



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

Many hands, they say, make light work. That's partially true - the work may not be light at all, but with many hands, great things can happen.

At Smoky, we value our community partnerships. We know that sometimes, we don't have all the answers - or the resources, expertise or mandate - to do all we'd like to do. In this newsletter, you'll read about the impressive accomplishments of the Juvenile Justice Services Continuum. It's an initiative that we could never successfully pursue alone, but through collaboration with myriad community partners and our network of providers, we're helping make a significant difference in the lives of young people throughout western North Carolina.



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

This initiative has both simplified and improved the process of assessing court-involved youths for behavioral health needs and referring them to services. This often includes Multisystemic Therapy (MST), an intensive program for young people at risk for placement outside of the home due to their behaviors. MST involves working with multiple people in the youth's life - family, teachers, neighbors and even peers - to produce positive, long-term behavioral changes. Smoky staff, juvenile court counselors and providers work together not only to provide counseling, but also to meet other needs that youths and families may have.

Real community change does not come from a single organization. It is not one-sided. It comes from multiple local groups who have the knowledge and experience to know what works in their neighborhoods and how to collaborate with others to effect positive change. This month, please join me in recognizing the contributions of all organizations that, like us, have the community's best interest at heart.

Community partnership helps court-involved youths get treatment, make positive changes

A western North Carolina initiative to help court-involved youths is offering enhanced, streamlined behavioral health treatment in the 23 counties Smoky serves.



The juvenile justice services continuum ensures that youths are screened for treatment needs and, if needed, referred for a comprehensive clinical assessment and appropriate services. Many youths participate in an intensive treatment program called Multisystemic Therapy (MST), which involves families, communities, schools and friends to help young people make effective life changes.

"Through the partnership among Smoky, juvenile court system and providers, we've been able to assess youths and provide them with the right levels of care," said Donald Reuss, Smoky's Provider Account Director. "It helps identify earlier in the process what treatment is most needed and helps young people have better outcomes."

Youth Villages, a nonprofit that helps children with emotional or behavioral problems, conducts assessments and offers MST for youths who receive Medicaid. The small number of court-

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SAMHSA releases guide to serve veterans

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration-Health Resources and Services Administration (SAMHSA-HRSA) Center for Integrated Health Solutions has released an updated guide featuring an array of resources to support veterans, service members and their families.

The guide includes key sources of information, trainings and clinical tools to support providers, as well as resources to share directly with veterans and family members. Learn more on the

involved youths who do not receive Medicaid also receive assessments and other services. Local comprehensive care centers provide outpatient mental health and substance use services, medication management and Intensive In-Home services, when appropriate. Other providers offer evaluation and treatment for youths who are sexually reactive and, if needed, residential care for up to three months.

The initiative employs the System of Care model to support both youth and their families. Under this model, Smoky and initiative partners work as a team to coordinate community-based services, supports and resources to meet families' needs related not only to behavioral health, but also in areas including physical health, education and overall welfare. Families themselves are an important part of this team.

The initiative was developed in the late 2000s after juvenile court counselors in the westernmost part of the state approached Smoky to help them develop a consistent and focused System of Care for court-involved youths and their families. Area behavioral health providers responded to these needs by working with Smoky and juvenile court counselors to streamline the process and ensure needed services were available in the community. The model spread throughout the counties Smoky serves and merged with a similar program operated by Western Highlands Network when the two organizations consolidated in 2014.

"I am pleased with the direction that we have been going with services," Krista Hiatt, District 22 Chief Court Counselor, told Smoky. "I'm optimistic that the timeliness and quality of mental health services to juvenile justice youth in Alexander County have the potential to be the best in my four-county, four-MCO district."

Using biology to balance body and mind: Community Resiliency Model popular in WNC

Sometimes, what works in Thailand also works for people in western North Carolina.

The Community Resiliency Model (CRM) training, an evidence-informed, promising practice developed by social worker Elaine Miller-Karas to help survivors of the 2004 tsunami that killed 8,000 people in Thailand, is taking off throughout the region. In the past



Participants in an August CRM training in Burnsville teach neuroscience to each other using the hand as a model to represent the brain.

[center's website.](#)

Technology makes digital inroads into behavioral healthcare

In November, the Washington Post examined how technology is expanding options for behavioral healthcare and introduced readers to the U.K.-based "Big White Wall." Read more in the article, titled "[It's 3 a.m. and you're feeling depressed.](#)"

Wilkes County men with disabilities featured in media

In November, the digital publication North Carolina Health News introduced healthcare professionals statewide to two young Wilkes County men with disabilities who are served by Smoky care coordinators. Both men receive N.C. Innovations Services. [Read the full article online.](#)

Generation Indigenous: Initiative targets native youths

Have you heard about Generation Indigenous, an initiative to improve lives of American Indian/Alaskan Native youths? Launched by President Barack Obama in December 2014, the effort aims to remove barriers standing between young people and their opportunity for success. Learn more on the [initiative's website](#) or in a [November blog post](#) by the Substance Abuse and Mental

two years, Smoky has introduced more than 1,250 community members to the CRM model and basic principles and has begun teaching the skills to a variety of groups across 14 counties, to date. CRM teaches participants skills to better manage chronic stress and trauma while creating more resilient communities.

Most major U.S. cities still don't offer CRM, said Smoky Community Outreach Director Ann DuPre Rogers, a CRM trainer. "It's really cool that this movement is starting here," she said. "Community groups are calling and asking to be trained. CRM is helpful not only in the face of natural disasters or armed conflict - it's also very useful in situations involving domestic and community violence, poverty or other life stressors."

Local CRM participants include healthcare provider staff, school counselors, parent groups, university faculty and social workers. The standard, one- to two-day training covers the impact and prevalence of chronic stress and trauma, findings of the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, how to lessen the impact of trauma and how to build resiliency. It also includes skills informed by neuroscience to regulate the nervous system and use the mind-body connection to reduce anxiety, depression and unwanted physical symptoms.

Once participants learn to use the skills for their own stress management, they then learn how to teach these skills to others - creating a ripple effect of wellbeing.

Smoky is working with community partners that also teach CRM - including the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC), Community Care of Western North Carolina, Mission Health and the Buncombe County Department of Health and Human Services - to reach even more community members. Upcoming Smoky CRM activities include trainings for Mitchell County Schools staff and for McDowell County DSS staff and school counselors. Learn more from the [Trauma Resource Institute](#).

9 ways to fight mental health stigma

You may know mental health stigma hurts many individuals and may prevent them from seeking help. But what can an everyday person do to help?

Stigma, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), is one of the most challenging aspects of living with a mental health condition. It causes people to feel ashamed for something that is out of their control and prevents many from seeking the help they need and speaking out. NAMI recently [asked its Facebook community about the best ways to end stigma](#). The box below lists the top nine responses.

1. Talk openly about mental health.
2. Educate yourself and others about mental health.
3. Be conscious of your language.
4. Encourage equality in how people perceive physical illness and mental illness.
5. Show empathy and compassion for those living with a mental health condition.
6. Stop the criminalization of those who live with mental illness.
7. Push back against the way people who live with mental illness are portrayed in the media.
8. See the person, not the illness.
9. Advocate for mental health reform.

[Learn more](#) and take [NAMI's Stigma Free Pledge](#) today.

Watauga County Schools: Training helps protect children from abuse

More than 100 Boone-area teachers and other school staff now know more about protecting children from sexual abuse thanks to a collaboration among Smoky, the Children's Advocacy Center of the Blue Ridge and the Watauga County School District.



DARKNESS to LIGHT
END CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The partnership allowed Smoky and the advocacy center to offer Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children

trainings at three schools on October 23. Smoky Community specialists Melissa Ledbetter and Robin Winkler led trainings at Hardin Park Elementary and Blowing Rock Elementary, while advocacy center Director Selena Moretz held a training at Green Valley Elementary. A donation from a Blowing Rock family to the advocacy center funded the training.

Stewards of Children, an evidence-informed program, offers practical abuse prevention training to increase knowledge about abuse and about how to help protect children. "One person can create change in a community," said trainer and Smoky Community Outreach Specialist Robin Winkler. "This opportunity shows how the partnership with the school system, advocacy center, a parent and Smoky came together to discuss how to protect children from child sexual abuse."

Smoky staff also distributed handouts with information on local resources for responding to abuse and state laws governing reporting of abuse.

From the doctor

"It is not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them that is a true measure of our thanksgiving."

This thoughtful quote from W. T. Purkiser is timely during the holiday season. We have a lot to be thankful for, and during this season many communities take pause to inventory their blessings and contemplate plans for the future.



*Dr. Craig Martin is
Smoky's Chief
Medical Officer*

The parameters that impact the future for Smoky have become more clear with recent Medicaid reform. For that, we can be thankful. Smoky's leadership continues to scan the environment of healthcare change to ensure we don't just adapt, but also thrive in the new world of population healthcare for individuals with complex needs. We know we need to keep doing what we do well, while growing our talents so that customers will seek out our leadership.

Hopefully, many of the leadership concepts Smoky has shared with you over the past year have taken root. A few decades ago, I first learned about the style of "servant leadership," described by Robert Greenleaf in 1970. He wrote that the servant-leader wants to serve FIRST and then makes a conscious choice to aspire to lead. To evaluate whether one is a servant leader, Greenleaf suggests we ask ourselves, "Do those we serve become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous and more likely themselves to become servants? And will the least privileged in society benefit?" More information about this leadership style can be found at www.greenleaf.org.

As you enjoy this holiday season, I wish you all the best in your time of reflection and renewal. And if you do decide to turn over a new leaf as a leader, please consider Greenleaf.

State news: Lawmakers discuss Medicaid at committee meeting

N.C. legislators expressed concerns about LME/MCO consolidation to state health officials during a legislative committee meeting on November 18.



In October, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) postponed any consolidation between CenterPoint Human Services and Cardinal Innovations Healthcare, LME/MCOs

operating in the Piedmont region, and the absorption of Nash County into Cardinal's service area. At the November hearing, state Medicaid Director Dave Richard told lawmakers who questioned those decisions that [DHHS Secretary Rick Brajer wants more certainty about the state's path toward Medicaid reform](#) before approving major changes.

Also in November, [state prison officials told mental health advocates they plan to improve the treatment of inmates with mental illness](#), including staff training in Crisis Intervention Team tactics to de-escalate potentially violent situations. Nationwide, officials said, 15 to 20 percent of prisoners have mental health problems, not counting any type of substance use disorder.

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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