

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

20

A YEAR OF
GROWTH & RESILIENCE

24



MERCER COUNCIL



A Message from our Executive Director

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Collaborators,

The power of storytelling remains vital. Neuroscientists in 2021 revealed that when people listen to the same story, their heart rates synchronize—evidence of the profound way shared stories unite us and help us to feel connected. Storytelling has been a significant way to communicate since the earliest days of human history. From cave drawings and oral traditions to written fables, the telling of stories pass down wisdom and epic history through generations.

As Aesop's fable of The Tortoise and the Hare teaches, "Slow and steady wins the race," a principle that applies perfectly to the work we do at Mercer Council.

At Mercer Council, we use the power of connection, partnership, and evidence-based information to ensure that we create trust with the quality of what we do, and to meet our vision of "empowering communities through education and support." Through storytelling, we hope this impact report will illustrate the importance of our partnerships and the impact of our work.

Some of these collaborations took years of planning and effort to reach their intended outcomes. But through the stories of our staff and partners, I've come to see that our success also stems from tenacity, constant communication, knowledge, professionalism, and accountability—traits that form the foundation of our partnerships.

As we reflect on our progress in 2024, I invite you to read our impact report for a deeper look into our ongoing journey. Our increase in numbers for serving and educating the public are important but the feedback we receive from our community members and our staff is just as valuable to our narrative.

There is no "The End" to our story because Mercer Council's work continues, over 45 years strong. We hope that you, too, will become a part of our ongoing story by supporting Mercer Council's mission and vision.

With Gratitude,

Margarita Leahy
Executive Director





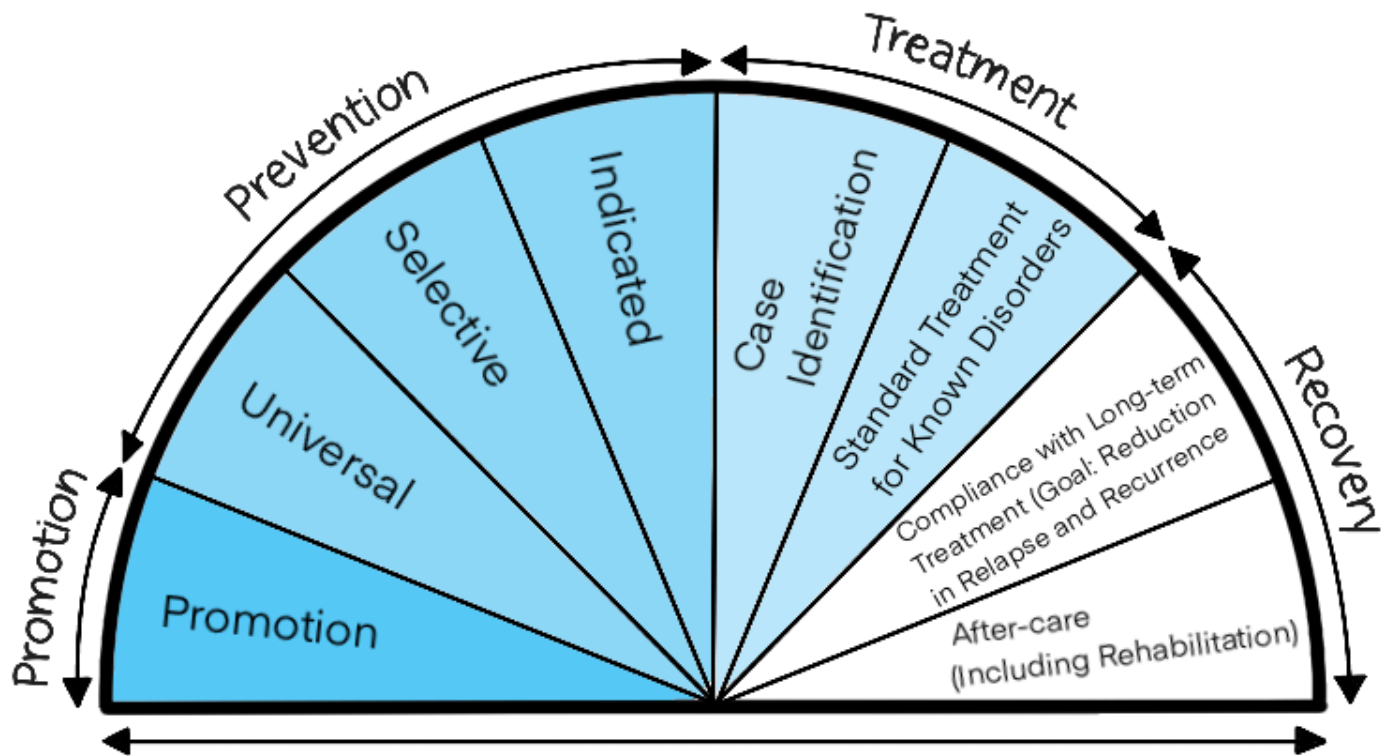
Envisioning healthy, safe and responsible communities



*Creating pathways to reduce
substance and behavioral
health-related challenges
through education, support,
advocacy and partnerships
throughout our community.*



Continuum of Care



The **Continuum of Care** model offers an important framework for intervening in the areas of substance misuse and substance use disorders. Mercer Council is proud to share that all of our work is guided by this model. We remain committed to providing high-quality, evidence-based curriculum and resources to our community.

Promotion involves creating awareness and advocating for preventive measures against substance misuse and abuse.

Prevention strategies are measures taken to proactively address risk factors and underlying determinants of substance use issues.

Though our focus is primarily on prevention, we offer select **Treatment** services, usually serving those with identified risk.

Recovery focuses on supporting individuals in their efforts to sustain a substance-free life. We celebrate all paths to recovery.



2024 At A Glance

6,200+ students in grades K-12

reached through various in-school programs, services, presentations and youth development activities held throughout the year.

- **4,680+** student interactions with positive youth development activities sponsored by ASYSST
- **51** ASYSST students received counseling services
- **550** 7th grade students in Hamilton's 3 middle schools received *Botvin's Life Skills Training* evidence-based curriculum
- **630+** freshmen in Hamilton high schools received teen Mental Health First Aid training
- **880+** students in grades K-12 received direct evidence-based, multi-session curriculum lessons
- **3,250+** students reached in **70+** topical presentations at **7** schools across the county

- **655** attendees reached through **52** All-Recovery Meetings, averaging **12-13** weekly participants
- **91** emergency dispatches through our Opioid Overdose Recovery Program
- **161** older adults (age 60+) reached in *Healthy Outlooks for Older Adults* workshops
- **24** new clients received short-term services with our employee assistance program (MEAS)
- **164** substance use evaluations and referrals conducted with the Juvenile Justice Commission
- **275** attendees across **11** monthly PCMC meetings, averaging **22** participants per meeting
- **24,750+** unique social media impressions

6,030+

adults in the community
reached through in-person and virtual community-based programs, trainings, workshops, events and activities throughout the year.

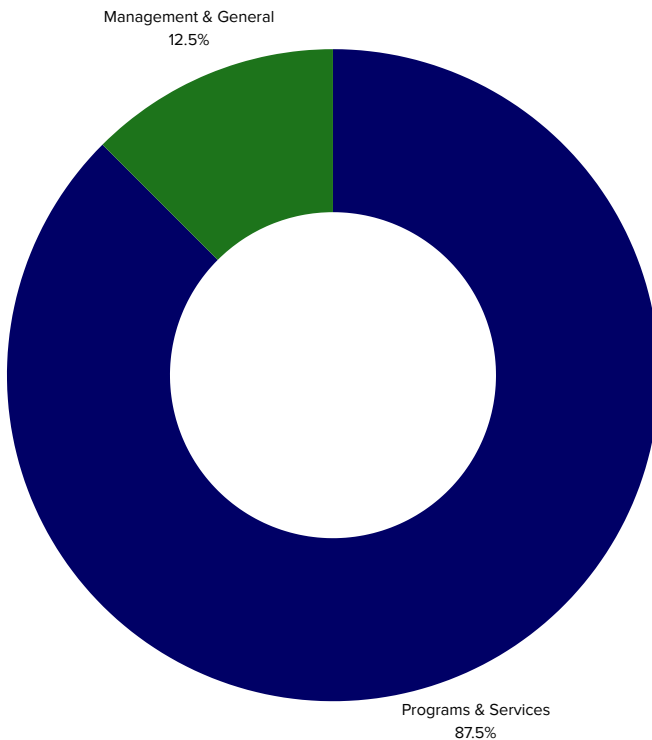
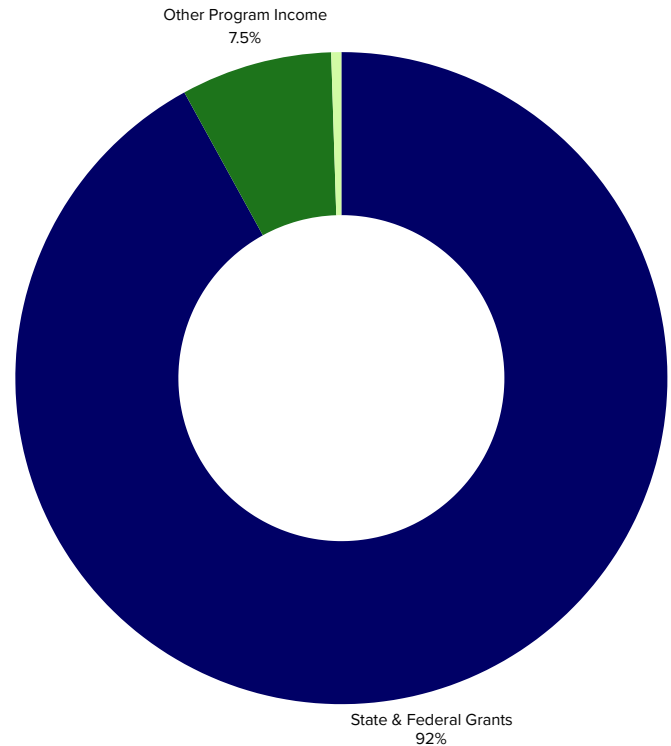


Financial Report

FY24: July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

Revenue: \$1,856,725

State & Federal Grants: 92%
Other Program Income: 7.5%
Contributions: .5% (\$10,053)



Expenses: \$1,718,172

Program Services: 87.5%
Management & General: 12.5%



Stories to Celebrate: Testimonials & Highlights

We celebrate stories of impact and are thankful to our community for believing in the work that our team does each day. The Mercer Council team is proud to celebrate another wonderful year of serving Mercer County with testimonials and highlights from our partners and our team of expert staff.





"I want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your patience, dedication, and unwavering commitment to making this summer an incredible experience for our campers. The children had an absolute blast, and it wouldn't have been possible without your hard work and care. Your efforts in creating fun, engaging, and memorable moments have left a lasting impact. We couldn't have done it without each of you!"

Joauni Porter

HomeFront (Camp Mercer)



"From the Summer Youth Employment Program Youth & Staff, we would like to thank [Malissa] for being a Guest Speaker! We are so thankful to have featured you in our Summer Program."

Micayla Weissburg

Mill Hill Child & Family Development



"I wanted to thank you for today and the effort you put forth for the presentation. The information prompted thoughtful questions/comments from our clients. They seemed to benefit from the discussion and gained insight into alcohol, drug, and substance use. A few individuals have made comments about having no interest in substance use now they know what it could be like and what it can do to the body. It is nice to think that we could provide that level of understanding, and protection, to our population."

Astrid Bohler

The Arc of Mercer



"Mercer Council has been an invaluable partner, providing Narcan supplies to prepare Medina Health Center for overdose emergencies and educating our staff on opioid-related issues in Trenton."

Mira Saghedi

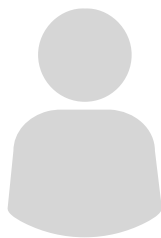
Medina Health Center



"...our staff gave the [Narcan] training an overall rating of 4.5 out of 5, and 14/15 would recommend the training to others. The attendees overall found the trainers to be engaging, felt sharing personal experiences was an added benefit to their understanding of the problems people face, and showed passion for the material."

Moriah Ratigan

Capitol County Children's Collaborative



"Your work, resources, and education helped me to save my child [using Narcan]. The work that Mercer Council is doing saves lives in our community."

M.D. (Anonymous)

Community Member & Parent



"In 2024, the PCMC restructured our Coalition to enhance community engagement and collaboration. Key steps included conducting a membership audit and satisfaction survey, establishing an Executive Board, and revitalizing Action Teams with defined goals."

These efforts have strengthened relationships within the Coalition and the broader Mercer County community. Additionally, we streamlined our Warmline and Service Request processes, improving service accessibility and community connections."

Charlene Phelps, MBA
Director of Advocacy & PCMC



"This year, the Prevention Education team introduced Teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) training to nearly 1,000 freshmen across Hamilton Township high schools, promoting mental health awareness among youth."



Mercer Council
**PREVENTION
EDUCATION**
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We also formed a new partnership with The Arc Mercer, delivering a specialized presentation on the dangers of alcohol and drugs to 65 adults with developmental disabilities. Developing and strengthening our community connections like these has been a wonderful highlight of our year."

Amy Argiriou
Director of Prevention Education

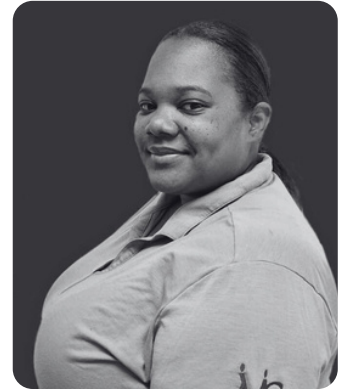


"ASYSST expanded its reach by introducing two new clubs at Ewing High School: Model UN and an NAACP Youth Chapter. Signature events like the Afro Arts Fest continue to grow in popularity, drawing attention from schools and the local community."

"...Our partnership with The College of New Jersey has been instrumental, with interns enriching our team and fostering meaningful connections between our students and the staff."

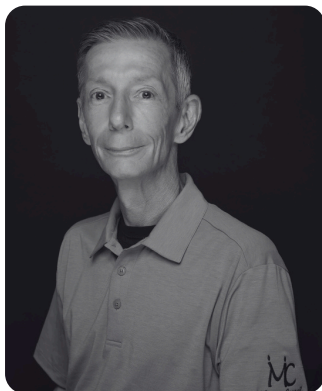
Shakita Johnson

Interim Program Director, ASYSST



"In 2024, the OORP team faced a dynamic and impactful year. Resuming services with Capital Health hospitals after the pandemic hiatus was a major milestone, resulting in 91 cases (15 Narcan reversals) by November, with momentum building in the year's final months."

We hosted over 10 Narcan training sessions, reaching 150+ attendees, and distributed 300+ Narcan kits and 108 Opvee medications. Outreach events allowed us to share 3,000 pieces of collateral and expand community awareness of our services."



"This year, we grew our team to include six certified Peer Recovery Specialists, with a seventh in training, and laid the groundwork for Medicaid billing in 2025. Our six-month EMS integration trial brought services to overdose survivors refusing hospital transport, and we continued our leadership within the Mercer County Overdose Fatality Review Team and NJ-CARS."

Dave DeCamp

Director of Recovery Services



Making an Impact Together: Support, Engage, Celebrate



Our work is not possible without the support of our community. We invite you to get involved in our work, whether by volunteering your time or resources, interning with Mercer Council, or by making a donation to support the important work of prevention.

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication of our Mercer Council team and we look forward to another year of creating lasting change in Mercer County—together.



Geetha Arulmohan Scholarship

This \$500 educational scholarship honors the memory of Mercer Council's former Executive Director, Geetha Arulmohan, who led the agency for 14 years with an unwavering dedication to the Mercer County community. Offering tuition support to individuals pursuing education or certification in fields related to prevention, the scholarship recipient is offered an additional \$500 match if they choose to join the Mercer Council team as an intern.

Our interns embody the vision of continuing to build on Geetha's legacy, and your support of the scholarship fund can help as we seek to empower the next generation of prevention leaders. Please join us as we work to continue making a lasting impact on our Mercer County community.

Visit www.mercercouncil.org/donate to support the Geetha Arulmohan Scholarship Fund!



"During my internship with Mercer Council, I was given the opportunity to work in the ASYSST program. I have enjoyed learning about the role and importance of school-based youth services programs and interacting with students during Lunch Bunch and weekly SAGA meetings. I am grateful to have been able to complete my capstone internship at ASYSST!"

Erin Stout, 2024 Scholarship Recipient



"I have greatly enjoyed my time at Mercer Council and with the ASYSST program. I have learned so much throughout my internship. I was able to get hands on experience in prevention education. I learned how to deliver lessons, and I even created my own curriculum for tobacco education. Through this opportunity, I learned that I want to continue working in health education and prevention education. I am forever grateful for this opportunity and the flexibility I had working with both Mercer Council and The College of New Jersey to have this internship count towards my capstone project."

Hannah Stutzman, ASYSST Intern



"While interning with Mercer Council, I was able to apply and test my skills in a real work setting, and to be a part of something bigger than myself. My passion for public health was reinforced through the impact they continue to make on drug and alcohol prevention throughout the community. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to intern and for the support of my amazing colleagues. This experience has been invaluable in helping me grow personally and professionally, and I'm excited for what lies ahead."

Jason Nemcik, PCMC Intern



Ways to Support our Work

Your contributions directly strengthen our prevention and recovery efforts across Mercer County, and supports our mission to foster healthier, safer, and more responsible communities. Please consider these meaningful ways to support our work!

Prevention T-shirt (\$25)

Show your commitment to prevention and recovery by purchasing our **Progress, Not Perfection** shirt (sizes S-2XL). This shirt serves as a reminder that recovery is a journey, and every step counts.



Memorial Pavers (\$100)

Honor the memory of a friend, family member or loved one by purchasing a **Memorial Brick**. These engraved paver bricks will be installed on a pathway outside of our building, creating a lasting tribute to those in our community who have been impacted by substances.





The Mercer Council Team

Board of Trustees

Chair - Deborah Dunn, Esq.

Vice Chair - Gwendolyn S. Jennings

Secretary - Jarrett Fisher

Treasurer - Lance Liverman

Chief Timothy Grant

Julie DeSimone

Joseph Hadge

Lenora Keel

Christopher Jakim

Maureen McGrath

Administrative Team

Margarita Leahy, *Executive Director*

Catherine Arulmohan, *Director of Operations*

Lisa Kauffman, *Office Manager & Prevention Educator*

Lorenzo McCollum, *Administrative Assistant*

Abubaker Ahmadi, *Projects Assistant*

Caitlin Allen, *Coalition & Community Engagement Coordinator*

Mercer Council Team

Amy Argiriou

Malissa Arnold

Dave DeCamp

Miquia Delvalle

Shakita Johnson

Wil Kauffman

Kenneth J. Lynch

Jon Macciocca

Aliyah McRae

Rodrigo Molineros

Trina Nixon

Marc North

Charlene Phelps

Stacey Ross

Alyssa Scaglione

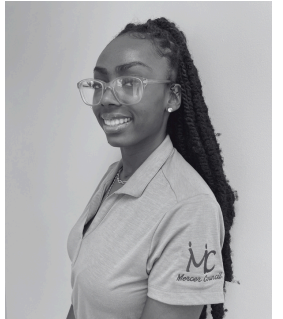
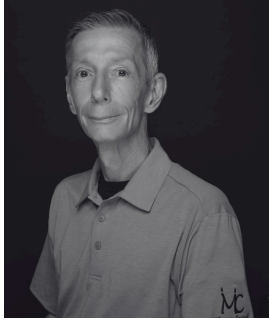
Jaleel Shabazz


Smriti Singh

Ian Smith

Mike Ziccardi

*as of December 31, 2024



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