



Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

As the 2026 state fiscal year draws to a close and a new one begins, there are many new laws passed by the General Assembly taking effect. Several different measures change the way the state regulates or even makes illegal some substances which have been legal previously. This includes THC-A products, Kratom, and other substances used as stimulants. While the substance that's being misused may change, the constant in our field is that a lack of connection and opportunity, hopelessness, and trauma leave people vulnerable to developing an unhealthy relationship with whatever new substance pops up. I am so grateful for the responsiveness of our providers, the generosity of our state leaders, and our ability to meet the need whatever may come.

Reflecting on change and advancement in our public behavioral health system is something that's been top of mind the last couple of months. We're proud to share that we have convened the Tennessee Public Behavioral Health Commission bringing together a couple dozen leaders representative of our community provider organizations, consumer, family, and advocacy groups. The Commission met for a 2-day summit in mid-May facilitated by our friends from the National Association

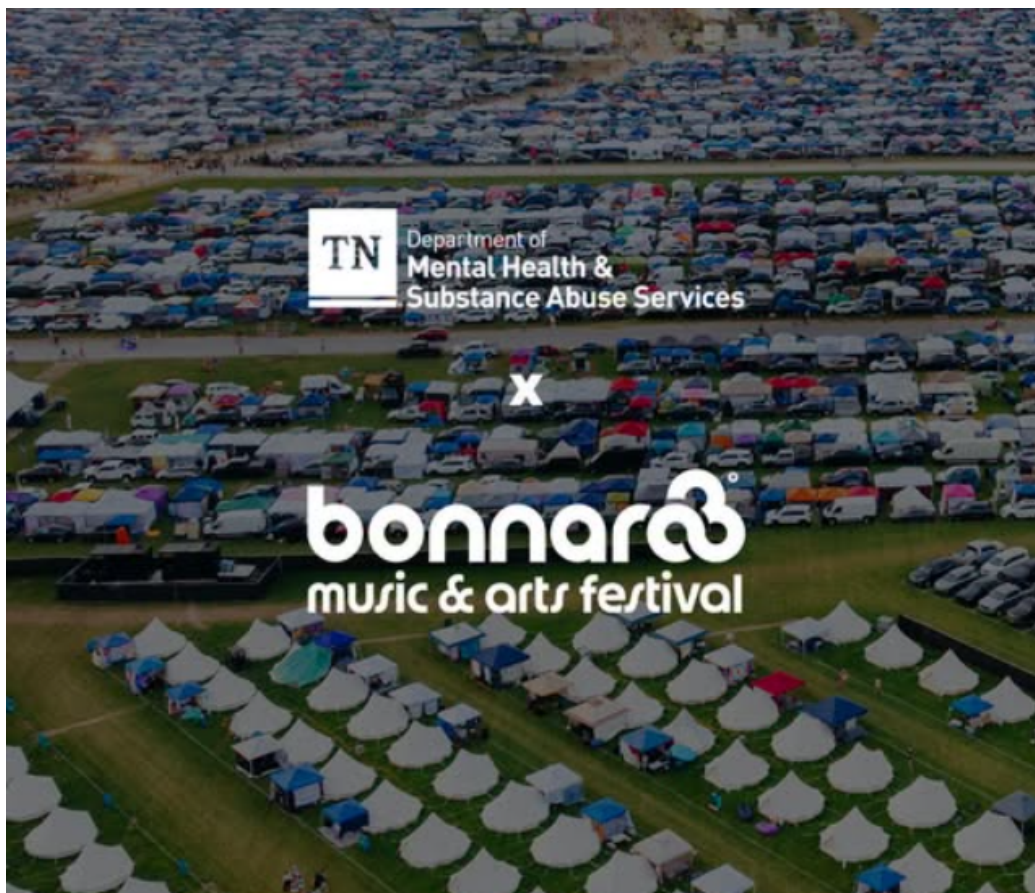
of State Mental Health Program Directors. It was apparent from the great discussion among participants that the people of Tennessee are truly blessed to have such high-caliber individuals leading organizations which are agile, mission driven, and outcomes-focused. The level of openness, collaboration, and future-focused approach at the meeting was truly remarkable and will produce a vision for the next 5-10 years which will help our state serve those in need at the right time in the right place with the right intervention.

May your work continue to be blessed,

Marie

MONTHLY Happenings

Bonnaroo and TDMHSAS Announce \$100,000 Donation for School-Based Services



A life-changing mental health program for children and youth is getting a big infusion of support thanks to Tennessee's signature music festival. The **Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival** is donating \$100,000 to support the **School-Based Behavioral Health Liaison** program in nine schools across all three school districts in Coffee County.

School-Based Behavioral Health Liaisons are masters-level therapists who are employed by grantee community mental health centers and funded at the state level through the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS). Liaisons work in partnership with their local school districts to help students who are struggling with mental health challenges, serious emotional disturbance, and substance use issues with parent permission. Bonnaroo's investment will help create dedicated counseling and wellness spaces in nine schools across Coffee County where these counselors, employed by Volunteer Behavioral Health Care Services, along with school social workers and other mental health professionals, can meet privately with students and provide care and support.

[Read more in our News Release on TN.gov.](#)

CPRS-J Celebrates Successful First Year

The team in the department's Office of Consumer Affairs and Peer Recovery Services and TAADAS trainers are celebrating a successful first year for the **CPRS-J endorsement!** During state FY26, there were more than 100 participants across eight CPRS-J trainings. This new endorsement adds on to the foundation of the **Certified Peer Recovery Specialist program**. Participants must be active CPRS and willing to self-identify as having involvement with the justice system at some level. In the additional 32 hours of training, CPRS-J participants explore all aspects of the criminal justice system through the Sequential Intercept Model map and cap the experience off by sharing before and after photos highlighting the transformation that's possible when peers share their strength, hope, and experience. Watch the videos in the player below to hear from some CPRS-J participants [and learn more about the endorsement at this link.](#)



Promise to Call Campaign Update

TDMHSAS is so pleased to share that new materials for the **Promise to Call suicide prevention campaign** are available for you to request! We recently ordered new materials (posters, flyers, business cards, magnets, pens, and more), and they are now part of the Clearinghouse operated by TAADAS. You can reach out directly to them and they will ship to you—or you can stop by the TAADAS offices when you're in Nashville.

Use this email to request materials from the TAADAS Clearinghouse

If you would like to print your own materials, we have those files available, too! We also have PowerPoint slides which you can use and social media graphics for sharing. **Use this link to Google Drive to download the Promise to Call partner kit.**

If this is your first exposure to the Promise to Call, it's a simple concept can help make conversations around suicide prevention less scary and truly open the door to saving someone's life. The campaign asks people to make a promise to call or text someone if they ever have thoughts of suicide. In making their personal promise, we're also asking people to share their promise in their networks to reduce stigma and increase the likelihood that people will be willing to reach out for help. Learn more at www.promisetocall.com.

TSPN Advisory Council Annual Meeting

Sharing the latest news from Promise to Call and other updates was part of the department's presentation to the **TSPN Advisory Council Retreat** on June 3. Commissioner Marie Williams expressed gratitude for TSPN's life-saving work and shared some perspective on how the department's support has grown greatly in recent years.



Office of Housing and Homeless Services Ribboncuttings



The TDMHSAS Office of Housing and Homeless Services was busy with a pair of big ribboncuttings in the last month. Congratulations to **McNabb Center** on opening their **Blount County Transition Campus**! This facility will centralize three different levels of care to meet mental health, substance use and social service needs of Tennesseans who are justice-involved with untreated mental health conditions and Tennesseans needing substance use services. Department funding created a new 18-bed facility through the Residential Re-entry Housing Program (RRHP) grant and a new 16-bed substance use disorder residential treatment facility. Additionally, grant writers worked with the Blount County Government to secure funding to build three recovery housing cottages on the campus using local opioid abatement dollars.



Congratulations to OUTsideIN for cutting the ribbon on their **CHI 2.0** project! About \$270,000 in grant funds went to property renovation and conversion of a beautiful home in Obion County to establish new, quality, and affordable supportive housing to serve 6 women in substance use disorder (SUD) recovery and their children.

Pictured above: (L to R) Neru Gobin, TDMHSAS Director of Housing and Homeless Services; Leellen Smith, Executive Director OUTsideIN; Jimmy Smith, Obion County General Sessions Judge; Jason Postlethwait, CHI 2.0 Regional Housing Facilitator.

Criminal Justice Liaisons and Case Management Annual Conference

Tennessee's **Criminal Justice Liaisons and Case Managers** gathered for their annual conference on June 17th. They heard insightful presentations on problem gambling, traumatic brain injury, and the continuum of the department's substance use treatment and recovery services. TDMHSAS is proud to partner with ten organizations to offer Criminal Justice Liaison services in all 95 Tennessee counties. Connect with the resources for your county at this link: <https://tn.gov/behavioral-health/cjl>

Care Coordinators Conference



The women and men who provide care coordination services through the department's **First Responder REST (Resource, Engagement, Specialty Team) program** met along with their supervisors for a two day summit in late June. The Care Coordinators are Certified Peer Recovery Specialists who are positioned to be a resource to first responders when they encounter someone who has overdosed or who needs referral to substance use disorder treatment services. The Care Coordinators also work with First Responders to increase access to naloxone/overdose resource kits for people at risk of overdose. This program has expanded greatly in recent years thanks to new streams of funding and now covers nearly all 95 counties. [Learn more about this program and how it can be a resource for the first responders in your area at this link.](#)

HAPI Arts and Advocacy Conference



A group of amazingly talented artists gathered for the annual **Arts and Advocacy Conference** on June 18. It's the second year in a row that the Healing Arts Project Inc. (HAPI) has held its conference in the summer at Nossi College of Art in Nashville. Participating artists received valuable lessons in all forms of art and practical ideas for sharing their story through artistic expression. They also explored how their creative endeavors can lead to financial compensation. Learn more about HAPI at their website: www.healingartsprojectinc.org



Pictured above: (Left) Joshua Jackson sets the stage for conference participants, (Right) Lisa Chibarro delivers a heartfelt and funny kickoff keynote.

Mem-GALA Celebrates Mental Health Court



Pictured Above (L to R): Commissioner Williams, Judge Sheila Renfroe, Court Coordinator Bryan Carson

TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams gratefully delivered the keynote address at the **Shelby County Mental Health Court** Mem-Gala on May 29. The green-themed event celebrated the court's life-changing work and community impact. In her remarks, Commissioner Williams shared gratitude to Judge Sheila Renfroe and her staff, as well as the community partners, advocates, families, and supporters who make the court's success possible. The department is proud to support the Shelby County Mental Health Court, and thanks to landmark expansion funding from Speaker Cameron Sexton, we are now up to 25 mental health courts statewide in FY27.

Coalitions Create Connection During Summer



The **Cheatham County Community Enhancement Coalition** launched its first-ever Rock the Block event to celebrate the last day of school with local youth and families in Ashland City. Held in partnership with Cheatham County Juvenile Court and Rockettown, the event drew more than 100 attendees, including over 85 youth ages 12-18, for an evening of games, skateboarding, karaoke, raffle prizes, and safe summer fun. The event highlighted growing community partnerships focused on prevention, mentorship, youth engagement, and healthy decision-making. Rock the Block showed the impact of bringing families, organizations, and young people together to build a stronger, healthier future for Cheatham County.



DeKalb County Prevent Coalition's IMPACT Youth Group has been busy this summer giving back to the community by cleaning up cigarette butts. While keeping our park beautiful is always rewarding, today's cleanup came with a reminder of changing trends. For the first time during a cleanup event, the kids also picked up numerous discarded Zyn nicotine pouches and vape device pieces. As nicotine

products evolve, our Substance Use Prevention Coalitions remain committed to raising awareness, keeping our community clean, and advocating for a healthier tobacco-free future!

Court Diversion for Problem Gambling Cases

The **Gambling Awareness, Mitigation and Education (GAME) diversion program** provides local prosecutors and investigators an additional tool to address illegal gambling by those under 21 years of age. Developed by Dr. Jim Whelan, the executive director of The Gambling Clinic, and his team in Memphis, GAME is an online course designed to build participants' knowledge, self-awareness, and skills for avoiding illegal and problem gambling. On June 23, Dr. Whelan and David Smith, the Department's problem gambling program manager, presented to the 12th Judicial District Attorney General Courtney Lynch and her team about the program to build awareness amongst local law enforcement as a non-prosecutorial tool at their disposal. If you are a member of the higher education community or law enforcement and would want a similar presentation, please contact david.a.smith2@tn.gov.

Team Updates



Welcome Back, Jessica Mullins!

Welcome back to **Jessica Mullins**, LMSW! She has joined the **Office of Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention as Assistant Director**. Jessica has more than a decade of experience in behavioral health, including providing community mental health services and leading statewide and federal initiatives focused on systems improvement, early intervention, and services for children, youth, young adults, and families. Jessica previously served TDMHSAS as the Director of Youth and Young Adult Initiatives. Prior to returning to TDMHSAS, she worked as a Public Health Advisor with SAMHSA.

Dr. Wes Geminn Elected to National Advisory Group

Congratulations to TDMHSAS Chief Pharmacist and State Opioid Treatment Authority, **Wesley Geminn**, PharmD on his election as **Vice President of the Opioid Treatment Network**. The OTN is a part of

NASADAD (the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Agency Directors) dedicated to developing and promoting quality services for those with an opioid use disorder. The OTN works to ensure compliance of individual opioid treatment programs with federal and State and opioid treatment standards. The members of the OTN are the designated State Opioid Treatment Authorities (SOTAs), who have lead responsibility for opioid treatment oversight and federal regulation compliance within their States/Territories.



Pictured above: Dr. Geminn presents at a recent event in Jackson hosted by JACO.

PLANNING & POLICY Council Meetings

Adult Committee

Wednesday, July 8, 2026
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. CT
Andrew Jackson Building
Conference Room 5.1 South, 5th Floor
500 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243

Region VI

Tuesday, July 14, 2026
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. CT
Aspell Recovery Center

Region III

Thursday, July 16, 2026
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. ET
AIM Center
472 W. MLK Blvd.
Chattanooga, TN 37402

Region VII

Tuesday, July 28, 2026
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. CT
Church Health

To verify the schedule and plans for future meetings, please visit the department website at these links:

[Statewide & Committee Meeting Schedule \(tn.gov\)](#)

[Regional Council Meeting Schedule \(tn.gov\)](#)

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.

Essential Resources



Call or text 988 and press 0 to talk to a trained counselor who can help. You can also chat with 988lifeline.org.



Call or text the Tennessee REDLINE at 800-889-9789 for free and confidential referrals to services.