



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



*“Keeping Families Strong”*

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A MEMBER OF **NJCMO**

# NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2026/ VOLUME 34

## QUARTERLY NEWS & UPDATES

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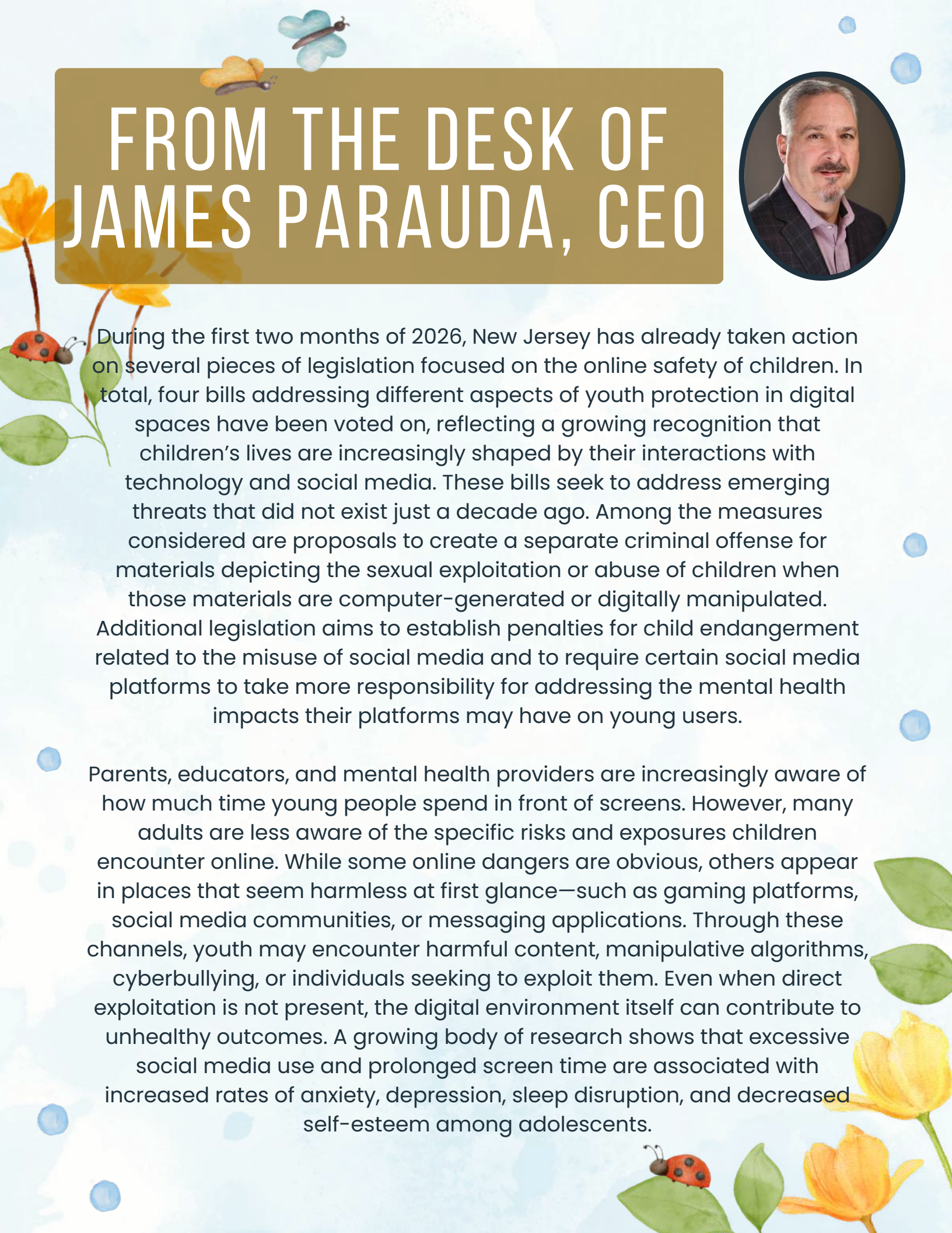


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The page features several decorative elements: a blue butterfly at the top center, a yellow butterfly at the top left, a red ladybug on a green leaf on the left side, and a red ladybug on a green leaf at the bottom right. There are also yellow flowers on the left and right sides, and blue circular accents scattered throughout the background.

# FROM THE DESK OF JAMES PARAUDA, CEO




During the first two months of 2026, New Jersey has already taken action on several pieces of legislation focused on the online safety of children. In total, four bills addressing different aspects of youth protection in digital spaces have been voted on, reflecting a growing recognition that children's lives are increasingly shaped by their interactions with technology and social media. These bills seek to address emerging threats that did not exist just a decade ago. Among the measures considered are proposals to create a separate criminal offense for materials depicting the sexual exploitation or abuse of children when those materials are computer-generated or digitally manipulated. Additional legislation aims to establish penalties for child endangerment related to the misuse of social media and to require certain social media platforms to take more responsibility for addressing the mental health impacts their platforms may have on young users.

Parents, educators, and mental health providers are increasingly aware of how much time young people spend in front of screens. However, many adults are less aware of the specific risks and exposures children encounter online. While some online dangers are obvious, others appear in places that seem harmless at first glance—such as gaming platforms, social media communities, or messaging applications. Through these channels, youth may encounter harmful content, manipulative algorithms, cyberbullying, or individuals seeking to exploit them. Even when direct exploitation is not present, the digital environment itself can contribute to unhealthy outcomes. A growing body of research shows that excessive social media use and prolonged screen time are associated with increased rates of anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and decreased self-esteem among adolescents.



# FROM THE DESK OF JAMES PARAUDA, CEO




Recognizing the urgency of this issue, Governor Sherrill made youth online safety and mental health a priority immediately upon taking office. On her first day as governor, she signed an Executive Order aimed at strengthening protections for children online while improving overall youth mental health outcomes. The Executive Order establishes a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to addressing the intersection of technology use and youth well-being. Central to this effort is the creation of a new office, the Office of Youth Online Mental Health Safety and Awareness, within the Department of Health tasked with coordinating statewide initiatives designed to keep children safe in digital environments.

The Executive Order directs all relevant state agencies, particularly those whose work touches children, families, education, or technology, to prioritize children's mental health outcomes in their policies and programs. Agencies are also required to engage regularly with key stakeholders, including young people themselves, parents, educators, and mental health professionals, to ensure that policies reflect the realities of children's online experiences.

In addition, the order requires agencies to review existing policies, regulations, and programs to identify opportunities to promote healthier internet and social media use. Finally, the newly established Office of Youth Online Mental Health Safety and Awareness will serve as the central coordinating body, working across state government to develop policy recommendations and strategies to strengthen protections for children and improve their overall safety and well-being in the digital age.

**For more information, refer to the report of the Kids' Mental Health and Online Safety Action Team**





# Youth Success Story

In our latest edition of the TCCMO Newsletter, TCCMO would like to highlight one of our youth, Conner S. This youth exemplified an incredible amount of resilience, as Conner's mother managed medical challenges. While Conner was hospitalized for about 10 months, he built lasting relationships with nursing staff and made his hospital room his own space by decorating with items he enjoys including "Huggy Wuggy".

Care Manager, Nimrah, described a wonderful reunification with his family in October and through implementing the wraparound model of care, Conner and his family moved into permanent housing. They started to participate in in-home Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services and worked with dedicated system partners, providers, and their Care Manager. The family has shared enjoying being together as a family unit again as well as experiencing much needed stability in their daily lives.

## Growing Greatness

Ever notice how kids know exactly what to say or do to set you off? That's because you're their most exciting toy. Just like with a new toy, they push all the buttons to get the most animated version of you. Unfortunately, that's often when they're exhibiting negative behaviors.

Ignoring them can sometimes make it worse. Ignoring is passive and may show a child that you're not interested at all. Instead, try to be active in their day. Be intentional about when you pause your energy. Stay "tuned in" so that when they turn it around, even for a brief moment, you're ready to recognize them. Show them your most animated self when they are doing something right.

**TCCMO offers small group Nurtured Heart Approach trainings twice a month. Click below find out more!**

**[\\* Click here for more info on the Nurtured Heart Approach](#)**

# Getting to Know TCCMOs Early Childhood Experts

It is indisputable that the needs of a 3-year-old are vastly different than those of an 18-year-old. Recently, the minimum age of kids served by the state's CMOs include birth to age 21. In order to best serve our youngest kids, the Children's System of Care entered into a partnership with Montclair State University to participate in the Intensive Fellowship in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and Early Relational Health.

Two of TCCMO's care managers are enrolled in this 10-month continuing education program about the field of early relational health and the subject of infant and early childhood mental health. They will then be able to serve CMO youth under age 5 with expertise and instruct other care managers how to do so.



Participating in this program was a natural fit for Kimberley Saccardi, Warren County Care Manager (CM) as she has experience as a preschool teacher and holds a preschool teaching certification. Kim says, "I have worked with young children for almost 40 years. They are the most inquisitive and entertaining age group. The mental health industry needs more resources and preventative care for birth through five as information, assessments, and trainings have changed over the years. Early prevention can prevent future behaviors."

Nicole Fallas-Arias, a Somerset County Care Manager in the fellowship, states, "I was interested in completing the fellowship because I wanted to better understand infant mental health and how I can support our youngest population. I think it is common to learn about children and adult's mental health, but the fellowship opportunity made me question: What about infants, and who supports them?" Nicole has learned about the importance of the relationship between caregiver and baby in development, and also that caregiver traumas that have not been addressed may affect the caregiver's parenting and relationship with the baby.



If you have questions about your own child under age 5, you can use this resource for questions and support ↓

**[Birth to Five Navigator](#)**



## TCCMOs 20<sup>th</sup> Celebration


On March 26, 2026, Tri County CMO proudly celebrated 20 years of serving youth and families at Beaver Brook Country Club in Hunterdon County. We were honored to share this special milestone with our community providers, local legislators, current and graduated youth, and both new and long-standing members of the TCCMO team. CEO James Parauda opened the ceremony with a powerful timeline highlighting CMO's accomplishments, challenges, and unwavering dedication to the community over the past two decades. The evening reflected on the impact of our work, the strength of our partnerships, and the resilience of the youth and families we serve. We are grateful to everyone who has been part of this journey and look forward to continuing our mission for many years ahead.



## Pride in Partnership

Tri County CMO had the pleasure of collaborating with several agencies this year to host the third annual Warren County Autism Awareness and Special Needs Resource Fair. Over 20 vendors attended, offering a variety of resources and services for families who have a youth diagnosed with autism and/or a developmental or intellectual disability. Families were able to speak with each vendor and learn more about the agencies to get the help they need. TCCMO also attended Hunterdon County's first annual Developmental/Intellectual Disability Expo this year, where we were able to share the services and resources we offer to families in our counties and to youth with behavioral, developmental, and intellectual disabilities.

We want to thank all the agencies that came together to organize these amazing events that support families in our community!



# FYI

**April is Autism Awareness Month**, during which the talents, contributions, and diversity within the autism community are celebrated. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental condition affecting how people perceive the world, interact socially, and communicate. With one of the highest prevalence rates in the nation, identified at 1 in 29 children, NJ prioritizes autism support by fostering a culture of understanding and inclusion, early intervention, specialized education, and advanced medical research for the thousands of individuals on the spectrum. This allows the conversation to shift from "awareness" to "acceptance." Advocacy organizations that focus on creating meaningful integration in schools, workplaces, and community spaces allow the neurodivergent champions to live a robust life and solve challenges along the way. Visit the agencies below for more!

[Autism NJ](#)

[The Arc of  
Warren County](#)

[The Arc of  
Hunterdon County](#)

[The Arc of  
Somerset County](#)

**May is Mental Health Awareness Month**, First recognized in 1949, this month aims at reducing the stigma associated with mental illness, educating the public, and celebrating recovery from mental illness. Some people suffer in silence and don't seek treatment for their conditions due to misconceptions about mental health issues. Mental health awareness is vital to improved understanding of mental health conditions and increased access to healthcare for those who need it. This year, The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) encourages people to participate in the "In Every Story, There's Strength" campaign. Wear green during the month of May to show your support for this important cause and visit the agencies below to learn more!

[NAMI](#)

[NAMI NJ](#)

[SAMHSA](#)

**June is Pride Month**, during which LGBTQIA+ history and rights are honored by rejoicing in diverse identities, embracing unity, and creating safe spaces through vibrant festivals, parades, and local flag-raising events. Pride Month is vital for the 55,000 LGBTQIA+ youth (ages 13-17) in NJ by providing essential visibility, reducing feelings of isolation, and creating mental wellness through community support. It also promotes a sense of belonging in schools and communities by addressing disparities such as discrimination, mental health challenges, and lack of inclusive care. Show your support by creating a safe space where LGBTQIA+ youth feel seen, valued, and supported. Learn more or donate below:

[PFLAG](#)

[PRIDE CENTER  
OF NJ](#)

[The Trevor  
Project](#)

# Whats happening?



**SAVE THE DATE TO**  
Join us at our  
**Family & Community Picnic**

Friday June 26, 2026  
11AM to 4PM  
Rain or Shine

**Location:**  
Forest Lodge NJ  
11 Reinman Rd  
Warren, NJ 07059

MORE INFORMATION TO COME!

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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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