

# Board Meeting

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**BE D·B·H·D·D**

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental  
Disabilities

October 23, 2025



# Agenda

## Roll Call

## Call to Order

## Introduction of Guest Speaker

## Action Items

- Board Meeting Minutes – August 28, 2025
- Consideration of Easement Amendment for Southern Natural Gas
- Northeast Georgia Health System Resolution

## Commissioner's Report

- Suicide Prevention Update
- Key Initiatives in Substance Use Prevention, Treatment and Recovery
- Northeast Georgia Health System Overview
- Board Engagement

## Chair's Report

## Public Comment

# Roll Call

Chelsee Nabritt

*Board and Special Project Manager*

# Call to Order

Lasa Joiner

*Chair*

# Introduction of Guest Speaker

Gene Conroy

*Assistant Executive Director of Operations, Georgia Council on Substance Abuse*

# Georgia Recovers in Communities 2025 Bus Tour Recap

Celebrating Hope, Healing, and Connection Across Georgia

Jasmine Turner – Bus Tour Manager



## Moments of Strength and Compassion

Throughout the tour, we witnessed powerful moments that embodied the heart of recovery:

This Mom in Recovery recently lost her son but showed up with courage and found comfort. The Bus Tour bought a smile to her face despite grief, offering her love support and healing.



Someone who was incarcerated was given the chance to speak on stage, sharing their story of transformation and redemption, inspiring all who listened

Reunited and it  
feels so good...



My peers just letting loose and  
having clean fun!





## Faith-Based and Community Support

The faith-based community showed up in a big way — offering love, prayer, and encouragement.

Every stop was a testament to what can happen when faith and recovery join hands: lives change, hope grows, and barriers fall.



## Stories that Inspire

A woman who heard the story of heroin addiction and a mother's journey to recovery with her son, said she was inspired to keep going — that she could make it one more day.

These stories remind us that recovery is about thriving and lifting others as we rise.



## Joy and Celebration

From panels and speeches to dancing and laughter, every stop of the tour was filled with joy and connection.

Jeff Breedlove and Jasmine Turner even got the crowd moving with the Electric Slide!



The twins, Kevin and  
Devin brought  
amazement to  
crowds throughout  
the state...



# Countless Stories, One Movement

There are countless untold stories from the Georgia Recovers Bus Tour that Jeff and I could tell — stories of resilience, forgiveness, and transformation.

Together, they form a chorus of hope, lifting the name of recovery and proving that Georgia recovers — in every community and in every heart.

# A Heartfelt Thank You

I am deeply grateful for every person, family member, and organization that made this journey possible.

The Georgia Recovers Bus Tour 2025 has shown us that when we come together — across towns, beliefs, and backgrounds — RECOVERY WINS.

**Georgia Recovers in Communities:  
Recovery is Real. No Matter What.  
For Every Person. Every Family. Every Community.**

# Action Item

- Board Meeting Minutes – August 28, 2025

# Action Item

- Consideration of Easement Amendment for Southern Natural Gas

# Action Item

- Northeast Georgia Health System Resolution

# Commissioner's Report

Kevin Tanner  
*Commissioner*

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# BE D·B·H·D·D

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities

Rachael Holloman, LPC

Senior Director, Office of Federal Grant Programs and Suicide  
Prevention



# 2025 Teen Summit Hope Changes Everything

- Hope Changes Everything teen summit targets Georgia teens ages 10-17.
- Due to the rise in suicide deaths among the 10-14 age group, we expanded to include 10-12 year olds.
- The event brings together speakers, musical artists and resources for hope filled discussions around suicide prevention and mental wellness.
- This year's summit was held on September 6<sup>th</sup> at Gas South District and featured the first ever parent experience and programming for youth ages 0-9.



## This year we welcomed:

- NFL veterans Doug Middleton, Andre Fluellen and Jarius Wynn to share their personal experiences with suicide loss, grief and resiliency.
- Miss Georgia USA and Miss Georgia Teen USA 2025 discussed body image and self love.
- Pop Star Jonah Marais performed, sharing messages of hope through his music.





# Parent Experience

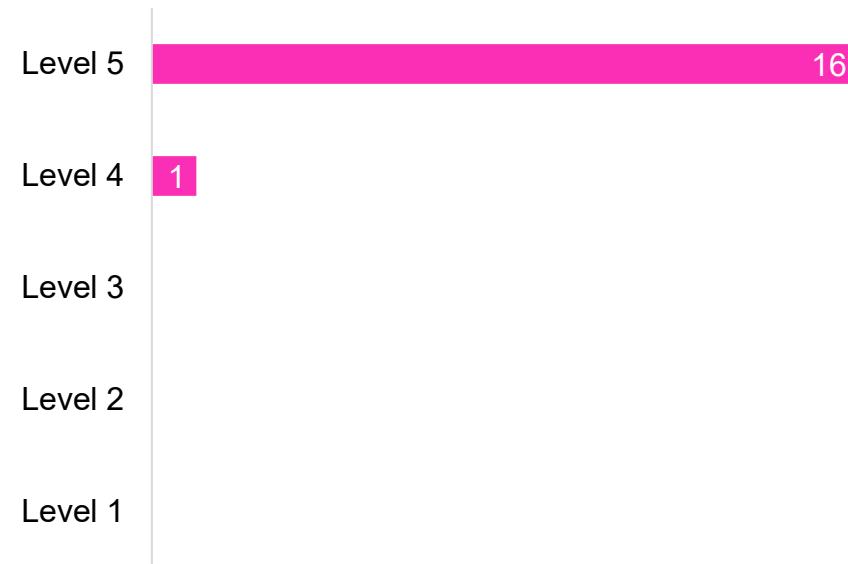
## Overall Quality

**How would you rate the overall quality of this experience?**  
(17 responses)



**4.94 / 5 stars**

Overall Quality: Response Distribution





The Hope Changes Everything Teen Summit is possible thanks to the immense support of DBHDD staff and partners and their dedication to suicide prevention across Georgia.



# Sounds of Support

*DBHDD OFGSP supported the suicide prevention activities of one of our SAMHSA Garrett Lee Smith grant providers, Viewpoint Health, at their Sounds of Support event.*

- Held on September 20<sup>th</sup>, Sounds of Support was organized by the Newton Rockdale suicide prevention coalition.
- There were over 20 community partner agencies organized on the Covington square providing resources, education and interactive activities.
- More than 100 families were present for the live performances and resources throughout the day.



# You Matter

- On September 25<sup>th</sup> 150 middle school students (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>) participated in the Hancock County middle school *You Matter* celebration organized by the school counselor.
- We provided a fun, interactive discussion-based presentation covering signs of suicide and emotional distress, speaking with a trusted adult, self-worth, and understanding that each student matters.

# GCSU 21<sup>st</sup> Annual CMLA Summit

*DBHDD OFGSP continues to support the mental well-being of current and aspiring educators at the Georgia College and State University Annual Collegiate Middle Level Association(CMLA) Summit.*



- The student organized summit had over 85 attendees including undergraduate students from local and out of state universities as well as speakers and current educators.
- We hosted a presentation on youth suicide prevention and ended the day with a focus on self-care featuring a live guided meditation.



[preventsuicidega.org](http://preventsuicidega.org)



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# BE D·B·H·D·D

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities

Cassandra Price-Bagley, GCADC II, MBA  
Senior Director, Office of Addictive Diseases, Division of  
Behavioral Health

October 23, 2025



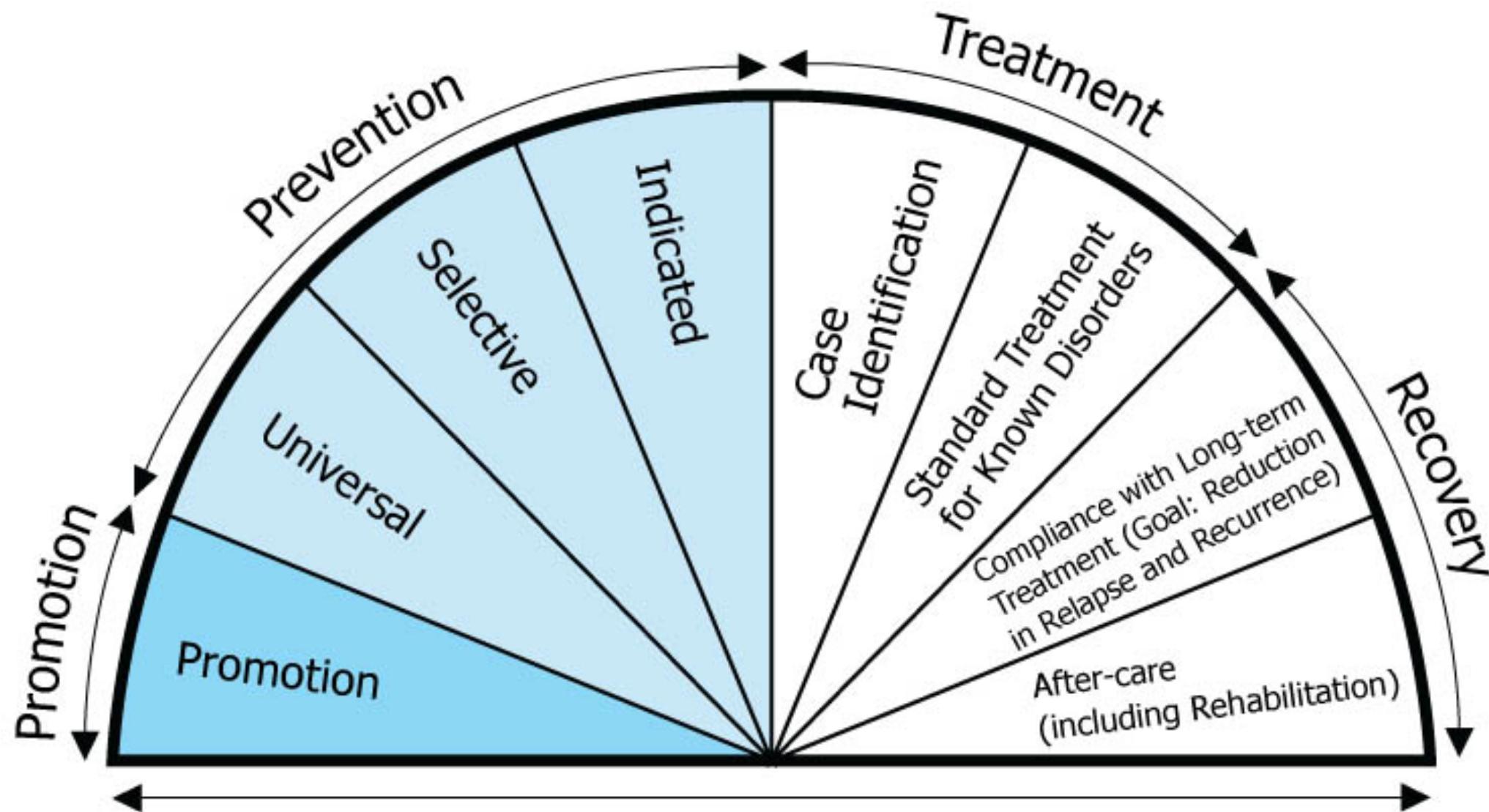
# Taking Action: Key Initiatives in Substance Use Prevention, Treatment and Recovery

Office of  
Addictive  
Diseases  
(OAD)

Office of  
Prevention  
Services (OPS)

Office of  
Recovery  
Transformation  
(ORT)

# Institute of Medicine Continuum of Care



# Substance Use Prevention

## Partners in Prevention (PIPP)

- 35 PIPP contracts in 35 counties across Ga
- Providers utilize the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) process with Community Workgroups to plan, select, implement, and evaluate evidence-based strategies
- Strategies are used prevent underage drinking, binge drinking, and misuse of other identified community substances
- They use individual strategies such as: Generation Rx/Project Alert/Ask, Advise, and Refer, Sources of Strength, Botvin Life Skills, Too Good for Drugs,...
- And Environmental strategies such as: Positive Social Norms, Safe Homes, Counter Advertising, Social Host Liability...
- From 2020 – 2024 Alcohol & Marijuana age of onset and 30 day reported use decreased and decreased more in PIPP intervention counties than non-intervention counties.

## Synar Project

- The Synar State Law prohibits sales of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 21-required in Block Grant.
- Mandated to keep the number of successful illegal tobacco purchases by individuals under 21 to no more than 20% of attempted buys.
- OPS contracts with the Georgia Dept of Revenue Alcohol and Tobacco and the University of Georgia to recruit and train youth investigators to randomly attempt to purchase tobacco products.
- Synar underage buy attempts in 2024 was 9.1%. This year it is below 7% (well below the 20% target rate).
- Year to date, over 4,660 compliance checks conducted across Georgia.

## SOR First Responder Naloxone Training Project

- OPS Conducts trainings and Contracts with MCDI and GPSTC for naloxone education/ training to first responders across Georgia.
- Conduct virtual and in-person trainings to Traditional/non-traditional first responders. Provide Naloxone Kits to trainees.
- 737 law enforcement responders trained
- 3,377 distributed
- 233 reversals reported

# Substance Use Treatment

## Adult Treatment (Residential Services)

### **36 Residential Treatment Sites**

- 7 Independent Residential - 46 beds
- 15 Semi-Independent Residential - 302 beds
- 14 Intensive Residential - 347 beds

### **Program Capacity**

- 85% Independent Residential
- 90% Semi-Independent
- 93% Intensive Residential

## Women's Treatment and Recovery Services

- 21 Residential Sites (428 slots) /17 IOP/14 Transitional Housing
- Program capacity - 94%
- Individuals employed/work activity - 99%
- Retained custody - 98%
- Regained custody - 94%
- Drug free births - 74
- Pregnant women served -118
- Women served with MOUD - 173
- Children served 6,175
- Successful Completion - 92%

## State Opioid Response Grant

- 24 providers offering MOUD treatment for uninsured/underinsured
- Supports 9 recovery support centers- 1 outreach program
- 2 transitional housing- rural areas
- Support naloxone training-distribution
- MOUD programs served over 2,000 individuals annually
- 38,128 naloxone kits distributed
- 103,709 fentanyl test strips distributed
- 1,675 trainings provided in the community
- 2,400 reported overdose reversals

# Substance Use Recovery

## Certified Peer Specialists

- 26 years of peer trainings
- Trained over 5,033+ Certified Peer Specialist (CPSs)
- 1,454 CPS - Ads (CARES) trained to date

## Addiction Recovery Support Centers

- 30 Addiction Recovery Support Centers across the 6 DBHDD regions
- Over 300,000 services provided in FY25
- Multiple providers going above and beyond - work with DFCS and jails

## Recovery Warmlines

- ORT supports both the Mental Health and Addictive Disease warmlines
- CARES warmline - October 2024 - September 2025 - 22,104 calls
- There are calls beyond their current capacity
- After hours calls are returned during business hours

# **Every Georgia School to Receive Opioid Overdose Reversal Kits**

## *Statewide Naloxone Distribution Initiative Launches This Fall*

**Project Overview:** DBHDD, Georgia Department of Education, and Georgia Opioid Crisis Abatement Trust are partnering to **equip every Georgia public school with opioid overdose reversal kits (Naloxone)**. This effort ensures that every school—urban, suburban, and rural—has access to lifesaving medication to respond to an opioid emergency.

### **Highlights**

- **Goal:** 100% of Georgia public schools will receive Naloxone kits
- **Total Schools:** 2,366
- **Total Doses Distributed:** 4,732 (2 per school)
- **Distribution Partners:** 16 Georgia Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs)
- **Community Engagement:** Regional public events to raise awareness and promote prevention

### **Rollout Timeline**

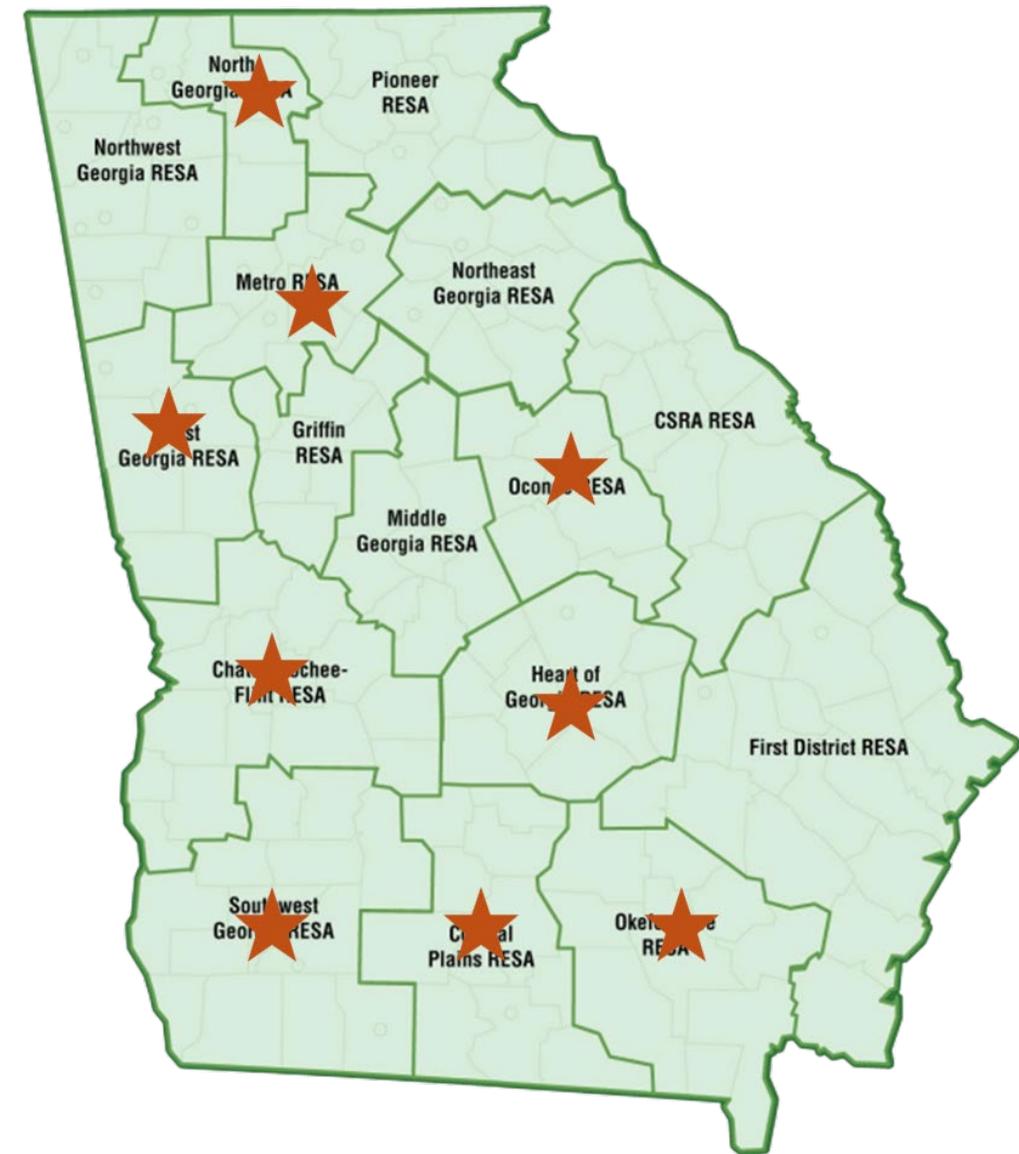
- **Fall 2025:** Phase 1 Distribution
  - Focus on Metro Atlanta, Southwest, and Central Georgia
- **Spring 2026:** Phase 2 Distribution
  - Remaining RESAs and schools across North, Coastal, and Southeast Georgia

# Every Georgia School to Receive Opioid Overdose Reversal Kits

## *Statewide Naloxone Distribution Initiative Launches This Fall*

★ = Phase 1 Distribution (Fall 2025)

RESA (Full List)	Total Schools
First District	207
Chatt-Flint	98
Coastal Plain	89
CSRA	124
Griffin	150
Heart	41
Metro	776
Middle GA	110
North GA	87
Northeast GA	117
Northwest GA	180
Oconee	24
Okefenokee	52
Pioneer	125
Southwest	90
West GA	96
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2,366</b>



# 2025 Georgia Recovers Bus Tour



# 2025 Georgia Recovers Bus Tour

- 75 stops - Recovery Rallies, Policy Meetings, Proclamations and more!
- Community Members in attendance
  - Individuals in recovery
  - Family members and allies
  - Judges
  - Members of the General Assembly
  - Sheriff's
  - Mayors
  - County and City Officials
  - Media
- 12,756 people in communities across Georgia who signed the bus- largest in person outreach effort in Ga history for Substance Use Recovery

# 2025 Georgia Recovers Bus Tour- Highlights

- **Impromptu caravan:** drivers spotted the Georgia recovers bus, turned around, and followed it to its next stop, creating spontaneous caravans of support. People approached to share their recovery stories, sign the bus, and receive a t-shirt.
- **#Garecovers bus spotting:** Georgia council for recovery staff received texts regularly about Georgians spotting the bus traveling the state.
- **Prayers for safety:** local faith leaders continually showed support for our mission and prayed for safety during their services.
- **Symbol of recovery:** when people signed the bus, most people would sign the start of a recovery journey or the date a loved one lost their life to addiction. The bus embodied the profound dichotomy of addiction: it revealed the devastation it leaves behind while standing as a powerful symbol that recovery is possible.
- **A state united:** from metro Atlanta to Georgia's most rural towns, one truth was clear: no community has been untouched by addiction. Every community is searching for new solutions, programs, and support for families affected by addiction.
- **Georgia council for recovery feedback:** “we saw fear and anger but also hope and joy. The tears were real, yet the smiles promised Georgia can continue to save lives, restore families, and strengthen communities.”



**Jasmine Turner & Jeff  
Breedlove- Ga Council  
for Recovery Bus Tour  
Team**



# The Launch and appearance of Devin Tanner

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# Policy Engagements

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## The Band- Black Lion Reggae

REGGAE

# Community Celebrations!!

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# Community Celebrations & Prime Time Movie

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One more group photo...



That's a wrap....  
but we continue to  
celebrate  
**RECOVERY** every  
single day, month  
and year-round.





# Peer Support and Recovery Programs at Northeast Georgia Health System

DBHDD Board of Directors Meeting  
October 23, 2025

Elizabeth Holcomb, JD, MPH, Executive Director, Government Affairs, NGHS

Brittany Smith, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, RNC-NIC, Nurse Director, Neonatal  
Intensive Care Unit (NICU), NGMC Gainesville and Braselton

# Peer Support Programs at NGHS

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1. Maternal Peer Support (MPS) Program in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)
2. Emergency Department Program for Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Overdose-related Incidents
3. Emergency Department Program for Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

These three programs connect individuals to Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialists (CARES).

Functions as a partnership between NGHS, Georgia Council for Recovery (GC4R), and the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to expand access to recovery-focused care and support for patients and families.



# Maternal Incidence

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- In 2019, 6.6% of women reported prescription opioid use during pregnancy
- Among these women, 21.2% reported misuse (a source other than a health care provider or a reason for use other than pain).
- 27.1% wanted or needed to cut down or stop using
- 31.9% reported not receiving counseling about how use could affect an infant

# What is Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)?

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- A diagnosis that is the result of maternal substance intake while infant is still in utero (illicit or prescribed) (Little et al., 2022)
  - Opioids, benzodiazepines, antidepressants, barbiturates, etc.
- Dysfunction of the central and autonomic nervous systems
- Infants are born withdrawing from substance, not born addicted to substance



# NGMC NAS

NGMC NICU first in nation to have NICU Peer Recovery Coaches  
Peer Recovery Coach program in NICU established 2018  
NGMC Daisy Team Award 2019

Implemented a Family Partnership Agreement in 2020  
Implemented Eat, Sleep, Console in 2021



2014 NAS average length of stay: 37.6 days  
2025 NAS average length of stay: 5.5 days



# Maternal Peer Support: Impact

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- **As of October 1, 2025**
  - **1,423** moms supported since 2018
  - **10,577** follow up conversations



# Emergency Department Peer Support for SUD

## NGMC SUD Peer Recovery Coaching Program (Jan 2018 – current)

- First ED Peer Support Program in Georgia to connect individuals to Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialists (CARES)
- Partnership: Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC), Georgia's Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), and Georgia Council for Recovery (GC4R)
- Supports individuals having experienced an opioid overdose or any substance use disorder related incident in NGMC's three campus Eds in Gainesville, Braselton, and Winder

### Program Impact Overview:

#### Initial Peer Encounters: 6,675

Individuals engaged for the first time by a Peer Recovery Coach during hospitalization or ED visit.

#### Multiple Encounters: 1,459

Individuals with repeat ED visits who were re-engaged by a Peer Recovery Coach—demonstrating both the chronic nature of SUD and the importance of continued support.

#### Successful Follow-ups: 22,714

Post-discharge contacts made to provide ongoing support, resources, and linkage to care—highlighting the program's emphasis on long-term recovery and relapse prevention.

# Emergency Department Peer Support for SUD

## Key Insights:

### Follow-Up Engagement:

On average, each peer received **~3.4 follow-up contacts**, reflecting sustained engagement post-discharge.

### Recidivism Touchpoint:

About **21.9%** of peers (1,459 out of 6,675) returned to the ED and were seen again—demonstrating the need for robust aftercare and perhaps targeted interventions for higher-risk individuals.

### Program Reach:

These numbers reflect **significant growth and sustained efforts** over nearly 8 years, underscoring the importance of Peer Recovery Coaches as part of the continuum of care for individuals with substance use disorders.

# Emergency Department Peer Support for AUD

## Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) Peer Support Program Launch in 2021

- Provides peer coaching to all AUD peers who present in NGMC Gainesville, Braselton, and Winder
- Also provides medication assisted treatment (MAT) with **wrap-around services** to a limited number of peers each year
  - Wrap-around services: inpatient detox, monthly intramuscular naltrexone therapy, treatment vouchers for sober living, monthly health checkups, coaching sessions, weekly counseling with a Certified Addiction Counselor, case management services, and transportation to and from all program-associated appointments.
- Initially funded with COVID funds through July 1, 2025; received a continuation of a portion of initial funding through Georgia General Assembly, allocated through DBHDD
- **~ 50% success rate** for those who participate in the program.
- Partnership with Georgia Council for Recovery, which collaborates with other sites

# Thank You to Our Partners!

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities



Georgia Council for Recovery Program Managers and Coaches

- Laurisa Barthen, MPH CARES, *Executive Director, Georgia Council for Recovery*
- Demetra Boles, *MPS Program Manager*
- Ashley Stevens, *Emergency Department Program Manager*
- Greg Gardner, *Alcohol Use Disorder Program Manager*
- Jennifer Thompson, *Peer Coach*
- Xara McClain, *Peer Coach*



October 13, 2025 Site Visit, NGMC Gainesville



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# BE DBHDD

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities

Kevin Tanner  
Commissioner, DBHDD





# Board Engagement

- Prescription for Prevention Conference
- Savannah Rotary Club
- Savannah Recovery Bus Tour Stop
- Macon Recovery Bus Tour Stop
- Northeast Georgia Health System Site Visit



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**BE D·B·H·D·D**

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities



# Chair's Report

Lasa Joiner

*Chair*

# Public Comment





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