



**For Immediate Release**

Thursday, May 29, 2025

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**The Florida Behavioral Health Association Showcases Voices from the Front Lines of  
Florida's Mental Health System**

**Tallahassee, Fla.** — May is Mental Health Awareness Month. For Florida's community behavioral health providers, mental health is a priority every day.

To honor this ongoing commitment, the [Florida Behavioral Health Association](#) (FBHA) is featuring a month-long video campaign with heartfelt testimonials from social workers, clinicians, program supervisors, and leaders across the state, sharing why they have committed their careers to mental health and what inspires them. FBHA is highlighting the videos on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X](#) with the message that mental health matters and so do the people who have mental health conditions.

FBHA's Board Chair, Scott Burgess, CEO for David Lawrence Centers for Behavioral Health in Naples, shared why he works in the mental health profession.

"It is because mental health has an impact on everybody's life," said Burgess. "It affects not only the individual with a mental health condition but also their family and community. I think it is critically important for us to invest our time in something that we are passionate about, and I am passionate about mental well-being."

Lindsey Pollen, a licensed therapist with LifeStream Behavioral Center in Leesburg, shared that the most rewarding part of her job is seeing growth in her adolescent clients and their families.

A crisis therapist with one of BayCare Behavioral Health's Mobile Response Teams said she appreciates her position because she gets to work with children and adults, helping to mitigate any danger and connect individuals with the providers at BayCare.

Team leaders at Aspire Health Partners in Orlando shared why mental health awareness is important. "Mental health awareness reminds us that there is hope, it saves lives, it transforms communities, it promotes access to care, it sheds light on the importance of mental well-being, and helps to reduce the stigma."

Bridgeway Center in Fort Walton emphasized the importance of mental health counseling, saying it is essential to overall well-being and makes our communities a better place. Centerstone Florida in Bradenton reminded us that it is OK to not be OK. Community Assisted and Supported Living in Sarasota agreed, saying mental health impacts emotional, physical, and social health, and reminded us that it is important to seek treatment in a timely manner.

Dr. Theresa Rulien, CEO of Child Guidance Center in Jacksonville, said, "It is time to remind ourselves that mental health is health. Whether you are struggling or know someone who is, you are not alone. Let us continue building a world where mental well-being is a priority for everyone."

Others offered tips for how to take care of mental well-being year-round.

Maureen Dunleavy, senior regional vice president of Guidance/Care Center in the Keys, said, "Our mental health is just as important as our physical health. One of the best tools to help manage your mental health is to get outside, get some fresh air, and enjoy!"

Broward Addiction Recovery Center celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month by bringing together its department leaders to step away from the office, catch up, and enjoy some fresh air by taking a one-hour walk together.

Lakeview Center in Pensacola encouraged individuals to reach out for help, especially if they are feeling alone.

Boley Centers in St. Petersburg expressed that mental well-being starts with a safe and secure place to live. "Housing is more than just shelter," said Boley Centers President and CEO Kevin Marrone. "It is the foundation to healing and stability, giving individuals the power to reach recovery."

Others shared programs and resources that their agency offers to help support those going through recovery.

Agape Network in Miami talked about the services it provides, including behavioral health care integrated with primary care, transitions from hospitals, running crisis stabilization units, and diversions from jails.

Dr. Jay Reeve, president and CEO of Apalachee Center in Tallahassee, spotlighted the groundbreaking collaboration with Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare, offering more accessible intensive outpatient services in the community.

Directions for Living (DFL) President and CEO April Lott shined a light on DFL's mental health court program, which serves individuals who have been incarcerated due to their mental health conditions.

Tri-County Human Services in Lakeland highlighted its Pathway Program, which provides wrap-around services for individuals needing extra support.

These are examples of the incredible, life-changing efforts behavioral health treatment providers are making to improve the lives of Floridians.

To view the full collection of videos, visit [FBHA's YouTube Channel](#) or follow and share the videos on FBHA's social media pages to help spread the messages of hope and healing all year round.

Remember, help is always available. Call or text [988 for the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#), or reach out to one of [FBHA's community provider members](#) for localized support from trained mental health professionals. Florida's [Mobile Response Teams](#) also offer immediate emergency behavioral health care for those in crisis.

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*FBHA represents over 70 community mental health and substance use treatment providers throughout the state. FBHA's members span from Pensacola to Key West, serve over 604,000+ individuals each year, and provide services in every county in Florida. These community providers primarily serve the uninsured, underinsured, and the Medicaid populations. Visit [Floridabha.org](#) to find a list of community providers and get connected with mental health and substance use treatment along with other services.*