

The Outlook

Alabama Department of Mental Health Newsletter



Alabama Continues Statewide Transition to Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Model

Expanding into Two New Areas of the State

[The Alabama Department of Mental Health](#) (ADMH) is proud to announce two additional community mental health centers have been approved to transition to the [Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic \(CCBHC\) model](#), an integrated approach to behavioral healthcare designed to expand access to mental health and substance use treatment services.

[Mountain Lakes Behavioral Healthcare, which serves Jackson and Marshall counties](#), and [Highland Health Systems, serving Cleburne and Calhoun counties](#), received approval from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in October 2025 and April 2026, respectively. The two organizations join AltaPointe and Wellstone in adopting the CCBHC model.

“Our department has set a bold vision for the future with CCBHCs, which offer a ‘no wrong door’ approach to behavioral healthcare,” said ADMH Commissioner Kimberly Boswell. “The transition to and expansion of the CCBHC model moves us closer to a system where every Alabamian has access to high-quality, coordinated and more efficient mental health and substance use treatment services.”



CCBHCs are specially designated clinics that must provide services to anyone seeking help for a mental health or substance use condition, regardless of their place of residence, ability to pay, or age. They reduce wait times and strengthen coordination among behavioral health, physical healthcare and social services. The model offers significant advantages for Alabama’s community mental health system. ‘

“The move to the CCBHC model is a major step and allows us to expand access to mental health and substance use treatment services, strengthen our Mobile Crisis response system, and introduce enhanced primary care screening and monitoring services. Our CCBHC will help to ensure timely, comprehensive care and to better address whole-person health needs, said Myron Gargis, Chief Executive Officer, Mountain Lakes Behavioral Healthcare.

Mickey Turner, Chief Executive Officer, Highland Health Systems, said, “Becoming a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) significantly strengthens the quality and accessibility of behavioral health services in our community. We will be able to further reduce barriers to care, improve outcomes, and ensure that individuals receive the support they need. It will strengthen community partnerships and, most importantly, help us better serve those in need by creating a more responsive system of care that promotes recovery, stability, and overall well-being.”

CCBHCs ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE NINE CORE SERVICES, INCLUDING:

- **CRISIS SERVICES**
- **OUTPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES**
- **PERSON- AND FAMILY-CENTERED TREATMENT PLANNING**
- **COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS**
- **PEER, FAMILY SUPPORT, AND COUNSELOR SERVICES**
- **TARGETED CARE MANAGEMENT**
- **OUTPATIENT PRIMARY CARE SCREENING AND MONITORING**
- **PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION SERVICES**
- **SCREENING, DIAGNOSIS, AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

By integrating these core services into a comprehensive model of care, providers can better address the whole-person needs of individuals and families. The process to become a CCBHC can take anywhere from six to eighteen months depending on staffing levels, infrastructure, and the services currently offered by each community mental health center.

Expanded community-based services will also help reduce barriers to treatment, including transportation and access challenges in underserved areas. The Alabama Crisis System of Care is a key part of the CCBHC model, providing Crisis Center access and mobile crisis services 24/7, 365 days a year.

AltaPointe, which serves [southwest and east Alabama](#), and WellStone in [northeast Alabama](#) both moved to the CCBHC model in 2024. “Transitioning to the CCBHC model has transformed our service to the community. We now reach historically underserved populations, remove barriers to care, and provide expanded crisis and evidence-based services. This model ensures no one is turned away due to diagnosis, insurance, or ability to pay. We remain committed to delivering comprehensive, person-centered care for every individual and family,” Tuerk Schlesinger, AltaPointe Health CEO.

Jeremy Blair of WellStone said, “CCBHC has been a gamechanger in north Alabama. Since implementing the model at WellStone, we’ve improved the quality and range of services as well as significantly decreased the wait time for care. We’ve given children and adults the quality, affordable, and timely care they need. Moving forward, we hope this model continues to grow so everyone can access the mental health care they need when they need it.”

ADMH and Alabama’s community mental health providers remain committed to building a comprehensive, accessible, and sustainable behavioral healthcare system for all Alabamians.

To learn more about CCBHCs, please contact the Office of Public Information, publicinformation.dmh@mh.alabama.gov, 334-242-3417.

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Want to be included in the next issue?

Send us your stories, achievements and events!

publicinformation.dmh@mh.alabama.gov

334-242-3417

Mental Health Matters: A Better You, A Better ADMH

– ADMH staff attend 2026 All-Staff Conference

More than 600 staff members gathered at the University of Alabama’s Bryant Conference Center in late June for the biennial ADMH All-Staff Conference.

The theme for the conference – “Mental Health Matters: A Better You, A Better ADMH” – was chosen to reflect the department’s commitment to workforce health and wellness as outlined in the ADMH 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, which states the department will “recruit and retain a skilled workforce ... supported by a culture of well-being, professional growth, and development.”

“This year’s theme ... goes to the heart of our vision, mission and values and reflects our firm belief that our department is at its best when our staff feels supported, empowered and appreciated,” Commissioner Kimberly Boswell wrote in her welcome letter.

The conference was the culmination of a one-year planning effort by an 18-member committee comprised of representatives from across the department. Session topics were determined in part by suggestions from staff, with 20 sessions on 13 distinct topics in four blocks of breakouts. As with the 2024 conference, attendees also had the option of touring the Bryce Hospital Museum.

The meeting began with a general session that included a greeting from ADMH Board of Trustees Vice Chair Donna Foster and a performance by The Sounds of Joy, a choir sponsored by The Arc of Tuscaloosa County and led by Vickie Brown. On the first day of the conference, the nine-member ensemble brought the animated crowd to its feet with performances of “Old Time Rock ‘n’ Roll” and “I Believe I Can Fly” before closing with the well-known patriotic anthem “God Bless the U.S.A.”



The content-rich concurrent sessions covered a variety of relevant topics, including ADMH 101, artificial intelligence, media overload, the history of mental health treatment in Alabama, stress management, state employee health insurance, trauma treatment, AlabamaRetire 457, harnessing a growth mindset, and applying the ACTOR Framework in the public sector.





All-Staff Conference 2026





Commissioner Boswell addressed attendees during the lunchtime general session, spotlighting recent noteworthy department achievements, recognizing significant staff service milestones, and honoring ADMH staff and retirees lost since the last all-staff meeting in October 2024.



The commissioner also took a moment to highlight Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey's role in the department's many accomplishments.

"Through Gov. Ivey's leadership, we have seen tremendous growth in our budget and a level of stability in state government that has allowed our department the opportunity to grow and dream," she said.



In closing her brief remarks, Commissioner Boswell echoed the conference theme and reminded those in attendance that mindset is a vital part of maintaining good mental health.

"The one thing I want you to do today is to think about what you're thinking about," she said. "We are unique in the world in that we are born with the ability to think about our own thoughts. Much of what you've heard today is about recognizing what you're thinking about and retraining your brain and connecting with others. Those two things can make a world of difference in your relationships, in your mental health, in everything you do, including everything you do in your workplace."



NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

More than a Month



When I first started my recovery journey, it was all about abstaining from substances and being able to look at myself in the mirror. After that stage, I was more concerned with managing my emotions and being capable of being able to gain employment, housing, and reconstructing family life. I burned bridges that I thought were unrepairable.

Today, my recovery is more about being a woman of integrity and having others in my life to hold me accountable. I'm reaching for higher heights. I want my life to look totally opposite of who I was during addiction. That old person is dead!

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

II Corinthians 5:17

- Carla Bugg, CRSS

Every September, we celebrate Recovery Month to raise awareness that recovery from a substance use disorder is possible and that long-term recovery is achievable. It's a time to educate others about substance use disorders, reduce stigma, and highlight the many pathways to treatment and recovery.

BUT RECOVERY MONTH IS ABOUT MORE THAN AWARENESS.

It's also an opportunity for people in recovery to reflect on their own journeys and what recovery means to them. For many, recovery isn't something passive. It's something they live every day. It's about building strong support systems, overcoming obstacles, and continuing to move forward one day at a time.

Recovery looks different for everyone, but each journey is a testament to resilience, hope, and determination.

As we observe Recovery Month, we celebrate the progress people have made, acknowledge the work that continues each day, and share a message of hope: recovery is real, and no one has to walk the journey alone.



Well to me Recovery means LIFE... cause for me addiction was death. I was mentally, emotionally, and spiritually dead and broken inside, being imprisoned inside myself, thinking there was no way out, the shame and the guilt just piling continuously through 26 years of active drug use. Recovery gave me life, it gave me freedom, and it gave me peace that I never thought possible. My life never much had purpose, the let downs, the continues incarceration, the death that seem to consume me. RECOVERY gave me purpose from all the Tragedy that took place in my life, now I take the tragedy that seems so worthless and hopeless and use them to help others go through their struggles and let them know there is hope, there is freedom, and there is life. I'm not the person that Addiction sad I was but the beautiful women that God and recovery helped me to become.

- Amanda Salter Gray

24th Annual Mental Health Interpreter Training

July 27-31, 2026

MHIT is a forty plus hour course designed to provide a sound basis for clinicians and interpreters to work effectively in mental health settings as part of a professional team. It includes lectures, demonstrations, exercises, evaluation and discussion to develop knowledge, skills and resources to ensure appropriate services for individuals who are deaf. This course includes:

- ✓ Medical and mental health systems, considering individuals who are deaf
- ✓ Sources of communication breakdown associated with mental illness and treatment for individuals who are deaf
- ✓ Clinicians and Interpreters: roles, tools, and resources
- ✓ Severe language dysfluency and Visual - Gestural Communication
- ✓ Psychiatric emergencies
- ✓ Community Mental Health Services, and
- ✓ Demand-Control Theory applied to mental health/deaf work

Presenters Include:

Bob Pollard, Robyn Dean, Roger Williams, Jaime Wilson, Steve Hamerdinger, Kent Schafer, Charlene Crump, Amanda Somdal, Brian McKenny, and others.

Mentoring and Clinical Supervision

Our staff interpreters provide clinical supervision and mentoring for interpreters who complete MHIT and work in the field.

Online Learning:

Online training in areas relating to Deafness and/or interpreting and Mental Health for clinicians and interpreters. Additional training series in mental health offered for ITP students.



	Through February 28	Through April 15	After April 15	Day Rate
Participants	\$340	\$390	\$425	\$110
Alumni	\$240	\$290	\$325	\$90

- Before July 1st, refunds will be provided upon written request minus 15% processing and handling fee. Refunds will not be provided after July 1st, however, registration fees will be applied to the subsequent year.
- Student representative participation is limited. Note: Students who apply for worker status must submit evidence of full-time status in a recognized University Program along with faculty recommendation. Contact info@mh.it.org for more information.

A Presentation of the:

Mental Health Interpreter Training Project,
Office of Deaf Services, Alabama Department of Mental Health.
In Partnership with ADARA and Wings Across Alabama.



Training location: Troy University in Montgomery, Alabama

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT: <http://www.mhit.org>

Office of Deaf Services
Alabama Department of Mental Health
info@mh.it.org



Hope Starts with a Conversation: Suicide Prevention Month

Every September, we observe Suicide Prevention Month to raise awareness about suicide prevention, reduce stigma, and encourage conversations about mental health.

Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death in the United States and affects people of every age, background, and community. It is a complex public health issue, but help, treatment, and support are available.

Suicide Prevention Month is a time to honor the lives lost to suicide, support those who have been impacted, and recognize the individuals who continue their journeys toward healing and recovery. It is also an opportunity to remind people that they are not alone and that seeking help is a sign of strength.

Open and honest conversations can play a powerful role in suicide prevention. By talking about mental health, recognizing warning signs, and connecting people to resources, we

can help reduce stigma and encourage those who are struggling to seek support.

Suicide affects people of all ages, including young people, and rates remain disproportionately high among men and boys. As we observe Suicide Prevention Month, we recommit ourselves to building awareness, fostering connection, and creating communities where every person knows that help and hope are available.



Volunteers of America Southeast Makes a Big Impact for Residents with Renovations!

There is something special about coming home.

For several individuals served through VOA Southeast's Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) programs, that feeling became a reality as they recently returned to a completely renovated group home designed to provide comfort, independence, and a vibrant place to thrive.

VOA Southeast proudly celebrated the grand re-opening of the home alongside residents, staff, supporters, and community members. The extensive renovation transformed the residence into a bright, welcoming space that reflects the dignity and value of the individuals who call it home.

Learn more! [Welcome Home: How a Renovated Residence is Enhancing Life for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities - VOA Southeast.](#)





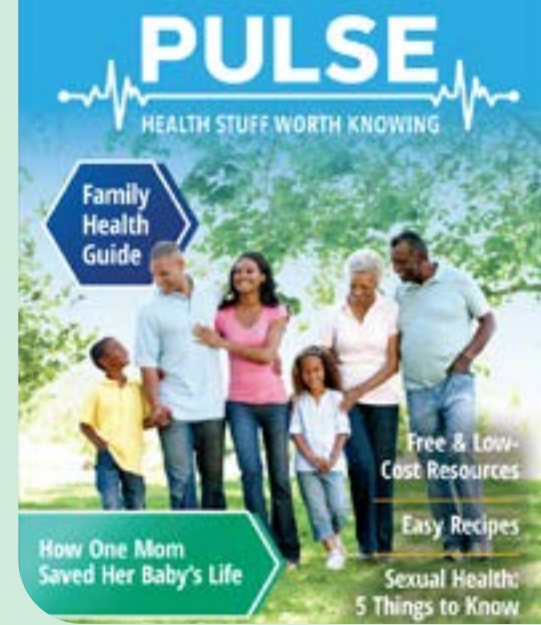
Celebrating Two Years of Preserving Alabama's Mental Health History

The Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) Museum, located in the Randall Welcome Center on the historic Bryce Hospital campus, proudly celebrates its second anniversary. Since opening on June 28, 2024, the museum has provided visitors with a unique opportunity to explore the rich history of mental health care in Alabama through engaging exhibits, historical photographs, architectural renderings, and authentic artifacts.

Visitors can step back in time and gain a deeper understanding of Bryce Hospital's pioneering role in advancing the practice of moral treatment, a progressive approach that emphasized dignity, compassion, and therapeutic care. The museum's collection includes original uniforms, medical instruments, and other historical items that offer a glimpse into the daily lives of both patients and staff throughout Bryce's history.

The exhibition also features an extensive collection of photographs honoring the men and women whose dedication helped establish the foundation of mental health services in Alabama. Their contributions continue to inspire the ongoing progress and innovation in mental health care today.

As the ADMH Museum marks this milestone, it remains committed to preserving, sharing, and celebrating the stories that have shaped mental health care across the state.



ADMH featured in the new PULSE Health Resource Guide!

Mental health services and information were graciously featured in the new **PULSE Health Resource Guide!** This is a great resource for individuals and families statewide. The guide was released digitally in June, with printed copies arriving June 20th!

In addition to clinics and doctor's offices, **PULSE** is directly mailing the guide to homes across the state, particularly to rural Alabama.

Find the digital copy here: <https://alabamapulsemagazine.com/latest-issue/> and Please Share!

New Staff Spotlight:

Brenda Bresley, RN III

The Alabama Department of Mental Health is pleased to welcome Brenda Bresley, RN III, to our Developmental Disabilities Division.

A graduate of Jacksonville State University, Brenda earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing and brings both professional expertise and a deep sense of compassion to her role. Her commitment to caring for others is rooted in the values that matter most to her.

When asked what she is most proud of, Brenda's answer was simple and heartfelt: her children. Family serves as her greatest source of pride and inspiration, and it is also what motivates her each day. She shares that being able to provide for her family is what drives her to come to work and give her best.

Outside of work, Brenda enjoys spending quality time with loved ones. Her idea of a perfect day includes visiting with her daughter and close friend, sharing a meal together, and spending time with her son. These moments of connection and support are especially meaningful to her.

When she has time to relax, Brenda enjoys reading, crocheting, and crafting, creative hobbies that allow her to unwind and express herself.

We are excited to have Brenda join the ADMH team and look forward to the knowledge, dedication, and caring spirit she brings to our organization. Please join us in welcoming her to the ADMH family!

A SLOW CLAP FOR...

Congratulations to **Chloe Wilkins**! She recently graduated from the University of West Alabama with her bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in Social Work.

Congratulations to **Maegan Williams**! She recently graduated from Jacksonville State University with her E.Ds. in Counselor Educator.

Congratulations to **Kymbrianna J. Tellis**! She recently received a Master of Science degree in Information Technology with a concentration in Information Systems from Walden University.



Serve.
Empower.
Support.

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