

**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
FRIDAY, August 11, 2023  
MEETING MINUTES**

A meeting of the Alabama Department of Mental Health Board of Trustees was held on Friday, August 11, 2023, in-person and virtual.

**Call to Order**

Vice-Chair Donna Foster welcomed members and called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

**Roll Call was conducted:**

**BOT Members Present:**

Kim Boswell, Commissioner (In-Person)  
Donna Foster (Virtual)  
Dr. Cynthia Bisbee (Virtual)  
Dennis Stripling (Virtual)  
Dr. Sandra Parker (Virtual)

**BOT Members Absent:**

Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth  
Dave White, Governor's Senior Policy Advisor-(Representing Governor Kay Ivey)  
Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter  
Judge Sheri Friday  
Leslie Sanders  
Judge Christopher Hughes  
Rodney Barnes  
Larry Bailey  
William Pete Cobb

**Others Present:**

Kathy Sawyer, Associate Commissioner for DD  
LaVonda Blair, Associate Commissioner for Administration  
Nicole Walden, Associate Commissioner for MH/SU  
Tommy Klinner, Chief Legal Counsel  
Malissa Valdes, Director of Public Information  
Ada Katherine van Wyhe, Chief of Staff  
Beverly Johnson, Director, Prevention Services  
Berenice Artis, Executive Assistant  
Kiarah Holloway, PIO (Virtual)  
Dr. Christine Rembert (Virtual)

## **Review and Approval of Agenda**

Ms. Foster asked if there were additions to the agenda and for approval. Dr. Cynthia Bisbee moved to accept the Agenda and Dr. Sandra Parker properly seconded. Approved by acclamation without additions, deletions, or oppositions.

**Review and Approval of May 12, 2023 Minutes:** Due to the absence of a Quorum, the minutes for the May 12, 2023 meeting were not approved.

## **Commissioner's Report:**

The meeting of the Board of Trustees commenced at 10:05am with Commissioner Boswell conducting the Roll Call. Following Roll Call, the absence of a Quorum was established. Commissioner Boswell opened the meeting introducing the new Associate Commissioner of Administration, LaVonda Blair. LaVonda previously served as the ADMH Internal Audit Manager.

One of the Strategic Planning goals is centered on Organizational Health and over the last few months ADMH has been working towards an organizational assessment of state facilities in Tuscaloosa. Commissioner Boswell advised there were challenges within our facilities especially coming out of Covid and the facilities being in crisis mode. Being in crisis mode can result in employee burn-out and staying in crisis mode wears people out.

In order to address organizational health, it was necessary to perform some kind of assessment to determine where people are and how things were going at state facilities. Commissioner Boswell further commented on some of these key observations and feedback received. Feedback from the facilities varied with some identifying disorganized, chaotic and overwhelming culture. Other observations/issues included concerns regarding inconsistent policies and practices due to staff capacity or lack thereof. Communication and coordination with facilities and the Central Office was an issue of concern.

Another key observation involved inconsistent policies and practices, staff reporting being under resourced in terms of training, equipment, and other needs. A list of equipment needs for all three facilities was requested and once received will take priority in addressing these needs as soon as possible.

One of the unsurprising issues was pay and scheduling and its impact on recruitment and retention. Pay scale, scheduling and flexibility were simultaneously identified concerns with 59% of comments referencing the pay scale. While this survey was under way, pay scales were being addressed which resulted in increased salary for direct care staff and shift differentials for second and third shift employees.

Work-life balance has become a national issue more than ever since Covid. To address this issue within our state facilities, the department is looking at the prospect of part-time positions for direct care staff; perhaps some Veterans Administration or Druid City Hospital employees may be interested in our facilities for part-time shift work.

Childcare provision for facility employees was another issue. Collier Tynes, Director of Legislative & Constituent Affairs, is conducting research and exploring options concerning this issue.

Communication and coordination is a challenging issue with work to address this ongoing all year. Nothing about us, without us has been the Department's philosophy as we work with individuals with lived experiences, our state facilities and providers. This philosophy involves the department seeking to gain their input when making decisions about them, as a means of improving communication.

Having a physical presence at the facilities from Central Office staff has been achieved with Associate Commissioner Nicole Walden making weekly visits to each of the facilities. At a minimum Clarus, our consultant, has recommended two listening sessions annually with feedback sessions and structured meetings with our state facilities and staff.

Commissioner referenced several opportunities for collaboration and consistency across facilities and recognizing the balance between a system's approach that looks the same across all three facilities yet distinguishing the uniqueness of the services provided by each facility. Each facility serves a different group of individuals, with different needs so there is the need for recognizing that balance between consistency across facilities and flexibility to do the things to address the needs of the individuals we serve.

Besides Central Office administrative staff and facility leadership, snapshots from specific groups were assessed for feedback, HR professional, nursing supervisors, direct care nurses and mental health workers. From these groups two noteworthy results came from HR professionals: the need for improved communication and supervisor training.

These are two of the reasons that people leave the department, not having a respectful and supportive supervisor and negative interactions between supervisors and subordinates. Supervisor training is high on the list to be addressed as an HR professional at Harper Center in Tuscaloosa, who does follow-up calls with mental health workers who have left report they left the department due to negative interactions with their supervisors.

Nurse supervisors reported that supervisor training is an important area. Staff report that patients in our state facilities today are very different from those in the past. Patients today have more complex needs and present more challenging behaviors than our staff feel trained and equipped to address.

Another issue is the strong dislike for rollover with employee pay. In the past, the state went from bi-weekly pay to semi-monthly pay where understanding overtime pay can be very complicated. To rectify this, the hope is to have the e-Start time and attendance system implemented in our state facilities in the next year. This will help generate reports where staff will be able to understand, view and better understand pay.

Direct Care Nurses shared their concerns about training, equipment and being fully resourced to do their job proficiently. They further reported feeling undervalued, the same feelings reported by our mental health workers. Intensive supervisory training will help address this issue. Additionally, Mental Health Workers report not having access to email so it's difficult to communicate with them from the Central Office. Our Bureau of Information Technology, Chief Information Officer Ram Kandula, introduced a software app, Rippleworks, which could help us create a feedback loop to communicate with Mental Health Workers. This software is currently being used by the Alabama Department of Corrections.

### **Opioid Settlement Fund:**

During the last sessions, the Alabama Legislature established an Oversight Commission to administer the settlement funds in Alabama. The purpose of the Commission is to review the expenditure of funds appropriated.

The Legislature also introduced Act 2023-384 which established the Alabama Opioid Treatment and Abatement Fund to administer the disbursement of these funds. This year the first round of settlement funds was \$10 million. Attorney General Steve Marshall announced the state will receive \$248,948,247million.

ADMH will receive \$8.5 million to be used to establish a grant program for community providers that provide opioid treatment, medication and services to individuals and families. Another \$1.5 million will go to the Alabama Department of Corrections for opioid and co-occurring substance abuse treatment, including residential substance abuse treatment, pre-and post-release services to justice-involved individuals.

Commissioner Boswell shared that the Department of Veterans Affairs approached the ADMH requesting assistance in helping them with administering their ARPA Funds. They received \$2 million from this last round of ARPA. They requested our assistance due to them not being set up to administer a grant program.

ADMH has tentatively agreed to assist, however, there will be the need to add one staff person to manage their invoices and some of the accounting functions. It will be a fairly small grant with a high volume of paperwork. Some of ADMH's subject matter experts will help them evaluate projects to be funded through their ARPA Grant.

**-Dr. Parker posed a question to Commissioner regarding the Opioid Commission and if she will be representing ADMH. She also inquired of available funding to provide these services and professionals to provide it. She inquired if funds would be available for psychiatry residents since there are only three in the state of Alabama.**

Commissioner Boswell advised that Senator Albritton and Senator Larry Stutts have raised this as an issue, so there may be conversations ongoing regarding this type of training.

**Crisis Services in Alabama Update: (See Attachment B, C, D)**

## **Legislative & Constituent Affairs Report –Ada Katherine van Wyhe**

Legislative update on the Opioid Settlement Funds--the Legislature passed two corresponding bills in the 2023 Regular Legislative Session:

- Act 2023-383, establishes the Oversight Commission on Alabama Opioid Settlement Funds.
- Act 2023-384, appropriating \$10 million from the Opioid Treatment and Abatement Fund (opioid settlement funds).

ADMH will provide the framework and structure for the Oversight Commission, of which the Commissioner serves as a member.

### **Hospital Discharge and Transition Planning for Complex Cases**

- Beginning in July 2022, ADMH began monthly meetings with Childrens' of Alabama to organize hospital discharge and transition planning with the hospital's Patient and Family Support and Behavioral Health Sciences teams.
- In May 2023, ADMH partnered with Alabama Hospital Association for five "Regional Mental Health Meetings" across the state to familiarize hospital leadership with the Department's services (specifically DD Waiver Services), programs, role in discharge and transition planning, and coordination of services in the community.

### **MH/SU Division Report – Nicole Walden, Associate Commissioner**

- **1115 Waiver**

Associate Commissioner Walden gave an outline of the 1115 Waiver stating it would begin October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. She also detailed two demographics:

- Demographic 1 it would cover all Medicaid recipients aged 21-64.
- Demographic 2 would cover Medicaid ages 21-64, must reside within 9 counties, (Blount, Cullman, Etowah, Jefferson, Madison, Shelby, St. Clair, Tuscaloosa, and Walker), or household income levels below 20% the Federal Poverty Level.

ADMH will conduct an evaluation to measure and monitor outcomes of demos.

- **CCBHC**

Associate Commissioner Walden also spoke on the CCBHC Infrastructure announcing 14 new learning communities has been created with meetings occurring twice a month.

Additionally, 5 TA calls have been held with ADMH staff to facilitate learning of CCBHC requirements, payments, and statewide certification.

### **Crisis Centers**

- First six months of the year, Crisis Centers completed 2321 evaluations, which resulted in 1745 admissions.
- Indian Rivers projected completion September 2023.
- SpectraCare has acquired permanent location with an expected completion within 7 months.

### **Mobile Crisis Services**

- ADMH, AMA, and VitAL completed 11 site visits to review individual reports.
- Medicaid along with ADMH in final stages of completing a state plan amendment for MCS which will establish a rate of pay for the eligible services.

### **ODS**

- Office of Deaf Services is providing services to more than 1,740 deaf or hard of hearing individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders.
- The annual Deafness and Clinical Training was held April 20-21, 2023 and addressed co-morbidity among deaf people with mental illness or substance use disorders.

### **Naloxone Update**

- ADMH in partnership with ADPH has distributed 14,402 kits of Narcan across the state.
- ADMH is working with local and state EMA to ensure all first responders are aware of grant-funded programs and ensure those who qualify have access to Narcan at no cost.

### **Substance Use Treatment**

- Under the State Opioid Response (SOR) Grant Alabama ranks #1 in the nation for contact with individuals who enrolled in the grant for treatment services.
- Alabama ranks the highest under the Alabama Covid Response Unit (ACRU) grant in enrolling health care providers.
- Four agencies were recently awarded funding to open outpatient clinics in counties where ADMH certified treatment centers were not located. Bringing the total to 62 of 67 counties with certified substance use treatment services.

### **DDD –Kathy Sawyer, Associate Commissioner**

- **Waivers:** As of August 2023, over 5,000 waivers enrollments have been issued, the current waiver waiting list is 1607.
- **HCBS Compliance Update**  
CMS approved Alabama's corrective Action Plan (CAP) as of June 30,2023
- **Interagency Initiatives:** 11 children in DHR custody have been placed by DDD in special residential services.
- **Rate Increases:** DDD will grant rate increases for Direct Support Staff in the following services: Residential; Personal Care; Day services; Respite Care; Adult Companion; Personal Care Services and Support Coordination.

**Office of Public Information – Malissa Valdes, Public Information Officer**

- Indian Rivers Crisis Center plans to open their temporary center in October.
- Crisis Centers progress reports have been added to ADMH website.
- 988 one-year progress report is available on ADMH website.
- 2022 Annual Report has been completed and is available for viewership online.

**Division of Administration –LaVonda Blair, Associate Commissioner**

**Bureau Of Human Resources**

- Associate Commissioner Blair gave an update that as of June 30,2023 facility Staffing levels for contract workers totaled 117 contract workers.
- The GQR contract ended July 31<sup>st</sup>. Maxim Healthcare Staffing has provided temporary staffing as of August 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Bureau Of Finance**

- The Examiners of Public Accounts have successfully completed the FY 2022 Statewide Single Audit of Federal Award Programs and plan to release the results effective July 28, 2023. There are no findings to report!

**Land and Facilities Management Office**

- Life Safety conducted 3,456 inspections in FY23.
- Land Sales/Leases generated over \$1 million for FY23.

The **Division of Administration** provides vital support to the Alabama Department of Mental Health's facilities, Central and Regional Offices.

**BUREAU OF HUMAN RESOURCES** (*PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE*)

- As of the week ending October 27, 2023, contract workers through Maxim Healthcare Staffing are as follows: Harper Center has 29 contract staff, Taylor Hardin has 60 contract staff, and Bryce Hospital has 54 contract staff for a total of 143 contract workers.
- Recruitment Highlight for Essential Leadership Roles: Harper's Facility Director started July 16<sup>th</sup>, their Director of Nursing started September 1<sup>st</sup>, and Hardin's Director of Nursing started November 1<sup>st</sup>.

**BUREAU OF FINANCE** (*ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH*)

- Each Bureau of Finance office continues to strategically work with other ADMH offices to ensure transactions are successfully processed for timely payment. During the 13<sup>th</sup> accounting period, the Bureau processed 7,594 documents, generating 1,596 payments, totaling \$49,641,834.

**LAND AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT OFFICE** (*ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH*)

- For Fiscal Year 2023: Life Safety conducted 4152 inspections.
- Land Sales/Leases income produced through the management of Oil/Gas/Mineral leases, hunting leases, timber sales, and other real estate leases generated \$1,178,257.78.

**BUREAU OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY** (*ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH*)

- Since the last report, the Bureau of Information Technology (BITS) has upgraded 15+ servers to Server 2022.
- Desktops, laptops, and other equipment was ordered for the facilities, deployments of new equipment are underway.
- The Central Office will be transitioning to WebEx cloud calling.
- BITS hired an Information Security Officer who will be implementing the IT Security plan.
- Established an IT Steering Committee Charter to prioritize and monitor IT projects.

**OFFICE OF OBRA PASSR** (*SYSTEM OF CARE & PARTNERSHIPS*)

- Staff are currently providing Public Health Emergency COVID-19 transition guidance for nursing homes and hospitals. The OBRA Office manages a 1-800 PASRR technical support line for all 67 Alabama counties and the following stakeholders: nursing homes, hospitals, home health agencies, hospice programs, disability advocates, family members, group homes, physicians, DHR and other state agencies.
- The PASRR Program processed 2,443 Level II Screening Applications to determine the appropriateness of nursing facility level of care.
- The OBRA Office processed 459 significant change applications to determine continued nursing home eligibility and the need for mental health support.

**NURSE DELEGATION PROGRAM (NDP)** (*PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE*)

- The Office of NDP trained 32 Nurses on Becoming a Delegating Nurse, updated 18 existing MAS Nurses on program changes, and educated 19 case managers on TB requirements for ADMH-DD.
- The Offices of NDP and Staff Development revised the MAC I [Training](#) in the Relias eLearning system, including adding a pre-exam and updating the Module 1 content to help improve learner comprehension.

**OFFICE OF POLICY AND PLANNING** (*PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE and KNOWLEDGE & AWARENESS*)

- The Office of Certification Administration (OCA) has hired a new Certification Director, Mr. Fred McCoy, III. During this period, OCA processed 227 applications and 64 site visit reports.



Office of Public Information

November 12, 2023

<i>Supporting the ADMH Strategic Plan</i>	
<b>System of Care &amp; Partnerships; Knowledge &amp; Awareness</b>	
<b>Alabama Crisis System of Care</b>	
<p>Indian Rivers opened the Hope Pointe Crisis Center on Oct. 17 with an amazing Ribbon Cutting with Governor Ivey. SpectraCare plans to open one in Dothan in early 2024. We are working with them to plan and promote the event.</p> <p>CCBHCs are closer on the horizon than ever before, and the Office of PI is working to create and disseminate communication templates informing internal stakeholders of decisions made by committees.</p>	
<b>Knowledge &amp; Awareness</b>	
<b>988</b>	<p>988 call centers are answering an increased # of calls with no paid promotions, but a new campaign will begin with billboard, radio and online ads to ensure all Alabamians are aware of this important resource.</p>
<b>Knowledge &amp; Awareness</b>	
<p>New pens, shirts and other promotional items have been designed and purchased to better showcase the dept. at events and conferences.</p>	
<b>Knowledge &amp; Awareness</b>	
<p>A mental health museum is in the final stages of planning, located at the Old Bryce Hospital. Art panels, logistics and flow for the museum have been approved by the Commissioner. The museum plans to open in early 2024. The museum will be heavily promoted when timing is appropriated, with a reception planned as well.</p>	
<b>System of Care &amp; Partnerships</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued work with CCBHC teams, managing the CCBHC Comm team.</li> <li>• Promoted the new ADMH Children and Family Services office/unit to staff</li> <li>• Designed and built a new intranet for DD providers to read, review and input information related to the HCBS rule</li> </ul>	
<b>Professional Workforce</b>	
<p>Administrative Assistant Training for the whole dept. was done in October, to ensure efficiency and similarity in our work with Outlook, Zoom and Adobe Pro.</p> <p>The Office of PI has been pleased to promote and showcase the ACE class, offered by Shelton State, in which many of the new Mental Health Workers at our facilities have and will be attending.</p> <p>Initial planning of an ADMH All Staff Conference has commenced. Date is Oct 1-2, 2024.</p>	

**Developmental Disabilities Division  
(As of October 31, 2023)  
Waiver Waiting List: 1595**

Waiver Enrollments	Counties	Number Enrolled
Intellectual Disability Waiver	All 67 Counties	4447
Living at Home Waiver	All 67 Counties	525
Community Demonstration Waiver Program		388

**HCBS Corrective Action Plan  
Milestones Update: Phase 2**

HCBS Setting Type	Total No. of Settings	No. of Settings Monitored	No. of Settings Monitoring Pending	No. of Settings Compliant
Residential Programs	659	374	285	291
Day Services and Program	10	39	17	34

**Other Initiatives**

**Interagency Initiatives/Crisis Emergency Cases:**

- Since the August BOT meeting, a total of eight (8) children and five (5) adults in DHR custody have been placed by DDD in special residential services.
- New Crisis Residential/Evaluation Beds and Services are being developed: Glenwood (8 Children and 8 Adult Beds); Altapointe (2 Children Hospital Evaluation Beds); and Project Transition (Crisis Case Coordination Services)

**Rate Increases/Waiver Amendments:** The rate increases for Direct Support and Support Coordination staff, approved by the Legislature, have been submitted in the ID and LAH Waiver Amendments to CMS. Other service rate increases and modifications were also included in the amendments with an anticipated CMS decision by end of month. CWP Waiver amendment has been submitted to Medicaid, awaiting their final review before submission to CMS.

**Stakeholder Discussion**

No discussion

**Other Business**

No other business

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the group, the meeting adjourned at  
The next BOT meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 16, 2024.

Respectfully Submitted:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kimberly G. Boswell  
Secretary of the Board and Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Donna Foster, Vice-Chair of the Board



**Alabama Crisis System of Care**

**Crisis Center: Progress Report 2022**

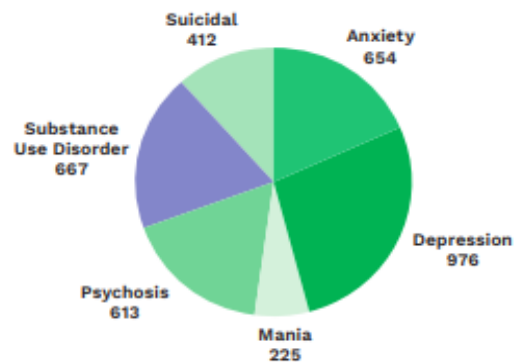
**Center Locations:** AltaPointe Health (Mobile) • WellStone (Huntsville) • Carastar Health (Montgomery)

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- 2106** Evaluations
- 1513** Individuals who Avoided Emergency Department Admission<sup>1</sup>
- 469** Individuals who Avoided Jail Admission<sup>1</sup>
- 140** Law Enforcement Drop-offs

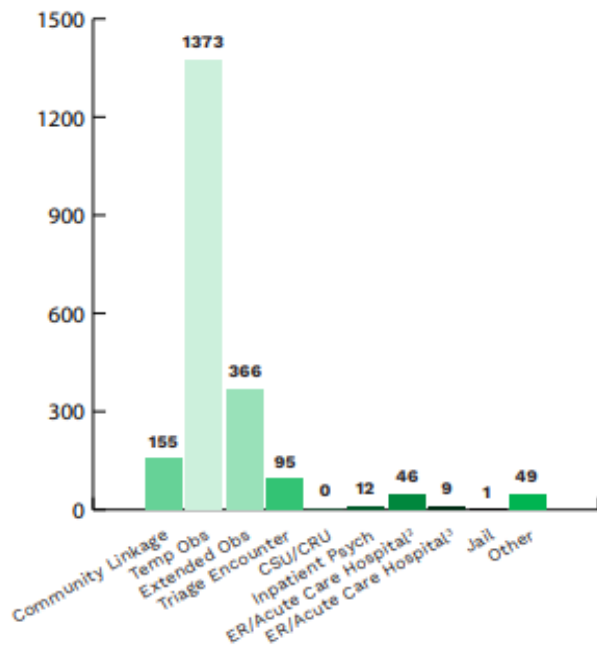
**PRESENTING SYMPTOMS**

Individuals may present with Multiple Symptoms

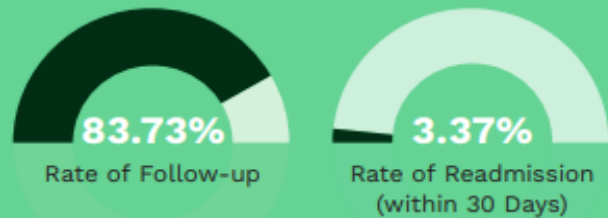


**CARE REFERRAL**

After Initial Crisis Evaluation



**FOLLOW-UP & READMISSION**



<sup>1</sup>Some Individuals may be duplicated in the avoidance of Emergency Department and Jail Admission  
 Community Linkage: Referred to a community-based program or service for follow-up  
 Obs: Observation  
 Triage Encounter: called or walked in requesting information but no evaluation completed  
 CSU/CRU: Crisis Stabilization Unit/Crisis Residential Unit  
<sup>2</sup>ER/Acute Care Hospital: Did Not Return to Crisis Center, not Medical Cleared  
<sup>3</sup>ER/Acute Care Hospital: Did Return, Medically Cleared  
 Other: Group Home, Peer Services, Recovery Services Team, Shelter, Substance Use Inpatient



**Alabama Crisis System of Care: Progress Report January 2022 - June 2023**

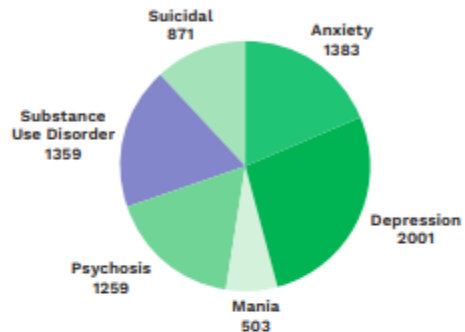
**CRISIS CENTERS** AltaPointe Health (Mobile) • Carastar Health (Montgomery)  
JBS (Birmingham) • WellStone (Huntsville)

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- 4427** Evaluations
- 3338** Individuals who Avoided Emergency Department Admission<sup>1</sup>
- 819** Individuals who Avoided Jail Admission<sup>1</sup>
- 322** Law Enforcement Drop-offs

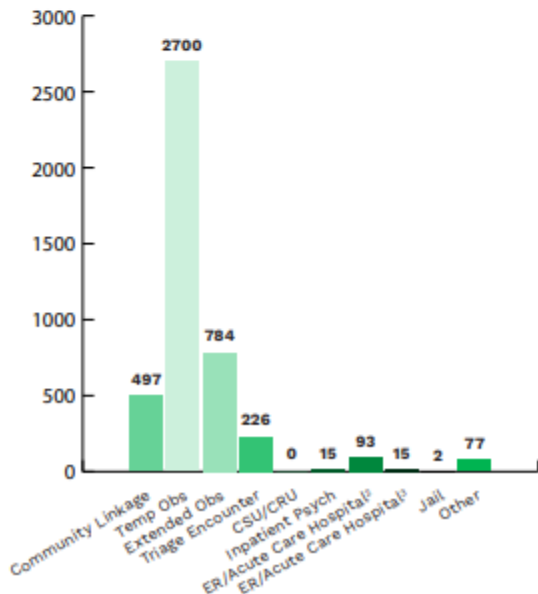
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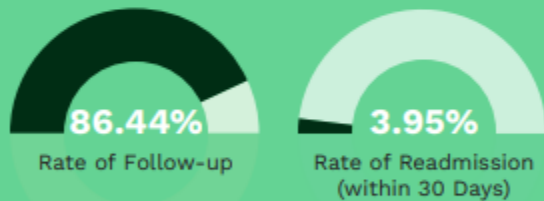


**CARE REFERRAL**

After Initial Crisis Evaluation



**FOLLOW-UP & READMISSION**



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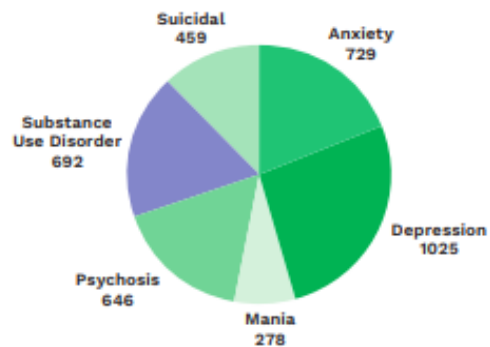
**CRISIS CENTERS** AltaPointe Health (Mobile) • Carastar Health (Montgomery)  
JBS (Birmingham) • WellStone (Huntsville)

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- 2321** Evaluations
- 1825** Individuals who Avoided Emergency Department Admission<sup>1</sup>
- 350** Individuals who Avoided Jail Admission<sup>1</sup>
- 182** Law Enforcement Drop-offs

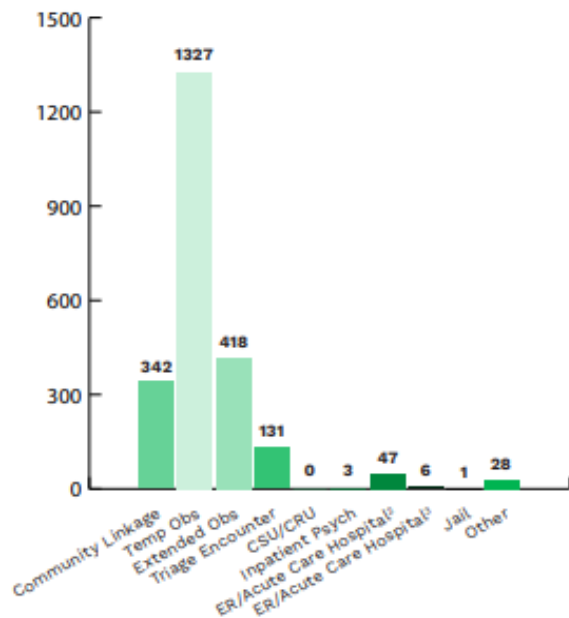
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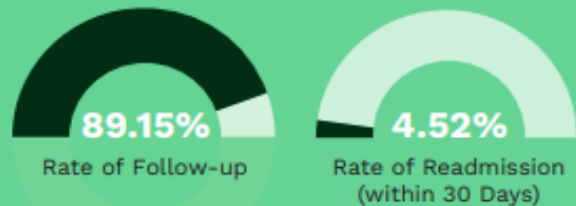


**CARE REFERRAL**

After Initial Crisis Evaluation



**FOLLOW-UP & READMISSION**



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