



**No person has the right to rain on your dreams.**

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*



**OUR MISSION:**

Creating

**COLLABORATIVE  
PATHWAYS TO  
RESILIENCY,  
RECOVERY, and  
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**

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# New Funding Means More Recovery Housing Coming to Tennessee

*Grants will create housing opportunities for people recovering from addiction*



The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) is proud to announce five community-based behavioral health agencies that will be instrumental in the state's efforts to increase housing opportunities for people recovering from substance use disorder.

The new state funding will be used to hire Regional Housing Facilitators under the department's new Creating Homes Initiative (CHI) 2 program. The facilitators are an essential part of the model working with community-based groups to inventory assets, identify needs, and create solutions. CHI-2 looks to build off the department's highly successful Creating Homes Initiative which has created more than 22,000 housing opportunities and leveraged more than \$692 million in state, federal, local, grant, foundational, and other sources for people living with mental illness.

The five agencies receiving grants are:

- Upper East Tennessee: **Frontier Health**
- Knoxville / East Tennessee: **Helen Ross McNabb Center**
- Cumberland Plateau / Southeast Tennessee: **Helen Ross McNabb Center**
- Middle Tennessee (Outside Nashville/Davidson Co.) **Coffee County Drug Court Foundation**
- West Tennessee: **Aspell Recovery Center**
- Memphis/Shelby County: **CAAP, Inc.**

[Read the press release in its entirety.](#)

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## Announcement of Funding

TDMHSAS is requesting proposals from agencies and organizations that provide services to Tennesseans living with substance use disorders to implement a dedicated full-time Regional Substance Use Housing Facilitator for the TDMHSAS Planning Region IV (Davidson County). This program will assist the state in creating and expanding permanent supportive housing and housing services options for service recipients by implementing one Regional Substance Use Housing Facilitator in Region IV in support of the Creating Homes Initiative-2 (CHI-2). The purpose of CHI-2 is to develop and expand the number of safe, affordable, quality, permanent housing options for persons in substance use recovery.

Completed proposals due Feb. 6. For more information, [visit our website.](#)



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## TDMHSAS Expanding Employment Opportunities For People With Disabilities

TDMHSAS is continuing the state's leadership in improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities through a new grant award.

Tennessee is one of 13 Capacity Building States identified for the Visionary Opportunities to Increase Competitive Employment (VOICE) program through the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy. The grant represents technical assistance which will flow to community behavioral health providers who use the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment model to connect people with severe mental illness to competitive integrated employment opportunities.

“When we talk about employment for people living with serious mental illness, we’re talking about a key that unlocks a future filled with hope,” said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW. “Employment builds natural supports, increases self-worth and confidence, and develops independence for a person.”

[Read the press release in its entirety.](#)

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## Gov. Lee visits Mental Health Cooperative



*Mental Health Cooperative SVP for Clinical Services Amanda Bracht leads Gov. Lee, Commissioner Williams, and MHC CEO Pam Womack on a tour.*

On January 14, we had an insightful and inspiring visit with Gov. Bill Lee at the Mental Health Cooperative Crisis Treatment Center. Gov. Lee received a tour of the facility and then talked with a person and a Metropolitan Nashville Police Department officer who have used the resource multiple times. Their encounter was recorded as a part of the [The Council of State Governments Justice Center Face to Face Initiative](#).

The Crisis Treatment Center is one of 7 pre-arrest diversion infrastructure projects that were funded in the FY18 budget. Pre-arrest diversion attempts to remove individuals from law enforcement interaction and get them the mental

health treatment they need. For this fiscal year, Gov. Lee and the General Assembly appropriated an additional \$1.5 million to create new pre-arrest diversion sites with a focus on rural areas. You can learn more about pre-arrest diversion in Tennessee at this link: [www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/prearrest](http://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/prearrest)



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## Commissioner attends White House Summit



Commissioner Marie Williams was honored and grateful to travel to the White House to participate in the Summit on Transforming Mental Health Treatment to

Combat Homelessness, Violence, and Substance Abuse on December 19, 2019. The gathering of top behavioral health leaders from across the nation heard from cabinet-level officials, state and local leaders, and mental health advocates. They even received a surprise visit from President Donald J. Trump at the end of the day!

Pictured, left to right, are: David Covington, CEO & President, Recovery International; Judy Fitzgerald, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities; Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Faith Community Organizer; and Commissioner Williams.

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## Healthy Transitions 2.0 is in full swing



*Submitted by Diana Kirby, Healthy Transitions Project Director*

Last month, the System of Care Across Tennessee Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) along with the TN Healthy Transitions-Improving Life Trajectories grant (HT-ILT) team hosted a Transition to Independence (TIP) Model Training and a Healthy Transitions Orientation for grant partners at Tennessee Voices for Children, Mental Health Cooperative, and Frontier Health. Led by HT-ILT Project Director, Diana Kirby, attendees learned best

practices for working with transition-age youth (TAY) with mental health needs. The TIP Model is a framework designed to enhance practitioners' skillsets in helping young adults discover and capitalize on their strengths, better engage in services and goal planning, identify key figures in their life for support, and balance risk and reward on their way to building a life into adulthood. This model is the only evidence-informed practice dedicated to this age group. All staff will complete Part 2 of the TIP training this month.

Pictured at the training: (Back row) Kris Schonewill (MHC), Kaitlyn Swinney (Frontier), Taylor Fischer (MHC), Brynn Fleming (MHC), Crystal Hutchins (TVC), and Brandy Wade, Don Walker, and Kedra Woodard (TDMHSAS). (Middle row) Hannah English (Frontier), Scott Hollenbeck (Frontier), Morgan Morris (MHC), Haleigh Gaddis (MHC), Alisa Jordan (TVC), and Jessica Mullins and Diana Kirby (TDMHSAS) (Front row) Ellen Omohundro (TDMHSAS) and Garrett Spurlin (TVC). Not pictured: Will Voss (TVC) and Kendall Elsass (MHC).



Pictured, left to right, with their custom-made "fidgets," are: Haleigh Gaddis, Brynn Fleming, Kris Schonewill, Taylor Fischer, and Morgan Morris (Mental Health Cooperative).

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# Our 2nd quarter Crisis Services Outstanding Employee is Clarissa Davis, Youth Villages



Congratulations to Clarissa Davis from Youth Villages! Clarissa was chosen as TN's Crisis Services Outstanding Employee for second quarter FY20. She was nominated by a colleague who wrote: "Clarissa is an outstanding triage counselor and is committed about helping youth and families who call into the hotline." Recently Clarissa helped locate a student who was attempting to commit suicide. "The youth was taken to the ER and assessed by crisis. Clarissa's quick thinking and problem solving made a real difference, and this is what she does

every shift."

Clarissa says she enjoys "helping others when they need it the most. I enjoy the quick problem solving phase and giving my clients the tools they need to be independent in the future." She also enjoys the follow-up. "It is great to know that a child is much safer and feels better after receiving my services," she says. "I also look forward to my job's annual conference. I always learn some great things at the workshops. I also have the chance to meet some amazing crisis counselors from across the state of Tennessee."

Clarissa says she is a proud Tuskegee University graduate and began working at Youth Villages shortly after receiving her master's degree.

To nominate a TN Crisis Services employee for this recognition, [visit our website.](#)

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## Staff News & Accomplishments



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*Congratulations to our 2019 Service Award recipients (Central Office)*



Congratulations to the following Central Office staff (pictured above) who were honored with Service Awards at our annual holiday luncheon. Thank you for your many years of service!

**Celebrating 40 years of service:** Cathy Benhamed

**Celebrating 30 years of service:** Andre Gibson and Dennis Temple

**Celebrating 25 years of service:** Kristi Burnette, Avis Easley, Pat Manners, and Ardana Miller-Foxx

**Celebrating 20 years of service:** Diann Cox and Ken Horvath

**Celebrating 15 years of service:** Shaundra Easley, Dave Farmer, Caron Petersen, Julie Ratledge, and Janice Tomlinson

**Celebrating 10 years of service:** Kurt Hippel

**Celebrating 5 years of service:** Monty Burks, Maria Camacho, Paul Havlicek, Leslie Judson, Chris Loftis, Matthew Parriott, Gerald Pitts, Nicole Rivers, Heather Taylor-Griffith, Noelle Suarez-Murias, and Keri Virgo

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## Western Mental Health Institute announces new staff roles

*Dr. Iwueke embraces new role as WMHI Clinical Director*



Western Mental Health Institute is pleased to announce that Dr. Chika Iwueke has accepted the role of Clinical Director, effective January 1, 2020, following the retirement of Dr. William Varner who served 16 years in this critical capacity. "I am grateful for all of the contributions and leadership provided during that time by Dr. Varner during his tenure as the head of the medical staff for this hospital," said WMHI CEO Roger Pursley. "I am equally

confident that we will see exciting new opportunities for growth and improvement under this new administration and leadership under the direction of Dr. Iwueke."

Dr. Iwueke graduated in 2009 with a medical degree from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) in Memphis. He completed his clinical rotations as a Resident Physician at the VA, MED, St. Francis Hospital, and Memphis Mental Health Institute. He completed his General Psychiatry Residency in 2013 from the UTHSC where he served as Chief Resident of the Department of Psychiatry.

Dr. Iwueke has provided Medical Officer of the Day (MOD) coverage for both MMHI and WMHI on a part-time as needed basis since June 2011. He has worked in direct care covering patient units three days a week on a part-time basis as a staff psychiatrist at WMHI since August 2017.

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### *Tom Greer is new Asst. Superintendent of Program Services*

Congratulations to Tom Greer who has been named Western Mental Health Institute's new Assistant Superintendent of Program Services. He first joined the WMHI staff in 2001 as program coordinator for children and youth at Timber Springs Adolescent Center. Since then, he has worked in quality, staff development, institutional services, and human resources.

Greer is a graduate of the University of Tennessee at Martin and the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. He began his service career path in 1990 as a



direct care home trainer and then house manager serving people with developmental disabilities. He has served as a public school teacher, a teacher/counselor and supervisor in therapeutic wilderness programs, a transitional living coordinator, a special education teacher, an Assistant Director of Education, and as the administrator of a residential treatment facility before joining the Western family.

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*Michael Brown is promoted to Adjunctive Therapy Director*



Congratulations to Michael Brown who has been promoted and appointed to the position of Adjunctive Therapy Director at Western Mental Health Institute. Brown began employment at WMHI in 2007 as a psychiatric technician and was hired in the Adjunctive Therapy Department in 2012 as a Recreational Therapist 2, where he remained until being promoted to his new position.

Brown brings a substantial amount of leadership experience to his new position. Prior to joining the WMHI team, Brown was employed for six years as a teacher at Bolivar Middle School and as a teacher and football coach for 13 years at Bolivar Central High where he held the title of head football coach for one year. He also served on the Bolivar City Council for two terms and as the Parks and Recreations Director for two years. Brown is a 1989 graduate of Tennessee Tech University where he majored in health and physical education.

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*Please help us welcome Jessica Moody to Central Office!*

The Division of Hospital Services has added another valuable team member to the family! Jessica Moody joins us as our new Clinical Application Coordinator for Central Office. In this role, Jessica will assist with the management of the Electronic Clinical Records project and serve as the liaison with our four Regional Mental Health Institutes.



Jessica is a Registered Health Information Technician with more than 14 years of experience with Electronic Health Records and 15 years of medical records/HIPAA compliance experience.

Jessica comes to us from Bridgeport, AL and most recently served as the Health Information Manager/HIPAA Compliance Officer for the Hamilton County Health Department.

Welcome, Jessica!

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### *Benita Hayes is named SOCAT Training & Technical Assistance Coordinator*



Please help us welcome Benita Hayes to the System of Care Across Tennessee Central Office team! Benita has been named our new SOCAT Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator within the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families. Benita has been with the department for the past eight years working primarily with Substance Abuse Services. She has many years of experience in providing oversight to - and support of - various initiatives. She will be working with internal and external stakeholders to continue to move forward the Training and Technical

Assistance Center (TTAC) as well as assisting in the oversight of many

components of our service delivery sites throughout the state. We are excited to have Benita as a part of our team and look forward to continuing to serve in excellence to all of our partners and stakeholders.

### *Welcome Brandy Thomas-Wade to TDMHSAS*

Welcome Brandy Wade to the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families. Brandy will be serving as a Co-Project Manager of the TN Department of Education's (TDOE) AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) grant. In this role, she provides training and support to four AWARE Local Education Agency pilot sites across the state and facilitates collaboration between the department's school mental health programs and TDOE's school mental health initiatives.



Brandy has a psychology degree from Tennessee State University and a master's degree in professional counseling from Argosy University. Prior to joining the department, she served in various community mental health roles providing community-based and intensive home-based counseling to children, youth, and families, including working in a classroom environment as a lead counselor at Tennessee Volunteer Challenge Academy. Brandy also brings a wealth of training experience in topics such as trauma-informed care and social-emotional learning. Her background providing counseling and training to diverse populations make her a great fit for this collaborative role.

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## Bringing holiday cheer to our hospitals



*Submitted by Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute*

Being in the hospital during the holidays can be tough, but the staff at our Regional Mental Health Institutes work hard to spread Christmas cheer during this most special time of year. Led by the efforts of the Adjunctive Therapy team, Moccasin Bend hosted a fun-filled gathering for patients and staff. AT Director Ryan Beckett and Nurse Executive Kathy Berger (pictured above) dressed for the occasion! Thanks to the psychology students from Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe High School (pictured below) who, along with their teacher, Susan, entertained everyone with their Christmas carols and jolly songs.



For questions about substance abuse treatment,  
**Call or Text the Tennessee REDLINE**  
800-889-9789

In the event of a **MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY:**

**Call 855-CRISIS-1**

**\*855-274-7471**

For confidential help  
from a caring crisis professional  
in your area, available  
**24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

This is a free call.

You can also text TN to 741741.



To learn more about Crisis Services in the State of  
Tennessee, [visit our website.](#)

24/7 • 365 DAYS



MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS LINE **855-CRISIS-1**

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# 2020

Save the Dates!

## JANUARY

**9**  
Law Enforcement  
Appreciation Day



## FEBRUARY

Therapeutic  
Recreation  
Month

**3-7**  
School  
Counseling Week

## MARCH

Social Workers  
Month

**20**  
First Day  
of Spring



**30**  
National  
Doctors Day

## APRIL

**22**  
Administrative  
Professionals  
Day

## MAY

Mental Health Month

**20** Nurses Day

**10-16** Hospital  
Week

**20-26**  
Emergency Medical  
Services Week

## JUNE



## JULY



**HAPPY 4TH!**

## AUGUST

**5**  
Psychiatric Tech  
Appreciation Day

## SEPTEMBER

Recovery Month  
Suicide Prevention  
Month

**10** World Suicide  
Prevention Day

First Day  
of Fall



## OCTOBER

American  
Pharmacists Month

**4-10**  
Mental Illness  
Awareness Week

**8** Depression  
Screening Day

## NOVEMBER

**8-14**  
Nurse Practitioner  
Week

**11** Veterans Day

**21** Survivors of  
Suicide Day

**26**  
Be Thankful!



## DECEMBER



**HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS!**

Let's Celebrate!

*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](mailto:OC.TDMHSAS@tn.gov).*

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