



# 2024 Annual Report

October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024



# Letter From Executive Director

The past year has been one of significant change and growth for Metro Drug Coalition (MDC). Our most notable transition occurred when Karen Pershing, after 14 years of dedicated leadership, decided to step down as Executive Director. I am deeply honored and grateful to have been selected by Karen and the Board of Directors to step into this role. I am fortunate to have a very supportive board of directors, an experienced and talented team, and many gracious and helpful community partners supporting me and teaching me as I grow into this role.

MDC has experienced many positive developments this year, particularly in securing funding to expand our programs and staffing. We've grown our youth prevention programming and our recovery support services, including the work we do at The Gateway Recovery Community Center, which recently celebrated its second anniversary. Over the past two years, we've provided more than 80,000 services at The Gateway, which is a testament to the impact we're making.

Since its founding in 1986, MDC has remained steadfast in our commitment to assessing and addressing the evolving needs of the community. Today, we continue to bring together diverse stakeholders to tackle the root causes of substance misuse. Through collaborative partnerships and maximizing available resources, we strive to make a greater impact. MDC has become a model for cross-sector collaboration, positioning us as Knoxville's premier partner for all types of substance use initiatives. Whether through professional education, primary prevention, harm reduction, or recovery support, we work alongside our community partners to address some of the most pressing issues in our community.

We know that mental health and substance misuse are closely linked, often sharing overlapping risk factors. That's why we continue to incorporate mental health first aid and suicide prevention trainings into our work, empowering community members to identify early signs of mental health struggles and intervene before substance misuse becomes a coping mechanism. MDC also recognizes the critical gaps in services for those with substance use disorders, particularly during the first two years of recovery which is typically among the most challenging. By supporting individuals and families through this crucial period at The Gateway, we help them develop the tools they need to thrive, which in turn reduces the demand for drugs and creates a healthier, safer community.

Substance misuse prevention is always at the heart of what we do, and we believe it must start early. This year, we expanded our prevention programming to reach children as young as 10 years old, ensuring that they receive age-appropriate messaging about the dangers of substances. We also know that childhood trauma plays a major role in the development of both substance use and mental health disorders. In response, we've launched an educational program for pediatric and obstetrical healthcare providers, equipping them with the tools to discuss adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and build resilience in children and families. We understand that preventing substance misuse is a community effort, and parents play a critical role in this process.

At MDC, we believe that substance use disorders are preventable, and that with collective effort, recovery is not only possible - it's the most likely outcome. With your continued support, we will keep building a healthier, more vibrant community by reducing the negative impacts of substance misuse.

Yours in Recovery,



Webster Bailey  
*Executive Director*



# MDC Board of Directors

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Board President:** Barbara Shipley

**Board Vice President:** Elizabeth Sherrod

**Board Treasurer:** Dan Sherrod

**Immediate Past President:** Maha Krishnamurthy

**At-Large:** Randy Nichols

**At-Large:** General Charme Allen

**At-Large:** Samuel French

**At-Large:** Jim LaPinska

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Chief Paul Noel

Kevin Parton

Superintendent John Rysewyk

Seema Singh

Elizabeth Sherrod

April Snell

Sheriff Tom Spangler

Charles Swanson

Janet Testerman

Zach Wishart

# Meet Our Team



**Ashlee Crouse**  
*Faith-Based Community  
Coordinator, East Region*



**Melissa Cunningham**  
*Intake Coordinator*



**Courtney Fuson**  
*Director of Communications  
& Strategy*



**Miria Galyon**  
*Executive Assistant  
& Strategy*



**Denver Johnson**  
*Recovery Coach*



**Jennifer Knisley**  
*Regional Lifeline Director*



**Bethany Lemons**  
*Prevention Coordinator*



**Karen Pershing**  
*Interim Director of Primary  
Prevention Services*



**Tony Pierce**  
*Director of Finance*



**Jermarcus Ricks**  
*Youth Initiatives Coordinator*



**Jill Silvey**  
*Prevention Coordinator*



**Jessica Stanley**  
*Regional Overdose  
Prevention Specialist*



**Brandon Styles**  
*Regional Overdose  
Prevention Specialist*



**Maria Valerio**  
*Youth Initiatives Coordinator*



**Katina Woods**  
*Recovery Coach*



**Anne Young**  
*Director of Recovery Support  
Services*

# Our Reach



## Social Media

4,803  LIKES  **17.1% INCREASE**  
from FY 2023

1,108  FOLLOWERS  **3.2% INCREASE**  
from FY 2023

1,240  FOLLOWERS  **18% INCREASE**  
from FY 2023

705  FOLLOWERS  **55% INCREASE**  
from FY 2023

## Earned Media



**118**

Earned Media  
Stories  
in FY 2024

*Earned media (or free media) refers to publicity gained through promotional efforts other than paid media advertising.*

## Newsletter



**4,547**

Newsletter  
Subscribers  
in FY 2024

# Meeting the needs of our community

**Metro Drug Coalition (MDC)** is a nonprofit organization striving to create a healthy and safe community, free of substance misuse. We have served the Knoxville community for over 38 years. Our goal is to increase access to evidence-based prevention education, harm reduction programs and recovery support services for anyone desiring to maintain or seek a life free from substance misuse. Through community collaborative efforts, we can all strengthen families and prevent future generations from the devastating consequences of addiction.

## AREAS OF FOCUS



**Primary Prevention**

**Harm Reduction**

**Recovery Support**

# Youth Engagement

**3,255**  
**YOUTH SERVED**

*18 years & under*



## Youth Programming

### My Drug-Free Life

An interactive presentation that discusses the most commonly used substances & why substance misuse occurs.

**1,104**

Youth completed My Drug-Free Life

#### Partner Organizations

- Knox County Schools

### Positive Action

Targeting youth who are indicated to be at greater risk of substance misuse, this curriculum teaches positive coping skills.

**48**

Youth completed Positive Action

#### Partner Organizations

- YWCA
- Wesley House
- Fountain City UMC

### Catch My Breath

A program designed to teach students about the dangers of e-cigarettes/vapes, how to recognize & combat marketing schemes, and peer pressure.

**17**

Youth completed Catch My Breath

#### Partner Organizations

- Knox County Juvenile Court
- Knox County Schools

### Generation Rx

Generation Rx teaches students the importance of medication safety. This program is available beginning in elementary school.

**462**

Youth completed Generation Rx

#### Partner Organizations

- SHADES of Development
- Pond Gap Elementary
- Christenberry Elementary
- Wallace Church of Knox
- Shora Foundation



# Youth Engagement

Ages 18-24



2,440

**COLLEGE STUDENTS  
EDUCATED**

## CAMPUS INITIATIVES

- Medication Safety Pop-Ups
- Campus Tabling Events
  - Play It Safe Picnic
  - Vaping Take Back & Education
  - Suicide Prevention & Awareness
- Presentations
  - UTK Health & Safety Summit
  - QPR
  - Anti-Hazing Bystander Intervention
  - Substance Misuse Prevention
  - Strengthening Mental Health
  - Suicide & Substance Misuse
  - Stimulant Misuse



260

**WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT/NON-  
COLLEGIATE YOUTH  
EDUCATED**

## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- KnoxWorx
- GoPlaces Career Readiness Program
- KCDC's Career Readiness Program
- Young Professionals of Knoxville
- SEED's Career Readiness Program
- Bryant's Bridge



586

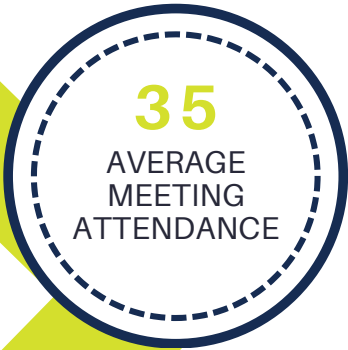
**VOLUNTEER HOURS COLLEGE  
STUDENTS COMPLETED WITH MDC**

Primary Prevention



# Community Coalition

The purpose of the Drug-Free Community Coalition is to engage every sector of the community in Metro Drug Coalition's efforts to reduce the misuse of substances. The coalition has continued to focus on a number of projects to educate, raise awareness and target young people, specifically, for positive alternatives to alcohol and substance misuse.



## Preventing Underage Drinking

### Reducing Social Access

**4**  
CAMPAIGNS

**1,587,023**  
IMPRESSIONS

**CAMPAIGNS**

- Social Media**
  - Football
  - Prom
  - Graduation
- DMV**
  - Be A Parent, Not A Peer

### Reducing Retail Access

- Compliance Support**
  - Provided resources for retailers who fail compliance checks
  - Recognized retailers who pass on social media

MDC provides all new permit holders with a packet of resources, including an ID coder, ID checking guide, and window clings. Last year, MDC began offering an online ID checking training as well.

**112** RESOURCE PACKETS DISTRIBUTED TO NEW PERMIT HOLDERS

**53** TRAINED IN PREVENTING UNDERAGE SALES



# 1,438

Medication lock boxes distributed



## 6 Medication Collection Events

Medication collection events included two DEA National Take Back days, three Aging Adult Resource Fairs, and the first ever medication collection event on the University of Tennessee campus.



## 1,748.5 Pounds of Medications Collected



## 11 Medication Safety Pop-Ups

Pop-ups focus on educating college students on the importance of medication safety. Pop-ups took place at the University of Tennessee & Pellissippi State.



## New Medication Mail Back Program

This program allows homebound individuals to receive a secure envelope to dispose of unwanted, expired, or unused medications via their mailbox.



## 1 Youth-Driven Medication Safety Campaign

Knox County students created messaging and art design for six medication safety billboards located around Knox County and medication safety tip posters distributed to local pharmacies, doctors offices, and family-serving organizations.

# Mental Health



Metro Drug Coalition recognizes that substance use disorders and mental health disorders are often co-occurring. As a result, primary prevention efforts have expanded to include Mental Health First Aid, Psychological First Aid, and QPR Suicide Prevention training.



## Mental Health First Aid

Adult & youth mental health first aid classes teach the skills to identify, understand, & respond to the signs of mental illness and substance use disorders.



## QPR Suicide Prevention

People trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help.



**250**  
BROCHURES  
DISTRIBUTED

**Born Drug Free Tennessee** is an initiative implemented by the East Tennessee Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Task Force in 2015. Its goal is to connect pregnant women who are struggling with a substance use disorder to an evidence-based treatment provider & prenatal care as early as possible to improve outcomes for both the mother and baby.

**1,363** MEDICAL PROVIDERS  
Trained in SBIRT since 2015



**Metro Drug Coalition** facilitates **SBIRT** (Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment) trainings in Knox County. This training equips providers, nurse practitioners, nurses, residents and office managers to: understand the disease process of addiction, recognize the risk factors and causes of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, understand the process of SBIRT (an evidence-based screening tool) to assess risk for substance misuse in patients, and learn ways to implement and administer brief interventions.

# Healthcare Provider Education

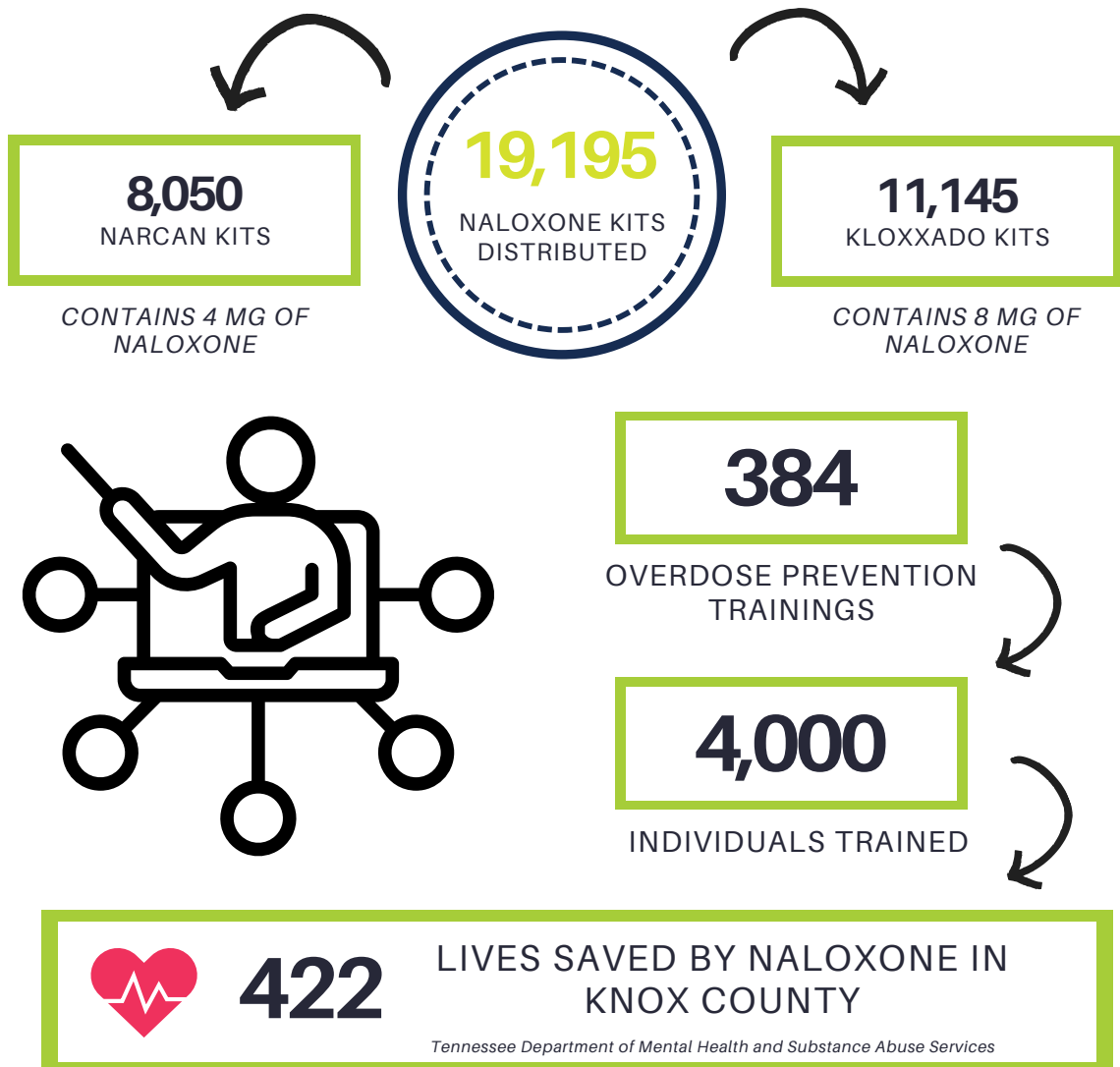


MDC collaborated with Pain Consultants of East TN, Summit Medical, Knoxville Academy of Medicine, Cherokee Health Systems and Cigna to host the Sixth Annual **East Tennessee Opioid Conference**. This conference educated medical providers on different levels of the opioid crisis and what they can do to play a role in finding solutions to this epidemic. **Over 455 individuals** received education at this event, either in-person or virtually, across the state of Tennessee.



## Naloxone Distribution

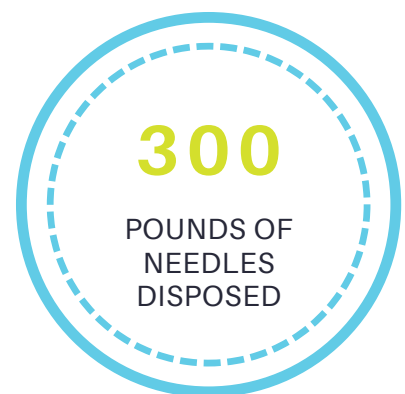
**Regional Overdose Prevention Specialists (ROPS)** are located throughout the state of Tennessee as a point of contact for training and education on opioid overdose and for overdose prevention through the distribution of naloxone.



## Harm Reduction Outreach

MDC's Recovery Support Team has been hard at work with harm reduction outreach in our community. Last year, MDC began distributing fentanyl test strips to help combat the high rate of fentanyl overdose in the community.

This year, an increase in xylazine use resulted in an increase of open wounds, so MDC began assembling and distributing wound care kits. MDC staff members have targeted specific areas in our community to distribute Narcan kits, safely dispose of needles and give other harm reduction items out to those in need.



# Recovery Housing Support Fund

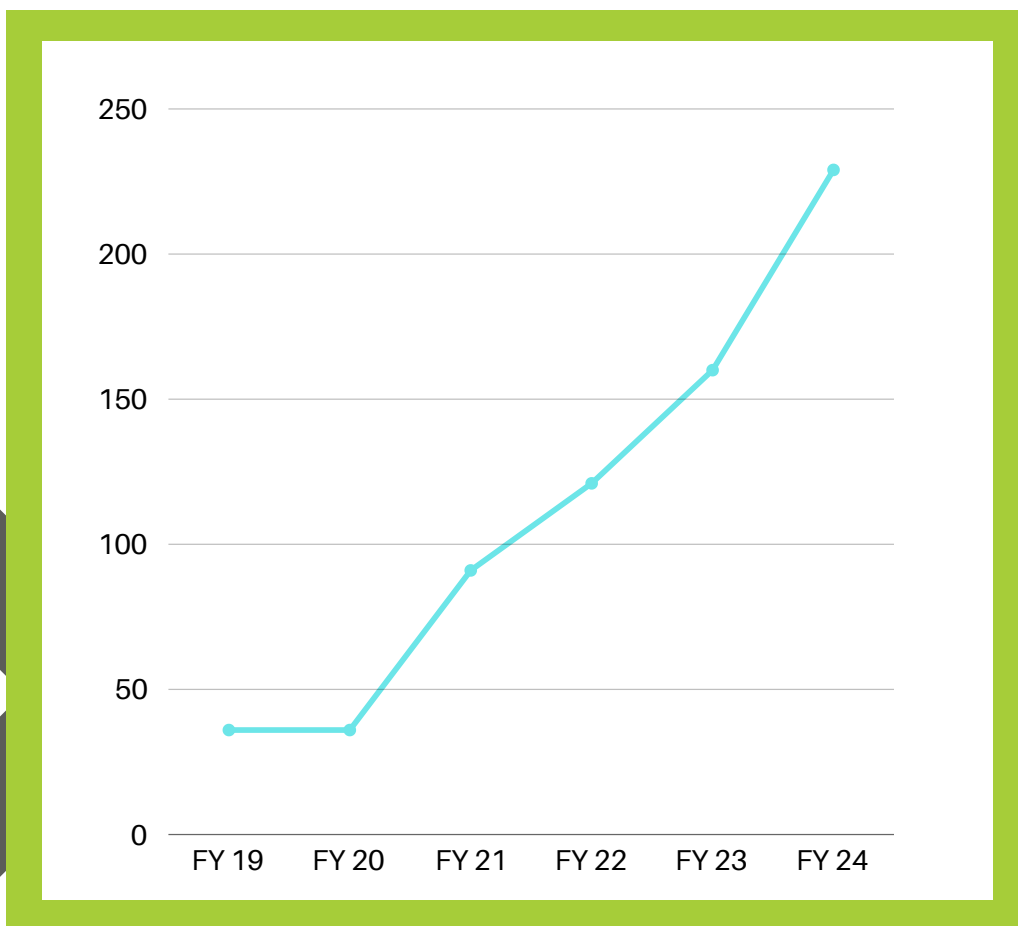


The Recovery Housing Support fund was established in 2018 with funds generated by MDC's second Recovery Resource Fair. The fund has grown exponentially since its humble beginnings. Over the lifetime of the fund, MDC has paid **696 deposits** for individuals to enter sober living who would not have had the resources to go otherwise. MDC has received donations and grant dollars from both individuals, local and state government, as well as funds raised by our organization.



# 229

Individuals received recovery housing scholarships in FY 24.

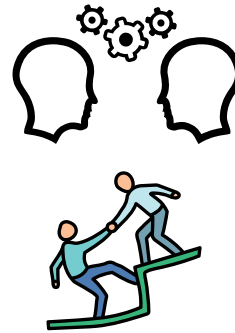


Number of Recovery Housing Scholarships Awarded by Fiscal Year



# Recovery Coaching

**Recovery Coaching** is a form of strength-based, healing centered supports for persons in or seeking recovery from alcohol or other substances. Similar to life and business coaching, Recovery Coaching is a type of partnership where the person in or seeking recovery self-directs their recovery while the coach provides expertise in supporting successful change.



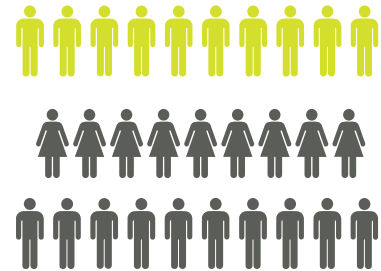
**60** COACHES  
trained in the CCAR  
Recovery Coach Academy in  
FY 24.

**451** INDIVIDUALS  
engaged in recovery  
coaching in FY24.

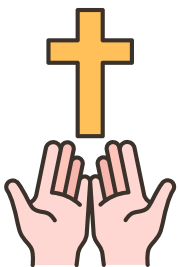
# Treatment Referrals

**520** INDIVIDUALS

Connected to alcohol and  
drug treatment, regionally



# TDMHSAS FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE



Faith Based Coordinator working in conjunction with Metro Drug Coalition to reach the 33 counties in East Tennessee's Grand Division. Efforts include spreading awareness and education in substance misuse and mental health. Promoting community involvement for congregations in facilitating forums to inform on mobilization efforts, stigma reduction and provide referral resources for individuals and families effected by substance misuse and mental health issues. Duties include traveling to congregations in the east region, conducting trainings, community forums and connecting congregations/individuals with the appropriate referral agencies.

**254** PRESENTATIONS  
were given by the Faith-Based Coordinator  
during FY 24.

**28** CONGREGATIONS  
became Certified Recovery  
Congregations during FY 24.





The Gateway Recovery Community Center has truly become a beacon of light for the recovery community in Knoxville. Over the past year, we have solidified our reputation as the principal one-stop resource for recovery, not only locally but also statewide. Our innovative and creative recovery services are being recognized and celebrated, and we are committed to continuing this trajectory of growth and excellence.

This year, The Gateway has made significant strides in providing a safe and supportive environment for individuals seeking recovery from substance misuse. Our center has become a hub where people can learn new skills, experience healing, and find a community that understands and supports their journey. Our innovative services have set us apart. We have introduced various programs that cater to the diverse needs of our community, ensuring that everyone who walks through our doors finds the support they need. These services have been instrumental in helping individuals rebuild their lives and regain their independence.

The recognition we have received from both local and statewide communities is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team. We are proud to be seen as leaders in the field of recovery support, and we will continue to innovate and expand our services to meet the evolving needs of our community.



Anne Young  
*Director of Recovery  
Support Services*

## Goals for the New Year

As we look to the future, we have set ambitious goals to further enhance our services and support:

1. **Establish a Membership Program:** We aim to create a membership program that fosters a sense of ownership and pride among our participants. This program will allow individuals to take an active role in Gateway activities and contribute to the community.
2. **Certified Recovery Community Organization (RCO):** We will explore the process of becoming a Certified Recovery Community Organization through Faces and Voices of Recovery, which will further solidify our standing nationally and enable us to provide even more comprehensive support.
3. **Recovery Support Service Advisory Council:** We plan to re-establish an advisory council consisting of over 50% self-identifying individuals in personal recovery. This council will guide our services and ensure they are aligned with the needs of those we serve.
4. **Education and Professional Growth:** Continuing to foster, educate and grow addiction professionals through evidence-based practices and curriculums is a priority. We will provide ongoing training and development opportunities to ensure our team and members are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills.
5. **Workforce Development and Funding:** We will seek to enhance our workforce development capacity and secure funding to support these initiatives. This will enable us to expand our services and reach more individuals in need.
6. **Coordinated Volunteer Opportunities:** Providing recovery supportive volunteer opportunities to the broader community is essential in decreasing stigma and fostering a supportive environment. We will actively engage volunteers and provide meaningful opportunities for them to contribute.
7. **Engage Champions and Recovery Advocates:** Finding champions and engaging people in providing Gateway programs is crucial. Identifying what services are still needed and finding the right champion to support our mission is ongoing. We will collaborate with individuals and organizations who are advocates for recovery and willing to help provide needed services.

The Gateway Recovery Community Center is on a path of continuous growth and improvement. We are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and innovative environment for all individuals seeking recovery. With the goals we have set for the coming year, we are confident that we will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of those we serve

## TOTAL SERVICES DELIVERED

Opening 9/2022 - 9/30/24



# 80,861

## TOTAL SERVICES DELIVERED

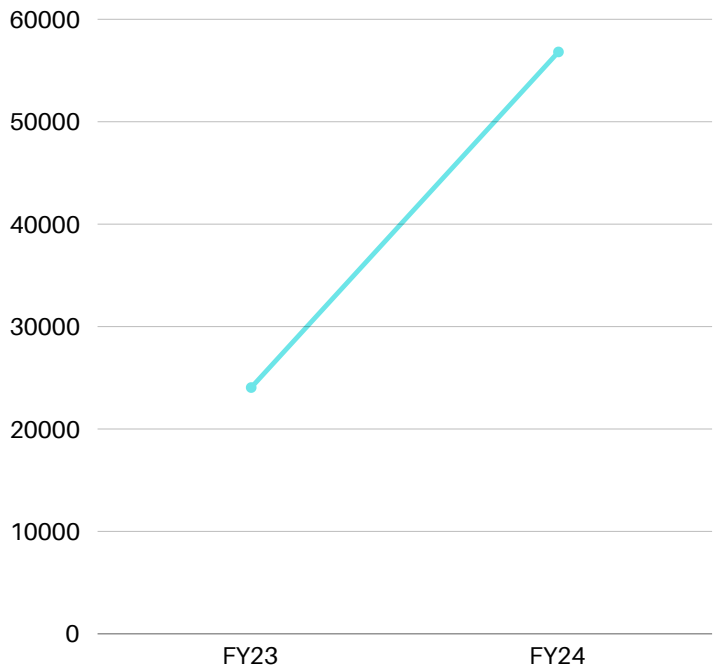
FY 24



# 56,814

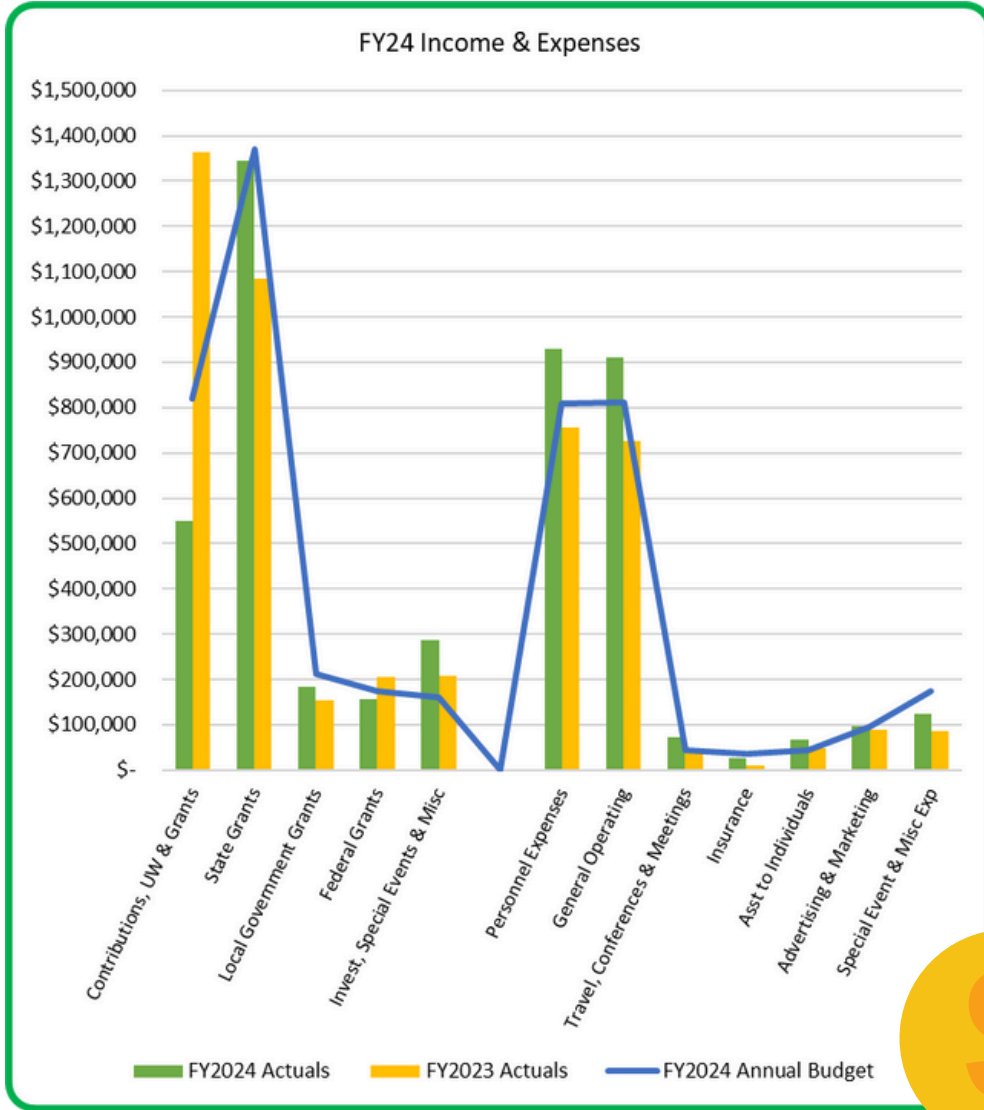


**THE GATEWAY MORE THAN DOUBLED THE NUMBER OF SERVICES PROVIDED FROM FY 23 - FY 24.**



**SERVICES DELIVERED COMPARISON**  
FY 23 vs. FY 24

# Financials

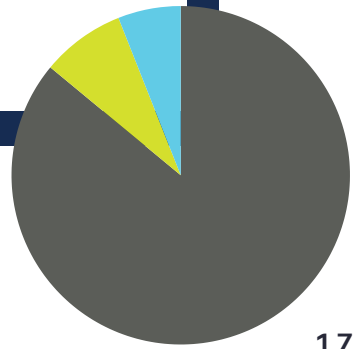


**For every \$1 spent:**

**.86**  
SPENT ON PROGRAMS

**.08**  
SPENT ON ADMINISTRATION

**.06**  
SPENT ON FUNDRAISING



# Donors & Funders

AAA  
Aaron Hatfield  
Adrienne Garcia  
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Candy Vincent  
Caroline Beidler  
Cedar Recovery  
Charles Swanson  
Chelsey Burgess  
Chelsi Moran  
Christine Buzhardt  
Christopher Beets  
Chuck Morris  
Cigna Health and Life  
Insurance Company  
City of Knoxville Grant  
Clear Meadows LLC  
Connie Gardner  
Cornerstone of Recovery  
Courtney Fuson  
Courtney Niemann  
Covenant Health  
Craig Moyer  
Crossroads Treatment Center  
David Gusar  
David Sprouse  
Deborah Smith  
Debra Stone  
Demi Marley Hester  
Denise Benoit  
Donald Lindsey  
Edward Jones  
Eleanor Kassem  
Elisabeth Feggans  
Emily Curran  
Emily Shelton  
Emmalee Cheshire  
Evan Sexton  
Ezra Andres-Tysch  
Faith Promise Church  
First Horizon  
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Foundation  
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Gilead Sciences, Inc  
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Hikma Community Health  
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Janet Harper  
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KAMA Philanthropic Fund  
Kasi Dunn  
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Kathy Schmid  
Keith Bacigalupo  
Keller-Ferguson KFA  
Nonprofit  
Kelley Santella  
Kelly Baker Henderson  
Kelly Moats  
Kevin Chadwick  
Knox County  
Knoxville Chapter  
Association of Certified  
Fraud Examiners  
Knoxville Leadership  
Foundation  
Kristen Sickle  
KUB  
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Linda Conaway  
Lisa Jones  
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Lorraine Burns  
Louis Lara  
Maarja Fox  
Makayla Marlow  
Mallorie Clark  
Morgan Stanley Gift

# Donors & Funders

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Shannen Wilson  
Shannon Dunlap  
Shannon Partin  
Shannon Stooksbury

Shauna West  
Shawn Owens  
shelby grindstaff  
Sherri Parker Lee  
Sierra Shreve  
Spiritual Principles  
St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church  
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Volunteers for Recovery, LLC  
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Webster Bailey  
Will Drury  
WILLIAM Boyd  
Zach Wishart

**Thank you for investing in Metro Drug Coalition. We greatly appreciate your caring and compassionate support. We ensure that every donation goes directly to the service and programs MDC implements in our community.**

# Vision for 2025

MDC will further its mission by fostering deep community collaborations and developing innovative programs in prevention, harm reduction, and recovery support. Together with our partners and neighbors, we aim to strengthen the health and resilience of East Tennessee, building a future where hope and recovery thrive. Below are some of the primary focuses that we will have in 2025.

## **Prevention: Empowering Future Generations**

- **Juvenile Detention Center Collaboration:** We will create impactful programming to support incarcerated youth, providing prevention education and opportunities for personal growth that address substance misuse and underlying trauma.
- **Substance Misuse Education:** MDC will expand its evidence-based education programming in Knox County Schools, ensuring students are equipped to make informed, healthy choices.
- **Youth Advocacy Revitalization:** We will revive the Youth Metro Drug Coalition (YMDC) to elevate youth voices and foster leadership, empowering students to co-create prevention initiatives.
- **Trauma-Informed Care for Obstetricians:** By training regional obstetricians in trauma-informed care, we will help them provide pregnant patients with compassionate, effective care and support to prevent substance misuse and work toward healing their trauma.
- **Youth-Led Campaigns:** Collaborating with students, MDC will develop social media campaigns that resonate with their peers, promoting prevention and wellness.
- **Consistent Messaging in Schools:** Prevention messaging will reach students daily through gymnasium and/or sports field banners, reinforcing positive health behaviors.

## **Harm Reduction: Saving Lives and Strengthening Communities**

- **Support for Overdose Survivors and Responders:** MDC will support first responders and overdose patients through our new Care Coordinator position, offering critical follow-up care and resources.
- **Mission District Medical Outreach:** We will continue to expand this vital program, addressing the healthcare needs of our Mission District neighbors and offering overdose response training to community members.
- **Community-Based Overdose Preparedness:** MDC will continue to foster relationships with residents and organizations, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to save lives.

## **Recovery Support: Building Connection and Sustainability**

- **Advisory Committee for The Gateway:** A newly established Advisory Committee will help guide the development of innovative, community-driven programming for The Gateway Recovery Community Center.
- **Recovery Coalition:** MDC will launch a Recovery Coalition to unite organizations and individuals working toward shared goals, amplifying recovery efforts across the region.
- **Certified Recovery Community Organization:** By working toward RCO certification, MDC will cement its role as a leader in recovery support and advocacy.
- **Expanding Education:** We will offer robust training opportunities for professionals in addiction treatment and recovery housing, enhancing their ability to serve effectively.
- **Membership Model for The Gateway:** Implementing a membership-based model will empower participants to take an active role in maintaining and shaping The Gateway's culture, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability.

## **Collaboration: Together We Achieve More**

MDC will continue to prioritize partnerships with aligned organizations as we work toward expanding our reach in all areas of our work. Each time we join together with other organizations, we amplify our impact in prevention, harm reduction, and recovery, creating a healthier community for all.

## **2025: A Year of Growth, Connection, and Hope**

With a steadfast commitment to our mission, MDC will continue to innovate, collaborate, and advocate. By empowering youth, supporting recovery, and saving lives through harm reduction, MDC will lead the way toward a brighter, healthier future.