

## Coalition Welcomes New DBHIDS Commissioner Kehinde “Kenny” Solanke:



The Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCP) proudly extends a warm welcome to Kehinde “Kenny” Solanke, MSW, LSW, who was appointed by Mayor Cherelle L. Parker as the new Commissioner of the City of Philadelphia’s Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), effective September 2, 2025.

Commissioner Solanke brings more than two decades of experience and an unwavering commitment to advancing equitable, innovative, and community-driven behavioral health care. Her leadership has already left an indelible mark on Philadelphia. She has overseen transformative initiatives such as the citywide launch of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, expansion of 24/7 mobile crisis teams, and the implementation of Philadelphia’s first Adult Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center. She also guided DBHIDS’ strategy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and has consistently championed services that reflect and respond to the needs of diverse communities.

The Coalition applauds Commissioner Solanke’s record of advocacy and innovation, as well as her deep commitment to listening to the lived experiences of those served by Philadelphia’s behavioral health system. Her vision for a system that is both compassionate and accountable aligns closely with the Coalition’s mission to ensure that culturally competent practices are at the forefront of service delivery.

We also recognize and thank Dr. Marquita C. Williams for her strong leadership as interim commissioner during this transition, and for her ongoing partnership with the provider community.

As Commissioner, Solanke will oversee all divisions of DBHIDS, including behavioral health and substance use disorder services, intellectual disability support, early

intervention services, and Community Behavioral Health (CBH).

The Coalition looks forward to supporting her efforts to strengthen cross-sector partnerships, expand equitable access to care, and advance Philadelphia's role as a national leader in behavioral health innovation.

On behalf of the Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers, we congratulate Commissioner Solanke on her appointment and pledge our continued collaboration in building a system that ensures all Philadelphians have the opportunity to heal, thrive, and live with dignity.

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## **Coalition Attends Exclusive NIH Research Event**



The Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCCP) was honored to participate in an exclusive event held September 23-25, hosted by the National Institutes of Health and the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. This private gathering brought together national leaders, researchers, and advocates to discuss cutting edge research, clinical advancements, and emerging opportunities to strengthen behavioral health and community based services.

Coalition leadership had the opportunity to attend presentations and engage directly with Dr. Wendy Webber, Dr. Inna Belfer, Dr. Janine Clayton, and Dr. Lanay Mudd. Each of these highly respected federal leaders is shaping the direction of behavioral health research and policy. Their insights highlighted the importance of advancing clinical research and identifying new funding pathways that can ultimately benefit local communities such as Philadelphia.

In addition to the presentations, the event provided valuable networking opportunities that allowed the Coalition to strengthen its relationships at the federal level. These connections ensure that CCCC remains at the forefront of innovation while amplifying the voices of culturally competent providers in critical national conversations.

Through this engagement, the Coalition continues its commitment to staying informed, building partnerships, and advocating for equitable access to resources that support the diverse communities it serves.

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## **Coalition Hosts Dr. Arthur Evans for Exclusive Member Session**



In July 2025, the Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCP) proudly hosted an exclusive session for its membership and leaders across Philadelphia's behavioral health system, featuring Dr. Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD, President and CEO of the American Psychological Association (APA) and former Commissioner of the City's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS). Organized by the Coalition, the session convened representatives from the provider community, city of Philadelphia DBHIDS, and Community Behavioral Health (CBH) for a timely and forward-looking discussion on the evolving landscape of behavioral health.

Against the backdrop of ongoing federal funding cuts, Dr. Evans urged providers to remain steadfast in their commitment to evidence-based practices and to continue centering clinical excellence in care delivery. He emphasized that, regardless of shifts in policy or administration priorities, providers have a responsibility to ground their work in what research and experience show to be the most effective approaches for the communities they serve.

Dr. Evans also reflected on the broader challenges facing the behavioral health field, including maintaining access and equity in times of fiscal uncertainty. His remarks reinforced the importance of collaboration between providers, government partners, and community stakeholders to ensure that services remain accessible and responsive, even under tightening budgets.

This exclusive conversation offered Coalition members invaluable insights from a nationally recognized leader whose career has been dedicated to system transformation and culturally responsive care. The Coalition remains grateful to Dr. Evans for sharing his perspective and for challenging providers to stay focused on quality, evidence, and community impact amidst a shifting national landscape.

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## On the Road:

Coalition Connects Sports and Mental Health  
at Delaware Conference



The Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCP) continues to extend its reach beyond Philadelphia, participating in the 4th Annual Opioid Substance Misuse Prevention and Wellness Mini Conference and Sports Clinic held in Claymont, Delaware on August 9. The conference brought together health professionals, educators, athletes, and community leaders to address the urgent intersection of substance misuse prevention, mental health awareness, and youth development.

Coalition Executive Director Asher Kemp joined as a panelist, where he spoke about the critical connection between young athletes and mental health. The discussion emphasized the importance of prevention, resilience, and wellness strategies for adolescents who face not only the pressures of sports performance but also the broader challenges of navigating adolescence in today's world.

The Coalition highlighted the need to integrate mental health resources into athletic and community settings, ensuring that young people have the tools to prioritize self care and emotional well being. The session also encouraged participants to think about long term career opportunities and leadership development, positioning young athletes as future role models in both sports and community service.

By participating in this event, CCCP reinforced its commitment to advocacy, prevention, and education while building visibility outside of Philadelphia. The Coalition's involvement underscores the importance of addressing wellness holistically and ensuring that youth athletes have access to culturally competent mental health supports that foster growth on and off the field.





## Honoring the Legacy of Jim Murray, Founder of Ronald McDonald House



The Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCP) joins the broader community in mourning the recent passing of Jim Murray, a visionary leader and one of the founders of the Ronald McDonald House. His life's work created a safe and supportive place for families with children receiving critical medical care, offering them comfort, stability, and hope during some of their most difficult times.

Jim Murray's legacy is rooted in his deep commitment to ensuring that vulnerable families have equitable access to resources and care, regardless of their financial means. His strong connections throughout the Philadelphia community, built through years of leadership and service, helped springboard his vision to cofound the Ronald McDonald House, which has become a national model of compassion and community support for families in need.

Murray also served as General Manager of the Philadelphia Eagles from 1974 to 1982, a tenure that marked a defining era for the franchise as the team reached its first ever Super Bowl following the 1980 season. His influence and relationships within the Philadelphia region not only elevated the Eagles but also fostered a network of civic engagement that he later used to improve the lives of countless families through the Ronald McDonald House.

Prior to his passing, Jim had been in conversation with the Coalition about opportunities for collaboration, recognizing the alignment between our mission to advance culturally competent care and his lifelong dedication to supporting families in need. His willingness to partner with CCCP underscored his belief in breaking down barriers and creating meaningful pathways to support those most impacted by inequities.

We honor Jim Murray's memory and his extraordinary contributions to the health and human services field and his deep commitment to the Philadelphia region. The Coalition remains committed to carrying forward the spirit of his work by continuing to build programs that reflect compassion, equity, and community-centered care.

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## National Association of Case Management's (NACM) 30th Annual Case Management Conference



On September 23, the Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCCP) joined colleagues from across the region at the National Association of Case Management's (NACM) 30th Annual Case Management Conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey. This year's gathering drew nearly 300 participants and provided a valuable platform to celebrate, learn, and network around the vital role of case managers in the behavioral health system.

The Coalition proudly recognized excellence in the field of case management, emphasizing the critical contributions of frontline staff who often serve as the first point of connection for individuals entering care. Case managers play a pivotal role in supporting clients, linking them to resources, and ensuring they receive the services needed to thrive.

A highlight of the conference was the keynote presentation by Monique Smith, a trauma survivor, business leader, and advocate. Her inspiring story of resilience resonated deeply with participants and reinforced the importance of equipping case managers with the training and perspective needed to support individuals who face complex challenges. CCCC leadership has already

begin exploring opportunities to bring Ms. Smith to speak at future Coalition events.

The Coalition's participation at NACM underscores its ongoing commitment to professional development, workforce support, and culturally competent practice. By engaging in events like this, CCCP ensures its members remain connected to emerging trends, best practices, and thought leaders shaping the future of case management.



## Coalition Members Testify at City Council Hearing on Kensington Crisis



On September 16, 2025, the Philadelphia City Council's Special Committee on Kensington held a critical hearing to examine how chronic trauma from exposure to the opioid crisis is impacting the emotional, mental, and behavioral health of children in the Kensington neighborhood. The hearing also explored tools, services, and programs that could provide much-needed

support for youth and families affected by the crisis.

Hector Ayala and Tony Valdez of the Latino Behavioral Health Coalition delivered powerful testimony that drew attention to the disproportionate impact of the opioid epidemic on Kensington's youth. Their remarks highlighted the urgent need for culturally competent, trauma-informed care and community supports tailored to the realities families face every day.

In addition, AnnMarie McDowell and Mary Doherty of CORA Services, active members of the Coalition, participated in the hearing, with AnnMarie providing testimony on the services CORA delivers and emphasizing the need for expanded support for children. Their participation further underscored the breadth of expertise and commitment within the Coalition's membership, ensuring that diverse provider voices were represented in this critical discussion.

The Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCP) stands in support of the Latino Behavioral Health Coalition's leadership and advocacy and is proud to have member organizations like CORA Services actively engaged in shaping solutions. By raising awareness of the impact of the crisis on children and families, these testimonies help ensure that the needs of Kensington's most vulnerable residents are not overlooked.

This important work reflects CCCP's commitment to supporting community-led solutions, advancing equity, and amplifying diverse perspectives in efforts to confront the ongoing opioid epidemic. The Coalition commends the Latino Behavioral Health Coalition, CORA Services, and all members who lend their voices to uplifting Kensington families and driving forward meaningful change.



## CORA Services 2025 Love in Action Celebration



On Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 6:00 PM, CORA Services will host its annual Love in Action Celebration at the Bellevue Hotel in Philadelphia. This signature event honors individuals and organizations whose commitment, leadership, and service embody the values of CORA's Foundress, Sister Charity Kohl, by putting "Love in Action" into practice every day.

This year's honorees include the Philadelphia Bar Association, American Heritage Credit Union, and Asher Kemp, Executive Director of the Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers. In addition, the 2025 Legacy Award will be presented to Mary K. Doherty, celebrating her extraordinary 50 years of service with CORA.

The Coalition is proud to celebrate Asher's recognition for his tireless advocacy and leadership on behalf of culturally competent providers and the communities they serve. We encourage our members, partners, and supporters to attend this special evening as we join together in honoring all of this year's distinguished honorees. For tickets, sponsorship opportunities, or more information, please visit [www.coraservices.org/love-in-action](http://www.coraservices.org/love-in-action)

## Coalition Welcomes Dr. Brenda Elliott and Thanks Dr. Jayme Banks for Her Service



The Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCP) extends its gratitude to **Dr. Jayme Banks** for her years of dedicated leadership within the School District of Philadelphia and warmly welcomes **Dr. Brenda Elliott** as the new Associate Superintendent of Student Life and Innovation.

Dr. Banks has been a steadfast champion for trauma-informed education, student wellness, and equity across Philadelphia's schools. Since joining the district in 2019, she has led efforts to strengthen supports for students and create school environments that prioritize both academic and emotional well-being. Her commitment to culturally responsive practices and her collaborative spirit have made a lasting impact on educators, families, and students throughout the city.

The Coalition was honored to attend Dr. Banks' farewell celebration and express appreciation for her partnership and leadership. We wish her continued success as she embarks on the next chapter of her professional journey.

We also extend a warm welcome to Dr. Brenda Elliott, who now leads the district's work in student life and innovation. Dr. Elliott brings a wealth of experience across multiple states in educational leadership, equity, and system transformation. Her vision for innovation, collaboration, and student engagement aligns strongly with the Coalition's mission to promote culturally competent and inclusive approaches to care and education.

The Coalition looks forward to continuing a strong partnership with the School District under Dr. Elliott's leadership. Together, we remain committed to ensuring that all Philadelphia students have access to environments that foster academic achievement, emotional wellness, and equitable opportunities to thrive.

## **Merakey Mental Health Walk-In Clinic Receives 2025 Bell of Hope Award**



The Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCP) proudly congratulates Merakey on receiving the 2025 Bell of Hope Award from Mental Health Partnerships for its groundbreaking Paving the Way Program at the Merakey Mental Health Walk-In Clinic, Philadelphia's first Adult Behavioral Health Urgent Care.

On the evening of October 9, 2025, Merakey was recognized at Mental Health Partnership's 26th Annual Bell of Hope Celebration for redefining access to behavioral health care in Philadelphia. The Bell of Hope Award honors programs and leaders who are paving new pathways for hope, healing, and innovation within the behavioral health system.

Since opening in September 2024, the Merakey Mental Health Walk-In Clinic has transformed how individuals access immediate and compassionate mental health services. In just its first year of operation, the clinic has served more than 3,000 individuals, offering same day assessments, crisis support, and connections to ongoing care. This innovative model provides an alternative to emergency departments, ensuring that individuals receive timely, trauma-informed support in a welcoming and recovery-focused environment.

This recognition reflects a shared effort made possible through partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), Community Behavioral Health (CBH), and Merakey's dedicated team of

clinical and operational leaders. Nicole Connell, Senior Executive Director and Mark O'Dwyer, Executive Director accepted the award on behalf of Merakey, joined by Malcolm Musgrove, Merakey's Vice President of Adult Behavioral Health Services and CCCP Board Member, along with many other partners and stakeholders from across Philadelphia's behavioral health community.

Among the evening's honorees were Stephen and Sandra Sheller of the Sheller Family Foundation and Stefanie Glick of the LiveWell Foundation, recognized for their outstanding commitment to advancing behavioral health and wellness throughout the region. Their philanthropy and advocacy continue to inspire collaboration, innovation, and hope across provider networks and community organizations.

The Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers celebrates all the 2025 honorees, and Merakey's continued leadership and commitment to meeting people where they are, removing barriers to care, and setting a new standard for behavioral health access in Philadelphia and beyond.



## Coalition Partners with The Strong Families Commission for Voices of Men Symposium



The Pennsylvania Coalition of Culturally Competent Providers (CCCP) is pleased to announce its partnership with The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (The Commission) to uplift and amplify the voices of men who have experienced or are currently experiencing family disruption. This important initiative seeks to explore the impact of these experiences on fathers, their children, and the broader family unit.

This year's Voices of Men Symposium will be held on Monday, December 8, at Community Behavioral Health, located at 801 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The event will provide a space for open dialogue, reflection, and advocacy around the needs of fathers and families affected by separation and systemic challenges.

In addition to the symposium, the event will also celebrate The Strong Families Commission's 10th Anniversary, marking more than a decade of service to families across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Members of the Coalition are encouraged to attend and take part in this important discussion. Further event details, including registration information and agenda highlights, will be shared soon.

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