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Quarterly News & Updates

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FROM THE DESK OF JAMES PARAUDA, CEO



By now, the new school year is underway. Hopefully, all of our TCCMO youth got a smooth start. But sometimes, at the beginning of the year—or even as school moves forward—stressors can contribute to some bumps in the road. The stress of new or existing friendships, academic pressures, changes in routines, can impact the success of our kids or their motivation to attend school consistently. For many young people, going back to school means adjusting to a lot of change all at once – a new teacher, a different schedule, challenging coursework, navigating friendships. For some youth, these stressors may show up as anxiety, irritability, withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, or reluctance to get up and go to school. This year, New Jersey's new bell to bell policy adds another significant change. The intent is to promote student well-being, academic engagement, and a positive school climate. While putting phones away may be an adjustment for many students, it also creates an important opportunity. Our kids have a chance to be more present—to focus on the classroom, interact with their peers, and connect with the adults around them. But helping young people focus is more than removing distractions. It is also about making sure they have the support they need when the school day becomes difficult. And the support does not have to be only parents. That is where trusted adults can make such a difference.

FROM THE DESK OF JAMES PARAUDA, CEO



A trusted adult can be a parent or caregiver, teacher, school counselor, coach, mentor, care manager, or another caring person in a young person's life. Sometimes the most important thing an adult can do is simply notice that something has changed and create an opportunity for a young person to talk. Parents and caregivers can help by asking questions that go beyond, "How was school today?" Try asking: Who did you sit with today? What was the best part of your day? Was there anything that felt difficult? Is there someone at school you can go to if you need help? The goal is not to eliminate every bump in the road. Kids will have difficult days. They will have friendship problems, challenging assignments, disappointments, and moments when they simply don't feel like going to school. What matters is helping them develop the skills, relationships, and support systems to move through those challenges. As we settle into another school year, let's encourage our kids to put down the phone, look up, and connect—with their teachers, their peers, their families, and the trusted adults who are there to help them. Sometimes, helping a young person move forward starts with something as simple as knowing who they can turn to when the road gets a little bumpy.





Youth Success Story



When Zion was first referred to Tri County CMO, he experienced significant challenging behaviors impacting multiple areas of individual and family life. Zion's needs were substantial, resulting in multiple hospitalizations and creating increased stress and disruption for him and his family.

Recognizing the level of need, the treatment team worked collaboratively with the family to identify additional support and agreed to place Zion on two out-of-home treatment waitlists while continuing intensive community-based services. Throughout this process, the family remained consistent and engaged. Despite the complexity of Zion's needs, the team persevered, successfully implementing IIC services, ABA services, and intensive services through RU Cares. These services provided increased structure, behavioral support, skill development, and ongoing care coordination. The family's commitment and willingness to participate, combined with the team's persistence, contributed significantly to Zion's progress. Due to this success, he ultimately did not need out-of-home treatment, and he successfully transitioned from TCCMO. Overall, Zion's journey reflects the power of family engagement, persistence, and a coordinated team approach, representing a meaningful success for both Zion and his family.

Youth on the Rise



Across communities, young artists are emerging with the creativity and innovation needed to truly express themselves. Through painting, writing, music, dance, digital media, and other artistic avenues, these rising talents use their imagination and skills to bring fresh perspectives to the arts. Tri County CMO wants to support and showcase the youth working with us so their passion can be recognized, shine, and grow. By nurturing these talented young creators, we help inspire confidence and self-worth, cultivate the next generation of culture-enriching artists, and shape the future of the creative world. Please check out *Youth on the Rise* feature below. Tri County recently hosted its first-ever Art Show sponsored by Dream Scholars at Dreamweaver Equine Center, where many of our incredibly talented youth proudly showcased their work.



Getting to Know TCCMO: Court Liasons

This past march, two of TCCMO's Lead Care Managers were promoted to the role of Court Liaison, which is a newly created position within the organization. Both Yahaira Gonzalez, based out of the Branchburg office, and Mollie Hornbrook, based out of the Stewartsville office, bring many years of experience in care management to their new role as a liaison between TCCMO and the county courts in TCCMO's catchment area. Yahaira and Mollie receive and review court calendars for juvenile and DCP&P (Division of Child Protection & Permanency) court. They ensure that care managers are notified of court hearings and will either accompany them or, if needed, attend in their place. They attend state-wide court liaison meetings with liaisons from other CMOs and attend county MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team) meetings. Yahaira and Mollie also collaborate closely with Family Crisis Intervention Units. They will continue to act as care managers, albeit with a smaller care load to allow time for their new role.



Events held by Tri County CMO

Back-to-school season was a busy and exciting time for our Development and Community Resource Department! Our team was out in the community attending several wonderful back-to-school events, including Somerset County DHS's Back to School Event, United Way of Hunterdon County's 'Start School Strong' Events, and Firth Youth Center's Hooray Day in Warren County. These events gave us the opportunity to connect with families, share resources, and celebrate the start of a new school year together. In addition, our evenings were filled with attending elementary, middle, and high school Back-to-School Nights throughout Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties. These events provided valuable opportunities to connect with parents, caregivers, educators, and school personnel and remind them that Tri County CMO is here year-round to support children and families. Whether a child is facing emotional, behavioral, substance use, developmental, or intellectual challenges, help is just a phone call away. We wish all students, families, and school staff a successful, healthy, and enjoyable school year filled with growth, learning, and new opportunities!



Growing Greatness

Pride in Partnership: Back to School



Ever have trouble calming yourself down? Did someone telling you to "calm down" ever actually work? Yet we often expect our kids to do it instantly when we use those exact words, wondering how they can master a skill we still struggle to manage ourselves. The key to emotional resetting is modeling the behavior and normalizing it for children. We are all human, and everyone needs a break sometimes, so call it out when you need a moment yourself to make taking a pause feel natural. Have conversations with them when they are calm to explore various coping techniques, keeping in mind that what works for you might not work for them. Then, set up a dedicated spot where they can easily access those tools when needed, always remembering that a reset is about self-regulation, never a punishment. If you want to dive deeper into these strategies, TCCMO offers small Nurtured Heart Approach group trainings twice a month—come find out more!

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

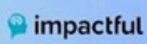


This new school year, youth served by Tri County CMO are stepping into their classrooms fully prepared and confident, thanks to the remarkable generosity of our community partners. AmeriCold, the United Way of Northern New Jersey, and the Somerset County Commission on the Status of Women generously provided 140 fully stocked backpacks filled with essential school supplies. Our team worked together to pack and organize these resources, ensuring they reached our families in need and relieving a significant financial burden for parents as the academic year began. We extend our deepest gratitude to all our partners for their continued collaboration and unwavering dedication to helping our families thrive.



Whats happening?



**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 if interested in learning more about this series and how to schedule a screening.



Angst



[Learn more at AngstMovie.com](http://LearnmoreatAngstMovie.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://LearnmoreatRaceToBeHumanMovie.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.



UPSTANDERS



[Learn more at TheUpstanders.com](http://LearnmoreatTheUpstanders.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://LearnmoreatTheLikeMovie.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?



Help Make the Holidays Brighter for Local Youth

This holiday season, you can help bring joy to our Tricounty CMO children and families who may be facing difficult times. Through Tri County CMO's Holiday of Hope, each participating youth has an individual, anonymous holiday wishlist.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

-  **1 Choose a Youth** from our Holiday of Hope wishlists
-  **2 Select a gift(s)** you would like to provide
-  **3 Purchase the gift** & have it shipped directly to Tri County CMO for delivery to youth

**VIEW OUR HOLIDAY OF HOPE WISHLISTS**
Scan the QR Code or Click to choose a child & gift
Gifts Due by: December 13th

Thank you for helping us spread **HOLIDAY HOPE**

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 ♥



TriCounty 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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