



April
2020



System of Care Across Tennessee

Letter from the Director: Keri Virgo



I am writing this with the sincerest hope that each of you is safe and healthy. Like many of you, I have more time than I could ever want to reflect and think about the state of the world we are living in. Having or caring for someone with a mental health condition can be hard on any day, but the challenges stemming from Covid-19 have brought about an additional set of barriers and fears. Families who rely on childcare and meals through schools are now struggling to provide for their families in multiple ways. There is a pressure to be productive, manage a household, and somehow keep the entire family safe and healthy at the same time. It's easy to imagine the anxiety our families are feeling because we are likely experiencing a lot of the same emotions ourselves.

What has become clear is that, in this time of uncertainty, it can be very hard to be alone. While we may be social distancing with family members or loved ones under the same roof, we may feel more lonely without the distractions of our daily lives. People are losing their jobs, their businesses, and most importantly of all, the people they love. On Monday, March

30th, it was announced that there had been a significant spike in the number of deaths by suicide in the Knox County area. My fear is that this will not be isolated to any one area as we continue to face this global situation.

My plea to you all is to remember that we serve an at-risk population, one that has often been marginalized even when times are good. When we decided to work in the mental healthcare field, we promised to be there for vulnerable persons when others could not be. In this time of physical isolation, we ask that you increase your outreach. We have always been impressed with your creativity when it comes to connecting with your families, and this is the time to utilize those skills. Do whatever you can to let them know they are not alone.

Our families often say that they have no natural supports, and if this is truly the case, how alone must they feel right now? You have the incredible ability to provide some stability and additional support to these families while we all walk on this uneven ground. We are not just staying home to protect our physical health—we must continue to prioritize our collective mental wellbeing.

We are continuously grateful for your commitment to bettering the lives of those you serve. You are important, amazing folks who make the Tennessee system of care what it is. The heart you bring to what you do everyday is evident and so important. Please continue to take care of yourself and your own families, stay safe, and remember that you are not alone in this.

Sincerely,
Keri



System of Care Across Tennessee Services

The System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT) offers high-fidelity wraparound to 87 counties across the state. Our team has enrolled over 200 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 children, youth, young adults, and their families, ages 0-21, 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 (Department of Children's Services) custody.

Our providers are:

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

To learn more about eligibility and the referral process, visit this link or contact SOCAT Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator, Benita Hayes, at [615-445-9094](tel:615-445-9094) or SOC.TAcenter@tn.gov.

Contents

04

System of Care Guiding Principles: A Closer Look

05

Youth and Young Adult Coordinator Update

06

COVID-19 Resources

08

Team Self-Care Stay Connected

10

At Home Self-Care

11

New SOCAT Staff

12

Upcoming Events

13

Connect With Us

TN

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





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



Y/YA Coordinator Update



Spring is typically a season of change, but no one expected it to be this much change. From schools closing and moving to online curriculums, to medical appointments being cancelled or switching to tele-health, change is a near constant right now. We wake up each day not knowing what the news will inform us about the latest infection rates or stay-at-home orders.

You may be feeling the urge to get out there and help your community, to come up with innovative ways to connect creatively with other young people. There may even be a newfound pressure to complete grand projects with your extra time or to help those who are more vulnerable. Those ideas sound great, but my biggest request to the youth advocates and leaders is to stay home and take care of yourselves first.

Remember what airline attendants say before take-off: in case of an emergency, please put your oxygen mask on before assisting other passengers. It's the same truth that we must apply to our reality now. Before you can step up and support other people, though, you have to check in with yourself. Make sure you are doing okay. You do not have to be defined by your productivity, and you are allowed to prioritize your wellbeing.

If you have a WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan), utilize the wellness tools you identified in there. If you do not have one, consider what your sleep and meal routine looks like when you are going about business as usual and feeling well. Do your best to replicate that during times of greater stress. Take advantage of the extra daylight time and add some outdoor coping skills into your toolbox. Decorate the sidewalk with chalk, toss a football around with your family, go for a walk, or even try camping in your backyard.


Most importantly, make sure you are still connecting with your support system albeit virtually. This is a tempting time to isolate, but connection is one of the most important wellness tools. If you are a young person between the ages of 16 and 30 living with mental illness or navigating systems, email me at jules.wilson@tn.gov to find out about how to get involved with our State-wide Young Adult Leadership Council, which is currently meeting virtually. We will continue to meet via online video platforms on the first Saturday of the month until it is safe to be in person again.



COVID-19 Resources

We know a lot is going on in the world right now, and there is a lot of uncertainty from day to day. In a time where it feels like there is nothing we can do, it is important to us that we can continue to share resources and information. SOCAT is committed to supporting the children and families of Tennessee in any way possible. This newsletter will be dedicated to resource sharing, so we can do our part to ensure that the people of Tennessee can be informed and have access to the resources they need during this challenging time.

Crisis Lines



[TN Statewide Crisis
Phone Line](#)

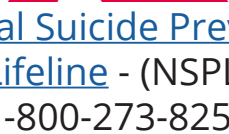
855-CRISIS-1 (855-274-7471)



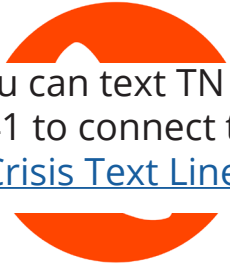
[Ayuda En Español](#) - (NSPL)



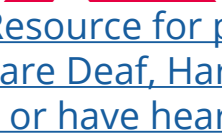
[The Trevor Project](#)



[National Suicide Prevention
Lifeline](#) - (NSPL)
(1-800-273-8255)



You can text TN to
741741 to connect to the
[Crisis Text Line](#)



[NSPL Resource for people
who are Deaf, Hard of
Hearing, or have hearing loss](#)



[Veteran Crisis Line](#)



COVID-19 Resources

To Stay Up to Date



State Resources



Team Self-Care

“This Strange, Weird Season of Life”



Many of us probably thought we had “been there, done that.” That is, until the COVID-19 pandemic came along. For those of us in the SOCAT community, we have seen our share of celebrations and disappointments, successes and defeats, and we continue to learn from those and move forward with what we do daily. Regardless of your title, profession, position in life, family status, financial worth, or faith background, we come to this work because we are invested and believe we add value. We come to this work because we are leaders--peer leaders, professional leaders, community leaders, faith leaders, and family leaders. We lead, it is what we do. We stand beside and educate others so they can lead from where they are. So when it comes to stepping back, minimizing

contact, and learning to educate and lead differently, we accept that challenge head on. But we have also had to learn how to care for ourselves differently than ever before. We have had to learn that while many of us are “working from home,” we are working through an unprecedented event and that requires a skill set that has not been used before. We are supporting loved ones who are essential and face the toughest situations on a daily basis. We are being called upon to do things we have never done before. As I think personally of the leadership I provide to those who depend on me during this time, I am learning to depend on them even more than before. I am continuing to learn that leading does not always mean being in front. And I am consistently reminded of the incredibly different ways that leadership involves teamwork. As we continue to learn and live together through this season, remember you and your leadership are invaluable in our work.

– Melissa McGee

“A Season of Uncertainty, the Comfort of Community”



How many times have you heard we are living in a time of uncertainty? It is true. However, some things are certain: families and children continue to need to thrive and not just survive. A paramount concern is the ability for families to know, have access to, and engage resources within their community. SOCAT has recognized and embraced the challenge to support our most vulnerable and unique population, children and families. Applying the community-based approach of a system of care, the divisional coordinators are linking SOCAT teams with an array of supportive services for families that are accessed within the community by delivery, video conferencing, and phone. These services encompass food, clothing, utility and rent payment assistance, self-care information, and activities for children and families. The response from parents to this method of connection and resource sharing are encouraging, confirming the necessity of a community-based approach. The favorable responses continue to show SOCAT’s strength in providing timely and needed services.

– Laritha Fentress

Team Self-Care

“Caring for Ourselves and Each Other in a Season of Uncertainty”



If there is something good that has come out of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be that the topics of self-care and mental health have moved, at long last, into the spotlight. We have all read articles, tips, and ideas for different ways to promote these important topics during this time. Keeping in mind not all things work for all people, a few of the things that have worked for me and my family are varied, different, and lots of fun! For my family of four, we have gotten outside much more than usual to walk at the park trails in our area. This gives us a chance to exercise for our physical health and being outdoors is good for our mental health. We talk and laugh, and that gives our spirits a real boost and time to connect! My daughter has found a new hobby in diamond art, and my son is starting to learn some new skills such as Morse Code. My husband has gotten a lot more yard work done, and a few areas in the house have gotten the clutter cleared out. My newest activity has been repotting my houseplants and getting the garden ready. Obviously, we are grateful this is happening in the spring and not the winter, so we can spend more time outside! As a family we have taken advantage of technology and have had online visits with friends and family. This has helped us stay in touch and remember we are all in this together...just apart!

– Jill Murphy

While there are a lot of unknowns in the world right now, one thing that is certain is that we need to protect our mental health--especially during a crisis. Wellness and self-care look a little different right now, but with a little bit of tailoring, we can still take time out of the craziness to take care of ourselves. Some overall wellness practices to be aware of is limiting news exposure, keeping regular contact with loved ones, and keeping a routine as much as possible. Our hearts go out to you during this difficult time, and we hope this page helps you find additional comfort and strength.

Stay Connected

 zoom



Google Hangouts
Messaging, Voice and Video Calls

COVID-19 Music Relief

 WhatsApp

Netflix Party

At Home Self-Care



Crystal Hutchins
Healthy Transitions Social Marketing Specialist

COVID Quarantine Self-Care

Through the quarantine it can be challenging to balance school, work, and self-care. You have to make time to understand what your mind and body may need. This can mean taking time to develop a school, work, and self-care schedule. Here are some tips on how to do that.

1. Start to get into a routine. Wake up and go to bed at the same time.
2. Separate work and personal time. Make sure you set hours to work and try not to do school work or regular work past a certain hour.
3. Utilize good weather. When there is nice weather, take a short walk with your dog, your kids, or even just by yourself to get some fresh air.
4. Develop healthy eating habits. Make sure you listen to your body when it tells you it's hungry, and try and get the proper nutrition you need to stay healthy.
5. Get 8 hours of sleep a night! This will help you to be ready to take on everything tomorrow has to offer!

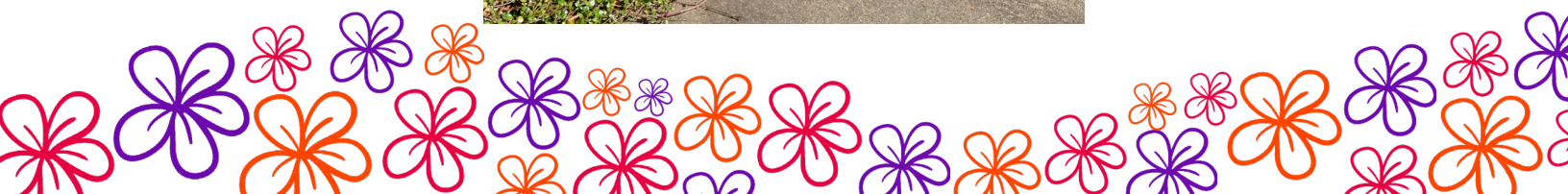


New SOCAT Staff

Antwan O'Neal Cook is the new Social Marketing Coordinator for TN Voices. He has experience in social media advertising, photography, videography, graphic design, and an extensive background in music production. With over 10 years of social marketing experience, his expertise will ensure that TN Voices continues to reach and impact our digital communities. Antwan, being previously employed as Marketing Director at an emerging barbershop, was able to significantly increase the business's virtual presence, by creating trendy and vivid content for its diverse clientele.

Antwan was born and raised in Mobile, AL, and graduated high school and attended college in south Mississippi. Over the years, he has volunteered and participated in various mentorship programs, where he did public speaking and collaborated with local youth organizations for special events. Aside from being a licensed barber in both Tennessee and Mississippi, Antwan is also a professional music producer, singer-songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist.

— Welcome Antwan! —



Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE!

MAY 14, 2020

9:00AM - 3:00PM (CDT)

CHILDREN, YOUNG ADULTS & FAMILIES WEB-A-PALOOZA

TDMHSAS Office of Children, Young Adults & Families presents

a one-day Webconference in honor of Children's Mental Health Awareness Month

Register for Free!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/104757321970>

- 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM**
 - POSITIVE PARENTING IN A PANDEMIC**
 - The Regional Intervention Program (RIP)'s 8 Strategies for parents of young children, revisited for our current times
- 10:00 AM - 10:45 AM**
 - ANOTHER PERSON'S SUFFERING: WHY IT MATTERS FOR ME**
 - Understanding secondary trauma responses
- 10:45 AM - 11:30 AM**
 - WE ARE FAMILY: IN THIS TOGETHER**
 - Family Support in our current reality
- 11:30 AM - 12:15 PM**
 - SUPPORTING YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS THROUGH COVID-19**
 - "When the world went virtual and it wasn't everything I'd hoped"
- 12:15 PM - 1:00 PM**
 - VIRTUAL RESOURCE FAIR**
 - TDMHSAS RESOURCES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN, YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS, & FAMILIES
- 1:00 PM - 1:45 PM**
 - WE'VE ALL LOST SOMETHING**
 - Helping Children, Youth, and Young Adults Navigate Grief and Loss during COVID-19
- 1:45 PM - 3:00 PM**
 - WORDS MATTER**
 - Gender Pronouns 101

 **East Tennessee
Mental Health &
Substance Abuse Services**

Upcoming Events



Spring Family Peer Leadership Academy

Friday, May 15, 2020, 9:00 AM to 1:30 PM

Discover your Leadership potential, Improve your Leadership Skills, and Virtually Network with other Family Support Specialists from across Tennessee!

This training will help you gain the skills to become an empowered leader. You have the ability to affect real change.

[Register for the Virtual Zoom Event Here](#)

This training is designed specifically for Certified Family Support Specialists and individuals eligible for certification.

For additional information, please contact:
Brenda Donaldson, Brenda.Donaldson@tn.gov
Kathy Rogers, krogers@tnvoices.org





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](#).



Follow us on
 Facebook
[@SOCacrossTN](#)



Follow us on
 Instagram
[@SOCacrossTN](#)



Follow us on
 Twitter
[@SOCacrossTN](#)



Connect with us on
 LinkedIn
[System of Care Across](#)