

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)
Dana Lasenby

BOARD OFFICERS

Dennis G. Cowan, Chair
Sarah Guadalupe, Ph.D., Vice Chair
John Young, Treasurer
Adam Fuhrman, Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS

Bijaya A. Hans, M.D.
Yolanda Giles, M.D.
Pastor Douglas Jones
Malkia Newman
Christina Root
Christopher Smith
Yvette Woodruff

Attn: Community Editors

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Tiffany Devon
248-975-9684
devont@oaklandchn.org

Suzanne Weinert
248-758-1991
weinerts@oaklandchn.org

The Holidays are Not Always Merry and Bright for Those Struggling with Mental Health Concerns

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI (December 4, 2025) – As the year winds down, Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN) is reminding everyone that the holiday season can be emotionally demanding and that caring for your mental health is just as important as celebrating the season.

While the holidays are often portrayed as a time of joy, many people experience something very different. For individuals living with mental illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, and substance use disorders, this time of year can bring increased pressure, disrupted routines, social expectations, and painful reminders of loss. A 2025 American Psychiatric Association survey reports that 41% of U.S. adults expect more holiday-related stress this year, and more than half of Americans say they experience sadness or loneliness during the season.

“The holidays can intensify emotions that many people quietly carry all year,” said Dana Lasenby, OCHN Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director. “We want every person in our community to know that they are not alone, their feelings are valid, and help is always available. Trained staff are ready to help you by simply calling or texting 9-8-8. Small steps like checking in with yourself, reaching out for connection, and asking for help early can make the holidays more manageable and meaningful.”

Strategies for Protecting Your Mental Health This Holiday Season

- *Rebalance expectations:* Simplify traditions or adjust plans based on your energy and needs
- *Protect your routine:* Consistent sleep, meals, and medication schedules to stabilize your health.
- *Build in recovery time:* Quiet moments and sensory-friendly settings can help avoid being overwhelmed.
- *Use healthy coping tools:* Grounding exercises, movement, writing, creativity, time outdoors, and peer support all help regulate stress.
- *Ask for help early:* If you're noticing increased sadness, anxiety, loneliness, or substance-use triggers, reaching out sooner can prevent a crisis.

Inspire Hope • Empower People • Strengthen Communities

OCHN encourages everyone to check in on neighbors, friends, and loved ones during the holidays. A moment of kindness, a text, a call, or an offer to listen can make an enormous difference for someone

struggling. OCHN remains committed to ensuring people across Oakland County have access to mental health, developmental disability, and substance-use recovery services year-round. If you or someone you know needs to support this holiday season, help is available.

About OCHN

OCHN is contracted by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to lead a provider service network and manage care for approximately 30,000 Oakland County residents at more than 400 service sites across the county. People who receive public behavioral health services through OCHN's provider network include those who have an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health concerns, or substance use disorder. Most of these individuals have Medicaid insurance coverage.

OCHN's goal is to ensure these individuals are aware of and have access to services and supports that will improve their health and quality of life, as well as ensure their engagement in full community participation. Its mission to "inspire hope, empower people, and strengthen communities" reflects an unyielding belief in a "Valuable System for Valued People." Programs and supports provided by OCHN's service network are available at www.oaklandchn.org.

-END-