

# NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2024 / VOLUME 25

## Quarterly News & Updates



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# From the Desk of... James Parauda, CEO

## ...Striving Toward Excellence

Tri County CMO has always focused on providing a high level of quality services to our youth and families. Over the years we have been informed by families what great work we have done and how we have changed their lives in so many ways. We are very proud of our accomplishments and the service we have given both to families as well as to the community at large. What we have never done was utilize an independent authority to evaluate and report to the community on the quality services we have provided.

We are excited to announce that our agency is pursuing accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), an independent, nonprofit organization of health and human services. CARF accreditation is an international recognition that an organization meets standards for quality and is committed to continuous improvement and service excellence. <https://carf.org/>

Our mission, vision, values, and strategic plan were all recently revised. This will help us to maintain a forward-thinking approach to our work. We took data gathered from stakeholders to finalize the revisions which helped to establish our principles and the ensuing objectives.

We have created a new training department where all direct care staff will receive increased targeted training from seasoned staff both initially upon hire and annually. We have implemented a quality control mechanism that will support staff by staying true to the evidence-based, wrap-around model.

We will also embark on more structured quality record reviews. The interpretive summary will be used as an initial look at the record to assist the team in understanding the family history. Ongoing record reviews will help the child family team with identifying trends or practical solutions.

A few years ago, we initiated the Zero Suicide model. This is a framework for preventing death by suicide. A key component to the framework is to train a competent, confident, and caring workforce. We have introduced the framework at all levels of staffing. As part of our current initiative, we are rolling out the use of the C-SSRS screening tool for care management staff. <https://zerosuicide.edc.org/> <https://cssrs.columbia.edu/the-columbia-scale-c-ssrs/about-the-scale/>

As an agency, our goal is to become CARF accredited by June 2024. We have conducted a thorough self-evaluation measuring the CARF accreditation standards against our facility's practices. We believe that seeking accreditation will help us improve our agency by establishing more standardized set of operating procedures. These more organized sets of policies and plans will help support best practices with exceptional service to our youth and families.

A special thanks to Victoria Monroe, Director of Quality Assurance, for assisting with this article. We look forward to providing you with additional updates on our endeavors.



# Youth Success Story

When Kaitlyn was first enrolled to TCCMO, she was having behavioral challenges that were fueled by depression and anxiety. Kaitlyn is a natural artist and athlete who enjoys performing, make-up, and volleyball, but her mental health challenges made it difficult to fully enjoy these activities. Although she was skeptical at first, Kaitlyn was brave enough to give therapy a try. Her hard work and persistence paid off; she was able to transition to outpatient services last year, showing everyone that there is more to her than her mental health symptoms. Kaitlyn's parents were supportive and present every step of the way, teaching themselves about mental health and driving Kaitlyn to and from her program every day for eight weeks. Care Manager Yahaira was impressed by Kaitlyn's progress and ability to take accountability, showing wisdom beyond her years.



# Community Corner

TCCMO was proud to partner with the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide and present a parent focused training on suicide prevention to the Hunterdon County community. The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide is a non-profit community organization dedicated to increasing awareness and reducing the stigma of suicide through specialized training, programs, and outreach resources that empower teens, parents and educational leaders with the emotional guidance and skills needed to help those at risk of suicide and build a life of resiliency. The training empowered parents and guardians to recognize warning signs and risk factors through education and awareness.



# Getting to Know TCCMO... THE Finance Department

**The Finance Department** is responsible for ensuring the financial integrity, stability, and sustainability of TCCMO. TCCMO has grown from 70 employees to 140, the agency revenue has doubled, and the number of youth served has increased from an average of 600 to 950.

**Aileen Arsenault** joined TCCMO as Chief Financial Officer and has seen tremendous growth in the agency over her five plus years here. Her career spans over 30 years in corporate finance, public accounting, international tax consulting, and non-profit business. She has an MBA in Management Accounting and International Business from Rutgers University, a BS in Finance from Montclair State University, and an Associate in Business from County College of Morris. She has served on multiple non-profit Boards and is currently Board Treasurer for Norwescap in Phillipsburg. She is also on the Board Finance Committee, Chair of the Technology Committee, and Coordinator for the CMO CFO Group, which comprises all 15 of the CMOs in New Jersey.



Aileen Arsenault

**Francy Toro** is our Accounting Coordinator, and she has over 15 years of experience in accounting and payroll, with four of those years being at TCCMO. Francy was born in Medellin, Colombia and she speaks three languages. She enjoys the work she does for the agency, specifically helping the families get the financial assistance they need in a timely manner. Francy loves to dance, travel, and go on walks with her dogs.



Francy Toro

**Barbara Wing** is our Accounting Assistant and has been in the finance industry for over 15 years. She finds joy in working with numbers, and feels it is like assembling a large jigsaw puzzle. She finds the results exceptionally rewarding. Outside of TCCMO, she has experience teaching in Sunday school and serving as a teacher in a Chinese school.



Barbara Wing



# Pride in Partnership

## United Way- Gifts of the season:

For families living paycheck to paycheck, the holiday season can add more stress to already tight budgets. Nearly 790,000 (41%) New Jersey children live in financially insecure households. In addition to facing difficult choices, such as paying the heating bill or putting food on the table, parents are forced to weigh their options and see if they can financially participate in the season's festivities. Here is where United Way of Northern New Jersey Gifts of the Season comes into play. With the communities' help, more than 6,000 gifts are distributed to eligible households across northern New Jersey. TCCMO had the pleasure of being one of the agencies selected to receive gifts this holiday season for our eligible families. A special shout out to TCCMO's little elves who helped collect and distribute gifts to our families!



# Growing Greatness

## Being Absolutely Clear in the New Year!

Now that the festivities of the holiday season have ended, we can focus on consistency and clarity in the new year. As part of the Nurtured Heart Approach® (a relationship building approach utilized throughout the NJ Children's System of Care and beyond), the concept of clarity is imperative for all individuals to succeed. The third stand of the Nurtured Heart Approach® is "Absolutely Clear" and this is where we are going to set and enforce clear limits and clear consequences in an unenergized way. Part of being clear means setting up an environment where everyone is aware of the rules, expectations, and consequences if a rule is broken. As caregivers and providers, we often give our youth warnings to give them another chance to make things right, but are the warnings consistent across the board? Inconsistent rules and warnings will leave the youth feeling off-balance. In 2024, focus on being consistently clear and remember that clear is kind, unclear is unkind!

Interested in learning more about the Nurtured Heart Approach®? Email **Nicole Del Duca** [ndelduca@tricountycmo.org](mailto:ndelduca@tricountycmo.org)





# Advocacy Corner

## Did you know?

New Jersey has the highest experiential requirements in the U.S. for a Professional Counseling License. Professional Counselor Licensing Act P.L.1993, c.340 current law requires NJ applicants for professional counseling license to complete at least three years of supervised full-time counseling experience in a professional counseling setting. That means Licensed Associate Counselors (LAC) are required to complete 4,500 hours of full-time supervised counseling to be certified as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC).

Senate bill 3368 would revise these requirements by reducing the required amount of supervised counseling for professional counselor licensure to 3,000 hours.

## Why does this matter?

New Jersey's children are in a mental health crisis. There are not enough licensed counselors to meet the growing need of our youth experiencing mental and behavioral health challenges. Please support Bill 3368 by contacting your local legislators today.



# TCCMO Addressing Mental Health Crisis

The pandemic has brought about major changes in work culture, technology, education, and physical and mental health. Any current discussion around youth mental health is accompanied by the word "crisis." However, TCCMO and the Children's System of Care provide supportive mental health services and are increasing initiatives to address more significant risk factors and behaviors.



Over the last four years, the number of youth served by CMOs increased by more than 30%. TCCMO increased the youth it serves over the last four years by 25%. In addition to the quantity of youth served, the severity of mental health issues has become more serious and complex. There has been a trend upward at TCCMO of youth with suicidal thoughts or attempts.

To help these youth and reduce the risk of harm, TCCMO is implementing an initiative that aligns the principles of the Zero Suicide Academy with its everyday practices. TCCMO has sent three cohorts of staff to be Zero Suicide trained over the last three years. TCCMO has also formed a committee on implementation within the agency and developed goals and strategies to ensure safety for youth. One major strategy includes utilizing the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale at periodic visits with youth.

Other national and state initiatives, such as *9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline*, reflect expanded efforts to mitigate risk. TCCMO will continue to assess the increasing needs of youth that it serves and ensure the appropriate tools, attention, and knowledge are dedicated to meeting their needs.



# FYI



## Children's Mental Health Week 2024

## National Eating Disorders Awareness Week 2024



Americans' mental health has drastically declined since the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental health challenges can impact everyone, especially youth. TCCMO takes pride in prioritizing our youth, and now you can, too. Children's Mental Health Awareness Week is nationally recognized on February 5-11. All over the country and even in the UK, people will be taking time during that week to equip and empower the children around them. Please join us in raising awareness about the importance of mental health. Improving the next generation's mental health will ultimately improve the future of our nation.



Click below to know more:

*Mental Health By the Numbers/ NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness*



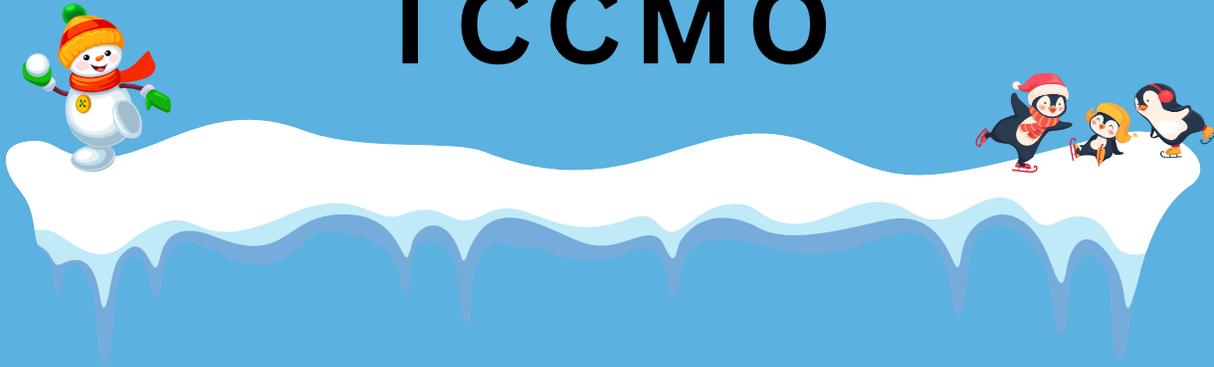
February 26 – March 3th is National Eating Disorders Awareness Week. Eating disorders are a complex condition that impact individuals and families all over the world. Many people are unaware that eating disorders are a serious mental health disorder rather than related to food and dieting. Types of eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge-eating disorder, and others. During this week, there will be events and information shared that emphasize the importance of access to treatment, reducing stigma, and early intervention options. Having a designated week of recognition provides increased opportunities for people to share their stories of how eating disorders have impacted their lives. Click the link below to get involved, learn, share stories of your own, donate or volunteer, or support and participate in events.

Click below to know more:

*Eating Disorders Awareness Week #EDAW- NEDA  
([nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://nationaleatingdisorders.org))*



# Events held by TCCMO



## TCCMO Holiday party (YMCA):

To kick off the holiday celebrations, TCCMO & Family Support Organization (FSO) co-sponsored the annual Family Holiday Party that was held on December 15th, 2023. The event took place at Deer Path Branch of YMCA Hunterdon County. Families enjoyed games, food, music, and a holiday gift for every child! There were special guest visits from characters including Mirabel from Disney's Encanto, Raphael the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, and it wouldn't be a holiday party without Santa making a special visit! TCCMO wants to give a special THANK YOU to Jill and Joe who teamed up with Pelican and donated 150 hats, gloves, and scarves for every youth and their families. TCCMO hopes you all had a wonderful holiday season with your loved ones!



# Upcoming Events

*Young Women's Support Group*  
 For Young Women Grades 9-12  
**A PLACE FOR JUST US**  
 Two Locations:  
 Warren and Somerset Counties

**Tuesdays**  
 Firth Youth Center  
 108 Fleming Dr  
 Phillipsburg NJ 08865

**Wednesdays**  
 Pioneer Family Success Center  
 50 Division St suite 303  
 Somerville, NJ 08876

**WHEN**  
 600pm-730pm  
 Sept 26th-June 5th  
**Food and beverages provided**

Contact Morgan Smith (Warren) 908-752-9866  
 msmith@tricitycymo.org  
 or Tyra Williams (Somerset) (908) 892-4554  
 twilliams@tricitycymo.org  
 for more information or to register

**WHAT TO EXPECT**  
 Therapists Amy Sutter, Erin Reyhan, Kaitlynn Vella, and Kate Shay will explore topics such as: healthy relationships, communication, resiliency, and self-esteem

here to register or scan the above code



**TRI COUNTY CMO**

## Angst-Anxiety & Our Youth

**THURSDAY**  
**FEBRUARY 22, 2024**  
**5:30 PM-7:30 PM**

Human Services Building  
 Conference Room 1  
 27 Warren Street  
 Somerville, NJ 08876

**PRESENTERS**  
 Nicole Del Duca MA, LAC  
 Kevin Dyches BA  
 of Tri County CMO

*Registration is required*  
 The deadline for registration is **Thursday, February 15, 2024.**  
 For questions, please call 908-704-6300

  
<https://www.tricitycymo.org>

*Angst* is a film based program designed to raise awareness around anxiety. Angst aims to remove the stigma and open the conversation about mental health, helping our youth and their families understand that a certain amount of anxiety is healthy and when to recognize when it's too much. The film includes interviews with kids, teens, educators, experts, parents, and a very special interview with Michael Phelps. Our program includes tips to recognize symptoms and encourages when to reach out for help.

This workshop will include a film viewing of approximately 35 minutes, along with discussion and Q&A. It is open to both adults and youth. Families are encouraged to attend. This workshop is in collaboration with the Somerset County Department of Human Services and Tri County CMO.





# Tri County CMO Board Members

Leslie Brusser - Board Chair  
Daphney Rene - Vice Chair  
Pam Jacobs- Treasurer  
David Yazujian - Secretary

Erin Karl - Secretary  
Daniel Kerr  
Lynne Eaton  
Lesley Schwarzman  
Melissa Fowler

Sakina Ladha  
Avril Okeke  
Shannon Twisler  
Alina Wells

## How to Get Referred to Tri County CMO

PerformCare can help a parent or guardian connect their child to Children's System of Care services. PerformCare staff are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide assessment and guidance to families facing challenges to their functioning and well-being.

PerformCare / Contracted Systems Administrator (CSA)

1-877-652-7624

<http://www.performcarenj.org/>

<http://www.performcarenj.org/families/index.aspx> (video guide)

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