



COMMUNITY
MENTAL HEALTH
FUND

Community Connections — March 2026



Proposed Domestic Violence Legislation Shifts Protection Responsibility to Courts

District 7 Senator Patty Lewis has proposed legislation that creates criminal consequences for violations of no-contact orders in domestic violence cases. Senate Bill 928 is supported by Jackson County Prosecutor Melesa Johnson.

Current no-contact orders are hard to enforce, because they put the

responsibility on victims to seek civil orders of protection. This bill would shift that burden to the courts and criminalize violations, allowing survivors to focus on healing.

CMHF will communicate amendments and updates to SB 928 as the legislative session progresses.

[Track the bill](#)

Rep. Crossley Co-Sponsors Bill That Prioritizes Early Mental Health Treatment

For some individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) — especially those who are unable to perceive their own illness due to a symptom known as anosognosia — non-compliance can result in a treatment loop of disruptive behavior, police intervention, emergency rooms, and life on the street.

District 29 Representative Aaron Crossley is the primary sponsor of House Bill 2088, which offers an alternative to the current system that requires a person to be a “clear and present danger” before a court can order hospitalization. By prioritizing Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), HB 2088 would allow courts to order community-based AOT before a crisis occurs and mandate case managers to ensure successful treatment and recovery.

In addition to providing earlier relief for individuals with SMI and their families, HB 2088 would significantly reduce hospitalizations and incarcerations, resulting in approximate savings of \$1.81 for every dollar spent.

Watch this space for amendments and updates to HB 2088 as the legislative session progresses.

[Track the bill](#)

Network Spotlight

The Learning Farm Transforms Empty Lot into Living Classroom

DeLaSalle Education Center's latest collaboration with Cornerstones of Care's Build Trybe gives students a hands-on learning opportunity to gain real-world experience as they create calming spaces and a healthy community food source.



DeLaSalle students install the raised beds they built with oversight and mentoring from Build Trybe's Theo Bunch and community volunteers.

What do you get when you combine an empty acre of land, a nonprofit partner with infrastructure-building know-how, and brainstorming from dozens of young, creative minds?

In the case of [DeLaSalle Education Center](#), you get the [Learning Farm](#). With oversight from school officials, [Build Trybe](#), and community partners, this living classroom is being designed, built and maintained by students.

Still in its first phase, the farm is already destined to become a school legacy.

The project began a few years ago with a corner lot clean-up. With an acre of land to transform, students were asked how the space should be used. Their wish list expressed interest in farming, agriculture, architecture, and culinary, which evolved into a blueprint for the Learning Farm.

Layout Leaves Nothing to Chance

From the outset, DeLaSalle Executive Director Sean Stalling was impressed with how seriously the students approached the project. "They've shown sensitivities to what will be included on the farm and developed a strong connection to the land," Stalling said. Their intentional choices attest to the careful thought students put into the project. The final farm design includes a peaceful walking path for relaxing and a calming butterfly garden instead of an apiary to lure pollinators to their space (some of them feared bees).

With oversight from Build Trybe's Theo Bunch and design facilitation from KEM STUDIO and University of Kansas architecture students, the DeLaSalle students' farm-building process has been well thought out. Models were built. Sensitive elements, like the duck pond and fruit trees, were strategically located. Raised-bed garden boxes were built, then torched to make them insect-proof before being installed.

Students put in both class time and extracurricular hours toward the farm's construction. Director of College and Career Progressions Breona Ward says that although students participate in other projects that let them build with their hands, this one is different. "I call this our great unifier. By the time they graduate, every student will have a chance to touch some part of the farm's creation," Ward said.

The Learning Farm Springs to Life

While they haven't yet planted their first crops, spring is just around the corner, and the Learning Farm's first Earth Day celebration will include fruit-tree planting. Sponsors like Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas City will be on hand for the festivities, and the community is invited, too.

The Earth Day trees factor into the students' long-term vision for the farm to provide enough fruit and vegetables for a free community farmer's market and fresh produce for Lion's Haven, the school's food pantry. There are short-term plans, too. As soon as this spring, students will be able to pick vegetables they've grown and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

The students who lay the groundwork for the Learning Farm will graduate before it reaches its full food-growing potential. But when they reflect on all the planning and hard work that's gone into the project, both Stalling and Ward say they fully expect graduates to check in and see how their gardens have grown.

Interested in being highlighted on CMHF's social media and in our newsletter? Reach out to smccall@jacksoncountycare.org.

World Bipolar Day is March 30



Bipolar disorder is commonly misunderstood, yet advocating for someone who lives with it can be as simple as knowing the facts. For example, the exact cause of bipolar disorder isn't known. One of the seven disorders grouped under this

umbrella is substance- or medication-related; the other six are believed to be caused by both environmental and genetic factors.

Knowledge can help end the stigma and dispel the myths — follow the link to learn more.

[Bipolar disorder myths & facts](#)

Staff Spotlight: Taryn Lichty



What's your favorite part of working at CMHF?

Coming to work and knowing that our mission is to support our partner agencies and their meaningful, impactful work.

What's a unique fact about you?

I believe small details matter — especially when they enable people (and dogs) to feel more comfortable.

Go-to drink order

Strawberry matcha

Taryn is CMHF's Data Administrator. She is a curious, creative, and community-minded person who loves bringing ideas to life — whether that's in the garden, at home, or through the projects she supports at work. She is the kind of person who enjoys digging into details to make things understandable, appealing, and functional.

Outside of work, Taryn is an avid cherry tomato and sugar snap pea gardener. She's also a devoted Italian Greyhound parent to her dogs, Louis and Gibbs, and finds joy in managing a local Italian Greyhound Meetup group for owners to bring their pups together to play.

Taryn values connection and community and has a knack for turning interests into welcoming spaces for others. She brings warmth, intention, and a sense of playfulness to everything she does — always with an eye toward making life a little more thoughtful and a lot more enjoyable.

Connect with CMHF!



[View email in browser](#)

Don't want to receive these emails? [Unsubscribe](#) here.