



North Alabama Mental Health Coalition

Meeting minutes for October 9, 2025

Attendees (in person):

Daniel Adamek (Little Orange Fish)	Jessica Alford (First Stop)	Kelli Arthur (VA)
Sarah Bailey (UAH RAN)	Randy Barbour (City of Huntsville)	Edward Becher (Invisible Warriors)
Nancy Becher (Invisible Warriors)	Jennifer Blazer (ALSP)	Annie Brasseale (VOP)
Amy Bryan (Alliance Huntsville)	Darlene Burton (Salvation Army)	Melissa Caldwell (Wellstone)
Selena Carter (Crestwood Hospital)	Aubin Cawthon (Ross)	Rudolfo Chavez (SVDP)
Dee Chukwu (Prodigal Home for Women)	Klara Chukwu (Prodigal Home for Women)	Deione L. Crutcher (ADRS)
Woodie Deleuil (NAMI)	Breann Dodson (MCSS)	Melissa Foster (UAH Nursing)
Alexis Harvey (ALSP)	Linda Howe (Just Serve)	Marc Hultquist (Regan's Clinic)
Beth McAnally (NOMA)	Marbi McCann (Bradford Warrior)	Cheryl McClendon (Wellstone/WES)
Michaela McKinnon (UAB Hsv Research)	Amber Moon (Unpack It Counseling)	Brian Moran (VFW Post 2702)
Connie Oakley (GRAMI)	Leticia Ogutu (Wellstone)	Alyssa Perry (Wellstone)
Sarah Perry (Partnership for a Drug Free)	Dawn Rayburn (Restorative Wellness)	Audrey Smith (Grow Our Village)
Shayla Tarrant (Pasadena Villa)	Barbara Wallace (Thrive AL)	Linda Ware (UAH RAN)
J'Nada Williams (ADRS)	Kendall Williams (First Stop)	Hannah Willoughby (Project Transition)
Brandi Woodard (Alliance BH)	Mack Yates (SVDP/VOP)	April Chukwu (Prodigal Home for Women)
Staci Cochran	Jalon Whitt (First Stop)	Audrey Rushing
Italya Tenney	Gabriel Burton	

1. Welcome and Introductions – Daniel Adamek

Introductions are important because you need to be able find out who can help you.

2. Policy Updates – Daniel Adamek

There is going to be a new meeting segment where we discuss the policy and legislation that impact the mission of the coalition. Daniel summarized a list of things that have gone on in the state and federally during 2025.

State policy developments:

- On October 1 the age of medical consent was raised to 16. We are not sure of the impacts yet.
- Voluntary Firearms Storage Act (Houston/Hunter Act) was passed in May. Allows for individuals to voluntarily store firearms with law enforcement agencies or licensed dealers during a mental health crisis.
- Fiscal year 2026 (starting in October) Alabama increased its budget by 19% for its' Medicaid budget. ADMH budget increase of 2%. An additional \$10 million directed to increased community centers.
- Crisis intervention expansion with 6 crisis centers now with a new one in Dothan through Spectracare.
- PTSD commission and board monitorization establishes a study on PTSD in veterans and First Responders. Not sure of the effect on us. Daniel encouraged someone to take the lead on finding out more information.

Federal policy developments:

- Ending Crime and Disorder in American Streets (executive order issued on July 24) to provoke broader use of civil commitment for individuals with serious mental illness. It may have an impact of long-term treatment capacity, but it remains to be seen.
- Medicaid cuts of 1 trillion dollars over the next 10 years. It ends the 5% federal match (which Alabama did not take advantage of anyway).
- Autism announcement may have impacts on our community.
- The US DEA changed telehealth rules, adding new rules for clinicians prescribing controlled substances via telehealth. Became effective October 1. This could be impactful for rural communities.
- Support for Patient and Communities Reauthorization Act (awaiting passage) extends federal funding for substance use disorder and mental health programs (including 988 suicide life line) extended through 2030.

Daniel will try to put these summaries together about changes in legislation that might impact the work we do.

3. Coalition Updates – Daniel Adamek

Little Orange Fish worked with UAH to develop a tool to help autism social workers help navigate systems and find resources. They are looking at how to transfer that technology to RAN ([Regional Autism Network](#)). Sarah (from RAN) mentioned that they have been trying to build up their list of resources over the past years. They want to put things in one database that individuals can access. Autism has such a wide spectrum and this will

be able to give us more data to ask for more things. It has gotten more confusing lately with announcements about autism. In September, the FDA issued a process to change labeling on acetaminophen based on studies that were anecdotal and not widespread. Myth about Tylenol taken during pregnancy causing autism needs to be debunked. She wanted to mention that NARC has resources for free autism testing. Someone else mentioned that we might see an increase in mental health issues from families that are dealing with guilt, thinking that they may have caused the problem.

Daniel reiterated that providing resources and improving access to care are some of the primary mission objectives of the coalition.

Mack reported that the petition for a long-term inpatient treatment and recovery center in North Alabama is moving along. All of the State's long-term facilities are in Tuscaloosa and have a long waiting list.

Melissa mentioned that UAH is having a mini conference ([Shine Conference](#)) on Tuesday October 21 from 11-2. They will announce a new neighborhood nursing program. They have partnered with agencies in the area to provide services and referrals. It is going to be one of the only programs like this in the country (John Hopkins has a similar program – Neighborhood Nursing). This will be like that, but not urban since they are trying to help the whole North Alabama area.

Randy had a community discussion on poverty on September 25. It was an insightful meeting and they discussed collaboration and barriers to collaboration between the city and nonprofits and church organizations. They also looked at what are the steps to move the programs (education, transportation, etc.) forward in the next 6 months. They will have a follow-up meeting November 18 (location to be determined). They want to have a conversation on how they can operate more effectively. Randy wants to develop a strategy (not just talk) about how we can address mental health and create access for everybody in our community. He hopes everyone can work toward the same goal with mental health and that is why we need these conversations. Randy will send out the information about the next session to Daniel.

Someone elaborated on the Houston/Hunter Act that Daniel mentioned. SAFER Together is a coalition that has been set up to help purchase safes to store the guns. There are two gun shops in Huntsville that have agreed to offer secure storage during a crisis. The guns storage is not just for mental health crises, but also if traveling or having kids visiting and you don't want guns in the house. \$1800 for 4 lockers and they are looking for donations.

Visit the website: www.safertogetheral.org

Invisible Warriors is looking for submissions to an art project about the day in the life of an invisible warrior. This artwork will be used to create a calendar for 2026 and will also be in a gallery to sell the artworks. 50% goes to Invisible Warriors and 50% goes to the artist. Further information at: www.InvisibleWarriors.org.

4. Featured Presentation – [City of Huntsville Homeless Outreach Initiative \(HOI\)](#) - Joy Davis

Joy Davis from [Huntsville Community Development](#) and John Savage from the Huntsville Police Department wanted to update the coalition since they last spoke in April 2024. Joy started working with HPD in 2022 on helping the unsheltered homeless. At the end of 2023, the [Homeless Outreach Initiative](#) was started to provide community collaboration to address homeless issues.

They began with a steering committee which is mostly comprised of the outreach team. They want to help the homeless more effectively. They are trying to let the community know how they can participate.

They also have a Homeless resource team which tries to determine how to engage everyone in all the aspects of the needs of the homeless (shelters, food, clothing, case management). This has now developed into the Homeless Strategy Network (facilitated by Dr. Randy Barber) and meets every other month.

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Things became more involved when they closed down the South Derrick camp (“The Slab”). There was a fire and the location became unsafe. There is a new South Derrick camp and the city of Huntsville is very hands on. We are trying to evolve as a community on how we address the concerns of the homeless, approaching the issues differently to be more effective.

The Homeless Outreach Initiative has basic goals. How do we deal with the increased numbers of unsheltered people? How do we expand the number of resources? We are trying to increase accountability.

The Outreach team consists of an administrative arm (the city), law enforcement, and community partners and they need to all work together.

Community Development receives funding from federal government to address low-income populations (homeless, elderly, and disabled). They are responsible for getting data on how they use the funds to the community as well as their administrators. They try and make sure they facilitate everyone and address the gaps in the services.

This is the link to the Homeless Outreach Initiative flyer:

www.huntsvilleal.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/COH-Homeless-Outreach-Initiative-Program-Overview.pdf

Officer John Savage explained about the Community Outreach Unit (HPD). For years, addressing homelessness was solely a police issue, but the police should just be providing support.

Their goal in the Community Outreach Unit is to:

- Educate the public: what is the law, what is the city is doing, and how can the public help?
- Provide access to resources and having a close working relationship with the resources in the community helps a tremendous amount. A lot of the population does not know what is available for them. The police will pick them up on the side of the road and now they can drop them off somewhere.
- Address concerns of the citizens.
- Make the homeless accountable. Set reasonable expectations for them.

Joy mentioned that collaboration is essential and they rely on their community partners ([R.O.S.S.](#), [First Stop](#), [Salvation Army](#), [Downtown Rescue Mission](#), [Wellstone](#), etc.). She showed a slide of some of the community partners. The Family Service Center has been an addition to the outreach team and helps get families into housing as quickly as possible.

John mentioned that, previously, they would not have seen the same results. With this team, they are able to see real success stories. He gave an example of a woman that was homeless and he was able to use community partners and now she is in stable housing. Joy brought up the situation of when it is cold outside, there are warming centers for people and now there are places for their animals to go as well.

John mentioned that there is a “Zero tolerance policy” when they deal with the homeless to add accountability. Judge Cleveland (Huntsville Municipal Court) developed the Unsheltered Court Program. In this program there is no jail time, and it can help them get off the street. There are 8-10 that are graduating this year through the program. They are safely housed. 16 people total to date have gone through the program and are no longer homeless.

Joy went over the Outreach implementation. The homeless numbers are increasing. There is a new South Derrick camp with a big fence around it to keep the residents in the camp safe. They are trying to keep the homeless from being exploited. People feel like they are “Doing God’s work”, but they are often a hinderance. Every Wednesday they clean up the camp and fill up garbage bins of trash (food, clothing, furniture) that people

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just drop off. They want to meet the basic needs of the people in the camp, but not saturate them with excessive amounts of stuff. You can have empathy without enabling. Joy and her team are trying to make the homeless accountable because they care. They need to keep their area clean.

The outcomes of the program are: safer/healthier community, keep our businesses safe, and safe shelters.

John introduced the members of the outreach committee that were at the meeting. Some of these organizations received city funding and some do not. This is a multi-disciplinary team and they work together.

They are required to do a yearly “point in time count” by the Continuum of Care. These numbers are reported to HUD and are taken the last ten days of January every year. They are also now doing summer counts for the city of Huntsville to make sure we are keeping a pulse on the community. They take the data to the city and community partners so they can address any concerns.

The Continuum of Care is made up of Madison, Morgan and Limestone counties, however, most of the numbers come from Madison County.

The common theme of all these programs is how we can work together. If there is a service or resource you can provide, talk to Joy. They do not want more people coming to the camp. There is a volunteer location for everyone to go to because they do not want the homeless to be exploited.

They have [South Derrick Camp](#) community meetings where different organizations do presentations about the resources they can provide. They are also creating a resident committee.

There are gaps in services that are needed such as transportation, immigration work, etc. and we need to think about how can we transition into these areas. There is a public calendar for South Derrick camp so you can see which services are being provided. One of the items needed is cleaning supplies. Transportation is a big need, but very tricky. Someone suggested making those needs more public.

John brought up the notion that people shouldn’t just bring items to the camp because it makes the residents more dependent. He wants to make them more responsible (and social) by making them leave the camp and go to a shelter (First Stop, for example) to get their needs met.

Joy also tries to encourage people to support other groups besides the homeless that need help (year-round) such as the elderly without family or people in group homes. 30% of the Madison County population that are working poor and are one step away from being homeless. Prevention education is a very important need.

Daniel asked about the strategy that the HOI is using to solve gaps in resources for the homeless. Joy mentioned again that the Homeless Strategy Network (the HOI is part of that) meets every other month to work on those issues such as how do we effectively treat mental health in the camps and in an unsheltered state.

Mack mentioned that the coalition is concerned about serious mental health issues. We need to take care of them. The severely disabled also have no support. There is not a place where we can put them. He stressed again the need for a long-term facility for those with severe mental illness.

Daniel recalled that a group spoke to the coalition in the past about starting a community for the homeless. Joy said there are not plans yet and there has been talk. There are tiny home communities outside the city, but the city zoning does not support that. We need to start small and build partnerships. With enough support, there is the possibility that the city would support it as well.

Someone mentioned that they had the financial support for a home for disabled adults, however laws kept the project from proceeding. These projects will not go anywhere unless the laws are changed. When you set up a group home, you must go through a check list and sometimes it is on the federal level that you run into problems.

John feels like until we move past the barriers of dealing with their problems, he doesn't feel like it would be a good idea to set them up in permanent housing. If there is an undesirable individual in the camps, it is easy to get rid of them. If they were in permanent housing, you would have to go through an eviction process. John said they are trying to make it as safe as possible and as temporary as possible.

Joy mentioned that Birmingham (for example) has a small group of tiny homes that are supported by multiple nonprofit organizations. They are highly monitored and temporary based on individual need. You need to start small on the human level – one client at a time.

Next Meeting
Tuesday November 11, 2025
11:00 am at Wellstone