



SYSTEM OF CARE ACROSS TENNESSEE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2021



WHAT'S INSIDE

- A Letter From The Director
- Mission, Core Values, Vision
- Guiding Principles
- Guide to Managing Mental Health Around the Holidays
- Engagement During COVID-19: A Success Story
- Youth Engagement Update
- Upcoming Trainings

MENTAL ILLNESS IS NOT FOUGHT ALONE

@NOTALONENOTES

I once felt utterly alone,
like I was fighting an uneven battle,
me against my innumerable struggles.
The difference came when I found
others fighting similar battles.
Together we win the war.



A child wearing a dark winter hat with a pom-pom and a patterned scarf is visible in the background, looking down. The scene is set in a snowy environment.

Greetings!

Oh, what a wonderful time of year! The joys of the seasonal changes are so refreshing and revitalizing. In reflecting over the past twenty-one months, it is renewing to know that we have faced some daunting challenges in our world, yet we all stayed the course to assure that the mental health needs of children, young adults and families in Tennessee were never put on the back burner.

The past months have shown us that it is possible to inspire HOPE! I have gotten to hear inspiring stories about times that our teams were able to provide light and hope to families in some of their darkest times. If a person does not have hope, everything takes effort—even breathing. It will continue to be our goal with System of Care Across Tennessee (SOCAT) to make sure that all of you have hope for a new day, and I am excited to support our teams in building that hope for the years to come. It is with great pride that we have managed to expand our SOCAT teams to have full coverage in all counties of Tennessee. With SOCAT, we've exceeded the number of families we planned to serve, we forged relationships we never saw coming, and we implemented a complex and intensive evidence-based practice. Just imagine what will happen in the coming years!

Kind regards,
Keri Virgo, Director
Office of Children, Young Adults and Families



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 grounded on SOC values and principles.

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.

CORE VALUES

- To be family-driven and youth-guided with the strengths and needs of the child/youth/young adult and family determining the types of services and supports provided.
- To be community-based with the primary services as well as the system management resting within a supportive, adaptive infrastructure of structures, processes, and relationships at the community level.
- To be culturally and linguistically competent with agencies, programs, and services that reflect the cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences of the populations they serve in order to help people access and use the correct services and supports and to remove inequalities in care.

SYSTEM OF CARE

**TN Department of Mental
Health and Substance Abuse
Services (TDMHSAS)**

Keri Virgo

*Director of Office of Children,
Young Adults and Families*

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Assistance Coordinator*

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To refer email:

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Or Visit:

**[https://socacrosstn.org/
make-a-referral/](https://socacrosstn.org/make-a-referral/)**

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

Incorporate or link with mental health promotion, prevention, and early identification and intervention 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.

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

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

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

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

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

Ensure that families, other caregivers, and youth are full partners in all aspects of the planning and delivery of their own services and in the policies and procedures that govern care for all children and youth in their communities, states, territories, tribes, and nation

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

SYSTEM OF CARE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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



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

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

MCLEAN'S GUIDE TO MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH AROUND THE HOLIDAYS

EXPERTS SHARE THE BEST WAYS TO MANAGE IF YOUR DAYS AREN'T ALL MERRY AND BRIGHT

"Elvis once crooned about feeling blue at Christmas time—and we're here to tell you: It's perfectly normal to feel that way. There are a variety of reasons why your days may not be merry and bright around the holiday season. It can be the jam-packed social calendar, deadlines at work, the loss of a loved one, sunless winter days, or all of the above. According to the American Psychological Association, 38% of people surveyed said their stress increased during the holiday season, which can lead to physical illness, depression, anxiety, and **substance misuse**. The reasons given: lack of time, financial pressure, gift-giving, and family gatherings.

To make matters worse, the **National Alliance on Mental Illness** noted that 64% of individuals living with a mental illness felt that their conditions worsened around the holidays.

However, there are ways in which we can prepare ourselves and hopefully deflect some of the increased stress of the holidays. It's important to realize that we do have more control than we think we do. However, it's equally important to realize that even if we put these ideas into practice and continue to feel overwhelmed or depressed, professional help is available.

We've identified six common issues that come up this time of year, as well as suggestions from our mental health experts for ways to address them...."


Find the rest of the article here!





ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19: A SUCCESS STORY

Jen Rich,
*SOCAT Care Coordinator
Perry County*



Engagement with families is such an important skill to have while working in the mental health field. My colleagues and I are constantly looking for new ideas and challenging ourselves in this area. We often talk about the topic of engagement in trainings, staff meetings, and day to day conversations. We know that getting trust and building relationships with families is the key to successful engagement. While this wasn't always easy before COVID-19, having the one-on-one human interaction piece we relied on became unavailable and challenged us on a whole new level. With this sudden and drastic shift to a virtual world, this change caused us to reevaluate how we think about engaging with children, youth, caregivers, and families.

As the pandemic continued, those of us in helping roles had to learn a new skill: How to engage families from a distance and via devices through a screen. It may sound odd, but at times it was often easier to get into someone's home than it was to get into someone's computer. Initially after the shift to virtual, many visits were cancelled or shortened. In my opinion, the lack of in-person human interaction was hard for a lot of families. Due to the personal nature of our roles, the lack of human connection created a disconnect as we tried to engage through a screen.

But we did not give up! We did the best we could to overcome these challenges. If a meeting was just 15 minutes, we made the most out of those 15 minutes, by playing games or other activities to connect and engage families. Many of us, in addition to our virtual visits, started sending a lot more "just thinking about you" texts, mailing hand written notes, or emailing activities. We hoped that our families could feel a more personal partnership with us.

Now, almost two years later, the "new normal" has gotten easier. Many of our families are new enrollments and virtual is the only way they know SOCAT. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all in so many ways. As with everything, we had to learn to roll with it. While we made it work virtually, I personally am excited to get back into the homes, schools, and communities, giving us additional opportunities for engagement in-person as well as virtually.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

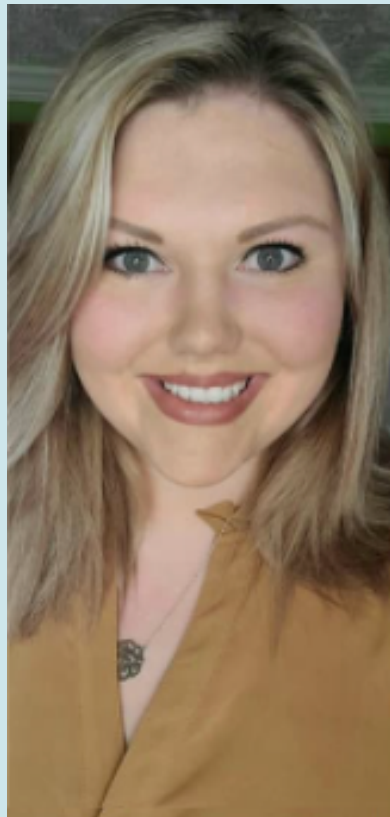
Youth M.O.V.E. (Motivating Others through Voices of Experience) aims to develop local youth-led chapters across Tennessee for individuals who have lived experience in various systems, working together to inspire change. Our Youth Engagement Specialists are working to begin implementing **Youth M.O.V.E. Councils** in the coming months, across the state of Tennessee. Youth MOVE Councils are for youth ages 10 to 16, peer based and peer led, and will have several educational and leadership opportunities.

Continue to be on the lookout for updates and information regarding Youth M.O.V.E. For any additional information needed, please feel free to reach out to your Youth Engagement Specialists. Their contact info can be found below.

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615-478-5548

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Sabrina and Kayla can also be reached at
youthmove@tnvoices.org



Sabrina Fillers



Kayla Cribbs

UPCOMING EVENTS

JAN- UARY

JANUARY 3 – INTERNATIONAL MIND-BODY WELLNESS DAY

JANUARY 12 - PRIORITIZING YOUR SELF-CARE TRAINING
(1:00-2:00 PM CST)

JANUARY 18 – TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE (9:00-10:30 AM CST),
WITH MELISSA MCGEE

JANUARY 18 - FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: PRIORITIZING YOUR
SELF-CARE (11:00-12:00 PM CST)

FEB- RUARY

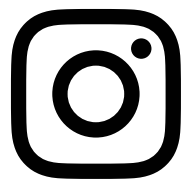
FEBRUARY – INTRODUCTION TO WRAPAROUND

FEBRUARY – YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

MAR- CH

MARCH 20 – INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS

MARCH 30 – WORLD BIPOLAR DAY



**CHECK OUT THE SOCAT WEBSITE [HERE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON EVENTS, AND CHECK OUT OUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MORE
MENTAL HEALTH RELATED DAYS!**



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



CENTERSTONE

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CHILDREN & YOUTH



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HEALTHCARE[™]

Pathways



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