



KEEPING UP WITH

# Friends

of the Alexandria Mental Health Center

FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM



## ABOUT FRIENDS

### OUR MISSION

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center (AMHC) provides financial help and hope to Alexandrians receiving City services for mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities.

### OUR APPROACH

Friends is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 with the knowledge that community makes a significant difference for those living with a mental health condition, developmental disability, or substance use on their path to recovery.

Friends' primary goal is to provide a financial safety net for Alexandrians receiving mental health services from the City's Community Services Board (CSB). Friends uses donations to provide help and hope to these individuals and their families for special and emergency needs, such as housing, medicine, dental care, transportation, social and educational activities, and basic life necessities.

Additionally, Friends supports the City and other partners working to advance mental health throughout Alexandria— those who strengthen the safety net; improve mental health awareness and advocacy; reduce stigma; and enhance training for CSB staff.

## Spring2ACTion for Friends on April 26!



### It's that time of year!

Alexandria's annual day of giving, Spring2ACTion, is set for April 26 from midnight until 11:59 p.m. For 24 hours, residents, families and even out-of-state supporters will donate to local nonprofits that make Alexandria a healthier, safer, more generous community. Please take this opportunity to support Friends. Early giving will begin on **April 12** and run through **Wednesday, April 26** at [spring2action.org/organizations/friends-of-the-alexandria-mental-health-center](http://spring2action.org/organizations/friends-of-the-alexandria-mental-health-center). Please consider giving early to Friends! **Our goal is \$25,000.00.**

## Highlights of People Served

From the start of the fiscal year on July 1, 2022 through Feb 28, 2023, Friends spent more on City resident needs than any other year in Friends' 40 years, having spent \$84,394.81 while receiving donations of \$49,801.49 during that period. Thank you, donors! Without you, Friends would not have been able to respond to the needs of city residents.



**Sarah** needed a physical to enter a residential treatment program. Insurance would not pay, because it covered only one physical a year. Friends immediately paid for the physical so that Sarah could enter the program. compensate for the lost income.

**AF** is a youth in recovery from opioid use who participates in services with the City. Friends was able to quickly pay for his medication assisted treatment, which allowed him to access more comprehensive residential treatment.

**David** participated in residential treatment while he was unemployed. However, he needed to continue to pay rent to have a home to return to when he graduated from the program. Friends paid his rent to sustain his housing and support his stability.

**Joana and Jacob** are two children participating in services through the CSB with their older brother Aaron, who has significant developmental disabilities. The mother receives Medicaid assistance to care for him. When Aaron's needs required that he move to a residential school, his mother lost that income. Friends paid for two months of rent, so Joana, Jacob and their mother had housing until she could find stable employment to compensate for the lost income.

As seen here, Friends has experienced the greatest increase in need in rent and housing-related assistance, as well as the needs of the families of children who access services from the City. There has also been an uptick in requests related to medication assisted treatment for opiate use disorder for youth. Friends is also fulfilling requests for summer camp tuition and anticipates more after spring break. Summer camps are not only enriching for the children who attend, but also provide much needed childcare for parents.

## BOARD MEMBERS

Anna Dvorchik  
Co-Chair

Mary C. Ray, LCSW  
Co-Chair

Kedryn Berrian  
Social Media

Adam Bloom-Paicopolis  
Social Media and Web

Rebecca (Becky) Bradford  
Online Fundraising

Larry Bryant  
Co-Newsletter Editor

Libby Eife-Johnson  
Outreach

Afework Eshetu  
WEWC Liaison

Elizabeth A. "Betty" Livingston  
Outreach

Angelica Medina  
Grant Writer

Val Reilly  
Consumer Liaison

Ian Ring  
CSB Liaison

Monica Rusk  
Treasurer

Vera Sarkis  
Member

Hon. Allison Silberberg  
Member

Jeremy Thompson  
Secretary

## ABOUT THE CSB



The CSB oversees the City's publicly funded services for Alexandrians with mental health conditions.

In 2018, the CSB served 4,363 Alexandrians of all ages through mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services. Historically, of those for whom income is known, nearly half have had annual family incomes of \$15,000 or less. In 2018, 25% were under age 20. The CSB is part of the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS).

# DCHS Employee Rhonda Williams Recognized



Friends received a generous donation from a resident, honoring the passing of her mother who had been a client of DCHS employee Rhonda Williams, LCSW, Supervisor of Older Adult Clinical Services. The donor expressed gratitude for her work with her mother, who was among Rhonda's first clients more than two decades ago. Rhonda also serves as a member of the local Hostage Negotiation Team, provides Critical Incident Stress Management support, and mental health training and consultation to the Alexandria Police Department. She consults to Adult Protective Services in emergencies and is a Red Cross disaster clinician.

In addition to Rhonda's work with individuals and groups, she helped design the Regional Older Adult Facilities and Treatment (RAFT) program, which assists older adults with mental illness and dementia in living in local facilities rather than state hospitals. She currently chairs the RAFT Oversight Committee. Rhonda also serves older Alexandrians on the Hoarding Task Force and the Virginia Geriatric Mental Health Alliance. Thank you, Rhonda, for all that you do for older adults and their families!

## FRIENDS FOCUS:

# Rising Mental Health Needs for Youth

- 1 in 10 NoVa teens seriously contemplated suicide in the last year
- 1 in 4 showed signs of clinical depression
- 1 in 3 showed signs of clinical anxiety

These recent statistics from a Community Foundation of Northern Virginia (CFNV) report are consistent with what Friends sees anecdotally in our community. These rates were rising on a national level before the pandemic. Since 2020, they have risen sharply. One study found that 22 percent of U.S. parents reported overall worsened mental or emotional health for their school-age children, and global rates of depression and anxiety for children and youth have doubled from pre-pandemic levels<sup>1</sup>.

According to the CFNV report, critical factors in youth mental health include relationships with parents and peers, and food and housing security. In FY23, Friends has been at the forefront of this crisis. Requests for assistance for children have skyrocketed. We have paid for several months of rent for multiple families, so that children who receive services can maintain housing stability while addressing their emergent needs. Friends has also paid for medication assisted treatment for youth battling addiction and residential service co-pays. These and related costs have accounted for almost half of Friends expenditures this year. The importance of having healthy parents, a home, and food security, cannot be overstated. Other important issues for child and teen mental health include adequate sleep and a community of trusted adults, whether they be teachers, mentors, or social workers. Friends impacts these

areas as well. For example, we have paid for tutors, educational advocates, piano lessons and other enrichment activities. Positive enriching activities are absolutely essential to supporting the mental health of youth in our community. To further focus our response to the youth mental health crisis, Friends recently reached out to the Court Services Unit of Alexandria Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, and to the head of the Mental Health Club at Alexandria City High School (ACHS). Friends wants to make sure that children who are court-involved and are receiving services can benefit from the support Friends gives. Additionally, Friends is interested in engaging with ACHS's mental health club to help fund and create programming for teens in the high school. Involving the students will help to create programming that is more impactful. For more detailed information about youth mental health in Virginia, see the CFNV report, for which we are deeply indebted for this article. [cfnova.org/images/pdf/InsightRegion\\_YMH\\_Final\\_Digital.pdf](https://www.cfnova.org/images/pdf/InsightRegion_YMH_Final_Digital.pdf).

1. Panchal, N. Kamal, R., Cox, C., Garfield, R.L., & Chidambaram, P. (2021). Mental Health and Substance Use Considerations Among Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Kaiser Family Foundation. Racine, N. & McArthur, B.A. (2021). Global prevalence of depressive and anxiety symptoms in children and adolescents during COVID-19: A meta-analysis. JAMA Pediatrics, 175(11).

# Friends Advocacy Goals for 2023-2024

Friends advocated this year to fund mental health budget items by writing to budget negotiator members of the legislature. We asked for the rates of reimbursement for Medicaid behavioral health services to be raised, many of which haven't increased for 20 years. During this time, costs have risen by more than 73%. No mechanism is in place to adjust rates based on inflation.

This rate increase would benefit Community Services Boards in the following ways: (1) Invest more in staff compensation and benefits (2) Recruit people to fill the vacancies at CSBs, so they can serve more people (3) Hire more licensed staff to provide quality supervision and oversight, as well as deliver services (4) Invest in training and professional development (5) Help CSB staff cover their education and supervision costs, and (5) Cover increased transportation-related costs to enable CSBs to reach more people geographically.

The other budget items that Friends endorses are those that would address CSB and employee compensation and fully funding crisis beds. Please reach out to your state senator or delegate and let them know that you support properly funding Virginia's mental health system.

## NEED HELP IN A CRISIS? Call 24 Hours a Day



- **Adult Protective Services** • 703.746.5778
- **Adult Protective Services State Hotline** • 1.888.832.3858
- **Child Protective Services** • 703.746.5800
- **State of Virginia Child Protective Services** • 1.800.552.7096
- **Domestic Violence** • 703.746.4911
- **Emergency Mental Health Services** • 703.746.3401
- **Sexual Assault** • 703.683.7273

## GET HELP NOW: Suicide Prevention Resources

- **CrisisLink:** 703.527.4077 or text "CONNECT" to 85511
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text "HOME" to 741741
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1.800.273.8255 • For deaf and hard of hearing, use your preferred relay service or dial 711, then 1.800.273.8255 or chat with someone 24/7 through **Lifeline Chat**<sup>1</sup>
- **Red Nacional del Suicidio:** 1.888.628.9454
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Veterans Crisis Line:** 1.800.273.8255, Press 1 or text 838255, or chat confidentiality with someone online 24/7 through **Crisis Chat**<sup>2</sup>
- **Emergency Services, Alexandria Dept. of Community and Human Services:** 703.746.3401
- **The Trevor Project, LGBTQ Youth:** 1.866.488.7386 or **TrevorText**, a confidential and secure resource that provides live help for LGBTQ youth with a trained specialist, over text messages: Text **START** to 678678. Chat with someone online 24/7 through **Trevor Chat**<sup>3</sup>

1 **Lifeline Chat:** [suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/)

2 **Crisis Chat:** [veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat/](https://veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat/)

3 **Trevor Chat:** [thetrevorproject.org/get-help/](https://thetrevorproject.org/get-help/)



## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Mental Health  
Insurance Information  
Enroll Virginia  
703.364.9456

Intake for  
Adult Mental Health,  
Developmental Disability,  
and Substance Use  
Treatment Services

703.746.3535

24/7 Emergency  
Mental Health Services

703.746.3401

## DONATE TO FRIENDS

Donors may send a check  
of any amount to:

**Friends of the Alexandria  
Mental Health Center**  
4850 Mark Center Dr.  
Floor 8, Room 8160  
Alexandria, VA 22311

### ONLINE DONATIONS

[mightycause.com/organization/  
Friends-Of-The-Alexandria-  
Mental-Health-Center](https://mightycause.com/organization/Friends-Of-The-Alexandria-Mental-Health-Center)  
or  
[givegab.com/nonprofits/  
friends-of-the-alexandria-  
mental-health-center/  
campaigns/FriendsoftheAMHC](https://givegab.com/nonprofits/friends-of-the-alexandria-mental-health-center/campaigns/FriendsoftheAMHC)

## SHARE FRIENDS!

Before you recycle this  
newsletter, please help us  
enlarge our circle of Friends.  
Pass it on to a friend,  
neighbor or family  
member who may wish to  
support Friends' mission.

## HELP US BE GREEN!

Send us your email address at  
[FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM](mailto:FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM)



**Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center**  
 4850 Mark Center Dr.  
 Floor 8, Room 8160  
 Alexandria, VA 22311

# Who are Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center?

Friends of the AMHC is a Board of volunteers who make sure that your donations go directly to the needs of Alexandrians in the form of direct financial assistance, education or training for community members.

A check of any amount may be sent to:

**Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center**  
**4850 Mark Center Drive**  
**Floor 8, Room 8160**  
**Alexandria, Virginia 22311**

Consider choosing Friends of the AMHC through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Please visit [friendsofamhc.org](http://friendsofamhc.org) for more information.

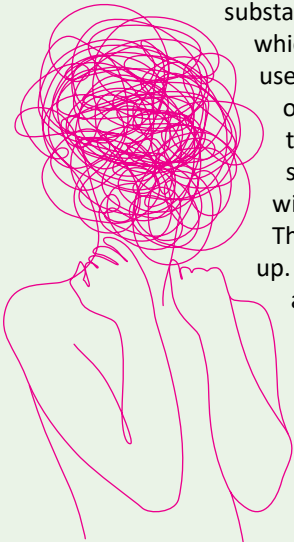


**Be sure to update your address book with our new address!**

# Get FREE Confidential Mental Health Screening

Alexandria's Department of Community and Human Services offers an online screening tool for mental health and substance use disorders. Behavioral health – which includes mental health, substance use, and more – is a key part of your overall well-being. Brief screenings are the quickest way to determine if you or someone you care about should connect with a behavioral health professional. Think of these as a checkup from your neck up. This program is completely anonymous and confidential, and immediately following the brief questionnaire you will see your results, recommendations, and key resources.

Visit [screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/northern-virginia](http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/northern-virginia) for more information.



## Checkup

Completing these screenings will help you determine if your recent thoughts or behaviors may be associated with a common, treatable mental health issue.



## Anonymous

We cannot link these screenings to any one individual, so you remain anonymous. Take these screenings anywhere you feel comfortable.



## Fast!

It takes only a few minutes per screening, and at the end you will be presented with information and next steps.



**Donors may give online for Spring2ACTION!**

[givegab.com/nonprofits/friends-of-the-alexandria-mental-health-center/campaigns/FriendsoftheAMHC](http://givegab.com/nonprofits/friends-of-the-alexandria-mental-health-center/campaigns/FriendsoftheAMHC)

