

Note From the CEO



As the seasons shift, we are reminded that growth doesn't happen all at once — it unfolds over time, in cycles, and in every stage of life. At Tennessee Voices, we believe that nurturing mental wellness is not bound to a single month of awareness or campaign; it is a year-round priority. Just like physical health, it is a practice of building strength, practicing resilience, and staying nimble.

This month's theme, *Growing Minds – Nurturing Mental Wellness in Every Season*, highlights an important truth: seasonal changes can affect our moods, energy, and overall well-being. The shorter days of fall and winter, changes in routine, and increased demands on families and educators can bring unique challenges. But just as nature prepares for renewal in every season, so too can we prepare ourselves and those we serve by practicing healthy habits — from getting sunlight and good rest to maintaining connection and consistency in our physical, mental, social, and spiritual health.

In the thoughtful article written by Brianna Grant in this issue, she offers practical strategies for adults, parents, and teachers to strengthen resilience during times of transition. Her words remind us that small daily choices — whether a walk outdoors, a moment of open conversation, or a commitment to classroom calm — can create powerful ripples of healing and hope.

I also encourage you to take advantage of the opportunities and resources highlighted in this newsletter, from upcoming trainings and career openings to our online library and featured book. Each resource reflects our shared mission to help families, individuals, and communities to support mental wellness in every season of life.

Thank you for being part of this journey of growth with us. Together, we continue to build a community where mental health is understood and people have a chance to learn, grow, and nurture resilience.

With gratitude,
Rikki Harris
CEO, TN Voices

Growing Minds: Nurturing Mental Wellness in Every Season and Preparing for Seasonal

Changes

Brianna Grant, LCSW, RPT-S
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September 2025

Prioritizing our mental health and the mental health of children should not be limited to awareness months or during the holiday season. Every day can present new stressors and challenges and prioritizing mental health makes all the difference. The well-being of our and our children's emotional, physical and social well-being deserves daily attention and is a year-round endeavor. Making mental health a daily and year-round priority means integrating self-care habits such as regular exercise, maintaining routines, adequate sleep, and stress management into daily routines.

With the fall and winter months approaching, that means daylight savings is on the horizon. This means shorter days, waking up and starting our days when it is often still dark out and heading home from school activities or work at dusk or when it is getting dark. Not to mention the colder temperatures that drive us indoors.

Seasonal changes, particularly reduced daylight, significantly impact mood by disrupting circadian rhythms, lowering serotonin, lowering Vitamin D levels, and increasing melatonin. Serotonin helps to regulate our mood, Vitamin D levels contribute to our mood and energy levels, and melatonin regulates our sleep. These seasonal changes and the impact can lead to the "winter blues" where we may notice symptoms such as increased fatigue, low energy, anxiety and even sadness.

This is where the focus on mental health as a daily and year-round practice is a crucial need and assuring routines and strategies are in place for ourselves, our children and students in the classroom. If not now – when?

Tips and Strategies for Adults and Parents:

1. Daily exposure to sunlight

In the winter, we tend to have less exposure to sunlight due to the time change and weather. Reduced exposure to sunlight decreases our Vitamin D levels. Lower levels of Vitamin D can lead to fatigue and low mood. Try to get outside, even in the cold, for quick exposure to sunlight/daytime rays.

2. Sleep hygiene routine

Less sunlight and daylight savings can disrupt our internal clock and circadian sleep rhythm. This internal clock regulates our sleep and impacts our mood and energy level. Having a set bedtime routine will help to regulate these rhythms despite the seasonal and time changes. Oh, and getting 7–9 hours of quality sleep per night is ideal!

3. Exercise

Moving our bodies with intention on a daily basis helps to release endorphins. Even a simple walk, a workout video, the kids attending sports practices or walking up and down the stairs to get our heart rate up with release endorphins. Those lovely endorphins are known to make us feel happier, boost self-esteem and enhance pleasure.

4. Connect with loved ones and maintain a support system

Schedule that play date for your kids, connect with a family member, meet for coffee or have that weekly check-in call with your bestie.

5. **Stress management**

See a therapist for support, practicing meditation or mindfulness for 10 minutes a day, step away from the day to day for 5-10 minutes to journal, have alone time, read a book, etc. Stress management is key when we are in the throws of seasonal changes. Creating a routine of self-care, even 5-10 minutes a day, can create real change when facing challenges.

6. **Talk About Thoughts and Feelings**

Encourage open conversations about feelings for yourself and your children. Validate your child's emotions and let them know it's okay to feel anxious, sad, or confused. Teaching children to express their thoughts and feelings can help them process their emotions in a healthy way.

7. **Routines, routines, routines**

Create morning and evening routines, especially after school routines. Set aside time for homework, family time to connect, preparing healthy meals and time for relaxation. A consistent routine fosters a sense of security for ourselves and our children.

Tips and Strategies for Teachers:

1. **Maintain predictability and consistency.**

Maintain classroom routines and schedules to assist with creating a safe and predictable classroom environment.

2. **Create Calm Zones.**

Creating a designated quiet space or calm down corner in the classroom with comfortable items, books or headphones for noise-canceling time can allow for students to decompress when feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated.

3. **Encourage social connections.**

Foster peer support through group activities or recess time to reduce feelings of isolation and increase positive mood for students.

4. **Teach emotional regulation and encourage healthy expression of feelings.**

Incorporate social-emotional learning activities and mindfulness exercises such as breathing techniques or 10 mindful minutes to create space for students to manage their emotions.

Taking care of our mental health and the mental health of the children in our lives is vital for well-being, connection and successful day-to-day functioning. If we can model healthy self-care, children will follow our lead and we can support resilient young minds to thrive!



STRONG ACC Regional Symposium



TN Voices was a sponsor of the Tennessee School Counselor and Administrator Leadership Institute (SCALI).



Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA) Conference



Kimochi Mental Health Workshop in partnership with Lebanon Special School District

**Have you thought of a career in Mental Health?
Check out our open positions at [TN Voices](#).**

Compliance and Ethics Corner

Ensuring the high quality of our care and maintaining transparency in our work requires everyone's involvement. If you have any questions or concerns that you have previously discussed with our staff and feel have not been resolved, or if you believe your feedback

could help improve our services, please don't hesitate to reach out to our compliance and ethics hotline information on <http://www.hotline-services.com/> (agency name: TN Voices). We prioritize all reports and conduct thorough research and analysis on each one. The link is also posted on our website.

Program Highlight

Intensive Care Coordination (ICC)

Intensive Care Coordination is a coordinated behavioral health service delivered in the home for TennCare-enrolled youth under 21 with serious emotional disturbance. It promotes collaboration among professionals, caregivers, and communities to support effective care planning and service coordination. Medication Management and Psychotherapy available as needed.

Intensive Care Coordination is an intensive, in-home treatment model grounded in the System of Care philosophy and powered by High Fidelity Wraparound.

A Certified Family Support Specialist uses lived experience and training to coach youth and their parents or caregivers in developing effective skills.

A Care Coordinator helps families build a strong support team and create a personalized plan to help their child succeed at home, in school, and in the community.

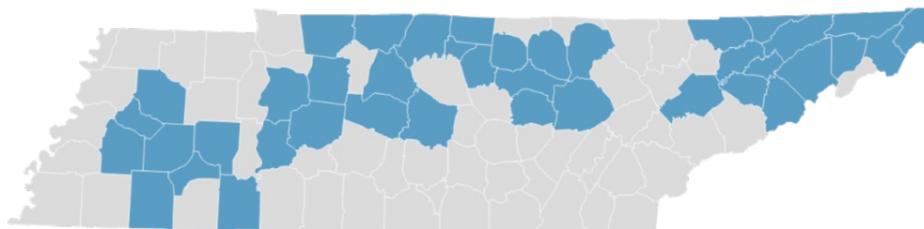
Eligibility Requirements

- We welcome these TennCare plans: Wellpoint (formerly Amerigroup), BlueCare, and United Healthcare Community Plan
- Under 21 years of age
- Must have mental health diagnosis
- History of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization or crisis stabilization unit involvement

Our Mission

We are dedicated to helping adults, families, and children thrive by providing clinical and supportive care, advocacy, and collaborative partnerships that nurture healthy environments and long lasting well-being.

Counties Served



**Make a
Referral**

Online Library Resources

Wemberly Worried
by Kevin Henkes

Wemberly Worried



by **KEVIN HENKES**

Wemberly worried about everything. Big things. Little things. And things in between. Then it was time for school to start. And Wemberly worried even more. If you ever worry (or know someone who does), this is the book for you.

This warm and comforting back-to-school favorite is from Kevin Henkes, the nationally bestselling and celebrated creator of *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*, *Kitten's First Full Moon*, and *Chrysanthemum*.

[Listen and Read Along Here!](#)

Search "Wemberly Worried" on this page to find the book.

[View more resources in our online library here!](#)

Upcoming Trainings

Parent 2 Parent Advocacy Training - Virtual

Are you looking for support with your child's IEP, 504, mental health, child welfare, or juvenile court involvement? Our advocates are here to help! We will walk you through the process and offer support and training. This FREE virtual training can also be a step towards getting your certification as a Family Support Specialist.

Date/Time: 10/7–10/8 (8:00 am–4:00 pm CT / 9:00 am–5:00 pm ET)

[REGISTER HERE](#)

For information on this class or future Parent 2 Parent classes, contact:

Jordan Buchanan - Jordan.Buchanan@tnvoices.org or Jennifer Davis –
Jennifer.Davis@tnvoices.org

Mental Health First Aid Classes in Middle and East Tennessee

Classes cover:

- Common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- How to interact with a person in crisis.
- How to connect a person with help.

- Expanded content on trauma, substance us, and self-care.

Upcoming classes:

October 2nd - **Adult Mental Health First Aid** at the Girl Scout office (4522 Granny White Pike, Nashville). [REGISTER HERE](#). For more information please contact Michelle Reeves at michelle.reeves@tnvoices.org.

October 10th - **Youth Mental Health First Aid** at Linebaugh Public Library (105 W. Vine St., Murfreesboro). [REGISTER HERE](#). For more information please contact Michelle Reeves at michelle.reeves@tnvoices.org.

October 22nd - **Adult Mental Health First Aid** at King Family Library (408 High St., Sevierville). [REGISTER HERE](#). For more information please contact Mindy Sidwell at Melinda.Sidwell@tnvoices.org.

October 29th & 30th - **Youth Mental Health First Aid** at Boys & Girls Club of the Smokies (209 McMahan Ave., Sevierville) [REGISTER HERE](#). For more information please contact Mindy Sidwell at Melinda.Sidwell@tnvoices.org.

If you are interested in having one of these classes (Youth or Adult) in your area, please let us know. Feel free to reach out to Michelle Reeves for Middle TN or Mindy Sidwell for East TN if you have any questions.



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