Ryan Henry Zoom Audio

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I want to ask you a riddle. What's always approaching but never arrives. What's always approaching but never arrives tomorrow. It's, it's true. But the ugly reality it's very true for somebody that's stuck in addiction. Tomorrow truly may never come for some folks who are lost in whatever addiction they might be from overdose from incarceration, and broken homes tomorrow may never come. And at one point my own life, I didn't think I was going to have it tomorrow. I survived a 12 year addiction to Oxycontin, and everything that it came with broken relationships, families, even leading to a stint in prison. So I understand what it feels like to not have a tomorrow to feel like there is no future. You know, the remember in the 80s, there's no hope and dope. It's cliche, but it's very true. I came to Cookeville from Knoxville, Tennessee about 10 years ago. So let me back up. I've been working in the field of recovery for 10 years and walking into my own recovery for 11 years. So it just went very quick. And I moved to Cookeville, Tennessee, about 10 years ago. And I worked at a homeless shelter for a while. And I came on board at the EPA criminal and human resource agency in Middle Tennessee. I came on board to work in a program. It was called social worker and police partnership. It was a program where we partner with local police department to help folks struggling with addiction and homelessness and mental health struggles to get off the street and to get connected to resources. This is where we live the upper Cumberland region in Middle Tennessee somewhere between Nashville and Knoxville. The upper Cumberland human resource agency was started in 1973 by the state assembly to be a provider of human services. We provide all kinds of services ranging from rental assistance to utility assistance to even helping families get out of poverty. But our largest program, our largest service is the public transportation. The upper Cumberland region covers about 5000 square miles and is home to somewhere around 360,000 people. So it's a big area for us to cover its rural Putnam County being the regional seat is where our central offices in Cookeville, Tennessee. So how did we come up with rad recovery? When I came on board in 2020, we're doing that for a year, late 2021. I was asked come over into the Transportation Department with a sample mandate of figured out how transportation can help with the substance abuse issue. So I said, Okay, let's figure this out. So I'm kind of a geek, I kind of like to research I'm one of my strengths is learner. And I like to learn and, and research things behind things. And one of the things I found, oh, let me back up. What ended up happening was we created an whether we knew it or not a particular niche for mobility management, and being a certified peer recovery specialist, and a Mobility Manager that created a hybrid position that bridged gaps between us as an agency and transportation and those providing services related to the recovery and substance abuse. So I found a really cool definition about mobility management, mobility management being excuse me, focuses on the unmet needs of stakeholders and always returns to the stakeholders needs insights and feedback, while educating, coordinating and promoting public transportation. I think that's kind of mobility management in a nutshell, wouldn't you agree? And there's the definition for a CPRS is someone who has lived experience willing to help other people go through, they go through a 40 hour process with 40 hour class, you get certified to provide peer support, and help others walked in their own recovery back to being. So this was yeah, this was kind of a cool thing that happened was, oh, wow, we created this recovery Mobility Manager, he was able to bridge the gap between these two. So I thought that was kind of a cool thing upon reflection about it. In my research, I found some data that had to do with overdose deaths in our region you'll you'll kind of see it kind of ebb and flow and 2020 goes down 2021, it spiked up tremendously. And in that, over 1400, people did not have it tomorrow. 175 people almost didn't have it tomorrow. Did you know In Tennessee, that according to the Department of Corrections, the number one reason for incarceration is really related to drug abuse, whatever the crime is tied to some sort of addiction, and you know, the number two reason for incarceration, murder. So drug abuse, is the number one reason the tendency for people to be incarcerated. The impact of RAD recovery, we started right to recovery by getting out in the community, and asking questions of people who are already doing the work. One thing I try not to do is come into an organization I experienced this my time at the homeless shelter was, there'll be organizations coming in? We want to do this for you. Well, we don't necessarily need that. So keeping that in my head, I went to these organizations and asked questions, what is it you need, whatever it is, and it's always transportation, jobs, housing. So spend a lot of time out in the field and other people's offices at these programs, taking tours, and just listening and asking questions. And just trying to put together a plan on how we can assist in this and how transportation can assist in this. There was such a tremendous thing was spending time in the field, and asking questions of those who are doing the work. So it just got to work, I ended up going through our driver training to be certified as a public transportation operator and started doing trips myself, we have a treatment center that are very, one of the only residential treatment centers in our region in Putnam County. So I worked really close with them. Because what I found out my net was too big, I had to narrow the net. And we'll we'll come to find out. There's so many options of trying to help people to get to meetings, after hours, and this thing was just, it was too big. So we narrowed in and said, How can we help get people to treatment? And how do we get people to the next step of treatment. So it turned out that rod recovery was really useful in getting somebody in that crucial moment where they make the decision to seek help, to be able to go get them and take them. There's also another crucial moment when somebody gets released from jail or prison. If they step outside, and they don't have a ride to wherever it is, they're going to go. They'll go back to where they came. So the idea was, if we can, if we can mitigate that and come in, and whenever they make that decision, we can be there to transport them this next phase. So we started in April of 23 or March of 22. Sorry. And I just started taking calls, keeping track of it and actually doing the trips myself. We found out about the the ready to launch grant and applied for my very first grant I had no idea of I'll just it's a shot in the dark. So let's give it a shot. That didn't got notified that we're aware that and met with Amy and her team. And kind of the rest is history. But what that did was gave us an opportunity. Let's take this next step further. What have we had certified peer recovery specialist trained to drive Republic transportation. You could take these individual out of the box calls

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and give that person that that specialized attention, so they're not scared and want to jump out of the van when you get to a stop sign. What if we did that? So that's that's what we did with our radio launch game, we're able to hire a CPRS driver who could take these one off trips these specialized cases, and help the person get to their next step without any kind of hindrance. So that timeframe was from April to December 23, where we did 137 trips, for 54 riders, for the whole time from March 22 to June 24. We did over 1900 trips, for 276 people 30% 36% of all our transports utilized a CPRS driver. And I can't emphasize enough how that is such a tremendous asset when somebody's in this fragile state, and everything's running through their mind. And everything in them is telling them to go the other way to have somebody who's been there and live through it and come out the other side. And at such a level of comfort. It was mentioned earlier in one of the talks about empathizing, not sympathizing but having empathy. So I think there is a future especially in transportation to have CPRS as, as mobility managers as on staff as drivers. Because there's not a city a town, there's not a county, there's not a region and a country not affected by the Substance Abuse. So something about the real impact are the lives man. This is Britney. Britney was one of the very first people who transported Britney was at a long term recovery facility in Jackson County, which is kind of 30 minutes. This way. Brittany was able to complete her intensive outpatient program, she was able to complete some of her court ordered mandates. And the biggest thing really was able to reunite with her toddler, her son. If that's not an impact, I don't know what it is. These are my favorite. Eric and Dustin. They were able to complete their recovery court mandates in our opening county recovery court. Dustin the guy on the right. He's talked to him a few times and you say Ryan, when can I come be a driver, I want to be a driver. So once he gets his court things situated and his driver's license situated, I told him You better come and see me and we're gonna put you in a van brother. Another cool thing we did with with the funds was we use the funds to create a as a seed to create a backpack program for those living on the streets. We're looking so what it is it opened up a way to work a lot with a local church who supplied us with some supplies to incorporate our day reporting center clients and getting their community service hours by helping us pack backpacks. And it created a way to perform outreach with other CPRS peer providers. These in this case all throughout the state. Well, the what I call a bag of hope. And in this bag, there's some of them have Mr. E's, Narcan kits, they'll have a plethora of resources, hygiene, you name it. And as that was all seated, ready launch grant. This is some of our peer workers in our state in our region. Dylan Johnson, the fellow on the right works in our local hospitals, getting people into treatment get into moved from the ER where they've just overdosed to some sort of detox or residential facility. My friend, Colby on the left there works in our Macon County, which is the furthest county up on the border of Kentucky. Basically the same thing he meets people where they're at in he works in the jail, works in the streets and he helps people get in to treatment, rehab, whatever. They just helped him to get into recovery. And the backpacks were able to do an outreach with them. What's next, because of the ready launch grant, we were able to get a lot of data and really experiment with this. And fortunately we were blessed to be able to secure funds With our state opioid grant from the state of opioid funds, which will allow us to hire 14 More CPRS, who will be trained as public transportation drivers, and cover the entire region? It will provide peer support services, but also transportation of any top at anytime. Yeah, yeah. Thank you. Let me leave you. With a quote from Elijah Cummings of US congressman, our transportation decisions determined much more than what roads or bridges or tunnels or rail lines will be built. They determine the connections and barriers that people will encounter in their daily lives. And thus, are harder to use easy will be for people to get where they need and want to go. That's

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Ryan's

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I want to I want to thank Brian, but we have a few minutes for some questions that fast. Well, he got us back on track. And I do want to offer you the opportunity for answering some questions. Sure. Yeah.

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I think more than a question, the first thing I want to say is thank you for sharing your story. I imagine if we asked them, we won't first show of hands of how many people whose lives have been impacted with addiction in some way, shape, or form. The numbers pretty overwhelming. So I just wanted to say this was an inspirational program and to to think it came out of transportation, our transportation sectors is doing this and rising to the occasion. So that's just fantastic. One question I do have no, I understand your your certified peer recovery, of course, presumes people have made it to sobriety and contain, have you run into any sort of insurance or drug testing issues that were unique to this that got kind of thrown at you as you were trying to develop this, as far as riders know, in turn in terms of the drivers and having him in those positions? Was there any pushback of insurance companies saying no, no, no. Or did they understand if you folks that were certified that they'd been recovered? They they're professional.

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So the workaround with that was these folks don't touch anything related to insurance trips, if there's an insurance chip, so my tear is I'll try to use whatever our regular transportation offers this thing about rad recovery, his touched every service, and every sector of transportation that we offer. So I try to work through that process. And usually, in a crisis state, it's kind of a, it's across the state. So you're just trying to hurry. So that kind of go into there. But if it's an insurance trip, we just kind of work that avenue.

18:16

Thank you.

18:21

I have kind of a two parter question. So I'm making an assumption here. Does your agency receive FTA funding? And if so, how do you get around all of those DoD regulations around drug and alcohol testing? And does your agency have any kind of pre hire screening thing that you had to overcome for that in order to get these individuals in there and start driving so

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that so for instance, or CPRS driver, they go through the same process, they're there, go through the background check. It's just the agency is lenient on this type of his position, but just because of the nature of it. For instance, I'm a felon. So I can go through the process, I can get driver trained. I just can't touch TennCare, any kind of insurance trip, that makes sense as far as the agency that's up to the agency as to who they hire, but in this arena of recovery, substance abuse, 99% of your staff are going to have some kind of history. So there's there's policies, you know, how long has it been? have they shown a proof of recovery of maturity? And are they still in the cycle? There's there's a lot of things to consider with that.

19:47

I have two questions here. One, Did you receive any pushback as far as like immunity for your drivers? I don't know if you have a board but any pushback at all. And then the second one is do you work with any law? Like penitentiaries, or local prisons or anything to get, you know, to kind of bridge the gap between when there are least and getting out?

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Yes, the answer is yes to all that there might the pushback wasn't so much from our county officials who are my boss's boss's boss. They, they were crying for this sort of program, the push back. It wasn't anything we couldn't push through. That makes sense. There's always going to be that, but our leadership and our community leaders, that's where the mandate came from my boss's boss, boss. They said, do something. And he said, Holly, do something. And Holly said, Ryan, do something. But But yeah, as far as not necessarily working with the prisons as of yet. I'm not sure what that looks like, really. But the ones coming out of jail, those were usually referred from a public defender, or district attorney. And they would call and say, Hey, I got a guy getting out of jail this day, this time, because that's a totally, you can't just send a public transportation ban, because it's a, it's a whole process to get somebody out of jail. You have to it's gonna, you're gonna be there a while, then you way, way, way. And then finally, the smoke comes out. So I hope that answers your question.

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Not a question. But just acknowledge, you know, great work that you've done, you know, in our business, we have all kinds of issues that we need to address in transit can be the solution. But I applaud you for your innovation to make this possible. And there are so many opportunities like this, that are out there. And once we have people like you that step up, make a difference. It opens people's eyes, and quite often is not just the constituents in a community, it's our legislators. It's FDA, it's others, they then want to buy in and see what they can do to help. So I applaud you. Thank

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you. Thank you, Holly, plug your ears for me real quick. No. There was a lot of times that I had to bend some rules, and do some things, not in a wrong way or anything, but just to make things happen. And I think a lot of times we let those things hold us back. So let's let's push the envelope. Let's see where it goes. You never know. But to me, I'd rather err on the side of helping somebody than not help him at all.

22:48

Um, I'd like to add just real quick. Ryan and I kind of work together. There's a story on intimates blog about what it I think it was based on Britney. But you can read that. We also have a blog entry, you can find that sage wrote about a program in Idaho, where they are hiring people who've been who are been convicted of nonviolent felonies, and they've now folded them in their transportation system as workers and to drivers and what have you and they say that's one of the best things they've ever done that they're incredibly hard workers. So if you want to see a couple stories on that, so Okay. Thank you, Ryan. Thank you