



Newsletter

WINTER 2026 / VOLUME 33

Quarterly News & Updates

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From the Desk of James Parauda, CEO



Celebrating 25 Years of New Jersey's Children's System of Care: A Legacy of Support, Strength, and Community

This year marks a remarkable milestone for New Jersey's Children's System of Care (CSOC): the 25th anniversary of the state's youth mental health system.

In the late 1990s, New Jersey began outlining a plan for a new model of care—one that would replace fragmented, reactive services with a coordinated, family-centered, and strengths-based system. On January 1, 2001, this plan became a reality. The system included a dedicated division, now known as CSOC, to oversee services across the state under the Department of Children and Families. It featured several levels of care, including Care Management Organizations (CMOs), Youth Care Management (YCM), and Mobile Response & Stabilization Services (MRSS). There was a single point of entry into the system through a dedicated Contracted Systems Administrator. The early success of the system led to an expansion in the number of youth served within the system of care. Throughout this process, and especially after merging with YCM services, CMOs became the heart of the vision for serving young people with high-level needs.

Instead of families navigating a maze of disconnected providers, CMOs offered something revolutionary:

- A dedicated care manager
- A team built around the youth's strengths
- A plan shaped by families' voice and choice
- A commitment to keep youth safely in their homes and communities whenever possible

This approach didn't just change service delivery—it changed outcomes. Over 25 years, CSOC has supported hundreds of thousands of New Jersey youth, reducing reliance on out-of-home placements and replacing crisis-driven intervention with collaborative, long-term stabilization. The impact can be seen in every corner of the state: families feel heard and empowered; schools and community organizations collaborate more effectively; youth build the skills and connections they need to thrive; and communities benefit from a more holistic, equitable system of behavioral health support.



From the Desk of James Parauda, CEO



Celebrating 25 Years of New Jersey's Children's System of Care: A Legacy of Support, Strength, and Community

For a quarter of a century, CMOs across New Jersey have been quietly and powerfully transforming the lives of youth with complex behavioral health, developmental, and emotional needs—and strengthening the families and communities that support them.

New Jersey's wraparound model is still regarded nationally as a gold standard. Over the years, CSOC has embraced new practices and responded to emerging needs, including:

- Expanding support for youth with developmental disabilities
- Addressing the youth mental health crisis magnified by the pandemic
- Partnering more deeply with schools, courts, and community agencies
- Embedding equity, cultural humility, and family partnership at every level

Despite challenges—from funding pressures to shifting community needs—CMOs have remained grounded in their purpose: to help every young person grow, heal, and realize their potential. The 25th anniversary is not only a celebration of organizational growth; it is a tribute to the families who trust CMOs with their journeys and to the vast network of partners who walk beside them.

Family Support Organizations, Mobile Response teams, providers, schools, hospitals, youth advocates, and county partners have all played essential roles. Together, they have created a system that is both resilient and responsive. The next 25 years will bring new challenges, but also new opportunities—advances in youth mental health, stronger community collaboration, and innovations that continue to place New Jersey at the forefront of caring, community-based support.

Here's to 25 years of the Children's System of Care and Care Management Organizations in New Jersey—and to the countless futures made brighter because of them. **Visit the NJCMO website (www.njcmo.com) and follow NJCMO on social media to stay up to date on the celebration throughout 2026.**

Youth Success Story

In this edition, TCCMO would like to highlight Thomas K., who was referred to CMO services about two years ago. Upon opening with CMO, Thomas was struggling with low self-esteem, negative peer relationships, and substance use. Although alternative interventions were explored, the journey continued downhill, ultimately leading to time spent in juvenile detention. When Thomas returned home, his family welcomed him with open arms. He shared that he realized this was not the path he wanted to continue, with support from his child/family team, a group of in-home and community providers was put in place and through fierce dedication, he has turned his life around. He has explored new interests, including making music, learning about nutrition and exercise, and practicing photography. Thomas transformed his bedroom closet into a recording studio and his family's basement into a home gym. He told his CM that his dream was to return to school and join the wrestling team. We are pleased to share that his dream has become a reality! Recently, Thomas met with a community college representative to discuss enrolling in an automotive technology program after high school. Thomas has demonstrated both strength and resilience. TCCMO shares in Thomas' sense of pride regarding all the hard work he has put in to get where he is today. We wish him continued success in the future!

Pride in Partnership

TCCMO, along with Middle Earth, hosted a LEAD-Adventure Group. The group invited young males experiencing substance or mental health concerns to participate in an 8-week program to learn more about themselves and grow their leadership skills. Each week, the boys engaged in physical activities such as basketball or a ropes challenge. Each session ended with a therapy circle led by a Carrier Clinic staff member. Topics discussed included healthy socialization, street smarts vs. book smarts, and how to manage anger to cultivate change. Using the two strategies together brought an interactive way to connect feelings and real-life scenarios. During this time, they found a safe place to express themselves and grew in self-confidence to build healthy and transferable skills to move them towards a successful future. Thank you to all who participated and organized.

**To know more about Middle Earth
click the logo below**



Community Corner

FY2026 Tri County CMO Community Resource Development Fund Spotlight

We are excited to highlight the two awardees of the FY2026 Community Resource Development Funds, both of which have launched meaningful and impactful programs for youth and families in our community.



Firth Youth Center has used its funding to offer Stronger Together: An Inclusive Martial Arts Series for youth ages 8-12 who are differently-abled, along with their families. This free program provides youth an opportunity to learn martial arts from certified Action Karate instructors. Siblings are also encouraged to attend and take part in physical activities and games with FYC staff. Each session concludes with a catered family dinner and bonding activities.

The fall session is currently underway, and spring session sign-ups are expected to open in March 2026. **Learn more at www.firthyouthcenter.com**

Bloom & Grow Coaching utilized its funding to run four sessions of the Rise and Thrive support group for youth and young adults ages 16-19. This free program focuses on emotional wellness, leadership development, and job readiness. Participants engage in resumé building, mock interviews, and also receive CPR certifications. **Stay tuned for spring session sign-ups at bloomandgrowcoachingllc.com**

A heartfelt thank-you to Firth Youth Center and Bloom & Grow Coaching for their continued commitment to supporting our youth and families.

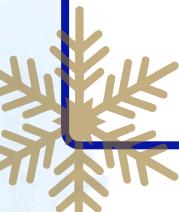
Growing Greatness

New year, New you! One of my favorite things about Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA) is that when we are focused on the positives, we become happier. What a great way to start the year by aligning our intentions to center around being happy! Connecting with friends and families by pointing out the good they have done and affirming those strong qualities helps us form more meaningful and calm relationships. Emphasizing these qualities moves people in an upward and confident manner to build self-esteem, resilience, and a moral compass, which then makes us feel more connected and loved. Make a resolution that this year you will begin to choose to see what is going right and call it out.

Happiness begins with you!

**TCCMO offers small group trainings twice a month.
Come find out more!**

*** [Click here for more info](#)**



Getting to Know TCCMO

In this edition, we're excited to spotlight our Directors of Care Management, an essential part of our team. We asked each of them to share their journeys, memorable moments, and advice.



Meet Lindsay Nally, the Director of Care Management for our Warren County Team!



What was your journey at TCCMO?

I have been with TCCMO for NINE years now! I previously worked at another CMO then moved to Hunterdon County and started at TCCMO in 2016. I started as a supervisor and helped develop the Hunterdon County team in its early stages before moving to my current role.

What is a situation/moment that helped solidify that you were meant to be here at TCCMO or in your career?

One that really stands out is when my team and I helped overcome systemic barriers to support a young adult with developmental disabilities. After a lengthy stay in a hospital setting, we were able to advocate and team up with various system partners to create a community-based plan to support the family with the youth's return home.

What is a funny memory that comes to mind as your time here at TCCMO?

I've always loved how everyone (even our CEO!) gets very involved in the agency activities/events. One particularly fun staff appreciation day included field games, and I will forever laugh when I envision our top agency leaders "running" around the field in bubble suits during a game of bubble soccer!

What is one piece of advice you would give our readers?

I would say when it starts to feel like you're losing control, or things are not going right – go back to the basics – Wraparound model – you are not in this alone so gather your team to have more brain power, ideas, and resources added to the conversation!



Meet Jessie Turluk, the director of Care Management for our Hunterdon County Team!



What was your journey at TCCMO?

Prior to coming to TCCMO, I worked as a therapist in a variety of settings for both youth and adults. I started at TCCMO in July 2019 as a Care Manager Supervisor and was promoted to Director of Care Management in December 2023!

What is a situation/moment that helped solidify that you were meant to be here at TCCMO or in your career?

I've had many moments throughout my career where I've felt that being a social worker is what I am supposed to be doing. Here at TCCMO, I've had the privilege of being part of child family teams in which the youth and family are able to overcome their crises and connect with each other again.

What is a funny memory that comes to mind as your time here at TCCMO?

One funny memory was the staff holiday party in 2019; each team created a skit to a favorite holiday song and walked down a runway to present their skit to everyone. I remember the room being so full of laughter, excitement, and fun. Each team was unique in their song selections and were invested in the presentation. This is one of the highlights of my time here at TCCMO.

What is one piece of advice you would give our readers?

My advice is to be intentional with your time, pursue what energizes you, and maintain a healthy balance between your personal and professional life.



Meet Veronica Mora, the director of Care Management for our Somerset County Team!



What was your journey at TCCMO?

I have been at TCCMO for 17 years. I started as a Bilingual Care Manager for five years, then was promoted to a Bilingual Supervisor, and was in that role for 9 years. I was then promoted to an Operations Manager which later evolved into Director of Care Management.

What is a situation/moment that helped solidify that you were meant to be here at TCCMO or in your career?

A moment that helped solidify that I was meant to be here, stay here, and make this my home away from home was when I was highly encouraged and motivated by my supervisor to go back to school and get my master's degree. This allowed me to work my schedule in a way where I could meet all my needs (work, school, and internship) at the same time while trusting that my work would be done.

What is a funny memory that comes to mind as your time here at TCCMO?

It is hard to think of only one funny memory. However, something that stands out to me is a time during a staff appreciation event when one employee sent a coworker flying (in an inflatable bubble that is). Yes, we have very competitive people in the office.

What is one piece of advice you would give our readers?

The one piece of advice I would give is to stay curious, stay compassionate, and stay connected. Curiosity will lead you to new skills. Compassion will keep you grounded in the mission. Connection, whether it be with coworkers, families, or community partners, will remind you that none of us do this work alone.

F Y I

January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, which is dedicated to raising awareness about human trafficking, supporting survivors, and promoting strategies to prevent exploitation. Human trafficking is a crime where people are exploited through force, fraud, or coercion for purposes such as sex trafficking, forced labor, or domestic servitude. Victims can be of any age, background, or nationality. Throughout the month, government agencies, organizations, and communities work to educate the public on recognizing signs of trafficking, understanding its impact, and taking action to protect vulnerable individuals. It is a time to strengthen prevention efforts, improve victim support services, and encourage a collective responsibility in ending human trafficking.

[→ Click here for more information & resources ←](#)

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM), a national effort to raise awareness about the prevalence of teen dating violence, understand what it is and why it happens, and promote healthy relationships to prevent abuse before it starts. Healthy relationships consist of communication and mutual respect. Teen dating violence is common, with 1 in 3 teens in NJ experiencing some form of abuse by a romantic partner before adulthood. This includes physical, emotional/psychological, or sexual abuse/harassment, or stalking of youth ages 13-18. The impacts of a lack of awareness and education can be long-lasting. Teens who experience dating violence are more likely to engage in substance use and attempt suicide compared to non-abused teens. Impacts affect not only the young people involved, but also their families, friends, and communities. Prevention steps include educating yourself on warning signs and consent, starting family conversations about respect, and supporting survivors. **Be sure to click on the resources below for more!** ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

[→ Safe + Sound Somerset: The Ask Ava Podcast](#)

[→ Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Warren County](#)

[→ Safe in Hunterdon](#)

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, which highlights the inclusion, contributions, and rights of people with developmental disabilities. These disabilities can affect learning, behavior, communication, or physical development, which may include conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, Down Syndrome, and Cerebral Palsy. The month focuses on increasing public understanding, promoting accessibility, and supporting opportunities for individuals with disabilities to live, learn, be empowered, work, and participate fully in their communities. It encourages advocacy, celebrates achievements, and emphasizes the importance of building inclusive and supportive environments for all people.

[→ Click here for more information & resources ←](#)

Whats happening?

Happy New Year

THE FIRTH YOUTH CENTER & TRI-COUNTY CARE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE...

STRONGER TOGETHER An Inclusive Martial Arts Series

For youth who are differently-abled & their families!

Wednesdays
6:15 - 7:45pm

Session 1 : March 4th - April 8th
Session 2 : April 15th - May 20th

Program sessions include Martial Arts led by Action Karate Certified Instructors, physical activities for siblings led by FYC Staff, and a catered family dinner with interactive games.



FAMILY BONDING • HEALTHY DINNERS • PRIZES

Open to participants who are differently-abled, ages 8-12 years old. A valid 2025-26 FYC Membership Form is required for all participants. Space is limited. For more information & registration, please visit: www.firthyouthcenter.com/strongertogether



908-454-7281

Firth Youth Center, 108 Fleming Dr., P'burg

ashlee@firthyouthcenter.com



WANT A BETTER CONNECTION
WITH YOUR KID?

THEN CHECK THIS OUT

Nurtured Heart Approach®

THE NURTURED HEART APPROACH IS AN ESSENTIAL SET OF STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMING THE MOST INTENSE CHILDREN:

- TRANSFORMING THE WAY CHILDREN PERCEIVE THEMSELVES, THEIR CAREGIVERS, AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM
- TEACHING CHILDREN THEY WILL RECEIVE RECOGNITION THROUGH POSITIVE BEHAVIORS
- SEEING INTENSITY TO BE A POWERFUL QUALITY THAT, IF DEVELOPED CORRECTLY, CAN DRIVE CHILDREN TO AMAZING ACHIEVEMENTS

THIS WILL BE CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY TWICE A MONTH

EVERY 2ND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH FROM 6PM-830PM
AND EVERY 3RD WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH FROM 1030AM-1PM

CONTACT **JANET HREHOWESIK** TO SIGN UP
(908)255-5697 OR jhrehowesik@tricountycmo.org
OR SCAN HERE TO SIGN UP



Ready to make a big impact?

Partner with us to fundraise for Tri County CMO families!

Email Deja Amos today → damos@tricountycmo.org

Or click the button below to **DONATE** directly from our Website!

DONATE

Tri County CMO

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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

→ **Performcare website** ←

→ **Performcare Welcome Video** ←

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