

# Newsletter

SUMMER 2024 / VOLUME 27

## Quarterly News & Updates

WARREN HUNTERDON SOMERSET  
**TRI COUNTY**  
Care Management Organization



*"Keeping Families Strong"*

## Follow us

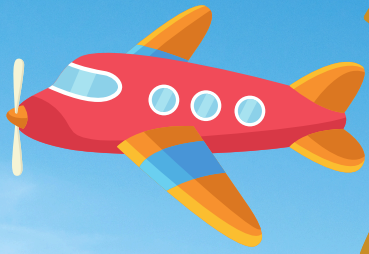


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**From the Desk of...**  
**James Parauda**  
**CEO**

In the Spring Newsletter, I wrote about the advocacy efforts of the Association of New Jersey Care Management Organization (NJCMO, <https://njcmo.org/> ) with state legislators. In this edition, I'd like to update you on the outcome of these efforts. Our goal was to secure an increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate for CMOs. Our intent was to meet the current demand for services and to continue to provide quality care to the youth and families by lowering staff-to-family ratios.

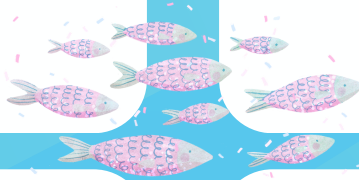
Our efforts resulted in a budget resolution on behalf of the CMOs and the Children's System of Care (CSOC) providers that totaled \$22 million. The CMOs are very appreciative to get recognized for our work during a difficult budget year. We particularly appreciate Senator Gordon Johnson and Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez for being prime sponsors. In addition, we would also like to thank the many legislators who co-sponsored the resolution.

Our ongoing advocacy will be to ensure that all people who touch the lives of our youth and children are aware of CMO services throughout New Jersey. It is important that not just the legislators know of our work, but that personnel in the schools, hospitals, family court, and others are aware of our services and know how to refer a youth to their local CMO.

Thank you again to all those who assisted in securing our goal including family members, providers, and CMO staff members. Our unity in advocating came together on behalf of the youth of this state.



# Youth Success Story



# Community Corner

Bowie is featured as a Youth Success Story because of his immense progress throughout his involvement with TCCMO. When Bowie was first referred, he was struggling with anger control, impulsivity, and depression. Bowie had been engaging in outpatient therapy and attended a therapeutic school placement, but needed more help to address his needs. Bowie was evaluated and it was recommended that he participate in a residential treatment program through the Children's System of Care (CSOC).

Initially, Bowie struggled with this commitment and had some difficult periods while he was Out of Home (OOH). However, after some time, encouragement, and self-reflection, Bowie began to take advantage of the treatment opportunity. Bowie worked very hard on himself to improve his lifestyle and complete the program. Bowie utilizes exercise to cope with life stressors and prioritize himself and his health. With the support of his family, and Care Manager Katie, Bowie successfully completed the program and returned home. Bowie even made enough progress that he was able to return to a traditional public school setting! Bowie is also proud of his faith and recently completed his confirmation. Bowie would like to remind others that God is always with them. TCCMO would like to congratulate Bowie on his accomplishments and wish him the best as he continues to push past obstacles and better himself.



## Specialized Care Coordination Services:

### Treatment for Problematic Sexual Behaviors in Youth

Problematic sexual behavior (PSB) is sexualized behavior in children and adolescents, under the age of 18, that's developmentally inappropriate or potentially harmful to those impacted by the behavior.

Specialized Care Coordination helps to ensure that children who initiate or are impacted by PSB, and their families, have access to specialized medical and mental health services regardless of their ability to pay for services.

All youth referred for SCC services will be offered a medical evaluation at the Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center (RDTC), with access to individual, group, and/or family counseling.

Modalities of treatment covered under the Children's Assistance Treatment Fund include PSB-CBT (Problematic Sexual Behavior-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), for initiating youth, and TF-CBT (Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), for youth impacted by PSB.

To access SCC services, contact the State Central Registry (SCR), at (877) NJ-ABUSE.

For additional information, contact  
**Ryan McEldowney, SCC,**  
908-430-0307,  
SCC@tricitycmo.org

# Getting to Know TCCMO...

Tri County CMO is very fortunate to have a remarkable team of dedicated bilingual Care Managers.



Vanessa Serrano, Care Manager Supervisor, is the fearless and compassionate leader of the bilingual team. Having been at TCCMO for six years, she enjoys making a difference in the population she serves. She enjoys her team because “they truly care about the work that they do and genuinely support one another.” When asked what makes her team unique, Vanessa said “We are all technicolor.”



Vanessa Serrano

As a party planner and dance mom, it’s no surprise that Yahaira brings the party to TCCMO every day! Yahaira is the Lead Care Manager on Team Serrano and has been with TCCMO for over ten years. She enjoys that she and her team share a love of food. She feels her team is unique in that they utilize their personal experiences to help their children and families overcome obstacles. Yahaira plans to return to school to complete her master’s degree and eventually become a licensed drug and alcohol counselor.

Yahaira Gonzalez



Josué Soria has been a TCCMO for a little over two years. Josué is the founder of the volleyball club at TCCMO and serves on the Risk Assessment & Prevention (RAP) and party planning committees. Josué enjoys being on the bilingual team because they are “supportive, fun, dynamic, and cool.” Josué enjoys building bridges of understanding between the bilingual population and other cultures.



Josué Soria

Yamile Vasquez



Yamile Vasquez has been at TCCMO for about a year and a half. She enjoys being part of a team that is knowledgeable about the unique challenges bilingual families face. Yamile’s favorite part of working at TCCMO has been witnessing her families’ growth and achievements. A fun fact about Yamile is that she owns ten crested geckos!

Alexandra Cespedes started at TCCMO as an intern and loved it so much she decided to come back as a Care Manager. She has been with TCCMO for a total of two years and has found the work to be extremely rewarding. Alexandra considers it not just a duty, but a privilege to support and empower the families she serves. She loves how her team shows “unwavering support for one another.



Alexandra Cespedes

Daniela Hernandez Cepero started out as a bilingual Care Manager Specialist supporting Team Serrano before becoming a Care Manager on the team. Daniela has lived in three different countries and plans to visit at least fifteen before her thirtieth birthday. Daniela would like to get her master’s degree in social work and continue serving youth in the school setting. Daniela loves that Team Serrano feels like a family and is “diverse, yet united.



Daniela Hernandez Cepero

- Like Daniela, Nachelyn Reyes started out as a Care Manager Specialist supporting bilingual Care Managers and their families. Having been with TCCMO for a year, she just recently moved into the Care Manager role and has been enjoying giving back to her community. Nachelyn takes pride in helping her families break down barriers to ensure access to needed services. Nachelyn’s professional goals include getting her master’s degree and providing outpatient counseling services to the bilingual population.



Nachelyn Reyes

Andrea Salazar is another Care Manager who started out as a bilingual Care Manager Specialist. She recently celebrated two years with TCCMO in June. Andrea previously worked with one of our contracted agencies, Hope Esperanza Counseling Services, and has made strong connections with our community providers.



Andrea Salazar

Next up in a long line of bilingual Care Manager Specialist greatness is Ashley Saravia. Ashley has been with TCCMO for about five months and is a fan of coffee, cooking and baking, sneakers, and all things Marvel. Ashley enjoys working with the bilingual team and finds their collaboration to be “rich and effective, with each person contributing uniquely to our work.” She is looking to go back to school to become a professor of Spanish literature.



Ashley Saravia

**We are incredibly grateful to have such an amazing team of bilingual Care Managers at TCCMO!**



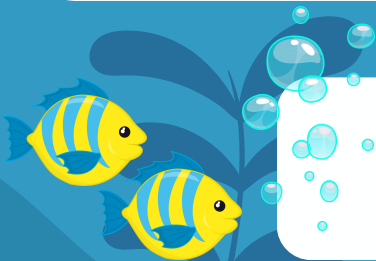
## Pride in Partnership



The recipients of the 2024–2025 Community Resource Department Grants are the Raritan Valley (NJ) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated and United Way of Hunterdon County.

The Raritan Valley (NJ) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, in collaboration with the Franklin Township non-profit One Family One Fight, has received the award for “Youth Thriving: A Mentoring Program for Health, Creativity, Opportunity, and Longevity.” This intervention-first program serves up to 50 middle and high school students in Somerset County and is grounded in the power of mentoring and representation to increase motivation and promote behavior change.

United Way of Hunterdon County has received the award for “Thriving Communities: Bilingual Mental Health Access” which will deliver a minimum of six free community outreach educational workshops in Spanish with the goals of increasing awareness of and access to mental health services for youth and families, with targeted outreach to parents of school-aged children, particularly in households where Spanish is the primary language, who are uninsured and who have family members who are undocumented.



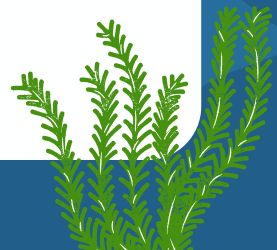
## Growing Greatness



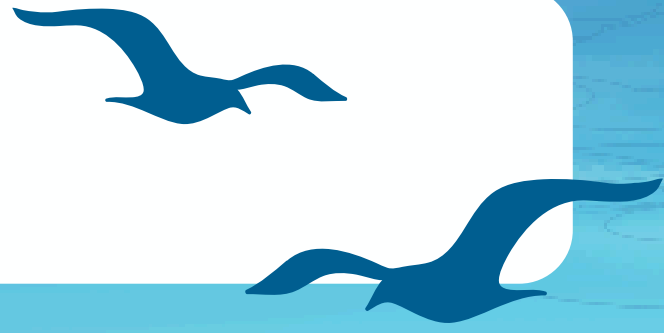
The Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) is a transformative methodology for cultivating positive relationships and enhancing children's Inner Wealth™. As summer break unfolds, it's an ideal time to integrate NHA principles into daily routines. This approach emphasizes recognizing and reinforcing children's strengths and successes, creating a nurturing environment that bolsters self-esteem and resilience.

During summer, parents can seize the opportunity to practice NHA by celebrating small victories, setting clear boundaries, and fostering a sense of appreciation. Outdoor activities, creative projects, and family outings become avenues for positive recognition. By focusing on what children are doing right and providing heartfelt recognition, parents can strengthen bonds and build a foundation of inner greatness that will serve children well beyond the summer months. This season, let NHA guide a summer of growth and connection.

For more information on the Nurtured Heart Approach® contact  
**Stephanie Suriani** at [ssuriani@tricitycountycmo.org](mailto:ssuriani@tricitycountycmo.org)



# FYI



## **National Suicide Prevention Month & Hispanic Heritage Month**

**National Suicide Prevention Month** is observed in September and plays a crucial role in raising awareness about suicide prevention and mental health. It encourages open conversations about mental health, reduces the stigma surrounding suicide, and promotes support to those struggling with suicidal ideation. Allowing a platform to educate individuals about the resources available is a reminder that all lives are important. If you or anyone you know is struggling, please use the resources below for more information.

*Links: [Suicide Prevention Month | SAMHSA & Home | AFSP](#)*

**Hispanic/Latin Heritage Month** is observed from 09/15-10/15 and celebrates the history, contributions, and achievements of Hispanic and Latino Americans. This month allows everyone to honor the diverse cultural backgrounds, values, and traditions of these countries! Click the resources below to help celebrate and learn more!

*Links: [National Museum of the American Latino | Home \(si.edu\)](#) & [National Hispanic American Heritage Month 2023 \(hispanicheritagemonth.gov\)](#)*

## **World Mental Health Day & ADHD Awareness Month**

**October 10th is World Mental Health Day**, a global initiative that aims to raise awareness and advocate for mental health education. This day is to help destigmatize mental health conditions, encourage open conversations about mental well-being, and emphasize the importance of seeking help when needed. We recognize this day so we can work towards creating a more supportive and understanding environment for those struggling. Below are resources that you can share and learn more about how you can help.

*Links: [Support Groups | NAMI](#)*

**Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Awareness Month** is observed in October. This month aims to educate the public, reduce the stigma surrounding ADHD, and highlight the importance of early detection and effective management strategies for those affected by the disorder. Use the resources below to learn more.

*Links: [About NRC - CHADD & Getting Help \(aacap.org\)](#)*



# Events held by TCCMO



## Annual Family and Community Picnic

TCCMO held its annual Family and Community picnic alongside the Family Support Organization (FSO) to kick off a fun summer for all the families we serve. This year we had over 300 people attend our annual picnic; families enjoyed a nice warm summer day filled with many activities. Families enjoyed the pool, a sensory section, the photo booth, face painting, music, food and so much more!

TCCMO and FSO host this picnic as a thank you to our enrolled families and providers who support us in "Keeping families strong".

We also want to give a BIG thank you to those who helped support and make this picnic possible!



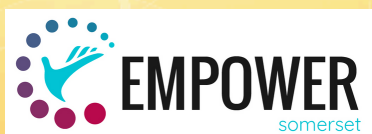
Family enjoying the Picnic



Winners 🏆



Prize Table

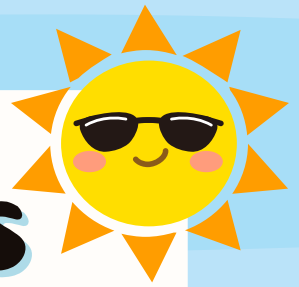


Sensory Table



Click the logos to access website





# Upcoming Events



**Tri County CMO Training Department** 

Is offering the following IMPACTFUL film screenings to our school and community partners. Choose one or all of the social impact films in the Mental Health Trilogy to view as a community. Film Screenings will be followed by post-film community panel discussion and Q&A.

Please contact the TCCMO Training Department @ [trainingdepartment@tricountycmo.org](mailto:trainingdepartment@tricountycmo.org) if interested in learning more about this series and how to schedule a screening.

**Angst**  
   
 Learn more at [AngstMovie.com](http://AngstMovie.com)

Angst is a film-based program that aims to raise mental health awareness and remove the stigma surrounding anxiety. The program helps young people and their families recognize when anxiety goes beyond a healthy level by providing interviews, tips, and expert advice.

**RACE TO BE HUMAN**  
  
 Learn more at [RaceToBeHumanMovie.com](http://RaceToBeHumanMovie.com)

RACE to Be Human is a program that offers actionable strategies for self-reflection and awareness. It combines insights from diverse experts to empower individuals and communities to respect and honor family, dignity, and diversity. The program fosters a sense of belonging and unity across all ethnicities.

**THE UPSTANDERS**  
   
 Learn more at [TheUpstanders.com](http://TheUpstanders.com)

"The Upstanders" is a film-based program that explores bullying and cyber-bullying, shares proven strategies, and promotes character building. It inspires qualities such as kindness, honesty, respect, empathy, trust, and connection, and highlights the importance of modeling empathy and resilience to transform attitudes and actions.

**LIKE**  
   
 Learn more at [TheLikeMovie.com](http://TheLikeMovie.com)

The LIKE is a film-based program explores the impact of social media on our lives and the effects of technology on the brain and on learning. Understanding that virtual connection is a huge part of our socialization and can have many benefits, how do we use it to best inform, educate and inspire us to self-regulate, so we can enjoy a more balanced and fulfilled life?

**WARREN, SOMERSET & HUNTERDON COUNTY SCHOOLS**

**INVITE TRI COUNTY CMO TO YOUR BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT**

**CMO IS THERE FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS/CAREGIVERS & THEIR FAMILIES AS SOON SCHOOL STARTS!**

**IF INTERESTED PLEASE CONTACT:**  
 Nicole Russo, Community Engagement Coordinator  
 EMAIL: [NRUSSO@TRICOUNTYCMO.ORG](mailto:NRUSSO@TRICOUNTYCMO.ORG)  
 PHONE: 908-526-3900 EXT 304

SCAN HERE OR CLICK FOR MORE INFO ON TCCMO







# Tri County CMO Board Members

Daphney Rene – Board Chair  
Melissa Fowler – Vice Chair  
David Yazujian – Secretary  
Pam Jacobs – Treasurer

Leslie Brusser  
Lesley Schwarzman  
Dan Kerr  
Avril Okeke

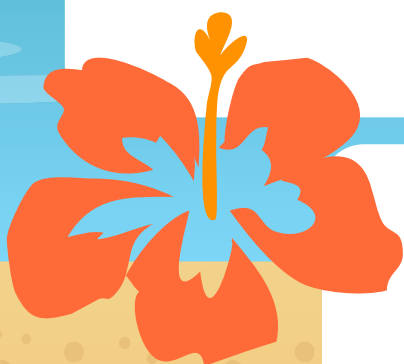
Sakina Ladha  
Alina Wells  
Linda Di Filippo  
Maggie Ryan

## 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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