



A Message from Commissioner Williams

Dear friends and partners,

In a year in which we all were called to be Beyond Compare, you truly went above and beyond. As the calendar turns to 2022 and we reflect on 2021, I'm amazed by your resiliency in the face of adversity, your skill in delivering impactful and evidence-based interventions, and your passion for serving our neighbors who need you most of all. As the impacts of the pandemic become more and more clear, we know that the challenges of working in this field are only going to increase. But one thing that's apparent time and time again is that when the challenge is at its greatest, you all are at your best. When the world has given up on a person, you step up with empathy and life-changing services. When your community's issues require innovative solutions, you step forward with insight and creativity. When your teammates need a lift, you reach out with a supportive message or a gesture of kindness. In this time of new beginnings, my wish is that you take as much time as possible to reconnect with your WHY. Examining our motivations for the things we choose to do is such a powerful self-reflection tool, and it unlocks the answers to so many of life's questions.

We know that this work continues 24/7/365 at so many locations across the state, so to those of you working in our hospitals, residential treatment providers, and other settings where the holidays are another work day, you have my utmost gratitude. Your service during this time of year is a priceless gift to help a person rebuild their dignity and self-respect.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and many many blessings in the New Year,

Marie

Public Behavioral Health Workforce Workgroup Report Published

Report's strategies already translating into funding recommendations

TDMHSAS and TennCare published the Public Behavioral Health Workforce Workgroup report. The document contains research, data, and strategies for addressing workforce challenges in publicly-funded mental health and substance use services, some of which have already translated into state budget requests proposed to Governor Bill Lee.



Public Behavioral Health Workforce Workgroup

Published by TDMHSAS and TennCare



Convened by TDMHSAS and TennCare over the summer, the workgroup was comprised of diverse stakeholders from public behavioral health provider organizations, mental health and addiction advocacy groups, colleges and universities, and the TDMHSAS Planning and Policy Council. Over the course of three meetings, participants identified gaps and needs in the public behavioral health workforce, developed detailed strategies for creating positive change, and authored the report for key decisionmakers.

[Download the workgroup report at this link](#)

The report's recommendations focus on several key areas of impact including provider reimbursement rates, licensure modifications, employee benefits and incentives, pipeline career planning, diversity and inclusion, student loan forgiveness, expanding internship opportunities, and communicating to potential students.

"Our response to workforce challenges is really going to define how we in the public behavioral health sector are able to meet to the increasing need of mental health and addiction treatment services in the post-pandemic world," said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW. "We are so grateful to the members of this workgroup for their time, talent, and insight, and we are excited to partner with them to put the recommendations into practice."

"While the pandemic has magnified challenges in recruitment and retainment of mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers, the efforts of the workgroup and this report will help us to better address the challenges and continue to provide the highest quality behavioral health services to Tennesseans," said TennCare Director Stephen Smith.

Budget proposals from both TDMHSAS and TennCare reflected high-priority items from the workgroup report including increased funding to allow providers to pay more competitive wages, sign-on bonuses, post-secondary scholarships, and internship opportunities. In all, the agencies proposed \$59 million in new state and federal funding to address issues contained in the workgroup's findings. Items included in Governor Lee's FY23 budget proposal will be announced in early 2022 when he delivers his annual State of the State Address.



Commissioner Williams and TennCare Director Stephen Smith presented the report and its findings to the attendees at the annual TAMHO conference on December 9.

University of Tennessee - Knoxville Hosts Collegiate Recovery Academy



Pictured L to R: Collegiate Recovery Initiative Director Nathan Payne, Metro Drug Coalition Executive Director Karen Pershing, TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, UT Director of Substance Misuse Initiatives Jennifer Tourville, UT President Randy Boyd, TDMHSAS Director of Faith-Based Initiatives Monty Burks, Faith-Based Community Coordinator Eric Landry

The TDMHSAS Collegiate Recovery Initiative added Recovery Allies in Big Orange County during the month of December. Collegiate Recovery Director Nathan Payne and the team held a Collegiate Recovery Academy event on the campus of UT Knoxville on December 2. Presenters also included Dr. Monty Burks, Metro Drug Coalition Executive Director Karen Pershing, and Faith-Based Community Coordinator Eric Landry. The crowd of students, faculty, and staff also heard encouraging words of support from UT President Randy Boyd and Commissioner Williams. [Learn more about the Collegiate Recovery Initiative at this link on TN.gov.](#)



Celebrating a Successful Year in Recovery Courts

Governor attends annual conference and graduation ceremony



Governor Bill Lee and TDMHSAS Director of Criminal Justice Services Rebekah Provost-Emmons speak at the annual TN Association of Recovery Court Professionals conference.

Tennessee's Recovery Courts have a lot to celebrate as 2021 comes to a close. The TN Association of Recovery Court Professionals held a successful, 3-day, in-person conference in early December. Attendees heard from Gov. Bill Lee, Commissioner Williams, and new State Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Page. The association also honored Deborah Taylor Tate who is stepping down after a successful and impactful tenure as Director of Tennessee's Administrative Office of the Courts.

In addition to hearing from state leaders and making new connections and reconnecting with old friends from across the state, attendees learned valuable lessons on intergenerational patterns of addiction, reducing stigma through language, and more. The department also recorded several stories from recovery court judges, staffers, and peers, so stay tuned in the coming months as those are released.



Governor Lee and Commissioner Williams were also able to share some words of encouragement to the graduates of the 13th Judicial District Recovery Courts at their ceremony on November 22 ([Link to More Photos](#)). The 13th District in Cookeville has 2 life-changing courts: a treatment court and a court for veterans. Congratulations to all recent graduates who have successfully completed a recovery court program!

Project Rural Recovery honored by Rural Health Association of Tennessee



Pictured L to R: Jacy Warrell, RHA Executive Director, Kate Orem and Shellie Hall from the McNabb Center, Dana Cobb, RHA President, Elaine Jackson, RHA Past President, Deborah Hillin and Jerry Risner from Buffalo Valley, Inc.

Congratulations to Buffalo Valley and McNabb Center! Their Project Rural Recovery mobile clinics were recognized with the Special Exemplary Project Award from the Rural Health Association of Tennessee. The award recognizes an organization or group that has successfully developed a unique program or project that advances rural health. Project Rural Recovery is a 5 year, \$10M federal grant through TDMHSAS that provides mobile clinics and staff delivering integrated physical and behavioral health services across 10 rural, underserved Tennessee Counties. To learn more about Project Rural Recovery visit: [TN.gov/behavioral-health/ruralrecovery](https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/ruralrecovery).



Climb on up and take a tour on the Project Rural Recovery mobile clinic operated by McNabb Center!

Wes Geminn Appointed to National Addiction Treatment Panel

TDMHSAS Chief Pharmacist Wes Geminn has accepted an appointment to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) National Advisory Council.

Council members advise the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment on ways to improve access, reduce barriers, and promote high-quality, effective treatment and recovery services. Geminn is one of 12 council members appointed by U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra.



[Read the full news release on our website at this link.](#)

MBMHI Develops Orientation Program to Combat Burnout and Stress

Dr. William Lefton (MBMHI's Forensic/Psychology Director), Dr. Joanna Hachtel (MBMHI's Newest Psychologist), and Ursula Bell (MBMHI's Forensic Coordinator) drafted a proposal to MBMHI's Administration to see if they could talk with new employees during their orientation about how to combat Burnout and Stress on the job. The proposal was accepted and the first dialogue about how to combat burnout and stress with new employees was initiated in November and it went really well.

Dr. Joanna Hachtel says that talking about these issues will hopefully help new employees have a foundation for how to identify burnout and how to ask for help when needed so that they can continue to do this hard but incredibly important work.

During Employee Appreciation Week in November at Moccasin Bend, Ursula and other members of the Retention/Morale Committee (Special Shout Out to Keye Blackmon- Training Specialist 2 for his knowledge and guidance on the

subject of Burn Out & Stress) set up a booth in the lobby to bring more awareness to **All Staff** about Burnout and Stress. Ursula says, to be the best caregivers to our patients, we need to focus on taking care of ourselves also and recognize the Signs of Burnout and Stress before they become a problem. Being aware of stress and burnout signs and knowing how to prevent them helps us to serve our patients effectively and helps us to enjoy a healthy work/life balance.

TDMHSAS New Hires and Promotions



We're excited to welcome **Stephanie Cooper** to Team TDMHSAS! She's joining the Office of Wellness and Employment as Assistant Director. Stephanie most recently worked at Centerstone where she helped integrate physical and mental health services before moving over to the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program working to help end veteran homelessness. In her final role at Centerstone, Stephanie served as the Program Manager of the Keys to Recovery program, working with individuals experiencing homelessness as well as substance use and mental health issues. In this role she also worked with the local Continuum of Care participating in multiple committees and serving as the Chair of the HMIS Oversight Committee in an effort to effectively end homeless in Davidson County. Welcome Stephanie!

Welcome **Keye Blackmon** to Central Office HR as the agency's Talent Management Director! The lure of Central Office pulled Keye away

from Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute (MBMHI) where he most recently served as a Training Specialist. Prior to being promoted to Training Specialist, Keye was employed at MBMHI as an LPN.

Keye became a Certified Facilitator in 2015 and graduated from the Commissioner's Leadership Academy in 2019. As the Talent Management Director, Keye will be responsible for department employee and leadership development, recruiting and retention, and performance management.



In his free time, Keye enjoys working in the community, particularly with at-risk youth and has volunteered with the Red Bank High School Quarterback Club for the last two years. Keye's vision in his new role is to maximize collaboration between the RMHIs and assist with optimizing internal talent, in addition to recruiting great external candidates.

Shout Out!

Shout out to Sam Boukli! The TDMHSAS Assistant Deputy Council can add marathon runner and St. Jude Hero to his list of accomplishments. Sam ran the St. Jude Marathon in Memphis on December 4. With his 4 hour and 54 minute feat of endurance, Sam raised \$1,615 for the kids at St. Jude. Way to go Sam!



MTMHI had a wonderful response to their inaugural Turkey Trot



competition this year! Each unit was given a bag of craft supplies and asked for staff and patients to work together in making their turkey. Despite receiving the same items, each unit made its own unique model of a turkey. Unit I was the winner of the competition with their turkey and family of smaller turkeys at its side.



Thank you to Kelly Whitted for capturing the sunrise over Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute.

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

Service Awards

Congratulations to all TDMHSAS employees on your service awards. Thank you for your continued commitment and dedication to serve the citizens of Tennessee. Because the pandemic disrupted last year's recognition, we're excited to celebrate employees who marked milestones in 2021 and 2020.



5 YEARS

Alicia Robeson
Jenifer Robl
Kendra Woodard
Londa Walker
Jessica Mullins
Kristen Mengelberg
Hannah Dieckhaus
Michelle Webster
Erica Dupree
Cris Pollard

Joanna Allman
Karen Baker
Sarah Barr
Shuntae Benning
Kathy Berger

Wanda Cutcher
Adonis Ferrer
Parrish Forber
Terry Hamilton
Audrey Hime
Whinolyn Jardeleza

Robert Johannes
Arien Ladd
Brett Lancaster
Joanie Oliver
Sharon Perkins
Richard Rogers
Sam Simmons
Carol Sodemann
Debbie Turner
Daz Wave

Sunday Adekalu
Tammy Beverly
Christina Brown
Victoria Dinkins
Don Elazar
Harold Felts
Emad Gabra
Leslie Girten
Pamela Mieles
Zosimo Monteros
Marcella Nwajia
Markham Overton

Julianne Patel
Norma Pendleton
Marie Poindjour

Gary Swaim
Fatima Ulumenfo
Glenda Victory
D'Asia White
Lawrence Boyd
Joyce Crowder
Rogina Davenport
Tevious Redmond





10 YEARS

Anthony Jackson	Helen Aigbe
Mark Liverman	George Awad
Zackary Blair	Katherine Brasher
Vicki Carter	Resha Cole
Jamie Murphy	Andreka Driver
Justine Bass	Debbie Lawrence
Ted Gleghorn	Olusiji Ogunyemi
Brandi Humphrey	Harish Prasad
Derrick Kelly	Velicia Shinkle
Janet Morrison	Angela Davison
Sandra Mayfield	
Paige Morse	
Fredrick Ranson	
Donna Sails	
Shelley Vatter	
Bo Walker	

15 YEARS

Heather Gundersen	Sherkecia Outlaw
Gayle Buckler	Bradford Owen
Kristin Douglas	Teresa Tynes
Camette Hail	Gloria Vorrice
Latray Jeffers	Yashica Wilcox
Barbara Petty	Tabitha Chairs
Shannon Goodwin	Wanda Johnson
Gina Headrick	Joyce Terry
Cindy White	Delois Jones
Issac Andze	Debra Webb
Mary Corbett	
Martin Drani	
Lisa Dunn	



20 YEARS

Melanie Kinslow	Kudirat Kareem
Laura Martin	Regina Manier
John Crawley	John Martens
Jerry LaCourse	Hany Michael
Nettie Liner	Wayne Odom
Loretta Queen	Cathy Toledo
Tim Woodard	
Joy Belog	
Virginia Brown	
Kathryn Butler	
James Collier	
Jason Gordon	
Kristine Gordon	
Edgar Harrison	
La'Wanda Jenkins	
Fredrick Jordan	

25 YEARS

Alphie Duncan
Gale White
Shannon Hardin
Marsha Coopriider
Carol Duncan
Kimberly Hendricks
Mary Stephens
Onitsha Moore-Davis

40 YEARS

John-David Shafer
Ricky Cole
Betty Lee
Theresa Watson
Gwendolyn Johnson

45 YEARS

Mary Robinson

30 YEARS

Gene Wood

35 YEARS

Jacqueline Talley
Reginald Seay
Janice Bunday
Sam Ejiofor
Lisa Janke
Clifford Walker
James Buechele





5 YEARS

Hilary Daugherty	Suzette Young	Tammy Dawson	Faisal ISiddiqui
Brenda Donaldson	Mary Young	Delia Delfino	Kala Simmons
Melissa Binkley	Scott Lacy	Abdul Enayat	Majlinda Sinjari
Joseph Yancey	Melissa Ward	Gamal Eskander	Kale Stranger
James Walker	Jame Morse	Anitra Devern Green	Kaili Thomas
Adrienne Tellis	Tonia Dykes	Cyrus Greene	Jacqueline Uwimbabazi
John Oziminski	Kimberly Franklin	Supriya Halder	Daniel Vossler
Freida Baggett	Roderick Grant	Robin Herman	Wesley Pitts
Allison Childress	Lenme Houser	Lisa Hudson	Dustin Austin
Sharon Middlebrooks	Jannelle Robinson'	Rena Isen	Johnny Granderson
Lisa Harper	Dr. Lydia Haren	Turner Jernigan	Amani Loggins
Latricia Sharpe	Adam Pruett	Kezia Chantell Mills	Michael Rogers
Casey Lloyd	Elizabeth Brown	DeOndre Outlaw	Dabonee Eleby
Shalyonda Toran	Kathy Carlton	Julius Tolosa Quiz	
Khaliid Sanford	Liesel Cramer	Tabitha Fay Rayzor	
John Julian	Rosa Dauda	Maror Rehan	
Pennie Callahan	Alicia Davis	Lydia Dumbujena	
Nicole Copeny			





10 YEARS

Rachel Tolliver
Justin Patton
Jonathan Dean
Nancy Higdon
Margie Barber
April Davis-Cranford
Trevor White
George Bishop Jr
Carl Booker Jr
Melinda Hunter
Folashade Lawal
Kimberly McClellan
Maycelin Ramos
Kendra Simmons

15 YEARS

Don Thornton
David Sherman
Lisa Ragan
Kelley Croisdale
Leann Duncan
Dedee Hayes
Kevin Beck
Marilyn Havis
Pamela Ward
Jacob Akpoyowware
Beverly Aleywine
Chemelle Cauthen
Jesse Nightingale III
Roger Victory
Shawn Eason
Greta Turner
Alena Miller
Erica Dandridge
David Hampton
Gihan Helmy
Charles Starks
Lee McDole
Valerie Hughes
Cynthia Giaroli
Juanita Holland
Kevin Adkins
Anthony Moss
Granda White
Terea Yates
Carole Abrahamson
Gwendolyn Mickle Lagrow

20 YEARS

Janet Williams
Ella Smith
Gayle White
Betty Smith
Kevin Williams
Tina Clemmons
Lorna Edrozo
Jon Eman
Jonathan Cole
John Hayden
Deborah Bedford
Timothy Hegarty
Donna Wilson



25 YEARS

Edwina Chappell
Vicki Ervin
Phaedra Black
Wilson Parham
Van White
Vincy Cherian
Paul Obiefuna
Melissa Ann Peters

30 YEARS

Gary Smithson
Tamika Henderson
Clement Iguobadia

35 YEARS

Jacqueline Talley
Vickie Graham
James McClellan
Keith Brown
Ann E Reuther

40 YEARS

Charles Gibson
Victor Johnson

45 YEARS

Linda Pritchett

50 YEARS

Patricia Qualls



Save-the-Dates

Planning and Policy Council Meetings

Planning and Policy Council meetings return in 2022.

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](#)

TDMHSAS is committed to providing individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from TDMHSAS programs, activities, and services. To request reasonable accommodations or modifications, please contact Amy Holland at amy.holland@tn.gov at least 10 business days prior to the meeting. Requests for accommodations or modifications made after the deadline will be honored to the maximum extent feasible, but it may not be possible to fulfill them.

Resources

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

For questions about addiction treatment/referrals ...



To talk with a TDMHSAS Consumer Advocate ...

Need help with mental health or substance use services?

Call the TDMHSAS Office of Consumer Affairs and Peer Recovery Services

HELPLINE

1-800-560-5767

We can help with:

- finding mental health and substance abuse resources in your area
- questions about insurance
- finding 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
- 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. CT
- Closed on state holidays



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

OCA.TDMHSAS@tn.gov | 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.*

And please connect with us on social media!



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