



A Message from Commissioner Williams

The following is an op-ed published to mark Mental Health Awareness Month.

Around the world and right here in Tennessee, we celebrate May as Mental Health Month. After the last year, the opportunity to pause, reflect, and evaluate our own mental health and that of the people in our lives has never been more important.

“How are you doing today?” It’s a question we asked each other multiple times a day that’s taken on new meaning over the last year. Prior to the pandemic, you probably brushed it off with a “Great! How are you?” when really you weren’t “great.” The collective experience of the last year has shown us is that it’s essential to take an honest look at how you’re feeling and share that with those around you.

Throughout the pandemic, [the U.S. Census Bureau has monitored](#) many aspects of the crisis including self-reported symptoms of anxiety and depression. Throughout 2020, between 30 and 40 percent of Americans reported symptoms of anxiety and depression, and in Tennessee the numbers were similar. The rate has gone down slightly in the last few months, but it’s still at 35 percent. Compare that to 20 percent in a normal year, and you’ll quickly see the emotional impact of the last year. The biggest barrier to better mental health is often the stigma of taking that first step.

So, what can you do to get help for yourself or a loved one?

First off, if you are experiencing a mental health crisis or thoughts of suicide, [please call our Statewide Crisis Line at 855-CRISIS-1 \(855-274-7471\)](#). The trained counselors who answer this line can talk through what you are feeling and refer you to the right level of care. Tennessee is blessed to have mobile crisis services for both adults and children available in every county.

If you need to talk to someone about feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and other symptoms related to COVID mental health concerns, there's a network of agencies across the state that have set up COVID-19 Crisis Counseling hotlines. [Click this link](#), and find the contact information for your local agency.

If you're a healthcare worker, first responder, or you work in education and you need to talk to someone, you can make a free and confidential call or text to the [Emotional Support Line for Pandemic Stress](#) at 888-642-7886.

If you're not currently experiencing a mental health crisis but you have mental health concerns, another great first step is to talk to your primary care doctor. Let the doctor know how you're feeling, how long it's been going on, and you can discuss next steps.

If you don't have insurance, Tennessee has a wealth of resources to provide mental health supports. [The Behavioral Health Safety Net](#) provides essential mental health services to uninsured adults who have no other way to pay and to all uninsured children and some insured children who don't have full behavioral health coverage through our strong community behavioral health providers. Thanks to Governor Lee and the Tennessee General Assembly, the Behavioral Health Safety Net for adults has been greatly expanded, and the Behavioral Health Safety Net for children was newly created in the current fiscal year. Governor Lee and the legislature also gave us funding in the current fiscal year to put one [School-Based Behavioral Health Liaison](#) in every county.

Looking ahead to next fiscal year beginning July 1, Governor Lee and the legislature are investing \$6.5 million in additional mental health supports for children, and they are setting up a \$250 million trust fund for mental health services that will impact children for generations to come.

So, the next time someone asks, "How are you doing?" think about your honest answer and embrace the conversation that ensues when you ask how they're feeling. You might be surprised what you learn.

Blessings,

Marie

How are you marking Mental Health Awareness Month?



Our Office of Children, Youth, Young Adults, and Families is taking center stage for the month of May! Each week features a different focus with the Regional Intervention Program going first followed by the school-based team, then early psychosis, and SOCAT rounding out the month. Make sure you [follow us on Facebook](#) and [Instagram to join in the fun!](#)

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, the first week in May, was created over a decade ago by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to bring to the forefront the importance of every child's mental health. In the Office of Children, Young Adults and Families (OCYAF), we observe the month of May as a time where we can showcase the great work that all of the great work our programs and service providers do to help children, young adults and families every day.



1,220 Tennesseans died by suicide in 2019. 12%, or 149 of these, were youth aged 10-24. Through a partnership with the Department of Health, all interested stakeholders now receive weekly county hospital attempt data for youth or ESSENCE data, allowing all to work more upstream toward suicide prevention.



HOW DO YOU NORMALIZE MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUR FAMILY?

Take a family walk to
discuss ways to
support each other
when struggling



Jessica



Jules



Morgan

Our newest member!

TN General Assembly passes FY22 budget and adjourns until next year

The 2021 session of the 112th Tennessee General Assembly adjourned on Wednesday, May 5. Lawmakers completed their constitutional requirement to pass a balanced budget for the upcoming fiscal year and also passed laws governing the state. Of specific note is the increases included in the TDMHSAS budget for FY22. In addition to the **\$250 million Mental Health Trust Fund**, the department's total state funding increase is **\$44,045,300**.

- Behavioral Health Safety Net: **\$6,500,000**
 - To provide recurring funding to expand community-based safety net type services to serve additional uninsured Tennesseans, with a focus on children, who have a serious emotional disturbance.
- Creating Homes Initiative: **\$3,583,400**
 - Funding to expand the Creating Homes Initiative (CHI) for Tennesseans diagnosed with mental illness and/or substance use disorder, with a focus on the justice re-entry population.
- Statewide Residential Recovery Courts: **\$4,687,500**
 - Funding for operational costs of two additional residential recovery courts. \$2,000,000 is non-recurring.
- Criminal Justice Liaisons: **\$625,000**
 - Recurring funding to expand CJLs to serve all 95 counties across the state.
 - The CJLs coordinate with local jails to provide services to incarcerated individuals who present with mental illness or substance use disorder.
- Mobile Crisis Services: **\$354,300**

- Recurring funding to support the statewide network of 13 mobile crisis providers while addressing the increased population of adults and children needing assessment and services during a mental health crisis.
- East Tennessee Private Inpatient Costs Support: **\$1,000,000**
 - Recurring funding to private providers the department has contracted with for inpatient care of uninsured patients in East Tennessee.
 - Three private psychiatric hospitals who have provided inpatient care for the uninsured population under TDMHSAS contract since 2012.
- RMHI Revenue Replacement: **\$10,105,100**
 - Recurring funding to reflect changes in patient mix and subsequent revenues collected at the state's 4 Regional Mental Health Institutes
 - Patient revenue collections have decreased as fewer insured and more indigent patients receive emergency mental health services.
- Capital Improvements: **\$17,190,000**

The General Assembly is scheduled to reconvene on January 11, 2022.



Children's Behavioral Health Safety Net Media Campaign

Statewide multimedia campaign aims to increase reach of service

The department has launched a statewide, multimedia campaign to promote the Children's Behavioral Health Safety Net. This campaign targets parents and other people who have roles in the lives of Tennessee children (teachers, coaches, pastors, etc.) as well as raising general awareness of supports for children and families. We got a wonderful level of participation and feedback from our providers in developing our messaging for this campaign, and we're excited to see how it translates to the people who receive the ads. You can view our spot by clicking on the video player below.

You can connect to services through the Children's Behavioral Health Safety net [by visiting TN.gov/BHSN](https://www.tn.gov/BHSN).



20th National Prescription Drug Take Back Day nets 27,380 pounds

Bi-annual prevention effort renews impact post-COVID

Tennesseans turned in more than 27,000 pounds of prescription medications during the 20th National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on April 24th.

Take Back Day combines the reach of [Substance Abuse Prevention Coalitions](#) and other community groups with local law enforcement to remove potentially addictive substances from homes and communities.

If you missed out on Take Back Day but you still have unwanted or expired

medication in your home, you can safely and securely dispose of it at one of more than 350 drug drop boxes located across the state. [Find the location nearest you on this map.](#)

As we look back on Take Back Day, enjoy this selection of highlights from our coalitions and their activities!

(Below) The crew in Putnam county poses for a picture with several drums filled and ready for disposal. Take Back Events are great opportunities for additional education. (Below Left) Sullivan County shared information about overdose reversal. Law enforcement partnerships are key as Sevier County (Below Right) shows!



Take Back Day was rainy and wet across much of the state – especially in East Tennessee. A pair of dedicated public servants collect the day's haul at a location in Chattanooga (left) and the crew in Loudon Co. takes a quick second for a picture in a dry spot (right).



West Tennessee, represent! Tipton (Left) and Weakley (Right).



Never too young for the message of prevention! Young helpers in Williamson (Left) and Obion (Right) Counties made Take Back Day a success!



Nashville Prevention Partnership (Left) and Rutherford County's Prevention Coalition for Success (Right) had great hospital partners in TriStar and St.Thomas to make their events successful.



Cumberland County (Left) and Roane County (Right)



Sumner County (Left) and Lawrence County (Right)



Several Coalitions received positive media coverage for their efforts around Take Back Day. In this photo from the Anderson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, a reporter from WATE-TV talks to Sgt. Barry Bunch with the Oak Ridge Police Department. Watch this story, find more news clippings, and flip through additional photos from Take Back Day April 2021 at this link on [TN.gov/behavioral-health/takebackday](https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/takebackday).

Recovery Courts celebrate graduates

Court participants, administrators, and judges persevered through unprecedented challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic

The past 15 months have posed unique challenges to every aspect of behavioral health, and time and time again, we've seen how people have risen to the occasion. In Tennessee's recovery courts, the judges, administrators, and staff showed amazing flexibility and perseverance to continue to serve their court participants. This meant drive-through court appearances, porch visits,

drive-in graduations, and virtual connections to maintain the contact and accountability that make recovery courts so special and effective. During the month of May, several of Tennessee's recovery courts celebrated their participants' successful completion with graduation ceremonies.



Graduates and staff of the DeKalb Co. Recovery Court pose with Judge Bratten Cook.



Graduates of the Lincoln Co. Recovery Court pose with Judge Andy Myrick. If you look closely, you can see the unique trophies they received in memory of the MANY drug screens they had to pass!

Among the many commemorations in the month of May, it's also National Drug Court Month! Organized annually by the National Association of Drug Court



Professionals, the awareness month celebrates the life-changing and life-saving impact that recovery courts in Tennessee and around the world have for their participants. [Learn more at this link.](#)

Welcome to the team, Andy Lawrence!

The Office of Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention is so excited to welcome Andy Lawrence to our team! Andy, MA, LPC-MHSP, has experience working in the mental health field for the past 19 years, and will serve as Assistant Director, Disaster Management and Emergency Services.



For more than 15 years, he worked in the community mental health space, and his experience includes case management, crisis response and suicide prevention. He has experience in both direct service and leadership roles providing program development and oversight for multi-county operations. His work in suicide prevention included implementation of a nationally-recognized service delivery program aimed at providing enhanced services to those most at risk for suicide. He is also a former Director of Admissions for a Nashville-based private inpatient behavioral health hospital. Additionally, Andy has experience providing a multitude of trainings to local law enforcement, school faculty and staff, community members and provider agencies. Welcome Andy!

National Nurses Week

*Special thanks to the special folks who provide nursing services
at all levels of behavioral health care!*

Nurses ROCK!

We know because we employ
more than **360** LPNs, RNs, and
Nurse Practitioners.

That's roughly 1 in 5
TDMHSAS employees!



#NationalNursesWeek

National Nurses week was May 6-12, and the team at Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute celebrated with goodie bags, quizzes and prize drawings, and a popcorn and toppings bar! (Below, left) Kathy Berger, Nurse Executive and Corey Weldon, Asst Nurse Executive are set up to serve the popcorn bar. (Below, right) Sharon Perkins, ASA3 Nurse Executive, rests after a day of serving popcorn.



Shout Out!

William Olotu - MTMHI Forensic Services Program



Shout out to William Olotu with the Forensic Services Program. William has worked as a psychiatric technician at FSP, but he won't be much longer – William passed his NCLEX and is applying to be a nurse on his home unit! Congratulations William!

If you'd like to "shout out" to a TDMHSAS colleague, please send an email to OC.TDMHSAS@tn.gov. Tell us who you'd like to recognize and why.

Save-the-Dates

Planning & Policy Council meetings

The next meeting of the TDMHSAS Planning and Policy Council is set for June 8. [Details on how you can attend will be published on our website at this link.](#)

Statewide Planning and Policy Council

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. CDT

Understanding Behavioral Health and Aging Needs

Do you, a staff member, or a board member need **FREE** continuing education hours? Join Mental Health America of the MidSouth (MHA) for its annual free workshop on Aging & Behavioral Health. This virtual (Zoom) workshop on **June 15th** qualifies for or has been pre-approved for 6 hours of continuing education for:

- Assisted Living Administrators
- Attorneys
- Certified Peers (CPRS)
- Licensed Counselors
- Psychologists (Type II CEs)
- Social Workers

Register for FREE at this link: <https://mhamidsouth.org/support/mental-health-academy/>

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND AGING NEEDS

June 15, 2021 | 8 am – 3:30 pm

Virtual Conference via Zoom | Registration is FREE; 6 CEUs

We know that individuals with mental illness diagnoses or addictions do not have the same life expectancy as their healthy peers, but that gap is narrowing. Many long-term care facilities and CMHCs are struggling to manage mental health issues and chemical dependency in older adults. What services are available for older Tennesseans, and what can we expect from the aging baby boomer population?

Plan to join MHA of the MidSouth for this annual, FREE workshop focusing on Tennessee's older adults: addictions, mental health care needs, healthy aging, brain maturation, caregiving tips, and more.

Educational Objectives:

By the end of this workshop, attendees will be able to...

1. List challenges specific to older adults with substance abuse issues;
2. Describe how hearing loss furthers the physical and mental decline of older adults;
3. Describe the physical and mental health impact of chronic loneliness and isolation;
4. List at least three updates or advances associated with Alzheimer's disease; and,
5. Compare and contrast the wrong ways and best ways to remove car keys from someone with dementia.

FREE for 6 CEUs

Special thanks to our sponsors and underwriters:



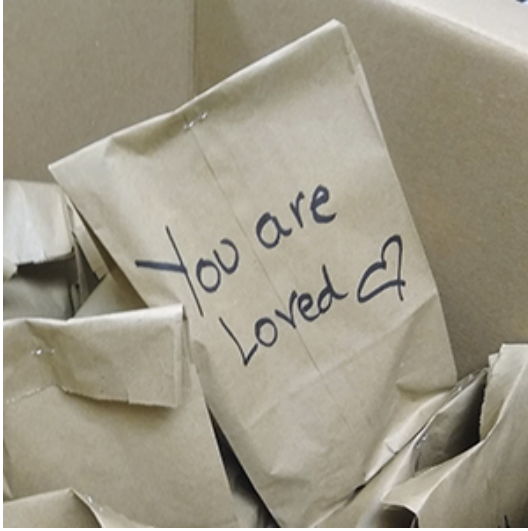
HCA TriStar Health
Janssen
TAMHO
Vanderbilt Behavioral Health



To learn more or register, please visit
www.mhamidsouth.org

Don't Forget...

Kind words leave a lasting impression! Kudos to the volunteers and members of the DeKalb County Coalition who helped pack prevention bags and wrote inspirational words for their 8th graders.



Amazing Art



Spring is Blooming with H.E.A.R.T. (Hope, Empathy, Advocacy, Respect, Trust/Safety). Thanks to Sharon Perkins for sharing her talents!

Resources

COVID-19 counseling services for Tennesseans

HELP IS AVAILABLE

HOP



IS REAL



If you're feeling overwhelmed, disconnected, hopeless, or just sad—you're not alone. Please know that help is available. Hope is real.

COVID-19 Counseling resources are available in every Tennessee County.
[Find the contact for your area on our website.](#)

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:



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 ...

TN
REDLINE 
1.800.889.9789
CALL OR TEXT 

To talk with a TDMHSAS Consumer Advocate ...



Office of Consumer Affairs and Peer Recovery Services

HELPLINE

1-800-560-5767

OCA.TDMHSAS@tn.gov

We can help with

- finding mental health and substance abuse resources in your area
- questions about insurance
- where to find 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 am to 4:30 pm
- Closed on state holidays

If we cannot answer your question, we will work with you to find the appropriate resource.

www.tn.gov/behavioral-health



OUR MISSION: CREATING
COLLABORATIVE PATHWAYS
TO RESILIENCY, RECOVERY & INDEPENDENCE
FOR TENNESSEANS LIVING
WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

OUR VISION:

A STATE OF *RESILIENCY, RECOVERY, AND INDEPENDENCE*
IN WHICH **TENNESSEANS**
LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS
AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS **THRIVE**

AS A DEPARTMENT, WE VALUE:

CUSTOMER FOCUSED:

An unwavering commitment to keep patients and those who serve them at the forefront of every decision.

INTEGRITY:

Honesty and truth in all we do.

INSPIRED PURPOSE:

The call to action in service of a cause greater than one's self.

EXCELLENCE:

The highest standards for services, efficiency, and conduct.

COMPASSIONATE

AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP:

The commitment to make effective decisions and inspire others through active listening and empathy.

SOLUTIONS AND OUTCOMES-ORIENTED:

The commitment to positive outcomes and meaningful changes in response to the critical needs of the Tennesseans we serve.

PARTNERSHIP:

Beyond teamwork, collaboration based on mutual success to the benefit of the Tennesseans we are blessed to serve.

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.

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