



NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office

Lee Harris, Mayor

Vasco A. Smith, Jr., Administration Building
11th Floor, 160 North Main, Memphis, Tennessee 38103

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2022

Frankie Dakin
Shelby County Government
Press Secretary
Office: 901.222.2057
Mobile: 901.496.0131

SHELBY COUNTY MAYOR LEE HARRIS AND SHERIFF FLOYD BONNER BRING LEADERS TOGETHER FOR A ROUNDTABLE ON MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SHELBY COUNTY

In recognition of Mental Health Month, Shelby County leaders will gather to provide a community update on mental health supports, programs, and reforms recently championed by Shelby County Government.

- WHAT:** Shelby County Government Mental Health Month Roundtable Discussion
- WHEN:** 11:15 a.m.-12 p.m., **TOMORROW**, Wednesday, May 11, 2022
- WHERE:** Vasco A. Smith, Jr. Administration Building Fifth-Floor Conference Room, 160 North Main Street, Memphis, TN, 38103

Shelby County, TN – Tomorrow, Wednesday, May 11, Mayor Lee Harris and Sheriff Floyd Bonner will convene leaders in mental health from across Shelby County to raise awareness about mental health supports available in our community and programs led by Shelby County Government. Roundtable participants will include Mental Health Court Judge Gerald Skahan, Shelby County Fire Chief Alvin Benson, Alliance Healthcare Services CEO Laurie Powell, Memphis Crisis Center Executive Director Mike LaBonte, and Serenity Recovery Centers Executive Director Paula Hopper. We will also have remarks from nationally renowned mental health crisis intervention expert, Major Sam Cochran of the Shelby County Sheriff's Office.



About half of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their lives, according to Mental Health America. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic only increased the prevalence of serious mental health disorders. According to research from the Kaiser Family Foundation, during the pandemic about 4 in 10 adults reported symptoms of serious anxiety or depressive disorder, up considerably from about 1 in 10 adults from the previous year.

Mayor Harris' office has championed a slate of mental health reforms to respond to the need for additional mental health supports. The slate has included direct transport by first responders to mental health care, certified training of dispatchers who handle mental health, behavioral emergency, and suicide calls, and a doubling of the capacity of Shelby County's Mental Health Court.

Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris: "We face so many challenges today, and the truth is most of us will experience a mental health crisis at some point in our lives. Mental Health Month is a great time for us to convene and raise awareness about services available to our community and the importance of mental healthcare. Over the last few years, Shelby County Government has increased our focus on mental health and grown partnerships to increase mental health supports. We do not intend to let up."

Laurie Powell, CEO Alliance Healthcare Services: "Mental Health Awareness month is a time to reflect on reducing stigma around the need for behavioral health services and to increase access for everyone who needs help. Alliance is committed to providing these critical services and working with Shelby County Government to address the growing need for them."

Recently, Mayor Harris joined Shelby County Sheriff Floyd Bonner to announce an effort to embed trained mental health professionals with first responders. The program builds on the Shelby County Sheriff's successful Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and will be funded for at least three years using federal dollars.

Shelby County Sheriff Floyd Bonner: "I'm pleased to join Mayor Harris for this important Mental Health Month roundtable discussion. Recently, we announced a new Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) collaboration between the SCSO, Shelby County Division of Community Services, and Alliance Healthcare Services. I'm also grateful that for the Shelby County Board of Commissioners for supporting this endeavor. The CIT mission supports our community -- our citizens -- who often live, struggle, and cope with mental illness, substance abuse, or intellectual developmental disabilities. This improvement will provide a community services co-response model and deliver an improved level of service to vulnerable residents by having mental health



professionals those in need before a crisis call occurs, as well as having them available on a crisis scene to assist law enforcement.”

(End of Release)