

NAS/NOW

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



- How the pill epidemic is affecting our youngest children

What is Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome?

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) is a health problem that occurs in newborn babies as the result of their mother's use of drugs.

On January 1, 2013, NAS became a reportable disease in Tennessee, and the Department of Health declared that the East Tennessee Region now has an epidemic to contend with.

While babies are in the womb they are totally dependent on their mother's nutrition habits and also drug habits, which can result in negative health consequences for the baby at birth. Nearly all drugs, legal or illegal, will be passed into the baby in the mother's womb through the placenta, resulting in the baby having the same drug dependency as the mother.

Once the baby is born and the umbilical blood supply from Mom to baby ends, by cutting the cord, the baby if he/she has received a certain drug, will unfortunately face withdrawals from the Mother's drugs of choice.

As the baby begins withdrawals, they may differ depending from others, based on what drug they are withdrawing from, and other factors.

In general some of the symptoms of NAS are:

Rapid breathing, confused sucking, diarrhea, sucking too much, cranky, fever, loud crying (screaming) spotty skin, tightness of muscles in arms and

legs, irritability, stuffy nose, sweating, yawning, poor feeding, sneezing, vomiting, trembling, sleep disorders, seizures, and dehydration.

There was a 10-fold increase in NAS babies being born in Tennessee from 2000 to 2010, according to the state hospital discharge database.

At the close of the first year that NAS was reported, 28.1% of the total 855 cases of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome in Tennessee occurred in our East Tennessee Rural region

The East Region had a 22.9% increase in the number of NAS cases, when compared to data in the 34th week for 2013 and 2014, while statewide the increase was 11.5%.

According to one 2009 survey, 4.5% of pregnant women reported the use of illicit drugs, including marijuana, cocaine, hallucinogens, heroin, methamphetamines and nonmedical use of prescription drugs. Among pregnant teens aged 15-17, 15.8% reported illicit drug use. The true percentage across all age groups is likely higher due to reporting bias (Hudak & Tan, 2012).

This same survey revealed that the number of infants diagnosed with neonatal withdrawal increased from 7,653 in 1995 to 11,937 in 2008 nationally.

"Women who are using are always more reluctant to seek help, especially if their drug use is illegal, but it is imperative that the mother seeks help in order to care for her unborn child properly," states Rev. Debra Shultz, Executive Director / CEO of Rescue 180 Jefferson County Substance Abuse.

"As result of neglect of prenatal care, women who use drugs while pregnant can often have other medical problems of their own to contend with, such as hypertension, preeclampsia, anemia, hepatitis, spontaneous, abortion and even birthing stillborn fetuses.

"There is now a cause for concern among Health Care professionals, that pregnant women who are using drugs will be afraid to seek prenatal care, because of the new law, causing the NAS problem to rise. Shultz who is also an active member of The East Tennessee Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Drug Task force along with other area Substance Abuse and Medical professionals, states "There is some concern among my colleagues that there is a definite need for clarification of the law in order for it to be effective in encouraging women who are using drugs to seek help."

Shultz and Rescue 180 have been part of a team working to develop a media campaign for NAS awareness called Born Drug-Free Tennessee (BornDrugFreeTN.com).

The law explained in layman's terms:

On July 1, 2014, changes in Tennessee law made it a misdemeanor if a child is born dependent to or harmed by the use of a narcotic drug taken by a woman while pregnant.

However, if pregnant women with an addiction problem enters a treatment program, and remains in treatment until after the delivery of the child, and successfully completes a recovery program, she protects herself from criminal charges and preserves her family (T.C.A. 39-13-107).

Impact of the law can be good or bad.

Women can be prosecuted for assault if their newborn is harmed as a result of their illegal use of a narcotic drug taken while pregnant.

What does the future hold for babies born drug dependent?

The protocol for caring for a dependent baby usually, but not always, consists of a 30 day stay in a Neonatal intensive care unit in order to receive quality care.

Each baby will be evaluated closely, and withdrawal symptoms vary according to the type of drug the mother had been using, and now has passed on to the baby. Professionals will need to know the number of drugs used by the mother, the time of the last drug used by mother, how much and how long the drug was used, and how the baby reacts to drug.

At East Tennessee Children's Hospital, nurses and medical staff are trained to care for NAS babies' symptoms. It is important that the mother is honest with physicians about the drug she took while pregnant, so her baby can recover effectively.

The staff of the hospital will measure the baby's withdrawal signs and each sign is given a point. This point system will help the medical staff evaluate the baby's progress, and determine treatment.



Data sources: Tennessee Department of Health; Office of Health Statistics; Hospital Discharge Data System (HDDS) and Birth Statistical System.

At most medical facilities where NAS is being treated, there are social workers who will work with the family, in order to make sure that the newborn will be cared for properly after they settle in at their new home.

According to health professionals, **most likely the baby will be facing permanent damage in some capacity**, because of their mother's drug use. These health issues can vary, but some are: trouble sleeping, growth delays, and problems controlling cravings.

Some behavioral problems may surface as well. The drug dependent baby may face problems in school. One of the worst negative consequences will be that the drug dependent baby will face having addiction problems throughout his or her life.

What type of solutions or treatment is available for the Mother?

When pregnant women are using drugs, whether the drugs are prescription or illicit, they now can be held responsible for harming their child by subjecting them to drug dependency.

The best way to prevent this problem is to talk to all female patients about possible drug use and addiction, if they are pregnant or wanting to get pregnant.

If a professional is unsuccessful in helping the patient make a decision to seek help for their drug use, it is imperative for them to talk to her about preventing pregnancy and to clarify to her the negative consequences of using drugs while pregnant.

The following is a list of solutions/ suggestions for pregnant women who are dealing with addiction and are seeking treatment.

- ◆ **Tobacco:** Contingency Management strategies have shown to be very effective.
- ◆ Cognitive behavioral Therapy is another option and nicotine replacement therapy can be considered if the benefits outweigh the risks.
- ◆ **Marijuana:** Contingency management and cognitive behavioral therapy have been shown to be effective.
- ◆ **Stimulants:** Again, Contingency Management can be used and these patients should also be referred for behaviorally based substance abuse treatment.
- ◆ **Opioids:** These patients can be treated and weaned off of the drugs they are using with Methadone or Suboxone. Unfortunately, these drugs still significantly affect the fetus and can cause withdrawal symptoms, but they tend to do better if the mother is using heroin or uncontrolled doses of prescription opioids. The neonate will usually then need to be treated for the withdrawals by giving very low doses of morphine and tapering off of it. It is also important for the mothers to receive behavioral therapies.
- ◆ Awareness programs such as education from your local Substance Abuse Coalitions.
- ◆ Your local Substance Abuse Coalitions usually have a Board Certified Prevention Specialist on staff, are trained mental health professionals who are prepared to educate educators in their community about NAS as well as other substance abuse problems. The Coalition also can help connect you with recovery options and provide you with emotional support, as well as, providing information.
- ◆ Your local Health Department is well prepared to provide you with educational materials about addiction and pregnancy.
- ◆ An important initiative is the VLARC program that was recently piloted in our area. (See VLARC article, Page 6)

Judge Duane Slone, Recovery Court participants, and the "family tree"



Compassion beyond the Bench

Who would have ever thought that a busy Circuit Court Judge and his lovely wife could open their arms as wide as the Honorable Duane Slone and wife Gretchen?

The answer to this question is: It was no surprise to many who know this couple that their compassion runs deep for hurting children.

The couple shares with us in an exclusive interview, that it was the Lord Jesus Christ, who led them to consider adopting a child who was born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.

“We want folks to know that adopting a NAS baby was not something we planned, but it turned out to be the perfect plan.”

Judge Slone continued, “I had observed on a regular basis, the pain of drug dependent babies, and knew first hand their struggles, but never ever thought I would be adopting a drug dependent baby.”

By 2011, the Slones would find themselves in a situation that would add them to the list of many families across this nation, adopting a NAS child.

“It wasn’t until a friend of ours had contacted us about a baby that was already six months old and struggling with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.”

Their friends were the grandparents of the NAS baby, and they were someone the Slones loved and respected.

“This little baby’s name was Joseph and he would be born with cocaine, meth, and OxyContin in his system - a cocktail of drugs,” shared Gretchen.

Joseph was born December 16th. Then he stayed 52 days in Neonatal Intensive Care, fighting withdrawal symptoms from these high powered drugs.

“When we began our process of getting the baby,” shared the Slones, “We had to go through all the red tape, just like everybody else, in order to get custody. No favoritism.”

The Slones said there was a whole lot

of praying going on, as they began their journey to get custody of this precious little guy they named Joseph.

“So we had to go through Department of Children’s Services to get temporary custody, first having to terminate the mother’s rights. Finally, we were able to become Foster parents, and the process seemed to expedite from there,” Gretchen shared.

“Some people think I could not have children. I have not tried, and this was just what God had planned for us. We have just been willing; not martyrs or want-to-be heroes, just willing.”

“When we finally brought him home, it was a day of victory, but now the hard work for us would really begin.”

Judge Slone added, “It has been a challenge, but we would not change one thing about our family, because we know God gave us the honor of raising Joseph as well as our other two children, who are also adopted.”

The Slones have no regrets, but do emphasize the struggles they have faced raising a baby with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.

“At this point, Joseph is doing extremely well,” shares Gretchen, “but it has been rough at times.”

Since their son Joseph’s biological mother was actively using drugs, unfortunately, they were being transferred into his body, while he was being formed in her womb. This means these drugs, affected the development of his organs, and could have caused many medical issues.

He, of course, went through withdrawals, but even at 6 months when the Slones adopted him, and still yet as a toddler, he struggles with some sleep issues.

“Even though it is obvious that he does have some repercussions from his biological mother’s drug use, he has made tremendous progress, and currently has no cognitive issues - and he is doing well in preschool.

“We are so thankful for all the folks



Judge Duane Slone and family

who have supported and guided us through this journey,” says Gretchen, “Friends, as well as health care professionals, have all been - and continue to be - amazingly helpful.”

“It is obvious now,” shares Judge Slone, “That it was not just a coincidence that we adopted this awesome little fellow.”

“Since God has allowed me to experience NAS on a personal and a professional level, it has been very humbling, and I would like to think it has made me, definitely more compassionate. While my work as a Drug Recovery Court Judge has always been meaningful to me, our experience with Joseph has made it more palpable.”

Judge Slone has been praised by many of his colleagues, as being one of the most compassionate and ‘driven’ leaders in East Tennessee, to help tackle our Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome problem.

He has also helped in piloting the VLARC program, along with the Health Department. This program is voluntary for inmates, male and female, who are serving a felony sentence.

The program not only provides free long lasting birth control for female inmates, it offers an educational briefing for the male inmates about prevention measures to avoid Neonatal abstinence Syndrome.

He has addressed this problem on many public forums, locally, as well as statewide. Recently, he was recognized by the Tennessee Association of Public Health, with a Partners and Leadership award, and this was the first time the award was given to someone who was not in the health field.

“I was so honored and felt extremely humbled that I was the recipient,” expressed Judge Slone.

“I certainly cannot take all the credit for any of this recognition. First of all, of course I give God the credit, and on a personal level, my wife Gretchen for her dedication, support, love, courage and hard work. On a professional level, my staff and colleagues with the recovery court.”

On a community level, the Slone’s encourage individuals, Churches, the educational system, civic clubs and other organizations to educate themselves about Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, as well as addiction.

“This is a growing problem and we must fight it as a community, not just leave it up to law enforcement and the Justice System.

“There are local Substance Abuse Coalitions in place that offer educational forums, workshops and materials free of charge to our Fourth Judicial area. In Jefferson County it is Rescue 180 (Rescue 180.com), and in Sevier County it is HEAL.”

"Don't give up until you see your miracle", were the words of Grainger county native, 26 year old Mallie Jane Moore.

Moore who has now been in the 4th Judicial Drug Court program for over 16 months, and doing well, states that, "Drug Court and the grace of God have pretty much saved my life".

Moore came in as a NAS (Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome) client, because she was pregnant with her third child.

Addiction had almost killed her and her three beautiful children, and life has not always been as good as it is today.

Starting her life of drug use at a very young age, "I started being rebellious and skipping school at the age of 13. That is also when I began using alcohol and other drugs," shared Moore.

The gateway drugs, Marijuana and alcohol, were her first addictions.

Moore says it was just fun and games at first, just a typical teenager wanting to hang out with 'cool' or older peers; and then it got deeper, as she wanted to get a bigger high.

By the age of 17, she had opened a horrible door of using opioids recreationally.

While in active addiction, at age 18, she became pregnant with her first child Jordon.

"I was using 90 milligrams of oxy's or roxy's a day while pregnant, snorting and shooting up, and Jordon was born very addicted."

When she went to the hospital to have him, they referred her to an outpatient drug program.

Department of Children's services had intervened at this point to rescue the child, and a family member now had custody of Jordon and he was safe. Unfortunately, Moore herself was not ok, because she was now headed toward living homeless and in active addiction.

"I was at my highest point on drugs, which was truly my lowest point," she shared. Moore received two theft charges back to back, first in 2010, then 2011. She was just in her early twenties.

"I was so high I did not know what I was doing, I was stealing and got

caught pawning what I had stolen."

Moore says she was not ready to stop. She had no desire to be sober, but obviously being arrested began a process a wake up call for her - only because she hated jail.

In 2011, Moore who was living on the streets in active addiction, and became pregnant again with her daughter, Anastasia.

"I was at my bottom, staying high. Seeking a drug fix was my main priority".

"I would go to the emergency rooms to get Percocet to get my fix hoping it would not hurt my baby. I would pretend to have a tooth ache, or some injury, just to get drugs."

"When I had my daughter, I had drugs in my system and so did she, but I had a prescription. So I did not lose Anastasia."

"By 2012, I ended up losing my two children completely, because I failed my drug screen with DCS, and also a family member had already gotten custody of my kids.

"I was on probation for a sell and delivery charge, and since I failed my drug test with DCS, my probation officer said I needed to go to a rehab in Nashville. I only went because I did not want to go to jail. So I went to a 24 day program, out of obligation."

Moore said she lost all desire to be sober, since her kids were gone. So when she returned home and was released from probation, she went right back to using drugs, and it got



Mallie's Story

even worse.

"I just didn't care anymore, what was the point without my children?" she shared.

Then by June of 2013, she became pregnant again with her third child, Sophia.

By this time, Moore had several warrants on her for several offenses. So addicted, sick and almost 6 months pregnant, she turned herself in to police.

"I went to jail in October. On January 29, 2014, I was accepted to drug court. By February 7th, I was living in the drug court's "Sober House," and on February 25th, I had Sophia."

Moore says that the Drug Court Program has basically saved her life.

"There were many times I wanted to try and escape, or run away, but I just kept telling myself to hang in there. Believe it or not, being forced out of my comfort zone into an accountable environment has been one of the major milestones in my recovery," Moore proudly shared.

She says the very things that frightened her in the beginning ended up being what pushed her to success.

"You have to embrace recovery, and stop being a victim, in order to become successful. We also encourage our participants to focus on Jesus Christ so they can know true victory," said the Honorable Duane Slone, who presides over Forth Judicial Circuit Court and the Recovery Court. "Miss Moore is truly a miracle, having come in pregnant

and on drugs. Little Sophia was born, drug free!"

Patty Williams, Director of Drug Court stated, "Mallie has made unbelievable progress and we are all so proud of her. Addiction is a terrible disease and so is Neonatal abstinence Syndrome. Sophia was our first baby born to one of our women in our recovery house, totally drug free and a healthy baby."

Williams says, "Mallie has been in the transitional house for 16 months, and has gone from being a scared young girl to a young woman who is raising and supporting her children now. Miss Moore now not only works and provides for her children. She is giving back to the addiction community by working as a 'House Mother,' and she has future plans of being an addiction counselor."

"Since March of this year, things have really started to come together, and now I can see clearly that God truly has a purpose for my life, Said Moore. "After a 9 month program, I have graduated from Drug Court, have a career in the making, and have transitioned to my own apartment. The greatest is, as of three weeks ago, I have custody of all my kids, and am drug free!"

Moore says her message is, "There is hope, if you are fighting addiction. Get in a 12 step program, Get involved!

"Find a meeting and Do NOT give up until a Miracle Happens..."

"Miracles still happen. Of course you have to believe in God first. Then yourself, and work to find others who believe, In YOU...Recovery is a lifestyle change, not just a onetime thing, but if you keep believing every day, the miracle will be YOU."



Preventive Measures and VLARC

(Volunteer Long-Acting Reversible Contraception)

According to local Certified Prevention Specialist, Rev. Debra Shultz, Director of Jefferson County's Substance Abuse Coalition, Rescue 180, "Preventive health education is this key. Prevention and awareness are the only way of decreasing our Neonatal Abstinence problem, as well as, all substance abuse issues."

"Rescue 180, is working to educate educators about negative consequences of substance abuse in Jefferson County. Our job is to bring awareness to our community and collaborate with other organizations, to educate and implement effective evidence based strategies to decrease substance abuse.

"We encourage prevention education as well as work to provide information, build skills, decrease barriers to solutions, increase barriers to substance abuse, change policies, and change environments," shares Shultz. "These are a few of our goals in our efforts to decrease the negative consequences of substance use. One of the most effective collaborations we have joined with is our 4th Judicial Drug or Recovery Court, which not only works in the area of recovery, but is also working to implement prevention education.

"They are working with a very important target population: those who have been incarcerated. According to several key informants, at least 95% of Jefferson County inmates are in jail due to crimes associated with substance abuse.

"The most pressing population would be women and their partners, who fall into the category of those who are in active addiction, such as those who are already incarcerated, due to crimes related to substance abuse".

Shultz says one of the most effective prevention initiatives being implemented is the NAS/ VLARC program that has been piloted by the Health Department, and our 4th Judicial Recovery Court/ Circuit Court Judge, the Honorable Duane Slone.

Shultz is actively involved with the 4th Judicial Recovery Court as a member

of their recovery team and board.

"I could not begin to tell you how much I believe in recovery court," Shultz continued. "It is effective in every area: body, soul and spirit. Watching someone's life change in addiction is like watching a miracle. It will bring you to your knees, and cause you to be thankful to God for your own life.

"Judge Slone, is truly a revolutionary and is helping to change the lives of those who have addiction issues, and are convicted felons. The whole team, for that matter, is made up of folks who are professionals, but full of compassion and integrity."

"Patty Williams, the Executive Director of Recovery court, not only puts her expertise into her profession, but her very heart, faith, and many hours of her own personal time. They all truly amaze me," Shultz shares. "They care for these folks and their children just like they are family, and in this cold cruel judgmental world, that is rare. No doubt, our 4th Judicial Recovery Court is a Godsend to many broken lives."

"Most importantly, we are watching the numbers go down in our Appalachian region," says Shultz, "As you may know, our region was marked nationwide as statistically at the top of bearing the burden of the epidemic of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. By no stretch of our imagination are we saying the numbers have drastically decreased, but they are going down."

"There has been some critics who have come forward, but small in number. In addressing the contraceptive initiative for inmates, there is absolutely no coercion. It is purely voluntary to be a part of the VLARC program, and we believe it is a very effective, evidence-based strategy, that falls in the category of 'increasing barriers,' because it is bringing down our NAS statistics, and saving lives."

The 4th Judicial Recovery Court,

also has a 'Sober House' located in White Pine, where they house women who are pregnant and are now actively living a life of sobriety and working to rebuild their lives. According to Judge Slone, "The NAS/ VLARC initiative that has been implemented in our Judicial District (Cocke, Grainger, Jefferson and Sevier counties), and is now being implemented statewide, is the single most effective strategy that has been implemented in the nation. Tennessee, one of the leading states with NAS births, due to in utero exposure and dependence on opiates, has been recognized as one of the states that is leading with solutions. Our success is primarily due to this initiative. Not only has this initiative already saved taxpayers millions of TennCare dollars spent due to these births alone, it has, more importantly, saved innocent infants from horrible suffering.

"The only critics that I have heard are concerned that the initiative is coercive and that tax payers are paying for the contraceptive devices. I believe that both these criticisms are primarily based on lack of accurate information.

"Regarding the program being coercive, there seems to be a lack of understanding about how the class is in reality being offered in the jail and by whom it is offered. The truth is that incarcerated ladies are treated with respect and dignity in a non-judgmental fashion. They are provided with an explanation about what NAS is and what causes it. Then, they are given an explanation about long acting reversible contraceptives (Vasectomies are available to males. If the ladies wish to take advantage of the opportunity while incarcerated, our sheriff departments transport them to the county health department for the procedure. The key words of the initiative are 'Voluntary' and 'Reversible.' As The Department of Health Commissioner, John Dreyzehner recently commented, "this is not sterilization. It is immediately 100% reversible if the lady changes her mind about her desire to become pregnant". The only feedback that I have heard

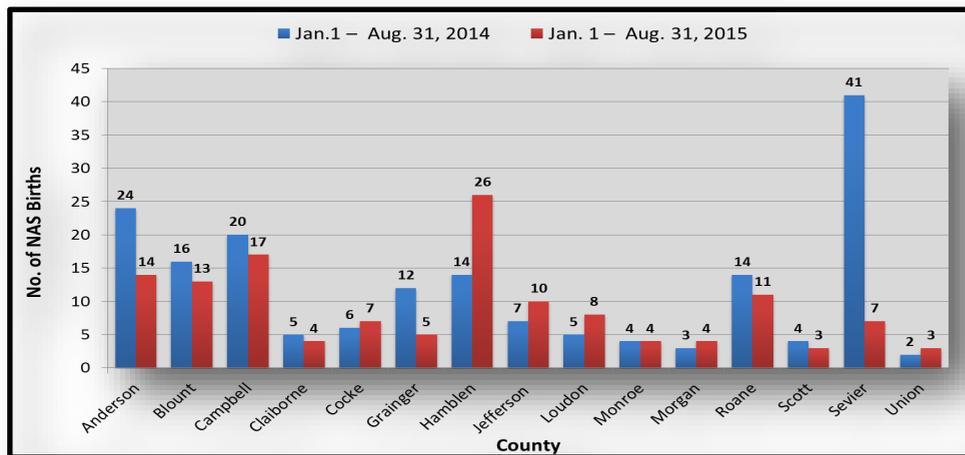
from these ladies is gratitude.

"The class is a mandatory condition of probation in our Judicial District for drug related crimes. Both male and female must attend (in order to receive probation). Attendance of the class offered by the Health Department is all that is mandatory. In comparison, our legislature has mandated people convicted of certain DUI offenses to attend a victim impact class with the hope that the impact on innocent victims and their loved ones as a result of driving while intoxicated will help motivate the offender to engage in responsible conduct. We are, in essence, doing the same thing with this class. What is different is that there is an immediate and quick action that people can take to ensure that they do not impact an innocent infant due to drug dependence.

"Those of us who are trying to assist people who desire recovery know how beneficial the initiative is to assist a person in recovery. One of the keys to a successful recovery is a reduction of stressful events, which can lead to relapse. Even planned pregnancies by healthy people can be stressful. Imagine how stressful an unplanned pregnancy can be for someone that is in recovery, and perhaps is not in a committed relationship, can be.

Judge Slone continued, "Anyone that is concerned about the cost of the initiatives should do the math. Sevier County, where the initiative was piloted at the beginning of 2014, has had an almost 90% reduction in NAS births this year. Check my numbers to be exact, but I believe that January 1, 2014 until September 12, 2014 Sevier County had 41 NAS births. During that same time period this year there was only 7. There is no other cause for the reduction. One need only compare Sevier County to counties that had not yet implemented the initiative. All of those counties continued the decade-long trend of an increase in NAS births. That is 34 children, a kindergarten class and a half that would have been going through the Sevier County education system in just a few short years."

NAS Births, by County, 2014 v. 2015 Comparisons



Statistics provided by Erica Wilson MPH,
Community Services Director

East Tennessee Regional Health Office



VRLAC Clinic Referrals,
Patient Demographics, East TN, 2014-
2015

• Race/Ethnicity

- Predominately non-Hispanic white

• Age

- Range: 19-50

- Average age: 29

- 86% between 21-35

• Education

- 68% have at least a HS diploma/GED

• Residence

- 24 TN counties represented

- 6 patients from out-of-state

- Majority of referrals (90%) are ETR residents

Callie Relford

Recovery Court Participant Praises program



would eventually lead her to the streets and strung out on drugs.

Relford says she started using 'Molly' and 'Acid,' before becoming pregnant at 16, while addicted to benzos and meth.

"I dropped out of Jefferson County High school my sophomore year, and began using heavily, and living under bridges, down by the lake, and pretty much just homeless for over 4 years," she shared.

She was using and making meth, while pregnant with her son, who is now 9 and living with Callie's Mother.

"He has a few issues, but he is doing very well right now."

Last year, she became pregnant again, while using pills and meth.

Relford was preparing to have another son, when she was arrested by the Jefferson County Drug Task Force, for selling and making Meth.

"I was almost 8 months pregnant with Camden when I went into Jeff County jail, and I thought I was going to prison in Nashville - when the

Recovery Court gave me a chance."

She says she really believes she would be dead if it had not been for their intervention.

Callie entered the Recovery House just a few months before having her second son.

"Everybody here has worked hard to help me. There have been times I have butted heads, and been 'sanctioned', but it has given me the direction and boundaries I needed, to not only get sober, but become independent and have faith in myself again, getting my life back on a productive track."

Miss Relford spoke well of everyone on the Recovery Court team, but had the greatest acclamation for Recovery Court Executive Director, Patty Williams, and pretty much 'Mom and Nana,' to all the folks in the house.

"Patty is like my second Mom. She has been a life saver for me. Not only has she put up with me, she has believed in me!" she laughed.

"The Judge, and the other house

mothers have also encouraged me, and picked me up, when I felt hopeless.

"Patty sticks with all the girls in the house. She helps with the kids too, pretty much 24/ 7."

She says Williams is always there for the girls in the house.

Camden, is now 5 months, and Callie has just completed getting her GED, and has just been accepted to Walters State.

"I want to major in art, maybe be a graphics designer," added Callie.

Director Patty Williams believes Callie will succeed.

"I have seen such growth in Callie in the last year. She has had her challenges, but things have panned out and she is doing great."

Williams continued, "I am proud of all of my girls and guys in recovery court. We are a family. Watching their progress is amazing and I thank God every day for the opportunity to be here for them."

Recovery Court participant, 25 year old Callie Relford, is a White Pine native who has not always been able to share her feelings and her story.

Relford praises the 4th Judicial Recovery Court program, and of course the grace of God, for saving her life.

"I started out using marijuana and alcohol at the tender age of 12.

"I just did not listen to my parents, or any authority, and began hanging out with bad influences, that led me into substance abuse"

Like all young people, she wanted her own life, but unfortunately, her peers were hardcore drug users, who

Patty's Passion

Executive Director Recovery Court
Patty Williams' passion to save lives keeps her in her profession 24/7.

She started working with the recovery court in 2009, and had previously worked in corrections since 1987.

"You know, when you work in corrections and probation, you do not really get to help folks change their lives, and I guess God knew this is where He wanted me," shared Williams, "This is the 'trenches.' This is where you see the good, bad and the ugly; but this is where a human touch, a word of encouragement or even a stern word, can help change a person with addiction issues."

Williams says watching people choose recovery can give you hope in mankind, and definitely make a believer out of you that this part of the Criminal Justice System works.

"I do know the Lord has put me here," she proclaimed.

Williams tearfully shared her heartfelt pain about her own brother being run over by a drunk driver at the young age of 16.

"I never dreamed I would be in this profession after what I went through losing my brother, but God allowed me this opportunity to help the addict, and it continues to amaze me every day.

"There has always been such a gap in the system when it came to helping those who are incarcerated due to substance abuse, and I believe Recovery Court/Drug Court has helped to fill this gap.

"There are many things that are great about the recovery house," says Williams. "You see here that these girls can learn basic responsibilities that for whatever reason many of them are lacking. We are helping them learn how to cook, clean, manage a home, jobs, and their children. It seems many of them were not even taught the basics, even how to shop for the right foods, do laundry etc., So the house is definitely more than just a place to

sleep. It is the mission field - sort of a boot camp. They have to follow the rules, go to bed and get up at a certain time.

"While they are pregnant, they do not work at an outside job. We make sure they get proper rest, prenatal care, and most importantly, stay clean.

"Many of our drug court clients, if they are pregnant, will stay here until the baby is born and they can obtain jobs - until they become independent.

"Running this house is a full time

job. There is no 'on and off' switch. It is pretty taxing, but you are saving lives. Sometimes I am called out in the middle of the night to come over to the house for one crisis or another. This is my life, it is my calling. My husband James, and my son Jeremy, are all on board with the girls and their babies. We truly are like family!"

Williams says her belief is: "It takes a village to raise any family," and the home environment of the recovery house is something many of these girls never had growing up. This environment is a large healing factor, in the girl's recovery, as well as, a very important nurturing ingredient for their children.

"Some of these girls have other children in state's custody. Due to their lives of crime and drug use, many of those children were NAS babies; and they haven't even had a chance to bond with them, and many end up giving them up for adoption, but

some work hard to get their children back. The babies they will be having while living here, thank God, will be drug-free, and to me just seeing one baby being born clean is worth all my time.

"Our goal is to try and help them get their lives back, as well as, their families. Some of them do not even

remember having their children when they were in active addiction, and that in itself, is so sad.

"Watching this come together is an amazing experience, and for me, it is definitely not that rewarding, monetarily speaking, but I can share something that makes it all worth it.

"Once, one of my girls said, 'I want to be a mom to my kids, like you are to yours, someday,' That said it all," shared Williams.

"I have been in law enforcement/criminal justice going on 30 years, and I believe that having a court ordered recovery program is the answer to restoring many lives rather than just hard time."

Williams says the next level for the recovery court is to help in providing transitional housing.

"Judge Slone and many on our recovery team and board believe that transitional housing is the answer for those who need stability and a clean environment, and we are looking for grants and moving in this direction.

"Many of the participants are not eligible for public housing, because they have felonies, but since they are in the process of rebuilding their lives they need something affordable."

Williams clarifies that the whole process is about watching these folks find a stable life again. Many of them, she added, have actually never known normal.

"They just need someone to believe in them - to have someone in their corner. Yes we are strict, but they need boundaries and direction, and many come back and thank us.

"The recovery court has grown a lot since 2009. We have been blessed to have so many come on board and help this cause, but we still welcome even more to get involved," chuckled Williams.



Raven's Story



This is my story about my addiction and journey to recovery. My story may be unique to some but very similar to others. I was broken, hopeless, and disconnected. Today I'm grateful, connected, and beyond hopeful.

Addiction had once controlled every single aspect of my life. Every choice I made. I was self-centered, empty, and lost most of all I was in full blown active addiction. Addiction can grab a hold of anyone at any given second. Addiction does not discriminate no matter the age, race, sex, religion, or type of family we may come from.

Unlike most children, I was not privileged to have both of my parents in my life. I was being raised by a single mother who did the best she could to raise my brother and I with what she had. Mom struggled with her own problems with addiction while my father had his own demons to deal. The consequences for his choices while in addiction led him to a 35 year prison sentence which he is still currently serving. This is a constant reminder that addiction always leads to jails, institutions, or death. Because I didn't have a male role model in my life, I searched for love in all the wrong places.

My mother struggled to raise my brother and I which resulted in a lack of supervision. At the age of 15, I became pregnant with my first son. I wanted to give him a loving family with a mother and father; something I never had. I gave birth to a healthy little boy at the age of 16. Not long after giving birth I made the bad decision to jump into a marriage I was not ready for. I was in denial about the abusive relationship I was in. DCS had threatened to take custody of my child. My teenage years were troubled and full of obstacles but I pushed forward and managed to graduate high school in 2008.

Around this time I made the choice to leave my husband. It wasn't long before I was in another unhealthy relationship and once again pregnant with my second child. Needless to say the relationship did not last long. At this point I had a very young son, was well into my second pregnancy, scared and alone and landed back in the arms of my first love. I had left him before I became pregnant with my first child. He was willing to be there for my children and me despite the circumstances. After giving birth to my daughter I filed for divorce from my husband because I thought I had found true happiness and the family I wanted to give my children.

It was during this relationship that I got comfortable and careless. Soon I found out I was pregnant with my third child, another son. Things seemed to be going well until that relationship became abusive. He had warped my mind into believing that he only hit me because he loved me. I had been considering leaving him until I found out about a very large settlement he was about to get. I stayed for all the wrong reasons thinking it would solve all of our problems because I was the only one working at the time. The settlement only



made things worse. At this point I was 19 and had only experimented with marijuana. Our money started running low so we got this bright idea from a so called friend to invest our money into buying and selling pills. Little did I know that buying and selling drugs would soon lead to using and abusing drugs. This was the start of my downward spiral into addiction.

Right after giving birth I married again. Shortly thereafter I began intravenously using opiates for the first time. I no longer felt empty. I felt great. My drug use progressed until I no longer had control of it. I was no longer the good mother I once was. I was a Junkie. It didn't take long before everyone around me could see how much I had changed. My loved ones feared for me and the safety of my children. My addiction led me to start using in front of my kids. That behavior led to my first charge and the first of many charges to come. DCS became involved and took custody of my children. My youngest was only four months old at the time. Instead of this being a wakeup call it led me deeper into addiction. I didn't have any fight in me to get my children back. I no longer knew who I was. I was angry, empty,

drained of hope, and full of dope. Soon my husband left me. When I was no longer able to support my habit I turned to stealing from others including my loved ones. I started trading sex for drugs and money. I had been stripped of any self-respect or self-worth. I didn't have a conscience. I was comfortably numb. Now I am no longer just using opiates, I have been introduced to meth which soon became the love of my life.

This lifestyle continued for the next two years. Things progressed until I was arrested in August 2012 for burglarizing the Circuit Court Clerk's home. I would do anything at this point for my fix. I was looking at a very long time in jail for these charges. I hated myself, everyone, and everything. I wanted to die. The next year was spent in jail and then I decided to try Drug Court. Many people told me I would never make it in Drug Court. On June 4th I was released to enter the Drug Court program. I thought I was going to manipulate the system and just get through it. I still didn't want to look in the mirror. I was told honesty was the key to working the program but I was not able to do that because I was lying as soon as I came into the program. Soon I got involved with another addict in recovery and became pregnant with my fourth child. I didn't want to have another child when I didn't have any of my other three children. My life was chaos and I didn't know which way to turn because I was lying to Drug Court about who the father was. Fear and guilt consumed me until I could no longer take it. I made it four months without using drugs and was three months pregnant when I picked up again. One use led to two and I knew I had to do something. I had a drug screen the next day. I tried to fake it and was caught by Drug Court staff trying to pass the screen with someone else's urine. It was a relief at that

point. Later that week I got honest about everything. Drug Court sanctioned me by placing me in jail for a week and then sending me to rehab. Insurance would only pay for one week so I had to go back to jail. That was the day I surrendered and made the decision to turn it all over. I could no longer live like this. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. I decided to let this make me, not break me. Later that week I was released on house arrest and was ordered to move into the Drug Court transitional house as soon as it opened. This was where I began to truly change my life. I gave birth to a drug free, healthy baby girl in March 2014. I was blessed and felt I had a purpose again for once in my life. I began to look at myself, let go, and let God. I completed my stay at the recovery house but not before I learned so much.

Addiction is much more than using. It's the way I think. I also have a co-occurring disorder which means I have a mental disorder as well as a substance abuse disorder. I learned that I had to change only one thing and that was everything. During my journey of recovery, I have signed over custody of my youngest son, I have established a healthy life style, I have a home, I have a vehicle, I have family and friends, and I have feelings of love and joy. Blessings continue to come my way as long as I make the next right choice. I wouldn't change any of this if I could because without all these experiences I would not be the strong person I am today. I know that if I can do it anyone can. I hope my story is an inspiration to someone. It's not always easy but it's beyond worth every second of it. Not matter what, you don't have to use. Life is so beautiful and there are so many blessings waiting for us.

I am 18 months clean and my story continues.

Local officials help launch 'Born Drug-Free' effort



Rev. Debra Shultz with District Attorney General, Jimmy Dunn at the NAS Task Force launch ceremony

“We are stepping outside of our normal role as prosecutors to reach out to expectant mothers who are addicted to drugs. We hope that our efforts in educating the public will help alleviate this rapidly growing problem effecting newborn babies. We are providing brochures and other forms of information so the community as a whole can be aware of the problem and work toward the solution. Our ultimate goal is to encourage pregnant mothers who have a drug problem to come forward and get help,” said Jimmy Dunn, District Attorney General.

'HEAL' Offers a New Beginning for Many

HEAL of Sevier County offers new life opportunities to women struggling with addiction.

Executive Director Ellen Wilhoit, a retired nursing administrator, who shares her passion to help women in recovery, governs the organization.

"There is always hope, and we at HEAL (Help Educate Address and Locate) are here to guide women into new life, and we are seeing positive results in our effort."

The women's recovery support group, is a Christ centered, 12 step program which is based on Biblical principles.

Nikki Osborne, who is now the leader of the Monday night session, shares how this group has helped her make a new start in her life.

Osborne learned about the group while she was working on the labor and delivery unit at LeConte Medical Center.

"I struggled with addiction for many years and have now been clean and sober for 6 years. I ask God to allow me to use my testimony and He does, every Monday night with these wonderful ladies," shared Miss Osborne.

She says her true desire is to be a mentor to them, and prays her testimony will give them hope, and show them that through Christ, all things are possible.

In 2011, Leconte Medical Center assembled a small group to begin addressing the concerns about the babies born in the facility who were addicted to drugs at birth.

As of November 2014, there have been 42 infants that have been born NAS babies. For a community the size of theirs, this number is alarming, and seeing the pain these newborns experience due to their addiction is heart-breaking.

The group has grown to include representatives from Children's Hospital, the

Sevier County Health Department, local law enforcement, county Judges, and many more. Originally, the group was known to the community as MoMs (Moms on Meds), now, they have expanded to include not only Moms but others who struggle with addiction. In 2014, their task force voted to change their name to HEAL

(Help Educate Address and Locate). Their goal is to reach those that struggle with addiction and do not know where to turn or how to seek help.

The group is also available for speaking engagements throughout Sevier County.

They offer a Women's Recovery Support Group, Day One, every Monday at the Life Springs Women's Healthcare office located at 627 Middle Creek Road in Sevierville at 6:00 p.m. If anyone needs more information on the support group, please call (423) 435-6586 or check out their FaceBook page.

Women's Recovery Support Group

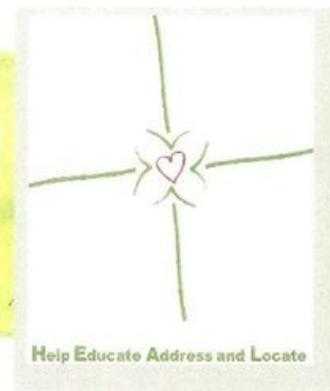
This recovery group is for women who struggle with addiction. In this group, we will use the 12 steps along with their Biblical principles. These steps are an important aid for women in their recovery.

All women are welcome!

This group is a safe place for ladies...a place of understanding where you will be accepted and loved.

This group is not a therapy group. We are a Christ centered recovery group. We share our experience, strength and hope with each other... finding healing and freedom from addiction.

womeninrecoveryseviercounty@gmail.com



Mondays from 11:30am to 12:30pm

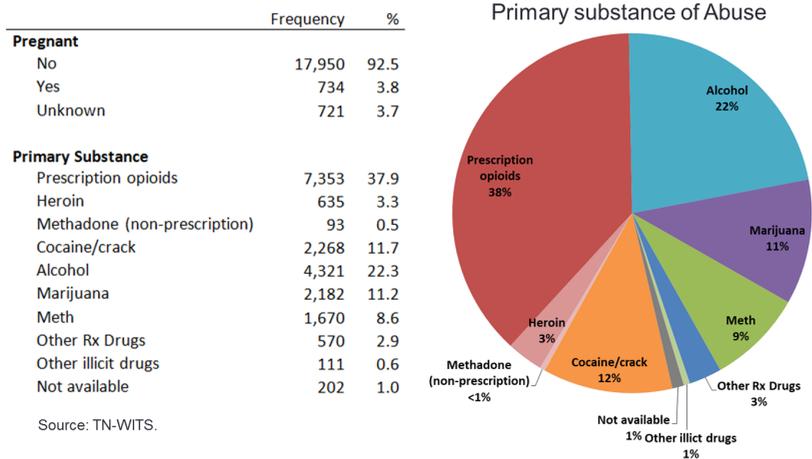
King Family Library: Bridgemont Room

**408 High Street
Sevierville, TN 37862**

For information: call (423)435-6585

Descriptive statistics

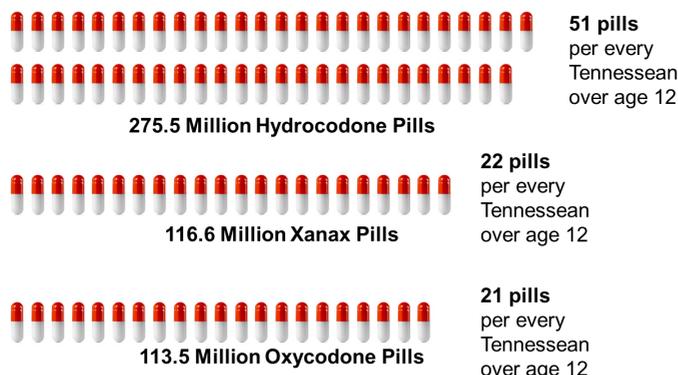
Figure 1. Treatment admissions for all women: Feb 2011- Jan 2015



Note. N = 19,405. Percentages rounded to whole numbers.



TN's Prescription Drug Problem



Data source: Tennessee Department of Health; Controlled Substance Monitoring Database.

Prenatal Drug Exposure

- All babies with neonatal abstinence syndrome are drug-exposed infants*
 - **Almost always prenatal*
- Not all drug-exposed infants will develop Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
- All drug-exposed infants are potentially at risk for adverse outcomes
- **NAS terminology to be changed to NOW – neonatal opioid withdrawal**

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Jefferson County Health Council



WWW.BornDrugFreeTN.Com