



KEEPING UP WITH

Friends

of the Alexandria Mental Health Center



SPRING 2026

FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM

ABOUT FRIENDS

OUR MISSION

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center (AMHC) provides financial help and hope to Alexandrians receiving City services for mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities.

OUR APPROACH

Friends is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 with the knowledge that community makes a significant difference for those living with a mental health condition, developmental disability, or substance use on their path to recovery.

Friends' primary goal is to provide a financial safety net for Alexandrians receiving mental health services from the City's Community Services Board (CSB). Friends uses donations to provide help and hope to these individuals and their families for special and emergency needs, such as housing, medicine, dental care, transportation, social and educational activities, and basic life necessities.

Additionally, Friends supports the City and other partners working to advance mental health throughout Alexandria— those who strengthen the safety net; improve mental health awareness and advocacy; reduce stigma; and enhance training for CSB staff.

Friends is Working Hard to Support Alexandrians in 2026

Fiscal Year 2026 has been a year to reorganize and rebuild for Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center (Friends). To date in FY2026, we have raised more than \$40,000 and have spent \$24,000. Changes in policy around state-funded rent assistance have allowed more people to qualify for state support. This reduction in rent requests to Friends has made funds available for other emergency and enrichment needs for residents participating in behavioral health programs. We still stand as “last dollars” for emergency needs, available when other resources have been exhausted. Requests have begun picking up and we expect average monthly requests will amount to \$4,000 to \$5,000.



Friends has also focused on another part of our mission: programming for the public. Last November we held an event on the health and wellness needs of caregivers. This spring, Friends is sponsoring a program that will focus on mental health for LGBTQ+ youth.

Donate online:
spring2action.org

Finally, Friends held a small planning retreat with a nonprofit consultant who helped us define our roles and clarify how we can focus our mission within the constraints of our time. We identified that we could accomplish our core mission with the group we have but would need to add capacity to the Board. If you are interested in serving on Friends, please email friendsofamhc@gmail.com.

FRIENDS IS SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON CRISIS AND EMERGENCY SERVICES THIS SPRING

Alexandrians have access to crisis and emergency services when they are having a behavioral health crisis. When Alexandrians need help, a lack of information can delay essential services or, in some cases, result in the dispatch of the wrong first responders.

Many crises do not require a call to 911. Some individuals can be triaged by calling 988, contacting City Emergency Services, or by

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and Communications

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Outreach

ABOUT THE CSB



The CSB oversees the City's publicly funded services for Alexandrians with mental health conditions.

In 2025, the CSB served 4,295 Alexandrians of all ages through mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services. Historically, of those for whom income is known, nearly half have had annual family incomes of \$15,000 or less. The CSB is part of the Alexandria Department of Community & Human Services (DCHS).

going to INOVA Alexandria Hospital to be assessed. These may be more effective paths than a police response.

However, there are times—when the individual in crisis may harm themselves or others or the situation cannot be de-escalated—that a call to 911 is best. When the call is made, ask for an ACORP Unit or Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer to respond. This informs 911 dispatch that the concern is due to mental health or substance use, resulting in better outcomes for all.

Next, Alexandrians also have access to services in the aftermath of a larger-scale community crisis impacting several or many people. The Community Crisis Response Team (CCRT) provides stabilization and debriefing to assist residents, first responders, and City employees. Examples of incidents where CCRT response may be needed include violent workplace or school incidents, natural disasters, or to support people who have witnessed a traumatic event.

Finally, Alexandrians may be familiar with Red Flag Laws which allow law enforcement to temporarily remove the firearms of an individual who is a risk to themselves or others and prohibit the purchasing or transporting of a firearm. If you have concerns, report the need for an Emergency Substantial Risk Order (ERSO) to law enforcement. To obtain free gun locks and medication lock boxes, see **Lock and Talk**.

Learn more about all of these **crisis services**.

Spotlight on Allison Guernsey, Psy.D, Division Chief, Crisis and Emergency Services

Where do you work in CSB?

I work in Crisis and Emergency Services where I was promoted to Division Chief in July 2025. Crisis Services includes Emergency Services, ACORP (Alexandria Co-Responding Program), CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) which provides behavioral health training to law enforcement, CCRT (Community Crisis Response Team), PCOT (Post Crisis Outreach Team) for support after the crisis and Marcus Alert, which aims to improve collaboration between 911, 988, behavioral health, and law enforcement.

When did you start?

I started with Emergency Services in August 2014 as a PRN Senior Therapist. I have worked in three positions in DCHS since that time.

What do you find most rewarding about what you do?

I love the energy and momentum in crisis services. Emergency Services provides crisis intervention and assessment to individuals



experiencing a behavioral health crisis. We have an extraordinary opportunity to provide support and resources to someone on what might be the worst day of their life and make a positive impact we can see right away. I am really proud of the work our team does and the continuum of care we have built in Alexandria, which provides care along a spectrum from outreach and awareness through the crisis itself and now post crisis support through our newest program, PCOT. One goal for the future is to expand education and outreach in the community and encourage the community to seek voluntary walk in care at our Mark Center Drive, First Floor offices.

What effect has Friends had on the residents you serve?

Friends provides crucial financial resources for individuals and families who would otherwise go without. Friends' support enhances individuals' quality of life and builds community in Alexandria.

Save the Date! LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health Awareness & Wellness Event

Join us on May 21 from 7-9 p.m. for panelists and small group discussions with mental health professionals and advocates. All are welcome, especially members, friends and family of Alexandria's LGBTQ+ youth. Pizza and beverages will be provided.

The event is free and donations to Friends are welcome.

Sign up here:

givebutter.com/lgbtq-youth-mental-health-and-wellness-event-dfawia

Highlights of People Served: You Make a Difference!

HELPING A CAREGIVER ACCESS SERVICES

The primary caregiver for a child did not have a working cell phone, which impacted her ability to engage with CSB services and her children's school supports. Friends provided a phone, thereby improving stability and overall well-being for the family.

SUPPORTING A CHILD WITH AUTISM WITH ADAPTIVE COMMUNICATION

A child who is nonverbal and has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder needed funds for an iPad for communication on an Apple app recommended by an ABA therapist, speech therapist, and school. The family could pay the app fee but could not afford the iPad. Friends stepped in to support and enhance this child's living and learning environment.

FRIENDS SUPPORTS HOUSING DUE TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

An individual whose mental health symptoms increased could not work temporarily and did not have paid leave. Friends helped cover their rent so they could continue to receive appropriate services and focus on recovery.



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Mental Health Insurance Information Enroll Virginia

703.364.9456

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Intake for Adult Mental Health, Developmental Disability, and Substance Use Treatment Services

703.746.3535

.....

24/7 Emergency Mental Health Services

703.746.3401

DONATE TO FRIENDS

Donors may send a check of any amount to:

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center
4850 Mark Center Dr.
Floor 8, Room 8107
Alexandria, VA 22311

Online Donations:
givebutter.com/friends-of-the-alexandria-community-mental-health-center

SHARE FRIENDS!

Before you recycle this newsletter, please help us enlarge our circle of Friends. Pass it on to a friend, neighbor or family member who may wish to support Friends' mission.

HELP US BE GREEN!

Send us your email address at **FRIENDSOFAMHC@GMAIL.COM**





Friends of the Alexandria Mental
Health Center
4850 Mark Center Dr.
Floor 8, Room 8107
Alexandria, VA 22311

How to Donate to Friends!

You may donate online or by mailing a check to:

Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center
4850 Mark Center Drive, Rm. 8107
Alexandria, Virginia 22311

To learn more, please visit friendsofamhc.org

Spring2ACTion! Friends is participating in Spring2ACTion on April 22, 2026. Help Support Friends on our biggest fundraising day of the year: spring2action.org

NEED HELP IN A CRISIS?

Call 24 Hours a Day

- **Adult Protective Services | 703.746.5778**
- **Adult Protective Services State Hotline 1.888.832.3858**
- **Child Protective Services | 703.746.5800**
- **State of Virginia Child Protective Services 1.800.552.7096**
- **Substance Use Disorder Residential Treatment 703.746.3636**
- **Domestic Violence | 703.746.4911**
- **Emergency Mental Health Services | 703.746.3401**
- **Sexual Assault | 703.683.7273**

GET HELP NOW: Suicide Prevention Resources

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text **988** (available 24/7). Chat online at 988va.org.
- **The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ Youth):** Call **1.866.488.7386** or text **START** to **678-678**. Confidential, 24/7 support is also available via TrevorChat at thetrevorproject.org.

Volunteer Opportunity!

Friends is looking for new board members. We are seeking individuals who can commit up to 10 hours a month to Friends activities. For more information, please contact Anna Dvorchik at friendsofamhc@gmail.com.

