



Alabama Department of Mental Health
Charting a New Course
Annual Report FY22

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Dear Governor Ivey,

On behalf of the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH), I am pleased to present you with the department's Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report. It was a year of renewal for the department as we evaluated our mission and vision and took a deep dive into new goals. Based on interviews with 62 key stakeholders and 35 organizations, five key areas of focus served as the driving force behind the work. Senior staff met over the course of the year to research, plan, and detail five strategic priorities which will be implemented over the next three years.


During the fiscal year, we continued to chart a new course for mental health in Alabama with the three pioneer Crisis Centers opening their doors and serving more than 1385 individuals experiencing a mental health, substance use, or suicidal crisis. Also, on July 16, 2022, the first call to 988 was made to an Alabama call center. From mid-July until September 30, more than 8330 individuals called 988 to access care.

These critical additions to the Alabama Crisis System of Care save lives. There is nothing more important. We are thankful for the continued investment by the Office of the Governor and the Alabama Legislature, helping to expand and transform these vital services which dramatically lower healthcare costs, achieve better health outcomes, and improve access to care for Alabamians.

Fiscal Year 2022 was a year of positive momentum and of adversity as ADMH increased access to care and simultaneously faced the continuing challenges of a significant workforce shortage. Despite these challenges, the department's providers and partners have worked with diligence and dedication on many initiatives to maintain, increase or transform services for the individuals we serve.

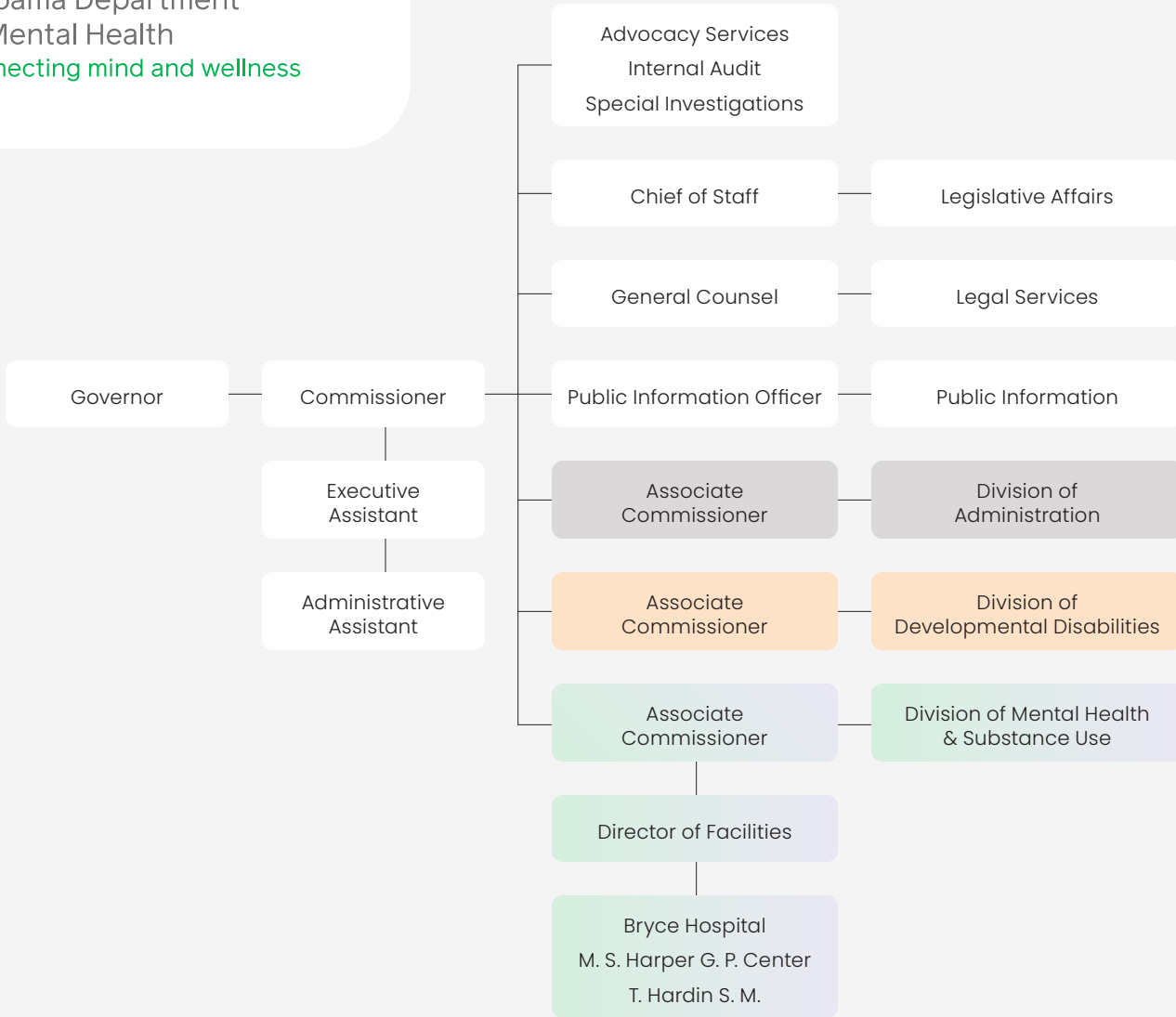
Compliance with the federal Home and Community Based Settings Rule was a significant focus of the year with work that included individual interviews with clients and providers, regional meetings, and reviews and evaluations of settings. This work is vital to ensuring individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have control and choice over employment, recreation, living arrangements and transportation.

We continue to be grateful to this administration, the legislature, and the citizens of Alabama. We thank stakeholders in the community who drive us to create new initiatives and expand existing programs to serve as many individuals as possible. We thank the department staff, providers, and partners across the state who are serving and caring for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorder and developmental disabilities in Alabama.


Kimberly G. Boswell, Commissioner



Alabama Department
of Mental Health
connecting mind and wellness



Division of Administration

- Certification Administration
- Facility Management
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Land & Assets
- Life Safety & Technical Services
- Nurse Delegation Program
- Nursing Pre-Admission Screening
- Policy & Planning

Division of Developmental Disabilities

- Administrative & Fiscal Operations
- Autism Services
- Infant & Early Childhood Special Programs
- Psychological & Behavioral Services
- Quality & Planning
- Self-Advocacy Services
- Support Coordination
- Supported Employment
- Systems Management
- System Transition & Waiver Development

Division of Mental Health & Substance Use

- Certification
- Deaf Services
- Mental Illness Community Programs
- Peer Programs
- Pharmacy
- Prevention Services
- Quality Improvement & Risk Management
- Substance Use Treatment Services

Alabama Department of Mental Health: Strategic Plan

With a mission to serve, empower and support, the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) serves more than 200,000 Alabama citizens with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders. Shortly before the start of FY22, the leadership of ADMH recognized a need and opportunity to develop a new strategic plan to guide the Department and its mission. Specifically, leadership was interested in developing a strategic plan that would:

- Guide the overall direction of the Department and serve as a touchstone for decision-making for the next three years
- Identify and build on strengths of the organization while also identifying potential challenges and opportunities
- Identify and engage diverse stakeholders in a meaningful way

During the research, discussions, and planning, five strategic priorities and goals were created. The priorities, thoughtfully developed with the achievement of mission and vision in mind, are the focus of the Department and will be implemented over the next three years.



A. System of Care & Partnerships: In coordination with our partners, provide integrated, prevention focused care so every Alabamian has access, without barriers, to services that meet their needs



B. Peer & Family Engagement: Benefit from the input and involvement of individuals and families through meaningful engagement and collaboration



C. Professional Workforce: Attract and retain a workforce that is highly qualified, diverse, and stable



D. Organizational Health: Promote a work environment that emphasizes teamwork and prioritizes wellness, innovation, and a connection to the mission



E. Knowledge & Awareness: Strengthen knowledge and increase awareness of ADMH so Alabamians have access to the resources and opportunities they need to be happier and healthier

Throughout the FY22 Annual Report, our initiatives, programs, testimonials, and success stories exemplify the dedicated work of ADMH staff, our providers and partners as seen through the lens of each of the five strategic priorities and goals.



System of Care and Partnerships

In coordination with our partners, provide integrated, prevention focused care so every Alabamian has access, without barriers, to services that meet their needs

Alabama Crisis System of Care: Charting the Course by Increasing Access to Care

In fiscal year 2022, the Alabama Crisis System of Care continued increasing access to care at a speed that has not been seen in many decades. The opening and operation of the three pioneer Crisis Centers; the evaluation and expansion of mobile crisis; and the transition to a new three-digit Suicide and Crisis Lifeline number, 988, have charted a new course in mental health care across every region in our state. Serving individuals with high-quality care, and producing successful results by supporting individuals through their recovery journey and beyond. The Alabama Crisis System of Care is a critical resource, saving lives, while decreasing the burden on law enforcement and emergency departments in Alabama.

WellStone Emergency Services Crisis Center (Huntsville), AltaPointe Behavioral Health Crisis Center (Mobile), and Carastar Health (Montgomery) assessed 1,385 individuals at their crisis centers, ensuring access to the right care at the right place.

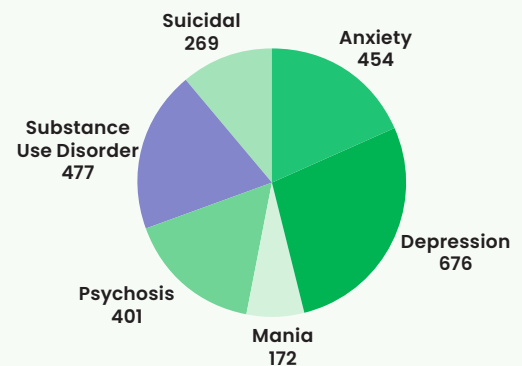
The Crisis Centers reflect a significant expansion in the ability to serve individuals more widely across the state, while serving as a designated place for law enforcement, and first responders to take an individual in a mental health crisis. Paula Steele, Director of WellStone Emergency Services, said, "For someone in crisis, there were only two options: you were either going to go to jail or you were going to go to the emergency room. And it just wasn't working."

BY THE NUMBERS

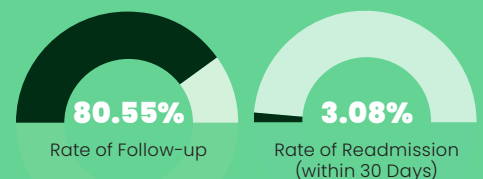
- 1385** Evaluations
- 940** Individuals who avoided Emergency Department Admission
- 344** Individuals who Avoided Jail Admission
- 90** Law Enforcement Drop-offs

PRESENTING SYMPTOMS

Individuals may present with Multiple Symptoms



FOLLOW-UP & READMISSION



¹ Source: SAMHSA National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care – Best Practice Toolkit

The centers offer core components of crisis care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year. This features assessment and linkage to resources, temporary (23 hours) and extended observation (<7 days), and collaboration with specialty providers for co-occurring disorders.

Services at Crisis Centers include an assessment and may also include medication management, individual and group therapy, peer support and discharge planning/warm handoff depending on an individual's unique situation. Ensuring the person who is being cared for knows what steps to take next is important when they leave a Crisis Center. *"We want people to understand that this crisis is just a moment in time, and we are part of their team and support network to help them through this time and empower them to find hope in their situation,"* said Steele.



Governor Ivey at the WellStone Emergency Services Crisis Center Ribbon Cutting

AltaPointe:

The AltaPointe Behavioral Health Crisis Center is located in Mobile and serves Baldwin, Washington, Clark, Conecuh, Escambia, and Monroe Counties. The phone number for AltaPointe Behavioral Health Crisis Center is (251) 450-2211.

Carastar:

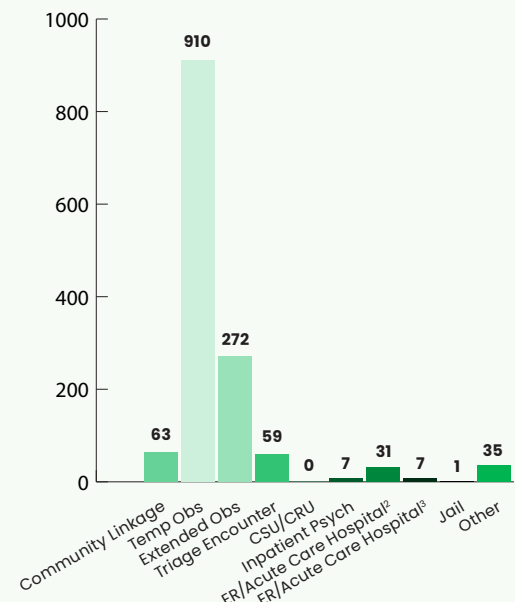
The Carastar Crisis Center is located in Montgomery, serving the entire River Region, and counties of Chambers, Lee, Russell, and Tallapoosa, in partnership with the community mental health centers of East Alabama and East Central Alabama. The phone number for the Carastar Health Crisis Center is (800) 408-4197.

WellStone:

The WellStone Emergency Services Crisis Center is located in Huntsville serving Cullman and Madison counties, and the surrounding counties of Fayette, Lamar, Marion, Walker, Winston, Lawrence, Limestone, Morgan, Jackson, Marshall, Cherokee, Dekalb, and Etowah. The phone number for WellStone Emergency Services Crisis Center is (256) 705-6444.

CARE REFERRAL

After Initial Crisis Evaluation



Data: Jan. - Sept. 2022

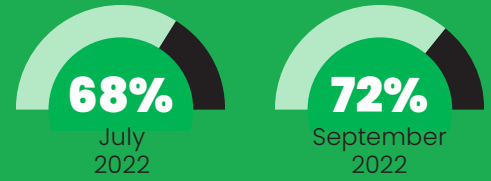
988: Lives Depend on It

On July 16, 2022, the ten digit Suicide and Crisis Lifeline number transitioned to 988, an easy-to-remember three digit number for all mental health, substance use, and suicide crises. 988 offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to decouple policing from a mental health or substance use crisis. It is part of a robust crisis system that can de-escalate mental health crises and connect individuals to the most appropriate care.

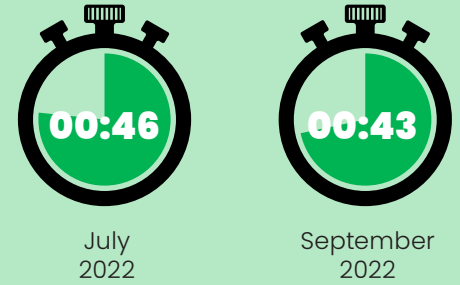
988 is more than just an easy-to-remember number—it's a direct connection to compassionate, accessible care and support for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress—whether that is thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. People can also dial 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need support.

988 calls are routed to the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline centers in each state with licensed counselors offering rapid access to behavioral health support through connection. In Alabama, the call centers are located in Mobile at AltaPointe Health, in Birmingham at The Crisis Center Birmingham, and in Huntsville at WellStone.

IN-STATE ANSWER RATE

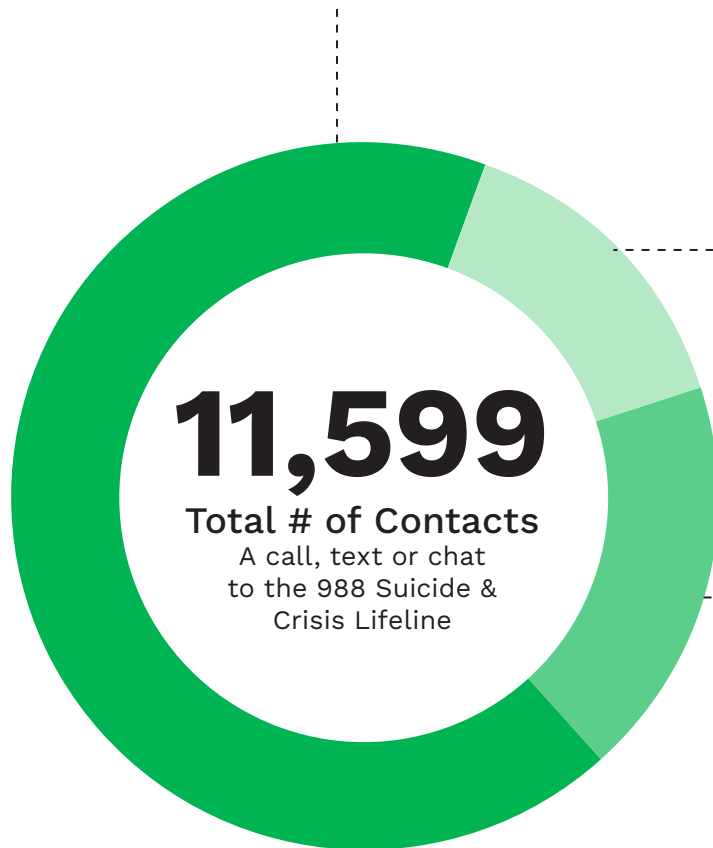


AVERAGE SPEED TO ANSWER



8,330

Total # of Calls



11,599

Total # of Contacts

A call, text or chat to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

1,664

Total # of Chats

1,605

Total # of Texts

Data: July - Sept. 2022



988 is the entry point into the Alabama Crisis System of Care, as the first step and response in a crisis. With the Crisis Centers as the first step of the journey to recovery, 988 is the next large move toward charting our course toward statewide crisis care access. 988 has provided Alabama with the unique opportunity to fully integrate and intentionally align the state's crisis system design and service delivery – linking individuals directly to critical services:

- Someone to call: 988
- Someone to respond: Mobile Crisis Services
- Somewhere to go: Crisis Centers

Testimonial: WellStone

WellStone's 988 staff received a call from a woman seeking help for her husband who was displaying early signs of dementia. He was forgetful, agitated, and hostile towards her. She was struggling to deal with their situation.

The crisis counselor was able to work on a crisis management plan for her and provide her with resources to help her and her husband. She was appreciative the counselor did not only focus on helping her husband but was also focused on helping her.

Testimonial: WellStone

WellStone's 988 staff received a call from a 19-year-old woman who presented as being intoxicated, and in distress. She said she wasn't suicidal but indicated that she thought about slitting her wrists when she got up that morning. She stated her friend convinced her to call 988.

She disclosed she felt depressed often, so she drank to numb the pain. She said she believed she was now an alcoholic and she didn't want to continue in the cycle of drinking and regretting her actions. The crisis counselor spoke with her about how her drinking possibly influenced her suicidal acts, and how she may need to go to a detox or hospital due to withdrawal symptoms from alcohol which could be detrimental to her health.

The crisis counselor also discussed a crisis management plan to focus on managing the depression without using alcohol and offered services in her area. She said she was appreciative, as she was thinking of giving up, and felt like she would be able to get the help she needed with her depression and alcoholism.

Testimonial: AltaPointe

AltaPointe Health's 988 staff received its first active suicide attempt call and intervened successfully. A female client in Mobile attempted overdose by taking muscle relaxers. She did not want AltaPointe to call 911 and hung up when her husband walked into the room. The staff called 911, and first responders were able to locate her and get her to an acute care ER in the Mobile area.

A day later, the client called AltaPointe Access to Care phone line after hours and was admitted to AltaPointe's EastPointe Hospital in Daphne for treatment.

Testimonial: AltaPointe

AltaPointe Health's 988 staff received a call from a client who expressed suicidal ideation. The caller also shared they had a history of suicidal attempts. After speaking with the counselor, the caller gave verbal consent and requested their crisis response team come to the location and was later, that same day, admitted to the AltaPointe Health Crisis Center.

Mobile Crisis Teams: Expansion and Enhancement

A mental health crisis may occur at any time in any place. It may occur where a mental health professional and immediate assistance is not readily available, or in a rural area where transportation may be barriers to access to care. Mobile crisis teams are a vital component of the Alabama Crisis System of Care, as their mobility enables them to respond to and address mental health crises no matter when or where they occur.

To transform and expand mobile crisis care, the Alabama Department of Mental Health and the Alabama Medicaid Agency received a CMS State Planning Grant for Mobile Crisis Services in FY22. The grant and its work with providers, facilitated by VitAL of The University of Alabama, assisted in increasing the quality of care of all mobile crisis teams to ensure compliance with The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Guidelines. Next steps in the work include securing a Medicaid funding strategy for future financial sustainability. These efforts are crucial for the expansion, development, and sustainability of mobile crisis services.

Five community mental health centers across the state received \$500,000 each in state funding for rural and mobile crisis programs:

Cahaba Center for Mental Health
Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center
Southwest Alabama Behavioral Health Care Systems
WellStone Behavioral Health (Cullman)
West Alabama Mental Health Center

With the introduction of the SAMHSA 5% Crisis Set Aside funds (both through the standard federal Mental Health Block Grant and the two COVID/ARPA supplemental funds), the funds will be used to implement additional programs at:

SpectraCare Health
South Central Mental Health Center

Additionally, there are three Crisis Centers with six Mobile Crisis Teams funded through a state appropriation:

AltaPointe – Mobile County
Carastar – Autauga, Elmore, Lowndes, Montgomery Counties
East Central – Bullock, Macon, Pike Counties
East Alabama – Chambers, Lee, Russell, Tallapoosa Counties

Finding a Home: Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

On any given night, approximately 3,350 people are without housing in Alabama. More than 61% are in emergency shelters and transitional housing and 39% are homeless or live in places not meant for human habitation. According to studies, roughly one-third of people experiencing homelessness have a serious mental illness. These conditions are often left untreated.

To assist individuals with serious mental illness who are experiencing homelessness or who are at imminent risk of homelessness, the ADMH received funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through a Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) grant. Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) is an important component of providing integrated, prevention-focused care so that every Alabamian has access to services that meet their needs without barriers. This grant offers an array of essential services and supports not otherwise offered by mainstream mental health programs.

Alabama PATH Programs are operated by Community Mental Health Centers serving areas with the highest density of homelessness—Birmingham, Madison, Mobile, Montgomery, and Tuscaloosa counties. In 2021, 202 individuals received PATH services. PATH services primarily include street outreach, case management, and peer services. Centers offering services are JBS Mental Health Authority, WellStone, AltaPointe Health, Carastar Health, and Indian Rivers.

PATH Success Story: WellStone

After moving to Alabama to escape an abusive relationship and be closer to family, a young woman came to WellStone to receive mental health services. Initially, things were going well, but earlier difficulties with substance use disorder resurfaced. She found herself homeless and without the support of her family. This led to her psychiatric instability, and she began to cycle in and out of psychiatric facilities, as well as being jailed several times.

The woman was admitted to WellStone's Crisis Center, where she was directed to the PATH Program and other necessary resources. She achieved her goals through constant work and engagement. Through consistent effort and participation, she gained psychiatric stability and, after about two years of being homeless, she obtained permanent housing. She has been stable, living independently for over four years, has reconnected with her family and started the journey of mending those relationships. She is interested in becoming a certified peer specialist and wants to inspire others with her testimony.

PATH Success Story: AltaPointe

An individual who received services from the Alabama PATH program was assisted at AltaPointe Health. From an early age, this young man was under the care of a state agency. He lived in residential programs and mental health facilities. Due to the lack of a support system, the young man eventually aged out of these residential programs and became homeless.

Ultimately, he was referred to Coordinated Entry to complete a housing assistance application, and into AltaPointe Health for assessment and services and accompanied to all appointments to provide support and encouragement. Fortunately, he was placed on Housing First's housing list and was selected for housing. Because he never had a stable household since his early youth, he went through significant adjustment phases at first. He was taught how to live safely, prepare meals, and maintain his apartment.

The Community Waiver Program Grows with Employment Success

The Community Waiver Program (CWP), facilitated by the Division of Developmental Disabilities, focuses on serving individuals with disabilities before they and/or their families are in crisis. Providers in this new program focus on important goals of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) such as community integration, opportunities for employment, and developing skills for independence.

The CWP design offers employment services to meet every person where they are and assist them to move forward with competitive employment. Supports to explore, seek, and gain jobs in the mainstream workforce are offered. Among the services offered are work incentives counseling, financial literacy, employment exploration, customized employment services, job coaching, co-worker supports, and career advancement. In addition, the CWP offers incentives for individuals to work, including access to increased transportation services, and services that support community inclusion when people are not working.

Anita is a waiver recipient in the CWP, born in Chicago, Illinois, who moved to Alabama to be closer to family with her mother. She lived at in a residential facility for over 15 years. While there, Anita worked with a small mobile cleaning crew and found her passion in home cleaning industry.

Anita and her mother spoke to an intake coordinator with the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH). When the CWP originated, she obtained a waiver and began receiving services. Ability Alliance of West Alabama (AAWA) started working with her and her mother to determine the services and support Anita wanted, and her first words were, *"I want a job cleaning."*

Anita went through an initial assessment with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) before choosing the Arc of Tuscaloosa's Palk Enterprises Supported Employment (PESE) program to assist her. PESE met with Anita to complete the discovery process with her. Anita interviewed for a job at a new hotel in Tuscaloosa. Anita had recently attended a family reunion at this same hotel, and she thought at the reunion, *"I would love to work there."* She was hired on the spot, and when Anita started working, everyone fell in love with her, especially her work ethic. She loved the job so much that she wanted to work more hours. Anita went to her supervisor and asked if she could work more hours, and they gave her an extra day. She now works 25 to 28 hours a week and has connected with a benefits counselor to assist her with not losing any of her benefits.

The staff at the hotel feels having employees such as Anita have contributed to their success and keeps patrons returning to the hotel. Anita's supervisor recently stated, *"Having an employee like Anita is one reason the hotel has a 4-star rating out of 5-stars."*

ADMH staff is proud of Anita's accomplishments in the Community Waiver and all individuals who have achieved employment success and look forward to the future of the program.

Increasing Communication in the Faith Community: Ending Stigma and Saving Lives

The Agency for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP)

The Faith-Based Support Specialist (FBSS) Program, created and managed by the Agency for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP), is a free, ecumenical program that equips senior faith leaders in Alabama Communities how to reach their congregants and participate to improve the quality of life. Over the course of 2022, the program was rolled out throughout the state and has seen tremendous success. The FBSS Program, certificated by the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH), is a 16-hour program custom designed by ASAP to educate pastors with the knowledge, tools, and resources to minister effectively to individuals experiencing substance use disorders, a topic that has a veil of stigma surrounding it, at times very heavily, in the faith community.

ASAP certified an average of 30 faith-based leaders, in each of the four trainings across the state (Huntsville, Oxford, Montgomery and Mobile). The program was sponsored by funding from the Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts (FORE). The FBSS program continues in 2023 with conferences held in several locations and a National Conference with Birmingham planned for December.

The Faith-Based Support Specialist Program is just one of the Agency's successful and energetic programs. The Agency for Substance Abuse Prevention has created a comic book called The ASAP Prevenger. The ASAP Prevenger is a superhero in a city called Preventionville. She battles substance misuse villains. ASAP also has interactive sheets and coloring pages for parents and their children. A commercial on Prevenger created with CBS, reached over 670,000 households.

Also, in 2022, ASAP learned through research with peers that alcohol is the leading misused substance on Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB). ASAP partnered with AIDB to create the commercial that focuses on the deaf community and any member who may be experiencing a substance use disorder.



ASAP Staff at Faith-Based Support Specialist Training



ADMH Director of Substance Use Treatment Services Morris presenting at FBSS Program



PEER AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The strategic goal of Peer and Family Engagement allows a benefit from the input and involvement of individuals and families through meaningful engagement and collaboration.

Expanding Peer Services and Recovery Across Alabama

Wings Across Alabama and Recovery of Support Specialists (R.O.S.S.), statewide peer support organizations ADMH supports, have seen enormous growth over the past year, impacting thousands of individuals beginning their journey of recovery or sustaining. Through meaningful engagement and collaboration with individuals in recovery and their families, Wings and R.O.S.S. help ADMH work toward the strategic goal of Peer and Family Engagement.

Wings Across Alabama is the largest mental health consumer-ran organization in Alabama. Wings is a "for us, by us" organization that deeply believes in healing that comes through shared experience. Offering peer support through an array of direct services, Wings' mission is to advance mental health policies and service to promote and support recovery.

With fiscal year 2022 funding from ADMH, Wings Across Alabama was able to expand the Warm Line to a 24/7 operation. The Warm Line is a free, confidential phone line that provides callers with a listening, empathetic ear. Warm Line Specialists are Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) who utilize their lived experiences. Though the organization grew exponentially, the care remained just as intensive and supportive. In 2022, the calls increased, and the Warm Line specialists spent more time with each caller – a total of 29,432 minutes on all calls!

The Recovery Organization of Support Specialist (R.O.S.S.) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit Recovery Community Organization RCO in Alabama. R.O.S.S. seeks to further develop and advance the role of recovery support within the community while promoting the right of self-determination and personal responsibility in individuals pursuing recovery. All certified peer specialists are individuals in recovery from a substance use disorder. R.O.S.S. reaches "people who fall through the cracks" and all services are free of charge.

Recovery supportive services and programs include the R.O.S.S. Recovery Community Centers, which served 150 individuals in 2022 and the 24/7 Helpline, a successful hotline which has seen a year after year increase in calls. R.O.S.S. also runs programs that provide outreach, mentorship, education, and employment – all crucial to recovery. Cumulatively in 2022, these programs served over 8,200 individuals. The Recovery Community Services Program served over 150 individuals on their road to recovery in 2022.

Testimonial: WINGS

*"I appreciate the Wings Line...it takes a strong person to be able to do it."
"Y'all have kind hearts and a tremendous amount of patience."*

Testimonial: WINGS

*"Thanks so much for being vulnerable and listening."
"You called back, and it made my day."*

Testimonial: WINGS

"All of your responders have been sincerely concerned and supportive."



ROSS Helpline
October 2021 vs. 2022

Calls increased from
11,400 to 12,001
an increase of 5%

Testimonial: ROSS client

"I stumbled upon R.O.S.S in active addiction. I was struggling with a whirlwind of problems that come with active addiction. I lost custody of what was my third child to the state of Alabama because of my substance use disorder. Julie from R.O.S.S. was referred to me and she helped me get an assessment for treatment and transported me to treatment. I went into to detox in September 2019 and that is when my recovery journey started.

After a few months in recovery, I was referred to R.O.S.S because they were offering a Recovery Community Services Program to learn how to become a Certified Recovery Support Specialist through the ADMH. I got firsthand experience through the Recovery Community Services Program working in the 24/7 Helpline Call Center.

I worked as a Recovery Community Services Program Intern and successfully passed my State Certified Recovery Support Specialist Exam in 2021. Now I am an Outreach Specialist in Jefferson County. I love getting to share my life experiences and recovery journey with peers in hopes that they too can see that recovery is possible.

I am three years into recovery, and I have gained so much. It has been a process to clean up the wreckage of my past but well worth it! Addiction is a disease, but with the appropriate help and a loving support system, it is possible to come out on the other side. I choose to recover out loud so that it ends stigma and people know you don't have to suffer in silence. I want to be the reason someone believes recovery is possible!"

Fancy Franklin
CRSS/R.O.S.S. Outreach Specialist



WINGS Warm Line
October 2021 vs. 2022

Calls increased from
328 to 26,969*
an increase of 8,122%

Warm Line Specialists
increased from
3 to 10*
an increase of 233%

*WINGS Warm Line
went 24/7 in 2022.

Testimonial: ROSS client

"The Recovery Organization of Support Specialist has been a huge plus in my life. Being a person who has struggled for many years and needing so many different things, R.O.S.S. has helped me arrange things to make my life doable. Without the help of my R.O.S.S. Outreach worker, Sharon Anderson, I do not think I would have ever begun my recovery journey.

On the streets of Tuscaloosa, feeling lost and alone, is where Sharon found me. It was like a dream. I know it was an act of a Greater Power. When I called Sharon, she asked me where I was. Unbelievably, Sharon was driving down the road that I was about to cross!

Sharon never abandoned me and for that I will be forever grateful. Sharon was deeply knowledgeable of the ways of peer support and guided me in such a comforting, understanding way. After learning more about the Certified Recovery Support Specialist certification and what it stands for, I became interested in becoming a part of an organization of people who had traveled similar paths. These individuals went on to become productive members of society. Today it warms my heart to know that I too can reach out and touch the lives of so many people who still struggle with a substance use disorder. Much thanks to all my R.O.S.S. family."

Peggy Hudson
CRSS



Stories from Our Peers

Peer Support Specialists assist individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders by providing resources, education, and information. They offer support in sharing their lived experiences using a relevant therapeutic approach. Peer Support Specialists act as mentors for individuals in recovery.

Testimonial: Peer Support Specialist

"I was a happy and content wife, mother, and business manager for our family business a little more than 20 years ago. Then things started to shift gradually, and simple everyday tasks became overwhelming. I was practically paralyzed with fear and worry. I began to feel hopeless and helpless. As I began questioning my own existence, these thoughts quickly escalated to ones of self-harm.

As my symptoms worsened, I was eventually admitted to a local hospital's behavioral unit. I was diagnosed with major depression and generalized anxiety disorder and was assigned to a day program for treatment. At first, I didn't communicate with anyone in the program, but the treatment team did not give up on me, and after a while, I began to improve.

There was a client in the rehab day program who wanted to achieve his GED, and another who wanted to learn how to balance a checkbook and establish budgets so he could own his own business. I was requested to assist them because of my educational experience in elementary and early childhood education. I started doing this in a corner of the classroom, but as more people became interested, I was given a small room and lessons began.

I was blessed to have a treatment team that believed in me and was there to challenge me when I grew too comfortable in my "rut." They assisted me in discovering a sense of purpose in my life. After several months of attending the programs, I was approached by the clinical director, who stated that they wanted to use me as an example of recovery and gave me a job as a temporary, part-time Child Case Manager. After four months, this became a full-time permanent position, and four years later, I was sent to Certified Peer Specialist Training and hired as the CPS Coordinator for Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center. I've also worked as an Adult Case Manager and as a Day Treatment Coordinator, as a CPI and MCS trainer, as well as doing Rights and Respect and Abuse and Neglect Trainings.

On January 4, 2023, I celebrated 19 years of service with NWAMHC. I recently reduced my hours with them to serve as the CPS Director for WINGS Across Alabama and the Peer Programs Coordinator for NAMI Alabama. Being a state trainer for the Certified Peer Specialist Program was a very meaningful accomplishment for me. I like my employment and the ability to repay so much of the support and assistance that I have received. I've discovered my life's purpose, pleasure, and tranquility, which seemed unattainable to the person who had given up on herself."

Leigh Few



Testimonial: Peer Support Specialist

"I had a typical childhood in Jasper, growing up in Winston County, Alabama, but things changed when my parents got divorced and I hit my teen years. In the small community of Helicon, I wasn't rebellious or out of control, but I began living in a fantasy world to escape reality. In my late teens, I began self-harming, and it escalated through my twenties and thirties. I couldn't hold a job for more than six months before my depression and anxiety would take over.

I worked in everything from manufacturing to fast food. In my late thirties, my final act of self-harm caused 3rd-degree burns to both hands. My road to recovery wasn't a quick nor easy journey. There were many stumbles along the way. There were numerous setbacks as well as triumphs in equal measure. My life began to change when I finally found a treatment regimen that worked and began attending day treatment classes.

Over the next ten years, I would learn more about myself and my journey. Other people began to notice things in me that I didn't see myself. It was suggested to me that I apply for the Certified Peer Support program. I had a lot of doubts about myself, but I passed the test.

After becoming a Certified Peer Specialist, I began training in additional programs throughout the state through NAMI Alabama and Wings Across Alabama. I attend every single training related to mental health that I can possibly be accepted into. Last year, after a long wait of three years, I was finally hired as a Certified Peer Specialist at the VERY same Mental Health Center that I attended for 10 years! For me, success isn't the accolades that I receive or the new levels that I attain, but by thriving! Making it one day at a time, step by step, success is the victory of living!"

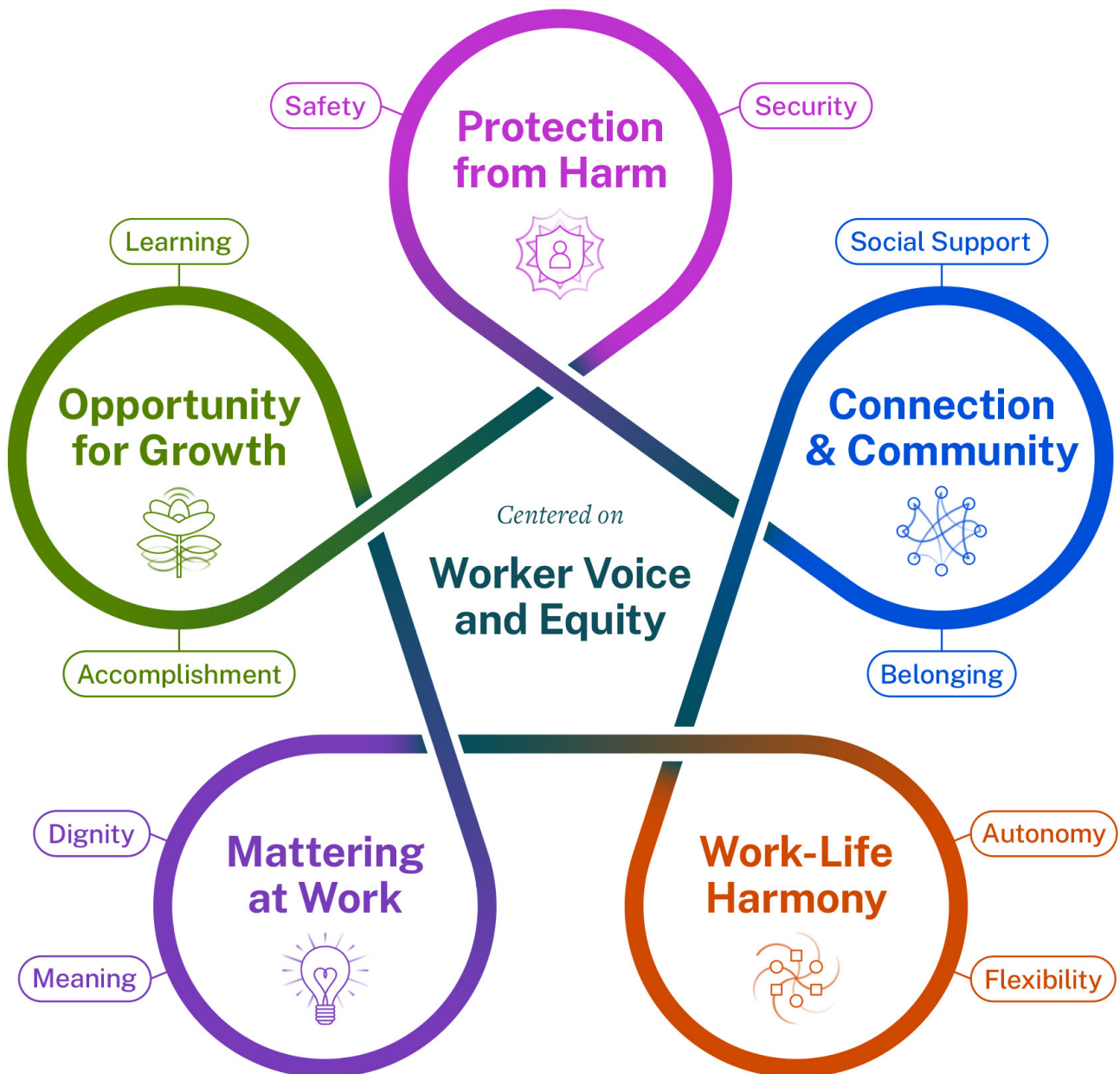
Jeff Mitchell



PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE

The strategic goal of attracting and retaining a workforce that is highly qualified, diverse and stable is of vital interest and need for ADMH and the state of Alabama.

Centered on the worker voice and equity, these five Essentials support workplaces as engines of well-being. Each Essential is grounded in two human needs, shared across industries and roles. The ADMH is working to implement these into our strategic priority of Professional Workforce.²



² Source: The U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being

Forging a New Path Forward: Supporting Families and Increasing the Workforce

Thousands of Alabama families have been heavily impacted by opioid use disorder and related factors. To support and help educate families, the ADMH has many programs in the prevention and treatment areas, but one that uniquely impactful is the Opioid-Impacted Family Support Program (OIFSP).

Alabama A&M University has teamed up with ADMH to provide Certified Case Management training in their apprenticeship program to meet this long-term mental health workforce need. The Health Resources and Services Administration funds the program (HRSA), and the students receive financial assistance while working with families affected by opioids and other substance use disorders.

In the FY22, eight students completed the Certified Case Management training. This apprenticeship model builds skilled employees while students complete their degree and develop a better understanding of ideas and theories related to the occupation.

The Alabama Department of Mental Health prioritizes a professional workforce. With this program and others like it, ADMH helps to increase a workforce that is a stable, highly skilled, and diversified.





ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Through the strategic priority of Organizational Health, our department will continue to promote a work environment that emphasizes teamwork and prioritizes wellness, innovation, and a connection to mission.

Virta Health Program: Changing and Improving Health

After being informed that he would need to start taking insulin injections for his diabetes, ADMH staff member Michael Collins knew he needed to make a major change. With the help of health counseling, Michael discovered the Virta Health program. Virta Health is a nutrition-based treatment plan that can aid in the reversal of Type 2 diabetes and other chronic illnesses without the need of calorie restriction, and participants are regularly monitored by physicians and behavioral specialists.

Before getting on the program, Michael stated he was *"sick of having heart issues and barely making it to work."* Michael shed 256 pounds with the assistance of Virta Health. He discontinued his medications except for his thyroid medication. Michael lost a lot of weight, but he gained a lot of life too. By losing 256 pounds, he has improved his physical and mental health. He has been able to spend time with his grandchildren and be more involved with his family.

***"I couldn't breathe and couldn't walk.
Now, I can do just about anything I wish."***

Additionally, since his physical health has improved, he can engage with his clients more. Before discovering Virta Health, Michael couldn't walk long distances. Now, he can meet with, and be more engaged. Michael is at Client Advocate at the Alabama Department of Mental Health where he assists and advocates for individuals' rights. Losing weight has also aided his emotional wellbeing and the drive to help others. Michael says that his confidence has also risen. He is happier, and his self-esteem has improved, which has benefited his employment.

He is more confident in his job and believes that his supervisors have noticed. He has been assigned to two Administrative Committees since the improvement in his mental health. The ADMH is committed to fostering a work environment that values collaboration, wellness, and a sense of purpose while also placing a high priority on innovation and a sense of mission.

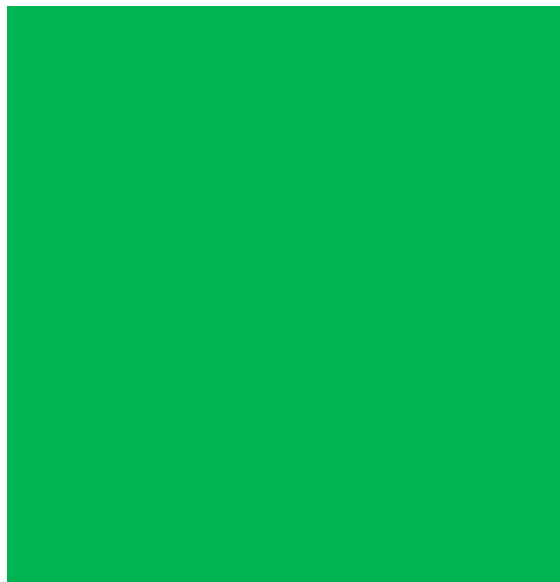


"I just feel like I do a better job now because I care about myself more."

A person's capacity to complete a physical job task might be hampered by mental health issues, which can also affect cognitive function. Michael's physical capacity and everyday functioning improved, as well as his involvement with his clients, because of his weight loss with Virta Health. Michael is happy that he found Virta Health. He states, *"It's been a journey."* But because of Virta Health Michael says that he *"got a new life."* Virta Health changed that for him. *"I've come a long way. Before I couldn't walk, I couldn't breathe good. Now I can go where I want to and do what I want to."*



Rediscover your spark





KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

Through the strategic priority, the ADMH aims to strengthen knowledge and increase awareness of the department so Alabamians have access to the resources and opportunities they need to be happier and healthier.

A Heart for Our Work: An Updated Look for the ADMH

The Alabama Department of Mental Health is committed to the promotion of mental health and well-being of Alabamians with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders. During fiscal year 2022, this commitment was translated into a new branding for the department. The ADMH collaborated to develop an updated brand and related Brand Narrative to further knowledge and awareness of mental health and increase information on access to services and vital resources in our state.

Several weeks of planning and designing culminated in the final logo. The logo represents the care and warmth the department and its providers give every day to individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders. The significance of the new logo design is crucial since it encompasses the department's beliefs, mission, standards, and ethics.



ADMH's slogan related to the branding is *"Connecting Mind and Wellness."* The Alabama Department of Mental Health is dedicated to facilitating connection by offering access to services at any degree of need and through a variety of approaches.

All Alabamians should have access to coordinated, responsive mental health treatment. When given open access to care, providers, partners, and the department can all help create healthier, stronger individuals, families, and communities. With the help of our partners and providers, we are working together to provide compassionate and empathic care to everyone we serve, and to showcase this in the look and feel of our department's branding and messaging.



Connecting People with Services Anytime, Everywhere...On Your Phone

Connect Alabama, a behavioral health services and treatment finder application launched in the summer of 2022, is providing individuals with instant access to education, information and services related to substance use, mental health, and prevention.

"It may take an individual many years to simply reach out for help with mental health issues or a substance use disorder. We need as many avenues as possible for an individual to seek treatment and information, when they are ready to take the next step toward recovery," said ADMH Commissioner Kimberly Boswell. Connect Alabama is an important tool offering fast and reliable service to someone looking for help.

A special feature of the app is functionality even if internet or data are not available. The application has built-in static information that is accessible anytime, without access to data or internet, and will update as service and data becomes available for the user. The app is funded through a partnership of the Alabama Department of Public Health and Alabama Department of Mental Health, and is created and managed by VitAL of The University of Alabama School of Social Work.

30,461 sponsored impressions

8,636 app users

6,003 webpage views

App Downloads



THE ONLY TREATMENT APP *You'll ever need*



KEY FEATURES

-  Substance Use
-  Mental Health
-  Prevention
-  Treatment Locator

Testimonial

As a provider I use this app to educate clients and family members, I also use it to locate other treatment facilities.

Testimonial

The app easily provides a navigation tool to clients/family, so they can have access to the tool at any point in the recovery process.

Five Years, Thousand of Lives Changed and Saved: The Alabama Opioid Overdose and Addiction Council

In fiscal year 2022, The Alabama Opioid Overdose and Addiction Council continued its mission to reduce the number of deaths and other adverse consequences of the opioid crisis with effective programs and life-saving outcomes.

Major accomplishments of fiscal year 2022 included:

- Council developed guidance for approved uses of opioid settlement funds with recommendations that supplement and strengthen resources available to Alabama communities and families for substance use disorder prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery.
- The Connect Alabama smart phone application (app) launched in July 2022. The app provides information and education to end users about substance use, mental health, and prevention. End users can find treatment and resources using the app directory as well as directly connect with hotlines. Data found on the app is available with or without access to data or the internet. Since its launch, there have been 2,129 total downloads across iPhone Operating System (IOS) and Android.
- The Treatment and Recovery Support Sub-Committee made significant progress in provide individuals and professionals with tools to address the opioid epidemic. The support of the Faith-Based Support Specialist Program by ASAP, a certification for faith-based leaders to equip individuals with the tools to assist individuals who are affected by substances was one such program. Over 80 faith-based professionals attended these trainings in FY22.

29,440 doses of Narcan administered

14,720 Narcan kits distributed

2,129 app downloads

80 professionals trained



- At the end of FY22, the number of naloxone distributed free of charge by the Rescue Sub-Committee and other partners including the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH), Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH), and the University of Alabama's Project Freedom, was 14,720 kits (29,440 doses). This is a major increase from 2021.
- One of the new accomplishments for the Rescue Sub-Committee, with critical support from the Law Enforcement Sub-Committee, was the removal of fentanyl test strips from the list of illegal drug paraphernalia in Alabama state law by the legislature.
- The Data Sub-Committee expanded data available and increased the timeliness of reporting with a focus of increasing access points of information such as treatment services of substance use disorder and opioid use disorder provided by the state's two largest healthcare payers, Alabama Medicaid Agency and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama. Additionally, a data panel was added showcasing opioid exposure provided by the Alabama Poison Information Center. To ensure continued operation of this program, a federal Bureau of Justice grant was secured through FY2024.
- The Prescribers and Dispensers Sub-Committee continued work ALAHOPE, the Alabama Health Professionals Opioid and Pain Management Education Course. Eighteen of 22 lectures in the Substance Use Unit can be found online related to the curriculum.

The Council has and will continue to convene diverse experts, stakeholders, community members and those with lived experience and family members to continue to move the Council's initiatives forward.



Alabama Department of Mental Health Offices

Commissioner's Offices

The Commissioner's Offices support the department-at-large with legal, legislative, investigative issues, as well as protect the rights of the people we serve and promote mental health in our state.

The Commissioner's Offices are comprised of the Chief of Staff who supervises the Office of Legislative & Constituent Affairs; the Bureau of Special Investigations; the Office of Legal Services; Office of Internal Audit; the Office of Public Information; and Office of Rights Protection & Advocacy.

Administration

The Division of Administration provides support to the department's central office and the facilities and regional offices through several specialized sections. Management of human resources and staff development, land and asset management, centralized accounting, policy and planning, information technology services, administrative support services, nurse delegation and nursing home screening services are housed in this division.

The division is comprised of the Bureau of Finance; the Bureau of Human Resources Management; the Bureau of Information Technology Services; the Office of Land & Asset Management which supervises Office of Administrative Support Services, Office of Certification Administration, Office of Life Safety & Technical Services, and Office of Nurse Delegation Program; the Office of Pre-Admission Screening, and the Office of Policy & Planning.





Developmental Disabilities

Developmental Disabilities (DD) provides a comprehensive array of services and supports to individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families in the state through contractual arrangements with community agencies, five regional community services offices, and three comprehensive support service teams that assist with behavioral, medical, psychiatric and dental services and supports.

The DD Central Office Staff provide oversight and support in planning, service coordination, service delivery, fiscal operations, contracts, eligibility, monitoring/quality enhancement of services, and the monitoring and certification of all community agencies that provide services to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

A DD Coordinating Subcommittee comprised of consumers, families, service providers, and other leaders in the field assists the division in setting and prioritizing service goals based upon the needs of individuals and budgetary considerations.

The division is comprised of the Office of Administrative & Fiscal Operations; the Office of Psychological & Behavioral Services; the Office of Quality & Planning; the Office of Supported Employment which supervises the Office of Self-Advocacy Services; the Office of Support Coordination; the Office of System Transition & Waiver Development; and the Office of Systems Management.

Mental Health & Substance Use

The Division of Mental Health and Substance Use Services promotes the development of a comprehensive, coordinated system of community-based services for consumers diagnosed with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders. The division partners with community providers to deliver a comprehensive array of evidence-based prevention, treatment and recovery-based peer support services throughout the state.

Responsibilities encompass contracting for services, monitoring service contracts, as well as evaluating and certifying service programs according to regulations established in the Alabama Administrative Code.

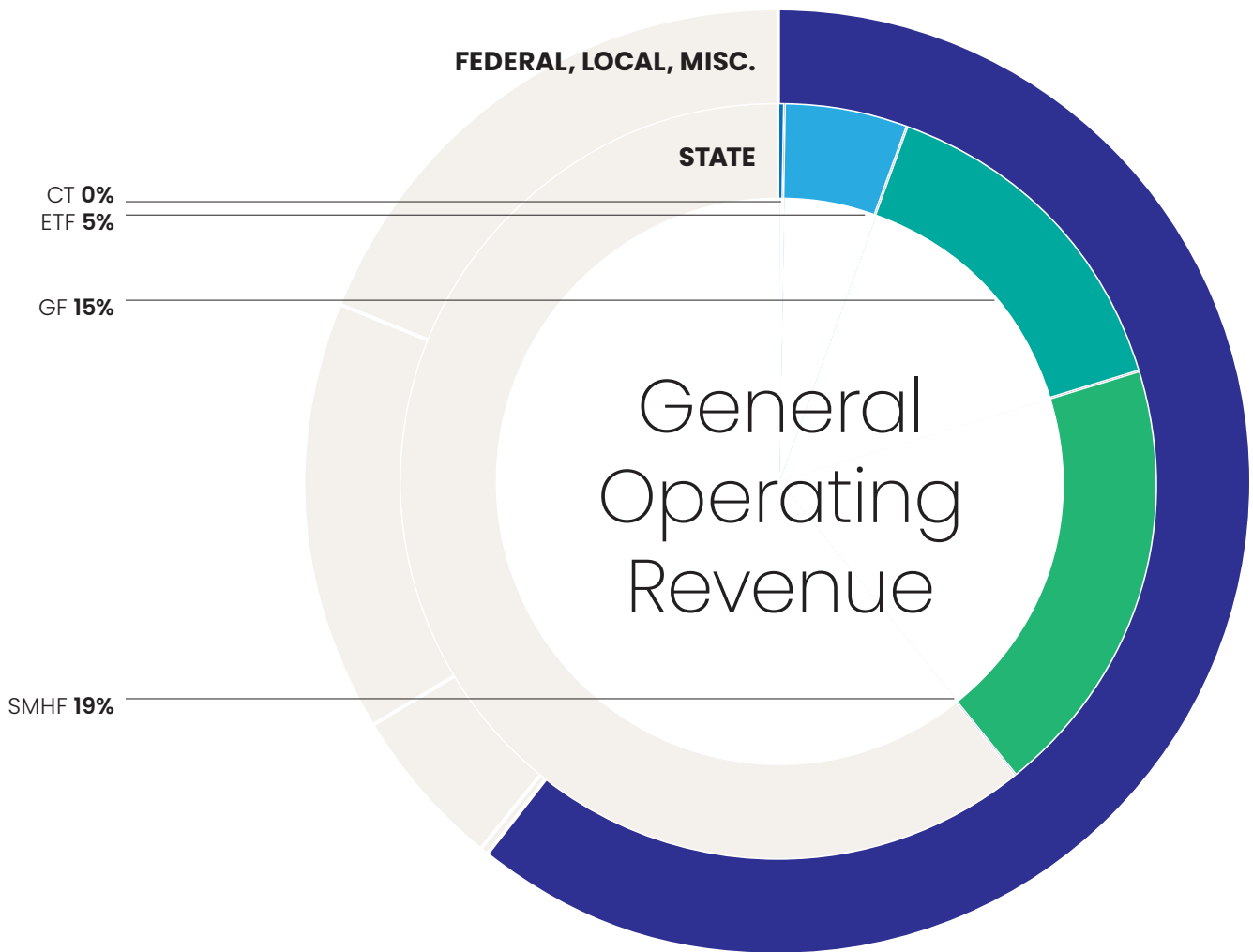
In addition, the division manages ADMH's three mental health hospitals: Bryce Hospital, Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center, and Taylor Hardin Secure Medical.

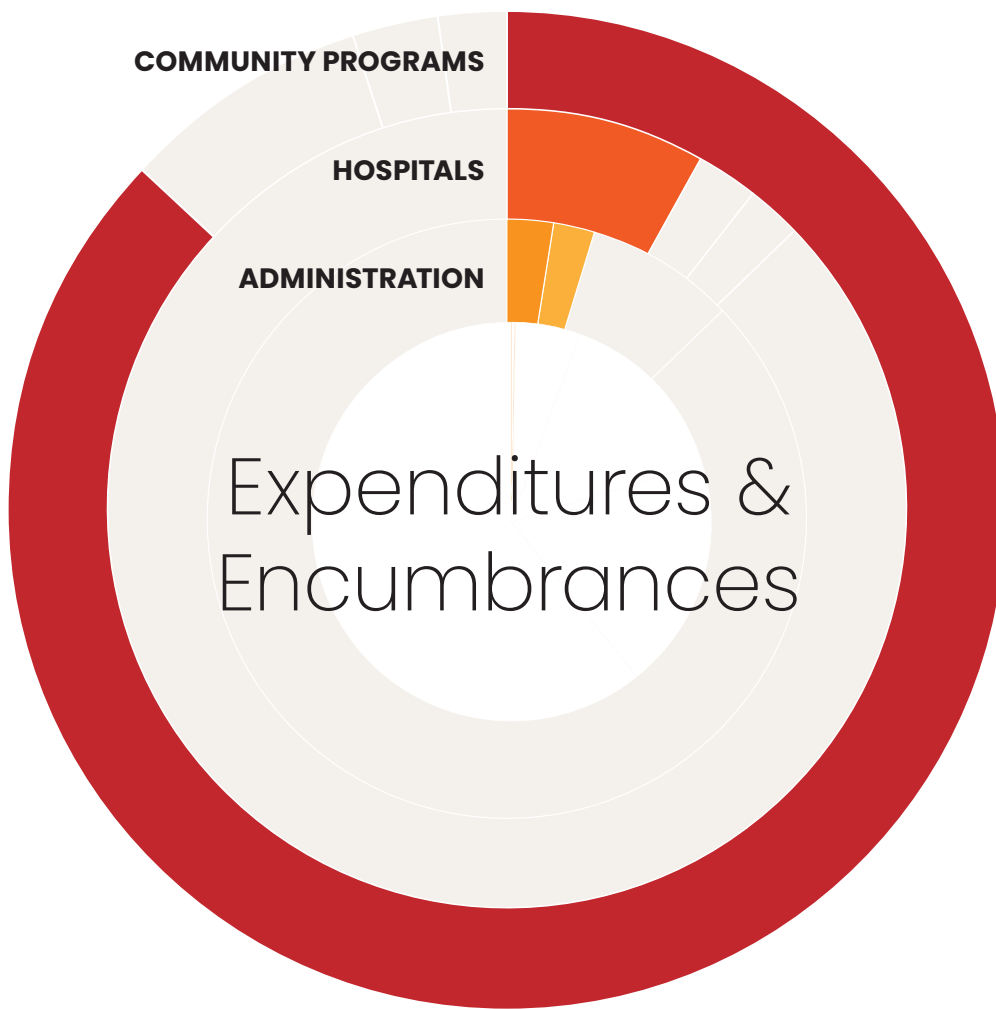
The division is comprised of the Office of Certification; the Office of Deaf Services; the Office of Mental Illness Community Programs; the Office of Peer Programs; the Office of Pharmacy; the Office of Prevention Services; the Office of Quality Improvement & Risk Management; and the Office of Substance Use Treatment Services.

Financial Report

Federal, Local, Miscellaneous 61%	
Medicaid, T. XIX-ID Community	439,007,913
Medicaid, T. XIX-MI Community	98,003,202
Federal Block Grants	52,734,312
Federal Grants	50,299,982
Medicaid, T. XIX-SA Community	18,375,534
Other Income	11,526,999
Medicaid, T. XIX-Facilities	10,194,552
Tobacco Settlement	3,068,255
State Match Funds - DHR/DOE	2,015,202
Medicare	1,522,280

Departmental Receipts	1,500,000
Medicaid, PL 100-203-OBRA	1,126,162
Donated Restricted	380,215
Indigent Offenders Treatment	85,770
Judicial Fines	518
State 39%	
Special Mental Health Fund (SMHF) 19%	214,296,732
General Fund (GF) 15%	167,209,926
Education Trust Fund (ETF) 5%	60,243,972
Cigarette Tax (CT) 0%	3,756,120
Total	1,135,347,646





Community Programs 87%

Developmental Disabilities	568,835,885
Mental Illness	320,007,490
Substance Use Disorder	85,906,196

Hospitals 8%

Bryce Hospital	46,771,823
Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center	23,490,564
Taylor Hardin Secure Medical	21,005,837
East Alabama Medical Center	1,500,000

Administration 5%

Central Office 3%	28,396,261
Special Services 2%	24,775,081

Total	1,120,689,137
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Individuals Served by Service Population

Developmental Disabilities

Community Program Waiver	110
Intellectual Disability Waiver	4,993
Living at Home Wavier	470
Total	5,573

Developmental Disabilities

5,464 adults served

109 adolescents served

Mental Illness

65,155 adults served

29,345 adolescents served

Substance Use

28,518 adults served

2,629 adolescents served

Total

99,137 adults served

32,083 adolescents served

Mental Illness

Bryce Hospital	344
East Alabama Medical Center (Adolescent Unit)	18
Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center	141
Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility	185
Total	688

AltaPointe Health Systems	16,599
Brewer Porch	23
CED MHC	3,199
Cahaba Center for Mental Health	2,445
Capitol Care South	332
Carastar Health	5,222
Central Alabama Wellness	1,943
East Alabama MHC	7,455
East Central Alabama MHC	2,820
Eastside	2,878
Glenwood	388
Highlands Health System	3,116
Indian Rivers	4,549
JBS Mental Health Authority	5,246
MHC of North Central AL	3,516
Mountain Lakes	2,911
Northwest Alabama MHC	3,485
Riverbend Center for MHC	5,676
South Central Alabama MHC	3,248
Southwest Alabama BHC	2,669
SpectraCare Health Systems	3,990
UAB	1,775
WellStone	9,460
West Alabama MHC	1,555
Total	94,500



Substance Use

AIDS Alabama	35	MedMark Treatment Centers of AL - Oxford	230
Alcohol & Drug Abuse Treatment	882	Mobile Metro Treatment Center	255
Aletheia House	2,738	Mom's	300
AltaPointe Health Systems	1,105	Montgomery Metro Treatment Center	167
Anniston Fellowship House	116	Mountain Lakes	391
BHG Huntsville	514	New Centurions	121
BHG Stevenson	63	New Pathways	289
Birmingham Metro Treatment Center	342	Northwest Alabama MHC	1,147
Bradford Health Services	188	Phoenix House	217
CED Fellowship House	687	RCA Foundation	432
CED MHC	401	Recovery Organization of Support Specialist	1,060
Central Alabama Wellness	362	Recovery Services of Dekalb County	644
Coosa Community Services: ROSS	74	Riverbend Center for MH	557
Dothan Houston County Drug Treatment Center	24	Salvation Army Dauphin Way Lodge	182
East Alabama MHC	905	Shelby County Treatment Center	460
East Central Alabama MHC	169	Shoals Treatment Center	369
ECD Program	354	South Central Alabama MHC	302
Family Life Center	932	Southeast Intervention Group	152
Fellowship House	970	Southern Wellness Services	385
Franklin Primary Health Center	307	Southwest Alabama BHC	215
Gadsden Treatment Center	344	SpectraCare Health Systems	1,738
HealthConnect America	549	St. Clair County Day Program	35
Highland Health	455	Substance Abuse Council of Northwest Alabama	61
Hope House	169	Teens Empowerment Awareness with Resolutions	100
Huntsville Metro Treatment Center	277	The Bridge	2,062
Indian Rivers	526	The Shoulder	159
Insight Treatment Program	279	Tri County Treatment Center	219
Lighthouse of Tallapoosa County	52	Tuscaloosa Treatment Center	1,119
Lighthouse of Cullman	84	UAB Drug Free	1,736
Marion County Treatment Center	26	Walker Recovery Center	96
Marwin Counseling	328	WellStone	1,165
MedMark Treatment Centers of AL - Dothan	144	West Alabama MHC	381
		Total	31,147



Alabama Department of Mental Health



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