



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



A Message from Commissioner Williams

Last year was the year of legendary, and how it was legendary. At the start of 2020, we discussed how it would be the year of hindsight, insight, and foresight. Truly there has been a lot of insight, and in 2021 we will combine that plus foresight to reach our new goal of being **beyond compare**.

When thinking through this year's motivation, I thought a lot about how **each and**

every one of you showed up last year in legendary ways. How the department, our hospitals, and community providers turned on a dime and embraced the new reality we were dealt – a reality that forced us to be legendary while adapting to new ways to work and new workplaces – legendary while on the front lines in our hospitals and communities adapting to new protections and precautions while continuing to serve people in need – legendary through all of the extra work done to bring in new grants and make decisions that have led us and those we serve so much closer to closing that gap.

As you know, we are very much a data-driven agency. Data must inform our decisions. Where is the need, how far are we from meeting the need, and are our services of the quality that will truly impact those in need in legendary and beyond compare ways? Whether you're a state employee or you work at a grant-funded agency, we are each in our positions to some extent through taxpayer dollars. **We are trusted to use every moment and every work hour to the highest and best of our abilities. To make the most of our time, talent, and treasure, we at TDMHSAS refer constantly to our department's mission, vision, and values when making decisions.**

Thinking about 2020, did we live up to these values? How did we carry out our mission? How could we have done more to execute our vision? That's the challenge for 2021, because we know the need is there.

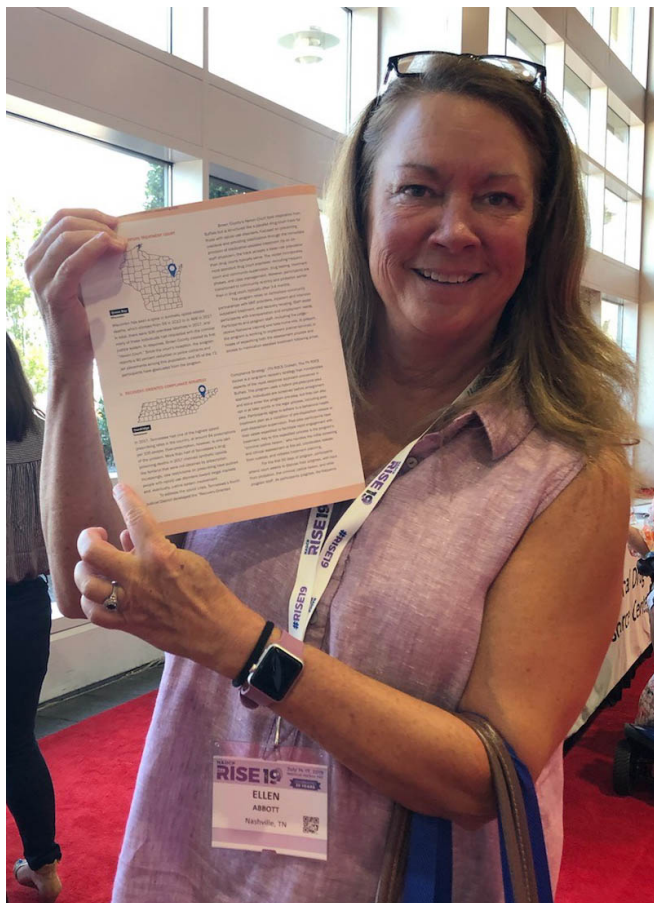
We often say our department has the best team in state government, and when you factor in peers, providers, families, and advocates, **we truly have the best system of any state in the nation.** You each bring unique and differing talents and gifts that make us better together. But one thing that is the same is our hearts. For I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we each have a heart for those we serve – a true servant's heart to take our gifts and talents to make this state the best place to live in to get on a road to recovery – to make our state one beyond compare.

Blessings always,

Marie



Mourning Ellen Abbott



We are in the midst of dealing with a heart-wrenching loss. Ellen Abbott, beloved colleague and servant leader, [passed away on Jan. 11](#) following an accident. She was 56 years old.

We will always remember Ellen's determination, her grit, her get-it-done attitude, her laughter, and her passion for creating restorative options for people in the criminal justice system. Her passing leaves a tremendous void in the TDMHSAS family and among the criminal justice advocates with whom she served.

Ellen was an innovator in her field. Her willingness to try new things is evidenced by the many and varied programs she oversaw as Director of the Office of Criminal Justice Services. Under Ellen's leadership, Tennessee's Recovery Courts, Criminal Justice Liaisons, residential court programs, and other high-impact initiatives grew by leaps and bounds to where they are today with availability in nearly every county. She was so excited for the opening of the new women's residential recovery court which will be named in her honor. We know her legacy and impact will continue to be felt there and in programs across the state.

You can get a sense of Ellen and her passion for her work in these videos. For an early look at TN's first women's residential recovery court, opening soon, [watch this video from last fall](#). And, here she is in June 2019 [talking about the work she loved](#).

The Administrative Office of the Courts [has honored Ellen on their website](#) and has a place where you can read and leave condolences.



Ellen, Linda McCorkle, and Taryn Sloss pose for a snapshot in 2017.



Ellen was a team player. Here she is with SAS colleagues promoting overdose awareness in September 2019.



Ellen was also a mentor. Tony Jackson, Director of Prevention Services, first began working with Ellen as an intern. He says she was "incredibly helpful" to him as a young public servant. "She wanted to help everybody as much as possible." They are pictured at the 2019 TAADAS Recovery Month dinner.



A Night to Remember: When Judge Duane Slone received the 2019 William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence at the United States Supreme Court in Washington D.C., Ellen was among those present. She is pictured with Commissioner Williams, Monty Burks, and Dr. Marie Crosson, TARCP Executive Director.



At the December 2019 Tennessee Association of Recovery Court Professionals

(TARCP) Conference, Ellen was chosen to receive the Christy Vernon Spirit Award. The annual recognition is voted on by peers statewide. Recipients must demonstrate a commitment for the advancement of recovery courts; have a history of community service; motivate and inspire co-workers, volunteers, and participants; and serve as an advocate or champion for recovery courts. That was certainly Ellen. She is pictured (left) with the award alongside Angela Parkerson, Shelby County Drug Court Administrator; and Dr. Marie Crosson, TARCP Executive Director.

On the right, also at the 2019 conference, Ellen and Recovery Court Administrator Rebekah Provost-Emmons are pictured with Chief Justice Jeff Bivins, Tennessee Supreme Court.

In a virtual meeting held Jan. 15, TDMHSAS Central Office staff remembered Ellen. Here are some of the words shared about our dear friend and colleague.



Ellen was a trailblazer. She left footprints in the sand.

Ellen was a champion for expanding peer support services.

Ellen was fearless. She knew her stuff.

She was passionate!

Ellen's work ethic and intellect were inspiring to me.

Ellen was always available, and she always got things done.

Ellen was somebody that made you good at your job.

Ellen was such a beautiful soul!

Ellen was a powerhouse, and she'll never be replaced.

Ellen was a model public servant. She was loved.

Remembering Gigi



We are also mourning the loss of Gigi Pasley who [passed away Nov. 22](#) from complications due to COVID-19 at age 22. Gigi, (front row, right) was an integral member of the TDMHSAS Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council and served as an advocate and powerful voice for those experiencing mental illness, homelessness, learning differences, LGBTQIA discrimination, and more.

During the development of the Certified Young Adult Peer Support Specialist program, Gigi was very involved in the feedback process and will be remembered for making a huge impact on the YA Peer movement in Tennessee. As Jules Wilson, Project Director for Healthy Transitions, said: "An endless flow of creativity and passion roared through Gigi, and I only got to experience a fraction of it. Now, our group is forever one person smaller, and our list of reasons for fighting is one reason longer!"

Gigi inspired us, and so do all of you. Keep fighting.

Regional Mental Health Institutes

begin administering COVID-19 vaccines

Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute was the first of our four hospitals to receive shipment of COVID-19 vaccinations just before Christmas, and the other three received their shipments soon after. We're eternally grateful for the brave men and women in our hospitals (and all community behavioral health professionals) working on the front lines of this crisis and choosing to get the vaccine. We are also grateful to our partners in state government who are helping make this possible, the TN Dept. of Health and TEMA!

Our CEOs leading the way!



CEOs Jeff Coons (Memphis) and Joyce Kovacs (Middle Tennessee)



CEOs Mary Young (Moccasin Bend) and Josh Carter (Western)

A few highlights from our hospital staff. Check out our Facebook and Instagram pages for more photos of staff rolling up their sleeves for Tennessee!



Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute

Lead Psychiatric Technician Tony Moss; Patrick McCulley, RN4, Infection Control Director; and Kathy Berger, Psychiatric Nurse Executive.



Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute

On the support team are Diana Spencer and Kristine Gordon (left) and pharmacists Lance Morgan and Misha Patel.



Western Mental Health Institute

Cheryl Trainum administers vaccines to Tasha Robinson and Dr. Shannon Pitts.



Memphis Mental Health Institute

Cheryl Hatcher administers the vaccine to Lindsey Old, and Juanita Holland administers to Dorian Stanfield.

Dedee Hayes awarded Governor's Excellence in Service Award



Congratulations to Dedee Hayes! Dedee was the fall 2020 recipient of the prestigious Governor's Excellence in Service Award. Dedee first began working for TDMHSAS in 1993 when she was hired as a Psychiatric Teacher's Assistant at Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute. After taking time off to raise her daughters, Dedee returned to work for the Division of Substance Abuse Services in 2007, later transferring to the Division of General Counsel where she has served as a Contract Specialist since 2013.

Over the last fiscal year, Dedee accurately and efficiently processed more than 400 contracts. Her tireless work ethic, attention to detail, and dedication ensures that persons suffering from mental illness and substance abuse

receive services. Dedee is a capable public servant who does vital work with the quiet humility of a true professional. She is a Nashville native and graduate of Pearl-Cohn high school, Aquinas College, and Belmont University.

[Learn more about the Governor's Excellence in Service Awards.](#)

Mary Beth Young named Western RMHI Nurse Executive



Mary Beth Young has been named Western Mental Health Institute's (WMHI) Nurse Executive. Young received her BS in Nursing from Union University and has worked as a psychiatric nurse throughout her career. She served as Director of the Behavioral Health Unit at Memorial Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida, where she managed a start-up behavioral health program that received outstanding reviews from ACHA, the chief health policy and planning entity for the state, and The Joint Commission.

Mary Beth has extensive nursing experience with the State of Tennessee beginning as a floor nurse at WMHI and working her way through various supervisory positions, including Director of Nursing for WMHI's Timber Springs Adolescent & Children's Program and also as Program/Clinical Director of Nursing for the Sub-Acute Care Program. She later worked for Memphis Mental Health Institute as the Psychiatric Hospital Nurse Unit Manager for the forensic admission unit. She returned to WMHI in 2019 and has worked as a RN3 on the acute units.

Deanna Day joins TDMHSAS as Statistical Research Specialist



Please help us welcome Deanna Day to Central Office. Deanna joins the Division of Research, Planning, Policy, and Legislation as a Statistical Research Specialist. She will serve as lead evaluator for the Project Rural Recovery grant.

Prior to joining TDMHSAS, Deanna was a data analyst at United Way of Broward County in Florida. She received her BA in Psychology and Master of Social Work from Florida Atlantic University where she worked in several psychology labs as a research assistant. Deanna loves data and thinks numbers communicate an essential piece of the story. We agree, Deanna! Welcome to the family!

Success Story

Erlanger SOAR Coordinator ensures, "No patient is left behind."

**Submitted by Whitney Malone and Gina Turley*

Donna Bourdon with Erlanger Health System in Chattanooga first learned about SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery) while serving on a Chattanooga Interagency Council on Homelessness committee. As Vice President of Ancillary Operations at Erlanger, she immediately saw the potential to help those needing long-term care who are experiencing homelessness and without income, family support or insurance.

With the full support of the CEO and CFO of Erlanger, the hospital developed a full-time SOAR Coordinator position in the fall of 2019. Bourdon decided the position needed to be filled by a Registered Nurse and certified Case Manager. That person could best understand the complicated medical needs of patients, as well as navigate community services for those homeless individuals.



(Left) Antoinette Mattison, RN, BSN, a certified case manager at Erlanger applied. Due to her years of experience as a Case Manager and her passion for this very vulnerable patient population, she was selected and quickly completed all of the qualifications necessary to become a Certified SOAR Coordinator on Oct. 15, 2019. Since that time she has obtained 26 approvals and her fastest approval was achieved within two weeks.

Her work quickly began making a difference. Mattison shared the story of a patient who was previously denied both Medicaid and disability, although he had a dual diagnosis of a behavioral health disability and a severe impairment of functional mobility, limiting his ability to live alone without assistance. He was very upset and felt he could never get disability or have money for housing. Mattison researched his medical records, wrote detailed descriptions of his functional capacity, and worked with the patient to re-file his claim. Soon he was approved for disability and insurance. He was so happy he cried and is very thankful. He now resides in a long-term skilled nursing facility, is getting great care, and he has extra money to spend on the things he needs.

Building trust with her patients is crucial, Mattison says. She recognizes that the patients have been traumatized, so she works hard to always follow through with what she tells them she will do. Referrals come from Case Managers, RNs, and Social Workers within the Erlanger Health System, and she spreads her interviews over two to three sessions to help alleviate the fatigue her patients feel. She writes robust reports, highlighting the key elements needed for an approval.

For the patients who are discharged from the hospital before a benefits determination has been reached, Mattison follows up with them and helps them navigate community resources. No patient is left behind. Bourdon considers this aspect of the SOAR Program a preventative measure as many homeless patients return to the Emergency Department soon after discharge, because they either cannot afford their medication or because they are trying to escape

the elements of cold weather.

Thus, the continued work of the SOAR Program Coordinator, even after discharge, is critical. When patients receive Social Security benefits, Bourdon sees it as holistic approach to care. Income helps to house the patients, and insurance increases their access to wellness services including physician visits and medication. Bourdon sees SOAR as a tool to help end homelessness and hopes more hospitals and agencies will adopt the model.

Thank you, Antoinette Mattison, Donna Bourdon, and Erlanger for your wonderful work helping patients SOAR!

**Whitney Malone is a SOAR Coordinator with Volunteer Behavioral Healthcare System and Gina Turley is a SOAR Trainer with AIM Center.*

For more information about SOAR, contact

Christy Spangler

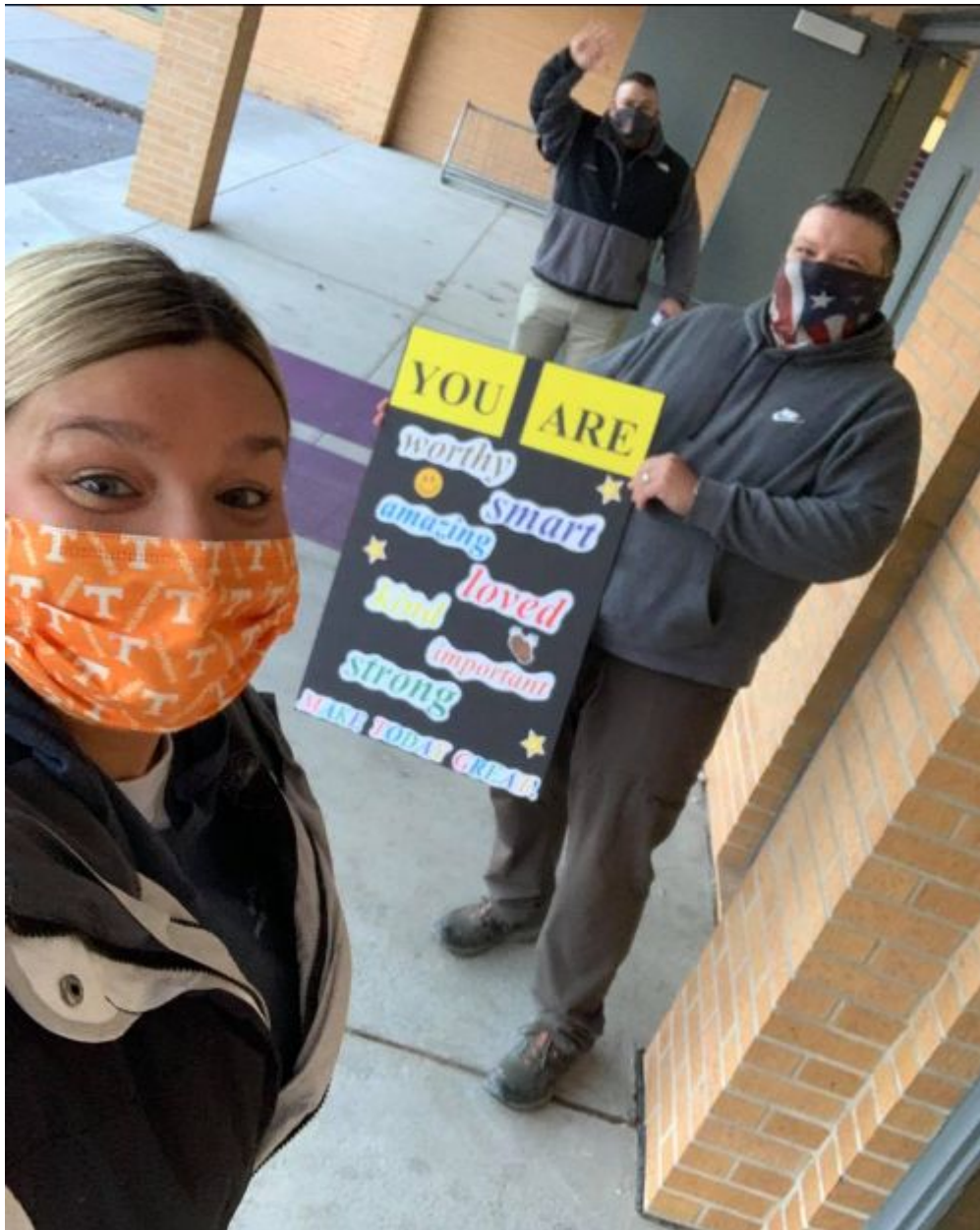
SOAR Liaison State Contact

Phone: 615-253-8162

Email: christy.spangler@tn.gov

Prevention coalitions serving all ages in the community

Tennessee's anti-drug coalitions are focused on educating and engaging youth and families, but their impact is felt throughout communities statewide. We were inspired to learn about the special ways our coalitions spent the holidays serving some of our most vulnerable and often underserved citizens. [Learn more about Tennessee's prevention coalitions](#) and connect with one near you!



Roane County Anti-Drug Coalition began the New Year by encouraging students as they returned to school. Here they are at Oliver Springs reminding students they are worthy, smart, amazing, loved, kind, important, and strong! We couldn't love this more!

Prevention efforts reach 231 elderly residents



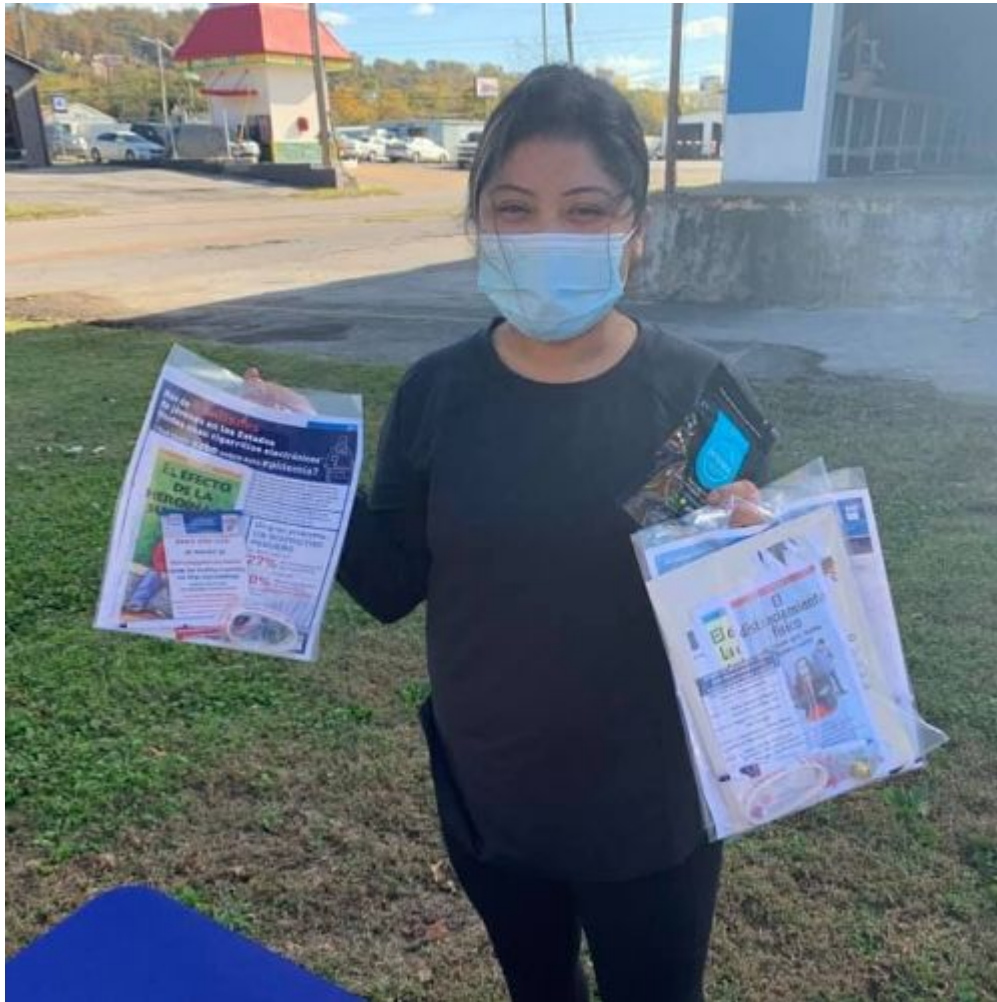
This Christmas, the Lawrence County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition provided medication lock boxes and at-home disposable kits for 231 elderly neighbors unable to leave home. They partnered with local senior citizen centers, Silver Sneakers programs, the housing authority, and NHC Homecare. "We hope they are better equipped to share memories, not drugs!"

Gifts GREAT grandparents



DeKalb Prevention Coalition partnered with faith-based partners (Dry Creek Baptist Church in Dowelltown and Elizabeth Chapel Baptist Church in Smithville) to "purchase a wish" for several grandparents raising their

grandchildren at the Fiddlers Annex. The children were also given gifts, and anti-drug education materials were provided to all.



Hamilton County Coalition teamed up with Tennessee United to participate in an Emergency Food Box Distribution in Chattanooga. HCC staff passed out resources on staying safe from overdose during COVID-19, while also helping to distribute food boxes to those in need.



*By Arthur Reed, Information Security Analyst
Strategic Technology Solutions, TDMHSAS*

One of the best ways to protect yourself, your workplace, and the people we serve from cyber threats is by having a strong password. Hackers have many ways to figure out passwords, especially if they contain common words, phrases, and number combinations.

For peace of mind when it comes to protecting your passwords, computers, accounts, and personal data, follow these steps.

1. Avoid common passwords.

Passwords should never include things like birthdays, names, phone numbers, sports teams, workplace information, and simple obfuscations of common words (“P@\$\$w0rd”).

2. Create a passphrase instead of a password.

Use your imagination, and remember shorter passwords are easy for attackers to compromise. The more complex your password, the more difficult it is to crack. If you have trouble remembering a complex password, try using a long passphrase.

Easily hacked: Fuzzydog82

Better: %FuZZyD0G#8254!

Best: myFuzzyDog-eats4bones!Aday-BIG\$

3. **Do not use the same password for multiple accounts** – no matter how strong it is. If one account gets compromised, then they're all compromised.

Protect your passwords and protect yourselves, your families, your workplaces, and your peace of mind! For questions about password security, feel free to contact arthur.reed@tn.gov

Save-the-Dates

Planning & Policy Council Meetings *January/February 2021*

Pursuant to Governor Bill Lee's Executive Order 71, which extends Executive Order 65, upcoming Planning & Policy meetings will be held via conference call. Call the number listed to participate. 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](#)

Statewide Planning and Policy Council

Tuesday, February 9 | 10 a.m. -12 noon CST

WebEx Information: Toll-Free: 415-655-0003/Meeting number (access code):
178 856 3748

Region I Planning and Policy Council

February 2 | 10 a.m. EST

WebEx Information: Toll-Free: 415-655-0003/Meeting number (access code):
178 040 6476

Region II Planning and Policy Council

February 10 | 11:20 a.m. EST

WebEx Information: Toll-Free: 415-655-0003/Meeting number (access code):
178 376 2360

Region IV Planning and Policy Council

February 3 | 11 a.m. CST

WebEx Information: Toll-Free: 415-655-0003/Meeting number (access code):
178 224 2690

Region V Planning and Policy Council

February 4 | 9:30 a.m. CST

WebEx Information: Toll-Free: 415-655-0003/Meeting number (access code):
178 032 1239

Region VII Planning and Policy Council

January 26 | 11:30 a.m. CST

WebEx Information: Toll-Free: 415-655-0003/Meeting number (access code):
178 128 8142

Free parenting classes begin Feb. 1



PARENTS!

Come join us for a
Fun, Free Parenting Skills Class!

Are you interested in having

- a happy family?
- well-behaved kids?
- strong bonds of love & respect?
- kids kept safe from alcohol & drugs?

Then come join us for a **FREE fabulous 5-week class** that teaches you fun, easy-to-learn, research-proven parent skills - to help you have the happy family you always dreamed of!

WHEN: Every Monday

****Starting February 1, 2021**

@ 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Central

-OR-

Every Tuesday

****Starting February 2, 2021**

@ 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Central

LOCATION: Virtually via Zoom

CONTACT: Brittany Ballard

@ bballard@tnvoices.org

Registration:

For Monday's Class:

<https://tnvoices.zoom.us/j/6116666666>

For Tuesday's Class:

<https://tnvoices.zoom.us/j/6116666666>

PROVEN BENEFITS:

For Parents:

- improves parenting skills
- increases family unity
- improves family organization
- increases good communication
- decreases family conflict
- decreases stress and depression

For Children:

- increases social skills & cooperation
- improves school performance
- reduces misconduct & aggression
- reduces depression & anxiety
- dramatically reduces alcohol & drug use

* Make it a party! Invite your friends, who are parents to join you – *they'll love the classes!*



**Strengthening Families
Program** by Dr. Karol Kumpfer

TN VOICES



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



Using all the tools in our toolbox to fight COVID-19!
Click image for full-sized poster



Getting 'Back to Normal' Is Going to Take **All of Our Tools**

If we use all the tools we have, we stand the best chance of getting our families, communities, schools, and workplaces "back to normal" sooner:

Get vaccinated.



Wear a mask.



Stay 6 feet from others,
and avoid crowds.



Wash
hands often.



www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines

Visit COVID19.tn.gov to request an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine, find county-specific information, and FAQs.

Resources

Hope Line: Support for Tennesseans 60+

TN HOPE LINE

Connect with compassionate,
trained, and loving listeners for
help, hope, & encouragement.



ARE YOU

**LONELY?
AGE 60+?**

M-F 9-3CT

844-600-8262

A partnership of The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives,
Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, and Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability

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)



And support for teachers ...

COVID-19 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT LINE NOW OPEN TO TENNESSEE EDUCATORS

CALL: 888-MHART-TN
or 888-642-7886

HOURS: 6 am - 10 pm CT
7 am - 11 pm ET



In the event of a mental health emergency ...

STATEWIDE
CRISIS LINE
HELP IN A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS
855-CRISIS-1 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

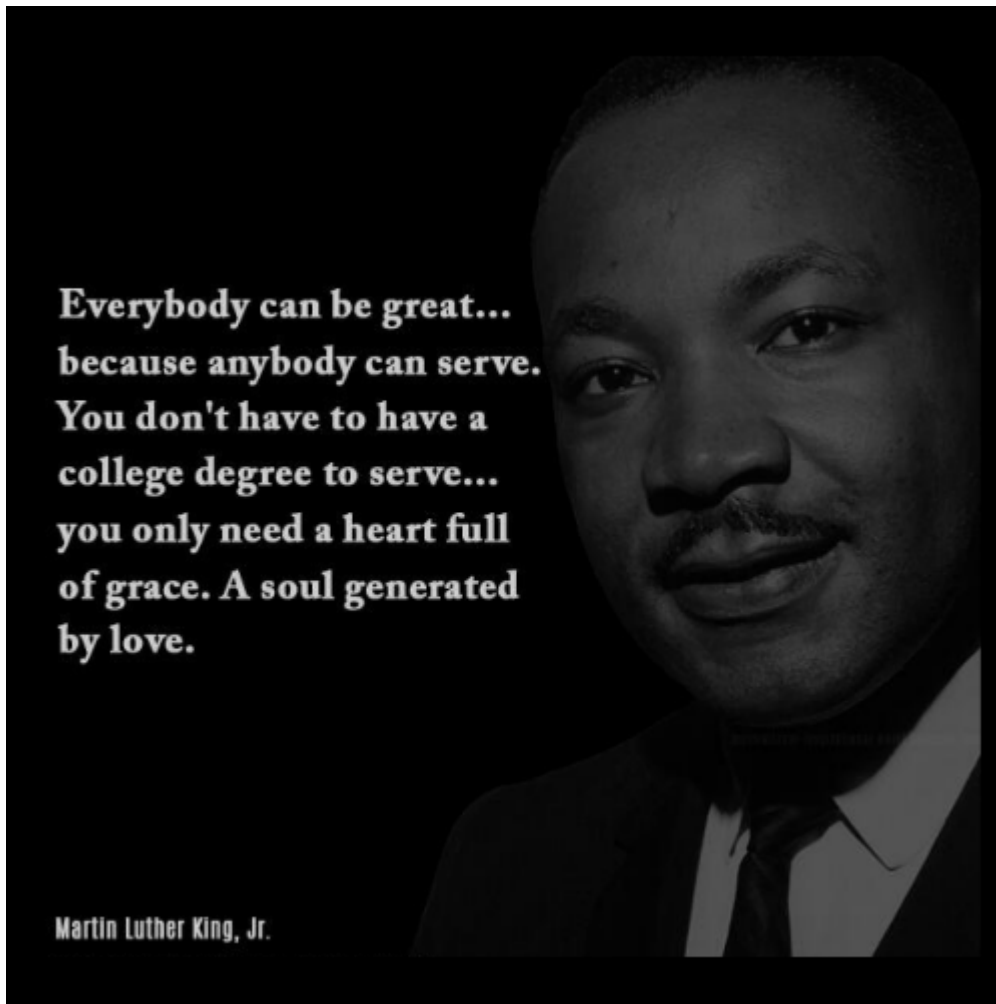
We are available

- 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

"Greatness is determined by service . . ."



As we paused this month to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we want to thank all who serve others. "The time is always right to do what is right," Dr. King taught us. We believe serving others is the right thing to do. We each have gifts and talents and abilities that are given to us that when combined with a heart full of grace can do more than anyone could ever imagine to help those among us in need.

*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!



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Facebook

Thanks to our [Facebook family](#) for "liking" us and sharing our posts!



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Instagram

Join us on
Linked 



Website



Facebook



Instagram



LinkedIn