal of President-elect Joe Biden, who instead campaigned on plans to improve and expand Obamacare. Biden may reverse the Tennessee block grant decision before it has any effect.

For now, Tennessee is the first and only state approved to transform Medicaid in this way. Federal officials said the proposal could be a "model" for other states. Gov. Bill Lee touted the approval as a "legacy accomplishment" and a "historic day for Tennessee."

"I have said from the beginning we would only accept a deal that was good for Tennessee and Tennesseans," Lee said Friday. "And I believe that we have done just that."

The approval drew immediate criticism from Tennessee Sen. Raumesh Akbari, D-Memphis, who called it a "last-ditch effort by the lame duck Trump administration" to undermine Biden. She encouraged Tennessee lawmakers to reject the proposal and instead work with Biden to "extend health coverage to every working Tennessean."

The block grant approval, negotiated over about a year with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, still must get final approval from state lawmakers before it can be implemented. Lee now intends to present a joint resolution on the plan for the General Assembly's "immediate consideration," according to a news release.

But the transformation still might be undone before it truly begins.

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But the transformation still might be undone before it truly begins.

Two Nashville experts, John Graves, a professor with the Vanderbilt Department of Health Policy, and Michele Johnson, executive director of the Tennessee Justice Center, said in December that if the Trump administration gave the block grant a last-minute approval, the Biden administration would likely reverse the decision.

During a news conference on the block grant approval, Lee said it "would be a mistake" for the Biden administration to reverse the decision, and he did not expect it to happen. CMS Administrator Seema Verma confirmed it would be within the authority of Biden's incoming cabinet members to reverse the approval, but said the administrative process should allow Tennessee leaders the opportunity to object.



STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Governor Bill Lee
will deliver his State
of the State address
on February 8,
during which he will
outline his
administration's
priorities and
present his
administration's FY
2022 budget.



Larry McCormack, *The Tennessean*

A third Nashville expert, Vanderbilt health economist Melinda Buntin, said Friday the odds were "very very low" that the Biden administration would let the block grant program stand "in exactly this form. Biden's goal will be to convince Tennessee to finally expand Medicaid coverage, which lawmakers refuse to allow.

"(Biden) will have an interest in constructing carrots, if you will, for states like Tennessee that have not expanded coverage to do so," Buntin said. "And so I would expect they would go into negotiations about this waiver with that in mind."

Buntin, a health economist, said she had not expected a last-minute approval of the block grant because this funding model was dependent on health care costs remaining relatively stable, but the coronavirus pandemic had thrown those costs into chaos.

In December, Buntin said she would be surprised if the block grant was approved. And then it was.

"And it still surprises me," Buntin said, "but I guess we've all learned to not to be surprised by surprising things in 2020, or now, 2021."

Block grant untested alternative to Medicaid expansion

The block grant plan fundamentally transforms how Tennessee's Medicaid program, called TennCare, is both funded and managed. TennCare provides health insurance to pregnant mothers, low-income families and many people with disabilities. It currently covers about one-fifth of all Tennessee residents.

Under the current TennCare system, the federal government pays Tennessee for about two-thirds of the cost of TennCare. This money is not capped, so as TennCare costs rise or fall, the federal funding adjusts to match.

The block grant caps funding for TennCare, with exceptions, and gives state officials more authority over how to spend that money. If money is saved as a result of state control, the state keeps half to reinvest in government programs but not necessarily in TennCare.

According to documents provided by the governor's office, priorities for spending this money include enhancing maternal health coverage, clearing a wait list of people with disabilities awaiting services, expanding coverage to include "additional needy populations" and "addressing state-specific health crises."

"For the first time, Tennessee will have the opportunity to be rewarded for its efficient and sound management of its Medicaid program through shared savings and additional federal dollars ..." said TennCare Director Stephen Smith. "This is about more, not less."

The block grant is often seen as an untested, Republican-backed alternative to expanding Medicaid, which was allowed under the Affordable Care Act, better known as Obamacare. Expansion raises the financial threshold to receive Medicaid coverage, allowing more people to join, and provides federal funding to support their enrollment.

Tennessee is one of the few states to decline Medicaid expansion, turning down billions in federal funding in the process. Conservative lawmakers who control the General Assembly have rejected all attempts to expand TennCare and instead passed a law last year requiring the governor to apply for a TennCare block grant.

When the governor unveiled his proposal last fall, it was not well received. Public hearings held across the state were almost entirely negative. The state collected about 1,800 written comments on the block grant plan, but only 11 were in support.

Is the block grant actually a block grant? Not really.

Much of the criticism of the block grant stemmed from concerns it would not provide enough funding in an emergency that caused a surge of TennCare enrollment, like a pandemic or an economic recession – two scenarios that have since become reality.

The state government tried to account for this scenarios by proposing a sliding scale that capped TennCare funding under most circumstances but still provided more federal money if enrollment spiked.

As a result, Tennessee's proposal is not actually a traditional block grant, and federal officials did not call it one when announcing the approval. In a separate news release announcing the approval, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services never uses the words "block grant."

Instead, CMS calls it an "aggregate cap," folded into a 10-year agreement now known as "TennCare III."

"The TennCare III demonstration builds on all the good ideas that have been out there around a new financing model for Medicaid, but addresses many of the most prominent concerns," said Verma, the CMS administrator, in the news release.

"This groundbreaking waiver puts guardrails in place to ensure appropriate oversight and protections for beneficiaries, while also creating incentives for states to manage costs while holding them accountable for improving access, quality and health outcomes. It's no exaggeration to say that this carefully crafted demonstration could be a national model moving forward."

Mourning the Passing of Ellen Abbott

Director of Criminal Justice Services , TFMHSAS



Ellen was a trailblazer. She left footprints in the sand.

Ellen was a champion for expanding peer support services.

Ellen was fearless. She knew her stuff.

She was passionate!

Ellen's work ethic and intellect were inspiring to me.

Ellen was always available, and she always got things done.

Ellen was somebody that made you good at your job.

Ellen was such a beautiful soul!

Ellen was a powerhouse, and she'll never be replaced.

Ellen was a model public servant. She was loved.

***Wear a mask
and never
miss a
moment.***



Face it. Masks *fight* COVID-19.



National Happenings

Biden Administration Adds National Council for Behavioral Health's Tom Hill to Office of National Drug Control Policy



The Biden-Harris administration today announced the appointment of Tom Hill, MSW, to the position of senior policy advisor at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

Hill leaves the National Council for Behavioral Health after nearly four years. He served in the Obama administration until January 2017 as a senior advisor on addiction and recovery at the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), prior to his tenure at the National Council.

"I'm honored to serve in my second administration, although it's not easy leaving the National Council," Hill said. "I'm in awe of the organization's expertise, depth of knowledge and the ability of our dedicated workforce to support the members who provide treatment and recovery services to more than 10 million people with mental illness and substance use disorders."

Hill joined the National Council in March 2017 as the vice president for practice improvement, a division that works closely with its 3,326 member organizations. He transitioned in 2020 to a new role as senior advisor, working on a broad range of addiction and recovery issues.

"I'm incredibly happy for Tom because this is such an enormous opportunity," National Council President and CEO Chuck Ingoglia said. "But I'm devastated personally because of what he means to me and to the National Council."

In his new role at the ONDCP, Hill said he hopes to have a platform to promote evidence-based treatment and shed light on the life-saving role of recovery support and harm reduction efforts.

"This is an exciting transition and an exciting opportunity because of the Biden-Harris administration's support for health care, broadly, and its stated goal of addressing health care and racial inequity," Hill said. "They are making a priority of tackling COVID-19, improving access to care, addressing the growing need for behavioral health care and reducing overdoses and overdose deaths."

The ONDCP is a component of the Executive Office of the President. The mission of ONDCP is to reduce substance use disorder and its consequences by coordinating the nation's drug control policy through the development and oversight of the National Drug Control Strategy and Budget.

Hill received his Master of Social Work in community organizing from Hunter College at City University of New York. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Johnson Institute America Honors Recovery Award; the Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Addiction Professionals and Their Allies (NALGAP) Advocacy Award; and a Robert Wood Johnson Fellowship in the Developing Leadership in Reducing Substance Abuse initiative. In 2020, he was honored with the America Honors Recovery William L. White Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award.



Liz Richter named CMS Acting Administrator



Liz Richter is the Acting Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Liz has served with CMS since 1990. She began in the Bureau of Policy Development working on inpatient hospital payment policy. She subsequently worked on a variety of Medicare payment issues. In 1998, Liz moved to the Office of Financial Management, where in 2001 she became Director of the Financial Services Group.

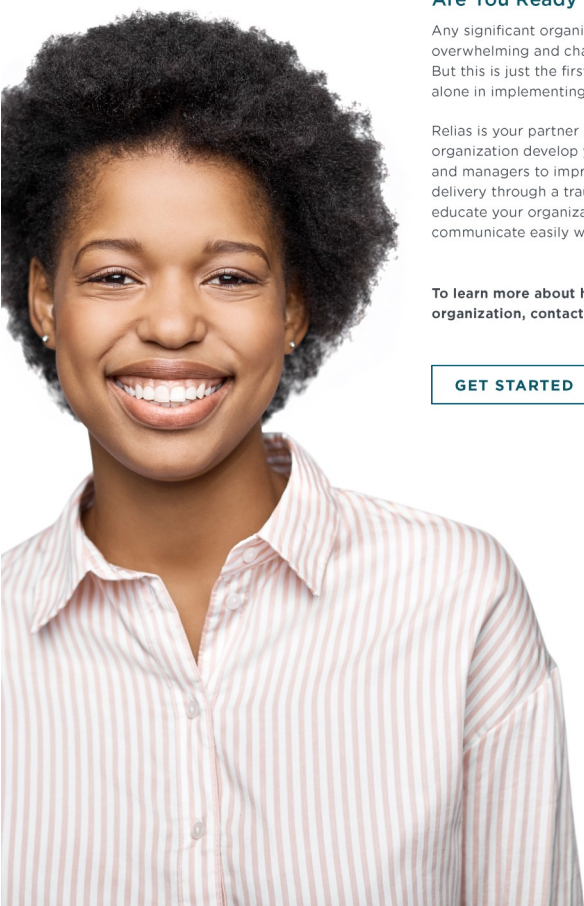
In 2003, she became Director of the Hospital and Ambulatory Policy Group in the Center for Medicare Management and became Deputy Director of the Center for Medicare in 2007.

National Council Applauds Biden Administration's Intent to Extend PHE through 2021

Acting Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Norris Cochran recently sent a [letter](#) to the nation's governors outlining the Biden-Harris administration's intent to extend the ongoing COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) through the end of 2021. The move signals the new administration's commitment to the ongoing pandemic response and specifies that whenever a decision is made either to terminate the declaration or let it expire, states will be given 60 days' notice prior to termination.

"The announcement of a likely PHE extension through the end of 2021 provides much needed stability," said Chuck Ingoglia, president and CEO of the National Council for Behavioral Health. "The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated communities nationwide. Stress, anxiety and suicidal ideation continue to increase, and we are coping with a massive mental health and overdose crisis. People with mental illness and substance use disorders have suffered disproportionately throughout the pandemic, and the demand for treatment and services remains historically high. Extension of the PHE designation will ensure states can continue providing vulnerable populations with life-saving care at a time when they need it most. We thank the Biden-Harris administration for providing greater certainty regarding the PHE, and we look forward to working with the administration as we continue to address our nation's mental health crisis."





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