



Dear Partners, Colleagues, and Friends,

As we wrap up September Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, I want to make sure you know these three facts: Your life is **precious**. Your life is **powerful**. Your life has **purpose**. We're losing too many of our neighbors and friends because they lose sight of those three facts.

**Your life is precious.** You truly are one of a kind. From your fingerprints to the retina of your eyes to the experiences and memories and talents hidden inside your mind, you are a unique creation that is precious and has value.

**Your life is powerful.** Your words have the power to change someone's day. Your knowledge and resources and connections have the power to change someone's life. Your ideas and your ingenuity and your inspirational story have the power to SAVE someone's life.

**Your life has purpose.** Whether you're still searching for this last one, or you found it long ago, your purpose on this earth, your calling, your reason for being is such an incredible, life-giving force. You are here for a reason, in this time and place in the role you're in at work, in the place you are with family and friends, none of this is an accident.

My deepest hope and prayer for each of you is that you never forget those three facts. Please, please make a promise that if you ever do lose sight of just how precious, powerful, and purposeful you are that you'll call someone and talk to them. You can learn more and make your promise right now at [promisetocall.com](http://promisetocall.com).

May your work continue to be blessed,

Marie



## MONTHLY Happenings

### Elevating Hope and Help at TSPN Statewide Conference



Commissioner Williams was delighted to deliver keynote address remarks at the annual TSPN conference. As an organization, the TSPN team and all of its volunteers and board members are such effective advocates, trainers and changemakers in Tennessee. Their work truly saves lives and elevates hope and help to those who need it most.



Congratulations to all the individuals and organizations who were recognized for their efforts with awards:

- Ken and Madge Tullis, MD, Suicide Prevention Award: Anna Carpenter (Pictured Above Right)
- Intra-State Departmental Group Award: Carol Coley McDonald
- Media Award: Addison Eggebeen (Pictured Above Left)
- Community Partner Award: Robertson County Health Council

Regional Awards:

- East: Jonathyn Elliott
- Greater Memphis: Pastor Mark Luttrell
- Greater Nashville: Don Loiacano
- Mid-Cumberland: Dr. Claudia Alonzo
- Northeast: Anna Carpenter
- Northwest: Darrah Crawford
- South Central: Tyler Sanders
- Southeast: Danah Snedden
- Southwest: Amy Coleman
- Upper Cumberland: Heart of the Cumberland

## Suicide Prevention Awareness Proclamation

In issuing his annual proclamation for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, Governor Bill Lee's office highlighted the power of every individual to contribute to suicide prevention by recognizing and sharing the risks and

warning signs, fostering open and stigma-free conversations that encourage help seeking, promoting safe and responsible messaging around suicide, and connecting others to life-saving resources. [Click this link or the image to view the proclamation.](#)



## On Campus Suicide Prevention Awareness



Pictured above: Rhonda Alley, Corbin and Deborah Foster

The Rutherford County Suicide Prevention Coalition was proud to participate in MTSU's Mental Health Fair on September 16. The fair gathered all sorts of beneficial resources for students. They were especially excited to talk about the 988 Lifeline, how to access it, and why it exists.

## Celebrating Recovery Month with TAADAS



Team TDMHSAS was proud to join our partners and friends at TAADAS for their annual Recovery Month Banquet in early September. The dedicated, talented, and caring men and women who work at the TAADAS member organizations are responsible for helping tens of thousands of Tennesseans find new pathways to recovery every year. They empower people to reclaim their lives, rebuild their families, and pursue their dreams.

Congratulations to everyone who was recognized for excellence in service at the dinner:

- Voice of Recovery: Rep. Esther Helton-Haynes and Rep. Mary Littleton
- Lifetime Achievement: Randal Lea, Cumberland Heights; and Mike McLoughlin, Memphis Recovery Center
- CEO of the Year: Amanda Dunlap, The Next Door
- Boomer Brown Advocacy Award: Jane Abraham, The Hart Center/Healing Hearts Foundation
- Volunteer of the Year: Tracey Levine, Healing Housing



OTP Directors Meeting



The state's Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) leaders gathered on September 15 for a time of networking and engagement with expert speakers on critical topics. From exploring emerging novel substances to understanding how GLP-1s can be integrated into Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment plans, the learning was invaluable.

A special highlight was the opportunity for attendees to tour Buffalo Valley's mobile unit (pictured below)! This mobile clinic is one of four across the state through our Project Rural Recovery which brings integrated physical and mental health services directly to rural communities, reaching those who need help in areas without local hospitals.



**System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT)  
is TennCare Official!**



The team behind the multi-decade success of the System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT) program gathered for a celebration of a milestone achievement on September 19th. The gathering was a passing of the torch after 2+ decades of leadership from TDMHSAS and community mental health providers, the High Fidelity Wraparound (HFW) services central to the SOCAT model are transitioning to a billable service for children and families receiving services through TennCare. Representatives from the department, community providers, TennCare, and the MCOs all gathered to celebrate the track record of success including greatly reduced out of home placements and recidivism among youth receiving services and to make connections for the next phase of this amazing program.

## IPS Conference Seeks Wellness through Employment



Supported Employment, Wellness, Crisis Management, Substance Use Recovery, and Housing professionals from across the state came together for the annual Wellness Through Employment conference September 23 and 24. Attendees engaged with dynamic keynote speakers and expert panelists who brought fresh perspectives to the challenges facing our fields. Beyond the programming, the conference provided opportunities for laughter, reflection, and meaningful peer connections—moments of taking deep breaths together and hearing from each other that proved just as valuable as the structured learning.



Congratulations to all of the individuals and organizations that were honored for excellence:

- Peggy Swarbrick Excellence in Service Award - Stella Melton
- Debbie Becker Excellence in Service Award - Marie Maxie
- Bob Drake Advocacy Award - Tiffany Ramsey
- IPS Vocational Rehabilitation Team Member of the Year - Emma Brown
- IPS Team Leader of the Year - Dylan Gregory
- IPS Specialist of the Year - Shelby Beattie
- Employer of the Year - Downtown Chattanooga Alliance
- Student of the Year - Turner Jenkins
- Employee of the Year - Belinda Thornton
- Peer Wellness Team Player of the Year - Kathy Hankins
- Peer Wellness Coach of the Year - Kerri Harris

## Peer Wellness Initiative Goes Cross-Country



Dina Savvenas, the Director of the Peer Wellness Initiative (PWI) completed the last step to become the only First Aid Arts Partner Trainer in the US. She co-facilitated her first Responder Training at the Ballard Homestead in Seattle, Washington in March, alongside the First Aid Arts Staff. This training was offered to 18 participants from around the world who gathered to be equipped in the First Aid Arts program to support their communities in need.

These participants will go on to serve in places like Japan in disaster relief, Jerusalem in trauma care, and Seattle supporting Afghan refugee women. The next Phase of the onboarding process was to co-facilitate a Responder and a Facilitator Training, in partnership with TDMHSAS and hosted by TAMHO. Two First Aid Arts trainers traveled to Tennessee to help bring this program to our state so that, moving forward, Dina can train the PWI team and other Peer Staff to be able to deliver this program. The final step was completed in August, with Dina co-facilitating a Facilitator Training for Responders, at the Ballard Homestead where 10 additional participants were certified as First Aid Arts Facilitators.

First Aid Arts is a science-informed program which is designed to equip individuals with arts-based tools, helping to decrease the negative effects of toxic stress and/or trauma, and increase key indicators of resilience in a weekly workshop format.

## MMHI Celebrates Creative Contributions to the Treatment Mall



On Friday, September 12, Memphis Mental Health Institute proudly recognized four outstanding Program Services team members for their dedication and creativity: Natalie Golden (Treatment Mall Secretary), Norman Conwell (Recreational Therapist), Angela Austin (Adjunctive Therapy Director), and Johnny Granderson (Program Director).

Over the past year, Natalie, Norman, and Johnny transformed the once plain, beige classrooms of the Treatment Mall into vibrant, welcoming spaces for our patients. These refreshed rooms now feature colorful designs and chalkboard walls that encourage self-expression and inspire positivity.

Angela Austin led the effort to restore a beloved resource lost during MMHI's 2007 move from Poplar and Dunlap to 951 Court Avenue: the patient library. Thanks to her vision, the Treatment Mall now features a new library filled with donated books, ligature-resistant shelving, and thoughtful décor—creating a safe and enriching environment for reading and reflection.

To honor each of these individuals, Assistant Superintendent of Program Services Jonathan Cole donated a book to the new library in each of their names, selecting titles by their favorite authors. These books will continue to inspire our patients, just as their namesakes have inspired us.

## MBMHI Bleyzer Program Volunteers in Community



MBMHI Bleyzer program participants dedicated time and energy to serving the community. Our patients volunteered at the Chattanooga Area Food Bank, supporting its mission to fight hunger and provide hope to individuals and families in need. By helping sort, organize, and distribute food, we are assisting the Food Bank to ensure that nutritious meals reach those who need them most.

The Bleyzer program is designed to help patients build or develop their functional skills that will help them in their transition back into the community. These functional skills deficits can create barriers to discharge readiness and community placement for our patients. Community service projects are a core value of the Bleyzer program, and we are honored to contribute to such a meaningful cause that strengthens our community and uplifts lives.

# Upcoming Events

## OAC Upcoming Meetings



The Vision of the Opioid Abatement Council states, "To approve and allocate the dollars through the Opioid Trust Fund so that Tennesseans struggling with opioid addiction with or without chronic pain find relief and pathways of recovery to bring hope and restoration through effective and transparent work for all Tennesseans, which will bring prevention and support for those families impacted by opioid use disorder."

To this end, the Council holds four quarterly meetings per year to discuss, and vote on the aforementioned items. In addition, occasional emergency meetings are held, as needed. All of these meetings are open to the public to attend. In each meeting, after official business is completed, the Chair will open the meeting for public comments.

The public can attend these meetings in person or virtually. Meeting dates, times, and location information will be posted before each meeting on the Opioid Abatement Council web site Meetings page. This can be found at the following link: <https://www.tn.gov/oac/meeting-schedule.html>

The third and fourth quarter meetings are now posted on the web site. We invite you to attend in person, or virtually, to learn more about the significant work the Council Members are accomplishing.

## Partners in Prevention 2026 Speaker Proposals

# Partners in Prevention

*A Statewide Training and Networking Event*

## 📌 Call for Speaker Proposals – Partners in Prevention 2026 📌

**Event Dates:** May 18–19, 2026

**Location:** Drury Plaza Hotel, Franklin, TN

Each year, nearly 200 prevention professionals from across Tennessee gather to learn, connect, and advance evidence-based strategies to prevent substance use and promote mental health.

We're looking for **\*\*dynamic, engaging presenters\*\*** who are passionate about prevention education.

### **Priority Topics:**

- ✓ Prevention Best Practices & Programming
- ✓ Emerging Substance Use Trends
- ✓ Prevention in the Digital World
- ✓ Mental Health, Wellness & Suicide Prevention

### **Questions?**

Email [Stacey@TnCertification.org](mailto:Stacey@TnCertification.org)

Notifications Sent: January 2026

Presentation Materials Due: March 2, 2026  
(subject to review)

### **Proposal Details:**

Deadline to Submit: October 31, 2025

Session Length: 60–90 minutes

[Submit Here](#)

*Limited speaking slots available. Proposals aligned with priority topics will be given preference.*

PLANNING & POLICY

# Council Meetings

**Adult Committee**

Wednesday, October 8  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. CST  
Andrew Jackson Building  
Conference Room 5.1 South, 5th Floor  
500 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37243

**Region VI**

Tuesday, October 14, 2025  
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. CST  
Aspell Recovery Center  
331 N. Highland  
Jackson, TN 38301

**Region III**

Thursday, October 16, 2025  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST  
AIM Center  
472 W. MLK Blvd.  
Chattanooga, TN 37402

**Region VII**

Tuesday, October 28, 2025  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. CST  
Church Health  
1350 Concourse Ave., Suite 142  
Memphis, TN 38104

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](https://988lifeline.org).



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