



Department of  
**Mental Health &  
Substance Abuse Services**

# Tennessee Recovery Navigators

FY21 Annual Report

Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse

October 2021



# Department Introduction

## **Department Mission**

Creating collaborative pathways to resiliency, recovery, and independence for Tennesseans living with mental illness and substance use disorders.

## **Department Vision**

A state of resiliency, recovery, and independence in which Tennesseans living with mental illness and substance use disorders thrive.

# Program Overview

Tennessee Recovery Navigators (“Navigators”) are individuals in long-term recovery who are responsible for meeting patients in the hospital when they present due to an overdose, are experiencing active withdrawal, or present with a primary substance use disorder, to connect them with treatment and recovery resources. Navigators are also responsible for following up with each patient they meet at 72 hours and 30 days to ensure that patients have connected to the resources, are doing well, and do not need any additional community referrals.

This program is executed through partnerships with community treatment providers who employ the Navigators. Navigators are Certified Peer Recovery Specialists<sup>1</sup>, who function as a resource with lived experience for patients as well as hospital staff. Navigators are not clinicians, law enforcement, counselors, or sponsors for patients they meet in the hospital.

# History & Background

### **June 2018**

TN Initiative by Governor Bill Haslam and Legislative Support provided funding to TDMHSAS for the TN Recovery Navigator Program.

### **June 2019**

A partnership with the Department of Finance & Administration (F&A) and the Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP), provided an opportunity for TDMHSAS to receive \$500,000 annually for three years to expand the Navigator program.

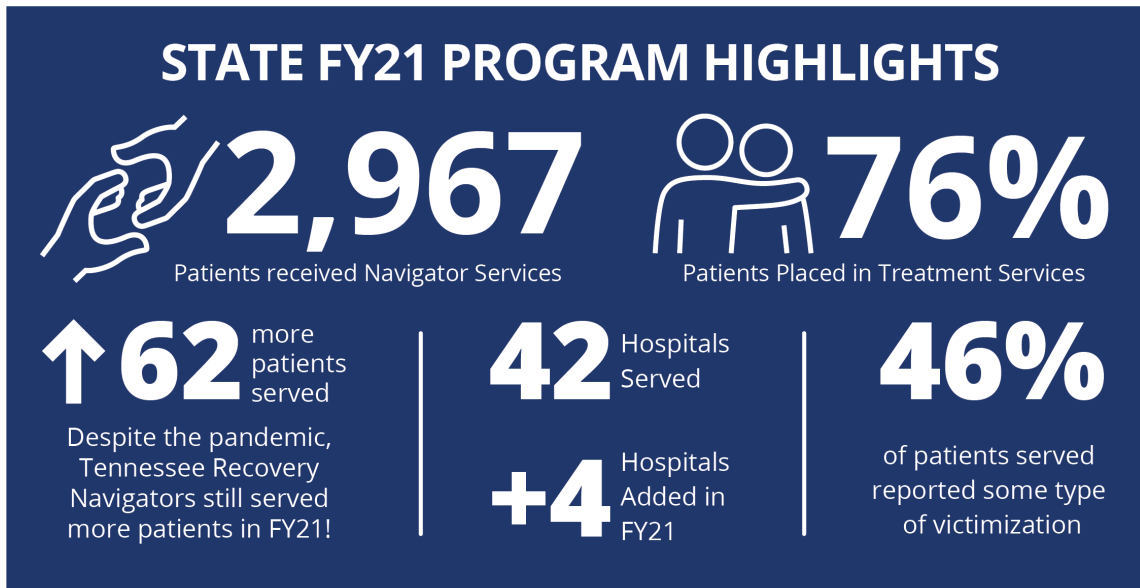
### **October 2020**

Finance & Administration and the Office of Criminal Justice Programs committed to an additional year of funding to carry the expanded Navigator Program through the end of FY22.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/mental-health-services/cprs/peer-recovery-services/certified-peer-recovery-specialist-program.html>

**Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Program Highlights**



**Patient Testimonial**

*“God has blessed this Navigator in our lives, she has continued to check in on us and helped us when no person or any organization would. If it wasn't for this Navigator, don't feel my daughter and granddaughter would be safe right now.”*

Mother of a Patient

**Current Tennessee Recovery Navigator Providers**

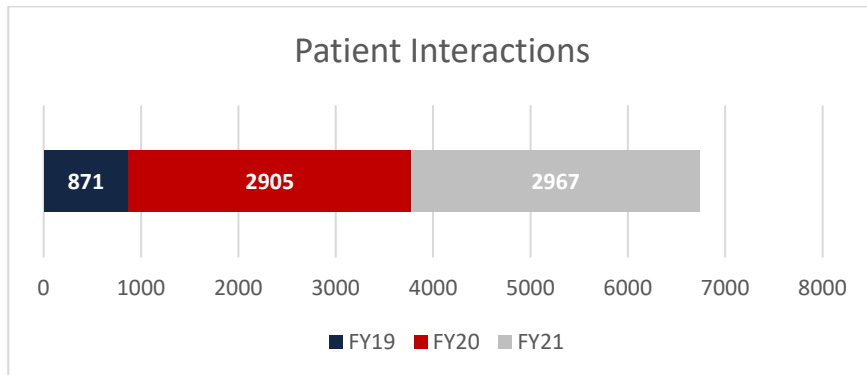
The following providers are currently facilitating the Navigator Program across the state of Tennessee.

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Cocaine and Alcohol Awareness Program (CAAP)</b>	Shelby County
<b>Pathways</b>	Madison County and Surrounding Areas
<b>Buffalo Valley, Inc.</b>	Davidson County and Surrounding Areas
<b>Volunteer Behavioral Health Care Systems</b>	Putnam County
<b>Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services (CADAS)</b>	Hamilton County
<b>Cherokee Health Systems</b>	Knox County and Surrounding Areas
<b>Helen Ross McNabb Center</b>	Hamblen County and Surrounding Areas
<b>Frontier Health</b>	Tri-Cities

# Spotlight on Navigator Data

## Patient Interactions

The Navigators continue to see an increase in patient interactions year to year.



*In FY21, 2,967 individuals were served by the TN Recovery Navigator Program.*

The continued increase in patient interactions can be contributed to relationships built with the hospitals and an increase need of those being identified as having a substance use disorder. The COVID-19 Pandemic also afforded the opportunity to utilize telehealth which assisted in reaching a larger population of individuals that we may have not been able to serve if we were just providing in-person services.

### **Navigator Success Stories: Whitney and Kelly**

*Whitni and Kelly were two patients who met with Tennessee Recovery Navigators employed by Frontier Health in the early days of the program. Not only are they living lives of recovery and able to share their inspiring stories, they're employed by Frontier Health and helping to give back to others. Scan or click the QR code to watch their story on the TDMHSAS YouTube Channel.*



The Navigators capture demographic information on all the individuals they serve. This information includes gender identification, race, and age. As the program continues, we are always looking at ways to outreach to at-risk and underserved populations.

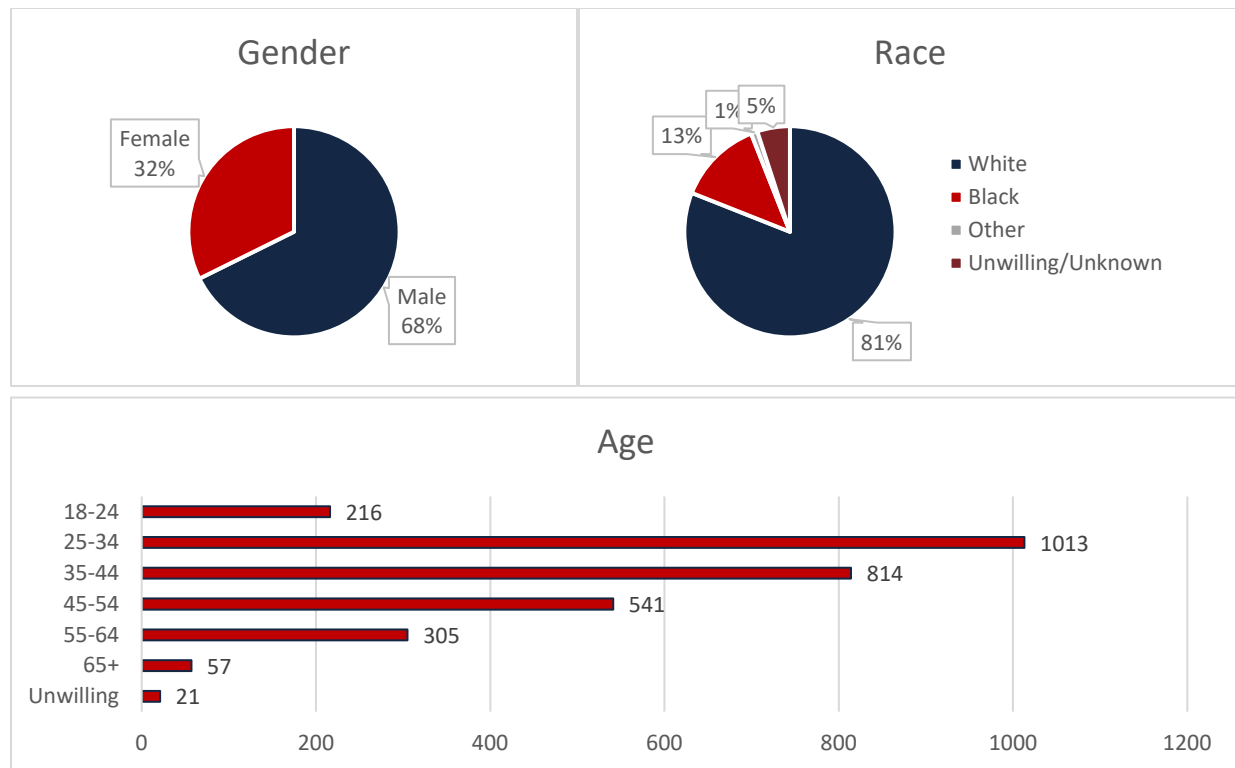


Figure 1. Demographic Data of Clients Served

### Patient Placements

In FY21 the Navigators were able to place 2,267 individuals in treatment – this is a **76%** placement rate. Since the program began in FY19 the placement rate has always been around 75%. The treatment type and the recommended level of care varies from person to person.

*76% of individuals seen by a Navigator were connected to treatment or a recovery resource.*

When the Navigators meet with the individuals in the hospitals, they recommend levels of care that best fits the person’s needs, wants, and insurance type. The Navigators always try to find an available resource for the individual. Figure 2 shows the recommended levels of care for patients in FY21, and Figure 3 shows the top placement locations.

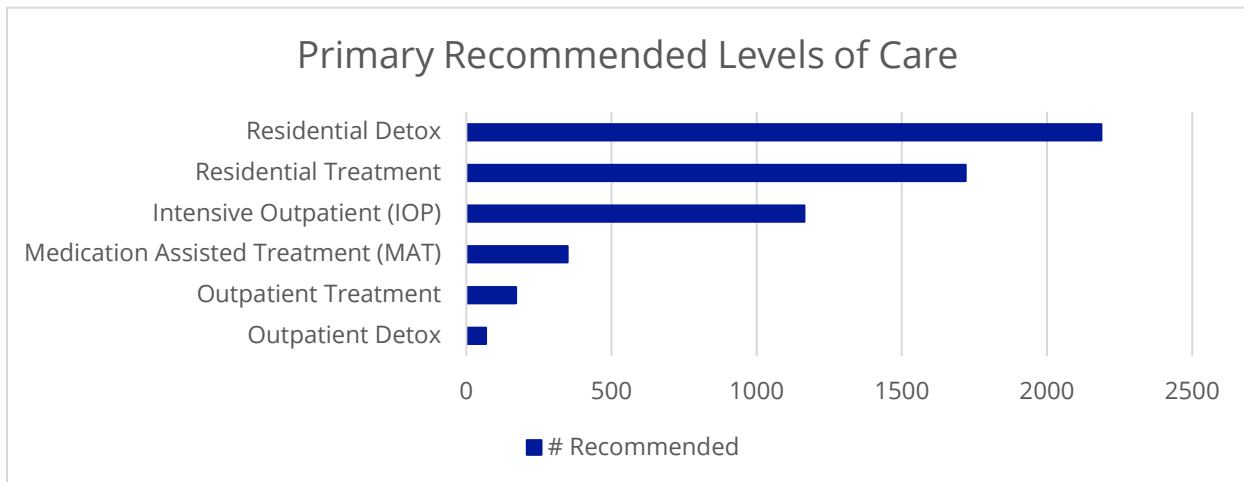


Figure 2. Primary Recommended Levels of Care

### **Patient Testimonial**

*“If it wasn’t for the Navigator I would not be on my road to recovery. She was able to help me get into a halfway house. I had been homeless for years, now I have a roof over my head, I am working, and I am working on getting my children back.”*

### **Patient Insurance Type**

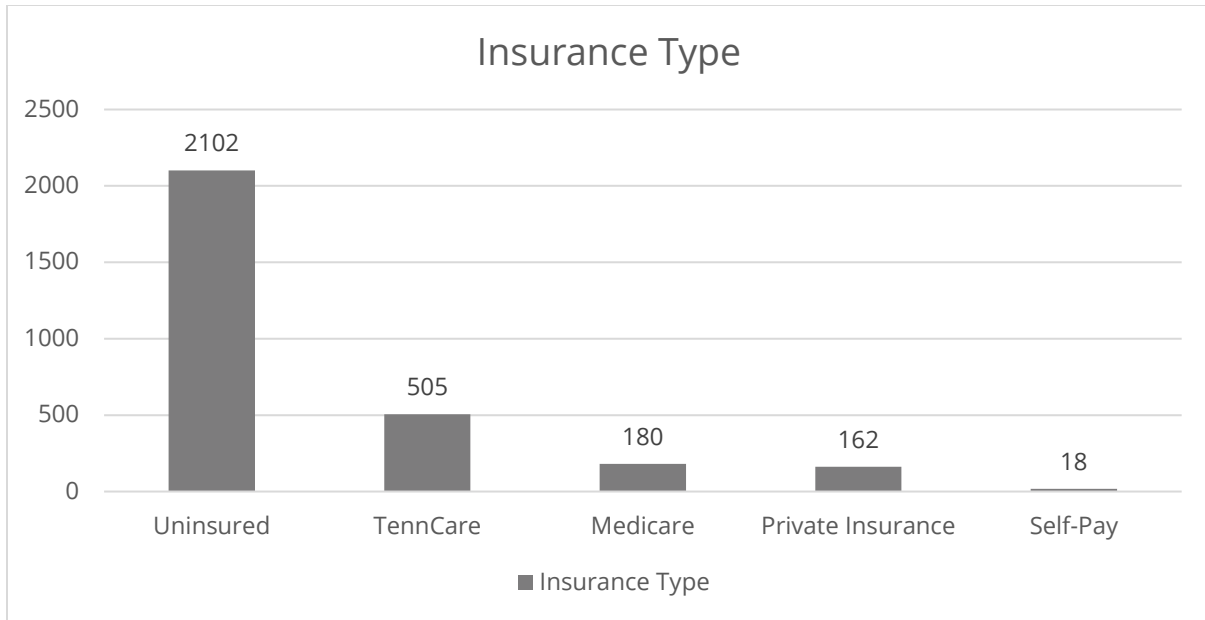
The Navigators will serve any person who is seen at the hospitals if they were admitted due to an overdose, are currently experiencing active withdrawal, or have been identified as having a substance use disorder. In FY22 we will start capturing how many individuals are being seen due to an overdose, active withdrawal, or having a substance use disorder. The type of insurance a person has helps the Navigators find treatment options best suited for the individual. Figure 3 shows that most of the individuals served are those who are uninsured or covered by TennCare.

*88% of the individuals served by the Navigators were uninsured or noted having TennCare.*

### **Hospital Testimonial**

*A social worker at St. Francis Bartlett has shared how much she appreciates the Navigator Program. As she describes it, “it is one of the few programs I have seen that really cares about the patient. When we call a Navigator, at any hour of the day or night, they respond”.*

St. Francis - Bartlett (Memphis, TN)  
Emergency Department Social Worker



**Figure 3.** Patient Insurance Type

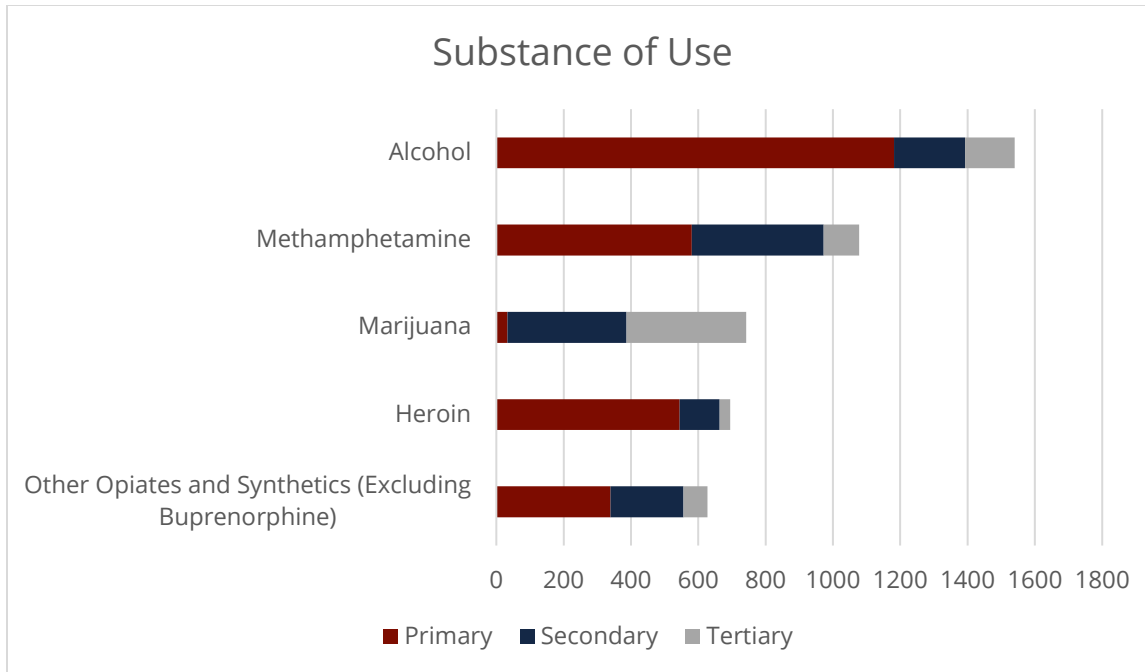
### **Hospital Testimonial**

*The Recovery Navigator Program is such an efficient way for people, who are struggling with addiction, to get the best possible treatment. The Recovery Navigator is always quickly responsive of requests for help for individuals in need. They talk with the people in need of help and make recommendations to them, based on their assessed need. They also listen to the person seeking help and meets them where they are in relation to what they are willing to do to pursue help at that time. I always tell our patients, who are struggling with addiction, that our Recovery Navigator, will “climb mountains and swim the deep sea” to get them what they need. This is not an exaggeration. She always goes “above and beyond”, to get them what they need. It’s obviously not just a job, but a mission and a passion to help others who are struggling with addiction. I am thankful to her, every time, for the tireless time, and energy she puts in to helping others.*

Elaine Peters-Gannon, LCSW  
 Erlanger Health System (Chattanooga, TN)  
 Emergency Department Social Worker

### **Top Substance of Use**

Primary, secondary, and tertiary substance of choice is documented for every individual served. This helps the Navigator identify the most appropriate treatment type. Figure 4 shows the top 5 overall substance choice for the individuals served through the navigator program in FY21.



**Figure 4.** Top Substance of Use

These substances of use are consistent with what was seen in FY20. This information coupled with other program data collected by The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services helps identify the areas of need across Tennessee. This data allows TDMHSAS to ensure that the programs being funded by the department are efficient and serving the most vulnerable Tennesseans.

### ***Patient Testimonial***

*"I wish that I knew how to thank all of your staff who were so kind to me and helped me. I feel like a brand-new person and I am going back to work tomorrow. Thank you for getting me help and where I needed to be to continue my life."*

## **Participating Hospitals**

The following 42 hospitals have partnered with the Navigator Program. As always, we are looking for new hospitals to introduce the Navigators too.

- Blount Memorial Hospital
- Sycamore Shoals Hospital
- HCA, TriStar Skyline
- HCA, Southern Hills\*
- HCA, Summit\*
- HCA, TriStar Centennial
- Ascension, St. Thomas Midtown
- Ascension, St. Thomas West
- WTH Dyersburg Hospital
- Milan General Hospital



- Greenville Community Hospital East
- Greenville Community Hospital West
- Morristown/Hamblen County Medical Center
- CHI Memorial
- CHI Memorial – Hixson
- Erlanger Baroness
- Erlanger East
- Erlanger North
- Hancock County hospital
- UT Medical Center
- Jackson-Madison County General Hospital
- Cookeville Regional Medical Center
- Ascension, St. Thomas Rutherford
- HCA, Stonecrest\*
- LeConte Medical Center
- Methodist North
- Methodist South
- Methodist University
- Regional One
- St. Francis
- Holston Valley Medical Center
- Indian Path Medical Center
- Bristol Regional Medical Center
- Sumner Regional Medical Center
- Tristar Hendersonville\*
- Unicoi County Memorial Hospital
- Creekside Behavioral Health
- Franklin Woods Community Hospital
- Johnson City Medical Center
- Woodridge Psychiatric Hospital
- WTH Volunteer Hospital

*\*Hospitals onboarded this fiscal year.*

### ***Hospital Testimonial***

*“Our recovery navigator has been a gamechanger for our ability to connect substance use disorder patients to treatment and has transformed the way we discharge these patients from the emergency department. She works very hard to ensure that each patients’ needs are met-not just treatment, but also necessary wrap-around services. Additionally, she works closely with medical and community stakeholders to continually improve patient care and provides education for our physicians, staff, and residents. Our recovery navigator is an irreplaceable, life-giving bridge for individuals struggling with a substance use disorder.”*

Erlanger Health System (Chattanooga, TN)  
 Rebecca Martin, MD, PhD, Clinical Faculty,  
 University of Tennessee Health and Science  
 Center

## **Tennessee Recovery Navigator Expansion Pilot Update**

In December of 2019, TDMHSAS partnered with the Tennessee Department of Health on a pilot that will expand the scope of the Navigator program. Through a grant TDH received from the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) we were able to implement a pilot that would expand the scope of the Navigator program, in a specified location. The expanded scope includes implementing Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) in the emergency department. The pilot was initially for three years but has received an extension through August 2023.

Rutherford County was the selected location for this pilot project due to experiencing the 4<sup>th</sup> highest rate of nonfatal overdoses in Tennessee as reported in 2017. St. Thomas Rutherford was chosen as the pilot site due to an already established TRN Program Memorandum of Understanding with Buffalo Valley and TDMHSAS.

### ***Goals of the Pilot and Updates:***

To design a more comprehensive overdose and opioid withdrawal protocol with the hospital and emergency department administrations. The partnership has explored the implementation of targeted and universal screening, initiation of Medication Assisted Treatment for eligible patients, access to Naloxone, and facilitated referrals and peer recovery services from the Recovery Navigators.

Universal screening is an area that is currently being worked on with the pilot hospital. The focus for this goal is continuing education on how to screen patients who may have a substance use disorder.

Initiation of Medication Assisted Treatment for eligible patients has seen a steady increase of interest and dispensing since the start of the program. We have had three (3) additional physicians register for the DEA X-Waiver. There have been **53** individuals who have been dispensed Buprenorphine in the emergency department setting.

There is a lot of research being conducted to find creative funding sources to purchase life-saving naloxone. Partnerships have been created with key stakeholders, such as TennCare to ensure there is a collaborative approach to providing Naloxone at the point of care.

At the beginning of the pilot the Navigators were only seeing around 2-4 referrals every two months. Since the implementation of the Navigators being physically in the hospital 20 hours per Navigator, weekly we have seen an increase of referrals. We are now receiving around 50 referrals every two months. The in-person interaction has helped build trust among the emergency department staff and improved visibility of the unique strengths peer support brings to patient care.

As the project continues to move forward, there is an increase in interest and buy-in from the emergency department. This work could not be done without our partners at the Tennessee Department of Health and the staff at Ascension, St. Thomas Rutherford.

### ***Final Thoughts***

The Tennessee Recovery Navigator program has shown resilience and persistence while navigating a world-wide pandemic. Due to the pandemic, hospitals limited non-personnel visitors into emergency departments forcing the Navigators to shift the way they responded to patients. Through their resiliency, the Navigators and the treatment providers that employ them leveraged deep connections with the hospitals, made prior to the pandemic, and found ways to connect with patients via telephone and telehealth. As we start to move toward the time after the pandemic, the Navigators are making their way back to in-person connections based on the individual hospital policies and local impact of COVID-19 numbers. The trust the Navigators can build with the individuals they see provides a new opportunity for that individual to find their road to recovery. Despite the odds, we were still able to serve more individuals this fiscal year and still find placements for treatment. This is a testament of dedication that each provider across Tennessee has.

We are always looking for ways to expand the program and expand our reach to different hospitals throughout Tennessee.

If you would like to learn more about the Navigator program, please visit [www.tn.gov/recovery Navigators](http://www.tn.gov/recovery Navigators). If you have any further questions or if you would like your hospital to start participating in the Navigator program, please reach out to Jessica Ivey at [Jessica.Ivey@tn.gov](mailto:Jessica.Ivey@tn.gov).