

MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Newsletter



BETTER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR
TENNESSEANS AND THAT OF THE NATION



CHHS staff (l-r): Linda Williams, MTSU Mental Health First Aid program coordinator; Christina Byrd, program coordinator and special projects; Cynthia Chafin, associate director for community programs; Sarah Gwinn, grants coordinator; and Angela Mueller, Mental Health First Aid trainer

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *MTSU Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS) Newsletter*. Thank you for taking time to learn more about the work that we do and the services we provide. Each issue will offer insight into CHHS' interdisciplinary research, projects, and programs, all geared towards population health with an emphasis on improving the health and well-being of Tennesseans and serving as a model for replication with national impact. We are a growing center, with a 27-year history, receiving external funding of over \$8.2 million to date.

Each newsletter will spotlight one member of the talented CHHS team as well as one of our health-focused research, projects, or programs. As a primarily externally funded center, we continually seek funding to carry out the work of the center and rely on partnerships and collaborations—both within the MTSU community and beyond—to further our mission. Please call, email, or visit our website to learn more about our work and how we might be of service to your department or agency.

Staff Spotlight

Cynthia Chafin, M.Ed., MCHES®

Associate Director for Community Programs



Cynthia Chafin has served as associate director for community programs at CHHS since May 2018 and previously served as interim director of the center (Oct. 2015–April 2018). She has been with the center as a project director since 2002.

Chafin holds a Master of Education in Health Promotion and Education from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Middle Tennessee State University. She also was part of the first national cohort to receive advanced-level certification as a master certified health educator

from the National Commission on Health Education Credentialing. Chafin is currently enrolled in MTSU's Health and Human Performance doctoral program.

She has a lengthy history in public health, having worked for and with the state health department along with multiple local, state, and national nonprofit and community-based organizations as a volunteer, project director, and consultant. Chafin has been a recipient of the annual Health Educator of the Year award from the Tennessee Public Health Association and was awarded the inaugural Eloise Q. Hatmaker Distinguished Service Award from the Rural Health Association for her public health work in rural Tennessee communities. Her work has received local, state, and national awards.

Who Do We Serve?

The Center for Health and Human Services collaborates with MTSU faculty and staff, and public and private organizations and partners to develop and implement local, regional, and state-wide programs, projects, and research activities designed to improve the health and well-being of Tennesseans and that of the nation.

Did you know that much of our work involves OFF-campus initiatives? It does! One of the more

common misconceptions about MTSU CHHS is that we serve the campus community. While some of our efforts do focus on our campus, the majority of our work is done in communities across Tennessee, some of which serve as models for other states. Our projects have touched all 95 Tennessee counties.



CHHS Campus Collaborations

The Center for Health and Human Services is pleased to partner with your department or with individual faculty or staff to support external funding opportunities that align with our mission. With a successful history of more than \$8.2 million of externally funded research and projects, and documented successful outcomes, applications developed by CHHS are of high quality and are appealing to funding agencies. If funding is awarded, CHHS is the award recipient and takes on the tasks of procurement, personnel, reporting, and other tasks that allow faculty to do meaningful research without the associated administrative burdens.

Recently, CHHS collaborated in writing a grant proposal with MTSU's Positive Aging Consortium (PAC) and PAC members from the Department of Health and Human Performance, Assistant Professor Brandon Grubbs and Assistant Professor Vaughn Barry. Starting with a research project conceptualized by Grubbs and Barry to use artificial intelligence to prevent falls and increase physical activity in nursing home residents, the CHHS lent its expertise in grant writing to assist in

development of a proposal that would pilot this project at a partnered, long-term care facility in Murfreesboro. Efforts of this project will be communicated across the state and potentially nationally on this traumatic and costly health concern.

The center worked with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to finalize a budget and complete the submission process. If funded, CHHS will handle all administrative tasks associated with the grant, including personnel (hiring, ongoing payroll and documentation, training), procurement, and reporting in close consultation with faculty. CHHS will be engaged in sustainability, utilizing earlier successful models that can be replicated for this project with tailoring. With CHHS' documented history of funding, related work, and collaborative partnerships, the proposal was strengthened. While the grant process was very competitive and the proposal was not funded, CHHS will continue to seek alternative sources to fund this important work. We look forward to a positive partnership with Grubbs, Barry, and the Positive Aging Consortium.



"The grant writing process with CHHS was smooth. They were communicative and timely in their efforts. We look forward to working with CHHS on this project!"—Vaughn Barry, Ph.D.



"Collaborating with CHHS was a no-brainer. Their funding history and grant experience strengthened our application and confidence in our proposal."—Brandon Grubbs, Ph.D.

Project Spotlight: 2020 *Rutherford County Health Watch*

What is Rutherford County's ranking for obesity? Premature death? Teen births? These are just a few of the statistics that can be found in *Rutherford County Health Watch (RCHW)*. Commonly referred to as *Health Watch*, *RCHW* provides a brief summary of Rutherford County's health status at a particular point in time. Researchers examine and analyze data relevant to 34 factors that can have a positive or negative impact on health for each county in the United States. Other researchers look at a variety of measures that rank the health of each state. MTSU's CHHS compiles statistics from these and other sources into one easy-to-read publication which also provides health priorities of CHHS and that of Rutherford County along with health-related resources for further exploration.

The inaugural edition of *RCHW* was published in 1998 and was founded by recently retired Jo Edwards, holder of MTSU's Adams Chair of Excellence in Health Care Services, College of Behavioral and Health Sciences. The 2020 edition of *Health Watch* was prepared by CHHS in consultation with the Adams Chair of Excellence



in Health Care Services. MTSU CHHS will continue to publish *RCHW* annually to provide data to support research, programs, and projects focusing on improving population health as well as to inform MTSU community health and nursing courses and others in the community with an interest in population health. Current and previous editions of *RCHW* are available on the CHHS website at mtsu.edu/chhs/publications.php.

Want to donate to further the work of MTSU's CHHS?

MTSU's Center of Health and Human Services operates primarily through external funding. In order to continue our mission of promoting health and well-being for all Tennesseans and that of our nation, we need financial resources to continue our work. We operate from public and private grants

as well as sponsorships and donations. Please consider a donation of any size which will go directly to CHHS. Visit mtsu.edu/chhs, click on Give to CHHS, and specify that your donation is for CHHS. The website accepts MasterCard, Visa, and American Express.

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