



North Alabama Mental Health Coalition

Meeting minutes for August 12, 2025

Attendees (in person):

Daniel Adamek (Little Orange Fish)	Sarah Bailey (UAH RAN)	Edward Becher (Invisible Warriors)
Nancy Becher (Invisible Warriors)	Jennifer Blazer (ALSP)	Annie Brasseale (VOP)
Amy Bryan (Alliance Huntsville)	Mark Burnett (NAMI)	Jennifer Burns (UAB Huntsville)
Darlene Burton (Salvation Army)	Rudolfo Chavez (SVDP)	Klara Chukwu (Prodigal Home for Women)
Dee Chukwu (Prodigal Home for Women)	Roxanne Crawford (Bradford at Madison)	La'trisha Fletcher (DHR)
Melissa Foster (UAH Nursing)	Jennifer Gentry (Long Leaf Centers)	Ryan Gentry
Amberlyn Haden (Partnership for Drug Free)	Traci Harris (Elm Foundation)	Daelano Harrison (First Stop)
Jeff Hastings (Ross)	Kimberly Lamar (Magnolia Ranch Recovery)	Sammie Laster (GRAMI)
Nicole Leland (Blood Bought Ministries)	Helen Lien (UAH Nursing)	Jana Mason
Marbi McCann (Bradford Warrior)	Michaela McKinnon (UAB Hsv Research)	Amber Moon (Unpack It Counseling)
Krista Moulton (Therapist)	Letricia Ogutu (Wellstone)	Sarah Perry (Partnership for a Drug Free)
Bill Pope (Pathway Healthcare)	Tara Vardaman (Charlie Health)	Don Webster (HEMSI)
Kendall Williams (First Stop)	Brandi Woodard (Alliance BH)	Mack Yates (SVDP/VOP)
Marilyn Lands (State District 10 Rep)	Karen Rogers	

1. Welcome and Introductions – Daniel Adamek

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

2. Coalition Updates – Daniel Adamek

Daniel is still trying to get communications in order. He has done a [blog for Little Orange Fish](#) relating what happens at NAMHC meetings. A link for it will be provided on the NAMHC website. He reminded everyone to send him information and links that they would like to place on the website. The '[NAMHC is Here for You](#)' app on the [Stay Informed](#) page of the website has a new Chat GPT 5.0 update.

The **GRAMI fundraiser** will be held on Friday night (August 15th) at the Ledges with the dance band Flashbacks. The live auction for local personalities is popular. There is a related QR code on their website www.Gramius.org. GRAMI (Getting Real About Mental Illness) is an organization that provides mental health counseling for first responders as well as supports CIT (Crisis Intervention Training). They want to de-stigmatize mental illness.

The Salvation Army shelter services re-opened on June 15th. The drug and alcohol program never closed.

A **Health Equity Symposium** will be held at the UAH School of Nursing on Oct. 21st. Contact Helen Lien if you have any questions (email helen.lien@uah.edu).

The Back-to-School workshop sponsored by the Kiss Your Brain Initiative was a great success. Harris Home brought their children to attend.

3. Featured Presentation – Advocating for Change: Engaging the Legislative process to improve mental health care– Marilyn Lands

[Marilyn Lands](#) is the District 10 Alabama state representative. She was elected during a special election in 2024 and her district includes about 20% of the City of Madison, the City of Triana, Redstone Arsenal & south Huntsville west of the Parkway. It is a very diverse district. She is a Licensed professional counselor by trade and has a heart for mental health which she is championing in Montgomery. Her primary areas of concern are mental health and maternal health. She tried to get a joint resolution to look at prevention programs in K-12 schools. It passed in the Alabama House of Representatives, but didn't make it in the Senate. She is heartbroken that the suicide rate is so high among adolescents and we've done nothing about it. She will continue her efforts to move prevention programs along.

She encouraged people to reach out to her. Marilyn Lands (256) 527-8197 or marilynlands@gmail.com.

She will also be meeting with public health officials and with [Dr. Mackey with the Department of Education](#). She is thankful that we now have mental health counselors in schools; however, this service is only available to kids who ask for it, their parents' consent to it (depending on the age) and the school has a counselor. She believes we need to be teaching kids from an early age about neuroscience and brain chemistry (you can't say social/emotional health). Our kids are in fight or flight mode much of the time and it only used to happen occasionally. It is not healthy. We need to teach kids some techniques for managing their emotions. Your emotions are not wrong. It's not your anger; it is how YOU respond to them.

She feels like many of our educators do not understand that depression can look like anger. Trauma is much more common than we used to think. There are different types of traumas depending upon the age.

She also is hoping that we can do more to help our veterans. She looks at other countries and sees that they have health care, childcare and treat their elderly better than we do in the United States. We need to do a better job of taking care of our children, veterans, and first responders.

Marilyn has been told that in the fourth year of a legislative period, traditionally nothing happens. She has filed a bill [***HB14 - Referendum measures; authorize general laws and constitutional amendments to be initiated through public petition process to allow people to have a ballot initiative process.***](#) She feels that if the Legislature is not doing things that people want (supporting Medicaid, education, etc.), then the people should be allowed to bring these issues forward. She is also working on some mental health and maternal health problems.

She is working with Mack concerning a lack of beds for the long term mentally ill in North Alabama. There are far too many people in jails and prisons that should be in hospitals. There has to be a better solution for this.

Someone asked about Medicaid cuts. She said everything is fluid at the moment, but she is meeting with the new [Medicaid commissioner](#) in the morning to hopefully get some answers.

Someone mentioned that they would like to see trauma programs in the schools. It would help produce mentally healthy kids, and also take some of the pressure off of the teachers and give the kids a "safe place" to go. When all the kids have the same material, they learn from each other. We should be teaching skills to kids like breathing and dealing with their emotions. This would help them in their academic subjects as well.

Don bought up the good news that if an adolescent attempts suicide, they now have an emergency facility here in Huntsville rather than to other places in the State. We still need more beds, but it has reduced the number of drives in the ambulance significantly.

[Rex Reynolds](#) has championed mental health as well as the Speaker.

In schools with counselors, there is a pathway for those that want help to get it. Daniel asked how many of the students actually get help, how many students need help, and how many students don't get the help needed. Do we have any of those numbers available? Marilyn said she would ask about it in her meeting tomorrow. She has heard from parents about the lack of counselors in the schools.

Daniel asked how do we bring issues to Montgomery (issues with data support). Marilyn said the data is very important. She cited an example of money that was given to support neighborhood nursing and they have not had any data back to find out if it was a successful program. She stressed to always reach out to your legislator

(and all the legislators in the Madison County delegation). The Madison County delegation has an office on Madison St. near Huntsville Hospital.

Marilyn said the number one issue that she hears about most often is the criminal justice system. When writing to your legislator, she emphasized avoiding form letters and sending the messages personally (even if it is just a few sentences).

She is looking into getting 25% of the continuing education hours for teachers to be in mental health education.

Marilyn explained more about HB14 (Ballot initiatives). 25% of the states have this process. The process involves getting signatures on an issue, going to the legislature for them to act on it or offer an alternative proposal so that the public could vote it. Daniel asked how we could support HB14. Marilyn said to reach out to the legislators and let them know that you support it. She also suggested that you contact her if there is something you would like to see passed, especially concerning mental health.

Melissa mentioned that if we could get school systems to allow nursing students in the schools to help out, that would be great and they would do a good job of collecting the data.

Marilyn concluded by encouraging people to reach out to her if there is some way she can help.

5. Directed Discussion and Gap Identification – Karen Rogers

Karen Rogers' son received a dual diagnosis of bipolar and schizoaffective disorder in 2007. She evaluates systems for a living, so she realizes where there are gaps. She has written these things down.

In 2007, when her son was diagnosed, he was 18 years old and still considered an adolescent in the State of Alabama. There was no place available in Huntsville for him, so they were transporting him by ambulance to a facility in Gadsden. He managed to escape. When the police caught him, they transported him to jail instead of taking him to a hospital. He was charged with a felony.

Karen had no idea of where to go for help. She went online to Families Anon and found some programs.

Recently her son was manic and she tried going to the Madison County Probate Office (you used to go to an attorney to get someone committed). She approached [Tammy Leeth](#) every day for 2 weeks and wanted him committed. Tammy finally spoke with the jail and realized that he was manic and needed to go to a hospital. He was in care from August to November. Karen wanted to know what to do after he got out of care and there was no help.

Last week, she called the Wellstone Crisis unit ([Wellstone Emergency Services](#)). They said he could get a therapist, a psychiatrist, and a counselor depending on the time when you call ... but not all of them at once. She called Tammy Leeth and she said that guardianship would get him committed. Things became worse, so she called the crisis unit and they said they would call the police. She said bringing in the police would traumatize her son. She decided the situation was bad enough that she called the crisis unit back, but they didn't answer for 20 minutes. She finally called 911 and specifically requested a mental health officer; however, they sent the police with weapons anyway.

HEMSI and CIT finally talked to her son and he masked his issues. They concluded that they didn't need to take him. Karen said she was told by Tammy Leeth that since she has guardianship and knows he is escalating; they should take him. The first responders said unless they catch him in the act or hurting someone or self-

harm, they could not do anything. Karen responded that if he acts out, they will just take him to jail. Her son ended up fleeing.

She kept calling the Probate Office asking for commitment. Tammy Leeth said she was busy and that Karen needed to talk to HEMSI and CIT. Everyone told her she had to go through the Probate Office. She finally got an intern to help her fill out paperwork, but then Tammy was gone for the day. The next day her son was convicted (on a substance charge) and is now serving three years in jail.

In her job at NASA, she works to identify gaps in processes. There are some laws that are in place that could have helped her. State law 70 says if there is a foreseeable threat, then you can commit them. Tammy didn't know about that law. HPD didn't know what guardianship meant. There are communication gaps.

Madison County Jail has no therapy and there is a limit on medication. Most of the time they just tase him and put him in a cell.

911 is not aware of mental health issues and to call a CIT when requested. She had to get an attorney to find out what guardianship actually is and what could be done.

A lot of people are going through a process similar to this, and information is not readily available. When you go to the Probate Office, there is nothing there that says anything about mental health. On the [website](#), it says to contact Tammy Leeth and she does not always provide the correct information. Karen admits that she needs help and she realizes that other people do, too. She shares the information that she has been able to gather. She found that [McClellan Hospital in Boston](#) has lots of free information on the web.

Mack asked her to come to future meetings and keep us updated.

Daniel will try to add her PowerPoint presentation to the coalition website.

6. Recap and Adjournment – Daniel Adamek

Someone asked about trying to get NAMI restarted in Huntsville. Mack recommended contacting Suzanne Katchke (suzanne@yourheritagechurch.com) because she is trying to get NAMI restarted county wide.

Daniel will provide a blog post about today's meeting on the [Little Orange Fish](#) - '[Community](#)' blog page.

*Next Meeting
Tuesday September 9, 2025
11:00 am at Wellstone*