

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

In This Issue

“Our intent is not to feel better, but to get better at feeling,”

– Michael Brown, author of *The Presence Process*

Last month, for Alcohol Awareness Month, we discussed the realities of recovering from alcohol use disorder (AUD) and how it impacts parents, children, and families. To expand that conversation, it is important to recognize that AUD and substance use disorders (SUDs) often coincide with mental health issues. As May is Mental Health Awareness Month, we want to focus on the importance of addressing mental health issues and speaking openly about them, especially as they relate to SUDs. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that six out of ten individuals with SUDs also suffer from another form of mental illness. The comorbidity of mental health issues and SUDs is both very common and very isolating. Open conversations about these issues help reduce stigma, lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation, and increase the likelihood that someone struggling will seek help.

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Beloved actor and comedian Robin Williams spoke openly about his struggles with both substance abuse and mental illness, specifically alcohol abuse and depression. During his rise to fame in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he became addicted to cocaine and alcohol. However, after the sudden death

of his close friend and fellow comedian John Belushi from a drug overdose, and shortly after the birth of his oldest son, Williams began his sobriety journey. He remained sober for nearly 20 years while battling anxiety and depression and was outspoken about the close connection between addiction and mental illness.

Research suggests that negative emotionality may contribute to both the development and persistence of addictive behaviors ([National Library of Medicine](#)). Negative emotionality can refer to a decreased ability to regulate emotions, negative self-worth, a lack of hopefulness, or a negative worldview — all symptoms associated with many mental health disorders. By speaking openly about his experiences, Robin



Williams as John Keating in *Dead Poets Society* (1989)

Williams created space for others facing similar struggles and for the families and loved ones supporting them. He reinforced the idea that mental illness and addiction are not moral failings, but illnesses that deserve compassion, treatment, and ongoing support. Such treatment must include nuance, patience, and understanding.



“You treat a disease, you win, you lose. You treat a person, I guarantee you, you’ll win, no matter what the outcome.”

– Robin Williams



In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, we encourage everyone to have honest conversations about mental health and substance use disorders. Healing begins when people feel seen, heard, and supported rather than judged or isolated. As Robin Williams reminds us, recovery is not about avoiding difficult emotions, but about learning how to move through them with compassion, connection, and support. By speaking openly, educating ourselves, and extending empathy to others, we help break the stigma surrounding mental illness and addiction and remind those who are struggling that they are not alone.



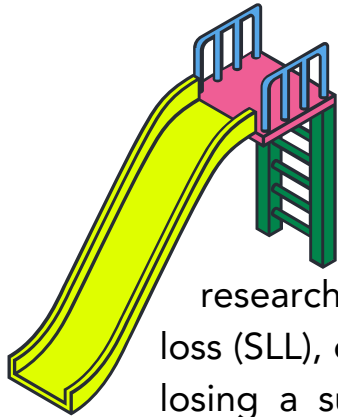
“The human spirit is more powerful than any drug, and that is what needs to be nourished with work, play, friendship and family. These are the things that matter.”

– Robin Williams



For resources and help for anyone struggling with substance abuse and/or mental health, including where to find treatment near you, check out the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#).

The Truth About “Summer Slide”



The seconds are dragging on as every student anxiously awaits the final bell of the school year to signal the start of summer vacation, a much-needed break from homework and tests. Unfortunately, and much to students’ chagrin, a full stop in learning and structure is not actually that beneficial. Much research has been conducted on the phenomenon of summer learning loss (SLL), or “summer slide.” These terms describe the concept of students losing a substantial amount of school year learning during the summer months. Some researchers claim that this break accounts for a loss of 17 to 34% of prior year’s learning ([Atteberry, McEachin, Brown University](#)). Other researchers, however, argue there is not strong enough evidence to suggest a break from school is the cause of an education gap, instead arguing that this gap is already evident even before students enter kindergarten. However, they do argue that using the extra time in the summer to provide supplemental education and reinforce what was taught during the school year can help shrink this already-existent gap ([Von Hippel, Education Next](#)).



Whether it is summer vacation that is causing educational gaps between students or a myriad of other socio-economic reasons, the consensus is clear: continued education during the summer is vital to students’ educational success.

As parents and guardians are able, [this article](#) suggests a few simple things to implement into summer rhythm to provide continued education for children. The list includes, but is not limited to, the following:



Reading. Reading with children is invaluable. Don’t forget: all reading is good reading (yes, even if it is Captain Underpants).



Hands-on creative learning, like crafts or outside activities.



20-30 minute, 2-5 times a week structured educational activities.



Family learning. Educational board games, travel or nature walks all count.

We've established the importance of summer education, now what? Not every family can support a full-fledged homeschool program, afford summer camps, or even let their kids stay home by themselves.* The good news is Nashville has many programs in place to provide childcare, enriching activities, and educational opportunities to fill in the gaps for children during the summer. **Keep reading for helpful resources and suggestions for families this summer.**

*For more information on the law around leaving kids home unattended, read [this Tennessean article](#). TLDR; there is no legal age in Tennessee for children to stay home alone. However, a good guideline is 10 years old and depends on your child's maturity level.

Nashville Summer Learning Resources

Click the following links or scan the QR codes to view:

[Metro Parks FREE Summer Enrichment Program](#)



[Nashville Library Summer Program Enrollment](#)

[MNPS Extended Learning Opportunities](#)



[MNPS Summer Learning at Home Resources](#)

Memorial Day

Our office will be closed on Monday, May 25th in honor of Memorial Day. Thank you to all the people who fought and sacrificed their lives for our safety, wellbeing, and families.



Practice Tip Spotlight

Generally speaking, if you have an upcoming motion already properly set on a Friday Motion Docket but would like to have the motion specially set to be heard earlier, **the Court will only consider this if the following criteria are met:**

- It is an emergency that the motion be heard.
- There is no option for a timely hearing on upcoming motion dates due to the conflicting schedules of opposing counsel/party.
- There is an agreement from both sides to hear the motion at an earlier date.

In the event that the above listed criteria are met, the Court will then take reasonable efforts to accommodate the parties so that a timely hearing can take place.

Upcoming Events

We are committed to building up our bar and have two opportunities this summer for new and seasoned attorneys! See flyers at the end for more information.

[Lunch and Learn: June 22nd, 2026](#)



First up, another **FREE CLE Lunch and Learn**, this time on June 22nd from 12 to 1 p.m. with Custody X Change. Everyone is invited to learn about their interface for creating parenting schedules and easy-to-follow calendar visuals.

[New Attorney Orientation: June 25th, 2026](#)

Second, new and soon-to-be new attorneys are invited to **New Attorney Orientation** on June 25th from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Attendees will witness hearings, tour the courthouse, and learn about starting a career in family law.

In Case You Missed It...

The Fourth Circuit went viral (well, sort of). Our Interpreter Appreciation Day post was a *hit* thanks to our wonderful Spanish interpreter, Noemi Camejo. We are thankful for all of the talented interpreters who help make our courts more accessible. In addition to fun videos, we post regular updates for our Court including important events, court closures, holidays and more on our socials. Don't miss the next post! Follow us on Instagram and Facebook by clicking the links below:



[@JudgeStephanieJWilliams](#)



[Judge Stephanie J. Williams](#)

Calendar

June

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		9	10	11		
				18	19	
				25		

6/9 – 6/11: ID Divorces by Waiver ONLY

6/18: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in Person or Via Zoom

Judge Williams' Dismissal Docket at 2:30 p.m.

6/19: Office Closed for Juneteenth Holiday

6/22: Lunch and Learn with Custody X Change

6/25: New Attorney Orientation

July

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					3	
			15	16	17	
				23		

7/3: Office Closed for Independence Day

7/15 & 7/16: ID Divorces by Waiver ONLY

7/17: Office Open, No Motion Docket

7/23: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in Person or Via Zoom

Judge Williams' Dismissal Docket at 2:30 p.m.

For a complete view of our regularly scheduled dockets and available Court dates, please see the calendar page on our website by clicking here: [Website Calendar](#) or by scanning the QR code:



Share!



[@JudgeStephanieJWilliams](#)



[Judge Stephanie J. Williams](#)

Feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who may be interested. You may also email RebekahLHaralson@jnsnashville.gov to be added to the mailing list.

Additionally, you may view this and all previous newsletters on our website by clicking this link: [Updates and Announcements](#) or by scanning the QR code:



Virtual “Lunch” and Learn with

Custody X Change

The Trusted Tool for Parenting Schedules



Presented by **Shea Drefs**,
Managing Editor at Custody X Change



Moderated by **Stephanie J. Williams**,
Judge of the Fourth Circuit Court

Learn the ins and outs of creating and managing custody schedules, calendar visuals and parenting plans with Custody X Change.



June 22, 2026

12 - 1 p.m. via Zoom

One hour FREE CLE credit*

All are welcome to attend including:

Attorneys*

Legal Staff

Litigants

***Attorneys seeking CLE credit must indicate such on their registration.**

Learn more and register by clicking [HERE](#) or by scanning the QR code:



Sponsored by the





Family Law Foundations with the Fourth Circuit Court:



NEW ATTORNEY ORIENTATION

Hosted by Judge Stephanie J. Williams

**New or soon-to-be new attorney?
You're invited!**

Open to recent Bar takers, law school graduates, and rising last year law students to be able to*:

- *Experience domestic court hearings*
- *Meet the Fourth Circuit staff and Davidson County Judges*
- *Tour the Historic Metro Courthouse*
- *Learn about taking appointments*
- *Hear practical tips for navigating family law cases*
- *Meet fellow attorneys—new and seasoned*

**Detailed agenda will be sent to registrants before the event date*

Thursday, June 25th, 2026
8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

**Space Limited:
Register by
June 20th!**

Click [HERE](#) or scan the
QR Code to Register
and Learn More:



**1 Public Square
Suite 607
Nashville, TN 37201
(615) 862-5910**