

## Meeting Summary for 10-15-24

**\*\*\*Please contact me if you would like any of the flyers or slide decks referenced in this meeting summary. Please direct inquiries to: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov**

Good afternoon,

Thank you to everyone for attending today's meeting and/or providing information beforehand. We would not be able to accomplish what we do without you!

A special thank you to our featured presenters, **Lorraine Rohde-Swope Health Services, Mary Williams-Family Conservancy Center, and Jennifer Sanchez-Every**. Our focus this month was on preparing children and adults for the upcoming holidays so that all have the best possible time and create wonderful memories. As you all know, financial difficulties, health struggles, and more can make this anything but the most wonderful time of the year for many of the people we serve. I am so thankful for our presenters today and for all of you doing what you do without fail to help members of our community.

The group acknowledged the devastation being experienced by people in Florida and other states because of the hurricanes and related tornadoes. We further acknowledge that many of you have loved ones, friends, and colleagues that have been in the paths of these storms. Our thoughts are with you and those impacted by the storms as well as first responders. I previously sent out a list of resources for people impacted by the storms and this included information for people with access and functional needs. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need that list again or if we may do anything to support you.

The link (recording) to today's meeting will be posted to our website ([www.jacksoncountysoc.com](http://www.jacksoncountysoc.com)) sometime tomorrow afternoon and in the meantime, here is a summary of today's meeting:

**1. Lorraine Rohde, School-Based Behavioral Health Liaison, Adult Specialist with Swope Health Services**

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**Email: [LRohde@swopehealth.org](mailto:LRohde@swopehealth.org)**

**Website: <https://swopehealth.org/behavioral-health/>**

- **Lorraine's slide deck will be sent under separate cover once available!**
- **Lorraine spoke about the challenges adults face during the winter and holiday months and how these challenges can be exacerbated by seasonal stress. This level of stress is then often passed down to the children who experience an increase in behavioral outbursts.**
- **Discussed was SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder (what it is, how to recognize it, etc.).**
- **Several related statistics were presented regarding SAD and some of those were:**
  - **4 out of 5 people with SAD are women**

- The main age of onset is between 20 and 30 but symptoms can appear earlier and later.
- Symptoms of SAD were reviewed such as (but not be limited to): overeating, daytime fatigue, hypersomnia, emotional/physical/cognitive symptoms.
- How to distinguish between SAD and Depression were reviewed.
- Risk factors for SAD were discussed in the context of identifying who may be more susceptible so that early intervention can be put into place. Geographic location as a risk factor was one such factor that many were not completely aware of.
- Treatment options such as light boxes were discussed as well as other evidence-based practices.
- Suggestions for coping strategies were provided.
- It is important to remember that December is Seasonal Depression Awareness month and it is more than the “winter blues.”
- Planning ahead ideas were listed and discussed to reduce difficulties for adults around the holidays.
- Some critical references were provided for further information and included some great fact sheets from NAMI (these are in the slide deck that will be sent out).
- Briefly reviewed 988 being not just for suicide prevention but any time you are struggling.
- Prioritizing demands (how to) and the importance of deciding what really needs to be done now were discussed.
- Talked about the pressure to have the “picture perfect” holiday and how this puts unnecessary stress on all.
- Highlighted the importance of sharing resources to reduce stress.
- Please feel free to reach out to Lorraine with any questions or needs about the topic discussed in the meeting!

2. **Mary Williams, Early Care and Education Program Manager with the Family Conservancy Center**

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**Website: <https://thefamilyconservancy.org/>**

- **Mary’s slide deck will be provided once available!**
- **Mary discussed minimizing holiday stress for all children but especially neurodivergent children who are at more risk for experiencing behavioral issues for a multitude of reasons such as sensory issues and schedule changes (to name just a few).**
- **Re-iterated how adult stress impacts children.**
- **Information was given about how to reduce our stress so that we do not inadvertently pass it on to any child.**
- **Techniques for preventing sensory overload at and away from home were reviewed.**

- We discussed calendars and schedules. Two things specifically looked at were “social stories” and “visual calendars” and how these can help to prepare kids for changes and celebrations. Highlighted the importance of personalizing them with pictures of the child and things familiar.
- Sensory seeking activities to help kids regulate themselves were reviewed in detail.
- The holidays can be more enjoyable for all when we allow time for transitions, prepare to meet the needs of children, use a lot of patience and focus on however connection looks like for each family.
- Having realistic expectations is key as is having a “Plan B” in case something happens.
- Include kids in on the planning and decorating empowers them and gives them a sense of control.
- Favorite comfort items are important and should not be overlooked.
- Having a way for children to communicate that something is uncomfortable is critical!
- Excellent child-related resources were provided to the group and is the last slide in the deck that will be sent.

### 3. Jennifer Sanchez, Connect Specialist with Evergy

Email: [jennifer.sanchez@evergy.com](mailto:jennifer.sanchez@evergy.com)

Website: <https://www.evergy.com/>

- Jennifer provided some critical content on available programs to ensure that people stay connected especially over the upcoming cold winter months. Many of these programs were not known about and are very much needed by our consumers!
- Financial Help from the Evergy website was discussed and can be found at: <https://www.evergy.com/manage-account/billing-link/financial-help> or <https://www.evergy.com/manage-account/billing-link/financial-help> (Kansas City Metro area). You can select a location to find out what specific forms of assistance are available for the person you are trying to assist.
- Some of the programs discussed were the Critical Medical Needs Program, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Economic Relief Pilot Program (can provide a credit each month of \$65 for a year), and Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Evergy is available in-person at any time to help consumers face to face better understand what help is available and what the requirements are.
- Information about the Medical Customer Program, Adjustable Due Date, and the Special Friend programs were all discussed and more can be found at: <https://www.evergy.com/manage-account/billing-link/financial-help>.
- Discussed was the issue that some may be having problems with connecting new service when it is discovered that they have an old bill in their name that they were not aware had not been taken out of service. Related issues to this were also reviewed and Evergy may be able to assist. Please reach out for more information!

- **If you are disabled you can apply for LIHEAP now.**
- **Under some circumstances, Evergy can push out a bill for a month and say for example make it so the entire thing is due the following month.**
- **The winter season and Cold-Weather Plans begin on November 1<sup>st</sup>.**
- **There is a new Critical Needs program. Please reach out for more information!**
- **Discussed was the fact that people with special medical needs and who are on one of the medical needs programs through Evergy have a different number they call to report outages so that they can be prioritized.**
- **Weatherization help may be available to those who qualify at:**  
<https://www.evergy.com/ways-to-save/programs-link/income-qualified-support/income-eligible-weatherization>
- **Customers can call and request a one time medical arrangement. This will stop disconnects for 30 days. No proof is needed and all you need to say is it is for “medical reasons.”**
- **This can all be very confusing for consumers especially those who may have special challenges or unique circumstances. Jennifer is available to assist in whatever way possible so please do not hesitate to reach out (please see her contact information above)!**

#### 4. Updates from others

- Kyle Matchell (MARC) shared information about an upcoming cybersecurity training. This is in reference to “Protecting School Systems: Understanding Cybersecurity Threats to K-12.” This will be on October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 11 a.m. More specifically:
  - Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Region 7 is pleased to invite you to an upcoming webinar, titled **Protecting School Systems: Understanding Cybersecurity Threats to K-12**, in collaboration with CISA’s School Safety Task Force. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 11 AM CT. This session is invaluable for anyone connected to K-12 education, whether you work in the field or have children or grandchildren in school. Be sure to register using the link below!

**Webinar Registration:** [Protecting School Systems: Understanding Cybersecurity Threats to K-12 Tickets, Wed, Oct 23, 2024 at 12:00 PM | Eventbrite](#) – **11am CT**

#### **Diana Mendoza-Cauley**

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Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency – [Region 7 | CISA](#)  
[diana.mendozacauley@cisa.dhs.gov](mailto:diana.mendozacauley@cisa.dhs.gov) | **NEW NUMBER** 816-863-9048  
Connect with us at [CISA](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#)

- Carol Ayres gave an important reminder that not all children and adults like the hustle and such of the holiday season. It is OK to say no to some events and just focus on what you are interested in! Be good to yourself!

- Dorian Sugar shared that there is a transportation summit at Centerview in Raymore on October 29<sup>th</sup> from 10-2. There is no charge and lunch is included. For more information and a ticket, please go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cass-county-transportation-summit-tickets-995500989257>. **Thank you to Dorian and others who attended from Cass County! They are seeking to have their own SOC and want to use us as a template. As I told her, YOU ALL are the reason this group is what it is and it would not be that without each and everyone of you!**
- Byra Nicodemus-Norman shared after the meeting, a flyer (please see attached) regarding a public survey for Hazard Mitigation Planning.

5. Additional Holiday Resources (Please also check the Ray Way Resource Directory posted on our website. This is updated weekly and has a holiday assistance category that is added to as information becomes available):

The better the parents, caretakers, anyone interacting with children are, the better they will do! In the interim, here are some resources to support parents as we draw closer to the holiday season:

- <https://www.peacefulparenthappykids.com/read/holiday-family-peaceful/>
- <https://www.pbs.org/parents/holidays>
- <https://www.caltrin.org/blog-holiday-overwhelm/>

Here are some additional resources that you may want to consider in your work with children:

- <https://theotbutterfly.com/holidays-with-a-neurodivergent-child/sws-podcast/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/retrain-your-brain/202312/managing-holiday-expectations-for-neurodivergent-kids>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jenniferpalumbo/2022/12/22/navigating-the-holidays-as-the-parent-of-a-neurodivergent-child/>
- <https://neurodivergentinsights.com/blog/neurodivergent-holiday-reflections>
- <https://www.understood.org/>
- <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/places-to-go/helping-children-and-parents-enjoy-the-holidays/>
- <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/supporting-children-and-teens-during-this-holiday-season>

Resources pertaining to safety and larger gatherings, safe cooking tips to prevent illness, etc.:

- <https://www.charlieshouse.org/>;  
[https://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/halloween\\_safety\\_tips.pdf](https://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/halloween_safety_tips.pdf);  
<https://www.nfpa.org/videos/christmas-tree-fire-turns-devastating-and-deadly-within-seconds>
- <https://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/food-safety-tips-holidays>

- <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/food-safety-by-events-and-seasons>
- <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/home-fire-safety/winter-holidays>
- <https://safety-solved.com/2020/11/choking-hazards-and-the-holidays-learn-how-to-keep-family-and-guests-safe/>

#### 6. My Updates:

- Our holiday assistance program: Please reach out ASAP so we are better able to serve those in need who may fall through the cracks otherwise. We are able to adopt individuals and families but they must be referred to by someone working with the family who will vouch for the need and the fact that other avenues were first pursued. Our goal is that NO ONE be left out of the holiday season no matter what holiday they celebrate. Everyone matters!
- Cash distribution to say thank you to all of the members: Last year we had \$1000 that was distributed to charities of YOUR choosing as a way to say thank you for making this group the wonderful group that it is and to further recognize causes that are important to our members. This year, we have doubled that and will distribute \$2000 to charities of our member's choosing. More information will be coming out about this but it essentially will operate like it did last year, you tell me where to send a donation, I make the donation, and send you the receipt to show that it was indeed made. In the end of the year summary, I will include a list of every place that received a donation and the amounts. This is done in an effort to be transparent.
- Health fair via Cancel Cancer initiative (last week in April 2025): Through our Cancel Cancer initiative, we are sponsoring a health fair to address the top cancers found amongst our communities. Early detection screenings will be available as will related resources. More to come!
- Update on FEMA Region 7 part 2 training (spring of 2025): This continues to be planned with FEMA Region 7 and is scheduled for late Spring 2025. It was stressed that you DO NOT have needed to have attended the first in this series which was in May of this year. It is free, will include lunch, and is open to anyone interested in ensuring the safety of children in disasters and emergencies. This will take a deeper dive into emergency operations plans and if you do not have one, helping you to have one. Even if you have one, this workshop will give you much food for thought as we have some amazing panelists and experts planned as a part of this day long workshop. It is designed to be user-friendly. When ticketing becomes available, I will send out more information. Again, it is FREE!

Our next meeting is on November 19<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. on Webex. I cannot thank each of you enough for the work that you do and for what you bring to this group. Never worry about having to miss a meeting, leave early, come late, etc. We value whatever time that you can devote to this and that includes sending me information after and in between meetings. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we may ever do anything to assist YOU!

Have a great week and I will get the slide decks from the presentations sent out this evening!

Jennifer

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