

PARTNERS

BlueCare Tennessee Managed Long-Term Services and Supports Program

News and tips to support MLTSS partners and enhanced care for our members

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Quality Corner: Preventing Unplanned Hospital Stays
- Recent Claims Issues for w90 Diagnosis Code Claims
- Referral Process and Member Expansion Changes
- Unlock Growth Opportunities with BlueCare Tennessee's Exclusive LTSS Training Series
- Employment and Community First CHOICES Group 7 and 8 Program Improvements
- Reportable Event Reminders
- Reportable Events and Interventions
- Mapping the Success of Direct Support Professionals with Career Pathways
- Workforce Development Office Hours Update
- Challenges in Employing Direct Support Professionals in Greater Memphis
- Committed to Service
- How Are We Doing?



Quality Corner: Preventing Unplanned Hospital Stays

Thirty million people in the United States over the age of 18 have had a hospital stay, according to the American Hospital Association.

Here are a few statistics on unplanned hospitalizations:

- Adults in Tennessee had about 801,000 hospital discharges.
 - According to the 2024 America's Health Rankings for Tennessee, for every 100,000 hospital discharges of people age 19 and older, around 2,760 were preventable. That's just over 22,000 preventable hospital stays.
- Adults age 65 and older have 12 times more preventable hospital stays.
- Women have a higher rate of unplanned hospitalizations than men.
- Preventable hospitalizations for women were commonly the result of acute conditions, while men experienced more chronic conditions.
- Adults from lower income communities had a higher rate of unplanned hospital stays.



There are resources available for our members that could help keep them out of the hospital, such as:

- Keeping scheduled medical appointments. Talk with the people you support about symptoms that could be addressed in an outpatient clinic, telehealth or office visit instead of an emergency room (ER). And ask them about any recent ER visits or hospital stays.
- Care and Support Coordinators can help with:
 - Providing resources to help members understand their conditions and symptoms.
 - Finding needed supports and services, which could lead to fewer unplanned hospitalizations.
 - Addressing social needs such as transportation, housing and food insecurity.

Some hospital stays are unavoidable. But care teams and benefits can go a long way to helping members stay out of the hospital.

Resources:

- <https://assets.americashealthrankings.org/app/uploads/allstatesummaries-ahr24.pdf>
- <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies/chronic-disease-management-programs>
- [Strategies | County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#)
- https://www.ahd.com/states/hospital_TN.html
- <https://www.aha.org/statistics/fast-facts-us-hospitals>
- [Hospital and Emergency Services - Healthy People 2030 | odphp.health.gov](#)
- <https://www.ajmc.com/view/continuity-of-outpatient-care-and-avoidable-hospitalization-a-systematic-review>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK606114/>

Recent Claims Issues for w90 Diagnosis Code Claims

We wanted to let you know about an issue with w90 diagnosis code claims being denied.

We recently implemented new claims editing system edits. These new edits caused some claims where the w90 diagnosis code wasn't allowed as a principal code to be wrongly denied. Claims with the type of bill 089X weren't included in this edit.

All incorrectly denied claims have been identified and adjusted for payment. These incorrectly denied claims are still listed with a denied status in the CareBridge system. But these claims have been or will be paid.

Please remember that contracted providers are required to get their claim status and payment information through Availity® and the self-service options available there. If you need help using Availity to check claim status and remittance advices, please reach out to your assigned claims liaison, either Corey Vance at corey_vance@bcbst.com or Brittney Cook at Brittney_cook@bcbst.com. They'll be happy to schedule a training to show you how to navigate Availity.

Referral Process and Member Expansion Changes

Read below for information about several changes and updates to our membership, referral process and how you can learn more about our members' needs.

Member expansion

We're excited to share that TennCare has approved the expansion of the CHOICES and Employment and Community First CHOICES programs.

CHOICES

- Expansion will include 2,000 new slots

ECF CHOICES

- Expansion will include 2,500 new slots

With this new expansion, providers can expect an increase in referrals and membership service needs. Providers who are interested in offering additional services and/or counties should notify their assigned BlueCare Tennessee provider network manager for more information.

Changes to referral process

Our referral process has recently changed. Previously, referrals were managed in the Order Manager (Sandata). As of Aug. 1, 2025, referrals are managed via email with direct communication from our Support Center.

Learn more about member needs

Our provider network management team and workforce development specialists host weekly office hours. We encourage all providers to attend this open discussion where our provider relations team shares real time data of membership needs and services. This data provides extensive details identifying specific services, counties and zip codes. These interactive meetings allow providers to fully participate and engage with our teams.

Provider network managers and the workforce development team are available to help providers with referrals and plan information.

Unlock Growth Opportunities with BlueCare Tennessee's Exclusive LTSS Training Series

If you've identified Community Integration Support Services (CISS) and Independent Living Skills Training (ILST) as key areas for growth but aren't sure how to implement them within your team, we're here to help.

Our LTSS provider network managers and employment specialists work together to offer a monthly virtual training series to support providers across Tennessee. These sessions are designed to answer your questions, provide actionable insights and give your team the tools they need to succeed in these expanding service areas.

Your assigned network manager can invite you to the next session.

These trainings are ideal for:

- Organizational leadership
- Trainers and supervisors
- Direct support professionals

Whether you'd like to attend one session or participate regularly, we'll let you know about upcoming events.

Contact your network manager today to take advantage of this exclusive BlueCare Tennessee training initiative.





Employment and Community First CHOICES Group 7 and 8 Program Improvements

ECF CHOICES Group 7 and 8 programs serve members with the most complex needs. Since their launch, BlueCare Tennessee has supported or enrolled 51 Group 7 members and 64 Group 8 members — and those numbers continue to grow as support needs increase.

As membership grows, so does the need for providers that can support this unique population. TennCare and the managed care organizations (MCOs) have collected feedback to identify ways to improve the program. In 2024, the Group 8 program was updated to give more flexibility in staffing qualifications.

In April 2024, Group 7 and 8 providers were given expanded options to employ staff who meet specific qualifications. These changes were designed to improve workforce flexibility while maintaining high standards of care.

Key Updates to Staffing Qualifications

Option 1: Staff must meet direct support professional (DSP) qualifications and complete 40 hours of registered behavior technician (RBT) training within 60 days of starting the behavior support specialist (BSS) role. This includes on-the-job training and supervision by a board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) or qualified RBT supervisor employed by or contracted by the provider.

Option 2: Staff must meet DSP qualifications and complete National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD) certification training within 60 days of starting the BSS role. They must also receive competency-based, on-the-job training and guidance from a masters level clinician employed by or contracted with the provider.

Option 3: Agencies may propose alternative staffing requirements to the Behavioral Health Training Review Committee. This option encourages innovative, person-centered staffing approaches tailored to specific needs.

Licensing Requirements

Group 7 providers must have:

- **Department of Disability and Aging (DDA) Licensure**
 - Personal support services agency (PSSA) — licensed per region
- **PSSA license** from the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse (TDMHSAS) or DDA
- **Masters level clinician employed or contracted**
 - Acceptable credentials: BCBA, LCSW, LMSW, LPC, LMHC, LMFT

Group 8 providers must have:

- **DDA Licensure**
 - Intellectual disability (ID) and developmental disability (DD) residential habilitation facility licensed per home; or
 - ID and DD supported living services – licensed per region
- **Masters level clinician employed or contracted**
 - Acceptable credentials: BCBA, LCSW, LMSW, LPC, LMHC, LMFT

TennCare and the MCOs are continuing to explore additional improvements to the Group 7 program and the Group 8 incentive structure and criteria. For more details on [DDA credentialing](#), visit the DDA website.

Reportable Event Reminders

Reportable Event Management (REM) is an important part of protecting the health, safety and dignity of people getting home and community-based and ICF/IID services.

Submitting reportable events and related information quickly and accurately helps us provide quality care and stay in compliance with regulations. Not submitting reportable events within the required timeframes can cause:

- Delays in care coordination and risk mitigation
- Potential harm to people due to safety concerns not being addressed

Best Practices for Providers

To stay aligned with Department of Disability and Aging (DDA) and TennCare expectations, providers should:

- Review REM guidelines with staff to be sure they know when to report a Reportable Event.
- Implement internal tracking systems to monitor submission deadlines and follow-up actions.
- Proactively communicate with BlueCare Tennessee and DDA representatives.
- Review and revise policies routinely to be sure they reflect current REM guidelines and protocols.

For more information about REM, [click here](#).

Timeframes for Submitting a Reportable Event

Reportable Events must be submitted electronically [here](#).

These are the reporting requirements for each event category:

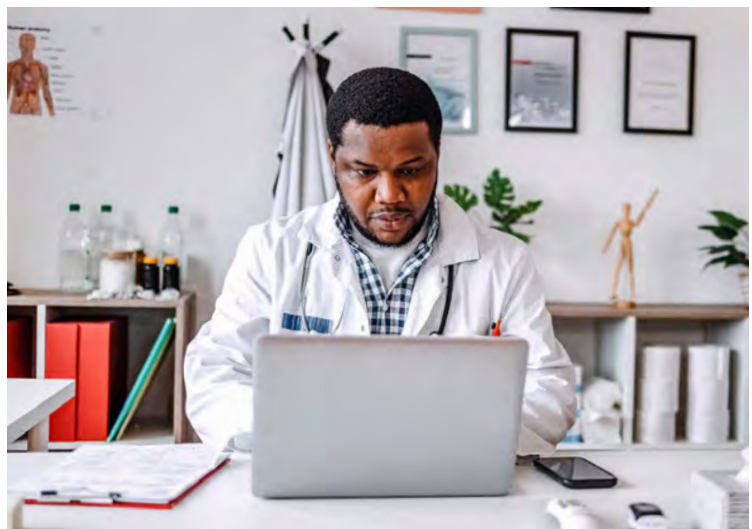
- **Tier 1:** Notify the DDA Abuse Hotline at **1-888-633-1313** as soon as possible, but no later than four hours after witness or discovery. Then submit an electronic reportable event form to DDA within one business day. Also notify Adult Protective Services (APS) at **1-888-277-8366** or <https://reportadultabuse.dhs.tn.gov/>, Child Protective Services (CPS) at **1-877-237-0004** or <https://apps.tn.gov/carat/>, and/or law enforcement as required by law as soon as possible.
- **Tier 2:** Submit an electronic reportable event form to DDA within one business day of witness or discovery and notify APS/CPS and/or law enforcement as required by law as soon as possible.
- **Additional Reportable Events and Interventions:** Submit an electronic reportable event form to DDA within one business day of witness or discovery.
- **Requests for Informational Findings and/or Staff Misconduct:** Respond to ReportableEvents@bcbst.com as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days after the date of the request. Please remember to address all findings and provide supporting documentation if applicable.

Reportable Events and Interventions

Your compassion while serving our members is invaluable to their experience, but so are your observations. Reportable Event Management (REM) is one important component of an overall approach for ensuring the health, safety, individual freedom and quality of life of members receiving home- and community-based services and intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities services.

When members are at risk, you're required to Report It Now. When you report these issues, they can be addressed, which helps keep the members you serve safe. Documenting the risk also helps protect you if there's ever a question in the future.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Report It Now and who to contact for a Reportable Event.



Mapping the Success of Direct Support Professionals with Career Pathways

DSPs are a vital part of care teams. They have an important role in helping individuals with disabilities lead fuller, more independent lives. Their work is hands-on, trusted and essential to a person-centered approach.

Career pathways for DSPs are clearly defined and offer opportunities for advancement. Starting as a DSP provides valuable hands-on experience and a competitive entry-level salary. From there, professionals can move into specialized roles in community-based supports, residential services or employment assistance. Many DSPs advance into supervisory positions, become client advocates or take on training roles that influence how frontline care is delivered.

A key driver of success within the BlueCare Tennessee provider network is a commitment to continuous learning. Our providers offer targeted training in safety, physical and agility skills, and person-centered planning. These opportunities not only help improve the quality of care but also support DSPs in progressing along their career paths. Promotions and career growth allow DSPs to demonstrate their expertise and unlock new opportunities. This approach aligns with national standards that elevate the DSP profession and provide a career trajectory that grows with the individual.

Career Pathways

One of the most impactful tools we've helped develop is the Career Pathways resource. Created collaboratively by all three managed care organizations and adopted by TennCare, this guide outlines the skills, steps and certifications available at each stage of a DSP's career. Career Pathways can help DSPs understand required training, recognize relevant experience and identify future opportunities.

In addition to competitive benefits — including health insurance, retirement plans and generous leave — our focus remains on helping each DSP build a fulfilling, long-term career.

To access the official TennCare Career Pathway, [click here](#). It's available in English, Spanish and Arabic.

Workforce Development Office Hours Update

Are you looking for practical solutions to staffing challenges or hoping to connect with other LTSS providers to share ideas and strengthen your workforce? Our Workforce Development Office Hours are designed with you in mind.

We hold office hours every Thursday at 10 a.m. ET. These drop-in sessions are a time to talk about workforce issues, explore available resources and learn about strategies to fit your needs.

You can join for the full hour or just a few minutes. And we encourage you to come prepared with questions, challenges and ideas. We'll answer your questions and discuss your challenges, as well as provide updates and tools to support your workforce goals. These meetings are meant to be collaborative and conversational, guided by participants' questions.

In August, we added a new component focused on capacity building. Our Provider Relations team now shares referral information for agencies currently accepting new member referrals. To make the most of this additional information, we encourage you to invite both your MCO referral contacts and your human resources and/or recruiting teams. These sessions will allow you to continue to explore workforce development strategies while also addressing staffing barriers that may impact your ability to accept referrals. Both are important to helping people get the services and support they need.

Challenges in Employing Direct Support Professionals in Greater Memphis

In the Greater Memphis area, health care providers are faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified DSPs. These essential workers provide hands-on care and support to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, helping them live more independently and with dignity. Yet despite the critical nature of their role, providers struggle to hire and retain workers.

Many providers report difficulty filling open positions, and those who do fill positions often struggle with high turnover rates. Here are a few reasons:

Low wages

We're working to address this through a mix of local and statewide initiatives. We've been advocating at the state level for increased reimbursement rates to support higher wages for DSPs.

Burnout due to long hours and emotionally demanding tasks

We work with providers to adopt person-centered principles and start advocacy councils to give DSPs a voice in policy and management decisions. This has led to better job satisfaction and lower burnout rates.

Limited career advancement opportunities, which can discourage long-term commitment

We worked with the other MCOs to create a career ladder document. We also use the career pathway tool in consultations and trainings.

Transportation challenges leading to missed shifts and inconsistent staffing

Transportation challenges, either with personal vehicles or limited public transportation, can be a major barrier. While currently there aren't specific Memphis-based transportation programs, this issue is influencing policy discussions — especially around staffing consistency in residential care settings.

Many job seekers don't know what DSP roles entail or the impact they have. There's a persistent misconception that these jobs are low-skilled or temporary, when they require compassion, resilience and specialized training. Without targeted outreach and education, potential candidates may overlook these meaningful career paths.

We're working with other plans to partner with community entities such as the Memphis Urban League, the American Job Centers, local programs and schools to create pipelines for recruitment, host job fairs and develop school outreach programs. These efforts aim to raise awareness, improve access and build a more sustainable DSP workforce.

Committed to Service

As your partner in serving our CHOICES and ECF CHOICES members, we're committed to providing you unmatched service and support. Stay current with the most current news and program guidance. Visit us at bluecare.bcbst.com to find resources, updates and the most recent version of the CHOICES newsletter.

How Are We Doing?

As a valued BlueCare Tennessee provider, we welcome your feedback and want to hear from you. If you have questions and/or concerns about a process, or if there's an individual that you'd like to point out for good service, please email us at: CHOICESProviderRelations@bcbst.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Provider Network Manager and Workforce Development Contacts

Manager	Region	Phone	Email
Britney Douglas, Provider Relations Supervisor	Statewide	(615) 427-3782	britney_douglas@bcbst.com
Phyllis White, Director, MLTSS	Middle	(615) 295-9680	phyllis_white@bcbst.com
Recie Gunartt, Provider Network Manager	West	(901) 201-7786	recie_gunartt@bcbst.com
Marilyn Turner, Provider Network Manager	West	(901) 573-2607	marilyn_turner@bcbst.com
Tanya Glover, Provider Network Manager	Middle	(615) 393-9117	tanya_glover@bcbst.com
Marea Sweeney, Provider Network Manager	Middle	(615) 946-3101	marea_sweeney@bcbst.com
Mark Watson, Provider Network Manager	Middle	(615) 598-2816	mark_watson@bcbst.com
Marquita Wilson, Provider Network Manager	Middle	(423) 413-5384	marquita_wilson@bcbst.com
Kevin Brooks, Provider Network Manager	East	(423) 290-8768	kevin_brooks@bcbst.com
Rainey Johnson, Provider Network Manager	East	(865) 712-5980	rainey_johnson@bcbst.com
Robert Dugger, Provider Network Manager	East	(865) 617-2980	robert_dugger@bcbst.com
Christian Ceccotti, Workforce Development Manager	Statewide	(423) 290-9284	christian_ceccotti@bcbst.com
Tonya Starks, Workforce Development Specialist	West	(901) 713-9602	tonya_starks@bcbst.com
Kylie Hennie, Workforce Development Specialist	Middle	(615) 924-3424	kylie_hennie@bcbst.com
Patrick Hampton, Workforce Development Specialist	East	(423) 509-3791	patrick_hampton@bcbst.com
Brittney Cook, Claims Liaison	East	(423) 637-0734	brittney_cook@bcbst.com
Nichole Phillips-Brock, Employment Services & Supports Specialist	Statewide	(615) 651-9076	nichole_phillips@bcbst.com
Aimee Rogers, Employment Services & Supports Specialist	Statewide	(423) 362-2562	aimee_rogers@bcbst.com
Kathryn Walters, Technology Champion	Statewide	(865) 340-1363	kathryn_walters@bcbst.com
Evy Boyer, Housing and Transition Manager	Statewide	(615) 218-2642	evelyn_boyer@bcbst.com

Where to Turn for Help

Your Service Need	Operational Area	Contact
Eligibility Services, Claims, Inquiries	BlueCare Provider Services/ Eligibility Service Line	1-888-747-8955
General Contracting/ Credentialing Questions	Provider Network Services/ Credentialing	1-800-924-7141, ext. 5775 (Provider Network Services) 1-800-357-0395 (Credentialing)
Member Related Questions/Supports, Member Emergencies (After Hours/Weekends Only) During Regular Hours Contact Coordinator Directly	Support/Care Coordination	1-800-262-2873
Sandata/EVV Tech Support	Sandata Client Relations (EVV)	1-855-389-4843
Availity Claim Submission Tech Support	Availity	1-800-282-4548
CHOICES Web Portal Claims Tech Support	e-Business	(423) 535-5717, select option 2
Provider Education, General Provider Support, Assistance with Contracting/Credentialing	CHOICES/ECF Provider Relations	CHOICESProviderRelations@bcbst.com
Authorizations Support, General Billing – Release of Units	Provider Inquiry Specialist Team	ProviderAuthIssues@bcbst.com OR call 1-888-747-8955, select option 2
Change of Ownership Notifications, Questions/Concerns	Provider Relations	Provider_CHOW@bcbst.com
EVV Exceptions	Provider Specialist Team	EVV_Exceptions@bcbst.com