



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: CHANGING FAMILY TREES

To download this report, visit stelizabethphysicians.com/alcohol-drug-treatment

A NOTE FROM ROSANNE NIELDS AND JACOB BAST

Over the last decade Dan Cole has served as the AVP of Medical Specialties providing leadership support and guidance to the work that is reflected in this document. Dan has been a champion for patients with behavioral health disorders often encouraging our work with the phrase, We are changing family trees. This document details the influence of Dan’s leadership and the continuous work of various Associates involved in this service line. Dan retired in early 2025. Please join us in welcoming Andrew Anderson as the new AVP of Medical Specialties as he continues to support our mission of delivering high-quality, compassionate care to patients with behavioral health disorders. Andrew has been a dedicated leader within St. Elizabeth Physicians for nearly a decade, bringing both operational expertise and a deep passion for patient care.

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ALIGNING TO IMPROVE THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM OF CARE

According to the [American Medical Association](#), behavioral health generally refers to mental health and substance use disorders, life stressors and crises, and stress-related physical symptoms and it remains a priority in the 2025-2027 [Community Health Needs Assessment](#). To address the CHNA priorities, the Community Convenor initiative

2025 CHNA PRIORITIES

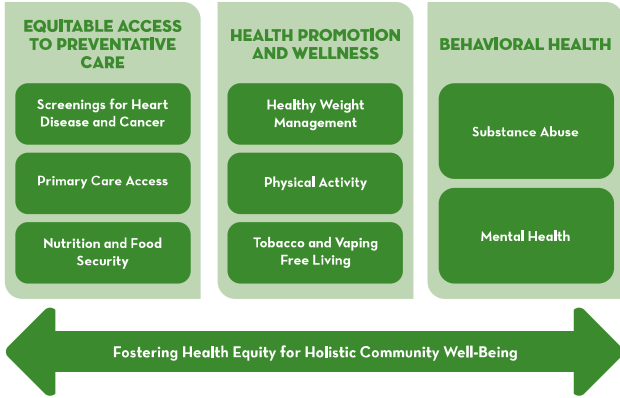


Figure 1- CHNA Priorities

2025 COMMUNITY CONVENOR GOALS



Figure 2 - Community Convenor Priority Areas

created three priority areas as shown in Figure 2. In late 2024, the behavioral health work group established goals related to aligning existing efforts that are focused on opioid/substance use (OUD/SUD) and mental health disorders (behavioral health) to maximize the likelihood of impact. A Steering Committee, with oversight by Andrew Anderson, is comprised of leaders in each of the existing efforts

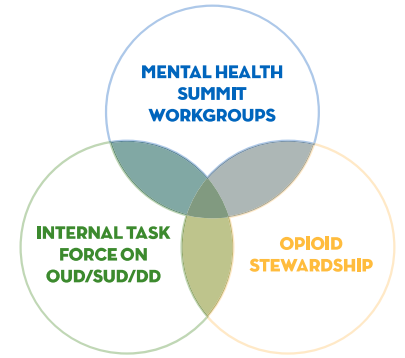


Figure 3 - Existing Efforts

The Community Convenor MH/SUD Workgroup will align with the long-standing strategies of the *Internal Task Force on OUD/SUD and Dual Diagnosis (ITF)*, which relate to infrastructure, prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. The information in this document will share the 2024 accomplishments related to these five strategies.

ITF includes representative from across the network who have met monthly since 2013 to create trauma-informed, recovery-oriented systems of care for patients with substance use disorder/dual diagnosis. Work of the Task Force is organized around five strategies as reflected in this document.

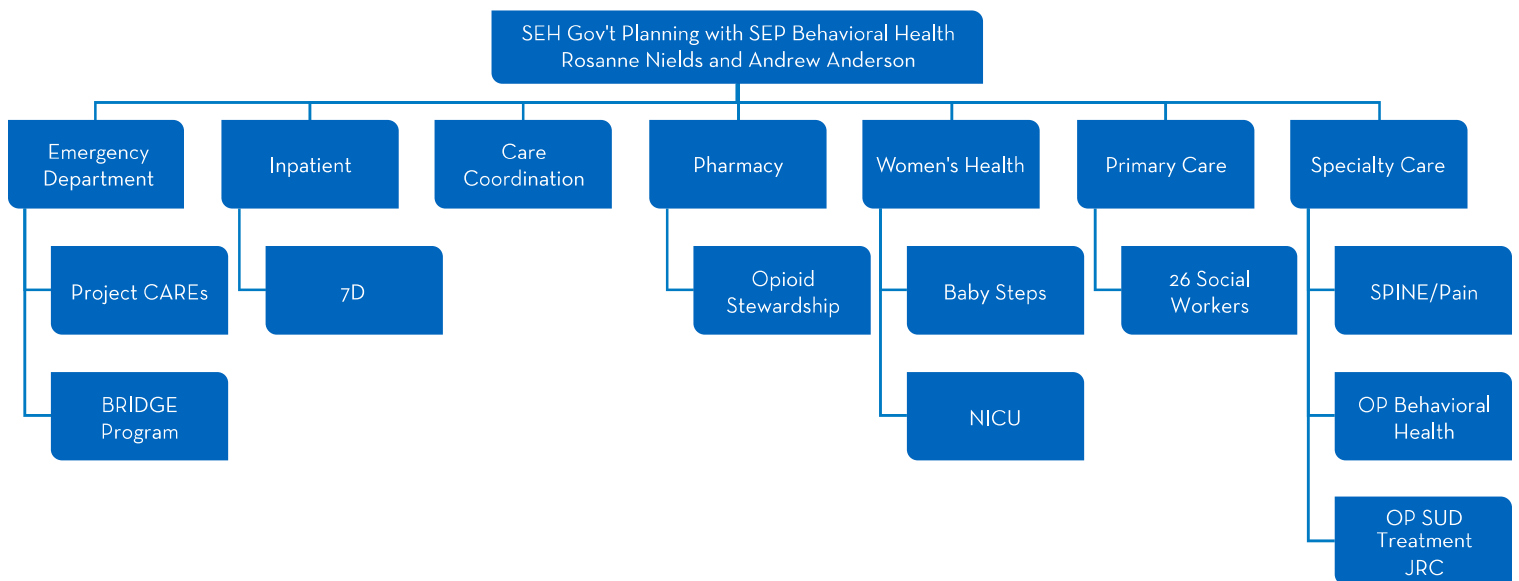


Figure 4 -Infrastructure of the ITF

2024 OUTCOMES ON FIVE STRATEGIES

Pages 3-8 of this report will document the outcomes on the ITF strategies.

1. ENHANCING OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

- We supported the NKY Office of Drug Control Policy by funding the NKY Helpline, serving on their Advisory Board, and collaborating in NKY's regional response to SUD/DD.
- We collaborated with agencies such as the NKY Health Department, NKY Workforce Investment Board, Life Learning Center, KY Career Center, Volunteers of America, Dearborn County CASA and others across the service region to bring new services to our patients. More detail on these partnerships is woven throughout this document.
- Prompted by the Community Convenor initiative, we began the process of aligning existing efforts: Follow-Up to the 2023 Mental Health Summit; Internal Task Force on SUD/DD; and Opioid Stewardship Committee.

2. PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOUTH

- Led by St. Elizabeth Mission Integration, Activating Hope is a community collaborative of over 40 community agencies, schools, and parents who have been meeting since 2019 to address mental health needs across the lifespan. This group will continue and align with Hey! Cincinnati in the coming year to strengthen mental health promotion efforts in Northern Kentucky. As shown in Figure 5, there is also a corresponding [Activating Hope website](#).
- St. Elizabeth Community Benefits sponsored over 15 educational events aimed at promoting the mental health and well-being of youth in Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana.
- More than 60 community partners worked together to conduct a regional youth mental health summit with the theme "My Best Self." The event attracted nearly 400 youth representing 31 Middle and High schools throughout the 8 NKY counties and was led by NKCES's Institute for Strategic Planning.
- Chelsea Ryan's Festival of Hope is a fund- and awareness-raising event conducted each year and focused on mental health promotion within the Erlanger/Elsmere School District. These funds support such programs as the Youth Ambassadors Program.
- The Activating Hope collaborative visited [The New Day Ranch in May](#) to learn about their programs. Using St. Elizabeth's STARS Model, New Day provides grief counseling services and support groups. A two-week camp each summer for children and teens experiencing grief is supported by St. Elizabeth Healthcare.
- The Dearborn County CASA Youth Summit, held each spring, includes approximately 610 8th graders from East Central, Lawrenceburg, South Dearborn, and St. Lawrence schools. Ten community partners shared information to promote healthy behaviors and prevent substance use, offering resource materials. Keynote speaker Chris Romulo spoke on resilience, and students attended workshops led by the Dearborn County CASA Youth Ambassadors (high school students).

Figure 5 - Activating Hope Webpage

The screenshot shows the Activating Hope website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the St. Elizabeth logo and links for 'GET CARE', 'MEDICAL SERVICES', 'PATIENTS & VISITORS', 'COMMUNITY', 'ABOUT', and 'SEARCH'. Below this is a blue banner with the text 'Activating Hope Menu'. The main content area features a large image of a family and the heading 'Activating Hope' with the subtext 'Promoting Health in Mind, Body and Spirit.' Below this is a section titled 'Should I Seek Help?' with three columns of information. The first column is for 'If you have thoughts of harming yourself or others, SEEK HELP NOW.' with a 'Call or Text - 988' and 'Call 504 Behavioral Health at (504) 421-9955'. The second column is for 'If you are having a hard time with work, family, friends, taking care of yourself, doing routine tasks at home or work, or misusing alcohol or drugs, SEEK HELP SOON.' with 'NorthKey at (504) 531-0200' and 'HealthPoint at (504) 499-4000'. The third column is for 'If you are feeling sad, more tired than usual, overwhelmed, angry or easily upset, stressed or worried OR if you are having panic attacks, racing thoughts, or trouble sleeping, it's time to SEEK HELP.' with 'Youth (13-20)', 'Adults (22-60)', and 'Older Adults (60+)' buttons. A 'DOWNLOAD PAGE AS PDF' button is in the top right of the main content area.

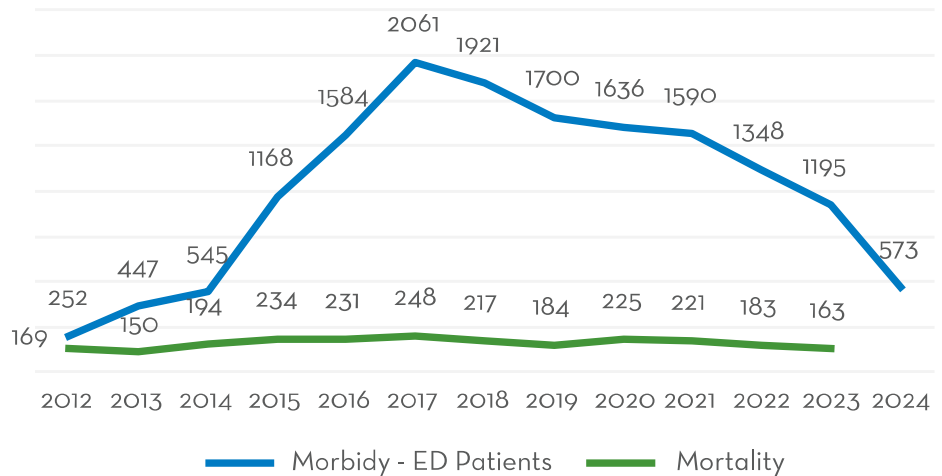
3. MITIGATING HARM FROM DRUG USE

Prevention of Infectious Diseases and Drug Overdoses

We continued collaboration with the NKY Health Department to prevent the community spread of infectious disease and death from overdose. In 2024, ED staff conducted 1,117 HEP C tests and identified 183 persons who tested positive. In addition, 612 tests for HIV identified 8 persons. Persons testing positive for these infectious diseases in the Emergency Department are referred to the Health Department for follow-up. A new grant will expand these efforts.

The number of overdoses treated in St. Elizabeth’s ED’s have dramatically decreased since they peaked in 2017 at 2,061. In 2024, the number of people presenting in the ED with an overdose event was 573. Widespread community distribution of Narcan, monitored prescribing practices, and community education have contributed to the decline.

Chart 1: Overdoses in Northern Kentucky 2012-2024



Opioid Stewardship Committee (OSC)

In 2024, the OSC:

- Continued to meet or exceed State Opioid Stewardship (SOS) standards for: opioid reversal administration, ED opioid use for migraine, ED opioid use for renal colic, concurrent e-prescribing of opiates and benzos, ED opioid use for acute ankle sprain, and opioid use (zero days) for uncomplicated vaginal delivery. These results lead to St. Elizabeth’s receipt of HRIP ([Hospital Rate Improvement Program](#)) funds.
- Established a Buprenorphine protocol, flowsheet, and order set.
- Facilitated Substance Use Disorder (SUD) screenings in L&D and peri-op.
- Deleted 17 formularies of controlled substances owing to decreased prescribing.
- Administered 11 Vivitrol doses through Free Trial Program resulting in \$42,542 in patient savings.
- Placed medication take back bins added to FLO and FTT which results in approximately 275 lbs. of medications removed from circulation. This, in turn, reduces medication misuse and prevents environmental contamination.
- Distributed five OurPractice Alerts (OPAs) related to opioid stewardship.

4. INCREASING ACCESS TO SPECIALIZED TREATMENT

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Patients with SUD present in multiple SEP locations, SEH Emergency Departments and as inpatients. Chart 2, page 5, reflects the number of unique patients and total visits across the SEP/SEH network from 2019-2024. Although the number of unique patients with SUD decreased (below 10,000) in 2024, the number of patient visits for SUD rose to 69,888 from 53,805 in 2023. The average number of visits per patient in 2024 also rose to 7.6 from 3.8 in 2023.

Of the 2024 visits, there were 4,822 visits in SEH Emergency Departments (EDs) related to substance use disorder. The highest number were in Florence, then Covington, then Edgewood. Between Jan-October, there were 417 repeat visitors totaling 1,061 repeated visits. Of the 417 repeat visitors 193 had 3 or more visits.

Access to Treatment in the ED

State funding was maintained for the BRIDGE project, which employs social workers in Care Coordination to assist patients. Additionally, the CARES project was initiated, funded by the NKY Office of Drug Control Policy Board with funds from the KY Opioid Abatement Commission. Both projects offer peer support, connection to treatment, and post-discharge support for patients with OUD/SUD. From April to December 2024, three RN Liaisons working on the CARES project connected with 3,895 patients in the Emergency Department, assessed their needs, and linked them to peer support or care, tracking progress weekly with community partners.

Chart 2: #Unique Patients and Total Visits for SUD by Year

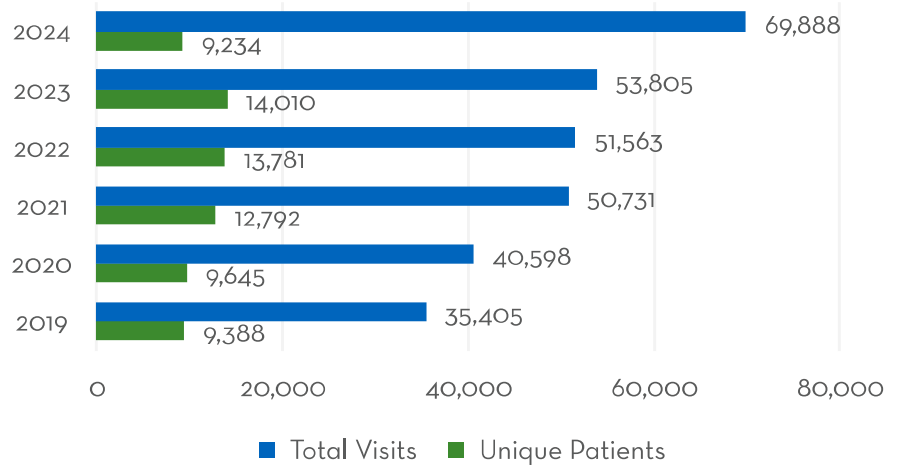
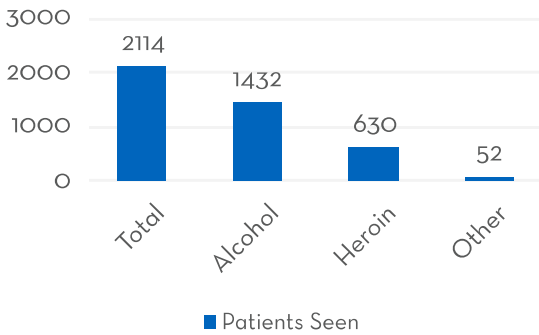


Chart 3: Patients Seen By Drug of Use in 2024



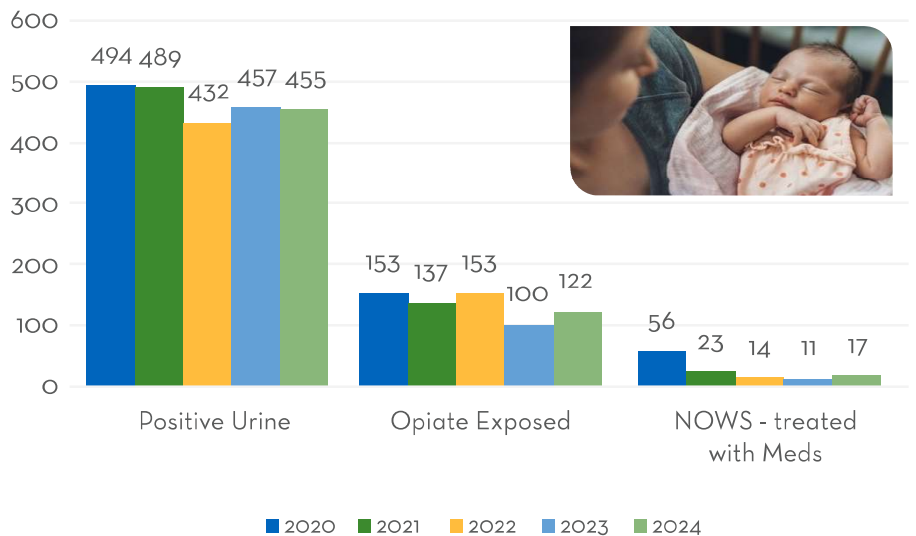
7D - A Place for Stabilization and Initiation of Treatment.

Patients with SUD who require long-term medical care often are transferred to Edgewood 7D. In 2024, this unit served 129 patients with 85% who completed their course of treatment. As part of their stay, they receive services from Journey Recovery Center, which saw 125 or 97% of the 7D patients in 2024. In 2015, the hospital established staff to provide **chemical dependency (CD)** consults to patients identified with a SUD during their hospital stay. Working in concert with 7D, in 2024, three CD Consultants saw a total of 2,114 patients with the largest number of patients presenting with alcohol use disorder. Of the 2,114 patients served, 872 were seen as they were inpatients at Edgewood, 393 at Ft. Thomas, 636 at Florence, and 213 in Dearborn. Alcohol misuse remains the substance most often impacting our patients' health.

Baby Steps

Maintained state resources to continue services for pregnant women with OUD/SUD (Baby Steps) including working with Volunteers of America to expand safe housing for pregnant moms with substance use disorders and their children. There were 4,365 live births in St. Elizabeth Birthing Center in 2024. Of those, 122 babies had been exposed to opioids in utero. Dramatic decreases in Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Spectrum (NOWS) have been observed since 2015 when the program began (from 106 to 17). Baby Steps nurses served 142 individuals in 2024 in KY and 16 in IN.

Chart 4: NOWS Dashboard 2020-2024



Mental Health

In 2024, a total of 4,940 patients underwent mental health assessments in the Emergency Department. Among these, 42.6% reported a related substance use disorder. Following assessments and treatment plan discussions, 56.4% were transferred to an inpatient mental health facility, while 43% were discharged home with outpatient follow-up. Data revealed that 39.9% of these patients arrived via local EMS services, and 12.3% of patients arrived through law enforcement transportation. Additionally, 5% of patients visited the emergency department three or more times within the year, with instances of up to 10 visits, and one case involving 26 visits. Those patients with frequent emergency department visits often presented with multiple medical comorbidities, mental health concerns, and social determinant needs. Examples of social determinant health needs reported by patients include the need for stable housing, food insecurity, access to preventive healthcare, and access to community resources. This data highlights the necessity for a multidisciplinary approach from the Emergency Department team to develop a comprehensive plan of care for these patients, facilitating their access to healthcare and secure services from community resources, aiming to improve patient outcomes and reduce the frequency of emergency department visits.

Chart 5: MH Assessments in the ED

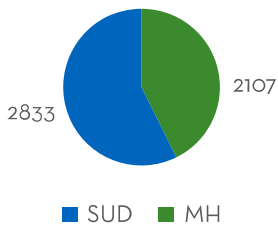


Chart 6: Gender Identified

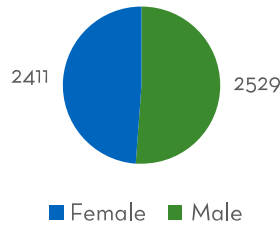


Chart 7: Age of Patient

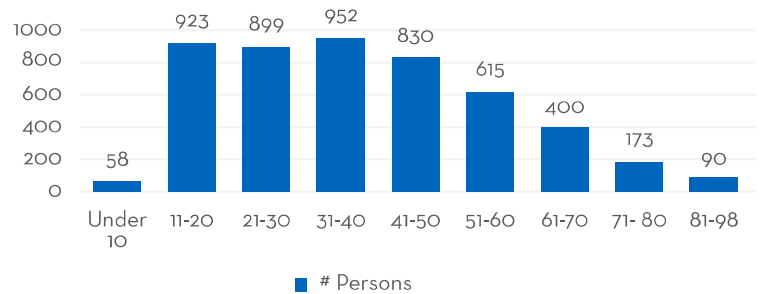


Chart 8: ED Location

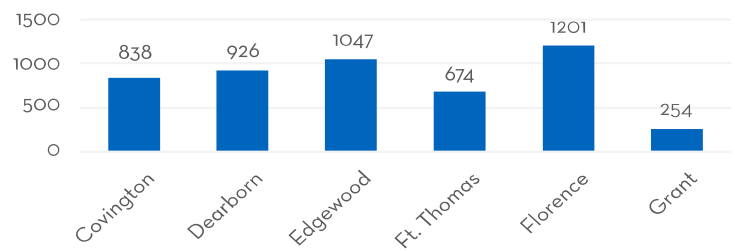
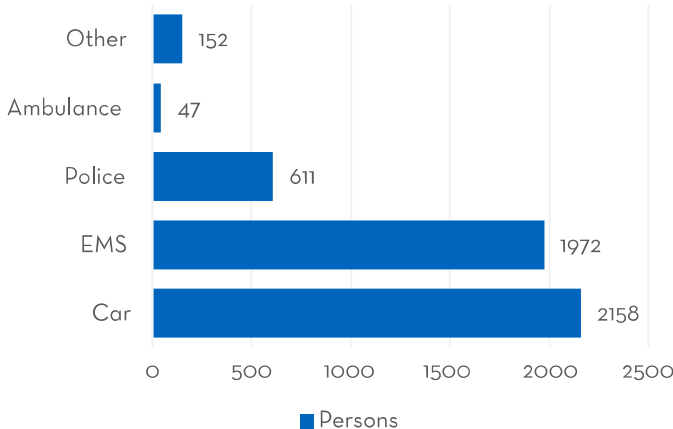


Chart 9: Arrival Method



Follow-up to the St. Elizabeth Physicians' Mental Health Summit of 2023

To focus on current resources in Northern Kentucky for mental health services, St. Elizabeth Physicians convened the Mental Health Summit of 2023. Nearly 200 community members attended the event and agreed to work in smaller groups focused on determining gaps in resources for youth, adults, and older adults. The follow-up work centered on addressing community education and awareness, social determinants of health, data analysis, and access to care.



Youth: According to the National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI), one in six U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. In the past 6 months of late 2024 and early 2025, there has been a high rise in the number of youth completing suicide in the region. The Youth work group connected to [Hey! Cincinnati](#), an initiative begun by Interact for Health to address mental health concerns for youth in the Greater Cincinnati area. An existing NKY collaborative called [Activating Hope](#) will align a new strategic plan with the Hey! Cincinnati initiatives to address youth concerns in Northern Kentucky, in particular the lack of mental health care.

Adults: Outcomes for the Adult Workgroup focused on community education and awareness and data analysis. To increase awareness among community members about a pathway to treatment, the committee created two downloadable education pieces. These are available from the [Activating Hope](#) website.

The data analysis group began monitoring utilization of emergency MH services at St. Elizabeth and Sun Behavioral Health to determine the number of repeated visitors within a 3-month window and to determine how services could be modified to be more relevant to each patient's need. One example of their ongoing work is to review the protocols and practices for patients referred to Eastern State who are then released back into the NKY community upon discharge.

Figure 6 - Downloadable from Activating Hope

SHOULD I SEEK HELP? SCAN FOR MORE RESOURCES

If you are...	If you're having a hard time with...	If you have...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling sad Feeling more tired than usual Feeling overwhelmed Feeling angry or easily upset Feeling stressed or worried Having panic attacks Having racing thoughts Having trouble sleeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work Family Friends Taking care of yourself Doing routine tasks at home Excessive use of alcohol or drug 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoughts of suicide Thoughts of harming yourself Thoughts of harming others
SEEK HELP	SEEK HELP SOON	SEEK HELP NOW
CALL: St. Elizabeth Physicians Primary Care: (800) 737-7900 Nurse Now Helpline: (888) 478-3689 HealthPoint: (859) 656-6100	CALL: NorthKey: (859) 331-3292 HealthPoint: (859) 656-6100 St. Elizabeth Care Management: (859) 656-8913 SUN Behavioral Health: (859) 429-5188 Northern Kentucky Helpline: (859) 415-9280	CALL OR TEXT: 988 CALL: SUN Behavioral Health: (859) 429-5188

Figure 7 - Downloadable from Activating Hope

<p>NORTHERN KENTUCKY STREET CARD NKY COMMUNITY RESOURCES PROVIDED BY SUN</p>	<p>SHELTERS:</p> <p>Emergency Shelter of Northern Kentucky 436 W 13th St, Covington, KY 41011 (859) 291-4555</p> <p>Welcome House 205 W Pike St, Covington, KY 41011 (859) 431-8717</p> <p>Fairhaven Rescue Mission 360 W Pike St, Covington, KY 41011 (859) 491-1027</p> <p>The IGN Center – DV Shelter 835 Madison Ave, Covington, KY 41011 (859) 491-3335</p>	<p>MEDICAL CARE:</p> <p>St. Elizabeth Hospital 1500 James Simpson Jr Way, Covington, KY 41011 (859) 656-8800</p> <p>85 N Grand Ave, Fort Thomas, KY 41075 (859) 572-3100</p> <p>1 Medical Village Dr, Edgewood, KY 41017 (859) 301-2000</p> <p>4900 Houston Rd, Florence, KY 41042 (859) 212-3200</p> <p>Northern Kentucky Health Department 1415 James Simpson Way Covington, KY 41011 (859) 431-3345</p> <p>1098 Nonmouth St., Newport, KY 41071 (859) 431-1704</p> <p>7505 Burlington Pike, Florence, KY 41042 (859) 363-2060</p> <p>234 Barnes Road, Williamstown, KY 41097 (859) 824-5074</p> <p>HIV Case Management Services: 8001 Veterans Memorial Drive Florence, KY 41042 (859) 363-2091</p> <p>HealthPoint Family Care 1401 Madison Ave, Covington, KY 41011 215 E. 11th Street Newport, Kentucky 41071 7607 Dixie Highway Florence, Kentucky 41042 (859) 656-6100</p>	<p>FOOD PANTRIES:</p> <p>Rose Garden Home Mission – St. Francis Food Pantry 2040 Madison Avenue Covington, KY 41011 (859) 491-7673</p> <p>Florence Christian Church – Feeding the Multitudes 300 Main Street Florence, KY 41042 (859) 647-5000</p> <p>Be Concerned Pantry 1100 Pike Street Covington, KY 41011 (859) 291-6789</p> <p>Action Ministries 4375 Boron Drive Covington, KY 41015 (859) 261-3369</p> <p>St. Paul Episcopal Church 7 Court Street Newport, KY 41071 (859) 581-7640</p> <p>St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry 2655 Crescent Springs Pike, Covington, KY 41017 (859) 341-3212</p> <p>518 Barkley St Falmouth, KY 41040 (859) 654-2444</p> <p>3972 Alexandria Pike Cold Spring, KY 41076 (859) 572-2640</p>	<p>MEALS:</p> <p>Hossa House 901 York St, Newport, KY 41071 (859) 261-5857</p> <p>Mary Rose Mission 272 Main St, Florence, KY 41042 (859) 292-0300</p> <p>Madison Ave Christian Church 1536 Madison Avenue Covington, KY 41011 (859) 261-0226</p> <p>Parish Kitchen 1651 Madison Avenue Covington, KY 41011 (859) 581-7745</p> <p>First Christian Church 14 W. 5th Street, Covington, KY 41011 (859) 431-3904</p>	<p>MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS</p> <p>Northern Kentucky Community Care Locations in Covington, Newport, Florence, Falmouth, Williamstown, Carrollton, Warsaw and Owenston 24/7 Crisis Line Phone#: (859) 331-3292</p> <p>SUN Behavioral Health 820 Dolwick Dr, Erlanger, KY 41018 (859) 429-5188</p>
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Updated October 2024

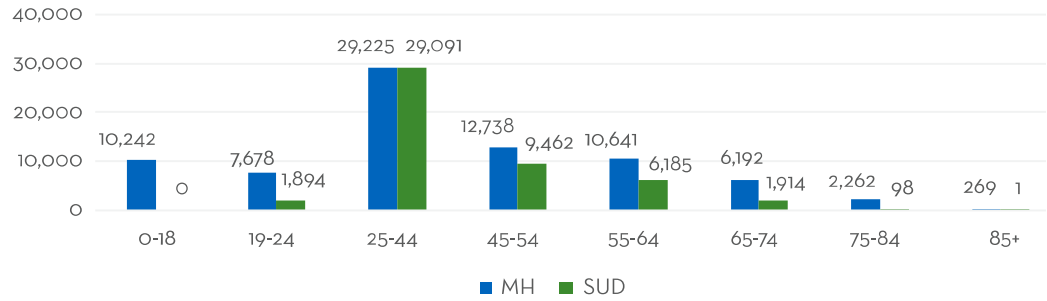
Older Adults: This workgroup created specific resources for older citizens for placement on the [Activating Hope](#) website and worked with the Adults workgroup to focus on social determinants of health. [Primewise](#), a St. Elizabeth program focused on supporting the health and well-being of older adults, is a member of this team. Primewise made significant strides in 2024 including providing Medicare education to help seniors navigate their healthcare options, offering low-impact exercise classes to promote physical health, and engaging with the community through the Senior Games and Senior Picnics. Additionally, Primewise hosted a variety of educational events, including Hands-Only CPR classes, mindful meditation sessions, and AARP workshops. Primewise also supported family members of individuals affected by substance and alcohol use disorder, providing vital resources and guidance to help them better support their loved ones.

5. IMPROVING OUTPATIENT EXPERIENCE AND OUTCOMES

Out-Patient Behavioral Health

In 2024, Behavioral Health (BH) delivered 79,807 visits to 12,071 unique patients across Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana. The year saw significant strategic growth, with the addition of **2 psychiatrists, 4 psychiatric nurse practitioners, 1 psychologist, and 2 therapists** to our provider team. BH also expanded its presence within St. Elizabeth Physicians (SEP) Primary Care locations, **increasing from 11 to 15 sites** to enhance access to integrated behavioral health care throughout the region. Presently, the BH team comprises **41 prescribers**, including Psychiatrists, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, and Physician Assistants, as well as **15 Therapists**, which include Psychologists and Independently Licensed Therapists.

Chart 10: Outpatient Behavioral Health Visits by Age in 2024



Outpatient Treatment for Substance Use Disorder

St. Elizabeth Physicians’ Journey Recovery Center (JRC) provided 48,977 visits to 1,788 unique patients across Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana. With a dedicated team of **nine prescribers**—including addictionologists, psychiatrists, and nurse practitioners—alongside **nine independently licensed therapists**, JRC delivered comprehensive, compassionate care. Located in **Covington, KY, and Aurora, IN**, JRC expanded its reach in **December 2024** by adding a **satellite location** within the **Dry Ridge Primary Care office**, furthering its mission to make high-quality addiction treatment more accessible to those in need.

Over the course of one-year, patient stability and self-sufficiency improved as indicated in the following data:

- Stable housing increased from 47% at intake to 73%,
- Unemployment rates dropped from 51% to 27%.
- Alcohol use decreased from 47% to 11% and illicit drug use dropped from 39% to 4%.
- 70% of participants reported engagement in self-help groups.
- 93% of patients reported interacting with family or friends supportive of recovery.
- Stress levels and the impact of drugs and alcohol on daily life and emotions significantly decreased.
- The *Lift Up Project* reached **1,405 individuals** over four years, with **550 or 39%** employed at 6 months, earning an average hourly wage of **\$16.50**.

Figure 8- LLC/JRC Holistic Pathway to Health

LIFE LEARNING CENTER

BUILDS THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A BETTER LIFE™

859-431-0100

- Life skills training across five domains (Emotional, Physical, Spiritual, Relational and Financial)
- Career readiness programming and placement based on interest and aptitude
- Care resources (food, clothing, personal care, transportation, housing, etc.)
- Sober social events and support groups for sustained recovery

Graduates enter work at an annual salary higher than the average entry-level position in Kentucky (\$36,500 compared to \$31,000.)

JOURNEY RECOVERY CENTER

PROVIDES TREATMENT FOR STABILIZATION AND RECOVERY

859-757-0717

- Individualized Treatment Plans
- Medication Assisted Treatment
- Behavioral Health Services
- Preventive Care and Health Screenings
- Targeted Case Management
- Individual, IOP, and group therapies
- Peer Support Services
- Baby Steps Program for pregnant and parenting women

At one year from starting treatment, 70% of patients are employed and living in stable housing; 88% of patients are not using alcohol or illicit drugs.

COLLABORATING TO ENHANCE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR PEOPLE WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IN NORTHERN KENTUCKY.

20 West 18th Street, Covington, KY 41011

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