



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

Tennessee Recovery Navigators

FY23 Annual Report

Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

August 2023



Department Introduction

Department Mission

Creating collaborative pathways to resiliency, recovery, and independence for Tennesseans living with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Department Vision

A state of resiliency, recovery, and independence in which Tennesseans living with mental illness and substance use disorders thrive.

Program Overview

The Tennessee Recovery Navigator program is executed through partnerships with community treatment providers who employ the Navigators. Navigators are Certified Peer Recovery Specialists¹ who function as a resource with lived experience for patients as well as hospital staff. Navigators are not clinicians, law enforcement, counselors, or sponsors for patients they meet in the hospital.

Tennessee Recovery Navigators (“Navigators”) are individuals in long-term recovery who are responsible for meeting patients in the hospital when they present due to an overdose, are experiencing active withdrawal, or present with a primary substance use disorder, to connect them with treatment and recovery resources. Navigators are also responsible for following up with each patient they meet at 72 hours and 30 days following hospital discharge to ensure that patients have connected to the resources, are doing well, and to assess for and coordinate additional community referrals.

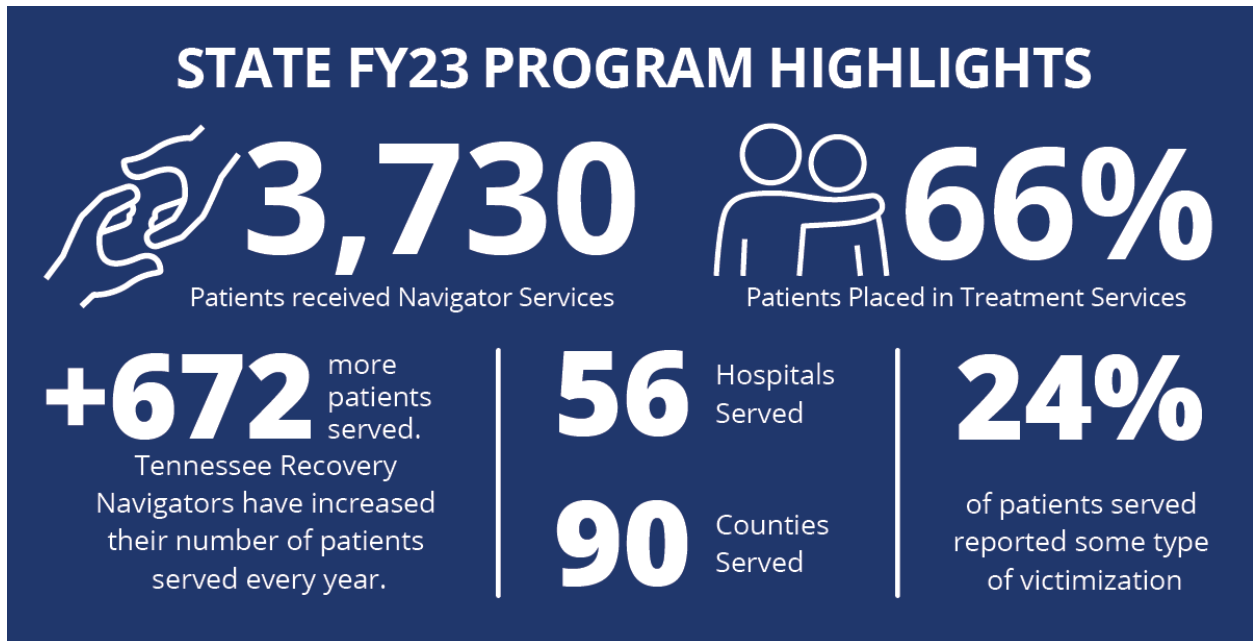
History & Background

The Tennessee Recovery Navigator Program started in 2018 through the TNTogether Initiative, Governor Bill Haslam’s legislative and budgetary response to the opioid crisis passed by the Tennessee General Assembly. In 2019, the Tennessee Department of Finance & Administration through the Office of Criminal Justice Programs, provided funding to the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) to expand the Navigator Program to three (3) other areas of the state that were not originally covered. In

¹ [TN.gov/behavioral-health/cprs](https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/cprs)

December of 2019, TDMHSAS partnered with the Tennessee Department of Health to expand the Navigator program yet again in Murfreesboro and Chattanooga. This new funding allowed for five (5) additional Navigators, two (2) in Murfreesboro, and three (3) in Chattanooga. The funding from the Tennessee Department of Health also initiated a pilot to explore buprenorphine induction in an emergency department setting. This led to TDMHSAS implementing a medication assisted treatment pilot in three (3) emergency departments across the state in FY22 through FY23. This pilot has been extended into FY24 and FY25, adding three (3) additional emergency departments, while continuing to provide funding to the three (3) original hospitals. The use of Navigators in each of the current participating hospitals is vital to the success of the project.

Fiscal Year 2023 Program Highlights



Current Tennessee Recovery Navigator Providers

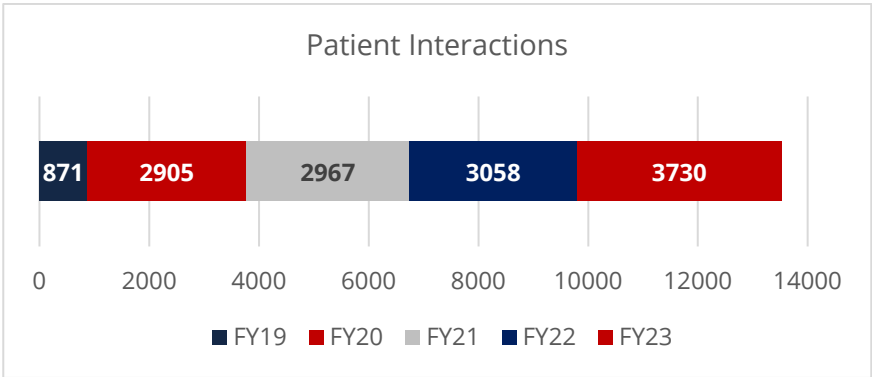
The following providers are currently facilitating the Navigator Program across the state of Tennessee.

Provider	Location
Cocaine and Alcohol Awareness Program (CAAP)	Shelby County
Pathways	Madison County and Surrounding Areas
Buffalo Valley, Inc.	Davidson County and Surrounding Areas
Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System	Putnam County
Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services (CADAS)	Hamilton County
Cherokee Health Systems	Knox County and Surrounding Areas
McNabb Center	Hamblen County and Surrounding Areas
Frontier Health	Tri-Cities

Spotlight on Navigator Data

Patient Interactions

The Navigators continue to see an increase in patient interactions year to year. Since the inception of the program, over 13,500 individuals have been supported by the TN Recovery Navigator program.



In FY23, 3,730 individuals were served by the TN Recovery Navigator Program.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the TN Recovery Navigator program addressed the nearly statewide hospital visitor restrictions by providing telephone and telehealth services, as well as

continuing in-person visits to our partner hospitals when available. While most hospitals have lifted the visitor restrictions, Navigators have continued to utilize telehealth and telephone services when necessary. This expanded modality of referral access has afforded the opportunity to continue to increase the number of referrals the program has seen from the hospitals. Despite nationwide workforce shortages and many providers operating with fewer Navigators, the Navigator program increased the number of patients seen from FY22 to FY23 by 672 patients, exceeding the set goal of 3,100 patients.

Patient Testimonial

"I had been using drugs since I was 14 years old, and over the last 10 years, I've tried so many times and so many ways to get and stay sober, without success. In January 2022, I woke up in the hospital and realized I had overdosed twice in a 24-hour period. I cried out to God with tears in my eyes "Please help me, I don't want to live like this anymore!" I swear, not 5 minutes later, God answered by prayers and sent in angels, AKA, the Recovery Navigators."

The Navigators capture demographic information on all the individuals they serve. This information includes gender identification, race, and age. As the program continues, the program continues to assess ways to outreach to at-risk and underserved populations.

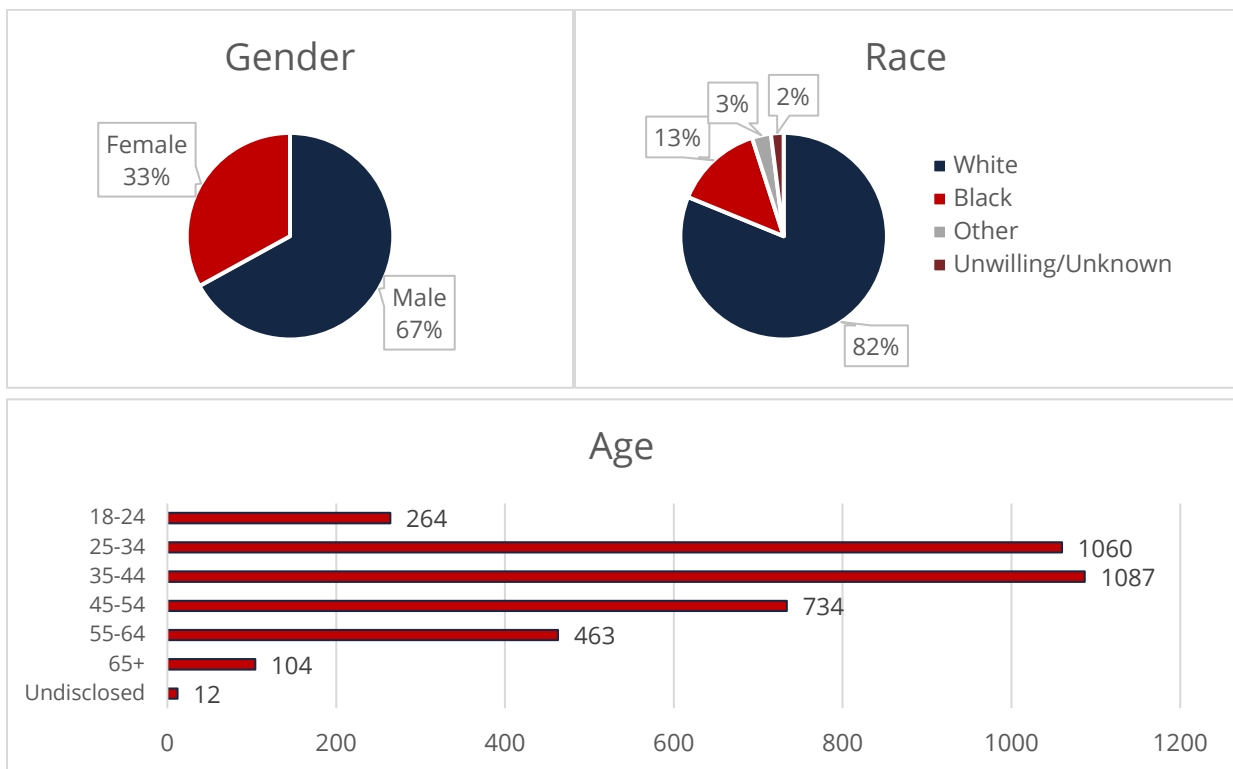


Figure 1. Demographic Data of Clients Served

Patient Placements

In FY23, the Navigators were able to connect 2,449 individuals to treatment or a recovery resource – this is a **66%** placement rate. Patient choice and willingness is key to placement and of the remaining 34%, 20% of patients either refused treatment or did not require a level of care higher than reengagement with recovery resources, such as AA or NA. When the Navigators meet with the individuals in the hospitals, they recommend levels of care that best fit the person’s needs, wants, and insurance type. The Navigators always try to find an available resource for the individual. Figure 2 shows the recommended levels of care for patients in FY23, Figure 3 shows the reasons for referral to the Navigators (overdose, withdrawal, etc.) and Figure 4 shows the top placement locations across the state.

66% of individuals seen by a Navigator were connected to treatment or a recovery resource.

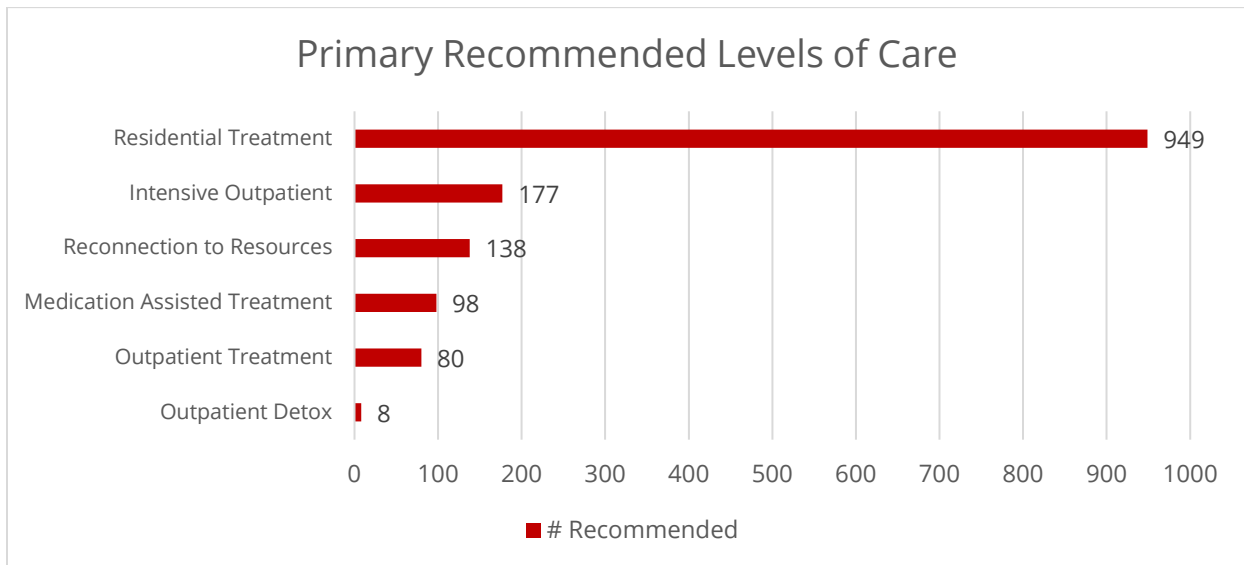


Figure 2. Primary Recommended Levels of Care

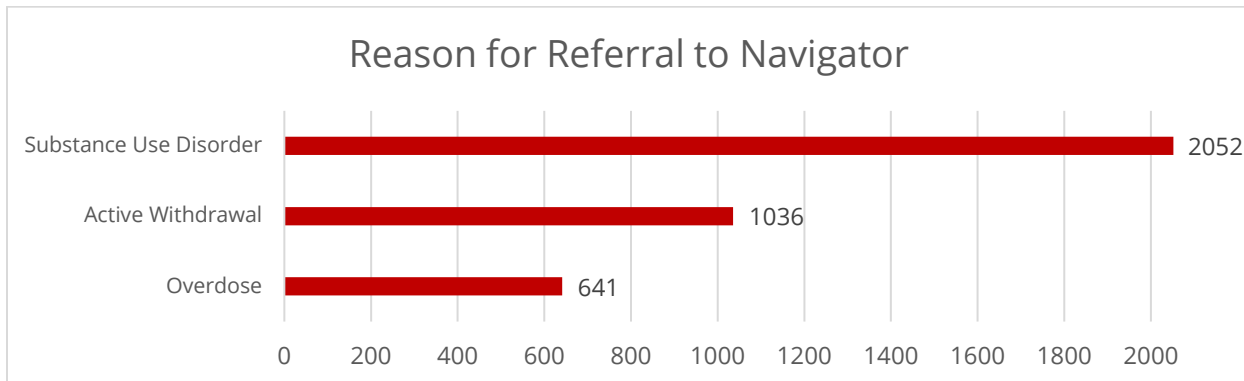


Figure 3. Reason for Referral to Navigator

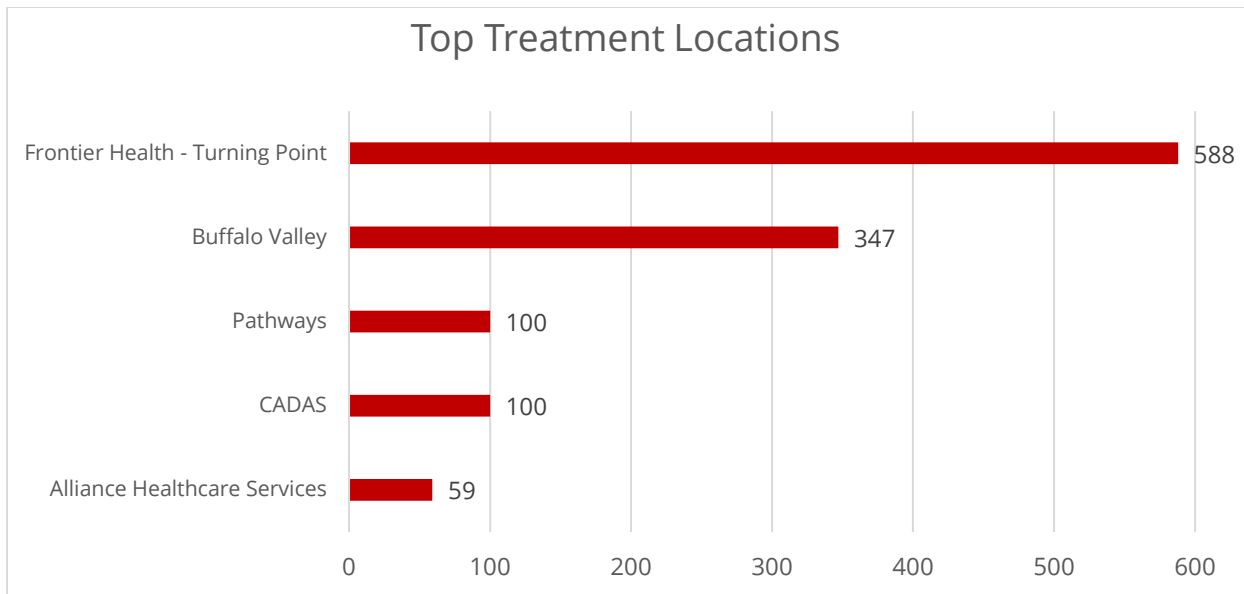


Figure 4. Top Treatment Locations

Family Member Testimonial

"I met a Navigator yesterday in an attempt to get my brother some help. My brother was admitted for alcohol abuse. We have tried for years to get him to accept his addiction and receive help, to no avail. The Navigator was by far outstanding in his knowledge and discussing addiction with my brother. No one has ever been able to get through to him, until yesterday. The Navigator was very direct and honest with him; in a way I find hard to put into words. He was compassionate, but at the same time he didn't mince words. I was literally in awe listening to him speak to us and my brother."

Patient Insurance Type

The Navigators serve any person who presents to an emergency department due to an overdose, currently experiencing active withdrawal, or identifying as having a substance use disorder, despite insurance status. The type of insurance a person has helps the Navigators find treatment options best suited for the individual. Figure 5 shows that most of the individuals served are uninsured or covered by TennCare.

81% of the individuals served by the Navigators were uninsured or noted having TennCare.

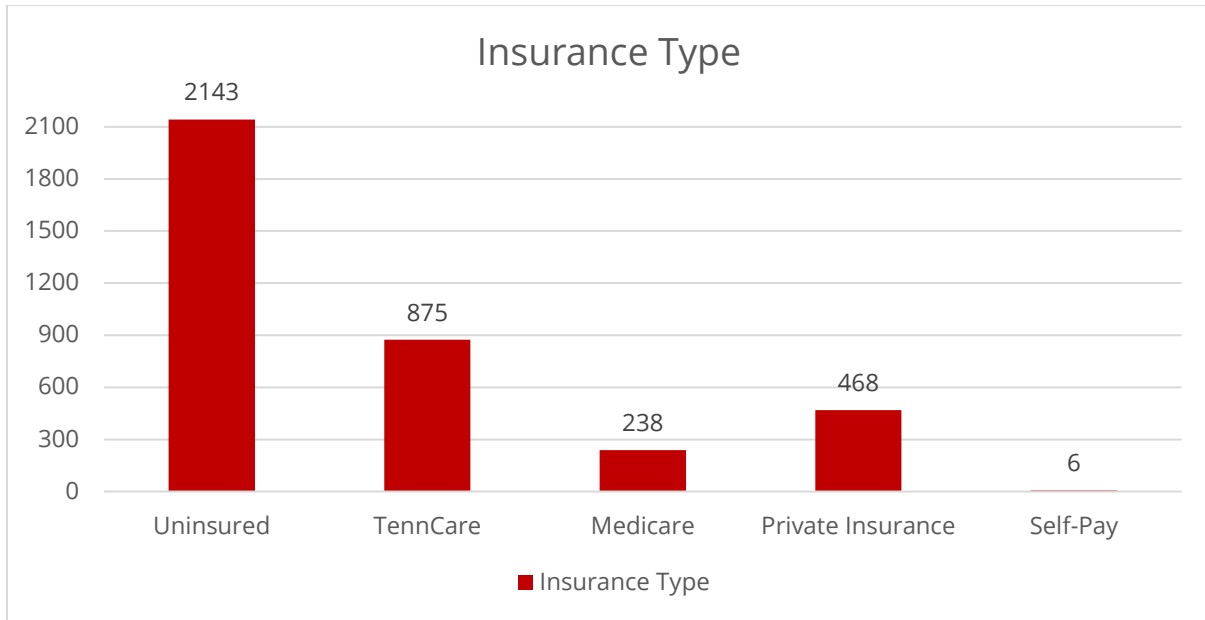


Figure 5. Patient Insurance Type

Hospital Testimonial

“The Navigator does so much for our patients. He is always willing to help in any way he can, whether it’s doing a transport in the middle of the night and/or on a weekend, coming to talk to a nervous patient, going to get them food, or any of the myriad ways to show care and concern to our patients, I can count on him to willingly help with unparalleled grace and friendliness. Just tonight, he cheerfully took a patient to his home to collect his forgotten CPAP machine and brought him back to triage for treatment. He is truly an asset.”

West Tennessee Healthcare
Virginia Bogue

Top Substances of Use

Primary, secondary, and tertiary substance of use is documented for every individual served. This helps the Navigator identify the most appropriate treatment type. Figure 6 shows the top 5 overall self-identified substance choices for the individuals served through the navigator program in FY23.

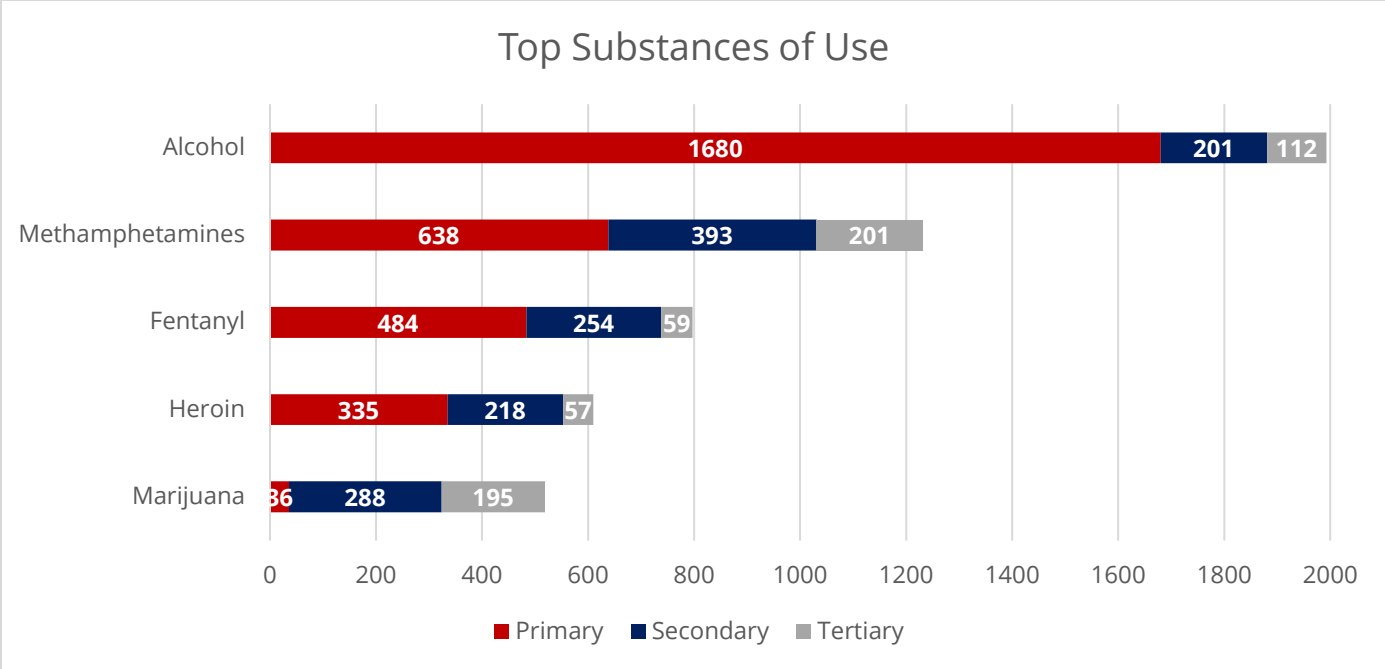


Figure 6. Top Substance of Use

In FY23, the Navigators saw an increase in patients presenting with fentanyl overdoses, so TDMHSAS began tracking this as a substance of use. With the addition of the reported fentanyl use, these substances of use are consistent with what was seen in FY22. This information coupled with other program data collected by TDMHSAS helps identify the areas of need across Tennessee. This data allows TDMHSAS to ensure that the programs being funded by the department are efficient and serving the most vulnerable Tennesseans.

Patient Testimonial

One of the Navigators connected a patient to treatment and upon successful completion, the patient was able to gain employment at the Navigator’s agency, completing electrical and carpentry jobs. The Navigator, whom the patient refers to as his “guardian angel” said, “He walks with purpose and has a smile that will light up a room. It fills my heart with joy knowing that he really is in a better place today because of divine intervention, our presence, and his willingness to be better.”

Participating Hospitals

The following **56** hospitals have partnered with the Navigator Program, either with a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a verbal agreement.

- Erlanger Bledsoe Hospital
- Blount Memorial Hospital
- Tennova Healthcare – Cleveland
- Sycamore Shoals Hospital
- HCA, TriStar Skyline
- HCA, Southern Hills
- HCA, Summit
- HCA, TriStar Centennial
- HCA, Stonecrest
- Ascension, St. Thomas Midtown
- Ascension, St. Thomas West
- Vanderbilt University Medical Center
- Nashville General
- WTH Dyersburg Hospital
- Southern Tennessee Regional Health System – Sewanee
- Milan General Hospital
- Greeneville Community Hospital East
- Morristown/Hamblen County Medical Center
- CHI Memorial
- CHI Memorial – Hixson
- Erlanger Baroness
- Erlanger East
- Erlanger North
- Parkridge East Hospital
- Parkridge Medical Center
- Parkridge North Hospital
- Hancock County Hospital
- Hawkins County Memorial Hospital
- Tennova Healthcare – Jefferson Memorial Hospital
- Johnson County Memorial Hospital
- UT Medical Center
- Jackson-Madison County General Hospital
- Parkridge West Hospital
- Starr Regional Medical Center – Athens
- Starr Regional - Etowah
- Cookeville Regional Medical Center
- Rhea Medical Center
- Ascension, St. Thomas Rutherford
- Erlanger Sequatchie Valley
- LeConte Medical Center
- Methodist North
- Methodist South
- Methodist University
- Regional One
- St. Francis
- Holston Valley Medical Center
- Indian Path Medical Center
- Bristol Regional Medical Center
- Sumner Regional Medical Center
- Tristar Hendersonville
- Unicoi County Memorial Hospital
- Creekside Behavioral Health
- Franklin Woods Community Hospital
- Johnson City Medical Center
- Woodridge Psychiatric Hospital
- WTH Volunteer Hospital

Patient Testimonial

“At every turn of this journey, the Navigators have had my back – even writing letters to my judge and the probation office. As of today, I’m 19 months sober. Longest sobriety time I’ve ever had. I go to church, and I have a relationship with God, I attend AA meetings and belong to a home group. I have the love and support of an awesome sponsor and recovery family. I may not be where I want to be in life, but I have a happy life. I can be a good role model for my two daughters that struggle with addiction. I am a hard worker, I’m a good friend, I am reliable. I try to help others and want nothing in return. I can be trusted. None of those things were true 19 months ago.”

Final Thoughts

The Tennessee Recovery Navigator program continues to play a vital role in emergency departments across Tennessee in the fight against overdose and substance misuse. The Navigators meet patients where they are and share their personal stories – stories of recovery, hope, and resilience that make the patients feel they are not alone, and recovery is possible. Additionally, the positive impact of the Navigator presence in the emergency departments has helped in overcoming stigma often associated with substance misuse.

While the Navigator program has made great strides, there is still work to do. TDMHSAS is always looking for ways to expand the program and expand our reach to different hospitals throughout Tennessee.

If you would like to learn more about the TN Recovery Navigator program, please visit [TN.gov/recoverynavigator](https://tn.gov/recoverynavigator). If you have any further questions or if you would like your hospital to start participating in the TN Recovery Navigator program, please reach out to Jessica Youngblom at Jessica.Youngblom@tn.gov.