



the source for BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN TENNESSEE

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEWS & EVENTS

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www.tamho.org

TENNESSEE ASSOCIATION OF MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

Message from the Executive Director

Tennessee Health Link (THL) was implemented in December 2016 as a way to enhance care coordination for individuals in the TennCare program who need behavioral health services. The hope was that through improved coordination of behavioral and physical health services and increased flexibility in the way care was delivered, individuals would see improved health outcomes and the State would see improved cost control.



Ellyn Wilbur
Executive Director

THL providers are teams of professionals who provide patient centered, whole person care to individuals who have behavioral health needs. Eligible individuals are identified by diagnosis, health care utilization patterns and/or a functional need.

In addition to traditional behavioral health services, Health Link provides:

- comprehensive care management (creating care coordination and treatment plans)
- care coordination (outreach and follow up with primary care and other behavioral health providers as appropriate)
- health promotion (educating the individual and family on health conditions and ways to improve overall health)
- transitional care (assist in developing discharge plans)
- patient and family support (assist in educating and supporting patient and family members throughout the treatment process)
- referral to social supports (facilitating access to community supports)

The implementation of THL included specific quality metrics that would be tracked and monitored to improve provider accountability and patient outcomes. TennCare’s research shows that their members with behavioral health needs are almost three times more likely than the average TennCare member to be hospitalized and twice as likely to present in an emergency room setting. In response to this, THL quality metrics included reducing hospitalizations and reducing emergency room visits for individuals receiving Health Link services. Additional metrics included improving screening rates for behavioral and physical health conditions and improved management of chronic health conditions.

We are pleased to report that for 2017, the first year of THL data, patients seen by TAMHO members saw:

- enhanced mental health and physical screenings for children, adolescents and adults
- improved management of chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and mental illnesses
- fewer visits to the emergency room
- fewer hospital admissions for acute physical and mental health conditions

We are proud of these quality outcomes and congratulate our THL providers on a job well done!

TAMHO THL Providers include: Alliance Healthcare Services, Carey Counseling Center, CMI Healthcare Services, Centerstone, Cherokee Health Systems, Frontier Health, Generations Health Association, Helen Ross McNabb Center, LifeCare Family Services, Pathways Behavioral Health Services, Peninsula, Professional Care Services of West TN, Inc., Quinco Mental Health Center, Ridgeview Behavioral Health Services and Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System.



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- Director of Policy and Advocacy | Alysia Williams
- Director of Member Services | Teresa Fuqua
- Director of Administrative Services | Laura B. Jean
- Project Manager TNCODC | Patrick Slay
- Statewide Peer Wellness Coach | Dina Savvenas
- Meeting Assistant | Carrie Ligon

Governor Bill Lee Announces Initiatives for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Efforts

Additional funding treats more Tennesseans, takes aim at Tennessee's high suicide rate.

Today, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee announced three priorities to increase access to mental health treatment and expand suicide prevention efforts across the state.

"The mental health of our citizens is foundational to all other goals we seek to accomplish in education, job growth and public safety," said Lee. "By prioritizing our mental health safety net and suicide prevention, we are caring for more Tennesseans and building healthier communities."

Gov. Lee is proposing \$11.2 million in new funding to expand access to services for Tennesseans living with serious mental illness. This investment seeks to cover an additional 7,000 uninsured Tennessee adults through the state's Behavioral Health Safety Net program, which provides several essential mental health services. Additionally, the investment addresses increasing costs at the state's four regional mental health institutes and ensures that those facilities will continue to provide high quality care to Tennesseans with the most significant psychiatric needs.

To complement Tennessee's work in recovery courts and alternative sentencing measures, Gov. Lee is also proposing a \$3 million investment to the Creating Homes Initiative. Since 2000, the program has created more than 20,000 quality, permanent housing opportunities for those living with mental illness. This new investment will expand recovery housing options for Tennesseans struggling with substance abuse.

"In addition to measures that address substance abuse and mental illness, we are tackling Tennessee's shockingly high suicide rate that is now 20 percent higher than the national average," said Lee. "There is tremendous opportunity to engage public-private partnerships as we work to prevent suicide and save lives."

To address this issue, Gov. Lee is proposing a

\$1.1 million investment that will expand the state's partnership with the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN) to establish a new regional outreach model and increase the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services' efforts to focus on interventions at the community level using evidence-based practices.

Nashville Organization Uses Art to Promote Healing

ARTICLE REPRINT | WTVF News Channel 5 Nashville | March 20, 2019 | Kelsey Gibbs | <https://www.newschannel5.com/news/nashville-organization-uses-art-to-promote-healing>

One organization is treating mental illness with art, and those suffering say it's the healing they always needed.

Looking at Cynthia Potter's art it's hard to believe she's been doing this for only a few years and watching her singing and dancing it's also hard to believe she struggles with a mental illness.

"I have bipolar and I have severe ups and downs and most of them are downs," said Potter.

Like many others Potter says she has found healing through her drawings.

"Art is our way of expressing our emotions and our feelings and it allows us to let things out which we keep bottled up," Potter said.

Wednesday was Behavioral Health Day at the Capitol. Advocates and supporters used this time to lobby for mental health awareness and resources. But one organization is letting these pictures to do the talking.

"I go to a peer support center in Clarksville Tennessee and they have a HAPI art teacher come in twice a year and teach us different forms of art," said Potter.

Healing Arts Project Inc or HAPI provides artistic opportunities for those battling mental illness and addiction recovery. HAPI currently serves approximately 400 individuals in mental health and addiction recovery each year.

I've seen people open more be able to speak more about who they are and a little more about their illness. One of the participants said today that we're people not the illness," said HAPI Executive director Lynece Benton-Stewart

And art is their cure.



“When I’m stressed out that’s what I do, when I’m having a bad day that’s what I do. It’s my medicine,” said Potter.

Many pieces of the art will be displayed throughout legislators office, and all of them are on sale you find out more information here info@healingartsprojectinc.org

TNCODC Strategic Initiative Updates

Upcoming COD Learning Community Events

West-Memphis, April 30, Tuesday, 9:15-12:00, topic: Reducing Stigma and Action Planning with the COMPASS-EZ

Middle-Nashville, May 7, Tuesday, 9:00-12:00, topic: Stages of Change/Stage Matched Interventions and Action Planning with the COMPASS-EZ

East-Knoxville, May 16, Thursday, 9:30-12:15, topic: Peer Support Services and Action Planning with the COMPASS-EZ

COD Learning Community Providers Participate as Peer Mentors at NatCon19

Zia Partners, Dr. Ken Minkoff and Dr. Christie Cline, presented a half-day workshop as one of the NatCon19 Preconference Universities. The topic was Welcoming Integrated Services for People with Co-occurring MH/SUD: Practical Steps for Implementation in Your Program. From the Tennessee COD Learning Community, we had seven providers participate as peer mentors during the session. They shared their learnings from the last few years as the strategic initiative has been implemented across the state to enhance Tennessee’s co-occurring disorders system of care. The participating providers were: Case Management, Inc., Hope of East TN

Pathways Behavioral Health Services, Renewal House, Inc., Ridgeview Behavioral Health Services, Synergy Treatment Centers, and Volunteer Behavioral Health Care.

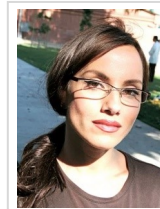


Patrick Slay
Project Manager
Tennessee Co-Occurring Disorders Collaborative (TNCODC)



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

The Peer Wellness Coaches assisted with this year’s wildly successful Art For Awareness, a favorite annual event that took place on March 20th at the War Memorial Auditorium in Nashville, to coincide with Behavioral Health’s Day on the Hill. They assisted with all aspects of this event and led a dance physical activity entitled “Let Art Move You.”



Dina Savvenas
Statewide Peer Wellness Coach

Leader’s Trainings Scheduled:

- CDSMP/DSMP Leader’s training scheduled at Helen Ross McNabb Center in Knoxville on April 1st – 5th
- CPSMP/CPSMP X Leader’s training scheduled at Frontier Health in Johnson City on April 15th – 19th
- DSMP Update Leader’s training scheduled at Cherokee Health Systems in Morristown on May 16th
- CPSMP/CPSMP X Leader’s training scheduled at Helen Ross McNabb Center in Knoxville on June 3rd – 7th
- More trainings to include Middle and West TN will be added as the year unfolds

Other updates:

My Health My Choice My Life will have a booth set up at the IPS conference in Nashville, TN on May 10th. Stop by to find out more about what we are doing to increase healthier behaviors for Behavioral Health/SUD participants in TN.



PLANNING & POLICY COUNCIL

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

<https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/research/data--research--and-planning/planning/council-overview/2019-regional-council-meeting-schedule.html>

DIRECT QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES TO:

Avis Easley
(615) 253-6397
Avis.Easley@tn.gov

Amy Holland
(615) 253-3785
Amy.Holland@tn.gov



To find resources for children in Tennessee, visit <http://kidcentraltn.com/>.



TAMHO MEMBER ORGANIZATION HAPPENINGS

Case Management, Inc. is Now CMI Healthcare Services

Now providing fully integrated healthcare services.



Case Management, Inc. is excited to share some news with our community partners. Since we

opened our Primary Care Clinic three (3) years ago, we have been evaluating our brand and how to best represent who we are. Our organization is proud to be a fully integrated healthcare system with both behavioral health and primary care services co-located in the same building under the same leadership and governed by one board of directors.

It seems like just yesterday, this stand-alone case management service provider came into existence; however, in 2020 CMI will celebrate 30 years of service in the Memphis & Shelby County Community.

Our service continuum has expanded greatly and although the name Case Management, Inc. is what the community knows this agency as, it no longer represents who this agency is. We are excited to start using our new name this year effective immediately. **Case Management, Inc. is now doing business as CMI Healthcare Services.** Although, our name has changed, our commitment to the thousands of families that we serve and the Memphis & Shelby County community has not. Additionally, all contact information remains the same.

We look forward to celebrating our 30 Year Anniversary in 2020!

Pilot Program Aims to Help Low-Income Residents Receive Mental Health Treatment

ARTICLE REPRINT | WREG—News Channel 3 Memphis | February 7, 2019 | Shay Arthur | <https://wreg.com/2019/02/07/pilot-program-aims-to-help-low-income-residents-receive-mental-health-treatment/>

Millions of people across the United States battle mental health issues.

Seeking help is hard enough if you're financially stable, but add living in poverty and it can be nearly impossible to get in touch with the resources needed.

"In our society often we have this idea of pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and if you work hard enough you can make the American Dream come true, and I don't think that's always the case," said Melissa Hirschi, assistant professor of Social Work at the University of Memphis.

"I think that individuals that are living with major and persistent mental illness, especially if it's untreated, and folks that are living

in poverty, those are two areas that make it harder for that American Dream to come true."

The University of Memphis reports nearly 19 percent of people in Shelby County live in poverty — that's about 6 percent higher than national numbers.

When it comes to mental health treatment, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration says almost 13 percent of people in Shelby County have received services, compared to about 14 percent in the U.S.

Experts say poverty plays a role in the numbers.

"Not having access to mental health services, not having transportation to get to the services that they need, not having insurance," said Michael Sims, program coordinator with Jail Division Services with Alliance Healthcare Services.

"Even though services are limited and sparse its compounded when there isn't access to those services," Hirschi explained.

So what are many doing in crisis when they can't get in touch with the proper care?

Memphis Police Lt. Col. Vincent Beasley said it's often police who have to deal with the situation.

"If somebody is gonna come to the scene you can call the police and we're going to come," Beasley said. "A lot of times we answer calls that are not really police related calls."

Memphis Police trains officers to be part of their CIT — Crisis Intervention Team — led by Beasley, because they are often dealing with people in crisis mode, potentially battling a mental health issue.

"We go out there and de-escalate the situation and get the individual to calm down enough so that we can get them to a place of help," Beasley said.

Right now there are 294 active CIT officers. Last year they responded to more than 21,000 calls, up from the more than 18,000 calls in 2016.

"We only transported 729 people to a penal facility, and that number is way below the national average because the national average is somewhere between 4 and 6 percent," Beasley said.

The city often takes people to Alliance Healthcare, a non-profit behavioral health provider.

"What we found in our work is there is a significant overlap between the people that they're seeing on the streets that have behavioral health issues, and the ones that we're seeing in our EMS system as well as our partners in Alliance Healthcare," said Lt. Kevin Spratlin, Memphis Fire Department's coordinator of the Health Care Navigator program.

So Memphis police, the fire department Alliance Healthcare have partnered together to form Crisis Assessment and Response to Emergencies, known as CARE. A pilot program kicked off in

September.

The goal is to move behavioral health patients away from taking an ambulance and get them in touch with the help they really need.

"All three of them arrive at one time, so basically whatever is going on with that individual, you got everything you need," Spratlin said.

Michael Sims, the Program Coordinator at Jail Division Services and Alliance Healthcare Services, says his office helps determine what the person needs and if they need to be taken to a center for treatment.

"Or if that person just really needs a safety plan or an outpatient referral to one of our clinics," Sims said.

For now, the CARE team operates Monday through Friday. Officials say when it comes to mental health, no one is immune.

"When we look at our data on Mental health calls across the city, it is everywhere in the city. There is no one area where it is specific," Sims said.

Memphis is the only one of a few cities trying out the one year pilot. From September when the pilot started until January 9, the care team had been dispatched to 266 incidents.

Head Start Brain Builders Program

Ridgeview's Head Start Brain Builders program will focus on children enrolled in Anderson County Head Start who are presenting with social histories and behaviors that indicate a strong likelihood of complex adverse childhood experiences.



Ridgeview will provide an approach that emphasizes **screening, observation, therapy, support group, and staff education.**

The Head Start Brain Builders program introduces the following protocols: early childhood trauma-screening utilizing the Project Broadcast Tool for Head Start children; individual and classroom mental health observation; provision of evidence-based therapies and practices that promote healthy attachment and brain development (e.g. PCIT-Parent Child Interactive Therapy); parent support groups using Nurturing Parenting curriculum; training on ACEs for all Head Start school personnel; and centering the county-wide community mental health awareness event, Ride 4 Hope, around Building Strong Brains.

This program will provide a Brain Builder Specialist to conduct early trauma-screenings for Head Start children enrolled in the 23 classrooms at 13 sites in Anderson County. This will support the identification of at-risk children who may have one or more ACE. The Specialist will further engage the family by offering Nurturing Parenting groups to the caregiver(s) throughout the year and providing evidence-based treatment that promotes healthy brain development, healthy attachment to caregiver(s), and overall resilience.

These measures will **mitigate** the child's vulnerability to short and long-term health concerns and social problems caused by ACEs.

We also propose to provide psycho-educational opportunities to all Anderson County Head Start staff to elevate the ACE literacy and knowledge of mental health in the 0-5-year-old population among the formal and informal supports of children.

Through these educational efforts, we will help **prevent** the occurrence of ACEs as healthcare, social services, and education will be better positioned, aligned, and informed to connect individuals and families with early screening and intervention.

As part of the FY 2020 Building Strong Brains Innovation Awards, Allied Behavioral Health Solutions was funded to establish the Tennessee First Five Training Institute (TFFTI). In partnership with TAMHO and its member organizations, the TFFTI will collaborate closely with six community mental health centers (two per grand region) to provide 12 months of intensive Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECHMH) training to 18 total clinicians (three per CMHC). The TFFTI will work closely with the selected CMHCs to address potential systemic barriers and concerns to providing IECMH services and to establish clear options for accessing IECMH services in the communities these agencies serve. While priority will be given to the 6 CMHCs, the trainings hosted by the TFFTI will be open to the other interested professionals, allowing for access to improved practice behaviors within our professional community regardless of selection for the 12 month intensive program. BlueCare has also agreed to collaborate with the TFFTI to continue conversations around appropriate billing and compensation for IECMH services so as to support long-term sustainability for these vital services. Be on the lookout for more information regarding the process for CMHCs to apply, the variety of trainings coming to Tennessee, and more!

Helen Ross McNabb Center granted First Episode Psychosis funding in Hamilton County

February 7th, 2019

The Helen Ross McNabb Center is pleased to announce a new clinical program, OnTrack Hamilton, which aims to improve outcomes for individuals experiencing an initial psychotic episode; provide better/quicker access to treatment; provide services geared toward treating the individual and family; and increase awareness and early detection of psychotic disorders.

OnTrack Hamilton is one of four programs funded through the Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services First Episode Psychosis Initiative. The Helen Ross McNabb Center operates the Hamilton County and Knox County programs.

The period of time immediately following an individual's first psychotic episode is important for treatment, support and education. Individuals receiving services through OnTrack Hamilton will receive evidence-based interventions, including psycho social skills training, trauma-informed clinical



interventions, intensive case management and peer support.

“This program can have a significant impact on individuals by reducing the number of future episodes and long-term effects of psychosis disorders,” said Gayle Lodato, senior director of Greater Chattanooga Area services for the Helen Ross McNabb Center. “By beginning treatment immediately, individuals will have more opportunities for a healthy and successful future, including higher education and employment.”

The program will also positively impact the community by reducing the number of hospitalizations, incarcerations and incidences of homelessness for individuals experiencing a psychosis disorder.

For more information about OnTrack Hamilton, contact the Helen Ross McNabb Center at (423) 266-6751.

The Helen Ross McNabb Center is a premier not-for-profit provider of behavioral health services in East Tennessee. Since 1948, the Center has provided quality and compassionate care to children, adults and families experiencing mental illness, addiction and social challenges. As the Center celebrates more than 70 years of providing services to communities in East Tennessee, its mission remains clear and simple; “Improving the lives of the people we serve.” For more information, visit www.mcnabbcenter.org.

Depression Comic Book Teaches Teens About Suicide Prevention

Centerstone has just released its fifth superhero-themed comic book for teens. Spark: Rising from the Ashes addresses the crucial topics of depression and suicide prevention among today’s youth. It is available now for distribution through Centerstone prevention specialists serving schools and community centers throughout 58 Tennessee counties. The free comic book can also be [read online](#) and reprinted.



Centerstone Takes Home Award

The Healing Arts Project, Inc. (HAPI) honored Centerstone with their Community Friend Award at the Phoenix Art Gala held in Nashville.

HAPI provides free art classes taught by professional artists, art exhibit and publication opportunities and outreach events.



Ben Middleton, Chief Operating Officer in Tennessee (right), accepted the honor, thanking HAPI volunteers and Centerstone Peer Support Services staff and clients for their administrative, therapeutic and creative efforts.



CEO of Professional Care Services, and President-Elect of TAMHO, Jimmie Jackson, was recently able to speak with Governor Bill Lee regarding Behavioral Health Safety Net. Jimmie expressed gratitude of the Governor’s support to allocate more dollars to the BHSN program and how it is a valuable program for many uninsured individuals.



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2019 Co-Occurring Disorders Summit

A statewide TNCODC Co-Occurring Disorders Summit was held in Brentwood on March 8, 2019. There were 111 attendees from 41 organizations. The four topics addressed were:



SLOSS



SLAY



GEMINN



LONG



CREWS



OMOHUNDRO

1. The Status of MAT in Tennessee, presented by Wesley Geminn, PharmD, BCCP, Chief Pharmacist, TDMHSAS, Nashville. The session included a Provider Panel discussion with Debbie Hillin, Senior Vice President, Buffalo Valley, Hohenwald, Michael Webb, Primary MAT Counselor, CADAS, Chattanooga, Paul Roddy, Outpatient Counselor, CADAS, Chattanooga, Myron Edwards, LADAC II, Clinical Supervisor, and Nora Brown, Registered Nurse, CAAP, Inc., Memphis, Brad Franks, MSC, LMFT, Director of Clinical Services for Greater Chattanooga, Helen Ross McNabb Center, Chattanooga, and Kimberly Sowell, MA, Vice President of Addiction and Co-Occurring Services, Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System, Murfreesboro.
2. Family-Centered Treatment Services, presented by Sarah Long, LCSW, Family Treatment Services Coordinator, Helen Ross McNabb Center, Knoxville, Tennessee
3. Creating an Organizational Culture of Self-Care, presented by Douglas Crews, PhD, Assistant Professor, Belmont University, Social Work Department, Nashville, Tennessee
4. Evolving Trends in Substance Use, presented by Ellen L. Omohundro, PhD, Director, Office of Research, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), Nashville, Tennessee

The videotaped sessions and materials are available at <https://www.tncodc.com/strategic-initiative#CODsummit>

We recommend sharing this with your staff and viewing as a group with discussion. We welcome any feedback that you may have.



EDWARDS

BROWN

SOWELL

FRANKS

RODDY

WEBB

HILLIN



March 12, 2019

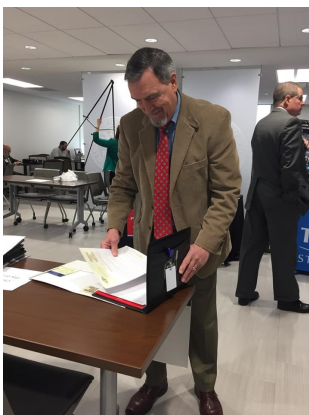
TAMHO ADVOCACY DAY



CHANGING LIVES TOGETHER!

50 TAMHO members made more than 100 visits during TAMHO's Hill Day on March 12th. Advocates met with their legislators to advance TAMHO's public policy agenda which included:

- A bill that makes collaboration between physician and nurse practitioner/ physician assistant more efficient as it allows telemedicine to be utilized during chart reviews and site visits at CMHCs. This legislation was signed into law on 4/23/19.
- A bill that would allow APN and PAs to treat opioid use disorder using buprenorphine within CMHCs and FQHCs. This bill passed in the house.
- A bill that would prohibit the death penalty for people with SMI. This bill was taken off notice in March.
- TAMHO opposed any legislation that would criminalize women with addiction disorders. TAMHO supports treatment for these women and their families.





BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DAY ON THE HILL

March 20, 2019

More than 300 advocates gathered on Capitol Hill for the Coalition for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Hill Day. Governor Lee kicked off this Hill Day thanking participants for what they do and assuring advocates that behavioral health is one of his Administration's top priorities. Commissioner Williams continued the excitement with an encouraging word and discussed TDMHSAS proposed budget enhancements. We heard from other speakers on the Peer Recovery Call Center, Pre-Arrest Diversion, Individual Placement and Support/ Supported Employment and Recovery Housing, just a few of the Coalition's priorities. Participants then spent the afternoon meeting with their legislators. The Coalition is grateful for Governor Lee's vision and commitment to the behavioral health community.



Behavioral Health Day
Capitol Hill March 20, 2019





STATEWIDE HAPPENINGS

TDMHSAS Receives Second Grant For TN Healthy Transitions

New federal funding expands services for youth and young adults to new sites

Tuesday, April 16, 2019 | 12:54pm

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— A program aimed at improving the emotional and behavioral health of youth and young adults is growing to new areas of the state with the support of a new federal grant.

TN Healthy Transitions is designed for youth and young adults ages 16 to 25 who have a serious mental disorder or co-occurring intellectual developmental disability (IDD). The program supports them with evidence-based treatment and recovery services that are appropriate for their age range.

“We know that too many of our young people are falling through the cracks and not getting the help they need for serious mental illness, sometimes with tragic consequences including suicide,” said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW. “The transition from school-based services to adult mental health services is a critical point where young adults often get lost. With this program, we want to make sure young people receive the services and supports they need so they can maximize their potential to lead full and productive lives.”

The grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is for \$5 million and lasts for five years. Tennessee is one of 14 grantees that received awards including other states, the District of Columbia, and Native American Tribes.

With the new funding, TN Healthy Transitions will add locations in Nashville and Greene County through partnerships with Mental Health Cooperative, Frontier Health, and Tennessee Voices for Children. The original TN Healthy Transitions grant serves Benton, Carroll, Gibson, Hamilton, Henry, Lake, Obion, and Weakley Counties and runs through September 2019. Capacity built through the

original grant has served as a foundation for Juvenile Justice Diversion Programs and other services for youth and young adults.

“The selection of a rural and an urban site for this expansion is intentional. As supports are added through this program, we want to make sure that we’re looking outside of the major cities and expanding capacity to serve all Tennesseans,” said Jessica Mullins, LMSW, TDMHSAS Project Director for Youth and Young Adult Initiatives.

In addition to services provided to youth and young adults, the original TN Healthy Transitions grant, awarded in 2014, has proved to have statewide benefits resulting in the creation of a peer support certification for young adults and a statewide Young Adult Leadership Council. Both programs work with youth and young adults on promoting mental health awareness and accessibility to services.

President Trump and The First Lady Deliver Remarks at the RxDrug Abuse & Heroin Summit

Dr. Monty Burks recognized by and called to stage by President Trump to make remarks.

President Trump spoke at the recent Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta and recognized Monty Burks on stage. His appearance is at about 1 hour 16 minutes into this YouTube link.

<https://foreignaffairs.co.nz/2019/04/24/mil-osi-video-president-trump-and-the-first-lady-deliver-remarks-at-the-rx-drug-abuse-heroin-summit/>



Tennessee Is Home to One of the Deadliest National Parks in the Nation: Here’s How We Change That

ARTICLE REPRINT | Forbes | March 7, 2019 | Bill Frist, Contributor | <https://www.forbes.com/sites/billfrist/2019/03/07/tennessee-is-home-to-one-of-the-deadliest-national-parks-in-the-nation-heres-how-we-change-that/>



Bill Frist

fbclid=IwAR064TYZBxt_Yhvfwk8kbPZ8CIDfaP8EsnOYCEs8H6LerT34PA9IY7GG_L8#30196df77d5e

In Middle Tennessee, we are known for excellence in health care services, music, and economic growth. However, one distinction we would like to relinquish is being home to the national park with the highest number of suicides in the United States.

According to an analysis by Outdoor Magazine, the Natchez Trace Parkway is one of the nation’s deadliest parks with 25 suicide deaths from the Natchez Trace Parkway Bridge between January 2006 and September 2016. In recent years, the suicide rate has climbed, with five deaths in 2017 and three this past year. Suicide has become a public health crisis in my home of Williamson County, Tennessee, one that was brought to my attention by my wife Tracy through her work on the board of Centerstone. More tragedies are preventable if we act swiftly and intentionally.

Why is the Natchez Trace Parkway Bridge so deadly? The 1,572-foot-long concrete bridge only has a short, 32-inch railing barring a 155-foot drop. And since the first recorded death at the bridge in 2000, it has gained a reputation for being the “suicide” bridge. Famed country music singer-songwriter Naomi Judd, who struggled with depression, wrote in her autobiography that she contemplated ending her life by jumping from this very spot: “I knew exactly how I was going to carry out my suicide. ... I would

drive my car to the very center, and in one swift motion open the car door and climb over the railing. ... After the 155-foot drop to State Route 96 below, it would all be over, now and forever.”

While Ms. Judd ultimately did not attempt suicide and was able to seek and receive help, [32 others](#) have made the devastating decision to end their lives at the Natchez Trace. Now, friends and family members of these individuals are uniting as the Natchez Trace Bridge Barrier Coalition and partnering with the nationally recognized behavioral health leader Centerstone and the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network with a singular focus: to raise the bridge railing or install a barrier to prevent future deaths. This is a cause I whole-heartedly support. And so does the science.

Studies have shown that curbing access to impulsive and lethal means of suicide is a successful method of prevention. If an individual experiencing a suicidal crisis does not have access to a preferred or lethal option, it may delay action enough until the crisis passes or the individual is able to get help. While raising the barriers on the bridge, adding netting below, or a combination of both may not prevent individuals from seeking other methods, it creates an impediment that may buy enough time for the person to rethink their choice or potentially receive medical intervention.

Adding safety measures to the bridge will also lift a burden on local law enforcement and first responders. Last January, then-Williamson County Sheriff Jeff Long [said](#), “It’s gotten so bad that when we have a missing person call, we immediately go to the bridge.” He estimated that they saw nearly as many suicide attempts as deaths, and talking individuals down took an emotional toll on his officers.

Some have asked why it has taken so long for this issue to be addressed. Why wasn’t the first death, or the fifth, or fifteenth, the wake-up call we needed? One challenge is that the railing cannot be addressed by a simple local or state level fix. Because the bridge is a part of a national park, it is managed by the federal government and thereby requires federal action to change. The park has to comply with the National Environment Policy Act, which necessitates a study of the environmental impact of any



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changes.

The second challenge is the desire to maintain the historical and architectural integrity of the bridge, which when it was completed in 1994, was the first of its kind. Modifications can affect its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. However, this would not be the first time a historically significant bridge made alterations to prevent suicide. As a major victory for suicide prevention, stainless steel netting is now being added to the iconic Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco to save lives. Research has shown barriers and netting work: a comprehensive analysis of physical barriers and netting added to bridges and cliffs in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Washington, D.C., Maine, Switzerland, and Canada found an 86% reduction in suicides. With these types of changes, we can make a difference and save lives.

To date, some small changes have successfully been made at the Natchez Trace Parkway Bridge. In 2010, the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network facilitated signs being placed on either end of the bridge with the number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This year, the National Park Service, which oversees the bridge, will install emergency call boxes. But it still leaves the central threat, the low height of the railing, unaddressed.

Luckily, we are beginning to see a groundswell of action to prevent suicide at this historic landmark in middle Tennessee. As a former federal lawmaker, I know it can take many voices raised together to serve as the necessary catalyst for change. The Natchez Trace Bridge Barrier Coalition has encouraged our community and state and federal leaders to take notice. State Representative Sam Whitson of Franklin just introduced a resolution recognizing the suicidal health crisis at the bridge and encouraging the Tennessee federal delegation to address the hazard. Senator Lamar Alexander and newly-elected Congressman Mark Green have expressed concern about the bridge. My wife Tracy has also initiated conversations with federal lawmakers about what steps we can take.

Here in Tennessee, we are getting the ball rolling. In order to address the mental health crisis and rising suicide rate we are experiencing nationwide, we must first start in our own backyard by creating healthier, safer environments for our community. Contact your federal representatives in the House or Senate and let them know that you support the creation of a barrier on the Natchez Trace Parkway Bridge today. With a united voice, we can prevent suicide.



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1. Make sure TennCare has a current address. Members can call 855-259-0701 for free to update their address.
2. Complete and sign the Renewal Packet sent to them in the mail and send it back to TennCare as soon as possible.
3. Open all mail from TennCare and follow the instructions.

There are 4 ways to renew your coverage:

- 1 **Call** TennCare Connect for free at 855-259-0701 to renew your coverage over the phone.
- 2 **Mail** your completed and signed Renewal Packet to:

TennCare Connect
P.O. Box 305240
Nashville, TN 37230-5240
- 3 **Fax** your completed and signed Renewal Packet to: 855-315-0669

Be sure to keep the page that says your fax went through.
- 4 **Use TennCare Connect.** If the letter you got in the mail says you can renew your coverage online, visit <https://tenncareconnect.tn.gov> and log in to your TennCare Connect account. Then click "Renew my Coverage".

Do you need help with your Renewal Packet?

Call TennCare Connect for free at **855-259-0701** to get help with your Renewal Packet over the phone.

To request a free [Instruction Guide](#) on how to complete your Renewal Packet call TennCare Connect at **855-259-0701**.

Helpful documents

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NATIONWIDE HAPPENINGS

National Council for Behavioral Health Board of Directors Appoints Chuck Ingolia Their Next President and Chief Executive Officer



Chuck Ingolia

The National Council for Behavioral Health, today announced that its board of directors unanimously selected Chuck Ingolia as the next president and CEO for the organization. He will succeed Linda Rosenberg, the current president and CEO on June 1, 2019.

"On behalf of the National Council Board of Directors, I am pleased to announce that after a comprehensive national selection process, the board is delighted to appoint Chuck Ingolia to the role of president and CEO," said Jeff Richardson, chair of the board of directors. "With more than 20 years of experience in behavioral health, working as a provider, advocate and educator for government and public sector organizations, we are fortunate to have a leader with Chuck's skill and deep knowledge. He is the clear choice to lead the National Council into the future."

Since joining the organization in 2005, Ingolia has served as the National Council's senior vice president of policy and practice improvement. He has directed federal and state policy efforts and overseen practice improvement programs offered to behavioral health professionals across the U.S. His efforts have centered on key issues such as parity, health care reform and improving access to behavioral health treatment in communities.

Prior to joining the National Council, Ingolia provided policy and program design guidance to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. He also directed state government relations and service system improvement projects for the National Mental Health Association (now Mental Health America), served as a policy analyst for the National Association of Social Workers and designed educational programs for mental health and addictions professionals at the Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare.

"We are very grateful to Linda for 15 years of outstanding leadership and fortunate that Chuck has accepted the position. Chuck is a proven leader and the best choice from a deep pool of interested and highly qualified candidates from across the country," said Richardson. "His vision and strategy are exactly what the National Council needs as we enter our next chapter."

"I am honored and humbled to have been selected as the next president and CEO," stated Ingolia. "With the support of the phenomenal board and staff, I look forward to furthering the mission of the National Council. Together, we will continue to protect and expand access to community behavioral health to ensure that all Americans have access to quality mental health and addiction services. And together we will continue the growth of Mental Health First Aid, our nation's premier public education program focusing on mental health and addiction."



Plan to join hundreds of your fellow providers, consumers, practitioners and advocates for those living with mental illnesses and addictions at National Council Hill Day 2019, **September 17-18 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C.**

At Hill Day 2018, over 600 advocates met with more than 250 legislators on Capitol Hill to speak up for the important population that you serve. Since then we have seen several of our legislative priorities advance in Congress. Hill Day 2019 offers an opportunity for you to continue this momentum and speak up for the vulnerable populations you serve.

Registration opens later this month. Add the dates to your calendar today. *(Note: This year Hill Day 2019 will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, not Monday and Tuesday).*

Questions? Email Michael Petruzzelli at MichaelP@TheNationalCouncil.org.

We'll see you at Hill Day!

OUR VOICES ARE LOUDER TOGETHER

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This past week, over 6,000 attendees gathered in Nashville, TN for NatCon19, behavioral health's premier conference. From inspiring fireside chats and keynotes to line dancing, NatCon19 had it all and provided the latest insights into policy challenges, solutions and guidance for behavioral health advocates. The consensus among health care leaders, government officials and innovative experts is that Medicaid waivers, state plan amendments, parity, and telehealth policy will continue to dominate the 2019 policy landscape for mental health and addiction treatment. NatCon19 attendees can access all presentation slides [here](#) with their badge number.

NatCon Policy Track Highlights

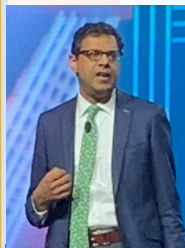
- *Medicaid waivers and State Plan Amendments* are expected to continue to play a critical role in health care policy in 2019 and will significantly impact behavioral health consumers. Whether states are using waivers to restrict access through work requirements or expand access and increase innovative treatment, it is important to understand how to speak with policymakers about using waivers to improve mental health and addiction coverage.
- *Parity* for behavioral health treatment may be the law, but individuals still face challenges getting insurance to cover mental health and addiction treatment at parity with medical and surgical services. Former Congressman Patrick Kennedy shared his own experience about getting behavioral health treatment on stage at NatCon19 and discussed the Kennedy Forum's #DontDenyMe Campaign which is working to uphold the federal parity law. States are also taking matters into their own hands to enforce parity, creating innovative strategies and tools to ensure access.
- *Telehealth* policy continues to evolve and redefine health care delivery and 2019 will see that evolution continue. Legislation has been passed to remove barriers for opioid use disorder treatment via telemedicine and reforms in Medicare rulemaking have made telehealth more accessible than ever, but barriers still exist to widespread adoption.

Save the Dates: Hill Day 2019 and NatCon20

Later this year, behavioral health advocates will storm Capitol Hill in Washington, DC on September 17th – 18th, 2019 for National Council's annual Hill Day. Make your voice heard at the largest behavioral health advocacy event of the year!

Whether you took full advantage of NatCon19 or had to miss it this year, be sure to mark your calendar for NatCon20 in Austin, TX April 5th – 7th, 2020.

Registration will open in the fall and it will be a guaranteed, can't-miss event for behavioral health next year.



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ADDRESS 42 Rutledge Street
Nashville, TN 37210

PHONE 615-244-2220
TOLL FREE IN TN 800-568-2642
FAX 615-254-8331

We're on the web!

www.tamho.org



- Executive Director | Ellyn Wilbur | ewilbur@tamho.org
- Director of Policy and Advocacy | Alysia Williams | awilliams@tamho.org
- Director of Member Services | Teresa Fuqua | tfuqua@tamho.org
- Director of Administrative Services | Laura B. Jean | ljean@tamho.org
- Project Manager—TNCODC | Patrick Slay | pslay@tamho.org
- Statewide Peer Wellness Coach | Dina Savvenas | csavvenas@tamho.org
- Meeting Assistant | Carrie Ligon | cligon@tamho.org