

SEPTEMBER 2025

D B H D I D

NEWSLETTER

Notes from the Commissioner



We, in the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, are in the hope business. The aim is to embed the makings of hope into systems so each time individuals encounter services they leave with more hope than when they arrived. A stronger belief in the possibility of something better. A family member with a reason to think tomorrow might be different. Hope is the lifeline, and the more complex an individual's challenges are, the more important it is that the opportunity for hope be instilled in someone's journey.

Our business of hope extends to our provider and partner network. Our investment in their work, training, and the infrastructure that supports their service delivery is a tangible bet on hope. We embed this hope into our infrastructure through our strategic initiatives including equity, enhanced system navigation, communication and information access, trauma and resilience frameworks, and supporting quality of provider organizations and practitioners.

Our hope is not naive. We know that all people, throughout their lifespan, can be active, contributing, and respected members of their community. We see that remission and recovery is possible. The key is person-centered services and supports grounded in hope.

Holding hope is a remarkable strength of our department. The business of hope is where we will continue to grow. And in a time when hopelessness often feels like a public health crisis of its own, it might be the most important business there is.

Trauma & Resilience

Trauma & Resilience: Celebrating Resilience - Building across DBHDID

By Miriam Silman

Congratulations! DBHDID has a lot of things to celebrate that help to build our individual and collective resilience...

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Equity Hub:

Equity Team

By Dr. Brittney Allen

Join Us: New Community of Practice – First Meeting October 8th

The Core Team and the Behavioral Health Equity Action Planning (BHEAP) group are excited to launch a new Community of Practice (CoP), open to all Department staff!

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DBHDID Celebrates National Recovery Month at the State Capitol

By: Levi House

Governor Andy Beshear joined hundreds of Kentuckians, members of Kentucky's recovery community, health officials, recovery advocates, and allies at the State Capitol on Sept. 5th in celebration of National Recovery Month.

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DBHDID Trauma & Resilience: Celebrating Resilience – Building across DBHDID

The DBHDID Trauma and Resilience Team extends a HUGE thank you to all staff who completed the **2025 CHFS Staff Resilience Survey** – there were 211 respondents who identified themselves as being in DBHDID which means we had over 90% of staff participate – amazing! The data are being analyzed by the Office of Data Analytics now and we will be sharing CHFS-wide data in early October and DBHDID-specific data in November. We are excited to see and learn from the results – and look forward to sharing them with you as soon as they are available.

Another big thank you to all staff on the amazing work you have done over the last months on our **Office Transformation**. Our efforts to organize, clean out, spruce up and improve our workspace and workplace on the Fourth Floor really shows. A big shout out to Tal Curry for leading this effort, and to all of you for taking part. Check out what these before and after photos!

Before:



After:



We embarked on our Office Transformation even before we knew that we would be returning to the building – but how fortuitous that we had started! While **“back to building”** will be an adjustment for most of us, we also know that there are some benefits to being together in real life. Connection is a powerful component of professional resilience, so we encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to connect with colleagues professionally and personally. We hope you can have more in-person meetings, enjoy lunch or a walk together, and engage in some spontaneous conversations that may yield important ideas and creative solutions.

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DBHDID Celebrates National Recovery Month at the State Capitol



Nearly 100 resource booths related to prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery support services were also at this year's Recovery Rally which celebrated the resilience and determination of Kentuckians in recovery.

Governor Beshear proudly announced six new certified Recovery Ready Communities, which help address and reduce the ongoing addiction crisis. Recovery Ready Communities offer transportation, support groups, recovery meetings, and employment services at no cost to residents currently seeking treatment for a drug or alcohol addiction. Governor Beshear

also presented a proclamation declaring September as Recovery Month in Kentucky, further emphasizing the importance of recovery awareness and the reduction of stigma surrounding addiction and recovery, the hard work and courage that goes into being in recovery, and the progress Kentucky has made so far alongside the progress that is yet to come. During his address, Governor Beshear reiterated that, "If anyone asks, 'How many times should you bring somebody back when they're suffering from an overdose?' The answer is, 'Every single time.'"

Other speakers included Lieutenant Governor Jacqueline Coleman, Dr. Steven Stack, Secretary of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Van Ingram, Executive Director of the Office of Drug Control Policy; Dr. Katie Marks, Commissioner of the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities; and Dr. Caitlyn Hood, Project Director of the Kentucky Overdose Response Effort. Both Lieutenant Governor Coleman and Dr. Stack emphasized the importance of sharing the burden and making sure no one goes through recovery alone. Dr. Stack added, "Recovery is an essential part of Our Healthy Kentucky Home. There is no Healthy Kentucky Home without all of us having the full opportunity to reach our potential and to thrive."

Will Walden, Reb Kreutzer, and Shanda Correll shared their powerful stories in recovery. Correll, who completed a bachelor's degree in criminal justice this Spring and is starting a master's program at Eastern Kentucky University, said, "When we come together — families, providers, advocates, peers — we create a safety net where no one has to fall through the cracks."

Last year, Kentucky experienced a 30.2% reduction in drug overdose deaths. This marked the third consecutive year of decline and the most substantial decrease in overdose deaths to date. While progress is worth celebrating, ongoing challenges to addressing the overdose epidemic persist. Stigma surrounding addiction often keeps people from getting the treatment and recovery supports they need. The Recovery Rally brought Kentuckians together to educate and inspire, to honor the progress we've made in addressing addiction, to reduce stigma, to celebrate the resilience of those living in recovery, and to recognize the dedication and courage of everyone working to reduce the negative impact of addiction.

Recovery Month is for everyone! You can help by carrying naloxone—the medication used to reverse an overdose—and by spreading resources and awareness about recovery. If you or someone you know is experiencing addiction, you are not alone. There are resources available to help you. You can start by visiting www.findhelpnowky.org and hear stories of individuals in recovery at www.unshameky.org. If you or someone you know is struggling with a mental health or addiction crisis, you can call, text, or [chat 988](https://www.ky.gov/govinfo/988) for confidential, free, 24/7 support. Kentucky-specific resources for addiction and mental health are available at <https://linktr.ee/KYMHAR>.

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Equity Hub: Equitable Services



This group will be a space for shared learning, collaboration, and skill building, using practical tools to help us create programs that are more person-centered, responsive, and accessible.

- **Date:** Wednesday, October 8, 2025
- **Time:** 1:00 PM
- **Please register to attend:** [Zoom Registration Link](#)

This Month's Focus: *Contracts as a Tool for Change*

Contract season is here! It's the perfect time to think about how our contracts can help ensure fair and consistent access to quality care.

By customizing each scope of work to align goals of the project with the unique needs of the populations we serve, contracts can:

- Break down barriers
- Improve access to care
- Reduce service gaps

Join us to share ideas, ask questions, and learn from peers.

Office Hours:

Starting **October 1**, weekly office hours will be offered to provide individualized support for drafting contract language.

- **When:** Wednesdays, 12:30–1:30 PM
- **Please register to attend:** [Zoom Registration Link](#)

If you'd like to connect at a different time, please reach out to Brittney Allen (brittney.allen@ky.gov).

Looking forward to connecting with you and working together to make contracts a true tool for positive change.

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DBHDID Trauma & Resilience:

Celebrating Resilience – Building across DBHDID

There may be some other benefits to in-office work as well: It may be easier to end the work-day at closing time if your computer isn't plugged up and waiting for you every time you walk by. Or, you may find that you are more efficient during your designated work time because you are wanting to protect your non-work time more since commuting may mean you lose some of that time. Or, perhaps you can reclaim a part of your house that has been "transformed" into your work space! Of course, there are some elements of returning to the office that will be hard, and we can't pretend otherwise, but we hope you won't forget to also recognize the opportunities being together can offer. For more tips on enhancing your well-being at work, check out these [short videos on Well-Being at Work](#) made by the DBHDID Trauma & Resilience Team several years ago.

Finally, be on the lookout for an invitation to the **DBHDID Back-to Building Bash!** we are looking forward to having a time in late October to connect, see where people's offices are, and appreciate the amazing transformation that has occurred. This event is open to ALL DBHDID Staff whether you work at the CHR building or not. And, if it is on a day you are not normally scheduled to be in-office, please work with your supervisor to see if a schedule accommodation is possible to allow you to attend.

Jefferson County's Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program Earns High Marks in Evidence-Based Program Review

By: Tara Brewer



The Treatment Advocacy Center (TAC) recently completed a comprehensive review of Jefferson County's Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) program. The findings highlight a team that is leading the way in Kentucky in supporting individuals with serious mental illness.

Jefferson County's AOT program is not just the largest in the state—it is also one of the most respected. Since it launched in 2020, the program has served more than 100 participants and currently supports 44 people through court-ordered community-based treatment. The program focuses on reducing hospitalization and incarceration of individuals who have a history of non-adherence to outpatient mental health treatment.

At the heart of the program is Judge Stephanie Burke, who has been a pivotal advocate for court-ordered assisted outpatient treatment since "Tim's Law" was adopted in 2017. TAC reviewers praised her courtroom as a model of respect and fairness.

Judge Burke:

- Greets participants warmly and sits at the same table with them rather than behind the bench.
- Takes time to ask about participants' goals, values, and everyday lives.
- Celebrates small victories, reinforcing that recovery is possible.

Judge Burke's approach sets the tone for a program built on dignity, accountability, and trust.

Positive highlights from the program review:

- **Strong philosophical foundation:** The team consistently focuses on recovery, person-centered treatment, and procedural justice—ensuring participants feel heard and respected.
- **Collaboration across partners:** Court officials, attorneys, treatment providers, and state leaders are united in their mission and communicate effectively.
- **Comprehensive services:** From medication management and therapy to housing and employment support, participants receive individualized care to meet their unique needs.
- **Client choice matters:** Participants help shape their treatment plans, choosing services and providers that work best for them.
- **Judicial excellence:** The review called Jefferson County's courtroom environment "ideal," with Judge Burke modeling "exactly how AOT hearings should look and feel."

While Jefferson County's program exceeds expectations in many areas, the review included suggestions for building on the program's success:

- Create a participant handbook to explain rights and program expectations.
- Develop formal training for all new and current team members.
- Hold quarterly meetings with community partners to share data and improve practices.
- Explore ways to expand referrals from hospitals, jails, and other community partners.

The TAC review team expressed gratitude for the openness and dedication of Jefferson County's AOT partners. "The team's commitment to treating participants with dignity while providing real paths toward stability and recovery makes Jefferson County a model for the rest of Kentucky".

As Judge Burke and her team from Seven Counties Services continue their work, the message is clear: **with collaboration, respect, and persistence, recovery is possible.**

Divisions of Substance Use Disorder (DSUD) and Mental Health (DMH) Annual Retreat

By: Tracy Desimone

The Divisions of Substance Use Disorder (DSUD) and Mental Health (DMH) held their annual in-person retreat on August 19th in Lexington. The day was full of collaboration, as attendees worked across program areas to discuss the “why” that keeps them motivated and drives their passion for the work they do. Dr. Caryn Warn with RTI discussed the next steps for Kentucky’s TIPS Project, serving as a refresher for the implementation science work occurring within the department. Dr. Ken Minkoff and Dr. Chris Cline with Zia Partners introduced participants to the department’s co-occurring disorder initiative and efforts toward shifting Kentucky’s behavioral health system into a co-occurring system.



Upcoming Risk Management Training



The DBHDID Risk Management Team will be offering a Mortality/Root Cause Analysis class on October 13-15. Please email Deedee Lancaster at Deedee.Lancaster@ky.gov if you have staff who would like to attend. Please note that if staff are attending an upcoming Certified Investigator class, it is not a good idea for them to take the above-mentioned classes until they have had experience with several investigations...they may want to wait until next round of Advanced and Mortality classes. Thank you!

DBHDID Staff Selected to Participate in the Cohort of CHFS IMPACT

By: Tracy Desimone

DSUD is excited to announce that DBHDID Branch Manager Samantha Reams, KORE's State Overdose Coordinator Adam Trosper, and DBHDID Program Administrator McKenna Revel were selected to participate in the upcoming cohort of CHFS IMPACT. CHFS IMPACT is a structured professional development initiative designed to prepare staff for current and future leadership roles within the cabinet. This program provides targeted training in critical leadership competencies, with a focus on developing the next generation of leaders across CHFS. A year-long endeavor, CHFS IMPACT pairs classroom/virtual training with onsite, hands-on opportunities to enhance leadership skills and knowledge of the cabinet and the variety of services provided across the state. Congratulations, Samantha, Adam, and McKenna!



BHDID Staff Honored at the 2025 Governor's Ambassador Award Ceremony

By: Tracy Desimone



Congratulations to DSUD's Mary Mosley and Katie Stratton for being honored at the 2025 Governor's Ambassador Award Ceremony. Mary and Katie received the Team Kentucky Excellence Award for their hard work supporting women and their children impacted by substance use disorders. Their dedication and passion continue to improve the lives of those they serve. This award is something to be proud of. Visit [2025 Governor's Ambassador Awards](#) to read more. Congratulations, Mary and Katie!

Program Integrity PRIME Award Recipients



The PRIME Award (Program Integrity Recognizing Impact, Merit, and Excellence) celebrates outstanding employees within the Division of Program Integrity who exemplify dedication, innovation, and excellence in their work. This award honors individuals who make a significant impact on their branch and the division through their work and leadership.

For PI employees to be nominated as a deserving individual, the PRIME Award Nomination Form must be completed by providing the following details:

- Name and contact information
- The nominee's name and branch
- A description of the nominee's achievements and contributions

Three (3) awards will be given, one from each Branch per quarter, and during quarterly PI Staff Meetings. Congratulations to the 2025 Q3 PRIME Award recipients:



Kim Long
IT Business Analyst Senior



Daniel Hume
Data Analytics Branch Program Manager



Chrystal Osborne
Health Program Administrator

Ijeoma Eneje Celebrates 30 Years of Service



Congratulations to Ijeoma Eneje (IJ) for 30 years of dedicated service to the Commonwealth of KY!

Ijeoma is currently employed in the Program Integrity Division as a Program Administrator.

Staff Spotlight: KORE Welcomes Sandi Haddix to the Team!



The Kentucky Overdose Response Effort (KORE) is excited to welcome Sandi Haddix as the newest member our team within the Division of Substance Use Disorder (DSUD). Sandi serves as one of the Treatment Implementation Specialists with KORE, overseeing MOUD access expansion in various treatment settings.

Sandi is dedicated and passionate about bettering the lives of Kentuckians through education, compassionate care, and providing support through traditional and modern public health strategies. Sandi has a broad background in public health, implementation science, organizational leadership, and community-engaged research.

She has extensive experience in qualitative research, community collaboration, and working within 23 Kentucky communities implementing evidence-based practices across multiple sectors. Sandi has worked closely within the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) system as a health education specifically focused on strategies related to mental health and substance use prevention. She has spent the last 6-years working alongside the Implementation Science team on the University of Kentucky NIH HEALing Communities Study.

Please join us in welcoming Sandi to this role. We are excited to have her join the team and about the impact she will have on the landscape of substance use disorder services.

Save the Date....Mark your Calendars!



If you are not scheduled to be in the office on Tuesday afternoon, you may talk to your supervisor about how you might be able to adjust to attend. If you are 100% telecommute we hope you'll be able to come in to say hello!

2025 DBHDID Leadership Retreat

The DBHDID Commissioner's Office hosted a 2025 Fall Retreat to reflect on the current departmental mission, vision, and values and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The retreat was held Sept. 22nd-23rd, at Natural Bridge State Park. During the retreat, the group explored the situational leadership framework and identified intersections and opportunities for the 2026 strategic initiatives that our department will lead.



The DBHDID Update is published quarterly for employees and friends of the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental & Intellectual Disabilities. News items are welcome and should be submitted to Dr. Greta Jones and Laura Cunningham.

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Commissioner Dr. Katie Marks

Our mission is to promote health, well-being, and resilience for all, facilitate recovery for people affected by mental illness and substance use, and support people with intellectual or other developmental disabilities.