

JUST NEWSLETTER

JUNE | 2025 | ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH
UPDATE



BUILDING THE TASK FORCE FOR A HEALTHIER CHATHAM COUNTY

Since our powerful showing at the Nehemiah Action, our Mental Health Committee has made meaningful progress toward expanding access to mental health care in Chatham County.

Earlier this month, **committee members met with Chatham County leadership** to revisit the Mental Health Workforce Development Task Force's intended goals, discuss its composition, and identify a facilitating partner to guide it.

We're excited to share that Christina Lawrence, M.Ed., Clinical Director at HUGS (Heads-Up Guidance Services), has been affirmed as the task force's facilitating partner. Christina brings a wealth of clinical experience, community connection, and a deep commitment to equitable access to care.

We are currently in the formation phase, assembling an energized and diverse group of clinicians and stakeholders from across the county, including members of the JUST network. The Task Force will represent various perspectives from the mental health system, public sector, and community-based organizations.

Once the task force roster is finalized and our follow-up meeting with the county has occurred, we'll share another update with more details about the team and next steps.

YOUTH VOICES

The Urgent Fight on Teen Mental Health

As a student in the Savannah-Chatham County, I have seen firsthand how minimal mental health access is. It's easy to see what the people around you present themselves as: cheerful people, fulfilled by life, but this mask is often far from true. The reality of being a teen is that you are often helpless in the world you are born in, which sustains you throughout your high school career, and whether that environment is healthy or not, you're stuck with it. This leaves many teens feeling incredibly isolated, and if you pair this with the pressures of high school, you have an easy recipe for disaster. With all this in mind, it's important to note that access to mental health care for most teens is very limited. Every teen deserves someone to talk to, and as a high schooler, it's clear that many of my peers lack this necessity. Teens are our future, and we all need to take a little responsibility to help fight this urgent battle so everyone feels seen.

Joey Heilbrun- JUST intern

Building Power Beyond the Action: Why Monitoring Matters in the Justice Cycle

After a strong turnout and an official commitment at the 2025 Nehemiah Action for the Access to Mental Health Campaign, JUST is now entering the final step in our four-step process for creating systemic change: the monitoring phase.

This phase is all about accountability. It's our opportunity to ensure that public officials follow through on their commitments by holding follow-up meetings, keeping our communities informed and engaged, and facilitating continued conversations within our congregations.

The monitoring phase is the time for us to unite as a community and move confidently and collectively forward in our fight for justice.

As we continue this work, let us remember: "It is the spirit and not the form that keeps justice alive." – Earl Warren

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