

Third Annual Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) Conference



September 4, 2025

Friday Conference Center
100 Friday Center Drive
Chapel Hill, 27599



ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) refers to the use of FDA-approved medications—such as methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone—in combination with counseling and other therapeutic supports to provide a *whole-person* approach to treating opioid use disorder. Unlike the term *medication-assisted treatment (MAT)*, which suggests that medications play a supplemental or temporary role, *MOUD* recognizes these medications as essential components of care—akin to how antidepressants are understood in the treatment of depression. These medications work to normalize brain chemistry, block the euphoric effects of opioids, relieve cravings, and stabilize body functions. This allows individuals to focus on other aspects of recovery, such as developing coping strategies and rebuilding life stability. When paired with counseling and wraparound supports—like group therapy, relapse prevention, vocational and educational services, family or community-based support, and behavioral health care—MOUD offers a safe, effective, and evidence-based pathway to recovery. This integrated approach addresses the underlying thoughts and behaviors associated with opioid use and empowers individuals to reclaim their health and agency.

This year's conference brings together a diverse coalition of activists, treatment providers, researchers, policymakers, and individuals with lived experience to confront the opioid crisis through shared knowledge and collaborative action. United by purpose, we will exchange insights, ignite new ideas, and explore innovative strategies to strengthen MOUD treatment across North Carolina. Through dynamic training sessions and cross-sector dialogue, participants will gain practical tools and renewed momentum to drive lasting change in their communities. **The theme of this year's convening, *From Insight to Impact: Ending the Opioid Crisis Through Multisectoral Partnerships*, reflects our commitment to translating collective wisdom into transformative solutions.**

ORGANIZERS

North Carolina Community Health Center Association (NCCHCA). NCCHCA was formed in 1978 by the leadership of community health centers. NCCHCA members include 38 Federally Qualified Health Center grantees (including one migrant voucher program) and five Look-Alike organizations. NCCHCA is singularly focused on the success of health centers throughout the state. As a non-profit consumer governed Federally Qualified Health Centers, NCCHCA provides integrated medical, dental, pharmacy, behavioral health, and enabling services to over one-half million patients in North Carolina.

The North Carolina Collaboratory is a research entity that partners with academic institutions and state agencies to transform research into practical information for use by State and local government. Since its authorization in 2016 by the legislature (see [31a N.C.G.S. §116-255](#)), the Collaboratory has stewarded \$148 million in appropriations from the NC General Assembly, investing in over 400 research projects across all 17 UNC System campuses and numerous NC-based private colleges and universities. Initially focused on

natural resources and environmental issues, the Collaboratory has since broadened its portfolio to include research on some of the State's most pressing challenges, including public health, education, clean energy, economic recovery, and technological development. The Collaboratory is committed to developing innovative, evidence-based solutions that serve the State and its constituents.

The Opioid Abatement Coordinating Center (OACC), housed within the Julius L. Chambers Biomedical and Biotechnology Research Institute (BBRI) at North Carolina Central University (NCCU), was established in 2022 with funding from the NC Collaboratory to advance statewide efforts to address opioid use disorder and overdose. The mission of the OACC is to strengthen research capacity and foster collaborative relationships across UNC System institutions, strategic partners, and community-based organizations. Through coordinated statewide initiatives, technical assistance, community engagement, and the translation of basic research into practice, the Center is committed to reducing the impact of the opioid epidemic on North Carolina residents.

SPONSORS

We gratefully acknowledge the invaluable support of our sponsors, whose partnership strengthens our shared commitment to ending the opioid crisis.

Carolina Complete Health
Governor's Institute
LabCorp
NC STAR Network
Trillium



AGENDA

Breakfast & Registration 8:00 AM - Atrium

Opening Session

- **8:45 AM - Welcome Address**, *Deepak Kumar, PhD*, Associate Provost and Dean of Research and Sponsored Programs, NC Central University (Redbud Room)
- **9:00 AM - Opening Remarks**, *Chris Shank*, Chief Executive Officer, NC Community Health Center Association (Redbud Room)

Morning Plenary

9:15 – 9:55 AM – Expanding Access, Reducing Stigma: North Carolina’s Path to Medication-Supported Recovery, *Saarah Waleed*, Chief Clinical Officer, Substance Use, Prevention, Treatment, & Recovery, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services, NCDHHS (Redbud Room)

Breakout Session I

- **10:00–10:55 AM – Lived Experience Panel**, *Kurtis Taylor*, i2i Center for Integrative Health (moderator), (Redbud Room)
- **10:00 AM–12:00PM – Opioid Overdose Reversal 101**, *Reid Getty*, NC Harm Reduction Coalition (Dogwood Room)

Breakout Session II

- **11:00 AM–12:15PM Symposium: Maximizing Opioid Settlement Funds through Government, Academic, and Community Partnerships** (Sunflower Room)
 - *Annie Preaux*, PhD, MPH, Appalachian State University
 - *Cassie Adler*, MSW, LCSW-A, AppHealthCare
 - *Yanet Cisnero*, Polk County Health and Human Services
 - *Natalie Trachsel*, Polk County Health and Human Services
 - *Summer Woodside*, PhD, LCSW, LISW-CP, UNC-Pembroke
 - *Ashley Love*, MPA, Robeson County Administration
 - *Jeffrey Milroy*, MPH, DrPH, UNC Greensboro, Department of Public Health Education
 - *Jennifer Layton*, MPH, Randolph County Public Health
 - *Rebecca Carlson*, Randolph County Public Health
 - *Jeni Corn*, PhD, NC Collaboratory (moderator)
- **11:00 AM–12:00PM Navigating MOUD and Mutual Aid: Strategies for Communities, Providers, and Policymakers**, *Scott Luetgenau*, MSW, LCAS, Gatespring (Redbud Room)
-

 Lunch 12:15–1:15 PM – Trillium A

 Keynote Address 1:15–2:15 PM (Trillium A)

Wholehearted Evidence-Based Care for Pregnant and Parenting Patients with Substance Use Disorders and Their Children, *Hendree Jones, PhD, LP*, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine

Breakout Session III (2:20–3:20 PM)

- **The Evolving Role of Opioid Treatment Programs in Addressing the Opioid Crisis**, *Anna Stanley, LCMHCS, LCAS, CCS*, State Opioid Treatment Authority (Redbud Room)
- **Implementation of OUD Treatment in the Primary Care Setting**, *H. Claire West, MD*, NC STAR Network and *Blake Fagan, MD*, NC STAR Network and MAHEC, UNC-Chapel Hill (Sunflower Room)
- **Knowing is Half the Battle: Reducing the Burden of SUD and Mental Illness Among Our Patients with Undiagnosed FASDs**, *Holly Warren, MD*, NCFASD Informed (Dogwood Room)

Coffee Break 3:20 – 3:30

Afternoon Plenary 3:30–4:45 PM (Redbud Room)

Peers at the Frontline: Strengthening Recovery Pathways in the Opioid Response

- *Bernice Adjabeng, DMgt., MA, MSW*, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work
- *Chad Cagle*, Blue Ridge Health
- *Chris Forney*, Mountain Area Health Education Center
- *Mark Moore*, Kinston Community Health Center
- *Patty Watford*, Kinston Community Health Center

Closing Remarks 4:45-5:00 PM (Redbud Room)

- *Leah J. Floyd, PhD*, Biomedical/Biotechnology Research Institute, NC Central University



SPEAKERS



Deepak Kumar, PhD serves as the associate provost and dean of Research and Sponsored Programs at NCCU and is also a professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences. In this capacity, he functions as the university's chief research officer, providing vision, strategy, and leadership for NCCU's expanding research enterprise. Dr. Kumar's career integrates scientific excellence, strategic leadership, mentorship, and community engagement, through which he has advanced both the research enterprise at NCCU and the broader goal of ensuring that innovation in science and health research benefits diverse communities across North Carolina and beyond. Over the course of his career, Dr. Kumar has secured more than \$75 million in competitive funding as a principal investigator or co-investigator. Currently, he directs several signature initiatives, including the NIH/National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) RCMI Center for Health Disparities Research and NC Collaboratory-supported opioid abatement project.

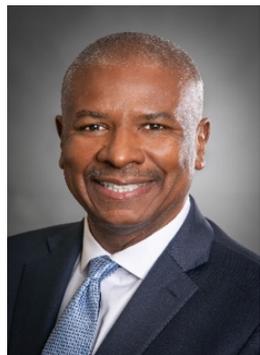


Chris (Crystal) Shank serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the North Carolina Community Health Center Association, the Carolina Medical Home Network, and the Translational Health Institute of the Safety Net in North Carolina. Since 2020, she has also supervised a Health Center Control Network. In her leadership role, Chris directs a team of 83 dedicated professionals committed to supporting Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alikes (FQHC LAL). Her efforts are focused on establishing a system of care aimed at achieving health equity for all individuals, particularly over three-quarters of a million Carolinians who access services at North Carolina's community health centers annually. Prior to her current position, Chris held the role of Regional Administrator with Duke Health-Duke Primary Care, where she was responsible for overseeing clinical operations, implementing practice transformation, and advancing quality improvement initiatives. Currently, Chris resides in Cary with her husband, Michael, and, in her spare time, they operate a nonprofit organization that provides ex-offenders with opportunities to build a solid foundation for becoming independent and functioning members of society.



Saarah Waleed, LCMHC is the Chief Clinical Officer for Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services at the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMHDDSUS). In her current role, she leads clinical programs and policies for substance use, problem gambling, and services for justice-involved adults across North Carolina. With over 30 years of leadership experience in behavioral health, Saarah has played a pivotal role in program development, strategic planning, and integrated care models. She has led efforts to

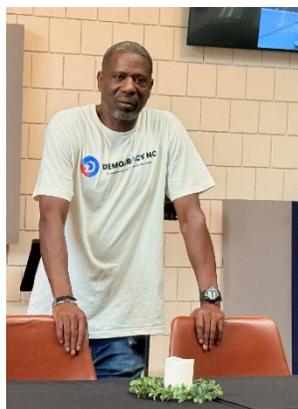
implement person-centered, trauma-informed, and whole-person integrated services, ensuring comprehensive care for individuals and families affected by substance use disorders, trauma, poverty, and criminal justice involvement. A Licensed Clinical Mental Health Clinician, Saarah holds a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling and is dedicated to advancing innovative, evidence-based solutions in behavioral health care.



Kurtis Taylor is the President & Board Chair for i2i Center for Integrative Health, as well as a board member for Oxford House, Inc. Presently, Mr. Taylor serves as the Executive Director of the Bob Barker Foundation, where he is committed to helping reduce recidivism rates, nationwide. Mr. Taylor is a vocal advocate for all citizens faced with the challenges of reentering society after incarceration, as well as those that accompany substance use disorder.



Scottie Barnes was born in Greenville, NC, in 1973 and raised in Raleigh's Halifax Court Projects where he was exposed early to drugs, violence and instability and yet found resilience through those challenges. By his teens he faced home abuse, run-ins with the law and the streets became his path, overshadowing his talent in football. His lifestyle led to addiction, incarceration and multiple near-death experiences including being shot 3 times in 2003. He began his journey of recovery in 2018 and fully surrendered to sobriety. He rebuilt his life through faith, work and service, holding a state job for 8 years before founding KatchtheKite in 2019. His nonprofit provides mentoring, peer support, and resources for the youth and families facing struggles he once endured. Today, Scottie is dedicated to breaking cycles of trauma and giving hope where it once felt impossible.



Franklin Henderson, and I'm a 62-year-old father and grandfather living in Raleigh, North Carolina. I was born in Charlotte, and for many years, I struggled with addiction, starting when I was just 15. But on February 4, 2025, my life changed. That's my clean date, and I've been on a new path ever since. I attend meetings daily, which is where my friends know me as "365." The support from my new friends, my sponsor, and my grand sponsor has been incredibly rewarding. My family is proud of the changes I've made, and I'm grateful for their love. I love connecting with people and sharing my story, hoping it might help someone else. Now, I have a new purpose. With the guidance of my sponsor and grand sponsor, I'm building a life I never thought was possible.



Curtis Johnson is a dedicated peer support specialist with seven years of recovery where I share my powerful story of change and hope. I visit the prisons and treatment centers. I'm a proud husband and father, and very passionate about helping and serving my community daily, believing that anyone can change with a new mindset. I'm a true example of change. I've dedicated my life to encouraging and helping others. I'm celebrating seven years in recovery on September 20, 2025. On my journey it is my plan to inspire hope and demonstrate how a person's life can be transformed with a new mindset. I thank God every day for the new person that I am today.



Reid Getty is the Community Health and Education Director at NC Harm Reduction. A North Carolina native and Durham resident for the past 12 years, Reid has over eight years of harm reduction experience rooted in direct service and lived experiences. His work is grounded in a deep commitment to public health, human rights, and community empowerment. Reid is a proud advocate for harm reduction, prison abolition, and the rights of sex workers and drug users.



Annie Preaux, PhD, MPH is an Assistant Professor of Public Health at Appalachian State University. She received her PhD in Community Health and Behavioral Sciences as well as her MPH from Tulane University. Dr. Preaux's current research focuses on the lived experiences of people with current and past substance use in western North Carolina, with a focus on how personal narratives can inform and strengthen opioid remediation efforts in the region. Her other research interests include maternal and child health and gender-based violence, approached through a health equity lens and grounded in the social determinants of health



Cassie Adler, MSW, LCSWA is the Behavioral Health Program Manager and a behavioral health provider at AppHealthCare, the Appalachian District Health Department, serving rural northwestern North Carolina. She supervises a team of behavioral health providers and recovery peer support specialists and is leading efforts to establish an in-house Syringe Services Program. With a background in finance, information systems, and social work, Cassie brings a systems-informed lens to public health and harm reduction. She is a partner on a collaborative project with App State

to engage people with lived experience of substance use in shaping future opioid settlement priorities.



Yanet Cisneros, MBA is the Transportation and Human Services Program Manager at the Polk Health and Human Services Agency. She oversees the county's public transportation system and leads the coordination of the county's response to the opioid epidemic, managing the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee and driving initiatives aimed at prevention, treatment, and recovery. Yanet holds a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in marketing, is a certified community health worker, and is trained in Mental Health First Aid. Currently, she is advancing her education by pursuing a doctorate in organizational leadership. With nearly two decades of experience in public health, serving in varied roles, Yanet brings a strong background in outreach, engagement, and systems navigation. Her work is rooted in equity, focused on reducing barriers, and amplifying community voices. Whether organizing grassroots initiatives, facilitating community education, or collaborating across agencies, Yanet is dedicated to empowering individuals and strengthening communities.



Natalie Trachsel, MS currently serves as Population Health Manager and Interim Health Director for the Polk County Health and Human Services Agency, where she oversees the Division of Public Health and Senior Services programs. Prior to her work with the county, Natalie's most recent background includes domestic and global public health research spanning the disciplines of health economics and financing, nutrition, health services promotion, and maternal and child health, in partnership with Georgetown University, the World Health Organization, and the National Institute for Medical Research in Korogwe, Tanzania. With over 10 years of experience in community outreach leadership and a multidisciplinary educational background, Natalie applies her technical knowledge and her passions for individual advocacy and community service to influence health policy and practice, particularly to serve the marginalized and rural areas of the county and the state. Natalie holds a Master of Science degree in Global Health from Georgetown University.



Summer Woodside, PhD, LCSW, LISW-CP is from Laurinburg, North Carolina. She has a Bachelor of Social Work degree from UNC Pembroke, Master of Social Work degree from UNC Chapel Hill, and PhD in Specialized Education Services from UNC Greensboro. She serves as Chair and Professor in the Department of Social Work at UNC Pembroke. Her research interests include issues related to equity and diversity in health and education settings. She currently serves on the School Social Work Association of America Awards Subcommittee, and the Public School Forum of NC Advisory Board.



Ashely Love, MPA Ashely Love serves as Grant Administrator for Robeson County, where she secures and manages funding to support key initiatives in public health, infrastructure, education, and workforce development. She also oversees the County’s opioid settlement strategy, guiding efforts that fund prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.



Jeff Milroy, MPH, DrPH is an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health Education, Graduate Program Director, Impact Through Innovation Faculty Fellow for the School of Health and Human Sciences, and Director of the Center for Athlete Well-being at UNC Greensboro. He is a public health scientist who has spent the past 21 years focusing on the conceptualization, development, and evaluation of theory-based behavioral interventions. He has led and co-led evaluation projects within the state, nationally, and internationally. Dr. Milroy has evaluated multiple web-based programs aimed at reducing alcohol and other drug use among college students and college athletes. Recently, he and his team received federal funding to develop and evaluate an opioid prevention mobile application targeting construction and health care workers as well as NC Collaboratory Funding to evaluate Randolph County Settlement Team’s (RCOST) technical assistance initiative.



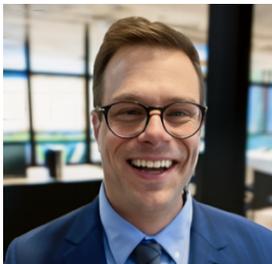
Jennifer Layton, MPH serves as the Assistant Health Director for Randolph County Public Health. She has served rural communities working in local health departments in North Carolina since 2012. The emphasis of her work has been empowering communities by collaborating on grassroots initiatives, coalition development, and sharing knowledge and skills to improve health outcomes. The opioid crisis having disproportionately impacted rural communities led Jennifer to work on this issue alongside governmental agencies, community-based organizations, and people with lived experience. As a result, she has successfully built community-based coalitions to build programs to meet the needs of communities, launch evidence-based interventions, and secure state and federal grants to support the work. Jennifer’s passion to equip communities with the knowledge and skills to guide their work long-term led to the idea of building a robust technical assistance program in Randolph County to support organizations receiving opioid settlement funds.



Rebecca Carlson, MPH is the Opioid Settlement Program Manager at Randolph County Public Health. She works with community partners on opioid use and overdose prevention projects and leads the training and technical assistance program for organizations receiving opioid settlement funds. Prior to Randolph County, she worked with the CDC Foundation as an Overdose Prevention Specialist and the Alamance County Health Department as a Special Projects Manager on substance use and mental health projects.



Jeni Corn, Ph.D serves as the Director of Research – Social Sciences for the NC Collaboratory. Jeni oversees grant-making for the social sciences research portfolio by partnering with academic institutions and government entities to transform research on the State’s most pressing policy problems into practical information and technologies for use by the State and local governments and the communities they serve. Jeni has extensive experience conducting research in school settings and providing technical assistance to school, district, and state-level education staff focused on research, evaluation, and policy in the Southeast. Most recently, she served as the Director of Research and Evaluation at the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), where she developed a robust research agenda, coordinated state- and local-level research and evaluation studies, and built research and evaluation capacity. Jeni attended UNC-Chapel Hill for her undergraduate and master’s degrees before moving to Raleigh to pursue her doctorate at NC State University.



Scott Luetgenau, MSW, LCAS, CSI is the founder of Gatespring, a consulting firm specializing in opioid settlement strategy, MOUD integration, harm reduction, and evidence-based prevention, treatment, and recovery planning. He has directed North Carolina’s largest opioid treatment program and served as Deputy Director and board member of Addiction Professionals of North Carolina, as well as co-chair of the NC Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence. Nationally, Scott has consulted for six years with SAMHSA’s Opioid Response Network and the Addiction Technology Transfer Center, leading initiatives on MOUD integration in detention centers and HCV screening and treatment in opioid treatment programs. An expert in outcomes measurement and program evaluation, he combines clinical insight, data-driven strategy, and collaborative leadership with lived experience as a person in long-term recovery. Scott leads collaborative strategic planning efforts, builds strong coalitions, and helps communities align settlement investments with local priorities for lasting, measurable impact.



Hendrée E. Jones, PhD, LP, is a licensed psychologist and Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After a decade of directing UNC Horizons, she stepped into a Senior Advisor role in order to take on several new national and international policy projects (e.g., Chair, Global Women’s Network for Providers of Women’s Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery). Dr. Jones has received continuous National Institutes of Health funding since 1994 and is a top world expert in neonatal abstinence syndrome and opioid-related disorders. She has written more than 350 publications, 17 courses for adult learners on topics of substance use disorder treatment and multiple books, book chapters and national and international guidelines on the topic of caring for women as well as children with substance use problems including those published by SAMHSA, the United Nations and the World Health Organization.



Anna Stanley, LCMHCS, LCAS, CCS, is a licensed clinical addictions specialist and a licensed clinical mental health counselor with expertise in opioid treatment. As North Carolina’s State Opioid Treatment Authority (SOTA), she is responsible for overseeing North Carolina’s vast network of Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs), which are state and federally licensed programs offering Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) as well as other treatment and recovery supports like counseling, case management, and peer support. Anna is passionate about guiding policy change to expand access to evidence-based treatment, enhancing MOUD in criminal legal settings, and reducing stigma toward individuals with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD).



H. Claire West, MD, is an Associate Professor of Medicine with UNC’s Division of General Medicine and Clinical Epidemiology. She is a clinician-educator practicing adult outpatient primary care in Chapel Hill and Cary. She established and directs the embedded medications for opioid use disorder clinic in internal medicine, runs the internal medicine residency training program on opioid use disorder and serves as the director of the state-funded OUD workforce expansion program, NC STAR Network.



Blake Fagan, MD is a family physician, and the Clinical Director of Substance Use Disorder Initiatives, at the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) in Asheville and a Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Preventative Medicine, Board-Certified in Addiction Medicine. He trains healthcare providers across the state in medications for opioid use disorder treatment, safe pain management, and safe opioid prescribing practices.



Dr. Holly Warren completed internal medicine residency at Duke prior to practicing primary care in her hometown FQHC for 12 years. She now serves as the medical director of Lenoir County Health Department, where she and collaborators are implementing a new Community Recovery Division in association with local treatment courts, following models established by All Rise and ASAM. She is also an FASD advocate in the setting of lived family experience and serves on the board of NCFASD Informed, a local affiliate of FASD United.

While serving in FQHC leadership, Dr. Warren was able to establish FASD screening and diagnostic services in eastern NC and is currently in the exploratory phase with Trillium in hopes of opening an FASD-inclusive afterschool and summer program for children in her community.



Dr. Bernice Adjabeng, DMgt., MA, MSW is the Director of the NCCPSS Program, where she manages certification, training, and partner engagement and evaluation. She joined the UNC–Chapel Hill School of Social Work in 2014. Her academic credentials include a Doctor of Management from Webster University and dual master’s degrees in social work and Nonprofit Management from Washington University in St. Louis. With over 20 years of experience, Bernice has worked in direct practice, community development, evaluation, leadership, and organizational

management. She applies a strong interdisciplinary approach rooted in both practice and research. Besides her administrative leadership, she has taught at UNC–Chapel Hill, Elon University, and NCCU. Her efforts support the development of a skilled peer support workforce and promote recovery-oriented care systems in NC.



Chad Cagle is a dedicated Peer Support Specialist with over 16 years of experience working/managing Peer Support teams. Currently, Chad serves as the Peer Services Manager at Blue Ridge Health. Known for his commitment to helping others, Chad brings compassion, consistency, and a strong work ethic to every aspect of his work. Outside of his professional life, Chad is a devoted husband and proud father to a wonderful daughter. He also serves as an active foster parent, offering care and stability to children in need. In his free time, Chad enjoys the outdoors and values quality time spent with his family.



Chris Forney is a NC certified peer support specialist of 12 years, CRC Recovery Coach, IFRS Forensic Peer Support Specialist, WRAP Facilitator, and Drug and Alcohol Treatment Specialist from McDowell County. He has been recovering from substance use since 2009, after being in active addiction for 27 years, starting at age 16. Chris's life changed after being caught in a drug sting and given a chance to enroll in Drug Court. When his father was diagnosed with bladder cancer, Chris vowed to never be away from his family again due to substance use. Once in recovery, he was able to spend 4 months clean with his father before he passed and served as his mother's caregiver during her final months. "My recovery and becoming a Peer Support gave me the chance to give my parents joy," writes Chris, "I finally became the son they raised me to be."



Mark Moore currently serves as a North Carolina certified peer support specialist at Kinston Behavioral Health. He also works with the recovery courts in the 9th Judicial District, serving Wayne, Greene and Lenoir Counties. Mark is an advocate for his clients serving as a positive role model in their recovery. Having over 40 years of substance use disorder, he is able to share his lived experiences to hopefully guide clients to a path of successful long-term recovery. He is actively involved with 12 Step Programs both locally and within correctional facilities, where he serves as a sponsor and supports individuals navigating incarceration in their transition back into society. Additionally, drawing on both lived experience and professional training, Mark serves as a Forensic Peer Support Specialist, walking alongside justice-involved individuals as they navigate the legal system and reclaim their path to recovery.



Patty Watford is a certified peer support specialist employed at Kinston Community Behavioral Health Center, supporting families involved with the 9th District Area Recovery Court. She believes that all families require assistance, at critical stages of development, to maintain a healthy environment for success. Patty advocates for her participants, guiding them in navigating community resources essential to their recovery. She assists participants in transportation to appointments, Wellness Recovery Action Plan Groups, and 9th District Alumni Groups. She shows compassion and empathy to those she serves and shares her open-mindedness and optimism about recovery with others. Patty has a wealth of lived experience, resulting in over 18 years of ongoing recovery from substance abuse. She holds an associate degree in human services technology with a concentration in substance abuse and a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies, Public and Non-Profit Administration: Substance Abuse. She is also registered with NCASPPB as a CADCR.



Leah J. Floyd, PhD, is a behavioral scientist at the Biomedical/Biotechnology Research Institute at North Carolina Central University. With over two decades of experience in psychology and public health, Dr. Floyd leads community-based research initiatives focused on preventing substance use, reducing drug overdoses, and addressing disparities in health outcomes. Her work is conducted in close collaboration with the Opioid Abatement Coordinating Center and is rooted in community engagement and equity-driven approaches. Dr. Floyd's research has been supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and published in peer-reviewed journals. She is recognized for her leadership in substance use prevention and treatment and currently serves as a board member for the Society for Prevention Research.