



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

Tennessee Recovery Navigators

FY24 Annual Report

Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

August 2024

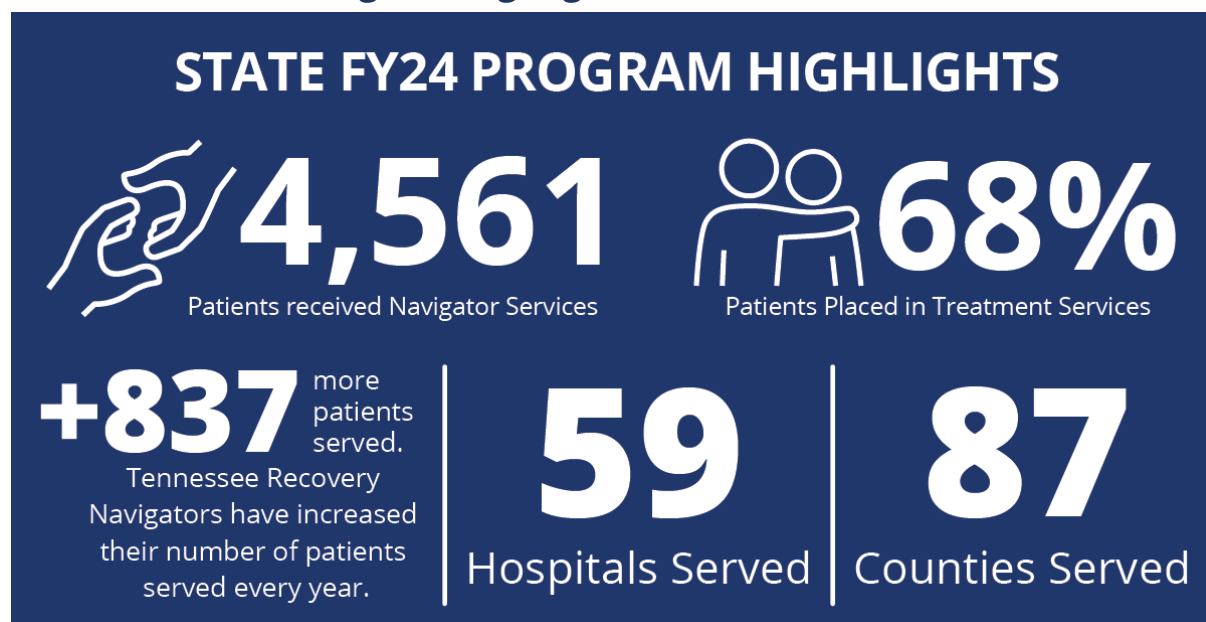


Program Overview

The Tennessee Recovery Navigator program is executed through partnerships between the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) and 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.

Fiscal Year 2024 Program Highlights



*Navigators can serve Tennesseans from all 95 counties. In FY24, they served the referrals from a total of 87 counties.

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

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 Department of Finance & Administration through the Office of Criminal Justice Programs, provided funding to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) to expand the Navigator Program to three (3) additional areas of the state. In December 2019, TDMHSAS partnered with the Tennessee Department of Health (TDOH) to expand the Navigator program to Murfreesboro and Chattanooga. This new funding allowed for additional navigators, and it 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. In FY24, the pilot was expanded to include 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 success of the project.

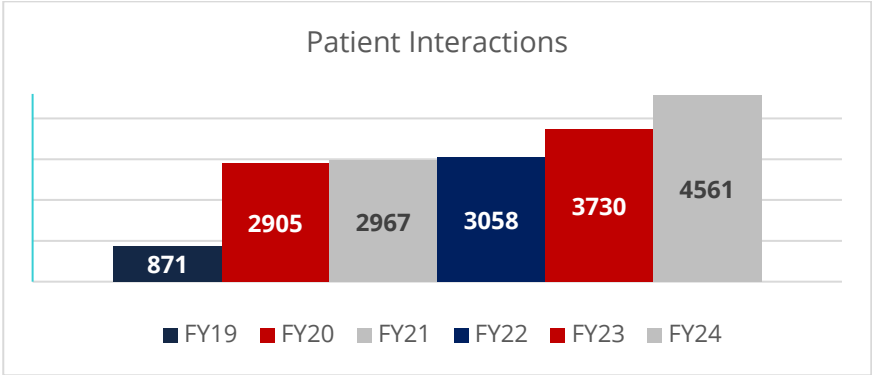
Current Tennessee Navigator Providers

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

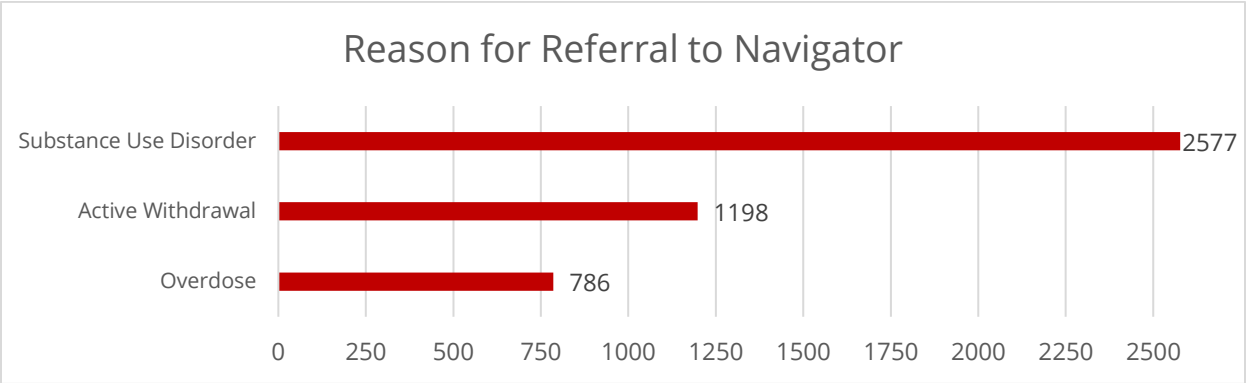
Patient Interactions

The Navigators continue to see an increase in patient interactions year to year. Since inception, the TN Recovery Navigator program has supported more than **18,000** individuals. Despite nationwide workforce shortages and many providers operating with fewer Navigators, the Navigator program increased the number of patients receiving supports from FY23 to FY24 by **831 patients (+22%)**, exceeding the year’s goal of 3,500 patients by more than 1,000.



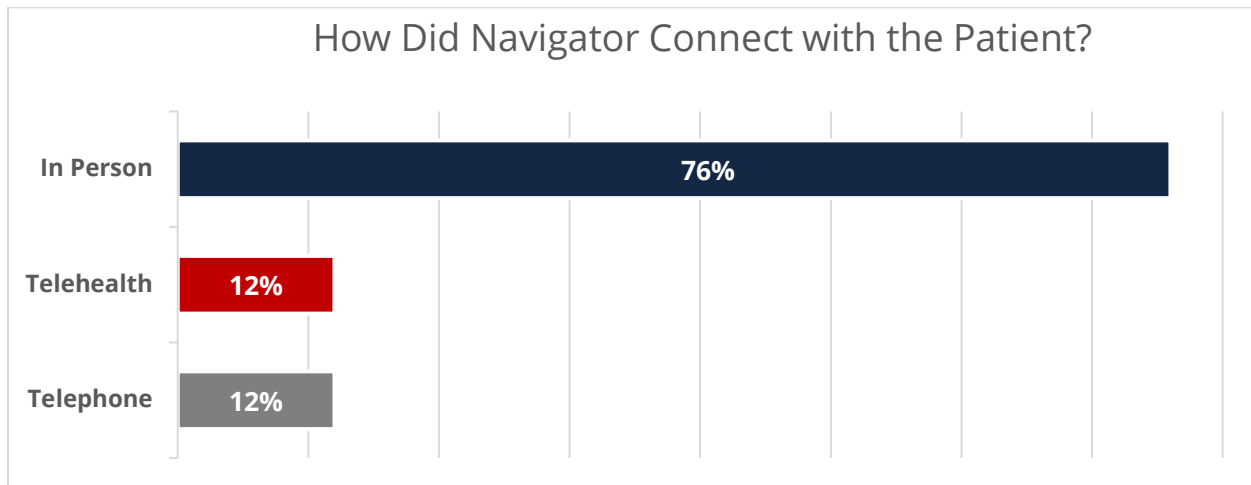
In FY24, 4561 individuals were served by the TN Recovery Navigator Program. A 22% increase from FY23.

Patients are referred to the Navigators by emergency department staff when they present due to an overdose, are in active withdrawal, or identify as having a primary substance use disorder. The chart below shows the breakdown of the reasons for referral in FY24.



Out of necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic, the TN Recovery Navigators began providing telehealth and telephone services. While in-person referrals are still the top preference and majority, this expanded modality of referral access has afforded the opportunity to increase the

number of referrals the program has seen from the hospitals by allowing providers to cover a larger span of area and reach hospitals that otherwise could not be served due to distance.



Patient Demographics

The Navigators capture demographic information (gender, race, age) on all the individuals they serve who are willing to disclose. The program continues to assess ways to outreach to at-risk and underserved populations.

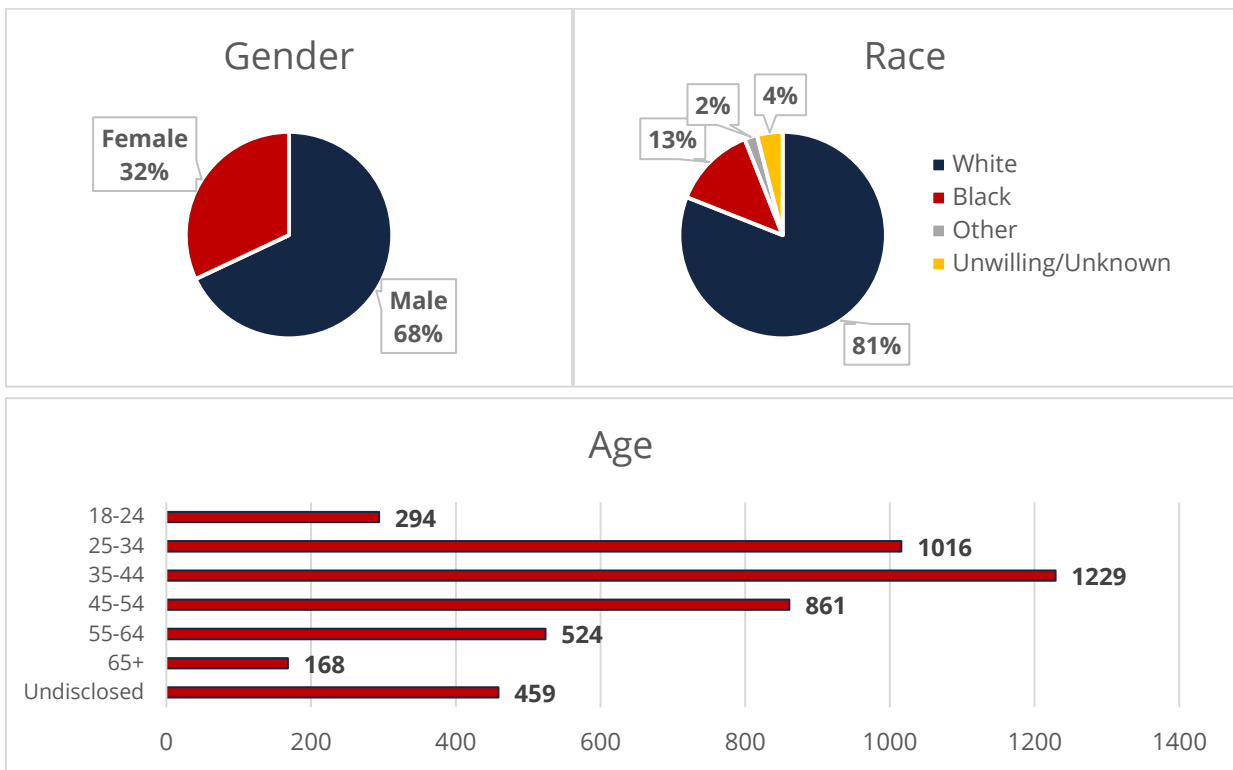


Figure 1. Demographic Data of Clients Served

Patient Testimonial

"I am so thankful that someone that has been down the same road that I was going down came to see me. You shot it straight, but with compassion. The advice and suggestions that you gave really made me think about what I was doing and options that were available for me. I have not drunk anything in eight months now."

Patient Placements

In FY24, the Navigators were able to connect 3,112 individuals to treatment or a recovery resource - this is a **68%** placement rate. Patient choice and willingness is key to placement and of the remaining 32%, 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.

68% of individuals seen by a Navigator were connected to treatment or a recovery resource.

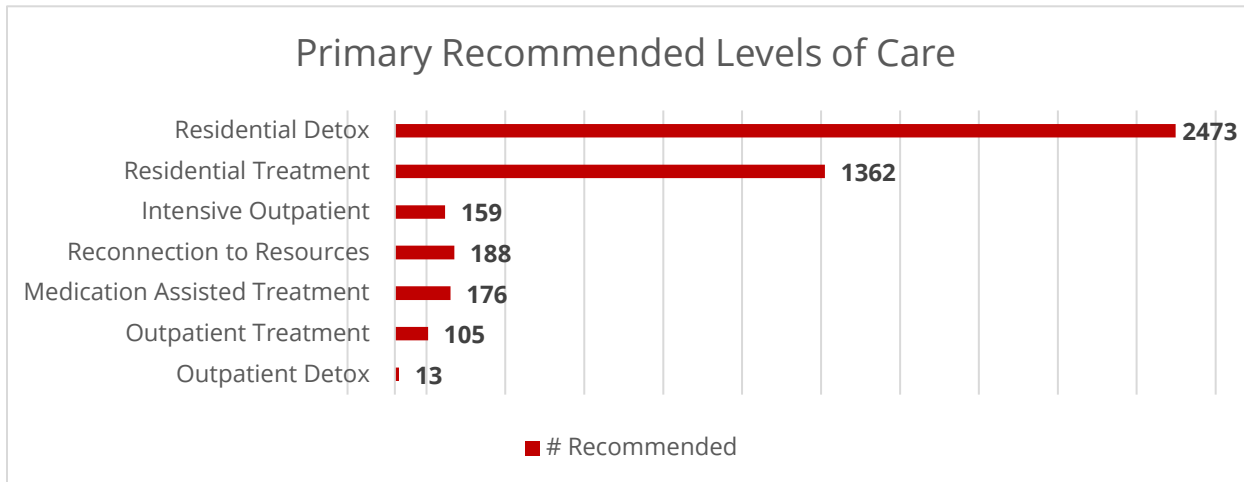


Figure 2. Primary Recommended Levels of Care

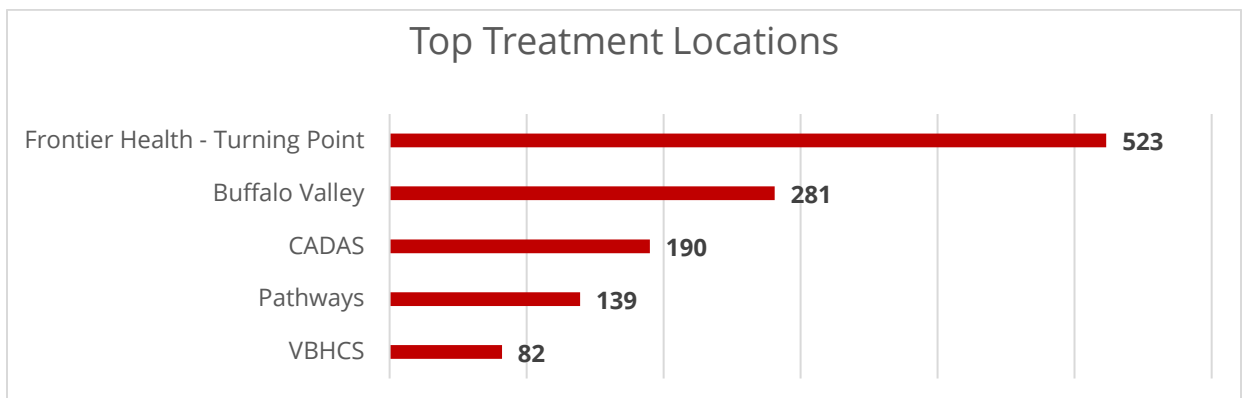


Figure 3. Top Treatment Locations

Navigator Testimonial

"I am happy to report a client I saw in the hospital last November completed treatment and transitioned into a halfway house. She is actively working with a sponsor and gainfully employed. She is a keyholder at the store she works at. She calls me often. This lady has a long road of reconstruction, but she has hit the ground running and I could not be more proud of her."

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 4 shows that most of the individuals served are uninsured or covered by TennCare.

76% of individuals served by the Navigators were uninsured or covered by TennCare.

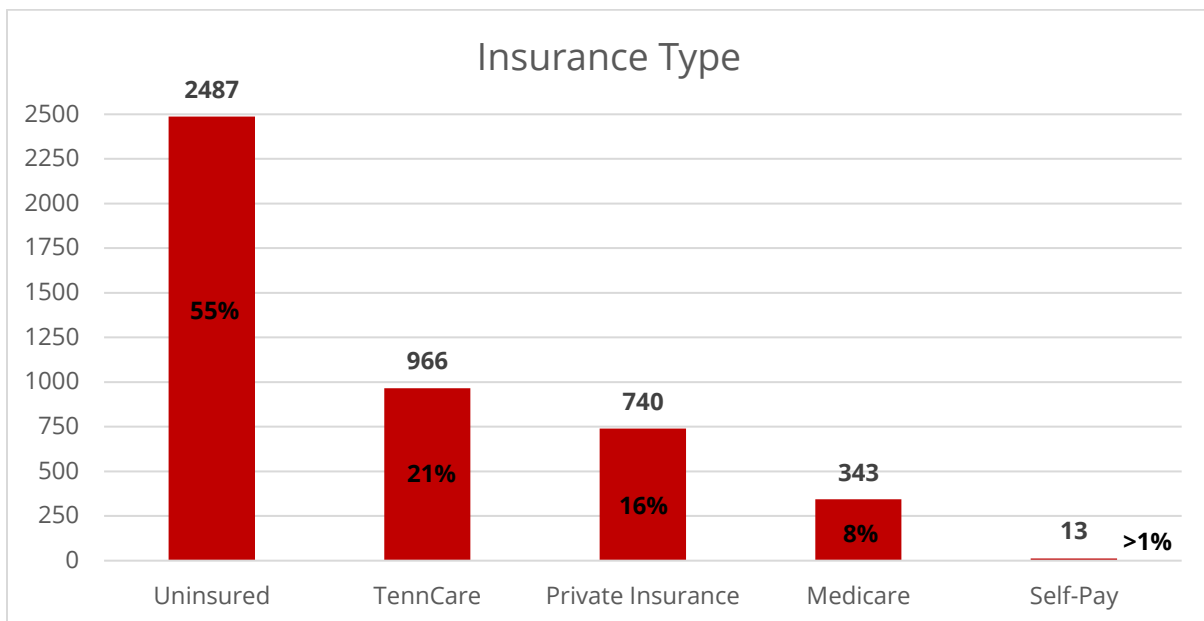


Figure 4. Patient Insurance Type

Hospital Testimonial

“Our TN Navigators work tirelessly, without hesitation, and understand when no one else can. If a resource we need is out there somewhere, the navigator will find it! Our navigators change lives every single day and because of them, there is hope for those they help in the hospitals. I am so glad this program is still around and growing.”

CHI Memorial - Chattanooga
Gilia Minnich-Angelin, RN

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 5 shows the top five (5) overall self-identified substance choices for the individuals served through the navigator program in FY24.

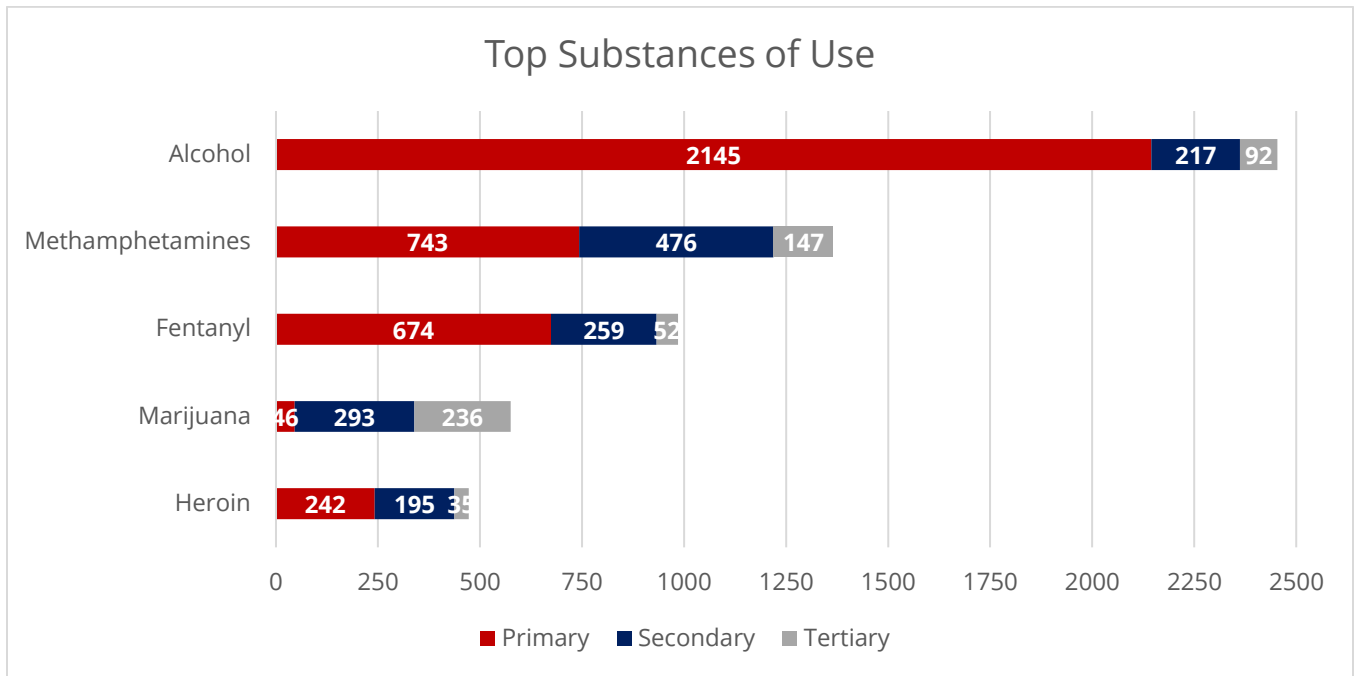


Figure 5. Top Substances of Use

In FY24, alcohol remained the top reported substance of abuse with reported fentanyl and methamphetamine use continuing to rise. These substances of use are consistent with what was seen in FY23. This information coupled with other program data collected by TDMHSAS helps identify the areas of need across Tennessee and ensures that the programs being funded by the department are efficient and serving the most vulnerable Tennesseans.

Participating Hospitals

The following **59** 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
- Bradley Medical Center
- 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 Comm. Hospital East
- Morristown/Hamblen County Medical Center
- CHI Memorial
- CHI Memorial – Hixson
- Erlanger Baroness
- Erlanger East
- Erlanger North
- Parkridge Camp Jordan
- Parkridge Medical Center
- Parkridge North Hospital
- Parkridge East
- Hancock County Hospital
- Hawkins County Memorial Hospital
- Jefferson Memorial Hospital
- Johnson County Memorial Hospital
- UT Medical Center
- Jackson-Madison County General
- Parkridge West Hospital
- Starr Regional – Athens
- Starr Regional – Etowah
- Livingston Regional*
- Cookeville Regional Medical Center
- Rhea Medical Center
- Ascension, St. Thomas Rutherford
- HCA, Stonecrest
- Erlanger Sequatchie Valley
- LeConte Medical Center
- Baptist East*
- Methodist LeBonheur*
- 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
- St. Thomas River Park
- Franklin Woods Community Hospital
- Johnson City Medical Center
- WTH Volunteer Hospital

—*Hospitals Added in FY24

Navigator Testimonial

"I had a patient who was referred to me for alcohol abuse in 2018 when the Navigator program began. The patient has now been sober from alcohol for 2 years and has come to me for help with MAT services due to heroin/fentanyl use. The patient is now receiving MAT services and he has been sober from all substances for 6 months total. It is extremely rewarding to see this person doing so well!"

Final Thoughts

The Tennessee Recovery Navigator program continues to be an invaluable asset 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.

TDMHSAS continues to explore additional funding sources and opportunities to expand the program and 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.