



We are thankful for you! Have a happy and safe Thanksgiving!

A Message from Commissioner Williams:

Dear Friends,

As we approach the Thanksgiving season in this year that has been unlike any other, we want to tell you that we are thankful for you. We are thankful that you are who you are and that you are where you are right now. I believe each one of us has a purpose in life, and whether you're a peer, a parent, a caregiver, a state employee, a behavioral health professional, a provider, or an advocate, your work and your voice is important to improving the lives of Tennesseans. Need proof? Make sure you scroll to the bottom to read the TN Recovery Navigator success story!

We are also truly grateful for Governor Bill Lee, his team, and the members of the Tennessee General Assembly. We have spent a lot of time over the last week or so [talking about the big gains that Tennessee has made](#) in the MHA State of Mental Health in America Report (more on that below), and a large portion of the gains we have made are thanks to their investment and to their support of the public behavioral health system and the people we serve.

As stated in the presentation, our focus in developing the proposal was to continue those items that are foundational to providing a quality system of care for Tennesseans diagnosed with mental illness and substance use disorders. Thus, we asked for cost increases in community behavioral health for crisis services, criminal justice services, recovery courts, and student behavioral health. In addition, we also sought a funding replacement for our Regional Mental Health Institutes as the number of insured individuals has decreased. Please know it is our goal to deliver efficient and effective hospital services, and this will allow us to continue to do so.

[You can find archived video of our presentation \(and watch presentations from other departments\) at this link.](#)

In this season of Thanksgiving and gratitude, please accept our gratitude for all that you do. It is our wish that your work is blessed and your holiday season is restful.

Marie

State of Mental Health in America: TN makes major strides

The report ranks our state's response to behavioral health needs at #28 in the nation

Tennessee moved up eleven spots to a ranking of 28th in responding to the behavioral needs of its citizens according to the 2021 State of Mental Health in America report published by Mental Health America. The annual ranking of all 50 states and the District of Columbia examines data trends in various categories relating to prevalence of mental illness, substance use disorder, thoughts of suicide, and access to care for both adults and youth.

Tennessee's jump of 11 spots was the fourth largest move among states that improved. Additionally, Tennessee's ranking in adult categories improved to no. 18 this year up from no. 28 last year. The data used to compile the report

represents the latest publicly available, nationwide behavioral health statistics from 2017 and 2018.

The State of Mental Health in America ranks all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The report looked at data for youth and adults. [Read the full report here.](#)



Click this image to watch News Channel 5 Nashville's nearly hour long special that features the details of this report and answers viewers' questions. Hear from Commissioner Williams and Tom Starling, CEO of Mental Health America of the MidSouth.

\$6 Million grant expands criminal justice reform efforts in 10 counties

The new federal funding builds on the success of a previous \$6.5 million grant from the Department of Justice

TDMHSAS is receiving a new federal grant to expand criminal justice alternatives for Tennesseans living with addiction. The \$6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice will cover ten project sites in Anderson, Blount, Bradley, Cheatham, Cocke, Dickson, Grundy, Montgomery, Roane, and Tipton Counties. The new grant builds on a previous \$6.5 million grant from the Department of Justice already serving eleven Tennessee counties.

“One of Governor Bill Lee’s first actions was to establish the Criminal Justice Investment Task Force, and I was proud to serve as chair for the mental health and substance use subcommittee. This grant and all of our work in the field of criminal

justice points directly to the findings of that task force: that the state has a great opportunity to increase positive outcomes by investing in behavioral health services for people in jails and prisons,” said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW. “The fact that we have had so much enthusiasm and interest from local partners in this new grant speaks to the value of the service and the need. We are grateful to our federal partners, Gov. Lee, and the Tennessee General Assembly for their continued support of our efforts in the criminal justice field.”

[Read the press release in its entirety.](#) And learn more about TDMHSAS Division of Substance Abuse Services Office of Criminal Justice Services at this link: tn.gov/behavioral-health/substance-abuse-services/criminal-justice-services

Sullivan County Overdose Response Team awarded nearly \$900,000

New federal funding coming to Tennessee will continue a successful program in Sullivan County aimed at ending the cycle of drug overdose. The Sullivan County Overdose Response Team (SCORT) is receiving almost \$900,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance to continue its work for the next three years.

SCORT is a collaboration between the Sullivan County Anti-Drug (SCAD) Coalition, area law enforcement agencies, and community behavioral health providers. The program is designed to connect with people after an overdose, prevent future overdoses, and get them into treatment. SCORT began as a pilot project in October 2018, and since then, more than 93% of the people in the program have avoided another overdose, and 77% have enrolled in some form of substance use treatment.

Visit our [Newsroom](#) to [read this press release in its entirety](#) and to learn more.



Dr. Monty Burks invited to speak at the ONDCP's Rural Faith Leaders Workshop Series Dec. 8

The Office of National Drug Control Policy will host "Empowering Faith Leaders to Help Persons with Substance Use Disorder" as part of its Rural Faith Leaders Workshop Series. Director Monty Burks is one of the speakers for this first workshop (in the series of four) scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. EST, Tuesday, Dec. 8.

RSVP early as space is limited for this online event. Contact Betty-Ann Bryce at MBX.ONDCP.RuralAffairs@ondcp.eop.gov. Please include your name, title, organization, and contact information.

*If unable to attend, workshops will be recorded and made available online in the [Rural Community Toolbox](#).

"The substance use issue is an all-hands-on-deck emergency, so we need to harness and empower the powerful resources of everyone who has a stake in health, including the special talents of the faith community. Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship are positioned in communities to be both first responders and communities of hope for people struggling with addiction. A healthy, safe community is essential to healing and long-term results and this is already part of the local churches' DNA.

As the nation begins to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, faith leaders need information and resources now more than ever to help rural leaders build strong, healthy, drug-free communities."

Office of National Drug Control Policy

SAS, prevention coalitions helping lead FDA effort to 'Remove the Risk'



Have you heard about the “Remove The Risk” campaign? This is a unique opportunity to assist the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) as they work to raise awareness about the dangers of keeping opioid pain medicines in the home. To help in this effort and to spread the word nationwide, the FDA has made available a toolkit of free materials with ready-to-use, professional marketing assets which include video, radio, and print PSAs, social media posts, fact sheets, and more.

The TDMHSAS Division of Substance Abuse Services was excited to jump on board early when representatives from the campaign's partner agency contacted the Office of Prevention Services. They wanted to learn more about the ways we encourage Tennesseans to safely dispose of unused opioid pain medicines. "We also shared with them the fine work our coalitions are doing," said Director Tony Jackson. "The coalitions were able to share some of their activities such as partnering with faith-based organizations, funeral homes, pharmacies, promoting drop boxes and lockboxes, and hosting drug take-back events."

We appreciate IQ Solutions for joining us at our recent Prevention Advisory Council Meeting and for incorporating some of Tennessee's ideas and strategies into the campaign. To join us in this important effort and to download the free marketing materials, visit the [Remove the Risk](#) toolkit.

Butterfly Moments chooses Veterans Day

for a very special groundbreaking

Creating Homes Initiative 2.0 project to provide housing for women in recovery who have served our country



Veterans Day marked a special groundbreaking in Clarksville for a new project funded under the department's Creating Homes Initiative 2.0. Director of Housing and Homeless Services Neru Gobin joined the team at Butterfly Moments and their supporters to break ground on a new housing option for women in recovery from addiction who are also veterans. Butterfly Moments is one of seven agencies to receive grants in state fiscal year 2020-2021 from the Creating Homes Initiative 2.0 program. CHI 2.0 was budgeted by Gov. Lee and the Tennessee General Assembly to create housing options for people recovering from substance use disorder. The program builds on the 20-year legacy of the original Creating Homes Initiative which focused on recovery from mental illness.

Pictured above (left to right) are: Bill Friskics-Warren (Regional Housing Facilitator for Regions IV and V); Bert Singletary (Singletary Construction); Mary Laremore (President of Butterfly Moments, Inc.); Chelsea Camp (Director of Development for Butterfly Moments and a veteran); and Neru Gobin (TDMHSAS Director of Housing and Homeless Services)

[Read more about the groundbreaking \(and see more photos\) in this article from the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle.](#)

Professional Care Services opens new facility in Somerville



Submitted by Professional Care Services

A ribbon cutting, building dedication, and open house was held Friday, Oct. 30 for Professional Care Services of West TN at their new location at 213 Lake View Road in Somerville. The new office was dedicated in honor of Mr. Earl Dowdy, long-time board member of PCS.



Pictured above, left to right, are: Sara Hawkins (Director of Crisis Services); Carrie McDivitt (Director of Operations); Sue Dowdy (wife of Earl Dowdy); Earl Dowdy (PCS Board Member); Suzanne Rhea (PCS Board Member); Tom Griffin (Financial Controller); and Samantha Hammonds (Clinical Director).

Office of Children, Young Adults, and

Families announces staff promotions

Kayla Mumphrey named Program Director for School-Based Initiatives

Please help us congratulate Kayla Mumphrey who has been named Program Director for School-Based Initiatives. For almost two years, Kayla has served as a Program Manager overseeing several school-aged programs, including the School-Based Behavioral Health Liaisons (SBBHL). In Kayla's new role she will be providing leadership in the SBBHL expansion as the program grows from 36 into all 95 counties, as well as supervising two staff overseeing six other school-aged programs.

Kayla graduated in 2014 with her Master's in Clinical Psychology and received a graduate certificate in Applied Behavioral Analysis from Lipscomb University in 2018. Prior to coming to TDMHSAS, Kayla worked at the TN Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. She is a member of the American Psychological Association and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

Kayla is pictured below, front and center (third from the left) alongside her colleagues in the Division of Mental Health Services. This was taken in January 2020 when Kayla was named the MHS Employee of the Month.



Jules Wilson named Healthy Transitions Project Director



Please help us congratulate Jules Wilson who has been named Project Director of the Healthy Transitions Initiative. As our Youth and Young Adult Coordinator for almost three years, Jules has proven to be an invaluable asset to the Office of Children, Young Adults & Families. She has provided best practices to multiple programs such as System of Care Across Tennessee and Healthy Transitions, as well as training and technical assistance. She also oversaw the TDMHSAS Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council and assisted in the development of TN's Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program. She has successfully collaborated with other offices, departments, and partners to be a voice for youth/young adult mental health needs.

In Jules' new role, she will be providing leadership and oversight of the Healthy Transitions Initiative which provides mental health services and supports to transition-age youth (ages 16-25) in Davidson and Greene Counties, as well as a pilot peer support program for youth/young adults in the Davidson County mobile crisis system.

Jules graduated in 2017 from Vanderbilt University with a Bachelor of Arts in English and became a Tennessee Certified Peer Recovery Specialist in 2018. In 2019, she was awarded the NAMI-TN Professional Award. Prior to coming to TDMHSAS, Jules worked as a Peer Support Specialist at Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute with the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers Association. She was also one of the initial members of the TN Young Adult Leadership Council.

RMHI Spotlights

Thank you, Nurse Practitioners!



We are so grateful for our TDMHSAS Nurse Practitioners! For the work that you do everyday and for going above and beyond during COVID-19, thank you!

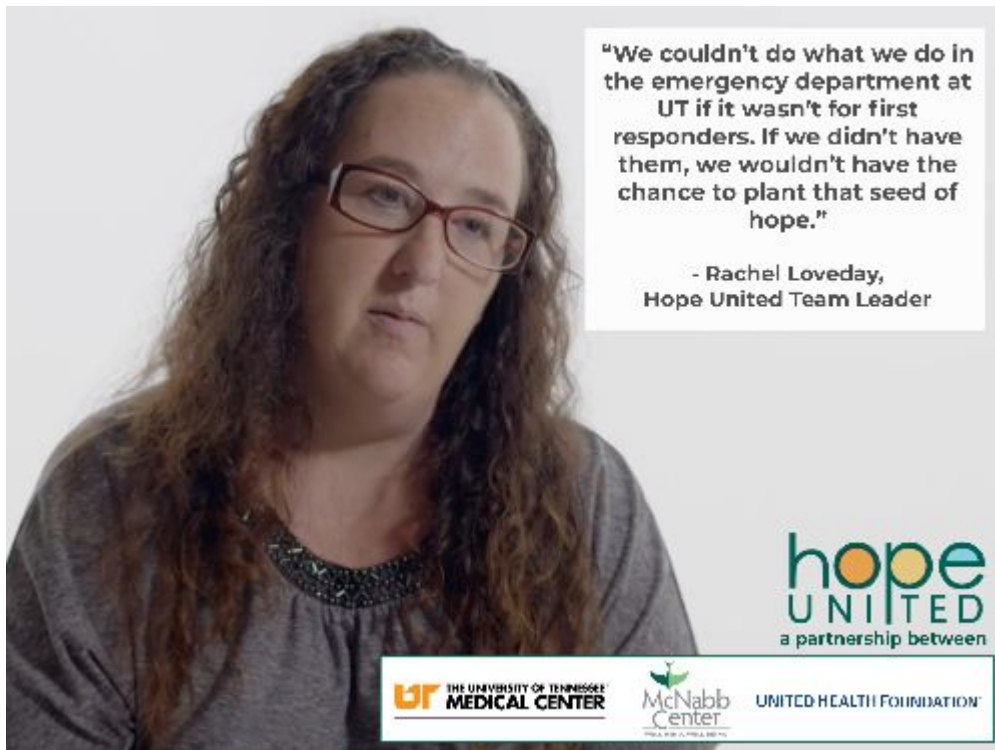
Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners

Ketsana Bouttavong, Belinda Douglas, Turner Jernigan, Ashley Jowers, John Martens, Maycelin Ramos, Kaythi Soe, Deborah Thompson, Jake Timian, and Marlo Smith

Nurse Practitioners

Rachel Appleby, Kelly Feldhaus, Alishe Gibson, Stacie Grantham, Rebekah Harris, Lindsey Hill, Tamisha Hodum, Kelli Little, Ian Mall, Karen Milen, Laura Mudrich, Denise O'Neil, Madeleine Ramirez, Edwin Simon, Olga Woods, Robb Wyer, and Nishamary Zachariah

We are thankful for first responders!



When it was time for First Responders Week 2020, "Hope United" took the opportunity to publicly thank the first responders who work hard to help us all do our jobs and keep our communities safe and healthy 24/7. Their campaign coincided with the one-year anniversary of a partnership between McNabb Center, University of Tennessee Medical Center, and United Health Foundation whose gift of more than \$1 million (via a three-year grant) has increased treatment opportunities to individuals entering the emergency room due to an opioid overdose. Part of the funding supported hiring addiction and peer support specialists, expansion of services, and increased education and awareness. The success of the program thus far has exceeded expectations.

Keep up the great work, Hope United, and all TN first responders!

Pictured below at the July 2019 grant announcement held at University of Tennessee Medical Center (UTMC): Gov. Bill Lee; Commissioner Williams; Lt. Gov. Randy McNally; Sen. Becky Massey; Sen. Richard Briggs; Rep. Jason Zachary; UTMC Chief Quality Officer Dr. James Shamiyeh; CEO/President Jerry Vagnier, McNabb Center; CEO Heather Cianfrocco, OptumHealth Services at UnitedHealth Group; and former Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero.



Volunteer Behavioral Health's CEO Chris Wyre to retire next August

Phyllis Persinger will assume President's role

Submitted by Volunteer Behavioral Health

Dr. James Boerner, Chair of the Volunteer Behavioral Health (VBH) Board of Directors, announced at the August annual meeting that CEO Chris Wyre will be retiring in August of 2021. After more than 43 years working with VBH, Chris' legacy of service to clients, staff, and the behavioral health field in Tennessee has been exemplary.

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

Upon Chris' retirement announcement, the Board unanimously appointed Phyllis Persinger who has worked for VBH for 33 years to the President's role. The Board acknowledged Phyllis' leadership as COO during the transition into the Tennessee Health Link program and expressed gratitude for leading the organization during recent challenges, especially through the difficult period of transformation and adjustment with COVID-19. VBH has no doubt she will be extremely successful in her future with the organization.

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

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

Misty Leitsch named TSPN Executive Director



The Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network has selected Misty Leitsch as its new statewide Executive Director. Misty has been serving as TSPN's Interim Director since fall 2019 and spent time prior as TSPN's Deputy Director. In this role, Misty supervises several staff members spread statewide across nine regions. She oversees several suicide prevention task forces, regularly communicates and collaborates with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and

Substance Abuse Services, manages TSPN's Advisory Council and large volunteer base, and serves as a speaker and thought leader who advocates for suicide prevention.

Misty holds bachelor's degrees in both social work and business administration from Belmont University. Her experience in the area of mental health includes working as an Erasing the Stigma coordinator for Mental Health America of the Midsouth, community liaison for Mental Health Cooperative, program director at New Transitions, and Zero Suicide Initiative director for TSPN.

In Memoriam: Mourning the loss of Jack Stewart

The Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network is deeply saddened to announce the loss of our Advisory Council member, advocate, and friend Jack Stewart. Jack is lovingly remembered by his wife, Kitty, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, as well as TSPN staff and volunteers across Tennessee. TSPN staff

and volunteers recognize the dedication, commitment, and devotion Jack had to making Tennessee a better place for anyone affected by suicide and mental illness. [View Mr. Stewart's obituary.](#) If you have pictures of Jack at a TSPN event, TSPN would love to share them. Please send to tspn@tspn.org.

NAMI Tennessee and TSPN are hosting an online remembrance service to celebrate Jack's advocacy in the areas of mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention on Monday, Nov. 23 beginning at 6 p.m. CST via Zoom. [Please pre-register at this link.](#) Zoom credentials will be sent the day before the service.

In addition to flowers, donations in Jack's memory are appreciated to NAMI, the National Association of Mental Illness Greene County, where Jack was Vice President East, or TSPN (Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network) on which Jack served on the Governors Council.

Be Happy, Be Brave, Be Drug Free!

Thousands of TN students participate in Red Ribbon Week



(Above) Dekalb County starts prevention learning early!

Thanks to every teacher, parent, caregiver, school administrator, classroom volunteer, community member, government official, and ALL who helped us spread this message to TN's youth: Be Happy! Be Brave! Be Drug Free! Prevention works!



We are so grateful for community partners! The Franklin County Prevention Coalition teamed up with the Downtown Winchester program and asked businesses to help promote Red Ribbon Week. As store fronts turned red, customers were educated about substance abuse prevention and even received some awesome discounts as well, courtesy of participating local business owners. Above are just a few of the businesses who stepped up in the name of prevention! [Visit the FCPC facebook to see more](#), and please help us thank them!

Pictured above (clockwise): Sole Shop, First Avenue Gallery & Custom Framing, Club 29 Nutrition (and their custom Red Ribbon Week drink!), and Designer Cakes!



We are sooo grateful for local leaders and law enforcement for their support of prevention programs! The City of Knoxville was among the many municipalities statewide recognizing and promoting Red Ribbon Week 2020. Holding the proclamation (center) is Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon.

Recovery Navigators: A Success Story



Shared by TN Navigator Polly Jessen, pictured

Following a suspected fentanyl overdose, a local ER reached out to our team of Recovery Navigators. Once the patient was stabilized, the MD ordered a crisis consult and a Navigator was dispatched to perform an assessment for a detox and treatment placement. Utilizing Jabber tele-med technology, the Navigator was soon able to meet with the client face-to-face. The Navigator introduced herself as a peer in long term recovery and asked how she could best help the client from this point forward. The client openly shared her struggles with addiction and became visibly emotional while recounting the misery and hopeless feelings of active addiction. She stated this was her first overdose and that it was unintentional. She had been using heroin

and meth intravenously for a few months, and she was unaware that it contained fentanyl.

She reported she happened to be using with a friend who had recently received substance abuse treatment. Although her friend had relapsed, she had maintained possession of the Narcan that was given to her at discharge. This Narcan was part of a large supply provided to the treatment facility by the Regional Overdose Prevention Specialist Sherry Barnett with the Sullivan County Anti-Drug Coalition. **Due to the Narcan training provided on site, the client's friend knew how to recognize the signs of an overdose, promptly administered the naloxone, and called 9-1-1. Because of her actions and quick thinking, the ambulance was able to more easily stabilize the client and deliver her safely to the ER for observation.**

The Navigator validated the client's experience and shared some of her own personal recovery story in order to instill hope. The Navigator then offered and discussed numerous treatment options going forward. The client was able to complete a detox program and then a 28-day treatment program for women. She reported learning about her co-occurring depression and anxiety that contributed to her addiction, as well as forming long lasting relationships with other women in recovery. She went on to live in a sober housing facility for women. In a follow up, the client reported to the Navigator that she experienced a brief relapse and knew that she needed more time in treatment. Utilizing the resource guide given to her as part of the initial assessment, she obtained admission to a faith-based program in Livingston. The Navigator worked to obtain the client a Greyhound bus ticket so that she could join the program.

The last interaction with the client was positive and she reported being grateful for the attention and assistance offered to her from the very beginning. **She also stated that her friend responsible for reviving her has begun attending recovery meetings and is clean and sober again as well! She reported wanting to stay in contact with the Navigator and work toward her goal of working in recovery one day in order to help others.**

"Because of this program and the amazing resources available in our community, our agency, our partnering agencies, and the Recovery Navigators we were able to not only save a life, but provide a future of hope with options for someone who was experiencing the devastating effects of mental illness and the disease of addiction," says Polly. "I want to thank everyone involved in this program and the recovery community. I know we all said at the beginning if we can help just one person it will

be worth it. Well, this client was just one of 2,905 people that we helped last year. You ALL are absolutely amazing, inspiring, and hardworking. This success story is belongs to us all! Thank you for letting me share!"

Polly Jessen CPRS
Recovery Navigator
Frontier Health/Region One

Coming in December ...

Suicide Prevention: TDMHSAS teams up with the TN Dept. of Health and TN Together

TDMHSAS and the Department of Health are collaborating on a new campaign centered around the risk of drug overdose and suicide during the winter holidays. The campaign, called ResilienTN, focuses building resilience and strengthening community connections to prevent the tragic loss of life to overdose and suicide. Behavioral health experts worry the climate around the COVID-19 pandemic may worsen the rise in overdoses traditionally associated with the winter holidays and could also result in increased deaths from suicide.

Through media messaging around overdose and suicide prevention, social media outreach, and virtual trainings and events, the ResilienTN campaign seeks to empower Tennesseans with helpful tools and knowledge that speak to the personal challenges many are facing. We will be sharing risk factors and red flags, so that Tennesseans can better help themselves (and others around them) and emerge on the other side stronger than ever.

Connect to events through the ResilienTN campaign on our website at this link:
<https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/calendar>

And stay tuned to our facebook page and tntogether.com in the coming weeks for more information, shareable graphics, data, and more.

Planning and Policy Council meetings return in 2021



Due to the pandemic and [Executive Order 65](#), all Statewide, Committee, and Regional Council meetings will resume in 2021.

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](#)

Have a road trip in your future?

Be sure to look up!



Prevention messages (and opportunities to "have the conversation" about the importance of staying drug-free) are popping up everywhere! Congratulations to Alycia Blangin! Her winning billboard design can now be seen in person as it towers over Main Street near Hardee's. [Via Unicoi County Prevention Coalition](#)

'Tis the season to celebrate safely!



[Visit this webpage](#) for measures you can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the risk of illness associated with holiday gatherings and travel.

Emotional support for healthcare workers ...

COVID-19 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT LINE FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Need to talk to someone about feelings of stress, anxiety, sadness, or depression related to work? The COVID-19 Emotional Support Line for healthcare workers can help.



888-642-7886

Calltakers are available: 6 a.m. - 10 p.m. (CT), 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. (ET)



In the event of a mental health emergency ...

STATEWIDE

CRISIS LINE

HELP IN A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

855-CRISIS-1 [TN.gov/CrisisLine](https://www.tn.gov/CrisisLine)
855-274-7471



For questions about addiction treatment/referrals ...



We love our acronyms!



This acronym was featured outside the breakroom on unit 3 at Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute, courtesy of Nurse Manager Joann Page: "I thought it was a good reminder to everyone working on Unit 3, what we do

and why we do it. Each letter of the word 'hearts' represents something we either need to practice in the psych field or something that we need to help instill in our patients. It's a reminder of who we are and what we do."

Thank you, Joann, and all staff working at Regional Mental Health Institutes, for sharing your HEARTS daily!

*We hope you've enjoyed this issue of the Update!
If you have news to share (a story idea, accomplishment,
provider news, etc.) or if you'd like to be added to the
distribution list, please email: the Office of
Communications at OC.TDMHSAS@tn.gov.*

And please connect with us on social media!

Celebrating almost 11,000 likes on facebook!



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