



News You Can Use from Smoky Mountain LME/MCO

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Greetings from Smoky Mountain!

Smoky makes it easy to keep up with what's going on with services for mental health, substance use or intellectual or developmental disability in western North Carolina. Whether you're an individual receiving services, a family member, a provider or a community partner, we're honored to share with you how we're striving to meet local needs in a way that only a public managed care company can. It is our pleasure to share with you information about Smoky news and events.

CEO SPOTLIGHT: Message from Brian Ingraham

October - what a great month for many reasons. It's the start of what might be the best season in North Carolina, a time to really appreciate our fantastic environment, and, yes, it does just happen to be my birthday month. Another great feature is that during the first full week of October, mental health advocates nationwide recognize Mental Illness Awareness Week. The 2015 theme involves reducing stigma by learning about and educating others on mental illness, seeing others as individuals - not a diagnosis - and taking action on mental health issues.



Every one of us can and should help reduce stigma. At a basic level, reducing stigma involves withholding unfair, negative judgments about mental illness and developing positive, caring attitudes toward people experiencing mental health concerns. It can mean refraining from saying, "Just quit feeling sorry for yourself," "Get over it" or "You don't have it that



OUR MISSION

Smoky is a public manager of care for individuals facing challenges with mental illness, substance use and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities. Our goal is to successfully evolve in the healthcare system by embracing innovation, adapting to a changing environment and maximizing resources for the long-term benefit of the people and communities we serve.

OUR VISION

Communities where people get the help they need to live the life they choose

OUR VALUES

Person-centeredness ~ Integration
Commitment ~ Integrity

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bad." People who say these things may mean well, but comments like these may make an already depressed or distressed person believe they are bad, lazy or doing something fundamentally wrong.

It can mean treating all people with respect and letting them know you're available to listen without judging them. It can mean going out of your way to make a person with an anxiety disorder more comfortable around others. It can mean having the courage to object when others use discriminatory language toward people with mental illness.

In our role as parents, it can mean supporting children and teens with mental health symptoms, getting them prompt treatment and not shaming them for what they feel. If you're an employer, it can mean not hesitating to offer a position to a qualified candidate you know who has been hospitalized for psychiatric reasons. It can mean educating yourself about how most people with mental health concerns live otherwise "ordinary" lives - perhaps owning homes, having professional jobs and volunteering in the community.

It can mean, when a public mass shooting occurs in the United States, not laying blame on the shoulders of the nation's mentally ill.

If you have a current or past mental health diagnosis, it can mean talking openly about your experiences. You don't have to tell the world, of course, but sharing your story can put a human face on mental illness and lets others know they are not alone.

This month, I encourage you to visit the [website of the National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) and sign the group's stigma-free pledge. This is something we can and should all get on board with - let's overcome stigma and offer hope to others.

Mental Illness Awareness Week: How can I help others?

With reports of violence by people with mental illness dominating news headlines, it's all too easy to write off individuals with a mental health diagnosis as "lost causes." However, we know that most of the one in five Americans with a mental illness live healthy, productive lives in our local communities. Support from friends, family and neighbors can make all the difference - and you can help.

As we recognize Mental Illness Awareness Week from October 5 to 9, know that mental health conditions like depression, anxiety and schizophrenia are highly treatable. You likely have a friend, family member or co-worker with a mental illness, although you may not know it. Medication, counseling and services such as supported employment, housing assistance

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Local N.C. Innovations forums in October, November

Smoky will offer six public sessions in October and November to inform stakeholders on the final draft N.C. Innovations Waiver amendment. Sessions will be October 12 in Lenoir, October 14 in Boone, October 21 in Asheville, October 27 in Spindale, November 9 in Franklin and November 16 in Clyde. [See times and more information.](#)

and peer support help people manage their symptoms and pursue a meaningful life. Treatment options are increasing throughout western North Carolina and may include same-day appointments, 24-hour crisis facilities and mobile crisis teams that travel to a person's location to provide care.

You may think, "I'm not a mental health professional. How could I possibly help?" In truth, everyone can play a role in creating healthier communities. If you're an employer, you can introduce or expand employee mental health assistance programs. If you're a medical professional, you can regularly screen patients for mental health conditions. If you're a school administrator, you can invite mental health advocates to speak to students about illnesses that commonly affect young people.

One important thing we can all do is offer support and empathy to people who are struggling. An excellent, free training called Mental Health First Aid is offered regularly throughout western North Carolina and teaches everyday people how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or in crisis. Mental Health First Aid teaches a five-step action plan that anyone can follow (see box to the right).

Some people may hesitate to lend an ear because they want to "avoid drama" or have been taken advantage of in the past. This is understandable. But being a supportive listener doesn't mean you have to abandon your personal boundaries. Do what you can, when you can, and remember that taking care of yourself comes first.

We know today that social support plays an essential role in helping people cope with stress and difficulties in life. Many people are afraid to seek help because they are afraid of what others may think. As a friend, family member or other trusted individual, you can help prevent a person's mental health problems from becoming worse and can give understanding and support to someone in crisis. In fact, you can change someone's journey in life by being a caring individual at the right time.

1. Assess for risk of suicide or harm

2. Listen nonjudgmentally

3. Give reassurance and information

4. Encourage appropriate professional help

5. Encourage self-help and other support strategies

NAMI NC conference coming in October

The N.C. chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will hold its 2015 annual conference on October 23-24, 2015, in Raleigh. This year's conference will focus on how mental health and wellness is changing in North Carolina. Find out more on the [NAMI NC website](#).

Autism summit set for October 5

The Appalachian District Health Department will hold an Autism Summit on October 5 in Boone. Participants are invited to discuss the Autism Spectrum Needs Assessment. [Read more](#).

"Transitions" fair coming to Asheville

Mission Children's Hospital and the Family Support Network of WNC will host the 5th Annual Regional Transition into Adulthood Fair on October 3 in Asheville. The fair features topics including high school transition planning, navigating adult community services and planning for the future when a family member has a physical and/or an intellectual/developmental disability. [Learn more](#).

White House observes World Suicide Prevention Day

President Barack Obama issued an official

Recovery does happen! WNC rallies for recovery in our local communities

An estimated 600 people from throughout western North Carolina [rallied in support of mental health and addiction recovery](#) on September 19 in Haywood County.



The Inaugural Western Regional Recovery Rally included a walk around Lake Junaluska, guest speakers and Recovery Champion awards, all designed to show friends, neighbors and policymakers that people can achieve sustained recovery and live a healthy life. Part of National Recovery Month, the rally was organized by a broad community coalition that included Smoky, local law enforcement, healthcare providers, recovery-focused organizations and local government health agencies.

Speakers included Courtney Cantrell, director of the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services. Three individuals in long-term recovery and three recovery allies were honored for their work to promote the wellbeing of people in recovery and reduce stigma.

Individuals in recovery recognized as Recovery Champions were Tracy Effler, a Smoky Peer Support Specialist in Lenoir, and Chris Morrill and Troy Daniel Reece, both of Waynesville. Recognized as allies were Genny Pugh, Smoky's Senior Director of Community Collaboration; the Appalachian South chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); and Waynesville Police Chief Bill Hollingsed.

The rally was featured on [ABC News 13](#), in the [Citizen-Times](#), on [NC Health News](#) and in the Mountaineer on [September 20](#), [September 24](#) and [September 25](#).

View a [photo gallery from the event online](#).

proclamation in observance of World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10. "We reaffirm our belief that mental health is an essential part of overall health, and together, we renew our commitment to supporting and empowering all Americans to seek the care they need," Obama said. [Read more.](#)

Suicide prevention: New survey

Three national mental health organizations released a new survey in September in observance of National Suicide Prevention Week, held this year from September 7-13. The numbers showed that nearly two in five adults believe seeing a mental health professional is a sign of strength but that more than four in ten believe it's something most people can't afford. [Read more.](#)

Workshop: Navigating System of Care

The Family Advocacy Network will partner with Cardinal Innovations Healthcare Solutions to present a free mental health educational clinic October 3 in Chapel Hill. "Navigating the System of Care: Things to Know About Accessing Treatment for Your Child" will help participants learn effective ways to navigate the complex maze of treatment services and community resources.

To register, visit www.mhatriangle.org or call 919-942-8083, ext. 2.

Recovery Month: Recognizing the value of peer support

This September, Smoky is acknowledging the role of peer support specialists in celebrating National Recovery Month, which promotes prevention, treatment and recovery for mental and substance use disorders. Peer support specialists - specially trained individuals with real-life experience with addiction or mental illness - know that people with these problems are not beyond help and that they, too, can change their lives.



Smoky Peer and Family Support Specialist Sam Sutker

Sam Sutker, a Smoky Peer and Family Support Specialist who struggled with undiagnosed, sometimes suicidal depression and anxiety since he was a child, now meets one-on-one with people in inpatient or crisis behavioral health treatment or in restaurants or coffee shops. Sometimes, he talks with people by telephone to let them know they're not alone and that they can recover.

"It gives people hope because they're working with someone who is not dictating to them how or what they should do," Sutker said. "Instead, we truly listen to what they have to say, support them and get them to think about what their own recovery might look like.

"People do recover, just as I did," said Sutker. "Being a peer support specialist helps me in my personal life, too - it helps me to pay attention to both the challenges that so many human beings face, to be thankful for the support I've gotten in my life and to experience the joy of being able to make a positive difference in someone else's life."

Learn more about Recovery Month at www.recoverymonth.gov.

"Smoky Mountain Movers" to participate in Injury-Free NC Academy

A team of three Smoky community specialists will learn new, innovative ways to prevent suicide in local communities as participants in this year's statewide Injury-Free NC Academy.



**Injury-Free NC
Academy**

*Building Capacity for
Injury and Violence Prevention*

Specialists Kate Glance, Melissa Ledbetter and Robin Winkler - working together under the team name "the Smoky Mountain

Movers," were one of 10 teams selected from a statewide pool of applicants. The free academy, sponsored by the University of North Carolina Injury Prevention Research Center, the N.C. Injury & Violence Prevention Branch and the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, aims to strengthen and expand the state's public health capacity for suicide prevention.

Teams complete a six-month program that includes two in-person sessions in Chapel Hill. Key learning areas include finding and using state and local data on suicide, learning evidence-based and promising approaches to suicide prevention, developing effective programs, measuring success with program evaluation, mobilizing a community coalition, successful grant writing and developing effective messaging.

"While the specific needs in each of the 23 counties that we serve may vary, preventing suicide is an important topic in all of them," Glance said. "By taking part in this academy, we hope not only to continue the discussion about suicide in our region, but also to learn what's working in other states, how to teach health professionals how to seek health for themselves and how to share stories of hope, resilience and recovery."

Providers gather for Smoky 2015 summit in Asheville



Hundreds of western North Carolina behavioral healthcare, intellectual/developmental disability and medical healthcare providers met to mingle and learn about Smoky's latest provider-directed initiatives on September 21 in Asheville.

Smoky's all-day 2015 Provider Summit, held at the Asheville Renaissance Hotel, opened with an expert panel discussion, "Medicaid Reform: What Will it Mean to You?" Facilitated by Lanier Cansler, President of Cansler Collaborative Resources and former Secretary of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the panel featured Dave Richard, Deputy Secretary of the Division of Medical Assistance of DHHS; Karen McLeod, President and CEO of Benchmarks; Dr. Jeff Heck, President and CEO of the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC); Marc Malloy, Senior Vice President, Health Plan Solutions of Mission Health; and Smoky CEO Brian Ingraham.

Afternoon sessions provided a deeper look at Smoky's latest Gap Analysis, Network Development Plan, Provider Operations Manual, Clinical Operations and whole-person care. [View photos from the event in our online slideshow.](#)

Smoky participates in Broughton recovery fair, local Alzheimer's walk

More than 100 residents participated in Broughton Hospital's second annual Recovery Event on September 25 on the hospital campus in Morganton.



Smoky Peer and Family Support Specialists Sam Sutker and Tracy Effler, along with Smoky Community Outreach Specialist Melissa

Ledbetter, shared information with residents on accessing care through Smoky, peer and family support, Wellness Recovery Action Plan training and getting help in a behavioral health crisis. Residents participated in a "recovery wheel" activity - spinning wheels featuring words like "support, hope, education, trust and self-advocacy" - and described what the "recovery word" meant to them.

Also, on September 19, Smoky participated in the 2015 Asheville Walk to End Alzheimer's. Ruth Jordan, Director of Smoky's Geriatric Mental Health and Adult Specialty Team, shared information on Smoky programs, dementia and upcoming trainings.



Mission Health, Buncombe County EMS staff enhance crisis response skills

Western North Carolina now boasts 13 additional paramedics with specialized training in how to respond to someone with a mental illness, substance use disorder or intellectual or developmental disability.



Eleven EMS staff from Mission Health and two from Buncombe County EMS completed Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training on September 17 in Asheville. Among other topics, paramedics learned about child behavioral health, issues related to people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, trauma, the involuntary commitment process, suicide risk factors and substance use disorders. They also participated in a dementia simulation and role-playing exercises.

Dr. Jim Hartye, Mission's Medical Director of Behavioral Health, congratulated each graduate, thanking them for their desire to increase their level of preparedness for whatever they may encounter on the job. Hartye added that behavioral healthcare skills will become increasingly important for EMS staff as health systems move toward an integrated care model. "Smoky hit the spot with this," he told participants. [Read more](#) or [view more photos from the training's graduation ceremony](#).

From the doctor

PS: I love you!

I penned these words in one of the first letters I wrote as a child. Before the time of emoticons, it was a reminder, a post script, of affection. These days, I have affection for a different type of "PS" - the practice of peer support.

Smoky employs 16 N.C. certified peer support specialists and many other staff with real-life experience recovering from mental illness, addiction or both. Others have experience with intellectual or developmental disabilities, and many more talented men and women offer peer support through provider agencies throughout western North Carolina. Their roles range from coaching and lending support to helping navigate community services and providing education, as well as serving as advocates.



Dr. Craig Martin is Smoky's Chief Medical Officer

More than 30 states now cover peer support services as a part of their Medicaid programs. We know from research and experience that the level of interpersonal understanding - and a healing relationship - can make all the difference in a person's life.

A few weeks ago, I gave a talk on medication adherence to a group of family members, several of whom were visiting North Carolina because their loved one had been hospitalized here in a psychiatric unit. We shared the many reasons for not taking medication properly and acknowledged that engagement works much better than judgment. Their stories consistently confirmed the importance of family and peers as key ingredients in the recovery journey. The Inaugural Western Regional Recovery Rally, held September 19 at Lake Junaluska, is but one example of how we can build so much more by working together than we can by working apart.

Smoky is planning additional training for peer support specialists that will move the recovery needle in the right direction for the whole health of our communities. We are happy to exclaim that at Smoky, peer support is not a post script, but something that is "Pretty Special."

Brian Ingraham appointed by governor to state task force on mental health, substance use disorders

Governor Pat McCrory has appointed Smoky CEO Brian Ingraham to a new state task force charged with making recommendations to improve the lives of N.C. residents with mental illness and substance use disorders.

The 24-member N.C. Mental Health and Substance Use Task Force will seek to reduce stigma and encourage people to seek help before their situation becomes a crisis. This special panel consists of experts from the justice system, private sector professionals, healthcare providers, county leaders and non-governmental organization entities to tackle mental health and substance use issues statewide. In the six years Ingraham has served as Smoky's CEO, the organization has grown from its roots as an area program to a public managed care organization and expanded nearly eightfold.

"Serving on this task force is not only an honor for me - it's also a golden opportunity to effect real change and improve a public service delivery system that facilitates care for hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians," Ingraham said. "This panel's interdisciplinary nature will prove to be a tremendous advantage. Going forward, we need all hands on deck, working together, to use existing resources to achieve real results."

[Read the full news release online.](#)

Adolescents: Some substance use down, depression up, SAMHSA finds



The prevalence of some forms of substance use is declining among U.S. adolescents, according to a recent survey by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The latest National Survey on Drug Use and Health report found that current tobacco use among adolescents aged 12 through 17 fell by roughly half from 2002 to 2014. Illegal alcohol use and nonmedical users of prescription painkillers also decreased in this group during the same time.

Meanwhile, use of marijuana - the most common illicit drug - is growing among people aged 26 or older. The percentage of people aged 12 and older using non-medical painkillers was similar to the year before, although current heroin use in the group doubled during the same time. The survey found an increase in the percentage of people 12 and older using any illicit drug, to more than 10 percent of the population. The report also found that major depressive episodes increased among adolescents and that young people who experienced depressive episodes were more likely to have used illicit drugs in the past year.

Locally, the Mountain Xpress [recently examined a spike in opiate use in Buncombe County](#). Read the [full SAMHSA report online](#).

Smoky receives URAC reaccreditation

Smoky has received full reaccreditation in three areas of healthcare operations following a three-day, onsite review in July by URAC, the independent leader in promoting healthcare quality through accreditation, education and measurement.

URAC accreditation is nationally recognized by state and federal regulators to ensure the highest level of quality is delivered to consumers. Accreditation requires applicants to submit policies, procedures and other organizational information that is followed by a review. URAC's Accreditation Committee reviewed Smoky's application and granted full reaccreditation as a Health Call Center until September 2018, as a Health Network until November 2018 and in Health Utilization Management until September 2018.

Additionally, Smoky scored 100 percent in all three modules. "Smoky staff have worked long hours not only preparing for

reaccreditation, but also working every day to ensure we are committed to quality healthcare management and strict quality standards," said Smoky Chief Operating Officer Christina Carter. "Ultimately, this benefits all of the people we serve."

ICD-10: Smoky, providers prepare for big changes

Beginning October 1, healthcare providers across the United States will shift from using the ICD-9 billing code system to ICD-10. This change, mandated by the federal government, will bring much greater detail to a consumer's medical record and documentation of all of the services and procedures they receive, helping enhance quality of care. ICD-10 will help providers treat complex medical conditions, coordinate care among providers and support new payment methods that drive quality of care.



Not only will ICD-10 expand a large number of behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability billing codes, it will also bring sweeping changes to coding and compliance processes and IT solutions used by many providers. Smoky has worked proactively to update network providers about the new code sets, required documentation, technology and available training and support. These efforts included regular communications and checklists on ICD-10 readiness and compliance assistance, trainings involving ICD-10 coding specialists, a dedicated Smoky ICD-10 email address and an ICD-10 webpage to streamline large amounts of information to meet our providers' specific needs.

Smoky also worked with an ICD-10 consultant and within our IT system to successfully test whether our systems are ready to handle the change. Additionally, we invited providers to email us format testing files to ensure their systems are compatible with ours, as well as sending test files to NCTracks to ensure compatibility within that system. Smoky is confident that this strong transition plan will ensure our network is ready for the changes to come.

North Carolina passes Medicaid reform

Governor Pat McCrory signed sweeping Medicaid reform legislation into law in October following years of discussion about the state-federal insurance program's future direction in North Carolina.



The reform passed by the General Assembly will privatize the state's Medicaid program, which provides care for 1.8 million people, and will come into effect in phases over eight years. The legislation allows for three statewide capitated contracts for Medicaid physical health management and up to 10 capitated contracts for provider-led entities (PLEs) to cover six regions created by the state. Key milestones include:

- Submission of an 1115 Waiver application - necessary to allow reform to take place - to the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) by June 1, 2016
- Start of capitated physical health Medicaid 18 months following CMS approval
- Awarding of three contracts between the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and capitated physical health managers, with three- to five-year contracts to stagger implementation. These entities would oversee all physical healthcare, prescription drugs, long-term services and supports and N.C. Health Choice behavioral health.
- Awarding of up to ten contracts with PLEs for regional contracts
- Continued management by LME/MCOs of behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability care for four years after the implementation of a capitated primary health program. The newly created N.C. Division of Health Benefits (DHB) would continue to negotiate the "per-member per-month" rate directly with LME/MCOs, with payments made directly to LME/MCOs during this period.
- Transition of Community Care of North Carolina primary care case management to primary care medical homes

Other key provisions include:

- Creation of the N.C. Division of Health Benefits (DHB) within DHHS and transitioning of functions from the N.C. Division of Medical Assistance (DMA). This transition would be completed within 12 months of the implementation of the capitated primary health system, eliminating the DMA.
- Appointment of the director of the DHB by the governor by January 2021 and confirmation by the General Assembly for a four-year term

- Creation of a Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and Health Choice

State news: Legislature approves budget

North Carolina legislators finally signed off on the state's months-overdue budget for the coming fiscal year in October. The spending plan continues and even expands some initiatives significant to behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) advocates. These include the expansion of three-way hospital beds and funding for both the N.C. Child Treatment Program and traumatic brain injury services.

The budget also dedicates funding from the sale of the Dorothea Dix Hospital property to create 150 new community hospital inpatient beds and expands START teams to include respite and services to children and adolescents with an I/DD.

Other budget items may mean significant changes to LME/MCO operations statewide. These include a reduction in single-stream funding of \$110 million in the 2015-16 fiscal year and of \$152 million the following fiscal year, with a potential \$30 million offset to these reductions. Based on initial calculations, Smoky's share may amount to up to \$14.9 million in the first year. The budget also calls for LME/MCOs to transfer more than \$17 million cash on hand each year for the next two years to the N.C. Division of Medical Assistance, with Smoky's share being up to an estimated \$2.3 million in the first year.

The budget also calls for funding for the state's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Centers to be transferred to LME/MCOs. Read more in the [\(Raleigh\) News and Observer](#).

Need services? We're here to help.

Smoky Mountain LME/MCO manages services for mental health, substance use and intellectual and developmental disabilities in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties. For immediate help or information about services, call us toll-free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at 1-800-849-6127 (TTY calls: Relay NC at 711).



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