



April
2019

System of Care Across Tennessee

Letter from the Director:

Keri Virgo

Greetings all!

We are so happy to be celebrating the return of spring and preparations for Children's Mental Health Awareness Month! Spring is a great time to think about future possibilities and the growth process. Just like the rest of the world, the System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT) has been experiencing growth as well. In the last couple of months, we achieved a milestone by enrolling our 150th family into SOCAT. In addition, we continue to see success in keeping our children, youth, and young adults in their homes with their families.

The beginning of this year has been a time of reflection and refining. SOCAT is committed to using our lessons learned and perfecting our craft so that all children, youth, young adults, and their families are receiving the highest quality care possible. SOCAT leadership has been spending a great deal of time visiting with local providers and communities to assess our accomplishments and opportunities. Through these visits, the team is able to get an understanding of what is working and what can be built on, leading to a stronger system.

On May 6, 2019, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will be hosting Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (CMHAD). The theme this for year is "Suicide Prevention: Strategies That Work." In support of CMHAD, communities across Tennessee will host events, sign proclamations, and celebrate a community of caring and compassion for one another. We hope that you will join us and your community in celebrating.



System of Care Across Tennessee

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and Substance Abuse
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Mission

To put in place policies, organizational structures, and funding mechanisms that support the implementation and expansion of a children's mental health system in Tennessee (TN) grounded on SOC values and principles.

Core Values

Family Driven | Youth Guided Services

Community-Based

Culturally and Linguistically Competent

Our Vision

To ensure Tennessee families have access to community-based services for children, youth and young adults with mental, emotional, and behavioral health needs that is coordinated across systems, individualized to a family's unique needs, strengths, and culture, and where the families are the primary decision makers in the care of their children.

System of Care Across Tennessee Services

The System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT) offers high-fidelity Wraparound Services to 87 counties across the state. Our team has enrolled over 150 children, youth, young adults, and their families in services!

Each SOCAT site employs a Care Coordinator and Family Support Specialist (FSS) to work with families who have young children, youth, or young adults with mental health concerns.

SOCAT utilizes System of Care values and principles while empowering Tennessee families to work together with child-serving agencies as a partner to guide their care.

The goals of SOCAT include:

- Decreasing the utilization of inpatient care
- Reducing the number of out-of-home placements
- Improving community function, including school attendance and performance
- Including and sustaining positive mental health, including increases in behavioral and emotional strengths in children, youth and young adults

Follow the map on the next page for a look at our [guiding principles](#).

The SOCAT initiative serves youth aged 21 or younger who are experiencing emotional or behavioral concerns that affect their daily life (i.e. having trouble in school, with their family, with peers or adults, with law enforcement, or children's services). Additionally, SOCAT focuses on young people who are having difficulty or are at-risk of being kicked out of school or have been or are currently at-risk of psychiatric hospitalization, residential placement, or placement in DCS custody. Our providers are:

- Frontier Health
- Mental Health Cooperative, Inc.
- Helen Ross McNabb
- Pathways Behavioral Health Services
- Professional Care Services of West TN, Inc.
- Tennessee Voices for Children
- Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System

To learn more about eligibility and the referral process, visit [this link](#) or contact SOCAT Project Director, Keri Virgo, at [\(615\) 770-0462](tel:6157700462) or SOC.TAcenter@tn.gov.

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PRINCIPLE 1

Ensure availability of an access to a broad, flexible array of effective, evidence informed, community-based Services and supports for children and their families that address their physical emotional and educational needs including traditional and nontraditional services as well as informal and natural supports

PRINCIPLE 4

Ensure cross-system collaboration, with linkages between child Agencies and programs across administrative and funding boundaries and mechanisms for system – level management, coordination, and integrated care management



PRINCIPLE 5

Provide care management or similar mechanisms to Ensure that multiple services are delivered in a coordinated and therapeutic Manner, and that children and their families can move through the system of services in accordance with their changing needs



PRINCIPLE 2

Provide individualized services in accordance with the unique potential and needs of each child and family, guided by strengths-based, wraparound services cleaning process and an individualized service plan developed in true partnership with the child and family

PRINCIPLE 3

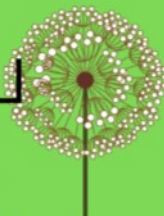
Deliver services and supports within the least restrictive, most normative environments that are clinically appropriate

PRINCIPLE 6

Provide developmentally appropriate services and supports to facilitate the transition of youth to adulthood and to the adult-service system as needed

PRINCIPLE 9

Incorporate or link with mental health promotion, prevention, and early identification to improve Long – term outcomes, including mechanisms to identify problems at an earlier stage and mental health promotion and prevention activities directed at all children and adolescents



PRINCIPLE 8

Provide developmentally appropriate mental health services and supports that promote optimal social and emotional outcomes for young children and their families in their homes and community settings

PRINCIPLE 7

Provide developmentally appropriate services and supports To facilitate the transition of youth to adult hood and to the adult – service system as needed



PRINCIPLE 10

Incorporate continuous accountability mechanisms to track, monitor, and manage the achievement of system of care goals; Fidelity to the system of care philosophy; and quality, effectiveness, and outcomes at the system level, practice level, and child and family level

PRINCIPLE 11

Protect the rights of children, Youth, and families and promote effective advocacy efforts

PRINCIPLE 12

Provide services and supports without regard to race, religion, national origin, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical disability, Socio economic status, geography, language, immigration status, or other characteristics; services should be sensitive and responsive to these differences



Youth Engagement Update

Article By: Jules Wilson

This spring, the Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) has a lot to celebrate—a rise in attendance numbers, a new meeting space, and the promise of another five years of funding, thanks to the new Healthy Transitions: Improving Life Trajectories (HT-ILT) grant. Director of Youth and Young Adult Initiatives for the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Jessica Mullins, was able to come to the March 30 meeting to deliver the good news in person.

Anyone who runs a community meeting will be able to understand the struggle of getting people in seats, and this has been especially true for the Young Adult Leadership Council over the years. A lot of the time, young people would tell us that they had no idea a group like the YALC existed. Determined to fix this, Healthy Transitions Youth Coordinator Crystal Hutchins and I stepped up our recruitment and outreach efforts. We have begun regularly tabling at Volunteer State Community College and are redesigning our marketing materials to be more reflective of the work the council does now. The hard work is paying off, and we have been averaging 10 participants at our last five meetings.

Our March 30 meeting took place at the conference room over in the Tennessee Association for Alcohol, Drug, and other Addiction Services (TAADAS) offices, our new—and hopefully permanent—meeting space. The room was the most spacious we've been in yet and also offered easy-to-use technological capabilities. At the meeting, we discussed our goals for the council's future. Gigi Pasley, the co-leader for the Policy, Advocacy, and Accommodations committee on the YALC, stated that her favorite part of the meeting was "coming up with new ideas and getting everyone's point of view and stories."

Gaining professional development and leadership skills isn't all that the Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council is about, though. Gigi puts it best. "I always love meeting new people and getting to be a part of their support systems." The YALC is a place for young people who share these experiences of mental illness, substance abuse, and/or systems involvement to come together and be their authentic selves. They will find a welcoming, nonjudgmental place where they can make friends and grow in their recovery and wellness journeys.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining the Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council, please don't hesitate to contact me at jules.wilson@tn.gov or text/call 615-878-0043.

Family Engagement Update

Article By: Brenda Donaldson

Congratulations to all of you who are Certified Family Support Specialists (CFSS) and those who are pursuing certification. You have shown dedication to the process as well as your commitment to families. I encourage everyone who has put in the many hours of FSS training to pursue certification if you have not already done so. Your experiences as a parent/caregiver are important and valued. With certification through the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, you can use those experiences to support and empower other parents and caregivers. CFSS's make a difference in the lives of many families by providing a very valuable and unique service.



If you or someone you know self-identify as being or having been the primary caregiver of a child or youth with a mental, emotional, behavioral, or co-occurring disorder...perhaps NOW is the time for you to acquire the skills to be a support for families in Tennessee.

For information about the prerequisite courses or the Family Support Specialist Competency Course Training, contact:

Kathy Rogers— 615-269-7751 or krogers@tnvoices.org

Roger Stewart—615-361-6608 or rstewart@namitn.org

For information about the TN Family Support Specialist Certification program contact:

Brenda Donaldson—615-770-1788 or Brenda.Donaldson@tn.gov

Open Questions Can Open the Door To Better Conversations

Article By: Jules Wilson

We've all seen that stereotype of a therapist on TV. Sitting in an armchair with a notebook and pen, they scribble notes, nod their head, and mumble "uh huh" over and over. Sometimes, they throw in the occasional "and how does that make you feel?" to spice things up. It can be easy to fall into this pattern of question, answer, question, answer, but in order to make someone feel truly heard, you have to get creative in your approach. The OARS method is great for this.

O = Open Questions

A = Affirmations

R = Reflective Listening

S = Summary Reflections

Let's dive into the O in OARS a bit more. If your questions are more innovative and thought-provoking, then the answers you get will also be. Make sure your questions are open-ended, meaning they cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" answer. Instead of "did you enjoy school today?" you could try "what about school did you enjoy today?" One word answers, be gone!

Who, What, Where, Why, and How are going to be great go-to's for coming up with open questions. Another good place to start is asking questions focused around the five senses—"What is it about pizza that tastes good to you? What color was your dress? How did the room smell when you walked in?" These will paint a better picture for both you and the young person of the experience they are having, and it can help build observation and grounding skills.

When you ask open questions, it changes the conversation from a provider talking at a young person to talking with a young person. Not every response has to be a question, but if you are able to sprinkle them in effectively, you will be opening the door for so many more conversations.

SOCAT Success Stories

Tennessee Voices for Children:

Jefferson County

One of our youth enrolled in SOCAT in Jefferson County has had ongoing juvenile justice involvement. Before being enrolled in SOCAT, the youth was 17 years old and had only six high school credits. These circumstances led to The Department of Children Services Juvenile Justice making a referral to SOCAT in May 2018. Once the youth was enrolled, a care team was created and began working with the youth and his family.



This support led the youth to enroll in adult education classes and get a job. The youth had a few bumps in the road and ended up in DCS Juvenile Custody in October 2018. The SOCAT team stuck with the family while he was in custody. After the youth transitioned home, he finished his education and graduated from high school on March 14, 2019. The youth will also be getting his driver's license and interviewing for a job where his dad works. Soon, he will be released from Juvenile Justice probation as well.



Volunteer Behavioral Health: Hamilton County

SOCAT is working with a 13-year-old male in Hamilton County who has reported that this is the best he has felt in four years! This youth has no contact with his biological father, and because of this barrier, at The Child and Family Team Meeting, we set up a mentor from his church to take him out once a week. This youth is now reporting that he is learning lifelong tools from meeting the mentor. Before the youth was enrolled in SOCAT, crisis was being called several times a week. After the first month of receiving SOCAT services, there have been no crisis calls!



Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

[Children's Mental Health Awareness Day](#) (CMHAD) is right around the corner, and SOCAT is gearing up for awareness festivities. The theme for this year is "Suicide Prevention: Strategies That Work." CMHAD will be observed on May 9th, but there are various events being held throughout the month. CMHAD was first observed in 2005 in Washington D.C. and has now spread across the United States.

The purpose of CMHAD is to raise awareness for community-based mental health services, promote positive brain architecture, and foster resilience in children and youth. We want to show that regardless of mental health status, youth and young adults can contribute positively to their communities. Make sure to follow us on social media to stay up to date on CMHAD events that will be held across the state. Below are some resources you can use to help promote the health and wellbeing of all children!

Outreach

- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (NSPL)
(1-800-273-8255)
 - [Ayuda En Español](#) (NSPL)
- NSPL [Resource for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or have hearing loss](#)
 - [TN Statewide Crisis Phone Line](#)
- [Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network](#)
 - [The Trevor Project](#)
 - [National Crisis Text Line](#)
- [You can text TN to 741741 to connect to the Crisis Text Line](#)
- [Tennessee Crisis Services & Suicide Prevention](#)

Fact Sheets

- [suicidology.org Fact Sheet](#)
- [AFSP State Fact Sheets](#)
 - [CDC Fact Sheet](#)
- [Trevor Project Fact Sheet](#)

The Natchez Trace Bridge Barrier Coalition

Article by: Sarah Elmer

The Natchez Trace Bridge Barrier Coalition (NTBBC) was formed in September 2018 by two survivors of suicide loss at the Natchez Trace Bridge, Trish Merelo and Sarah Elmer. Trish's son died by suicide, and Sarah lost her sister, as well as a friend. Sarah and Trish met at an annual event put on by the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN). The catalyst for the coalition was a determination by these families to turn their grief into action, preventing further loss of life at Middle Tennessee's "suicide magnet."

The goal of the coalition is to obtain federal approval and funding for a suicide-prevention barrier installation on the Natchez Trace Bridge. Research has shown an 86% reduction in suicides across similar sites after the installation of physical barriers.

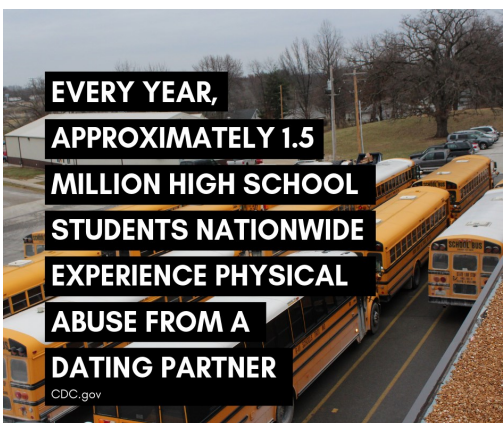
According to the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, the removal of barriers at the Grafton Bridge in Auckland, New Zealand led to a 500% increase in the number of suicides at the site. After the barriers were reinstalled, that number dropped to zero.

The NTBBC has received tremendous support from Centerstone, the TSPN, Sen. Bill Frist and Tracy Roberts, Sen. Lamar Alexander, U.S. Rep. Mark Green, TN state Rep. Sam Whitson, and many other community advocates. We're dedicated to raising awareness around this need, as the lack of reporting has allowed the problem to go unchecked. We attend community events and encourage others to come support us and make their voices heard. The NTBBC is also dedicated to mental health advocacy, having participated in the AFSP's Out of the Darkness Walks in and around the Nashville area. Please like and follow our [Facebook page](#) to show your support and keep up to date on our progress. You can also subscribe to our newsletter on our website at raisethebarNTB.com.



#teenDVmonth

For our readers who follow us on social media, you may remember our posts about #teenDVmonth. Every February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, which aims to raise awareness around violence, abuse, and harassment in teen relationships. While February has come and gone, teen dating violence is a topic that should be talked about year round. Use this page to help build your resources for those who may be experiencing dating violence.



[National Domestic Violence Hotline](https://www.nvhl.org/): 1-800-799-7233

Tennessee Statewide Domestic Helpline: 1-800-799-7233

Warning Signs

- [Physical hurting](#)
- [Threats](#)
- [Extreme jealousy](#)
- [Name calling](#)
- [Possessiveness](#)
- [Put downs](#)
- [Restricting contact with loved ones](#)
- [Violating physical boundaries](#)

Starting the Conversation

- [7 Tips for Starting the Conversation](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Teen Dating Violence](#)
- [Talking to College Students](#)
- [A Place to S.T.A.R.T.](#)

Resources

- loveisrespect.org
- breakthecycle.org
- [Dating Matters](#)
- [Shifting Boundaries](#)
- [Tennessee Domestic Violence Help](#)

Fact Sheets

- [Understanding Teen Dating Violence](#)
- [YWCA Fact Sheet](#)
- [Dating Abuse Statistics](#)
- [Children's Safety Network](#)
- [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)

Surfing Safely

Social media and internet safety have been major discussion topics over the past few months. Most of the talk surrounding social media and internet usage comes from a negative place. The conversation typically centers around the danger and unrealistic living expectations pushed on us via the internet. Social media is not going away anytime soon, so we must find ways to promote healthy usage of the internet for people of all ages. Happy scrolling!

If you can't beat em, join em! Have you thought about making your family sign [social media contracts](#)? As the digital landscape changes, it's important to allow youth to [navigate the internet safely](#).

Spending too much time on the internet and social media can be [unhealthy](#). Youth and young adults are not the only ones who spend a lot of time on online. Here is a [guide for adults](#) on limiting phone usage.

Having a [healthy](#) relationship with social media is possible. Taking a [break](#) or spending less time on social media can be beneficial.

[Teens](#) are avid social media users, but social media does not always have a positive impact on young adults. There are some [do's and don'ts](#) when talking to teens about being safe on social media.

There are ways to [teach](#) kids of all ages how to navigate the internet safely. Teaching kids to be [smart](#) on the internet starts with an open and honest [conversation](#). If you don't know where to start, here is a [guide](#)!





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



System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT) builds on two decades of System of Care experience and focuses on young children, children, youth, and young adults, and their families. SOCAT utilizes the System of Care values and principles while empowering Tennessee families to work together with child-serving agencies as partners to guide their care. To make a referral, click [HERE](#).



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To learn more about System of Care Across Tennessee and the work our team is doing in your community, visit our website at SOCacrossTN.org.