

# THE OUTLOOK

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER



## MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Recently, we were asked by Governor Ivey to describe significant policy changes and how our work benefits the citizens of Alabama. Knowing that many of you offered valuable input toward the current ADMH Long-range Plan, we would also like to briefly update you regarding the department's strategic long-range planning. We began working in November 2017 with the creation of our Mission and Vision statements, which are now on all ADMH official templates, the website and other materials. This initial work launched our journey into an intensive process of inclusive planning and staff engagement to create the wildly important goal (the "WIG"), which is *Opening the Gateway to Care*.

We then determined that there are two "Battles": *Expand our quality workforce, and Assure individuals get the right care, at the right time, in the right place*. Each of those battles is essential to achieving the WIG! Next, each DMH division engaged in an intensive collaborative process to determine its sub-battles and the specific measures that will support fulfilling the objectives of their particular division. This kind of attention to the needs of our department and the individuals we serve demonstrates "who we are" as a department, as we focus on the care given and commitment to those individuals. But we know that there is more we can do to increase efficiencies and accessibility going forward.

As we move into the holiday season, I want to thank all of you for helping to form the plan and for your role in implementing the first stages of each of the sub-battles. Our work matters: your efforts change lives as you Serve Empower & Support individuals in the community and in our facilities. Thank you for being an essential of component of ADMH. My personal best wishes to you and yours for a healthy and happy holiday season!

*Steve Beshear*



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Want to be included in the next issue? Send us your stories, achievements, initiatives, events...etc!

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Project | SEARCH®



Those participating typically rely on family members to provide transportation. In rural counties, this can be a challenge. In Baldwin County, some interns are required to commute more than 30 miles, one way. For many families this daily commute can create a financial hardship.

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) has assisted interns in Baldwin County with transportation expenses since the program's inception in Fairhope almost seven years ago. ADRS funded bus passes for interns to utilize the Baldwin County Rural Transportation service (BRATs). However, the program was encouraged to explore other resources to assist with the ongoing and rising cost of transportation.

After several meetings and negotiations, BRATs received a check from the Baldwin County Commission and Baldwin County state legislators Chris Elliot and Matt Simpson for assistance in transportation. Because of this generous donation, the interns will continue to use the BRATs to attend Project SEARCH as they prepare today for the challenges of tomorrow!

Project SEARCH is a unique, business-led, one-year employment preparation program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The program in Alabama is a collaborative partnership and initiative between local school systems, local community rehabilitation programs, the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities, the State Department of Education, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Alabama Department of Mental Health and businesses across the state.



*Sherry-lea Bloodworth Boto, Public Information Officer/Community Engagement Manager, Chris Elliott, State Senator and Matt Simpson, State Representative presented a check to Eddie Tyler, Superintendent of Baldwin County Public Schools on behalf of the program.*

## PROJECT SEARCH RECEIVES \$25,000 DONATION

FROM BALDWIN COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

While the goal of Project SEARCH is competitive employment, student interns also learn and develop independent living skills. A common barrier to employment as well as participation in Project SEARCH can be transportation to and from the business each day.

# Mental Health & the Holidays

A few things to keep in mind.

## FEELING DOWN?

1 in 3 Americans feel sad or lonely during the holidays. Just know it's normal and you're not alone.

## It's Okay to SAY "NO"

Keeping commitments manageable helps keep unnecessary stress at bay.

## CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN

Things may not always go as planned. Try to stay focused only on what you CAN fix.

## CHOOSE WISELY

If you know Aunt Mary's get-togethers always stress you out, politely decline and do something else that brings you JOY!

## SKIP THE BOOZE

Spirits can't lift depressed spirits and lowered inhibitions can result in a holiday-ruining episode.

## REACH OUT

Stay connected with friends & family or find a support group to help you cope when you're down in the dumps.

**UAB MEDICINE**

Knowledge that will change your world

# OPIOID TRAINING INSTITUTE



The Alabama Opioid Training Institute, a collaboration between the Alabama Department of Mental Health and the Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy, is a free one-day education program that includes programs for Community Leaders intended to raise awareness of Opioid Use Disorder and empower communities and individuals to take part in and collaborate with efforts battling the opioid crisis.

In addition, program offerings are available for Healthcare Providers intended to provide medical professionals with the knowledge needed to assist with prevention of new Opioid Use Disorder instances.

The Opioid Training Institutes began in May 2019 and concluded September 2019. However, webinar offerings will continue for the next four years. As a result of the four-month face-to-face trainings, 1,066 total registrants attended the statewide offerings (455 Community/611 Healthcare) <http://alabamaoti.org/>.

Did You Know?

ADMH is on  
LinkedIn!



Follow us to see  
jobs posted!

AND...BE SURE TO CHECK THE  
ADMH WEBSITE FOR ALL  
EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION!

# THE STEPPING UP INITIATIVE

## FIRST YEAR OUTCOMES

The Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) expanded **Stepping Up Alabama** this year to five community mental health authorities (CMHC's). The program establishes effective partnerships with law enforcement, local governmental entities, elected officials, mental health and healthcare providers, social service providers, courts and other partners, to meet the goal of decreasing the number of persons with mental illness and substance abuse in jails and hospitals.

**The Dannon Project**, a Birmingham organization dedicated to assisting the unemployed or underemployed, at-risk youth and non-violent offenders reentering society, has helped the CMHC's in their mission to implement the program, inform and educate communities on Stepping Up Alabama.

In the first year of the Stepping Up Alabama, over 2,000 individuals were screened in community jails and hospitals with over 1,500 screened positive for serious mental illness (SMI), 73% of inmates screened positive and 53% of ER patients screened positive. Over 150 individuals received case management services and 80% of individuals who received case management services also received mental health treatment. Only 10% of those who screened positive for SMI were re-arrested

The program's successes can be credited to:

- Developing strong collaborations among previously siloed agencies
- Brokering strong relationships between jails, hospitals, mental health centers and other community resources
- Identifying sources of funding for sustainability
- Garnering media attention around the issue
- Increasing community awareness and education through media exposure and hosting seven Crucial Conversations
- Developing relationships with jails to improve data management systems
- Utilization of data for decision making among key stakeholders

Some barriers experienced are: strains placed on county jails due to varied staff levels, inconsistent data management, space and security for screenings, lack of financial resources to support case management in jails and varying environments. Changing misconceptions about data sharing and maintaining established relationships after administration changes in local law enforcement or elected positions can help to improve the program.



Moving forward, the Dannon Project will continue technical assistance and training to three of the Year 1 sites and in Year 2, five new sites will receive these services. Two of the Year 1 sites have received "Innovator Status".

A user-friendly data system will be used to improve data collection and management. Sites and stakeholders will be coached on best methods for collecting baseline recidivism data so cost-benefit analysis can be conducted.

If continued progress is made and an investment by all partners is sustained, communities can benefit from:

- Increased treatment for individuals living with mental illness
- More efficient use of public funds
- Less strain on jails and law enforcement
- Increased peace of mind for families and the community
- Healthier community members
- Greater prosperity for the entire community

# 8

Tips For

## Mental Wellness During

- THE HOLIDAYS -



The holiday season is a busy time for most. There is so much to do, attend and plan, which can bring up feelings of being overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, and depressed. Conversely, this is also a time where people may feel acutely aware of the void left by the loss of a loved one, and their own personal loneliness.

### Who is affected?

Holiday depression, anxiety and stress can affect anyone at any age. Sometimes, these feelings are triggered by a specific event or life experience. There are many things happening around the holidays that can act as triggers.

### What can I do about this?

Holiday depression, stress, anxiety can be managed. Many people who experience depression, anxiety and stress during the holidays may think that they should just be able to 'get over it' on their own. Others may need time to recognize how deeply this affects their life. If your holiday depression, anxiety or stress seems severe or is interfering with your life, talk to a mental health care professional.

### How can I help a loved one?

Supporting a loved one who is experiencing holiday depression, anxiety or stress can be difficult. You may not understand why your loved one feels or acts a certain way. Some people who experience this feel like they have to do things a certain way or avoid things or situations, and this can create frustration or conflict with others. Support can be a delicate balance, but you should expect recovery—in time.

### Here are some general tips:

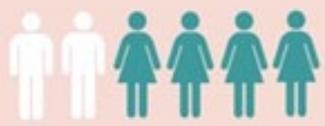
- Ask your loved one how you can help them.
- Be patient—learning and practicing new coping strategies takes time.
- If your loved one is learning new skills, offer to help them practice.
- Listen and offer support, but avoid pushing unwanted advice.
- Set boundaries and seek support for yourself, if needed.

Here are some of the most common holiday triggers and tips to prevent and/or lessen holiday depression, anxiety and stress. Remember, that you always have a choice and there are options available to you.

1. **Budget:** There are many expenses during the holidays. Plan your budget in advance and don't stress about purchases.
2. **Family:** Not everyone gets along. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Set boundaries.
3. **Overindulging:** During the winter months, our activity slows and there are many opportunities to indulge in food and alcohol. When you plan your holiday schedule, allow opportunities for activity.
4. **Taking on too much:** You may overcommit or experience unrealistic expectations. Pace yourself and do not take on more responsibilities than you can handle. Cut out things that are not important.
5. **Loneliness and Isolation:** This can be a concern for many during the holidays. Pick up a winter hobby or join a group. Volunteer and make some new friends while helping those in need.
6. **Loss:** The holiday can be a reminder of the loss of a loved one. Acknowledge that the holidays won't be the same but this is an opportunity to create new traditions as a way to keep your loved one's memory alive. Spend time with supportive and caring people.
7. **Seasonal Affective Disorder:** This is a type of depression that's related to the change in seasons. Speak to a mental health professional for options for you.
8. **Year End Reflection:** As the year comes to a close, many of us reflect on what has changed, or stayed the same. Give yourself credit. Look to the future with optimism

Source: <https://www.mymentalhealth.ca/8-tips-for-mental-wellness-during-the-holidays/>

# Holiday Mental Health Facts



Women are more likely to feel that stress increases around the holidays.



25% of Americans feel "extremely stressed" during the holidays.

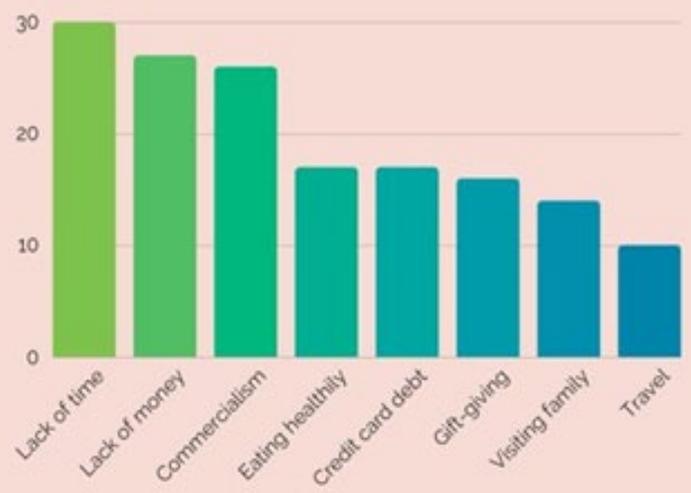


58% of those aged 35-44 admit to checking their work email on holidays.



Lower middle income individuals are more affected by holiday stress, due to the stress of work plus the seasonal rush and lack of time.

## Leading Holiday Stressors



## Tips to Reducing Holiday Stress

- Prioritize your mental health by developing a self-care routine.
- Light therapy or getting outside on sunny days can help alleviate symptoms of seasonal affective disorder.
- If you're in eating disorder recovery, create a plan with a list of triggers and healthy coping strategies.
- Seek counseling or get support from family & friends.

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## THE RESPECT INITIATIVE

### MILESTONES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Since the launch of the Respect Initiative of Alabama in 2018, seven training sessions have been held in various locations across the state. We now have 59 graduates of the program prepared to tell their stories of recovery from mental illnesses and substance use disorders. These sessions have been an overwhelming success, with several graduates saying that the training was a life-changing experience. We are receiving requests from consumers statewide who want to take the training. On a couple of occasions, ADMH has opened meetings with a graduate sharing their story. Responses from staff and attendees have been overwhelming. Many have commented that these stories remind them of why they work at the department and helps them see the importance of their work, even though they may not come in contact with people we serve on a daily basis.

We would like to encourage partners and providers to make use of this valuable asset by inviting graduates to share their 10-minute stories of hope and resilience at the beginning of departmental meetings, conferences, trainings, and other functions. Respect Initiative presentations could set a positive tone for meetings, empower the graduates to know that their stories are important, and remind staff of their motivations for serving in this field.

Any group that would like to host a Respect Initiative speaker for a meeting or event can contact the ADMH Peer Programs office at 334-242-3456 or 1-800-832-0952.

Are you, or a family member, struggling with addiction or in need of support?  
[www.rosshelpline4u.org](http://www.rosshelpline4u.org)

# 24/7 Helpline

# 844-307-1760

The South Central Alabama Mental Health Center showcased the My Smart Dose Opioid Prevention campaign at the Covington County Fair in late October with some fun messaging and characters! We thank the center for reaching out to their community and talking about this important topic!



**NAMICon 2020**  
Atlanta • July 15-18

Registration now open for the  
2020 NAMI National Convention  
<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-National-Convention/Registration-Information>

# JOIN IN THE CONVERSATION!

The **Alabama Community of Practice** now has a Facebook page! This is a closed group for people using the Charting the LifeCourse framework and resources. Here they share ideas, feedback and help each other enhance capacity to apply the Charting the LifeCourse framework to daily lives, in professional roles, and within organizations.

To join, simply click the link to the FB Group page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/alcommunityofpractice/> and Ask to Join!

Please share this page with all interested individuals and families!



## DID YOU KNOW?

Wings Across Alabama has a new website!

<https://wingsacrossal.org/> Check it out!



# Serve • Empower • Support