



# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEWS AND EVENTS

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## Message from the Executive Director

### TAMHO'S HOPE AND VISION FOR 2022



Elyn Wilbur  
Executive Director

As I look ahead to 2022, it is with hope and gratitude: hope that we will see a winding down of the COVID pandemic, hope that as a state and country, we will see an increase in patience and tolerance, and hope that this new year will remind us the importance of being kind to each other and to ourselves. We have weathered a difficult couple of years and I am grateful for our system's resilience. I am grateful for the special people in our system who have taken such good care of others. They are committed, hard-working and dedicated and deserve a special thanks. I am grateful that the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (TDMHSAS) and TennCare have put similar thoughts into action with their fiscal year 2022-2023 budget requests.

TAMHO and our member agencies across the state commend TDMHSAS and TennCare for convening stakeholders to recommend solutions to TN's behavioral health workforce shortage. The Public Behavioral Health Workforce Workgroup findings and recommendations have been published and both departments have included solutions in their budget proposals. Addressing workforce shortages is a multi-pronged approach and a critical part includes increasing pay rates. [Click here](#) to view report.

TAMHO's legislative priorities in 2022 will support Tennessee Department of Mental Health's budget proposal that includes significant new funding to support the system and the special individuals who work in it. [Click here](#) to view the TDMHSAS budget. We also support the TennCare budget that includes additional funding for a rate improvement to begin addressing the workforce that we depend on to care for our most vulnerable citizens. [Click here](#) to view the TennCare budget.

TAMHO and its member agencies also commend the General Assembly for passing legislation early in the pandemic enhancing the availability of telehealth services for Tennessee residents and in 2021 passed legislation that allows a HIPAA-compliant audio only option for the provision of behavioral health services when other means are not available. We will be asking the General Assembly to leave in place the telehealth changes that have enabled behavioral health services to be delivered with minimal disruption.

We wish you a happy new year and hope you will join us in our advocacy efforts.

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### TAMHO HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES:

TAMHO will be closed on January 17th in observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday.

## TAMHO

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Phyllis Persinger | Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System

#### President Elect

Kristie Hammonds | Frontier Health

#### Immediate Past President

Florence Hervey | CMI Healthcare Services

#### Treasurer

Jason Lay | McNabb Center

#### Secretary

Brad Numm, PhD | Centerstone

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Nashville | George Hunter, Executive Director

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#### AIM Center

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#### 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 | Elyn 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 Sawenas

#### Project Assistant | Carrie Ligon

## TDMHSAS and TennCare Publish Public Behavioral Health Workforce Report

Recommendations already translating into budget proposals to address challenges.

State of Tennessee, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services | December 9, 2021 | Office of Communications | <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/news/2021/12/9/tdmhsas-tenncare-publish-public-behavioral-health-workforce-report.html>

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) and TennCare today published the Public Behavioral Health Workforce Workgroup report. The document contains research, data, and strategies for addressing workforce challenges in publicly-funded mental health and substance use services, some of which have already translated into state budget requests proposed to Governor Bill Lee.

Convened by TDMHSAS and TennCare over the summer, the workgroup was comprised of diverse stakeholders from public behavioral health provider organizations, mental health and addiction advocacy groups, colleges and universities, and the TDMHSAS Planning and Policy Council. Over the course of three meetings, participants identified gaps and needs in the public behavioral health workforce, developed detailed strategies for creating positive change, and authored the report for key decisionmakers.

[Download the workgroup report at this link](#)

The report's recommendations focus on several key areas of impact including provider reimbursement rates, licensure modifications, employee benefits and incentives, pipeline career planning, diversity and inclusion, student loan forgiveness, expanding internship opportunities, and communicating to potential students.

"Our response to workforce challenges is really going to define how we in the public behavioral health sector are able to meet to the increasing need of mental health and addiction treatment services in the post-pandemic world," said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW. "We are so grateful to the members of this workgroup for their time, talent, and insight, and we are excited to partner with them to put the recommendations into practice."

"While the pandemic has magnified challenges in recruitment and retention of mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers, the efforts of the workgroup and this report will help us to better address the challenges and

continue to provide the highest quality behavioral health services to Tennesseans," said TennCare Director Stephen Smith.

Budget proposals from both TDMHSAS and TennCare reflected high-priority items from the workgroup report including increased funding to allow providers to pay more competitive wages, sign-on bonuses, post-secondary scholarships, and internship opportunities. In all, the agencies proposed \$59 million in new state and federal funding to address issues contained in the workgroup's findings. Items included in Governor Lee's FY23 budget proposal will be announced in early 2022 when he delivers his annual State of the State Address.

## The Tennessee Co-Occurring Disorders Collaborative (TNCODC)

Strengthening individuals, families, and communities with hope, access to services, and recovery

TNCODC is currently in the midst of strategic planning, in light of the 10 year anniversary of its formation as well as a new steering committee chair, Jim Jones of Pathways. Two brainstorming sessions have been completed, and we are working on compiling the ideas and strategies discussed as well as comparing them to the scope of the TNCODC grant. The discussion notes will inform an updated plan for the TNCODC upcoming fiscal year.

TNCODC also completed its winter training event on December 7th. The topic was "Understanding Trauma and Trauma -Informed care, conducted by Dr. Ebert of Vanderbilt. The event was well attended and had much positive feedback. The recording and related materials are now accessible on the TNCODC website at <https://www.tncodc.com/strategic-initiative/additional-resources>. Please reach out to [mhashimi@tamho.org](mailto:mhashimi@tamho.org) with any questions.



Mariam Hashimi  
Project Manager—TNCODC



[WWW.TNCODC.COM](http://WWW.TNCODC.COM)

# My Health, My Choice, My Life

## Peer Wellness in Tennessee

Happy New Year! It's that time again, when many of us are setting goals and New Year's Resolutions for the coming months. Did you know that talking with a Peer Wellness Coach can help to work through ambivalence about a change goal? We use a wonderful, collaborative skillset you've probably heard of, Motivational Interviewing, when we work with clients one-on-one. Motivational interviewing is an interview style and counseling approach developed in part by clinical psychologists William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick. It is a directive, client-centered approach for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence. All of the Peer Wellness Coaches have been trained by a MINT trainer and several of us are on our way to becoming MINT trainers ourselves. You may find more information about MINT at [www.motivationalinterviewing.org](http://www.motivationalinterviewing.org) Motivational Interviewing is based upon Carl Rogers' main principles of Unconditional Positive Regard, and the idea that humans are designed to self-actualize when their sense of autonomy is nurtured. We recently learned of a wonderful and informative podcast called "Talking to Change," with Glen Hinds and Sebastian Kaplan, that dives into the key components of MI and how it is used to help support individuals and groups in making health and lifestyle changes. You may find all 5 seasons wherever you listen to podcasts, such as Apple Music, Spotify, or Amazon Music. If you need some extra support in making changes in 2022, please feel free to reach out to me or a Peer Wellness Coach in your area – you may find us here: [My Health My Choice My Life \(tn.gov\)](http://MyHealthMyChoiceMyLife.tn.gov)



Dina Savvenas  
Statewide Peer Wellness  
Coach



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



## REPRESENTATIVES FROM TAMHO RECENTLY MET VIRTUALLY WITH CONGRESSMAN JOHN ROSE TO DISCUSS IMPORTANT FEDERAL LEGISLATION.

Pictured above (top to bottom, left to right): Alysia Smith Knight, TAMHO; Sean McPherson, TN Voices; Susan Phillips, Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System; Jason Kroiter, Legislative Assistant with Congressman Rose's Office; and, Congressman John Rose.

Florence Hervery, Laurie Powell, Alysia Smith Knight also met with Congressman Steve Cohen and were instrumental in securing his co-sponsorship for the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Act.

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.



# TAMHO 2021 Annual Conference and Awards and Recognition Ceremony

This year's TAMHO Annual Conference brought together experts to explore the behavioral health workforce shortage in Tennessee and discuss strategies to address it.

## Subject Matter Experts

OPENING GENERAL SESSION | TDMHSAS / TennCare Workforce Work Group Final Report

Stephen Smith, Director, TennCare  
Marie Williams, Commissioner, TDMHSAS



Smith Williams

GENERAL SESSION | Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHCs)

### PANELISTS:

Ben Middleton, Chief Executive Officer, Centerstone Tennessee  
Laurie Powell, Chief Executive Officer, Alliance Healthcare Services  
Kristie Hammonds, President & CEO, Frontier Health  
Brett Beckerson, National Council for Mental Wellbeing



Hammonds Middleton

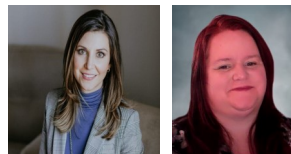


Powell Beckerson

GENERAL SESSION | Peers in the Workforce

### PANELISTS:

Rikki Harris, MAMFT, MACE, Chief Executive Officer, Tennessee Voices  
Amy Blackwell, CFSS, Family Support Specialist, Tennessee Voices



Harris Blackwell

Cyera Anderson, CPRS, Regional Manager, Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association (TMHCA)

Rachel Loveday, LMSW, LADAC II, CPRS, Recovery Navigator, McNabb Center



Anderson Loveday

GENERAL SESSION | Telehealth

Ashley Newton, MPS, PMP, CPHQ, Chief Operating Officer, Centerstone's Research Institute

Taylor Moore, PhD, Vice President of Program Evaluation, Centerstone Research Institute



Newton Moore

## TAMHO's Highest Honors and Recognitions

Unveils the new Andrea R. Chase Impact Award

The Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (TAMHO) bestowed its highest honors during their Annual Conference at the Franklin Marriott Cool Springs Hotel in Franklin, Tennessee. In total, eight awards were bestowed upon ten exceptional individuals and agency programs during the ceremony.

TAMHO 2021 Frank G. Clement Community Service Award  
Richard McClain (nominated by Frontier Health)



McClain Stratton

TAMHO 2021 Dorothea Dix Professional Service Award  
Sharon Stratton (nominated by Ridgeview Behavioral Health)  
Mandi Ryan (nominated by Centerstone Tennessee)



Ryan Felts

TAMHO 2021 Andrea R. Chase Impact Award  
Rhonda Felts (nominated by Centerstone Tennessee)



Mansfield Allen

TAMHO 2021 Emerging Leader Award  
Daniel Mansfield (nominated by Centerstone Tennessee)

TAMHO 2021 Distinguished Service Award  
Candace Allen (nominated by McNabb Center)



TAMHO 2021 Outreach and Engagement Award  
McNabb Center, Knoxville



TAMHO 2021 Innovation and Creativity Award  
VOCA, Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System, Murfreesboro

## TAMHO President's Award

TAMHO President, Florence Hervy, recognizes TAMHO Committee Chairs and Staff with the TAMHO 2021 President's Award

TAMHO President, Florence Hervy, opened the ceremony reflecting open the unprecedented times within the Association and its' member organizations had functioned over the last two years and noted the honor of having been in a position to lead. The President of TAMHO has the privilege to recognize an individual or organization with the duly named TAMHO President's Award. Ms. Hervy noted that this year was not a difficult decision on whether to bestow the award nor to whom the award should be bestowed. Just as each member organization has had to be innovative and pivot, so has TAMHO to continue to move forward and meet the needs of its' members over the past two years. TAMHO's successes were not achieved through any one individual but the dedication and commitment of a group of people. The following 11 individuals were recognized with the TAMHO PRESIDENT'S AWARD:

- Jerry Vagnier, Legislative Committee
- Chad Duncan, Addictions Committee
- Paula Hudson, Compliance and Quality Committee
- Susan Bell, Children and Youth Section
- Julie Spears, Fiscal and Administrative Section
- Sean Jones, Crisis Services Committee
- Brad Nunn, Ph.D., Healthcare Innovations Work Group
- Elyn Wilbur, Executive Director
- Alysia Smith Knight, Director of Policy and Advocacy
- Teresa Fuqua, Director of Member Services
- Laura Jean, Director of Administrative Services



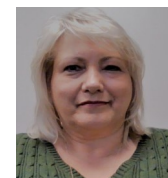
Vagnier



Duncan



Hudson



Bell



Spears



Jones



Nunn



Wilbur



Smith Knight



Fuqua



Jean

## TAMHO Expo Hall

Fun, Networking, and Valuable Resources

The TAMHO Expo Hall provided 32 booths with incredible vendors showcasing amazing products and services and such fun and creative give away items. We appreciate our sponsors and vendors and encourage you to give them priority considerations when in the market for products and services they offer.

*Thank You!*  
to our Sponsors

## Gold Sponsors



## Silver Sponsors



## Bronze Sponsors



# TAMHO Leadership Transitions and Recognitions

## TAMHO Recognizes the 2021 Leadership Team

Another 'thank you' and accolades for the successes under the leadership of the 2021 leadership team.

President—E. Florence Hervey | CMI Healthcare Services, Inc.



Hervey

President Elect—Phyllis Persinger | Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System



Persinger



Jackson

Immediate Past President—Jimmie Jackson | Professional Care Services of West TN

Treasurer—Kristie Hammonds | Frontier Health



Hammonds



Nunn

Secretary- Brad Nunn, PhD | Centerstone of Tennessee

### Committee and Section Chairpersons:

Jerry Vagnier, Legislative Committee

Chad Duncan, Addictions Committee

Paula Hudson, Compliance and Quality Committee

Susan Bell, Children and Youth Section

Julie Spears, Fiscal and

Administrative Section

Sean Jones, Crisis

Services Committee

Brad Nunn, Ph.D.,

Healthcare

Innovations Work Group



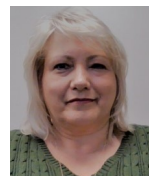
Vagnier



Duncan



Hudson



Bell



Spears



Jones



Nunn

## TAMHO Elects Leadership Team for 2022

Join us in welcoming the following individuals to the TAMHO 2022 Leadership Team:

President—Phyllis Persinger | Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System

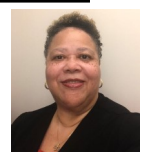


Persinger

President Elect—Kristie Hammonds | Frontier Health



Hammonds



Hervey

Immediate Past President—E. Florence Hervey | CMI Healthcare Services, Inc.

Treasurer—Jason Lay | McNabb Center



Lay



Nunn

Secretary- Brad Nunn, PhD | Centerstone of Tennessee

### Committee and Section Chairpersons:

Jerry Vagnier, Legislative Committee

Katherine Lewis, Addictions Committee

Paula Hudson, Compliance and Quality Committee

Susan Bell, Children and Youth Section

Julie Spears, Fiscal and

Administrative Section

Sean Jones, Crisis

Services Committee

Brad Nunn, Ph.D.,

Healthcare

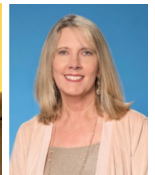
Innovations Work Group



Vagnier



Lewis



Hudson



Bell



Spears



Jones



Nunn

# Member Organization Happenings

## Quinco Mental Health Center Welcomes New Executive Director

Marlin Medlin Retires; Kelly Odum Appointed as Successor

The Quinco Mental Health Center Board of Directors recently announced the retirement of Marlin Medlin as Executive Director effective December 31, 2021. Medlin has served in many leadership roles during his 42-year career with the agency.



Kelly Odum



Kelly Odum, LCSW, of Lexington, Tennessee has been selected to fill the Executive Director role effective

January 1, 2022. Odum joined the agency in 2010 and has served in several leadership positions, most currently, she served as the agency's Clinical Director.

Gail Brooks, Chair of the Quinco Board of Directors, stated that "we have seen much growth under Mr. Medlin's leadership and his years of experience will be greatly missed. The Board of Directors are extremely grateful for the dedication, passion, compassion, and visionary leadership that Mr. Medlin has provided." She went on to add that "the Quinco Board is extremely positive in the selection of Ms. Odum and confident that Quinco will continue to thrive under her guidance for years to come."

Quinco Mental Health Center is a leading provider of mental health services in Southwest Tennessee. Based in Bolivar, Tennessee, Quinco has 13 facilities in seven counties, including Chester, Decatur, Hardeman, Hardin, Henderson, Madison, and McNairy counties. Quinco has over 140 employees who serve over 5,000 clients on an annual basis.

## AIM Center, Inc. Welcomes New President and CEO

CEO Donna Maddox Retires; Anna Postano-Biggs Appointed as President and CEO



Anna Postano-Biggs



The AIM Center, Inc. Board of Directors welcomes Ms. Anna Postano-Biggs as the new President and CEO of the AIM Center. Originally from England with an Italian background, Ms. Postano-Biggs is a Barrister-at-law

and Attorney-at-law with an international perspective. The AIM Center Board of Directors is excited with Ms. Postano-Biggs experience within the mental health community, and knows she makes an excellent fit to not just lead the AIM Center but to create even greater change and mental health awareness within our community.

Ms. Postano-Biggs is the founder of the Hamilton County Mental Health Court and served as its inaugural Director. She has worked for 9.5 years as a Public Defender in Chattanooga where she was lead attorney working with mental health consumers and clients with traumatic brain injury and developmental and intellectual disabilities. Ms. Postano-Biggs is a compassionate and dedicated professional with diverse experience in law, criminal justice, health systems, program development and management. She describes herself as a lifelong learner driven by the need to find creative and lasting solutions to community and government systemic issues. Ms. Postano-Biggs was named the 2017 TN Chapter National Association of Social Workers Public Official of the Year.

Prior to coming to Chattanooga, Ms. Postano-Biggs served as a Senior Research Officer to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, served the 56th United Nations Sub-Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland as a NGO Representative and Speaker, and worked with an Independent Health Research Project in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. She has a law degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Master of Law from the world-renowned Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex, and a Bachelor of Science in Management with Basic Medical Services from Imperial College London.

## Centerstone's Military Services Receives COL Laura A. Wheeler Behavioral Health Champion Award

Centerstone's Military Services has been awarded the COL Laura A. Wheeler Behavioral Health Champion Award by the National Guard Bureau.



Named for COL Laura A. Wheeler, chief behavioral health officer for the Army National Guard, the national award is given annually to an individual, group or organization for their outstanding impact in the advancement of National Guard behavioral healthcare. Centerstone's Military Services was selected



for the award for its work with members of the National Guard, particularly the Tennessee Army National Guard (TNARNG).

For more than two years, Centerstone's Military Services has provided no-cost, evidence-based mental health treatment to TNARNG services members and members of their families. This is in addition to close work with the Missouri National Guard, Georgia National Guard, and Florida National Guard, among others.

"Centerstone's Military Services has brokered a constellation of therapeutic relationships assisting TNARNG soldiers and their families in countless ways," said Matt Thompson, director of psychological health at TNARNG. "From acute psychological needs, complex psychosocial circumstances, and through family and couples counseling, Centerstone's Military Services recognizes that the health of a soldier extends into the systems that support them."

Centerstone's Military Services utilizes a nationwide network of mental health professionals who are trained to understand military culture and the unique experiences of our nation's service members. These professionals offer a wide-range of mental health and substance use disorder treatments, which are available to any active-duty service members; members of the National Guard, Reserves, or Coast Guard; veterans from any service era; or loved ones that are a part of a military family, including spouses, partners, children, parents, or siblings.

"We're honored to have received this prestigious award for our work with members of the Army National Guard. As we approach Veteran's Day, I am reminded of their continued sacrifice and it gives me a sense of renewed energy to do even more for them and our other military heroes who all deserve to lead lives that are free from the challenges of mental health concerns," said Dr. Blas Villalobos, chief executive officer of Centerstone's Military Services.

## Mental Health Provider to Increase Pay for its Team Members

Johnson City Press | January 13, 2022 | [https://www.johnsoncitypress.com/news/mental-health-provider-to-increase-pay-for-its-team-members/article\\_4de681f0-73d4-11ec-9af6-bb0d038ced3c.html](https://www.johnsoncitypress.com/news/mental-health-provider-to-increase-pay-for-its-team-members/article_4de681f0-73d4-11ec-9af6-bb0d038ced3c.html)

The leadership of Frontier Health has approved a plan to raise the pay and salaries of employees of the behavioral and mental health provider.



According to a news release from the company, Frontier Health's board agreed in December to increase wages in the health system. Officials said the decision was made as a result of the region's "challenging and changing landscape around both hiring and retaining team members."

The new pay plan became effective Jan. 3 and brings Frontier Health's minimum pay up to \$13.50 an hour. The move will also result in significant increases to pay rates for additional positions within the organization.

Starting rates for master's level therapists, licensed practical nurses and case managers are increasing by more than \$4 an hour. That will put the starting rate for licensed therapists at \$23.75 an hour, licensed-eligible master's therapists at \$21.75 an hour and LPNs to \$19.85 an hour.

Case managers will be paid \$18.27 an hour and direct support specialists will receive pay starting at \$14.50 an hour. In addition, all full-time positions include what the company calls "an excellent" benefits package.

"With the ever-increasing need in our community for mental health and substance-related services, Frontier's ability to serve is more important than ever," Kristie Hammonds, Frontier Health's president and CEO, said in a statement released Wednesday. "Our team members are essential to meet these needs. We are hopeful the change in compensation structure will enable us to retain and recruit individuals who have a passion to serve."

Frontier Health is the region's leading provider of behavioral health, mental health, substance abuse and vocational rehabilitation services since 1957. For more information, visit [www.frontierhealth.org](http://www.frontierhealth.org) or call 423-467-3600.

## Tennessee Mental Health Workers Could See Pay Increases if Budget Proposal is Approved

Officials are asking for \$36 million for a cost-of-living adjustment. This would raise the pay rate by nearly 20% for mental and behavioral healthcare providers.



WBIR 10 Knoxville | January 15, 2022 | <https://www.wbir.com/video/money/tn-mental-health-workers-could-see-pay-increases-if-budget-proposal-is-approved/51-e901c631-c3a9-42f1-869a-2586e6c36135>



Author: wbir.com  
Published: 10:37 PM EST January 15, 2022  
Updated: 10:37 PM EST January 15, 2022

Click image or link above to view WBIR's interview with McNabb Center.

## Staff of Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System Meet Locally with Members of the Tennessee General Assembly—Senator Ken Yager and Speaker of the House Cameron Sexton



Pictured left to right:  
**Robert Edmonds**, VBHCS; **Speaker Cameron Sexton**, TN House of Representatives; **Phyllis Persinger**, VBHCS; **Dr. Jim Fournet**, Board Member, VBHCS; and **Nathan Miller**, VBHCS



Pictured left to right:  
**Robert Edmonds**, VBHCS; **Senator Ken Yager**, TN State Senate; **Phyllis Persinger**, VBHCS; and **Christopher Sales**, VBHCS

## Tennessee Behavioral Health Leaders Make Historic Request Amid Provider Shortage

Rikki Harris is the CEO of Tennessee Voices — a statewide nonprofit mental health organization. She said it’s an issue that’s been brewing in Tennessee since before the pandemic.

News Channel 5 Nashville | Olivia Michael | Posted January 12, 2022 & Updated January 13, 2022 | <https://www.newschannel5.com/news/tennessee-behavioral-health-leaders-make-historic-request-amid-provider-shortage>



It’s a problem Amy Sulam-Gibbs knows all too well.

“I finally got diagnosed, left the hospital, and they were basically like ‘OK you have to have a therapist, and a psychiatrist, good luck getting those,’” said Sulam-Gibbs. “I felt like I had been thrown out into the wild. I had no idea how difficult it would be.”

She said the lack of mental health professionals in Tennessee was always an issue — throw in a pandemic, and now there’s a crisis.

“Mental health is health care, and people should be able to quickly and confidently access care for their mental health needs,” she said.

Rikki Harris, the CEO of Tennessee Voices — a statewide nonprofit

mentalhealth organization, said it’s an issue that’s been brewing in Tennessee since before the pandemic.

“I would describe our state in crisis right now,” she said.

That’s why she and other industry leaders formed the Public Behavioral Health Workforce Workgroup to retain and find more behavioral health care workers in the state.

To do so, the group is asking the governor for \$59 million.

“We believe our budget proposal for this year will help us respond to the greater demonstrated need for services, reduce the gap of unmet need and provide unprecedented support for the public behavioral workforce,” said

Marie Williams, commissioner of Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, during a budget request presentation,

The budget proposal includes increased funding for more competitive wages, sign-on bonuses and pipeline opportunities for students like scholarships and internships.

The \$59 million request is part of a larger \$383 million request by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. It's the largest request the department has ever made and would mean a 20% increase in funding.

"This should tell you what the data is saying," Harris said. "This is an indication of how serious our problems are in Tennessee right now around mental health and mental health care."

She doesn't foresee the need for mental health professionals slowing down and without the extra funding, she worries the issue will only get worse.



## Member Organizations



[www.tamho.org](http://www.tamho.org)

# Statewide Happenings

## TDMHSAS FY2023 Budget Proposal Presentation

Commissioner Williams recently presented the proposed TDMHSAS FY2023 budget proposal. Click this link to view a full-sized PDF version of the TDMHSAS proposed budget increases. If you want to view the hearing, download the slides, or view any of the other state department hearings, you can do all of that at this link: <https://sts.streamingvideo.tn.gov/Mediasite/Channel/mediasiteadmin-tn-budget-hearingsfy2022-2023>



## Tennessee Data Show Families with Children Need Expanded Support

State of the Child 2021 release provides insight into children's well-being during shifting times

Tennessee's children and their caregivers have struggled through the last two years but expanded supports make recovery possible, according to *The State of the Child 2021* an annual report released by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. This year's release evaluates the most recent available data on childhood well-being in economics, education, health and youth justice.

The *State of the Child* report examines data from the last three years to evaluate how Tennessee families have fared throughout the pandemic, where we find resilience and how we can recover. The concurrent health, economic and social crises have left many Tennessee families unable to provide for their families and challenged many others.

Expanded supports from the state and federal government have been critical in mitigating the negative impact of the last two years and helping build resilience among Tennessee families, yet many have or will soon expire. Before the pandemic, one in five Tennessee families were living in poverty, and 42 percent were economically disadvantaged.

In September 2020, 42 percent of Tennessee households with children had difficulty paying for usual expenses. In Tennessee, 60 percent of households

reported receiving a Child Tax Credit. These funds are being used to meet the critical needs of over 1 million Tennessee children and their caregivers yet without intervention they are set to expire December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Without extension, one in six of those children would fall back into poverty.

High housing costs have continued to burden Tennessee families. The annual household income required to afford a two-bedroom rental home at Fair Market Rent is \$36,587, 1.5 times the minimum wage, and \$10,000 higher than the poverty line. More than one in four Tennessee children live in a household spending over 30 percent of their monthly income on rent or mortgage. In August 2021, one in five households with children had little or no confidence in their ability to make their next housing payment on time. Of those households, more than half were likely to face eviction or foreclosure in the next two months.

Youth and young adults' mental health continues to struggle. Although already on the decline, the pandemic likely exacerbated the issue. Indicators of youth mental health include:

- In September 2021, 58 percent of young adults reported being anxious or on-edge for more than half of the days in the last two weeks. The highest reported rate in the country.
- One in three reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless.
- In Mental Health America's Ranking the States, Tennessee ranked 40<sup>th</sup> nationally in Youth Mental Health and 45<sup>th</sup> in Access to Care.
- In 2019, more than one in seven Tennessee high school students reported they had made a plan within the last year of how they would attempt suicide.

In 2019, one in six high school girls reported experiencing physical dating violence in the last year, the highest rate in the country and twice the national rate.

"Tennessee's children and their caregivers have faced immense challenges over the last two years. We have seen how important it is to come together as a community and a state to provide support," said Richard Kennedy, executive director of Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.

The last two years have highlighted the critical need for access to healthcare for children and their caregivers. In 2020, the percentage of uninsured children in Tennessee doubled. Many caregivers delayed care during the pandemic, Tennessee had a 62 percent decline in pediatric visits

in April 2020 compared to the month prior. The delay in care resulted in a 39 percent lower childhood vaccination rate when compared to April 2019.

More than half of Tennessee children are insured through TennCare or CoverKids. Over the last two years, one in five parents in these programs reported a loss of coverage. For more than one in three of those that lost coverage, it was due to an issue with paperwork. In 2019, there were over 53,000 Tennessee children that were eligible for coverage, yet remained uninsured. A healthy future begins with children and their caregivers having access to the healthcare they need.

The report shows how additional state and federal intervention can build resilience and support the health and well-being of families with children. Tennesseans, particularly those with children in the household, have experienced drastic changes throughout the pandemic. The ongoing steps we take to address children's needs and support their development can ensure their current and future health as well as long-term development.

Release Information — The *State of the Child 2021* is available at <http://www.tn.gov/tccy/stateofthechild>

## TDMHSAS Awards \$6.5 Million in Grants to Support Children's Mental Health Across the State

Grantees developed unique proposals specific to needs in their communities

State of Tennessee, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services | December 22, 2021 | Office of Communications | <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/news/2021/12/22/tdmhsas-awards-6-5-million-in-grants-to-support-children-s-mental-health-across-the-state.html>

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) has selected a total of ten programs across the state to receive \$6.5 million in new funding to expand mental health services for children and youth. The new state funding was budgeted by Governor Bill Lee and appropriated by the Tennessee General Assembly in the TDMHSAS budget for state fiscal year 2022.

In the department's announcement of funding, grantees were instructed to collaborate with community stakeholders including local education authorities and other partners to design proposals that would have the greatest impact and address outstanding needs. The selected proposals increase school-based services and respond to the increasing need for emergency psychiatric services for children and youth.

Grantees also designed proposals focusing on early intervention services for children from birth to 8 years old. Infant and early childhood is a critical period for determining a person's lifetime mental health, and funding will allow for the expansion of early childhood mental health training, coaching and consultation, as well as capacity development and awareness building.

"Tennessee is a state blessed with a wide variety of resources and challenges when it comes to children's mental health. That's why we took a bottom-up approach to this funding opportunity to empower the amazing mental health providers we work with to design approaches to meet the biggest needs that they see in the communities they serve," said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW. "We are so grateful to Governor Bill Lee for his vision in budgeting this funding and to the members of the General Assembly for their investment in the mental health of our state's most precious resource."

## Planning and Policy Council

Planning and Policy Council meetings return in 2022. To listen to recordings of past meetings, and to verify the schedule and plans for future meetings, please visit the department website at these links:

[Statewide and Committee meeting schedule](#)

[Regional Committee meeting schedule](#)

DIRECT QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES TO:

Avis Easley  
(615) 253-6397  
[Avis.Easley@tn.gov](mailto:Avis.Easley@tn.gov)

Amy Holland  
(615) 253-3785  
[Amy.Holland@tn.gov](mailto:Amy.Holland@tn.gov)

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

Available funding under this announcement was divided proportionally among the department's seven planning regions based on the number of children and youth living in each region. Programs selected under this announcement of funding include:

Region 1 Northeast Tennessee: Frontier Health, \$424,000 – Expanding school-based services through the School-Based Behavioral Health Liaison program and Project BASIC, enhancing crisis care with an additional master's-level therapist

Region 2 East Tennessee: McNabb Center, \$1.1M – Creating three Crisis Response Teams which will partner with schools, East Tennessee Children's Hospital, and detention centers to improve outcomes from a child's mental health crisis

Region 3 Southeast Tennessee and Cumberland Plateau: Volunteer Behavioral Health, \$900,000 - Expanding school-based services through the School-Based Behavioral Health Liaison program and Project BASIC.

Region 4 Davidson County: TN Voices, \$623,000 – Expanding Child Care Consultation with two new Early Childhood Specialists and two Family Support Specialists

Region 5 Middle Tennessee: Volunteer Behavioral Health, \$594,000 - Expanding school-based services through the School-Based Behavioral Health Liaison program and Project BASIC; Prevention Coalition for Success, \$200,000 –

Integrating a Family Support Specialist into the Family Preservation Initiative to work with youth and families in the juvenile court system; Youth Villages, \$426,000 – Creating an enhanced crisis coordination team with five liaisons to assist in children and youth mental health crisis cases; TN Voices, \$609,000 - Expanding Child Care Consultation with five new Early Childhood Specialists and five Family Support Specialists and adding one new School-Based Behavioral Health Liaison

Region 6 West Tennessee: Pathways, \$500,000 – Expanding observational and consulting services currently being offered in 20 Head Start centers, seven emergency departments, and other locations across the region, adding one new School-Based Behavioral Health Liaison and four project liaisons to work with community agencies to provide initial assessment, case management, and counseling services

Region 7 Shelby County: TN Voices, \$1M – Expanding Child Care Consultation with three Early Childhood Specialists positions and three Family Support Specialists

For additional details on TDMHSAS services available for children and youth, please visit our website at this link: [TN.gov/behavioral-health/children](https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/children)



Call or text for emotional support for healthcare workers, first responders, and teachers . . .

**COVID-19 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT LINE FOR TENNESSEE**

Need to talk to someone about feelings of stress, anxiety, sadness, or depression related to work? Calltakers with the COVID-19 Emotional Support Line can help.



Tennesseans working in education, healthcare, or first responder roles can call or text:

**888-642-7886**

Calltakers are available: 6 a.m. - 10 p.m. (CT), 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. (ET)  
The COVID-19 Emotional Support line is a collaborative project among National Association of Social Workers-TN Chapter and the following groups:



Questions about addiction treatment and referrals . . .

**TN REDLINE**



**1.800.889.9789**

**CALL OR TEXT**





In the event of a mental health emergency . . .

**STATEWIDE**

**CRISIS LINE**


**HELP IN A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS**

**855-CRISIS-1** [TN.gov/CrisisLine](http://TN.gov/CrisisLine)  
**855-274-7471**  Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

To speak with a TDMHSAS Consumer Advocate . . .

Need help with mental health or substance use services?  
Call the TDMHSAS Office of Consumer Affairs and Peer Recovery Services

**HELPLINE**  
**1-800-560-5767**




We can help with:

- finding mental health and substance abuse resources in your area
- questions about insurance
- finding housing options
- communicating with mental health and substance abuse providers
- questions about the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist program
- filing a complaint

We are available

- Monday through Friday
- 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. CT
- Closed on state holidays



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# National Happenings

## Commissioner Marie Williams Named Chair of the Council of State Governments Justice Center Advisory Board

Williams will oversee the CSG Justice Center's efforts to advance safety and second chances across 50 states and all three branches of government.

State of Tennessee, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services | January 12, 2022 | Office of Communications | <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/news/2022/1/12/commissioner-marie-williams-named-chair-of-the-council-of-state-governments-justice-center-advisory-board.html> | This news release was originally published by the Council of State Governments Justice Center at this link.

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center welcomes Marie Williams, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and current Advisory Board vice chair, as the organization's new Advisory Board chair. In this role, Williams will leverage her extensive leadership, policy, and oversight experience to help guide the CSG Justice Center's efforts to develop research-driven strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities. As commissioner, Williams serves under the leadership of Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, whose focus on criminal justice reform has produced meaningful changes in the state.



Marie Williams

"It is such an honor to be able to be part of this amazing group of changemakers from across the country. My time on the CSG Justice Center Advisory Board has been enlightening and impactful, and going forward together, we are truly shaping a future for our communities, our states, and our nation that is innovative, collaborative, and restorative," said Williams.

The CSG Justice Center is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, representing state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to use data to improve safety and justice, as well as advance health, opportunity, and equity. Prior to Commissioner Williams's appointment, the Advisory Board was led by Justice Michael P. Boggs, who serves on the Supreme Court of Georgia.

"During my tenure as Advisory Board chair, justice professionals across the country sought new ways to responsibly reduce the rates of incarceration, strengthen community supervision practices, and to safely keep more individuals in their local communities in response to the realities of a global pandemic," said Justice Boggs. "I'm proud of the work we did to provide empirical data and proven strategies to states and municipalities that formed the basis for many timely and responsible criminal justice reforms. Now, I can think of no better person to lead our work than Commissioner Williams. She brings invaluable experience and proven leadership in behavioral health services and criminal justice reform and is well prepared to guide the work of the CSG Justice Center during the next phase of responsible reforms. I'm excited about the future of our work under her leadership."

Through her career in behavioral health services and as commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Williams has demonstrated her leadership in key areas such as substance use services, emergency psychiatric services, criminal justice reform, and housing and homelessness services. Appointed commissioner in

October 2016, Williams has led an unprecedented growth of publicly funded prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery services, with annual budgets growing from \$337 million to more than \$504 million in the current state fiscal year.

During her tenure as commissioner, Williams spearheaded the creation of the TN Together initiative, which aims to address opioid addiction. The initiative has led to public investments in substance use treatment, addiction prevention, and law enforcement for Tennesseans. She also established a unique public-private partnership with the Tennessee Hospital Association to address the amount of time patients in psychiatric distress spend in emergency departments. Williams has worked to more than double Tennessee's network of recovery courts and oversees the department's juvenile justice diversion programs.

Prior to her role as commissioner, Williams initiated the **Creating Homes Initiative (CHI)** as director of Housing Planning and Development at the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Since 2000, CHI has leveraged more than \$850 million and developed more than 28,000 housing options for people diagnosed with mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders. The program has been expanded twice to create additional housing for people recovering from substance use disorders who are returning to communities after incarceration.

"We are thrilled to have Commissioner Williams serve as our Advisory Board chair," said Megan Quattlebaum, director of the CSG Justice Center. "She is our first chair to come from a background in health and housing, rather than in the justice system. Having her as our new leader underscores the CSG Justice Center's conviction that, to improve outcomes for people touched by the justice system, other systems and sectors will need to be engaged as critical partners. Commissioner Williams's experience in the areas of behavioral health, criminal justice reform, and housing and homelessness services is rivaled only by her deep dedication to the people her work serves. Her leadership and vision are just what we need at this critical juncture in our nation's efforts to build better systems of safety and justice that work for everyone."

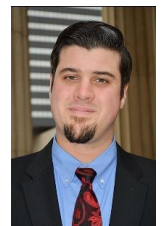
Throughout her career, Williams has received numerous professional and community awards, including the Excellence in Advocacy Individual Achievement Award from the National Council for Behavioral Health, the George Goodman and Ruth P. Brudney National Social Work Award from Mental Health America, the Alumni Professional Achievement Award from the University of Tennessee Knoxville, and the Senator Douglas Henry Award for Service to Children and Families at Risk from the University of Tennessee College of Social Work.

## Wes Geminn Appointed to National Addiction Treatment Panel

State of Tennessee, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services | December 3, 2021 | Office of Communications | <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/news/2021/12/3/tmhsas-chief-pharmacist-appointed-to-national-addiction-treatment-panel.html>

TDMHSAS Chief Pharmacist Wes Geminn has accepted an appointment to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) National Advisory Council.

Council members advise the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment on ways to improve access, reduce barriers, and promote high-quality, effective treatment and recovery services. Geminn is one of 12 council members appointed by U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra.



Wes Geminn

[Click here to read the full news release.](#)





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**ADDRESS:** P.O. Box 1274, Brentwood, TN 37024

**EMAIL:** [tamho@tamho.org](mailto:tamho@tamho.org)

**PHONE:** 615-244-2220

**TOLL FREE IN TENNESSEE:** 800-568-2642



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Tennessee Co-Occurring Disorders Collaborative  
P.O. Box 1274  
Brentwood, Tennessee 37024

615-244-2220  
800-568-2642 toll free in TN

[www.tncodc.com](http://www.tncodc.com)

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by behavioral health agencies, and numerous individuals in local communities and throughout the state and nation who have an interest in the advancement of behavioral health in Tennessee.

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### Executive Director

Ellyn Wilbur | [ewilbur@tamho.org](mailto:ewilbur@tamho.org)

### Director of Policy and Advocacy

Alysia Smith Knight | [asmithknight@tamho.org](mailto:asmithknight@tamho.org)

### Director of Member Services

Teresa Fuqua | [tfuqua@tamho.org](mailto:tfuqua@tamho.org)

### Director of Administrative Services

Laura B. Jean | [ljean@tamho.org](mailto:ljean@tamho.org)

### Project Manager—TNCODC

Mariam Hashimi | [mhashimi@tamho.org](mailto:mhashimi@tamho.org)

### Statewide Peer Wellness Coach

Dina Savvenas | [csavvenas@tamho.org](mailto:csavvenas@tamho.org)

### Project Assistant

Carrie Ligon | [cligon@tamho.org](mailto:cligon@tamho.org)



ADDRESS P.O. Box 1274  
Brentwood, TN 37024

PHONE 615-244-2220

TOLL FREE IN TN 800-568-2642

[www.tamho.org](http://www.tamho.org)