



North Alabama Mental Health Coalition February 13, 2024

Attendees (in person):

Daniel Adamek (Little Orange Fish)	Jessica Alford (First Stop)	Charles Allen (HSV City ODEI)
Chief David Bailey (Madison Fire)	Sarah Bailey (UAH RAN)	Kim Bigelow (Warrior Wellness Program)
Jennifer Blazer (ALSP)	Crystal Bone (Fox Army Health)	Annie Brasseale (VOP)
Hannah Carter (First Stop)	Aubin Cawthon (Ross)	Emily Colbert (Wellstone)
Woodie Deleuil (NAMI)	Mikiah Dial (Huntsville DEI)	La'trisha Fletcher (DHR)
Zack Gilliam (HH/UAB)	Amy Gillott (Decatur West)	Kelli Glass (Wellstone)
Kelly Goff (ADMH)	Nicole Goggans (SAM Foundation)	Tammy Goodwin (ALNG)
Jeff Hastings (Ross)	Kim Holder (Not One More Alabama)	Daelyn Houser (Wellstone)
Stephanie Jennings (Best Life Recovery)	Tammy Leeth (Probate Judge's Office)	Brooke Linney (HSV City ODEI)
Cheryl McClendon (Wellstone/WES)	Tealacy Mitchell (Thrive Alabama)	Krista Moulton (Therapist / NAMI)
Craig Patton (GRAMI)	Termayne Perry (Thrive)	Karen Petersen (Wellstone)
Julie Schenck-Brown (Huntsville Police)	Jakob Shilt (VA Police)	Mack Yates (SVDP/VOP)
Lorenzo Young (Bradford Health Services)	Kelly Cody	

Welcome and Introductions

Introductions are important because you need to find out who to help you

Legal Services Alabama/ ADMH – Jennifer Blazer, Staff Attorney

Jennifer has been in the social service field for 19 years and is currently working with Legal Services Alabama under a grant with the Alabama Department of Mental Health. They have offices statewide (in addition to Huntsville) and have 80 attorneys. They provide free legal services for lower income Alabamians. Under the Mental Health grant, Jennifer specifically focuses on housing and homeless prevention.

Some of their attorneys are under federal grant money to provide general legal services but there are a variety of other grants across all counties that focus on issues such as FEMA relief, elder law and others. For ADMH, the grant focuses on the theme that housing stability promotes mental health stability. She works a lot with eviction defense so people can stay in their homes and keep their treatment stable. Their goal is to address any kind of homelessness and, as a result, they deal with everything from violence and abuse to custody issues as well as consumer issues (garnishment). They can help make appeals for someone who loses food stamps. They can also help with Social Security issues so people can have a steady income in order to help pay their rent. They also deal with education issues such as how someone who is homeless can get their kids to school. Their legal services are free, but sometimes other costs are involved. Jennifer's office tries to get eviction cases before they go to court and, in that way, they can save money by avoiding court fees. If it comes to that, they can represent people through the court system.

They also address reasonable accommodations such as a person residing there that helps take care of them or an emotional support animal. Federal law permits reasonable accommodations.

Each year they handle about 6000 online applications. They have a call center available from 9 am to 4:30 pm. There are about 4000 walk-in cases. Each attorney has a very high caseload. Jennifer left flyers about her organization and she encourages referrals.

A question was asked about the financial criteria to receive help. They are under federal HUD guidelines, so you have to be 125% to 200% of poverty level depending on the situation. If there is violence or trafficking involved, you don't have to be a citizen; however, to get other aid you have to be a US citizen and an Alabama resident.

They can be very busy, but a lot of their work involves providing quick advice and explaining how to communicate effectively.

SAM Foundation – Nicole Goggans, CFO

The SAM Foundation is a non-profit based in Alabama and Georgia. The organization is named after Nicole's brother Sam who died by suicide. The acronym is Suicide Awareness Means hope. Their mission is to train people how to step in and prevent suicide. Anyone can be trained. Their favorite training is QPR: Question,

Persuade, and Refer. QPR is a one and a half hour training that teaches you how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, how to question them and then, where to refer them.

There are three initiatives:

1. Education. They offer QPR training, AMSER training for mental health professionals, Assist training (a two-day course), CAM scare (for mental health professionals) and Safe Talk. They try to offer the classes as low cost or no cost using grants and fund raisers.
2. Elevate. They promote awareness at events such as walks and fund raisers.
3. Support. They have support groups for survivors of suicide loss and they offer counseling scholarships.

Suicide comes with a lot of stigmas and they want to make everyone aware of how to prevent it.

They have an upcoming fund raiser on May 18th at Sweet Seasons Farm in Valley Head, Alabama. Taylor Hicks is the headlining act. Nicole is looking for corporate sponsors and encouraged the coalition members to come and support the event.

<https://samfound.networkforgood.com/events/65198-sowing-seeds-of-hope-concert-samfest-2024>

Every second Tuesday they offer a virtual QPR program on suicide prevention.

Nicole's contact email address: nicole@samfound.org

GRAMI (Getting Real About Mental Illness) – Adina Peyton

Adina founded GRAMI about 1 ½ years ago. She showed a video about how suicide effects everyone involved. The organization tries to destigmatize mental illness and get mental health support for first responders.

She is trying to set up a template for law enforcement officers to get support for PTSD so that other cities can follow it. There is going to be funding at a federal level since legislation was passed.

Adina feels that we can start addressing mental health issues by trying to get help for first responders.

Their program is open to any first responder – fireman, police, HEMSI and even dispatchers. First responders can get help at any fully licensed therapist and GRAMI will pay. The organization was able to send several law enforcement officers to CIT international this year and hopes to do the same next year. They also sponsored 6 CIT training spots for dispatchers. Madison budgeted money to provide online CIT training for their dispatchers.

Contact Adina if you see gaps that they could help with: gramius.info@gmail.com

GRAMI publishes a magazine (once a year) and she asked people in the coalition to send her information about their organization to be included in the magazine. The magazine will have a shelf life of one year and will include listings for all of the mental health resources.

Please send information about your organization to Adina by the end of the month (February), including:

- Name of the Organization and logo
- Short synopsis of the mission
- If there is a cost related
- Point of contact

Her email address is: adinainelle@gmail.com

Their next fundraiser will be held on August 16th.

Someone asked if their services can expand to mental health professionals with compassion fatigue. Adina said not yet, but they hope to.

Psychiatric Residency Update – Mack Yates SVDP/VOP

The psychiatric residency is being pursued by both the UAB Huntsville and UAB Montgomery campuses. They hope to have the first class starting in 2025. Montgomery wants 3 of the spots and Huntsville is asking for 6 spots. The residency class is four years and that might lead to 24 psychiatrists down the road since 70% of the

psychiatrists tend to stay in the area where they were trained. They have been getting a lot of support from Huntsville Hospital and the VA.

Wellstone is pursuing their own residency program.

Open Floor

Karen Peterson mentioned that Wellstone has their annual Beacon of Hope fundraiser on **Thursday May 16th** at the Jackson center (6 pm with social hour at 5pm).

Karen sent this message about the fundraiser:

At the Beacon of Hope, we'll have an update on the state of mental health, local stories of hope and healing, and we'll hear from national mental health advocate David Magee. Magee is the best-selling author of "Dear William," a memoir that chronicles his family's struggle with mental illness, addiction, overdose, loss, and finally recovery and redemption.

We have individual seats and tables available (\$75 and \$600, respectively, with 20% discount with code HCL24 through tomorrow, 2/19).

Kelly mentioned the state autism conference is in Tuscaloosa next Friday with some sessions on Thursday. The topics include how to adapt mental health practices for autism and new diagnosis and practices for autism.

To find out more information or register for the conference: <https://training.ua.edu/autism/>

Tim Ward mentioned that they will have the North Alabama First Responders conference again this year. He is looking for people to speak at the conference who help first responders: Cops, EMTs, fire fighters, dispatch, chaplains, and spouses. The conference is in August and this is a good way to let people know about the resources that are out there for mental health. Contact Tim for more information: tward@madisoncountyal.gov

Next Meeting
Tuesday March 12, 2024
11:00 am at Wellstone