



North Alabama Mental Health Coalition

Meeting minutes for February 10, 2026

Attendees (in person):

Daniel Adamek (Little Orange Fish)	Max Auburtin (NACH)	Sarah Bailey (UAH RAN)
Tammy Ballentine (Advocate/parent)	Randy Barbour (City of Huntsville)	Edward Becher (Invisible Warriors)
Nancy Becher (Invisible Warriors)	Annie Brasseale (VOP)	Morgan Brown (First Stop)
Amy Bryan (Alliance Huntsville)	Mark Burnett (NAMI)	Darlene Burton (Salvation Army)
Melissa Caldwell (Wellstone)	Rudolfo Chavez (SVDP)	Staci Cochran (PDFC)
Shaylah Cooley (PDFC)	Roxanne Crawford (Bradford at Madison)	Deione L. Crutcher (ADRS)
Stephanie Davis (Wellstone)	Breann Dodson (MCSS)	La'trisha Fletcher (DHR)
Susie Fryer (DHR)	Tindra Hammett (Parent)	Traci Harris (Elm Foundation)
Alexis Harvey (ALSP)	William Justin Holmes (Probate)	Linda Howe (Just Serve)
Stephanie Jennings (Best Life Recovery)	Sevierre John (NACH)	Michayla Johnson (First Stop)
Kathleen Leonard (YSO)	Michael Mathis (QUE Training & Wellness)	Beth McAnally (NOMA)
Cathy Miller (United Way)	Krista Moulton (Therapist)	Letricia Ogutu (Wellstone)
Leigh Oliver (Thrive AL)	Mikayla Percell	Sarah Perry (Partnership for a Drug Free)
Karen Petersen (Wellstone)	Audrey Rushing (Not One More Alabama)	Julie Schenck-Brown (Huntsville Police)
Joy Seuis (Wellstone)	Leslie Shepard	Mayra Short (Clinica Medica Moscati)
Holly Strayer (Advocate)	Kendall Williams (First Stop)	Hannah Willoughby (Project Transition)
Brandi Woodard (Alliance BH)	Mack Yates (SVDP/VOP)	

1. Welcome and Introductions – Mack Yates

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

2. Coalition Updates – Daniel Adamek

Daniel commented that we had a good kickoff meeting last month. We are trying a new approach to communications. Daniel spent time pulling discussions out of the minutes and highlighting topics. He asked for a response to the new structure including a listing of events listed at the bottom of emails that go out. We will highlight upcoming events as requested. Daniel requested feedback about other things going on the community as pertains to the coalition. He is working on a calendar of events in the city and with other organizations that relate to what we do.

Mark Burnett reported that the state approved a [NAMI](#) organization for Madison County (NAMI Huntsville is gone). They got approval to start programs. The first family support meeting will be held on the first Tuesday of March (March 3) with meetings every first and third Tuesdays. The meetings will be at 6:30 pm at Heritage Church in Madison. They are excited to get NAMI going again.

[Bradford](#) is now offering adolescent IOP for ages 13-18. Initially they will only provide Telehealth and they have scholarships for the uninsured. Cards were available.

The [Partnership for a Drug Free Community](#) gave an update report. They performed 65 assessments in January with 30 placements. They were awarded the Opioid settlement grant and serve 17 counties. There has been an increased need in detox for fentanyl and meth. They also have NARCAN available with no questions asked.

Sarah from [RAN \(Regional Autism Network\) at UAH](#) mentioned that RAN assists in finding mental health help for children (ages 10-30) available for Alabama residents. RAN handles insurance and financial support. She mentioned that if you fill out surveys, you can also get compensation.

Information is available at: <https://ran.uah.edu/resources/research-studies>

RAN is hosting a webinar presented by Dr. Susan White on March 3, 2026, about the EASE-UP research study, which offers 16-20 weeks of therapy for autistic people 10-30 years of age.

Daniel ([Little Orange Fish](#)) has kicked off a partnership with RAN. He is going to the [Alabama Autism Conference](#) next week where they will be demonstrating version 2 of a tool to facilitate navigating autism resources. They have been in partnership with RAN and working with students to take this tool to the next level. The goal is to have this as a tool for all 5 regional areas in the state. Daniel got a paper published in a science journal on ATHENA (the first version of this navigation tool). Good news!

3. Featured Presentation

“A LEGACY OF COMPASSION: ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, NORTH ALABAMA MENTAL HEALTH COALITION, AND ONGOING SERVICE TO STRENGTHEN MENTAL HEALTH IN NORTH ALABAMA”

– Tom O’Donnell, Treasurer and Mack Yates

Mack talked about the history of the coalition mentioning early efforts by Chief Jernigan and Officer Johnny to start CIT in the Huntsville area. He also mentioned Brig. Gen. Morgan Jellett who helped to create the coalition. Brian Davis (CEO of Wellstone at the time) suggested meeting at Wellstone and also suggested (and arranged for the funding of) case workers at the jail. Jeremy Blair continues to allow us to meet at Wellstone.

[SVDP \(St. Vincent de Paul\)](#) started in 1833 in France and is now worldwide. In the US, there are 4,000 different conferences (81,000 members). They pay out more than \$1.7 billion in aid to over 5 million needy per year. In 2025, [SVDP in Alabama](#) paid out over \$1.1 million in aid.

The Huntsville district council is the main governing body and meets once a month. There are 3 conferences in Huntsville, 2 in Madison and 1 each in Decatur, Florence, Cullman and Guntersville. Conferences meet weekly and handle aid to poor (utilities, rent, housing, food, etc.). The District Council has 3 main programs: 1 – Wheels4Working (began in 2011) assists the working poor with car replacements or repairs (over \$1,270,000 since inception).

2 – NAMHC (this coalition) helped to find funding for the first 2 case workers at the jail (\$50,000 each). Mack and Johnny Hollingsworth helped with the formation of [CIT \(Crisis Intervention Training\)](#) program. In 2018, Huntsville police won a grant (1 of 4 nationwide) called the Valor Program to start CIT.

In 2019, NAMHC submitted a petition (signed by law enforcement members in North Alabama) to encourage legislators to fund mental health crisis centers. In October 2020, the governor announced 3 crisis centers – one to be built in Huntsville. These centers were set up for adults, but [HEMSI](#) had to transport children all over the state for mental health treatment. In 2020, our coalition met with Chris Newlin ([NCAC](#)), Jeff Sams ([Huntsville Hospital](#)), and Amy Gillot ([Decatur West](#)) and from those meetings 16 beds were created for children with mental health issues. Today there are 48 pediatric beds. A year or two later [Wellstone](#) was able to open the pediatric mental health crisis unit in Huntsville.

Wellstone provides us with a place to meet and SVDP has helped Wellstone. SVDP donated \$50,000 to Wellstone for operational costs. They also donated \$52,000 for a building renovation to create a 10-bed crisis center before WES started. Since 2021, SVDP has donated over \$35,000 to Wellstone for intake costs, counseling, medicines, rents and utilities, for those who have no funds.

3 – Low Interest Loan program in collaboration with Redstone Federal Credit Union helps those with high interest loans to find a path out of their situation. The Credit Union will offer 1% loans to those who qualify. The loan program has paid out over \$269,000 in high interest loans.

Tom O'Donnell (SVDP District treasurer) explained about the low interest loan program. This loan program came about because they were looking for ways to make systemic change. Looking at the people who needed help, they found out that most of their expenses were payday loans (like quicksand – once you get in it, you don't get out). Typical payday loans are 210% interest. They tried for 5 years to stop it through a legislative route, but too much money comes in from these loan companies and goes to campaign contributions.

Tom gets referrals from SVDP and other faith-based organizations. The only criteria are that they can make the monthly payment and be a member at Redstone credit union (\$5). Tom meets with the people and sends them to Redstone which handles the administration. Of the 228 loans, they have a 65% success rate. Tom gave an example of a family in 2019 that was paying \$700 per month in interest only (they only owed \$4,300). Over seven years they had paid \$34,000 in interest only. They were able to be debt free in 24 months.

Someone asked if Redstone was reporting this to the credit bureau. Tom says these loans improves their credit rating and they are able to get a signature loan from Redstone. They do not advertise this program because SVDP is not in the loan business, but the systemic change business. They want to help people so they don't have to ask for help again.

Mack mentioned that we are also currently working on petition for a long-term inpatient mental health facility in North Alabama. For all of Alabama, there are only 268 beds (excluding the geriatric) all in Tuscaloosa with a one year wait to get in. All the people that are waiting for beds are back on the street, in jail, etc. and it is a nightmare for the families.

In 2014, Rudy Chavez met Brig. Gen. Morgan Jellet and joined SVDP. His emphasis is the Hispanic mission. Rudy gave an example of how [Wheels4Working](#) helped a family whose little girl was sick with transportation. When SVDP helps others, they consider them friends, neighbors, not just clients.

Mack reminded us that all the members of SVDP and this coalition are all volunteers. Anyone interested in helping (it is a non-denominational program) please donate or volunteer. www.Svdphuntsvilleal.org If you need assistance, you can go to the website and it will give you the names of the conferences and when to call.

4. Recap and Adjournment – Daniel Adamek

[Clinica Medica Moscati](#) is a clinic that serves the uninsured in Huntsville with a mobile clinic that serves Scottsboro (once a month on Fridays). They have a Dispensary of Hope that will provide insulin for free for those approved for the program. They try to help in anyway as possible.

Holly from the [National Shattering Silence](#) coalition explained that they are a grass roots organization. They all have a child with major mental illness. They strive to share info about psychosis. They are trying to advocate the State to change from reactive to proactive in mental health. One of their members is a mom who was trying to get her son help, but he is now in prison before he got help. The national organization started 4 years ago. There are problems across the US with psychosis in children being handling poorly. Mental health crises

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'Here for You' from littleorangefish.org

should not take so long to help. Her son is an adult and could not get help because he wasn't doing selfharm or harming others.

She has had a big response from this area. Our coalition website informed her of our existence. She would love to see this grow in Jefferson County like here. Daniel encouraged her to come when we have meetings.

The pediatric unit at WES will now help kids as low as 8 years old.

City of Huntsville and [Ashakiran](#) are holding their annual kite festival Saturday March 7 from 11 to 3 at John Hunt Park. He encouraged members to have exhibits of their organizations.

Mike Mathis with [Youth Friendship Foundation](#) said they will be hosting a festival ([Caribbean Qarnival](#)) on May 16th that will have a 5K run and a mental health fair at Big Spring Park. Trying to get information out there about mental health. Please get in touch with Mike if you would like to be an exhibitor. Mike Mathis gtwconsulting@gmail.com

[Dr. Barbour mentioned that Huntsville](#) is in the planning process of a mental health conference on Thursday May 14th. Updates will be forthcoming.

There will be a Little Orange Fish fundraiser at the Shed at Stovehouse on May 9th. The event is free and open to the public. There will be lots of activities including kids' activities by the [Nursing Program at UAH](#). Daniel encouraged everyone to participate.

The [Not One More Alabama](#) office (2200 Bob Wallace Ave.) will have an "Into Light" traveling art exhibit on display. The exhibit consists of a B&W sketch with a biography of those that have died from overdose. Their office is open every night (6-7:30) until February 20th for viewing of the artwork.

[Community Calendar \(New!\)](#)

<https://northalabamamentalhealthcoalition.org/calendar>

Next Meeting
Tuesday March 10, 2026
11:00 am at Wellstone