

# 2024-2025

FULL REPORT

## Central Virginia Community Report

Data  
Action  
Resource  
Team



DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP BY



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### **How This Report is Organized**

This report presents a detailed analysis of each data source to highlight trends and key statistics within the Central Virginia Health District, comprised of Amherst County, Appomattox County, Bedford County, Campbell County, and Lynchburg City, focusing on data collected between 2023 and 2024.

The connection between mental health and substance use disorders is crucial to recognize, as many individuals struggling with substance use also battle co-occurring mental health issues. This report focuses on the importance of examining both areas together, as addressing their interrelatedness can enhance treatment strategies and ultimately lead to better outcomes for those affected by these challenges.

This is the fifth report in an annual series, with the current analysis reflecting data from Fiscal Year 2025 (FY'25).

## **Executive Summary**

In 2020, it became increasingly clear that a deeper understanding was needed of how social and community factors are influencing substance use and mental health challenges in Central Virginia. In response, Horizon Behavioral Health, in partnership with the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), and the Central Virginia Addiction and Recovery Resources Coalition (CVARR), launched the Data to Action Resource Team (DART) on May 25, 2021.

DART brings together a diverse group of professionals from various sectors, including behavioral health providers, emergency medical services, housing providers, law enforcement, public education systems, social services, and others. Together, this team is dedicated to gathering and analyzing local data to identify trends, explore contributing factors, and understand the broader impact of substance use and mental illness in the counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, and the city of Lynchburg.

## **About Our Partners**

### **Horizon Behavioral Health**

Horizon Behavioral Health is committed to supporting the health, independence, and self-worth of individuals and families throughout Central Virginia. The organization provides a wide range of community-based services focused on treatment, prevention, early intervention, and long-term support for people affected by mental health challenges, substance use, intellectual disabilities, and co-occurring conditions.

### **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)**

The Crisis Intervention Team works to improve how law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community members respond to individuals experiencing mental health or substance use crises. CIT programs aim to reduce unnecessary involvement with the criminal justice system and ensure timely access to behavioral healthcare through coordinated, compassionate, and informed response strategies.

### **Central Virginia Addiction and Recovery Resources Coalition (CVARR)**

CVARR is a community coalition that unites local partners across sectors to address substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts. The coalition focuses on identifying service gaps, increasing awareness, and minimizing the impact of substance use on individuals, families, and communities in Central Virginia.

## **Summary Analysis**

### **Overview of Substance Use and Mental Health Trends in Central Virginia**

Recent data indicates a promising shift in substance use trends across Virginia, with a significant 43% decrease in drug-related overdoses in 2024 compared to the previous year, dropping from 2,463 to 1,403 incidents. Central Virginia mirrors this positive trend, showcasing an even more substantial reduction in reported overdoses, which decreased by 55.3% from 2023 to 2024. Despite these overall improvements, the demographic landscape highlights concerning patterns, particularly within the aging population.

### **Mental Health Stressors**

Across Central Virginia, community-based organizations and service providers are reporting a continued rise in anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. Young adults, particularly those aged 20–29, are increasingly seeking treatment for behavioral health issues. This situation is accompanied by an alarming peak in Emergency Custody Orders (ECOs) in May 2024, constituting 11% of all ECOs for the year. This demographic accounted for a significant portion of new mental health and substance use treatment admissions in 2024. Long-term substance use is also contributing to an increase in cases of psychosis. The intersection of sustained drug exposure and untreated mental illness is deepening the severity of behavioral health outcomes across age groups. These symptoms are not emerging in isolation but as part of broader socioeconomic pressures, including job insecurity, rising costs of living, and systemic barriers to care. This pattern reinforces the need for integrated, whole-person approaches that address both clinical and structural determinants of health.

### **Economic and Housing Pressures**

The decrease in affordable housing in Central Virginia is intensifying community vulnerabilities. In 2024, homelessness data showed 372 individuals affected, many of whom also reported high rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD. These housing-related stressors intersect with broader employment challenges, creating cycles where untreated behavioral health issues both result from and reinforce economic instability. This convergence of housing and mental health trends illustrates how structural factors magnify individual risks, suggesting that solutions must extend beyond clinical care to include economic supports.

### **Service Provider Concerns and Gaps**

Service providers consistently describe resource shortages ranging from long waitlists and provider vacancies to gaps in transitional and long-term care. These are barriers to effective response. These limitations are especially pronounced in rural areas, where transportation challenges and a lack of specialized services leave vulnerable populations with fewer options. When paired with community reports of rising intergenerational substance use and growing awareness of fentanyl contamination across multiple drug types, the picture that emerges is not simply one of inadequate capacity, but of system-level strain that hampers prevention, treatment, and recovery alike. Populations that are most affected include the underinsured, rural residents, youth, older adults, and individuals experiencing mental health crises.

## **Summary Analysis**

### **Demographic Insights and Substance Use Patterns**

The data reveals that men continue to experience higher rates of overdose incidents, accounting for 60% of cases in Central Virginia. The most prevalent substances involved in these fatalities remain opioids, responsible for 58% of drug-related deaths in 2024. Notably, there has also been an increase in methamphetamine usage and inter-generational substance use, emphasizing the need for comprehensive educational outreach and prevention programs. Additionally, communities are becoming increasingly aware of the dangers associated with polysubstance use and the risk of fentanyl contamination, which further complicates the landscape of substance misuse.

### **Service Gaps and Access to Care**

Despite the positive trends in reduced overdose rates, significant gaps in service provision persist. Rural communities face distinct challenges, including long waitlists, provider shortages, and compatibility issues with insurance coverage. Limited access to crucial services, such as inpatient, transitional, and long-term care, exacerbates these issues. Transportation barriers further hinder timely access to necessary care, particularly for vulnerable populations, including the underinsured, rural residents, youth, older adults, and those in mental health crises. The lack of integrated prevention, follow-up, and recovery support systems contributes to high emergency incident rates, indicating a public health system under strain, where law enforcement is often the default response.

### **Youth Trends and Concerning Developments**

Encouragingly, responses to the 2024 Lynchburg Youth Survey indicate an improvement in student mental health and a decrease in overall substance use among young people. However, this positive trend is accompanied by an uptick in vaping, nicotine, and THC gummy usage, raising concern over the potential long-term effects of these substances on youth development. Equally concerning is the decrease in affordable housing, which exacerbates uncertainty and homelessness in Central Virginia. In 2024, 372 individuals reported experiencing trauma alongside high rates of mental health conditions—depression, anxiety, and PTSD—that can stem from or contribute to precarious living situations.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, while the statistics on drug-related overdoses in Virginia show promising declines, the multifaceted nature of substance use and mental health issues calls for an urgent and comprehensive response. Addressing the demographic shifts, enhancing service provision, and creating a robust support system will be essential to ensure that these trends translate into sustained improvements in community health and well-being. The relationship between substance use, mental health, and socio-economic factors must be at the forefront of policy development to effectively address the challenges that lie ahead.

### ***From Our Service Providers:***

The ever-evolving landscape of funding related to grants, programs, and insurance is causing significant concern among service providers. Many organizations are struggling to navigate the complexities of an uncertain financial environment, which hampers their ability to respond effectively to the increasing demands of the communities they serve. The inability to secure adequate funding not only restricts their capacity to deliver essential services but also limits their potential for expanding programs that could further benefit the community.

Additionally, many organizations find themselves unable to allocate sufficient staffing and time toward addressing these challenges. The burden of limited resources means that existing staff often stretch themselves thin, risking burnout and reducing the quality of care and services provided. Without a strategic investment in both financial and human capital, service providers may struggle to keep up with the increasing needs, ultimately affecting the overall well-being of the populations they aim to support.

In response to these challenges, it is crucial for stakeholders, including government agencies and philanthropic organizations, to collaborate and innovate in funding approaches. By pooling resources and leveraging cross-sector partnerships, we can build a more sustainable funding model that empowers service providers to effectively meet the challenges posed by the evolving landscape of need. Only through a concerted effort can we hope to address the gaps identified and ensure that service providers have the necessary support to thrive in such a rapidly changing environment.

### **A Focus On Prevention**

The declining trends in substance use and mental health crises can be largely attributed to the commitment to evidence-based prevention programming and initiatives. By prioritizing public health measures in these areas, we can foster healthier communities, reduce stigma, and create environments where individuals can access the resources and support they need to thrive. Organizations like Horizon Behavioral Health are at the forefront of this effort, actively engaging with grassroots coalitions to implement impactful prevention programs. Initiatives such as the DART project and open community trainings in all areas concerning mental health and substance misuse response, including but not limited to Adverse Childhood Experiences, Mental Health First Aid, and Opioid Overdose Response, stand as essential components in building awareness and promoting healthy life choices within our communities. The organization places a focus on prevention efforts toward youth with programs like Too Good For Drugs, a substance awareness course taught to 9th graders, and Countertools, which address the illicit sale of tobacco products to minors, highlighting the importance of protecting our youth from harmful substances. Moreover, Horizon Behavioral Health's impact in creating media campaigns designed to raise awareness and advocate for healthy living plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions.

Horizon Behavioral Health collaborates with multiple coalitions across Central Virginia, such as the Bedford Area Resource Council, Central Virginia Addiction & Recovery Resources, and the Central Virginia Suicide Prevention & Awareness Coalition, amplifying collective efforts to create a supportive environment for everyone. As readers and community members, you have the power to advocate for these initiatives, participate in local discussions, support community programs, and consider how you can contribute to fostering a healthier environment for all.

Together, we can build a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

## **Data Onboarded and Developed**

To better understand the scope and impact of substance use and mental health challenges in Central Virginia, regional datasets have been brought together to offer a more comprehensive, community-wide perspective. At the request of the Data to Action Resource Team (DART) members, data have been collected from multiple sectors, including behavioral health, public schools, law enforcement, youth surveys, homelessness services, local EMS, and social services.

We believe that compiling and analyzing this data will help:

- Educate and inform the community
- Identify and prioritize local needs
- Support the development of action plans that address contributing factors
- Secure the resources necessary to address substance use, mental illness, and suicide throughout Central Virginia

## **Data Sources Included in This Report**

Horizon Behavioral Health provided emergency custody order data and staff-identified trends in behavioral health needs.

Emergency Medical Services highlighted opioid-related incidents, including patterns of when and where they occurred.

Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services provided regional data on reported overdose emergencies and incidents.

Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) included data on Child Protective Services (CPS) and public assistance programs, Medicare, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Central Virginia Continuum of Care (CVCoc) relayed data on the return to homelessness in Central Virginia.

Miriam's House shared data on homelessness in the region and national comparisons.

Lynchburg Youth Survey (LYS) examined the health behaviors and trends among students in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades.

Local law enforcement shared data from the Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) system Beyond 2020 showing trends in substance-related arrests.

## **Quantitative Data Analysis**

The following section of this report utilizes quantitative data provided by a variety of local organizations as well as commonwealth-wide agencies to understand relevant trends occurring in the Central Virginia Region.

### **Change-point analysis on EMS data and corresponding trends in other datasets:**

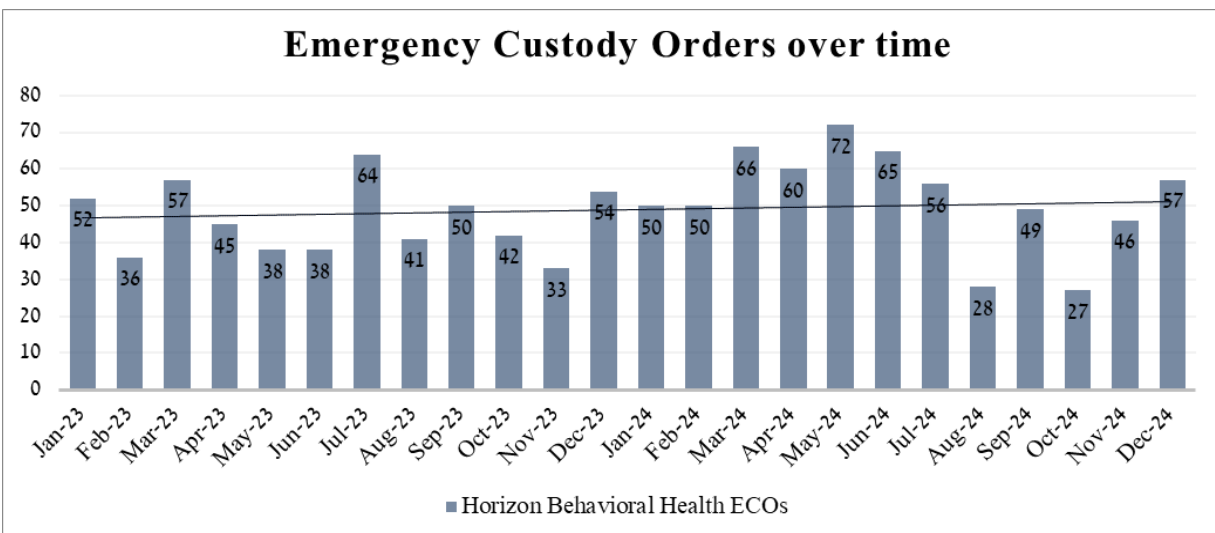
Change-point analysis is used to name significant changes in the linear trends within data over a certain period. Using this method, an analysis was conducted on EMS incident data to define major shifts for the Commonwealth before observing trends in other data sources at the regional level for the identified change points to understand noteworthy time shifts and trends.

### **Horizon Emergency Custody Order (ECO)**

The Horizon Emergency Custody Order data provides a monthly breakdown of ECOs from January 2023 to December 2024. Emergency Custody Orders result in a meeting between a professional mental health evaluation and a person with a suspected mental illness to determine whether hospitalization or treatment is needed, as well as if the situation meets the standard criteria for the issuance of a temporary detention order.

### **What was the trend in emergency custody orders over time?**

ECOs were relatively stable in 2023, with the largest spike seen in July (64), going into a steep decline in November (33). March 2024 begins the steep incline with a maximum peak of 72 in May, followed by significant declines in August (28) and October (28).

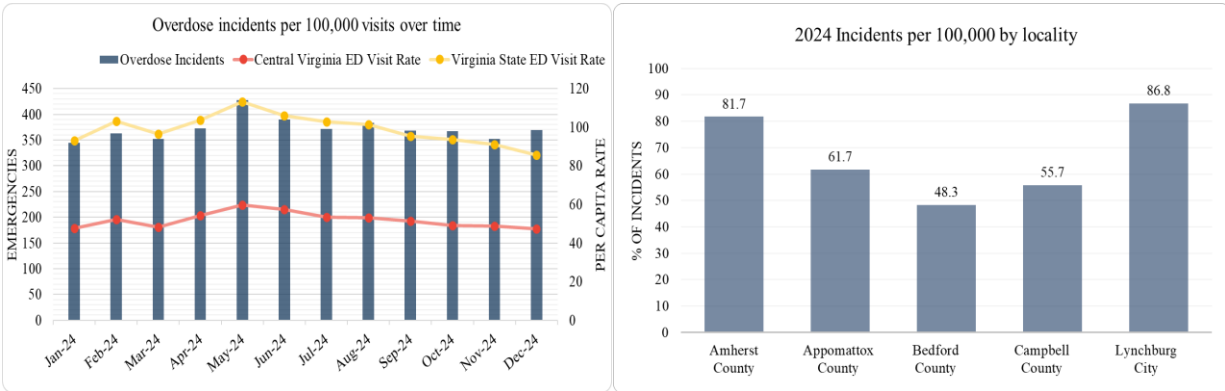


## Emergency Medical Services

The Emergency Medical Services Application is a self-service dashboard that provides users with statewide data about emergencies involving opioids, including overdoses and naloxone administration.

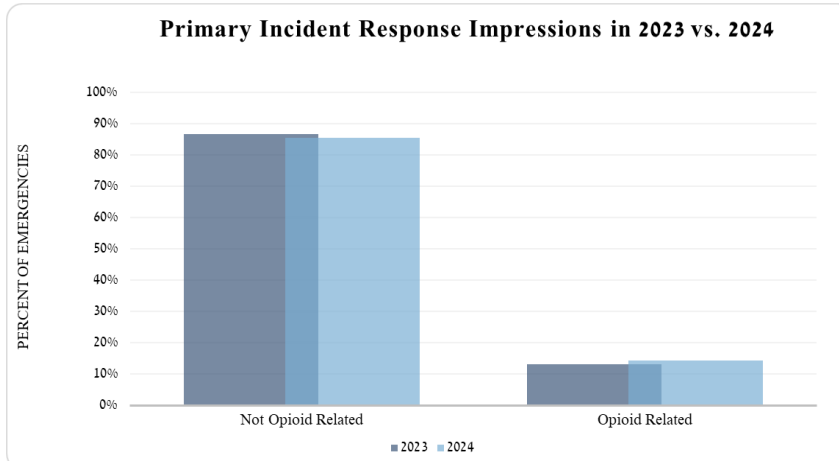
### What was the trend in emergency responses for overdose incidents?

In 2024, the trend in emergency responses to overdose incidents in Central Virginia demonstrated a significant fluctuation in monthly incidents. The highest number of incidents per capita recorded was in April (54) and remained relatively stable thereafter. This indicates a consistent need for emergency responses in Central Virginia throughout the year, with periodic spikes suggesting episodic increases in overdose cases.



### How have the trends in primary impressions recorded by EMS providers changed over time?

From 2023 to 2024, there was a slight increase in the percentage of EMS calls related to opioid emergencies. Rising from 13.2% in 2023 to 14.5% in 2024. While the majority of EMS calls were not related to opioids, this uptick suggests that opioid-related incidents became more frequent in 2024. Despite this increase, primary naloxone usage declined overall. This downward trend is reflected by the percentage of calls showing patient improvement after naloxone administration, decreasing from 21.3% in 2023 to 15.9% in 2024. This reduction may reflect a decrease in overdose severity, earlier intervention, or a shift in substances involved in overdose events.



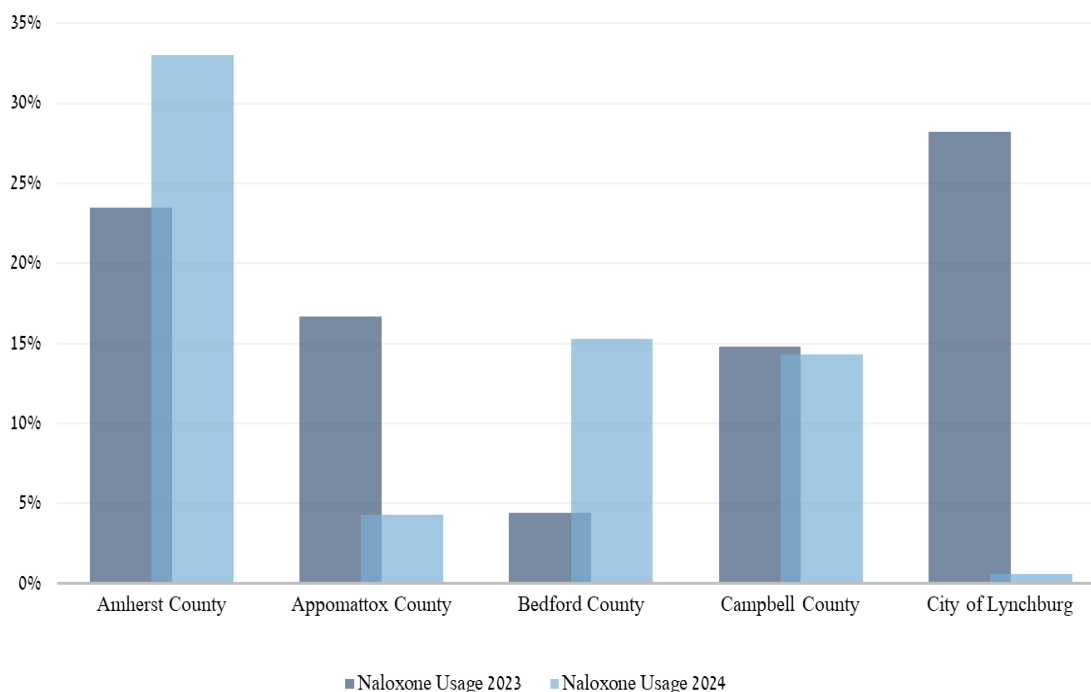
### How does naloxone usage compare to the total number of opioid emergencies?

Naloxone use, when compared to opioid-related emergencies, varied significantly by locality:

- In Amherst County, naloxone was administered in 32.9% of overdose-related EMS calls in 2024, up from 23.5% in 2023.
- Appomattox County experienced a decrease, dropping from 16.7% in 2023 to 4.3% in 2024.
- Bedford County saw an increase, with naloxone use rising from 4.4% in 2023 to 15.4% in 2024.
- In Campbell County, naloxone use was 14.8% in 2023, but in 2024 decreased to 14.6%.
- In Lynchburg, there was a major decline—from 28.2% in 2023 to just 0.6% in 2024.

These percentages show that while naloxone continues to be an essential tool, its usage trends differ across counties reflecting changes in drug types, severity of overdose cases, or how quickly bystanders or EMS are able to intervene.

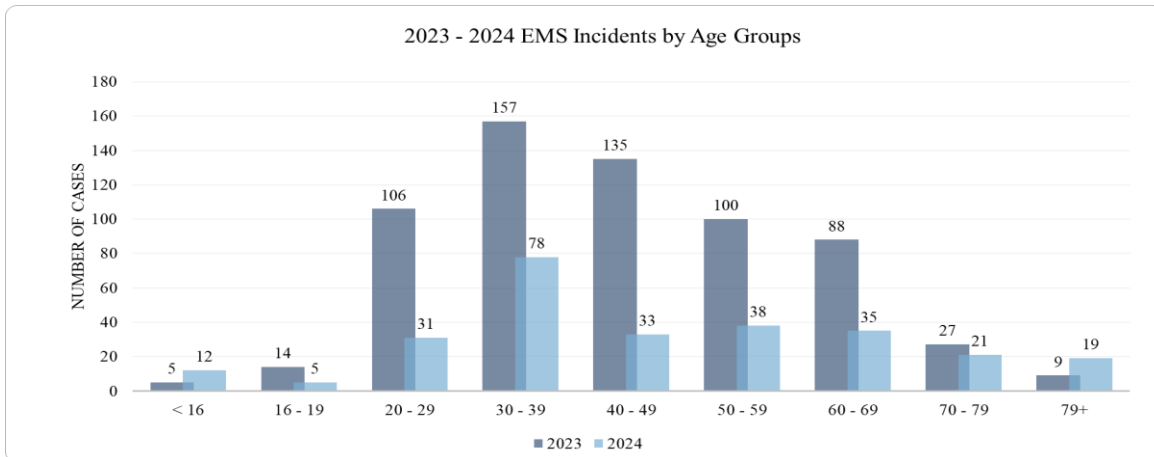
**Naloxone Usage in Central Virginia From 2023 - 2024**



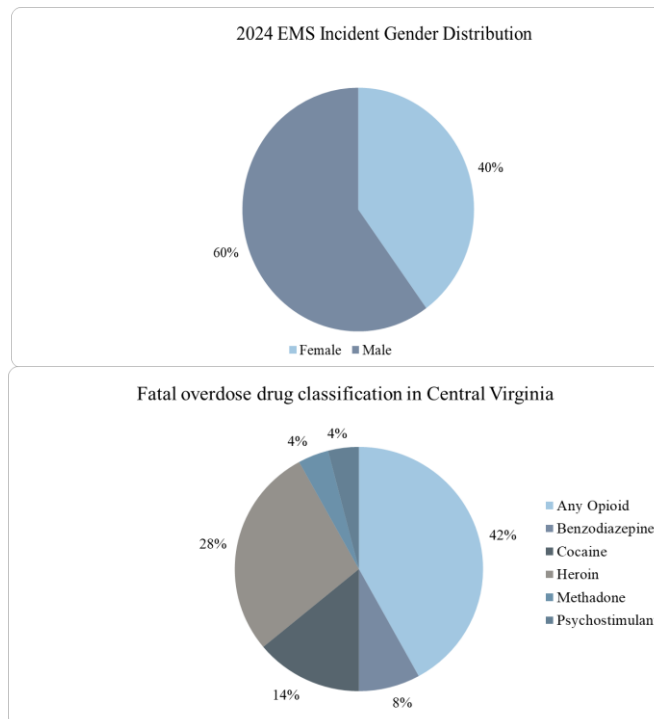
\*Preliminary data from VDH Open View EMS Substance Response Incident does not reflect complete 2024 year naloxone administration by call data.

## What was the demographic breakdown of EMS incidents?

In 2024, individuals aged 30 to 39 continued to be the most affected by opioid-related emergencies, making up approximately 26% of all incidents. Although this represents a slight decrease from the previous year, this age group still experiences a notably higher rate of emergencies compared to others. The 40 to 49 and 50 to 59 age groups also remained significantly affected, accounting for around 23% of reported cases. These patterns show that people in their 30s, 40s, and 50s continue to face elevated risks, emphasizing the importance of focused support and prevention strategies tailored to their needs.



EMS data indicate that 60 percent of all overdose incidents are male and that opioids remain the largest cause of fatal overdose drugs seen across Central Virginia, followed by heroin specifically and cocaine.

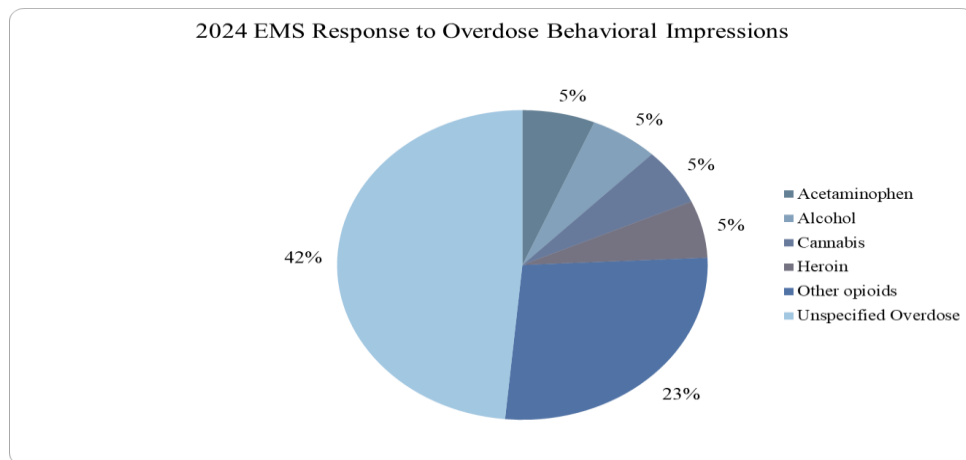


## **Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services (BREMS)**

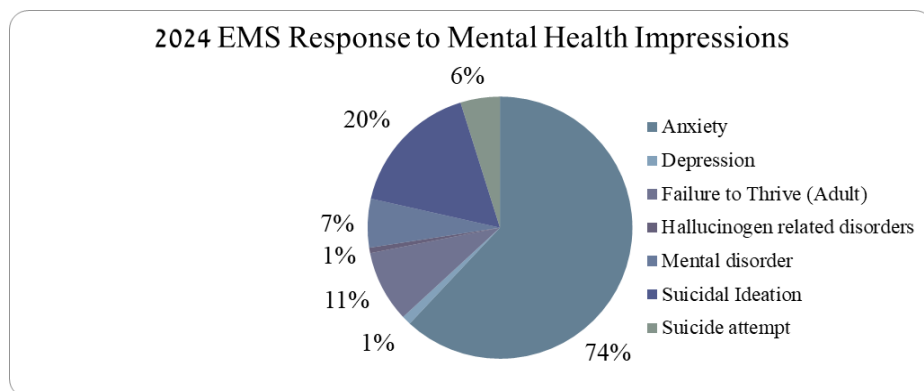
The Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services Council provided emergency response data specific to the Central Virginia region for the year 2024. This report focused on behavioral health-related EMS calls, including those involving substance use and overdose.

### **What were the most common substances involved in overdoses?**

Among the 312 BREMS responses classified under behavioral health impressions in 2024, the most commonly reported substances involved in overdoses were "unspecified" substances, representing approximately 42% of all cases. This category includes incidents where the exact substance was unknown or not clearly identified at the time of response. Following that, "other opioids", excluding heroin, were the second most frequently involved, accounting for 23% of overdose cases. Less common substances included heroin, alcohol, and acetaminophen, each appearing in roughly 5% of overdose-related EMS responses.



In addition to overdose-related calls, the Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services Council also responded to numerous emergencies involving mental health concerns in 2024. These calls are categorized under "Mental Disorder" in the behavioral health impressions. Throughout the year, BREMS teams in the Central Virginia region responded to 1610 calls related to mental health disorders. Of these calls, 53% were from someone displaying a mental disorder.

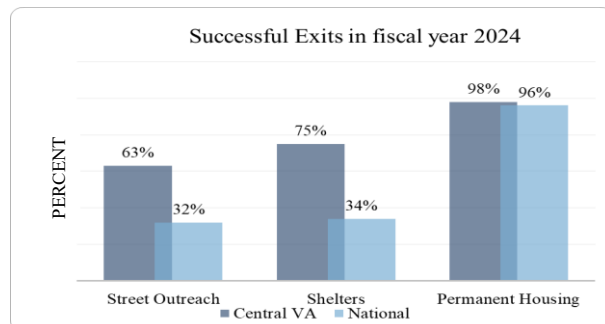
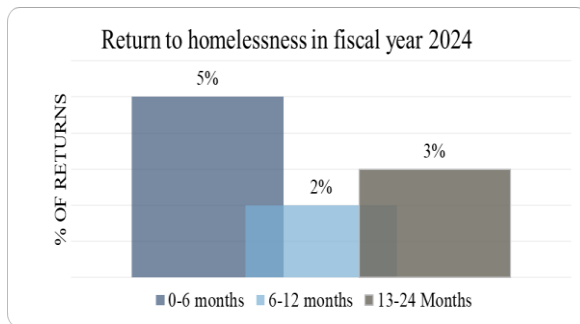


## Central Virginia Continuum of Care (CVCoC)

The Central Virginia Continuum of Care (CVCoC) is a coalition of agencies working to end homelessness in Central Virginia. This data was shared by the Director of Homeless System Coordination at Miriam's House- the Homeless Management Information System Lead Agency for the Central Virginia Continuum of Care.

### How many individuals were homeless during the fiscal year 2024?

In fiscal year 2024 (FY24), 372 individuals experienced homelessness. Of the 372 individuals, 152 accessed emergency shelter, with a total of 361 accessing emergency shelter and a permanent housing solution. 10% of those who experienced homelessness in FY24 had experienced homelessness 2 years prior. Looking at those who were housed and returned to homelessness, 5% returned to homelessness within 0-6 months, 2% between 6-12 months, and 3% within 12- 24 months. The number of individuals seeking emergency shelters and permanent housing decreased from 480 in FY23 to 361 in FY24. However, the average length of time spent experiencing homelessness increased from 73 days in FY23 to 92 days in FY24.



### What percent of individuals experiencing homelessness had successful exits in 2024?

In fiscal year 2024, 63% of exits from street outreach programs successfully transitioned into shelters and/or permanent housing, nearly doubling the national rate. 75% of exits from shelters were successful, and 98% of exits from permanent housing led to successful exits in FY24. Although there is a growing concern for the rise in length of time spent homeless, these figures reflect Central Virginia's strong commitment to addressing homelessness and ensuring that vulnerable individuals have the ability to receive the necessary support to achieve sustainable living conditions.

## **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**

This data was collected from the Virginia Department of Health's Open Data Portal, which showcases all aspects of data contributing to Virginians.

### **What are the overdose trends across Central Virginia?**

Virginia Department of Health Overdose Data shows encouraging signs of improvement across the region, with most localities experiencing a decline in overdose death rates (per 100,000 residents) from the previous year. Notably, Amherst County saw a decrease in fentanyl-related deaths (from 5 in 2023 to 2 in 2024). Lynchburg City, while reporting rates above the state average, showed a decline in overdose deaths involving all drugs (from 22.1 in 2023 to 14.7 in 2024) and fentanyl (from 16 in 2023 to 6 in 2024), indicating progress in addressing overdose incidents. Campbell County maintained relatively low methadone and opioid related death rates in both years, suggesting continued stability. Appomattox County and Bedford County also maintained consistently low overdose death rates across all drug types, pointing to fewer reported incidents. Overall, the 2024 data reflects positive movement in several localities, though continued attention remains necessary in higher-rate areas.

Overdose Death Rate	Virginia State	Amherst County	Appomattox County	Bedford County	Campbell County	Lynchburg City
2023 All Drugs	28.7	18.9	18.7	23.8	14.5	22.1
2024 All Drugs	16.3	18.9	12.5	15	7.2	14.7
2023 All Opioids	24	6	2	15	8	16
2024 All Opioids	12.4	2	1	10	1	7
2023 Methadone	1	0	0	0	0	0
2024 Methadone	0.8	0	0	2	0	0
2023 Fentanyl	22.5	5	2	14	8	16
2024 Fentanyl	11.3	2	1	10	1	6

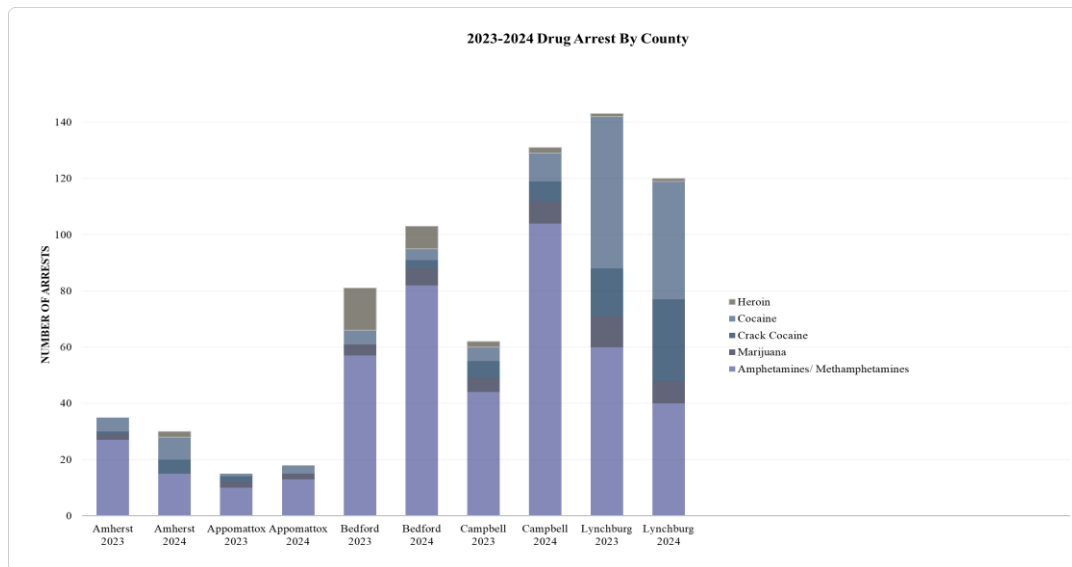
## **Virginia State Police (VSP) Beyond 2020 Incident-Based Reporting System**

The Virginia State Police's Incident-Based Reporting (IBR) System is a self-service dashboard that lets users analyze substance-related arrests.

### **What was the trend year over year in drug-related arrests?**

In 2024, drug-related arrests across Central Virginia showed notable shifts compared to 2023, with methamphetamine-related arrests seeing the most significant increase overall.

Cocaine-related arrests saw mixed changes as arrests increased in several localities, most notably in Amherst and Campbell counties, and declined in Lynchburg City, dropping from 54 in 2023 to 42 in 2024. Crack cocaine arrests rose across most counties. Lynchburg City experienced the sharpest increase, from 17 to 29 arrests, and Amherst County saw a rise from 1 to 5 arrests. This pattern indicates heightened enforcement or an increase in usage in these areas. Heroin-related arrests remained relatively low overall but showed decreases in Bedford County (15 arrests in 2023, 8 in 2024). However, some counties like Amherst saw a modest increase, from 0 to 2 arrests. Marijuana-related arrests fluctuated as Campbell County increased from 5 to 8 arrests, while Lynchburg City and Amherst County saw small decreases. Methamphetamine/amphetamine-related arrests saw the most dramatic increases. Campbell County more than doubled its arrest total from 44 in 2023 to 104 in 2024. Bedford County also rose significantly, from 57 to 82 arrests. Conversely, Lynchburg City experienced a decline from 60 to 40, suggesting regional shifts in meth-related activity or enforcement.



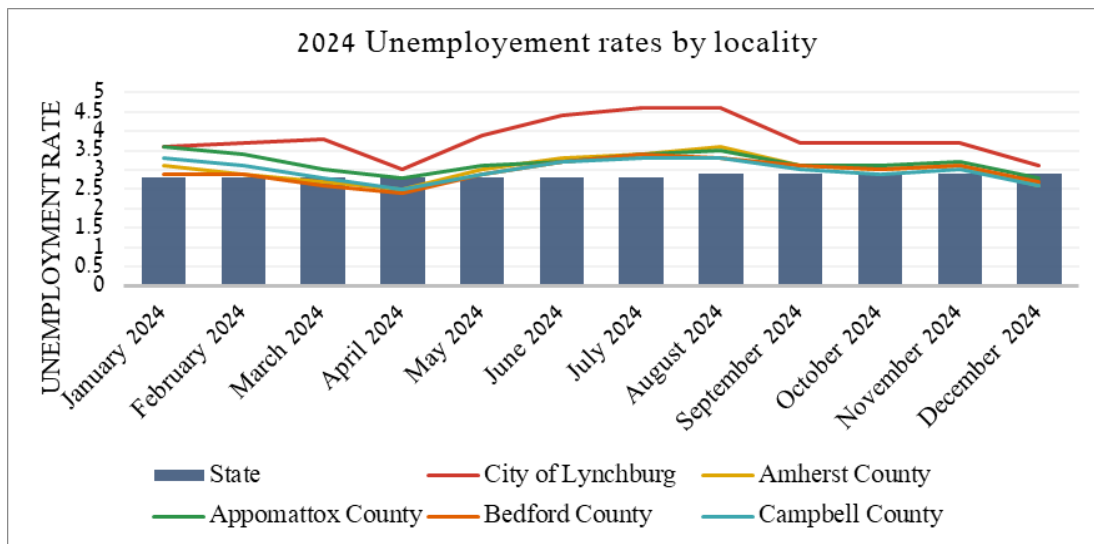
Overall, the region experienced a significant rise in methamphetamine-related arrests and growing concerns around crack cocaine, while arrests involving heroin and marijuana either remained stable or declined in most counties. These trends may reflect shifting patterns in drug use, law enforcement focus, or community reporting.

## **Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)**

The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) is a self-service dashboard that lets users analyze details related to unemployment rates and claims.

### **What were the unemployment rates in Central Virginia?**

In 2024, unemployment rates in Central Virginia varied across localities, generally ranging from 2.6% to 5.2%. The City of Lynchburg experienced higher rates, peaking at 5.2% in August, while other counties like Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, and Campbell showed lower rates, often aligning closer to the state average, which fluctuated around 2.7% to 3.2%.



\*Rates defined as per 100,000 persons.

### **How do unemployment rates compare between localities in the region?**

Throughout 2024, the City of Lynchburg consistently registered higher unemployment rates compared to the other localities in Central Virginia. For example, in December 2024, Lynchburg had a rate of 3.9%, compared to lower rates in counties like Bedford (2.70%) and Amherst (3.00%). Rates in the counties were closer to or below the state average, indicating a less volatile job market compared to the City of Lynchburg.

## **Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS)**

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) provides valuable data on a range of services, including child protective services (CPS) and various benefits available to residents. A study published by the American Psychiatric Association highlights that parents with serious mental illness are eight times more likely to come into contact with CPS.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the likelihood of a change in living arrangements for these parents is 26 times higher. Substance use disorders also show a significant correlation with CPS involvement.

### **Which locality in Central Virginia had the highest number of CPS referrals?**

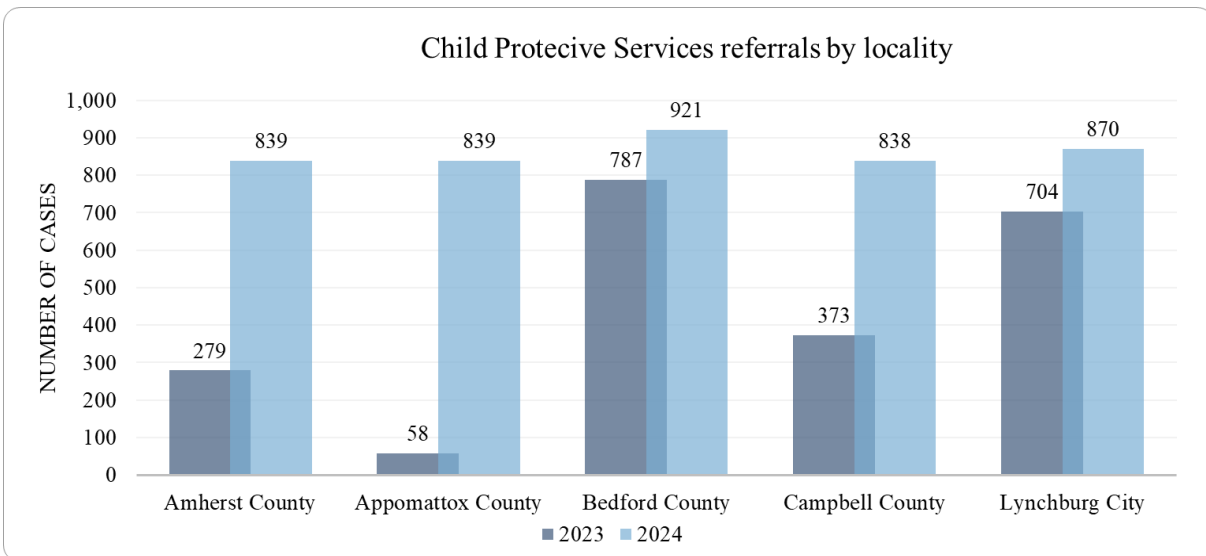
In the state fiscal year 2024, Lynchburg City experienced the highest number of Child Protective Services (CPS) referrals in Central Virginia, with 870 referrals. This represents a decrease from the previous year, when Lynchburg recorded 1,354 referrals.

Bedford County saw 921 referrals in 2024, a decline from 1,230 referrals in 2023.

Similarly, Campbell County reported 838 referrals in 2024, down from 1,191 the previous year.

Amherst County and Appomattox County also reported fewer referrals in 2024 compared to 2023. Amherst County saw a drop to 419 referrals from 605 in 2024, while Appomattox County had 242 referrals in 2024, down from 377 the previous year.

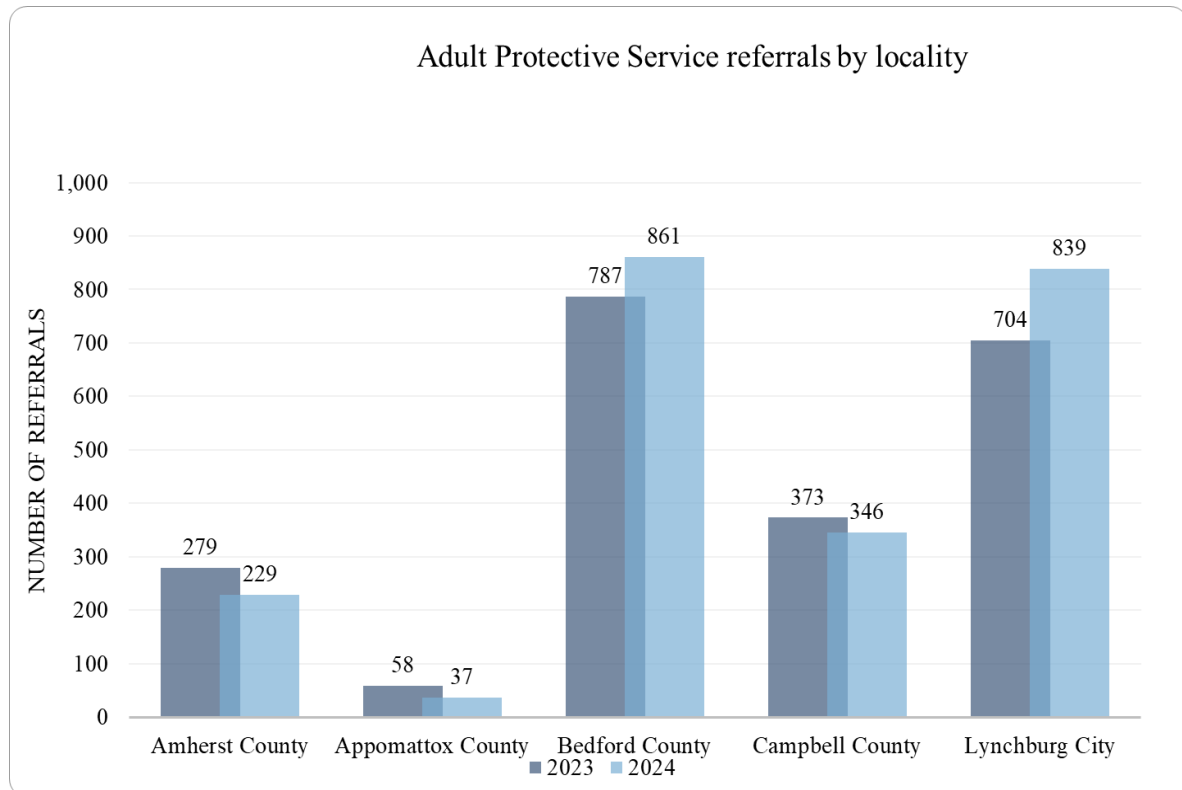
These changes in referral numbers reflect varying trends in CPS demand across the region, with significant reductions in referrals in most localities, particularly in the larger cities and counties



<sup>1</sup> Mental Illnesses: Results From a National Survey. Psychiatric Services, 70(3), pp.202-208.

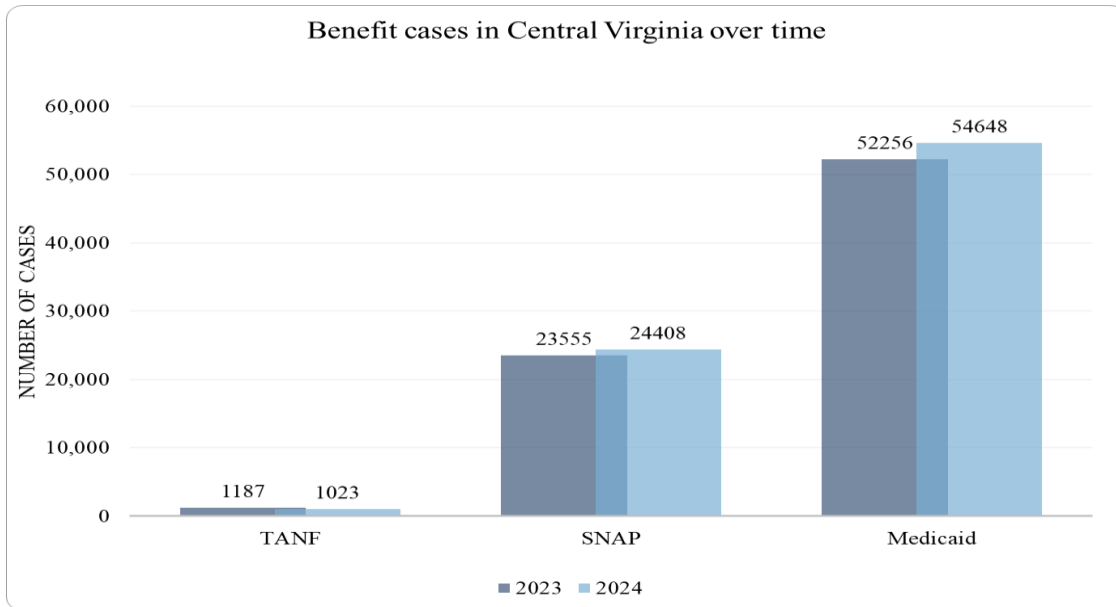
### Which locality in Central Virginia had the highest number of APS referrals?

In the state fiscal year 2024, Bedford County recorded the highest number of Adult Protective Services (APS) referrals in Central Virginia, with 861 referrals, indicating a notable demand for APS support in the region. This is an increase from 787 referrals in 2023. Following Bedford, Lynchburg City reported 839 referrals in 2024, a slight increase from 704 in the previous year. Campbell County had 346 referrals in 2024, a decrease from 373 in 2023, while Amherst County saw a drop to 229 referrals from 279 in 2023. Appomattox County had the lowest number of referrals, with 37 in 2024, down from 58 in 2023. These differences highlight the varying levels of APS engagement across the localities, which may be influenced by factors such as the prevalence of vulnerable adults, community awareness, and the effectiveness of reporting and intervention mechanisms in place.



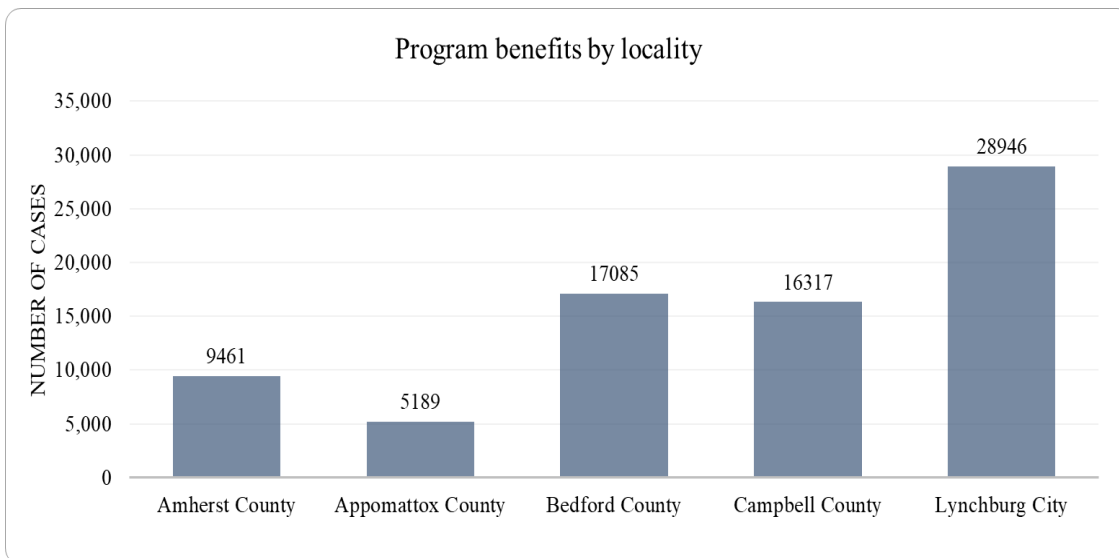
### What is the most common benefit program in Central Virginia?

Medicaid emerged as the most widely utilized benefit program in Central Virginia, maintaining the highest number of participants from 2019 to 2024 when compared to SNAP and TANF. In 2024 alone, 54,648 cases were initiated for Medicaid, substantially more than the 24,408 cases for SNAP and the 1,023 cases for TANF. This trend highlights Medicaid's critical role in supporting health coverage needs across the region.



### Which locality relies on benefit programs the most in the region?

In the Central Virginia region, the City of Lynchburg reports the highest number of individuals utilizing benefit programs, with 28,946 residents seeking support through various services.

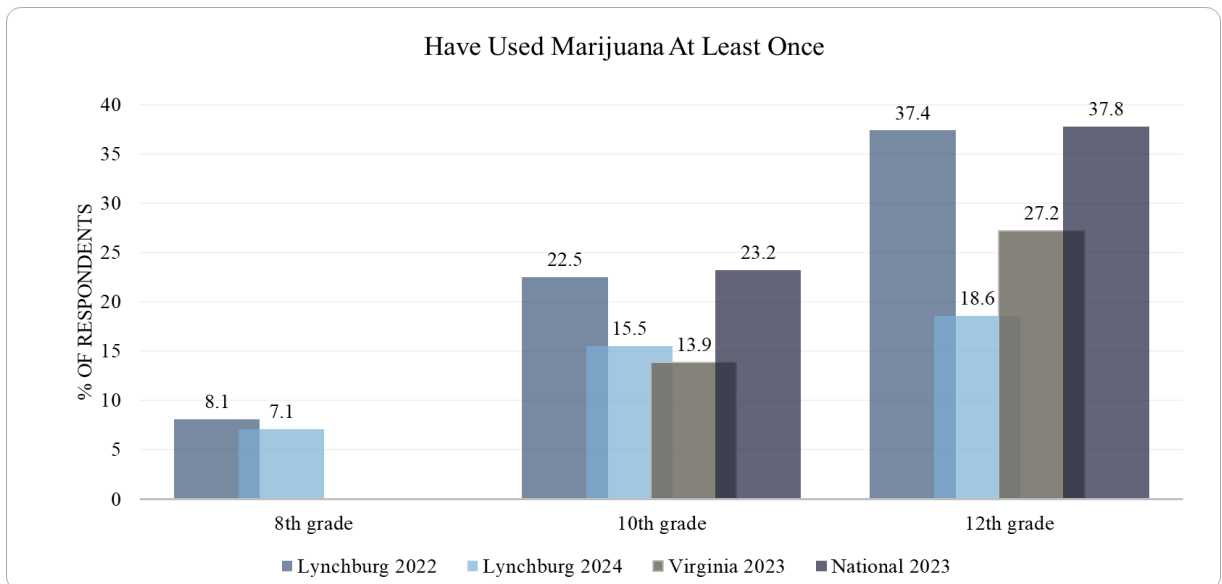


## **Lynchburg Youth Survey (LYS)**

The Lynchburg City Schools have been surveying youth in the school district since 1999. The survey is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) with some minor modifications according to local interest. The LYS was administered to Lynchburg City Schools' 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students in Fall 2024 and is administered every two years. The main topics addressed by the 2024 Lynchburg Youth Survey were: Unintentional Injury, Intentional Injury, Tobacco and Electronic Vapor Use, Alcohol Use, Drug Use, Sexual Behavior, and Healthy Lifestyle.

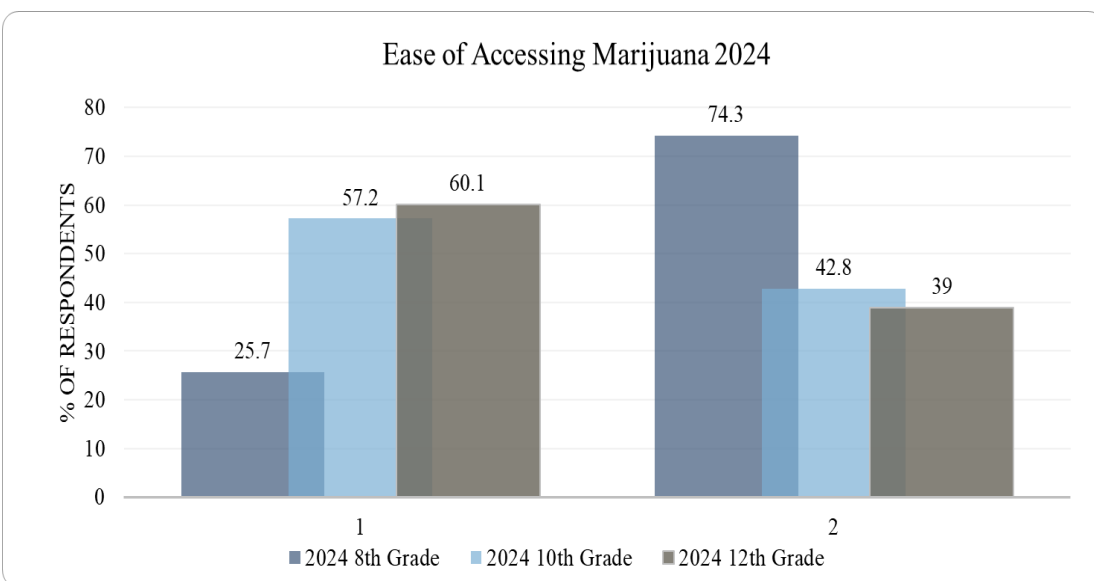
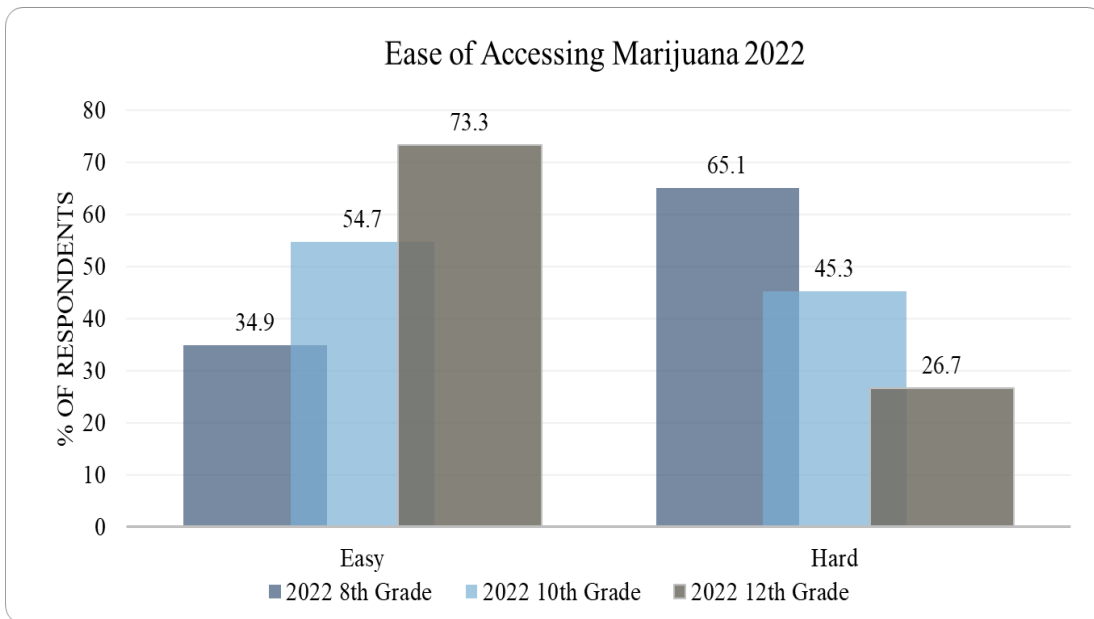
### **Survey questions related to marijuana.**

Marijuana use among Lynchburg students increased by grade, with 7.1% of 8th graders indicating they have used marijuana at least once compared to 18.6% of 12th graders. In 2024, Lynchburg City Schools students perceived marijuana as slightly harder to get in comparison to 2022. Students continued to believe that their parents would think marijuana use is wrong, with fewer believing their peers would think marijuana use is wrong. This discrepancy is especially pronounced among 12th graders. Almost no students report using other illicit drugs or methods, including inhalants, cocaine, heroin, meth, ecstasy, or injections.



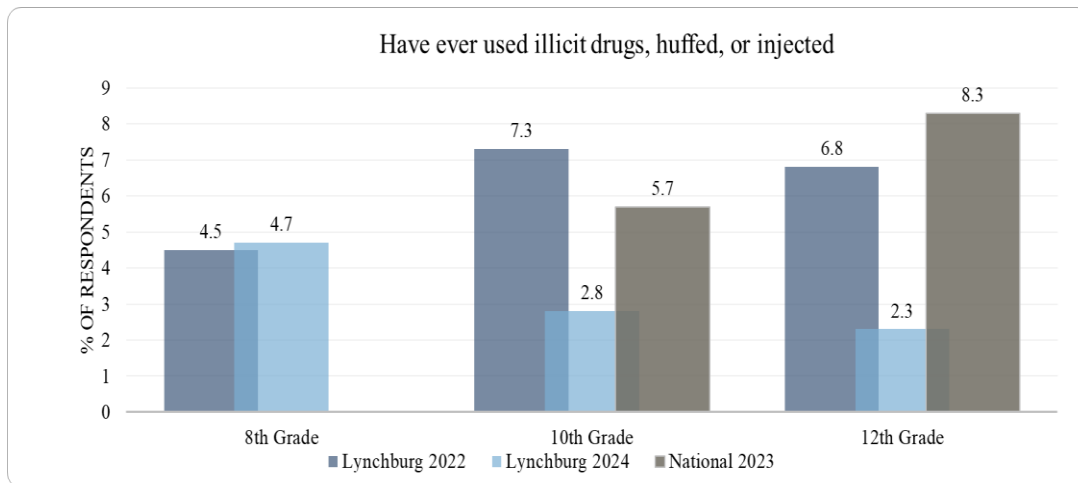
### Survey questions related to marijuana.

Among Lynchburg students, 8th graders were the most likely to report difficulty obtaining marijuana if they wanted it. In contrast, most 10th and 12th graders said it would be either "very easy" or "fairly easy" to access. When compared to 2022, both 8th and 12th graders in 2024 reported having a harder time getting marijuana, while 10th graders noted a slight increase in ease of access. These findings suggest that perceptions of marijuana availability varies by grade level and may be influenced by changing policies or peer environments.



### Survey questions related to illicit drugs.

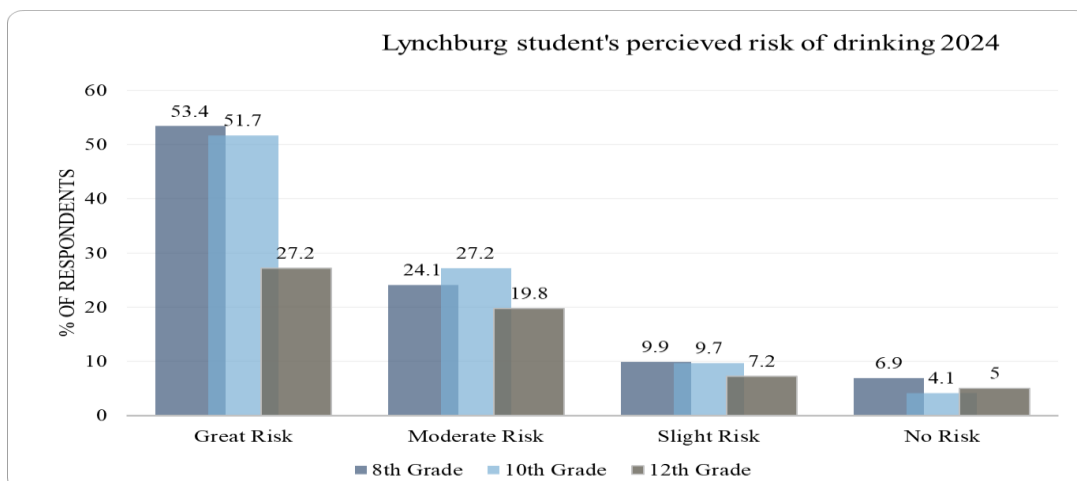
The majority of Lynchburg students (95.3% across all grade levels) reported that they have never used illicit drugs. Among the small percentage who indicated any lifetime use, the most commonly reported behavior was "huffing". Huffing is inhaling substances such as glue, aerosol sprays, or paint fumes to get high. This was reported by 3.1% of students, a figure that aligns with both local data from 2022 and national trends observed in 2024.



### Survey questions related to alcohol.

In 2024, the majority of Lynchburg students (71.5%) reported never having consumed an alcoholic beverage, which is notably higher than the previous Lynchburg youth survey in 2022 (64.9%) and the 2024 national average (51.3%).

Of Lynchburg students who have tried alcohol, the majority indicated that they had their first drink at 13 or 14 years old (5.7%) followed by 15 or 16 years old (5.4%). On average 8.2% of Lynchburg students across all grades reported having ever tried alcohol, which is down slightly from 10.9% in 2022. Of Lynchburg youth in 2024 who indicated they drank alcohol in the past 30 days, the largest percentage reported being given the alcohol by another person – either family (24.3%) or non-family (19.6%)

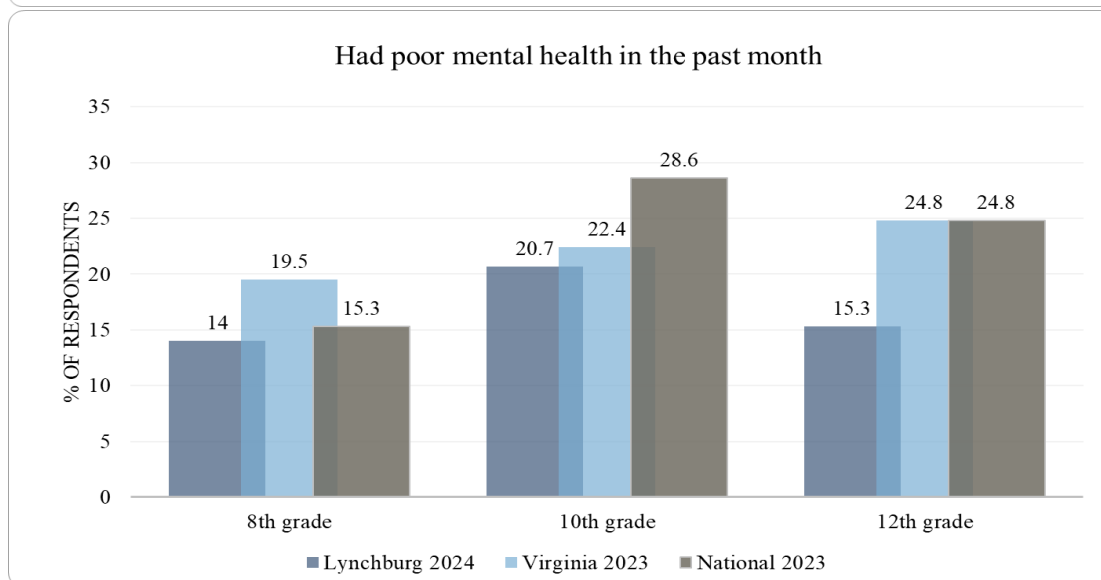
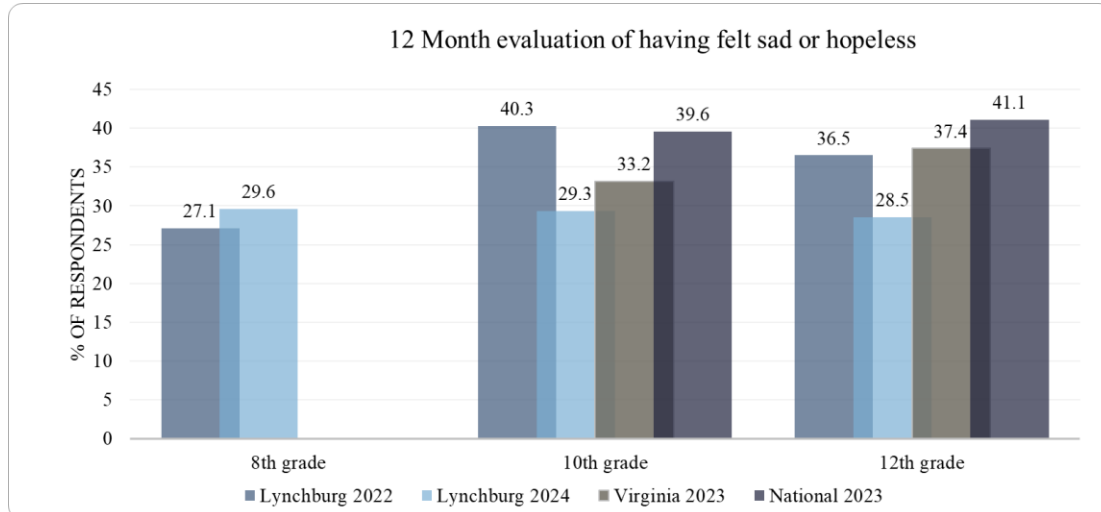


### Survey questions related to mental health.

In 2024, 29.1% of Lynchburg students across all grade levels reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that they stopped engaging in some of their usual activities. While still a significant figure, this reflects a modest improvement compared to 2022, when 34.6% of students reported the same experience.

The percentage of students reporting these feelings decreased slightly with each advancing grade level. When compared with both state and national averages, Lynchburg 10th and 12th graders were less likely to report persistent sadness or hopelessness over the past year.

Additionally, 16.5% of Lynchburg students indicated they experienced poor mental health "always" or "most of the time" during the previous 30 days. This rate was highest among 10th-grade students. While mental health challenges remain a concern, the 2024 findings suggest a slight overall improvement in student well-being compared to previous years.



## ***Qualitative Data Analysis***

The following section utilizes qualitative data provided by key informants from a variety of local organizations within the community in order to understand relevant trends that are not captured in quantitative data.

### **Horizon Behavioral Health**

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Director of Grants and Programs at Horizon Behavioral Health. The data was captured through several of the clinical managers who oversee mental health and substance use services at Horizon Behavioral Health.

#### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

The organization stated that substance use and mental health are central concerns among the clients they serve. They explained that co-occurring conditions often complicate treatment planning, particularly for youth, and highlighted the importance of involving family members in the recovery process alongside the individual.

#### **What impact does substance use and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

Horizon reported that the demand for services has led to varying impacts across programs. While some, like intensive outpatient substance use treatment, maintain a strong service flow despite having waitlists, others face challenges due to clinical staffing shortages. They emphasized that rising needs among clients with co-occurring disorders continue to strain resources and lead to longer wait times, particularly for therapy services.

#### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The organization observed a troubling increase in fentanyl contamination across a wide range of substances, including marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamines, and counterfeit pills. They noted that many individuals are unaware their substances contain fentanyl, which can result in unintentional overdoses. Additionally, they reported a rise in vaping and substance-induced psychosis, with some cases requiring acute hospitalization due to hallucinations and paranoia.

#### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

Horizon reported an increase in referrals for anxiety and depression. They indicated that these concerns have become more prevalent in recent months.

**Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The organization shared that they operate a separate admissions department focused specifically on intake, serving as the first point of contact for new clients. They reported that, while overall referrals have remained steady, school-based programs and intensive outpatient services have experienced a notable increase in demand.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

Managers within the organization noted higher rates of homelessness among both young and older adults. They also reported an increase in engagement from African American clients and observed a rise in treatment-seeking behavior among individuals in their early 20s.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)**

The organization identified several contributing factors, including ongoing challenges with Medicaid reimbursement that affect program sustainability. They also cited staffing shortages as a barrier to client access and noted that the lingering impacts of COVID-19 continue to drive spikes in service demand.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

Horizon acknowledged a few service gaps despite offering comprehensive programming. These include referral waitlists, delays in funding authorizations, and a shortage of providers who accept Medicare and Medicaid.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

The organization reported that family instability, particularly in cases where children are raised by single or non-parental caregivers, is a significant contributing factor. They also cited increased anxiety related to the political climate, especially among vulnerable populations. In addition, they identified broader societal and economic pressures as key drivers of both substance use and mental health challenges in the community.

## **Roads to Recovery**

Roads to Recovery is a recovery community organization; an independent, nonprofit corporation led by people in and supportive of recovery. This data was given by Registered Certified Peer Recovery Specialist team.

### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Roads to Recovery stated that substance use and mental health are central to their mission and influence nearly every aspect of their operations. They reported that many individuals in recovery also experience co-occurring mental health disorders, which adds complexity and severity to their needs. As a result, the organization continually adapts its approach to care, staffing, and partnerships within the community.

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

The organization explained that both substance use and mental health conditions significantly shape how services are delivered. They have implemented more trauma-informed care practices, increased individualized support, and collaborated more closely with healthcare providers to ensure accurate diagnoses and medication management. Roads to Recovery reported that these dual diagnoses often result in more intensive and longer-term services, which can affect overall service capacity.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The organization expressed growing concern about synthetic opioids like fentanyl being mixed into other drugs, including counterfeit pills. They noted an increase in polysubstance use and reported that more younger adults are accessing or being referred to recovery services.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

Roads to Recovery reported a noticeable rise in cases of anxiety and depression, particularly among younger clients. They also observed an increase in individuals presenting with trauma-related symptoms such as PTSD and noted that more clients with untreated serious mental illness are seeking help primarily through substance use treatment pathways.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The organization reported a steady increase in calls and referrals, especially from hospitals, the criminal justice system, and family members. They also noted a rise in walk-in traffic and a growing interest in peer recovery programs. This increase is seen as a reflection of both higher need in the community and increased awareness of their services..

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

The organization reported a shift toward younger clients, with more referrals involving young adults. They also observed an increase in female participants, particularly mothers, seeking recovery support. Additionally, Roads to Recovery has seen more referrals from rural areas, where access to services continues to be limited.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

Roads to Recovery identified workforce shortages and funding limitations as ongoing challenges in 2025. They also highlighted the rising cost of living as a factor that has put added pressure on both clients and staff, making it more difficult to address needs like housing, transportation, and other essentials. While the immediate impact of COVID-19 has decreased, the organization noted that its long-term mental health effects continue to influence service needs.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

The organization reported persistent gaps in detox and withdrawal management services, particularly for individuals who are uninsured or underinsured. They also cited a shortage of accessible psychiatric care and long-term supportive housing. Additionally, they emphasized the need for more culturally competent services tailored to marginalized communities.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Roads to Recovery identified several contributing factors, including generational trauma, lack of access to affordable housing and healthcare, unemployment or underemployment, and social isolation. They also cited the impact of untreated mental illness and insufficient early intervention resources for young adults. The organization noted that the availability of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs has further worsened outcomes in the community.

## **Anderson Treatment “The Twelve” in Lynchburg**

"The Twelve" is a residential program operated by Anderson Treatment licensed as a clinically managed halfway house. It follows a values-based recovery philosophy rooted in truth, honesty, personal accountability, work ethic, community involvement, and service to others to promote their treatment goals of reducing relapse and promoting recovery. The reported data comes from the director of admissions.

### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Substance use and mental health are central to the organization's mission. Staff work with individuals facing addiction and mental illness by addressing a wide range of needs, including mental, physical, emotional, and social support.

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

The organization provides addiction treatment that incorporates mental health support. These conditions are closely linked and must be treated together. Often, recovery starts with stabilizing substance use, which allows individuals to begin working toward long-term mental wellness and a stable life.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

Staff have observed that alcohol use disorder remains the most common substance use issue, though it is frequently overlooked. There has also been a significant increase in heroin and methamphetamine use, which has become more difficult to treat due to the increased hidden presence of fentanyl and xylazine.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

The aforementioned substances are contributing to long-term mental health symptoms, including psychosis.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

They reported that there has been an increase in referrals, particularly from hospitals and detox facilities. Many individuals need safe transitional living arrangements and recovery support after initial stabilization. The Twelve offers a 60-to-90-day residential program focused on sober living, employment, and life skills development to aid those individuals.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location. Etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

The organization has seen an increase in younger individuals, especially those in their early twenties, entering treatment with substance use disorders. These individuals often lack life experience, which adds complexity to recovery. Men continue to outnumber women in treatment programs, despite similar rates of substance use. Women often face barriers such as caregiving responsibilities and limited access to supportive housing.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

Yes. Medicaid is currently the sole funding source for the type of long-term residential treatment the organization provides. With potential changes to Medicaid eligibility, many individuals are at risk of losing access to care. The organization recognizes the need to adapt by offering services such as job readiness and volunteer opportunities to help clients maintain their coverage.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

The Anderson Treatment Twelve noted a significant gap between inpatient and outpatient care. Transitional living programs are critical to recovery but remain limited. In addition, there is a shortage of long-term sober housing options, which are essential for maintaining stability and preventing relapse.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

The organization stated in Central Virginia, the lack of resources is a major concern. The few available services are often overburdened, as they must serve multiple surrounding localities. Without increased investment in mental health and addiction services, these communities will continue to struggle. Supporting individuals in recovery benefits not only the person but the entire community.

### **Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services**

Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services (BREMS) is also one of eleven non-profit EMS councils serving the Commonwealth of Virginia. BREMS serves the City of Lynchburg and the Counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford and Campbell. The information summarized in this section was provided by the Regional Director and Performance Improvement Specialist from the Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services Council.

#### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

The organization reported that substance use has significantly increased call volume, contributing to system-wide delays in emergency care and other local services. They stated that a substantial portion of their interventions in 2024 involved substance use and mental health crises, which directly affected both response times and resource allocation across the system

#### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services stated that increased calls related to substance use and mental health have delayed service delivery throughout their operations. They noted that such calls often require coordination with law enforcement and other support systems, which diverts personnel and delays the organization's ability to respond to other emergencies.

#### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The organization observed a decline in overall opioid related calls from 2023 to 2024. However, they reported an increase in substance use among school-aged youth, particularly involving THC-infused gummy products.

#### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services reported a 3% decline in mental health-related responses from 2023 to 2024. They noted that mental health calls represented 9% of total responses in 2023, compared to 6% in 2024.

#### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The organization noted a decrease in general calls over the past year. They suggested that this trend may be linked to improved access to prevention education and the increased community availability of Naloxone.

#### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

Blue Ridge Emergency Medical Services reported that demographic data from their interventions indicate a recurring trend involving white women aged 35 to 55, who make up a significant portion of substance use and mental health-related calls.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

The organization cited the 2023 FDA enforcement policy on medical drug boxes and medication kit exchanges being paused until April 2025 as a factor that reduced available funding and resources. This enforcement policy impacted the drug supply chain security when EMS exchanged medical drug boxes when they were with a patient at the hospital. Local agencies are having to budget these medication kit exchanges themselves during this prolonged transitional period. Despite these challenges, they reported that patients are being treated more quickly and more frequently for substance use and mental health symptoms.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

The organization reported that the high frequency of overdose and behavioral health-related emergencies indicates ongoing gaps in preventive care and mental health support services. They also noted that limited time and resources continue to hinder comprehensive intervention efforts.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

The organization identified several contributing factors, including sustained economic stress, lack of accessible treatment options, social isolation, limited intervention programs, and transportation barriers that prevent individuals from accessing available services.

## **Centra Health**

Centra Health is a regional nonprofit healthcare system based in Lynchburg, Virginia, serving over 500,000 people as the dominant provider of critical medical services in Central and Southern Virginia. Centra Health Senior Director of Social Work provided the following data.

### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Centra Health reported that substance use and mental health challenges have significantly influenced service delivery throughout Lynchburg and Central Virginia. In response, the organization has developed innovative programs and expanded its behavioral health infrastructure. They stated that the demand for behavioral health services has grown substantially, prompting the organization to prioritize expansion efforts, particularly following the release of the 2024–2027 Community Health Needs Assessment, which identified mental health and substance use as the region's top health concerns. According to the report, 25% of residents identified mental health as the most difficult service to access, highlighting persistent availability and accessibility gaps.

### **What impact does substance use and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

The organization reported that it has expanded both outpatient and urgent behavioral health services in response to increasing demand. A notable development was the opening of the Piedmont Psychiatric Adult Urgent Care in November 2024, which was designed to divert patients from emergency departments and provide same-day mental health care. They stated that this facility filled a significant geographic gap, as the nearest comparable service had previously been over three hours away. Centra also noted improvements in same-day access to therapy and psychiatry, as well as enhancements in referral efficiency through integration with electronic health records.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The organization observed a troubling rise in youth substance use, particularly involving THC vapes and accidental fentanyl exposure among elementary and middle school-aged children. Centra reported participating in prevention efforts alongside regional coalitions like CVARR, aimed at increasing awareness and education for both the public and healthcare professionals.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The organization confirmed that behavioral health admissions, outpatient appointments, and urgent care visits have all increased. The implementation of the Piedmont Psychiatric Adult Urgent Care was cited as a direct response to growing psychiatric admissions, many of which had previously been managed through emergency departments.

### **Key Inpatient Activity Changes (2024–2025):**

**Increased Admissions:** Centra Virginia Baptist Hospital reported a rise in psychiatric admissions, particularly among individuals with co-occurring disorders, suicidal ideation, or acute psychiatric symptoms. This demand at times exceeded available bed capacity, leading to longer emergency department wait times for psychiatric placement.

**Higher Emergency Department Referrals:** Emergency departments across the system experienced more psychiatric cases, especially involving adolescents, young adults, and individuals in opioid-related crises or withdrawal.

**Increased Crisis Calls:** Behavioral health triage teams and crisis hotlines saw higher call volumes, often leading to inpatient evaluations. Centra noted that its coordination with Horizon Behavioral Health contributed to responding to the growing number of calls involving suicidal youth and adults in distress.

### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

Centra Health reported that children as young as 8–11 years old are increasingly exposed to harmful substances such as vapes and opioids. The organization also identified geographic disparities, with rural communities surrounding Lynchburg facing greater service shortages and longer travel times. Additionally, they observed that low-income, uninsured, and underinsured populations were more likely to experience untreated mental health and substance use conditions.

### **Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)**

The organization stated that post-COVID workforce shortages, particularly in psychiatry and clinical social work, continued to impact service delivery in 2024. Despite ongoing recruitment and training efforts, capacity challenges persist due to rising demand. Economic inflation and limitations in insurance coverage also created barriers to care, especially for uninsured individuals, by delaying access to appropriate treatment.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

Despite recent expansions, Centra acknowledges several ongoing gaps, including:

- Inpatient psychiatric beds, especially for youth and high-risk adults.
- Access to outpatient follow-up care after discharge, often hindered by long waitlists.
- Transportation barriers in rural areas that limit access to centralized facilities.
- Specialty care for co-occurring disorders, which require integrated and often longer-term treatment strategies

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Centra identified several contributing factors, including Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma, especially among youth, socioeconomic instability, such as housing insecurity and poverty, insufficient access to early intervention resources, persistent stigma surrounding mental health and addiction, which discourages help-seeking, and the easy availability of high-potency substances like fentanyl and synthetic THC products.

### **Central Virginia Health District**

The Central Virginia Health District provides a range of public health services to the community as a part of the Virginia Department of Health. The information summarized in this section was provided by the Lead Health Educator at Central Virginia Health District.

### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

The Central Virginia Health District (CVHD) reported a growing number of individuals presenting with both substance use and mental health disorders. This increase has led to higher recovery court attendance, longer recovery timelines, and a greater demand for inpatient treatment. Due to limited staffing, CVHD shared that they are often unable to meet the rising need and must sometimes turn away requests for support.

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

CVHD explained that many clients have high levels of trauma, which often shows up as treatment resistance or a higher risk of harm. These complex needs have influenced the organization's approach, leading to plans for expanding person-centered programs and supportive coaching services.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The organization has seen a rise in the use of cocaine and methamphetamine, as well as the emergence of a dangerous substance, *tianeptine*, also known as "gas station heroin." This unregulated drug is being sold in convenience stores and online as a supplement or research chemical, despite not being FDA-approved. CVHD emphasized its serious health risks, including potential coma or death.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

CVHD noted a concerning increase in individuals with mental health disorders struggling to access appropriate treatment, highlighting gaps in care availability.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

Both local courts have seen a rise in referrals. In response, one court now uses recovery capital assessments to determine readiness, while the other directs individuals with more significant needs to CVHD programs.

### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

CVHD shared that there has been a notable increase in cocaine use among women.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

A key financial challenge was a 10% decrease in CVHD's State Opioid Response (SOR) funding, which impacted their ability to maintain or grow services.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

The organization pointed to a shortage of peer support specialists in emergency departments. Unlike other agencies, CVHD does not have access to a four-year waiver for background checks, limiting their ability to staff these roles. They believe placing peers in emergency settings could strengthen collaboration with emergency responders and law enforcement in overdose situations.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

CVHD identified several contributing factors: increased gang activity, the availability of marijuana, and the ongoing lack of resources for individuals with low incomes.

## **Brightview**

Brightview is a comprehensive, evidence-based addiction treatment & recovery organization that offers outpatient care, MAT & counseling. This data was reported by the Community Outreach Manager.

### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

The organization stated that addressing substance use and mental health is the foundation of their work. Their approach emphasizes not only clinical treatment but also rebuilding lives through comprehensive care, counseling, and coordination with community partners

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

They reported that service delivery is often challenged by structural barriers, such as limitations around dual treatment for mental health and substance use. The organization actively seeks creative, compliant solutions and advocates for more integrated care models.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

Brightview reported a rise in contaminated street drugs, which has led more individuals to seek treatment urgently. To address this, they focus on low-barrier access, including walk-in services and on-site support.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

The organization has observed increased patient volume and heightened anxiety about access to care.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The organization reported a significant increase in new patient inductions, even during typically slower seasons. They welcomed this rise, recognizing it as a sign of growing willingness among individuals to seek help.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

The organization stated that substance use does not discriminate and continues to affect all age groups. However, they noted particular concern for older adults who are unhoused and struggling, emphasizing ongoing outreach to support this vulnerable population.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)**

Staff turnover was cited as a major factor affecting service continuity. The organization emphasized the importance of building trust with patients and reported that staff retention is a key focus to avoid disrupting care relationships.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

The organization pointed to ongoing issues such as a lack of transportation, cuts to social services, and challenges for uninsured patients. They also identified navigation barriers for individuals with mental health conditions and expressed a need for expanded peer support services.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

They cited a general lack of public understanding about addiction and mental health, particularly outside of treatment circles. Many individuals face deep trauma, emotional wounds, and systemic disadvantages. The organization stressed the importance of compassion, advocacy, and reducing stigma to better support recovery.

## **Miriam's House**

Miriam's House works to end homelessness and rebuild lives in Central Virginia, by connecting individuals and families with stable, affordable housing and providing the skills and supports that lead to self-sufficiency. This data was reported by the Director of Housing Services.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The organization has observed increasing challenges around heavy marijuana use, particularly among clients seeking employment. Many clients assume marijuana use won't impact job prospects, leading to disqualification late in the hiring process. This has been a difficult topic for the organization to address, as marijuana is less stigmatized and often not viewed as problematic by clients. They have also highlighted the ongoing need to stay informed about emerging substances like xylazine and to keep up with harm reduction practices, including distributing test strips and Naloxone.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

Anecdotally, staff reported seeing more clients with untreated psychosis, especially in street outreach. They reported that many clients struggle to engage with services, sign leases, or complete disability paperwork due to delusions or paranoia. The organization frequently works with Adult Protective Services (APS) in these cases, but often finds limited options available. While diagnoses like schizophrenia are not new in their client base, the number of cases presenting with severe symptoms seemed unusually high over the past year.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

In 2024, the organization received more referrals for families, particularly those experiencing vehicular homelessness. However, they saw fewer referrals for youth (ages 18–24), which they suspect may be due to under-identification rather than an actual decrease. Overall, they enrolled fewer households in 2024 compared to 2023 (roughly 50 people). This was attributed to longer housing timelines as the average number of days to house a family increased from 52 days in 2023 to 68 days in 2024. Additionally, families remained in the program longer due to challenges affording rent independently, resulting in slower turnover and fewer openings.

### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

While no major demographic shifts were reported, the organization continues to work primarily with single mothers, many of whom are coming from domestic violence shelters and present with trauma-related symptoms like PTSD, anxiety, and depression. In their supportive housing programs, they are beginning to see an aging population among those who are chronically homeless. This shift is creating gaps in services for older adults, particularly those who only have Medicare, which does not cover many recovery or mental health services. The organization flagged this as a growing area of concern.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

Several major factors have impacted their work including:

- Rising rent prices: The cost of housing has risen dramatically in the area, slowing down placement and increasing the time needed for families to stabilize financially.
- SNAP work requirements: The return of work requirements for food assistance created economic hardship for many clients.
- Paused mainstream vouchers: HUD vouchers, which serve people who are homeless and have disabilities, were put on hold, limiting housing options for high-need clients.
- Shelter closures: The closure of the RESET shelter and the temporary pause in intakes at the Salvation Army created a prolonged gap in emergency shelter availability, which persists as a challenge.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

The organization pointed to ongoing and emerging service gaps:

- Lack of recovery services covered by Medicare for older adults with behavioral health needs.
- Insufficient emergency shelter capacity, especially during the months when local shelters were closed or paused intakes.
- Limited access to affordable housing, which delays placements and forces longer program durations.
- Challenges supporting clients with untreated psychosis, who often cannot engage in paperwork or decision-making needed to access housing and services

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Miriam's House identified a mix of immediate and long-term factors contributing to both substance use and mental health challenges. They noted that many clients are in crisis situations (fleeing domestic violence, losing housing, or facing extreme financial stress), which creates acute emotional strain and can trigger or worsen existing conditions. They noted that underlying trauma, such as adverse childhood experiences and lack of access to early mental health care, also plays a major role. These issues are often compounded by systemic barriers like poverty, stigma, lack of transportation, and limited services in rural areas.

Additionally, they expressed concern about the criminalization of behaviors tied to mental illness or substance use, especially for individuals without housing, emphasizing the need to treat these issues as public health, not criminal, concerns.

## **Amherst County Social Services**

Amherst County Social Services provides social work services aimed at supporting families and protecting children. The information summarized in this section was provided by the Family Services Supervisor.

### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Amherst County Social Services reported that substance use and mental health issues have significantly affected their work, with more than half of their cases involving one or both issues.

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

These issues have required ongoing coordination between service teams, particularly for testing and monitoring purposes, to support affected families more effectively.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The agency has seen an increase in cases involving substance-exposed infants and children. This rise is attributed in part to improved access to testing for substances like cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

While no specific new mental health trends were noted, Amherst County Social Services emphasized how closely intertwined substance use and mental health are. Without a deep understanding of a person's history, it can be difficult to distinguish the root causes of behavioral or emotional challenges.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

There has been a noticeable increase in drug-related complaints and calls to Child Protective Services. While pre-COVID calls often reported physical abuse, current calls more frequently involve concerns about child neglect.

### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

There has been an uptick in drug-related complaints involving older adults. Some individuals may appear to have dementia or other mental health disorders, but past substance use could be contributing to their condition. Additionally, there's been a resurgence in calls about alcohol misuse, particularly from medical responders. Though these cases are newly documented due to improved reporting protocols, alcohol misuse has long been present but underreported in the community.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

No major social, economic, or environmental disruptions were reported as affecting service delivery over the past year.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

Amherst County Social Services highlighted a lack of housing and shelter options for individuals with substance use and mental health challenges. Many long-standing housing options have closed, and shelters are frequently at capacity. Medical transportation, especially for inpatient services, is also limited and considered unreliable.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Economic stress remains a major factor, often contributing to child abuse and neglect, which can be linked to broader patterns of mental health and substance use concerns.

## **Bedford County Social Services**

The Bedford County Social Services provides social work services aimed at supporting families and protecting children. information summarized in this section was provided by the Family Service Manager at Bedford County Social Services.

### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

The agency reported that approximately 80% of its cases, particularly within Child Protective Services (CPS), involved issues related to substance use and mental health. These two factors have become central to the agency's overall workload.

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

To address the increasing complexity of cases, staff require enhanced training in identifying and assessing substance use and mental health issues. The agency emphasized that it can be difficult to determine whether a client's behavior stems from substance use, an underlying mental health disorder, intellectual limitations, or all three. Understanding a person's baseline functioning is crucial, yet often unavailable, which complicates care planning.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The agency observed a notable rise in methamphetamine use, which they say is underrecognized at the state and national level. Fentanyl remains present, but meth is increasingly prevalent—especially as a social drug passed among friends and family. It's not uncommon for entire neighborhoods to be affected. They've also noted an increase in "functional meth users," people who maintain jobs and appear stable, making detection more difficult.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

They shared that they are observing complex patterns in clients where it's difficult to separate substance use from underlying mental health conditions, especially if individuals also have intellectual disabilities or environmental stressors. For example, someone may misuse medication due to a lack of understanding of the associated risk, not specific intent, especially when trust is placed in peers or friends offering alternative substances.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The agency described a sharp increase in CPS and Adult Protective Services (APS) cases. Notably, APS has seen a surge in calls related to elder financial exploitation, with vulnerable adults giving away large sums to online scammers. These individuals are often deemed legally competent, limiting the agency's ability to intervene despite clear manipulation

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

The agency works in a predominantly white county and noted that usage patterns generally reflect the population. One alarming trend is intergenerational substance use (grandparents, parents, and children using drugs together). The agency has also noted there has been an increase in functional meth users in the area; more people are using meth socially, for companionship; they are able to hold jobs, do regular daily and recreational activities without the average person being able to tell that they are using.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)**

While broader social or economic events didn't directly disrupt service delivery in 2024, the biggest challenge remains access to treatment resources. Inpatient services often require transportation to other areas, creating barriers for those in need.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

While broader social or economic events didn't directly disrupt service delivery in 2024, the biggest challenge remains access to treatment resources. Inpatient services often require transportation to other areas, creating barriers for those in need.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

The agency cited several contributing factors, including rising depression and anxiety, shifting cultural norms around drug use, and casual references to substance use in daily conversation—even among professionals. They also noted a concerning trend in early childhood behavior and mental health challenges, which they attribute to a mix of prenatal exposure, poor parental modeling, and overuse of handheld digital devices.

## **Campbell County Social Services**

Campbell County Social Services provides social work services aimed at supporting families and protecting children. The information summarized in this section was provided by the Assistant Director and team of Supervisors at Campbell County Social Services.

### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Campbell County Social Services reported that mental health and substance use have significantly impacted their work, with a high volume of related cases currently on their caseload.

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

Despite the high number of cases, the agency shared that their service delivery has not been directly affected. Staff continue to meet client needs while managing the growing demand.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The agency noted a shift in primary substances used in the community. Cocaine has overtaken opioids and fentanyl as the most commonly used drug. Additionally, there is a noticeable increase in the number of substance-exposed infants.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

No significant new mental health trends have been observed in the community at this time

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The organization has seen a general increase in the number of calls, though the frequency varies from month to month.

### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

Substance use remains most prevalent among individuals in their early 20s through their mid-40s, according to recent observations.

### **Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

The most notable impact has come from changes to Medicaid, which have affected individuals' access to both mental health and substance use treatment. Reduced coverage has created barriers for those needing support.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

As a rural locality, Campbell County faces limited access to service providers, resulting in longer wait times and fewer available appointments. Transportation also remains a significant barrier for individuals trying to attend treatment. Additional issues include clients not being forthcoming about their substance use and a lack of qualifying insurance coverage.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Campbell County Social Services identified poverty, a general lack of resources, and limited awareness of available support services as major contributing factors.

## **Amherst County Public Schools**

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Supervisor of Intervention and Behavioral Services at Amherst County Schools.

### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

It is important to acknowledge the significant impact of substance use on the operations of Amherst County Schools. The adverse effects on students' learning, behavior, and overall well-being are considerable. Furthermore, the added responsibilities and stress experienced by teachers as a consequence of these challenges should also be recognized.

### **What impact does substance use and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

Multiple elements within a school environment are affected when considering substance abuse and mental health, including disturbances in the learning atmosphere, increased absenteeism, and a decline in academic performance, in addition to potential issues within the wider community.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

There is a rise for concern as the increase in accessibility of substances has exacerbated the amount of substances found among elementary-aged children.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

There is an increase in rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation, particularly among high school students. There is also a need for enhanced mental health support within elementary and middle schools.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The organization reported a substantial increase from last year.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

Amherst County Public Schools noted the growing demand for support services among elementary school students across all demographics, highlighting a need for both substance use and mental health services.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)**

In 2024, several social, environmental, and economic factors influenced Amherst County Public Schools' service delivery. Notably, there was a lack of adequate funding and resources dedicated to addressing the mental health and substance use needs of students.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

Amherst County Public Schools have highlighted several areas where they believe there are gaps in the availability of services necessary to adequately support students. These gaps may include insufficient mental health resources, a lack of specialized programs for students with differing needs, or inadequate access to academic support services.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Socioeconomic disparities, insufficient access to mental health services, and a history of trauma all represent considerable concerns to the increase of substance use and mental health emergencies.

## **Appomattox County Public Schools**

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Director of Student Services in Appomattox County Public Schools.

### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

ACPS has seen a significant rise in vaping among students, which has led to disciplinary actions such as SIR (School Incident Reports) and ISS (In-School Suspension). At the same time, an increase in student mental health crises—such as self-harm—has created safety concerns that teachers are often unequipped to manage. This has resulted in more student hospitalizations, threat assessments, and alternative learning placements like homebound instruction to accommodate severe anxiety.

### **What impact does substance use and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

The growing need for behavioral and mental health support has led ACPS to make more referrals to Horizon's substance use programs and outpatient therapy services, including those coordinated through FAPT (Family Assessment and Planning Team).

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The agency has reported a noticeable increase in vaping, especially in younger students.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

ACPS has observed a general decline in student mental health, largely tied to peer-related conflicts. These issues contribute to higher rates of anxiety and depression and have increased the need for therapeutic behavioral support services such as TBT (Trauma-Based Therapy), RBT (Registered Behavior Technician), and BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) interventions.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

ACPS has seen a steady increase in the number of referrals, particularly related to substance use and behavioral issues.

### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

The agency has noted that while substance use has risen across all student demographics, it is particularly noticeable in middle school. Mental health referrals tend to involve white girls more often, while behavioral referrals are more often associated with black boys.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)**

They noted that the most significant ongoing challenge is the lack of available mental health providers and treatment resources within Appomattox County.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

The organization noted many service gaps, including a shortage of substance use therapy options for teenagers. Additionally, private insurance limitations often create access barriers for students and families.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

ACPS identifies several contributing factors, including a lack of early intervention programs, limited access to healthy coping outlets, insufficient parental education, and limited parental availability to engage in their children's behavioral and emotional needs.

### **Bedford County Schools**

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Director of Student Support Services with Bedford County Schools.

#### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Substance use and mental health have profoundly affected the Bedford County School's operations. The rise in high-potency THC vapes, edibles, and other substances has led to serious student health crises, increased behavioral incidents, and disrupted learning environments. Staff regularly respond to students under the influence, sometimes involving hallucinations, wandering behavior, or medical emergencies requiring multiple ambulances. Mental health needs are also growing more complex, leading to increased staff strain and challenges in supporting students effectively.

#### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

It was reported that these issues have significantly stretched service capacity. Teachers, administrators, nurses, and counselors are increasingly drawn into crisis management and ongoing student support. Despite implementing several interventions (such as CAST groups, partnerships with Horizon, TDT, and DSS), staff often feel overwhelmed and under-resourced. While some services are showing promise, the volume and intensity of needs frequently exceed what current staffing and funding levels can support.

#### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

Bedford County Schools reported that since 2021, there's been a noticeable shift from nicotine vapes to high-concentration THC products and edibles. Use is beginning at younger ages, including among elementary students. The school has also seen a decrease in alcohol and cigarette use.

#### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

Bedford County Schools has seen the frequency of mental health reports stabilizing somewhat compared to 2021–2022. Although the frequency is decreasing, the severity and complexity of cases are escalating, often to the point where traditional supports no longer suffice.

#### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

Substance-related referrals peak in high school, with grades 10 and 11 showing the highest rates. There is a growing number of students under the influence at school, often resulting in disciplinary actions, medical interventions, and deep involvement from multiple staff and agencies.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

Substance use is concentrated most heavily in middle and high school students, peaking in 10th and 11th grade, though concerning incidents are increasingly being observed in elementary school as well. The speaker also challenged the assumption that substance use only affects disengaged or struggling students—highlighting that high-achieving, involved students are also being caught with and using high-potency THC products.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

A major concern is the inconsistent nature of funding. Many of the most effective programs (like CAST groups and external partnerships) are grant-funded and time-limited. The uncertainty around what happens when these grants expire is a looming issue. There's also concern that access to substances is far too easy—students can purchase them online, from local stores, or even get them from family members, sometimes with little adult awareness or oversight.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

BCS highlighted several service gaps. There's a need for earlier prevention efforts, starting in late elementary school, not just through brief programs like DARE. Staffing shortages limit the number of therapeutic groups that can be offered. Additionally, students needing more than outpatient care but not qualifying for hospitalization often fall through the cracks due to a lack of middle-tier support.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Key factors include easy online access to substances, parental engagement, and high stress levels among students. There's also a lack of community understanding around trauma and addiction, along with inconsistent support between home, school, and the community. Substance use has become harder to detect, with vapes and edibles disguised to look like everyday items.

## **Lynchburg City Schools**

The information summarized in this section was provided by the Director of Student Support Services with Lynchburg City Schools.

### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

The organization reported that substance use and mental health challenges have significantly shaped its work. Staff are increasingly supporting students facing complex trauma, anxiety, depression, and early-onset substance use. They emphasized the need for ongoing support services, behavior intervention, and stronger case management to address the rising intensity of student needs.

### **What impact does substance use and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

They indicated that service delivery is heavily influenced by the growing severity of student cases. While supports are in place, the current services sometimes lack the intensity required, particularly for those needing more than outpatient care but less than hospitalization. Barriers to access, system navigation challenges, and gaps in communication between families, schools, and providers continue to hinder effectiveness.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

The organization has observed several concerning trends. There has been a noticeable rise in younger students possessing vapes, with few engaging in vaping at school; some as early as third or fourth grade. This trend is particularly noticeable primarily due to the age of those at risk and the accessibility of vapes to this demographic.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

LCS are seeing students experiencing hallucinations that, in most instances, are linked back to the student's depression and or anxiety. While overall threat assessments and self-harm incidents have decreased, the complexity and severity of remaining cases have increased, often requiring hospitalization.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

The organization observed a significant drop in threat assessments and self-harm incidents compared to the previous year, falling from 2023. However, the intensity of the cases has increased, with more leading to hospitalization. Referrals for drug possession, particularly involving prescription drugs and marijuana, are on track to surpass previous years. Vaping incidents have declined, likely due to enhanced monitoring and prevention efforts.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

The organization reported that substance use is beginning at younger ages, especially vaping in elementary-aged children. Staff also noted that complex mental health needs are affecting students across grade levels, suggesting a widespread issue rather than one confined to specific demographics

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity, etc.)**

They reported that reduced funding in 2024 had a clear impact on services. Programs previously offered multiple times per week (such as substance use groups in suspension centers) were reduced due to budget constraints. This reduction has limited the organization's ability to deliver early intervention and education, particularly in middle and elementary grades.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

The organization identified several service gaps. These include a lack of intensive middle-tier support between outpatient and inpatient care, insufficient education on substance use for younger students, and significant access barriers for families due to poverty or private insurance limitations. The decline in funding has also constrained prevention programming in schools.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

They believe that many parents either struggle with their own mental health and substance use or lack understanding of the seriousness of these issues. Some express apathy or hopelessness after failed attempts to access services. Additionally, complex trauma and limited access to intensive or tailored care contribute to worsening conditions. Staff emphasized the need for greater psychoeducation, family engagement, and community-wide support.

## **Law Enforcement**

The information summarized in this section was provided by Lieutenants, Deputies, and Officers from Amherst County Sheriff's Office, Appomattox County Sheriff's Office, Bedford Police Department, Campbell County Sheriff's Office, and Lynchburg Police Department.

### **Amherst County Sheriff's Office (ACS)**

#### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Substance use and mental health concerns have placed a significant demand on ACS operations. Each case often requires extensive time and coordination of resources, which can delay response times and impact overall service delivery.

#### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

Substance use and mental health-related calls require a high level of attention and resource allocation, often straining ACS staff and slowing the provision of other essential services.

#### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

ACS reports that methamphetamine continues to be the most frequently encountered substance, followed by cocaine and fentanyl.

#### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

The ACS has found that there is a noticeable pattern linking mental health disorders across family members. Juveniles living with parents or guardians who struggle with mental health issues often begin to exhibit similar concerns themselves.

#### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

No significant data was reported at this time.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location. Etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

The ACS has found that substance use is frequently reported in low-cost hotels and retail locations, while most mental health emergencies tend to occur in the individual's home environment.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

Limited funding and staffing shortages significantly affected ACS's ability to meet the increasing demand for services.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

One notable gap is the lack of follow-up support for juveniles involved in mental health-related calls once law enforcement has responded.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Ongoing marijuana use (both medical and recreational) appears to contribute to the use of other substances. Additionally, low self-esteem and poor self-image often lead to harmful behavior patterns, which can negatively affect both individual mental health and community well-being.

## **Appomattox County Sherriff's Office (ACSO)**

### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

The Appomattox County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) continues to face significant challenges due to substance use and mental health issues in the community. High volumes of Emergency Custody Orders (ECOs) and Temporary Detention Orders (TDOs) place pressure on staffing and operations. These situations often require deputies to extend their shifts, disrupt daily workflows, and respond to incidents beyond their assigned duty hours.

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

Substance use and mental health-related incidents have greatly impacted ACSO's ability to provide timely and effective services. A large percentage of calls are linked to these issues, often requiring additional personnel and resources. This demand results in staff shortages and increased reliance on extended or emergency staffing, affecting overall service delivery.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

ACSO has observed a notable increase in fentanyl-related incidents within the community, reflecting a shift in substance use trends.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

Mental health crisis calls have shown a steady rise throughout the year. Although call volumes vary from week to week, the overall trend indicates increasing frequency and urgency of mental health emergencies.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

There has been an increase in referrals and calls related to substance use. This trend is partly attributed to ACSO's proactive policing approach, where initial calls, such as those involving domestic disturbances, may escalate into narcotics investigations upon further assessment.

### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

Substance use and mental health emergencies appear to reflect the general population demographics of Appomattox County. No specific trends based on age, race, or gender were identified as disproportionately represented.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

ACSO has not seen any changes that impact their service delivery.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

There are several gaps in service that influence public safety and trust between law enforcement and the community. Staff must operate with limited resources leading to reduced coverage during shifts. While safety is a top priority there is a clear need for quicker access to mental health support services. Delays result in individuals remaining in police custody longer than necessary which contributes to resource strain and public mistrust. Placing individuals in custody, especially those going through mental health crises, can be traumatic and may be seen as counterproductive when the goal is to be protective.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

A key issue that continues to contribute to substance use and mental health problems in the community is the misalignment between the judicial and magistrate system. Individuals often do not receive appropriate treatment and reoffend, keeping them in the legal system. Additionally, there is often pressure on an individual to commit crimes, like larceny, to fund their addictions.

## **Bedford Police Department (BPD)**

### **How has substance use, and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

The Bedford Police Department (BPD) continues to face growing demands due to the rise in substance use and mental health-related crises. These issues have led to more frequent crisis situations, requiring officers to receive additional training and utilize more departmental resources.

### **What impact does substance use, and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

Substance use and mental health emergencies often delay response times, as officers must wait for mental health professionals or EMS to arrive. This strain limits BPD's ability to respond to other emergencies promptly and efficiently.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

BPD has observed a notable increase in synthetic drug use, particularly fentanyl, along with a rise in opioid misuse. These trends have led to more overdoses and complex response situations, similar to challenges seen in larger urban areas. In response, BPD has partnered with outside agencies and Horizon Behavioral Health to provide Narcan training and strengthen their response capabilities.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

There has been a clear rise in mental health emergencies, particularly among individuals experiencing homelessness or involved with the criminal justice system. The department also reports a seasonal uptick in anxiety and depression, especially during the holiday season.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

Over the past year, BPD has seen a 15%–20% increase in mental health-related calls, along with a general rise in calls connected to substance abuse.

### **Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

Adults aged 25 to 40 are the most affected by substance use and mental health issues. However, BPD has also noted increasing substance use among younger populations. Communities experiencing higher rates of poverty tend to see more pronounced mental health and substance use challenges.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

The lingering economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to increased stress, higher substance use, and mental health challenges. Staffing shortages and limited access to mental health resources have made service delivery more difficult across the board.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

BPD has identified a lack of long-term substance abuse rehabilitation programs in the local area. This presents a hardship for residents who must travel outside the community to access needed services, creating barriers to sustained recovery and support.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Key contributing factors include social isolation, economic hardship, limited access to healthcare, the ongoing opioid crisis, and the stigma surrounding mental health. These challenges are especially prevalent in lower-income areas of the community.

## **Campbell County Sheriff's Office (CCSO)**

### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Substance use and mental health challenges have significantly impacted the operations of the Campbell County Sheriff's Office. The Crime Suppression Unit (CSU) has been required to take a more proactive approach in addressing crime related to substance abuse and distribution. Staffing limitations have added pressure to the unit, particularly when managing civil orders of service (COS).

### **What impact does substance use and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

The demands of issuing Emergency Custody Orders (ECOs) and Temporary Detention Orders (TDOs) frequently tie up staff and delay response times. This diversion of manpower affects CCSO's ability to respond promptly to other emergencies.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

CCSO reports that while the price of methamphetamine has dropped significantly, usage rates have remained steady. Fentanyl use has seen a sharp increase, often appearing laced within other substances to foster addiction without the user's knowledge. The office has also identified a rise in the presence of drug combinations like fentanyl mixed with xylazine in the form of strips or sleeves.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

Mental health-related calls are predominantly from individuals seeking assistance or support. This shift suggests a growing awareness or desperation among residents to access mental health services.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

CCSO has reported the number of calls, referrals, and admissions related to substance use and mental health has slightly increased over the past year.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location, etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

The CCSO has observed that younger individuals, particularly those struggling with anxiety, are among the most affected by substance use and mental health concerns.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

Economic pressure, staff shortages, and limited access to mental health services have made service delivery more difficult for CCSO, mirroring broader trends across the region.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

A key gap identified by the CCSO is the lack of public awareness and access to available programs. There is a pressing need for improved communication, outreach, and education to connect the community with counseling and support services.

**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Socioeconomic conditions are a significant driver of substance use within the county. Individuals with lower income levels are more likely to experience mental health challenges and may turn to substances as a coping mechanism.

## **Lynchburg Police Department (LPD)**

### **How has substance use and mental health impacted your organization's work?**

Substance use and mental health issues continue to play a significant role in the workload of the Lynchburg Police Department. While the department has seen some improvements in managing time spent on Emergency Custody Orders (ECOs) and Temporary Detention Orders (TDOs), these situations still consume substantial resources and impact officer availability for other duties. In 2024, 76% of mental health-related calls were initiated by citizens, with requests for welfare checks being the most common, followed by ECOs.

### **What impact does substance use and mental health have on your organization's service delivery?**

Mental health and substance use calls continue to place a strain on service delivery. Although LPD reports a reduction in the total number of service calls and in the man-hours spent on ECOs and TDOs compared to previous years, the complexity of these incidents often demands significant staff time and specialized response, reducing capacity for proactive policing and other community services.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to substance use?**

LPD has observed an overall decrease in drug seizures and overdose reports from 2023 to 2024. Among substances seized, methamphetamine remains the most prevalent, followed by cocaine, marijuana, and fentanyl. This trend is consistent with neighboring jurisdictions, which are also seeing increased fentanyl use, sometimes laced into other drugs, contributing to the overdose risk.

### **Has your organization seen any new trends related to mental health?**

Mental health calls are increasingly dominated by Level 3 Marcus Alerts, which accounted for 68% of all such alerts in 2024. These cases typically require the greatest investment of time and resources, further highlighting the need for more embedded mental health response services.

### **Has your organization observed any change in the number of referrals/admissions/calls over the past year?**

Since 2020, LPD has reported a steady decline in calls for service overall. However, the department continues to respond to a high number of mental health-related incidents, even as general call volume trends downward.

**Have you or your organization observed any trends in demographics (age, grade, gender, race, location. Etc.) related to substance use and/or mental health?**

In 2024, overdose incidents were most common among white men, followed by Black men and white women. This marks a slight shift from 2024, when white women held the second-highest rate after white men. These changes suggest subtle but notable demographic shifts in substance-related health crises within the community.

**Were there any social, environmental, or economic factors in 2024 that impacted your service delivery? (e.g., COVID, funding, capacity etc.)**

As with many law enforcement agencies across the region, staffing shortages and limited mental health resources have impacted LPD's ability to deliver services efficiently. Economic pressures and lingering post-pandemic challenges have continued to place stress on both service providers and community members, contributing to ongoing demand for crisis response.

**Are you aware of any gaps in the services?**

LPD, like other departments, has identified gaps in long-term mental health and substance use treatment availability. There is a particular need for more immediate access to mental health professionals during crisis calls and more structured options for follow-up care. Transportation and access to out-of-area services remain barriers for many community members seeking long-term support.

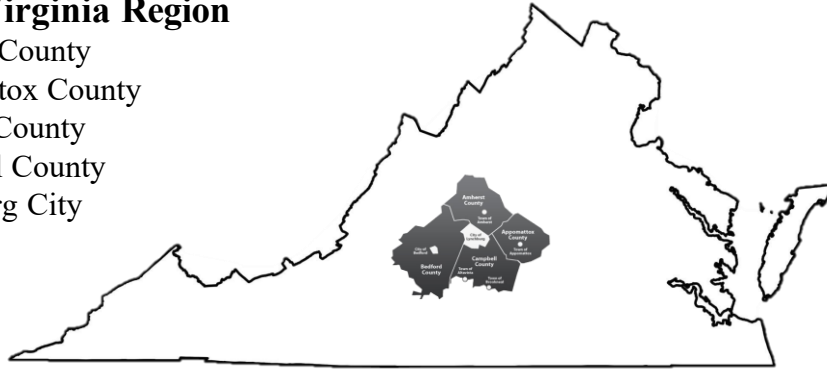
**What factors do you perceive are contributing to substance use and mental health problems in your community?**

Several factors appear to contribute to the rising mental health and substance use issues in Lynchburg. These include socioeconomic challenges, such as poverty and unemployment, limited access to healthcare, social isolation, and stigma surrounding mental health. The prevalence of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs has compounded the risks, especially for vulnerable populations. Additionally, repeat contact with the legal system without sufficient therapeutic intervention perpetuates cycles of crisis and criminalization.

## **Conclusion**

### **Central Virginia Region**

1. Amherst County
2. Appomattox County
3. Bedford County
4. Campbell County
5. Lynchburg City



The Data to Action Resource Team (DART) was initiated on May 25, 2021, in response to increased community issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, which underscored the critical necessity of our work. Over the last five years, DART has collected local data to help inform and educate the community, identify and prioritize needs, support the creation of action plans that address root causes, and secure the resources necessary to address substance use and mental health in Central Virginia.

After careful consideration and evaluation of the progress made through the DART initiative, we announce that this will be the final DART project, unless a significant need arises.

We are grateful for the collaboration and support from all partnering organizations that have contributed to both the qualitative and quantitative data over the years.

As we move forward, we encourage continued engagement and commitment to the ongoing efforts in improving the well-being of our community. Thank you for being a vital part of this journey.

If you found this report useful for informing your community, applying for funding, or expanding your services, please let us know. More information about this report and the Data to Action Resource Team can be found at

<https://www.horizonbh.org/services/data-action-resource-team/>.

