

MARCH 2026

THE CHARLES TOWN INITIATIVE

Monthly Newsletter



DEAR CHARLES TOWN,

This month's newsletter highlights several important community efforts. We're introducing a new Social Hosting Awareness Campaign, focused on helping families understand the risks and legal responsibilities surrounding underage drinking. We'll also spotlight Danielle Baker and hear about her experiences at the Ranson 5K and Wellness Fair as well as Prevention Day at the Capitol. You'll also learn more about 7-Hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), an emerging substance of concern being marketed as a kratom product. Together, these stories reflect our continued commitment to healthier, safer communities.

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February 2026

School Support Specialist and Lead Mentor

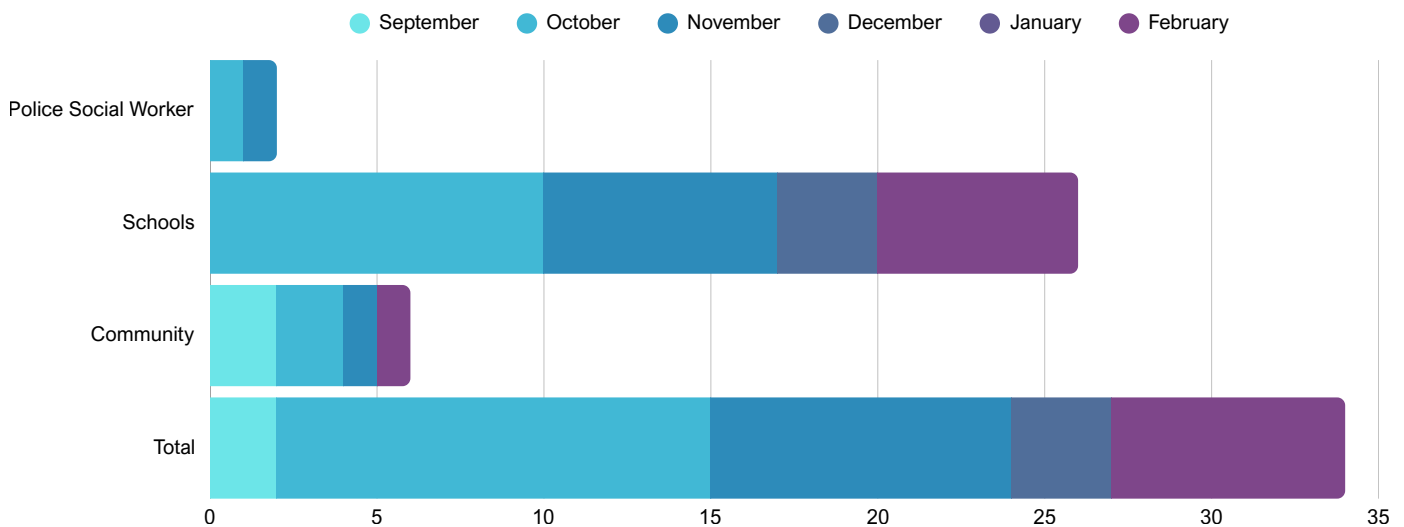
Number of Moderate- or High-Risk Students on Caseload

15 students

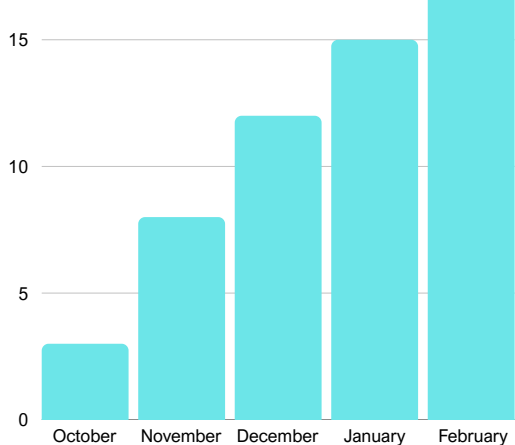
Specialized Skills Building to Moderate/High Risk Children

17 sessions

Source of Referrals to School Support Specialist



Growth in School Support Specialist Caseload



Number of Mentoring Sessions

7 sessions, 14 hours

Number of Crisis Interventions Provided

3 interventions

Number of ACEs Screenings and SDQ/CYRMs

1 screening

Success by Numbers

February 2026

Police Support Specialist



Number of Successful Encounters

15 encounters

Number of Mental Health Screenings

2 screenings

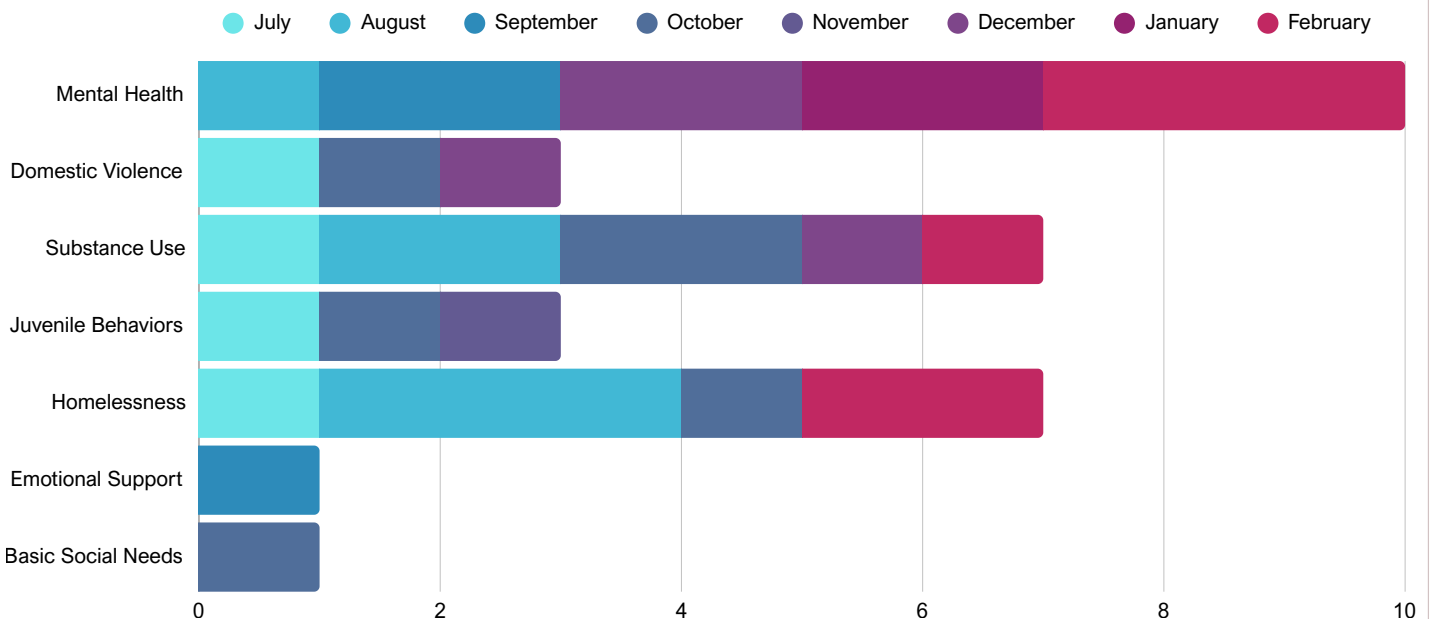
Number of Social Determinant of Health Screenings

5 screenings

Number of Individuals on Caseload

10 people

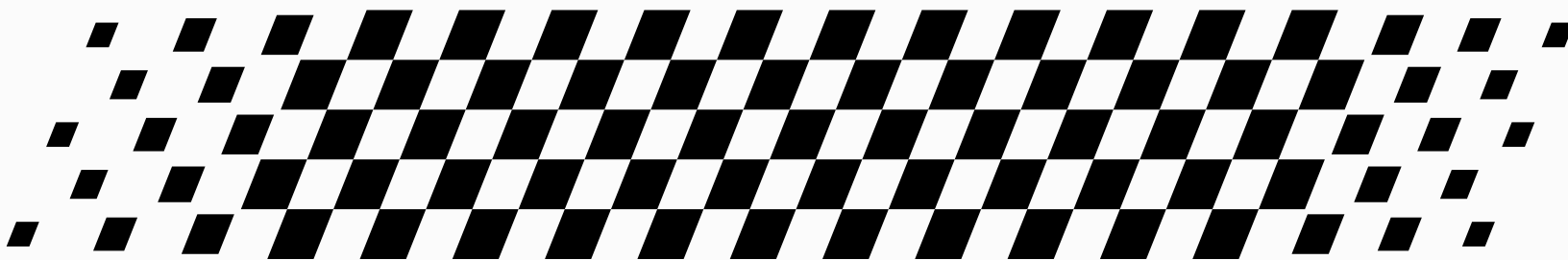
Number of Referrals to Police Support Specialist from July 2025 to February 2026



RANSON RACE 5K AND HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR

Joining the community together for a morning focused on health, connection, and fun.

The Ranson Race 5K and Health & Wellness Fair brought the community together for a morning focused on health, connection, and fun in Ranson. With more than 200 runners registered and over 60 vendors participating, the event highlighted a strong community commitment to wellness. The race concluded at the Ranson Civic Center, where participants enjoyed resource tables, demonstrations, and even free pizza for runners. Attendees also had the opportunity to watch a CPR demonstration from Jefferson County Emergency Services and a wellness demonstration from a local massage professional. Charles Town Initiative team members, Brian and Danielle, were glad to connect with partner agencies and community members, share information about the Jefferson-Berkeley Alliance, and continue building relationships that support community health and prevention efforts.



CHECK OUT JBA'S NEW SOCIAL HOSTING CAMPAIGN!

JBA is partnering with the Motor Vehicles Network to spread information at DMVs across Jefferson County.

Hosting a Party? Know the Law.

In West Virginia, adults have a legal responsibility when hosting gatherings where alcohol may be present. If someone under the age of 21 drinks alcohol at your home or on your property, you could be held responsible—even if you did not directly give them the alcohol. Allowing or



Hosting a party?
In West Virginia, adults
KNOW THE LAW.

knowingly providing alcohol to underage guests who are not your family members can result in criminal charges.

Social hosting laws exist to help prevent underage drinking and the risks that come with it. Alcohol use among youth is strongly linked to car crashes, injuries, violence, alcohol poisoning, and long-term health effects. Many tragedies begin with situations where alcohol was easily available at a party or gathering.

As a host, you have the power to create a safe environment. Set clear expectations, do not allow underage drinking, and make sure alcohol is not accessible to minors. If alcohol is present, monitor the situation carefully and be prepared to intervene if needed.

Responsible hosting protects young people, families, and the entire community. Safe homes build safe communities.

HEAR FROM DANIELLE!

Danielle Baker serves as the School Support Specialist at Charles Town Middle School, where she works closely with students to provide guidance, encouragement, and practical support. For Danielle, the most meaningful part of her role is the relationships she builds with students. She enjoys helping students recognize their own potential and celebrating their achievements—no matter how big or small. Whether it's a student stopping her in the hallway for a high five or knocking on her door to share a success, those moments mean a lot. She also values the times when students seek her out for extra support, knowing that they feel safe enough to share their struggles.

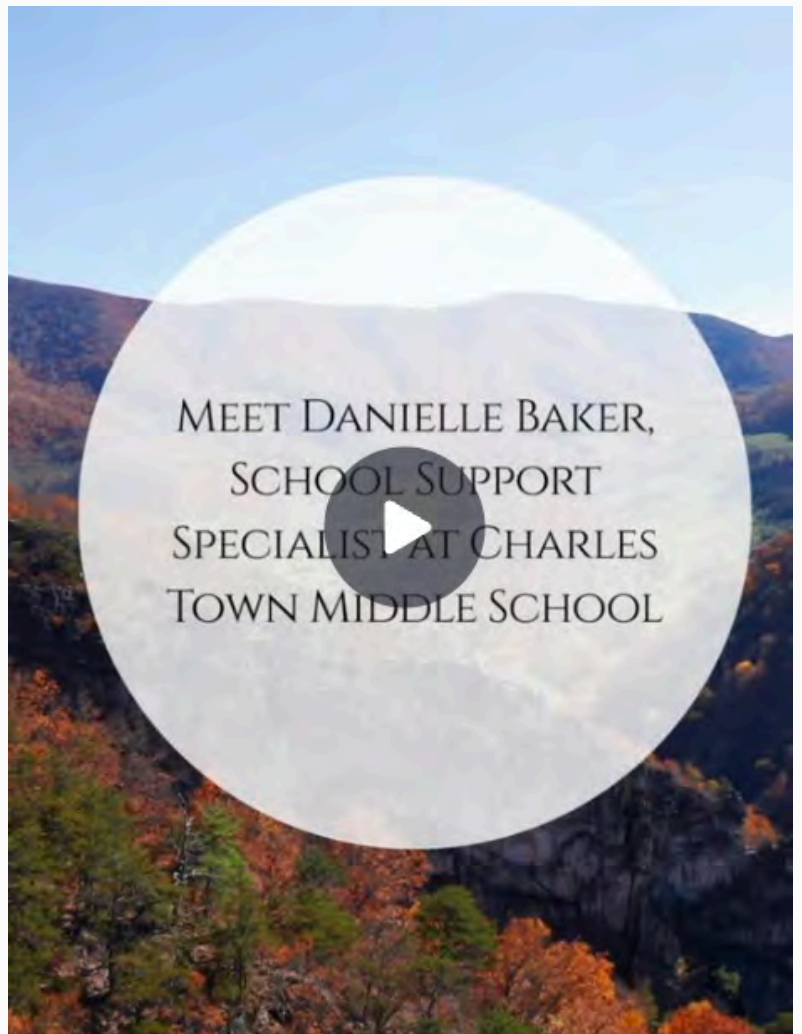
“It’s not just the victory celebration,” Danielle says. “It’s the fact that they decided I was worth telling, that they trust me enough to share that moment.”

Danielle’s daily work centers on supporting students one-on-one, helping them set and work toward personal goals. She also provides crisis support and case management when needed. This year has been a little different, as Danielle transitioned from a community already familiar with her work to one where she is helping introduce and grow the program. In addition to her school-based work, she collaborates with local partners and participates in community events to build awareness of JBA. She has also completed Crisis Intervention Team training to assist with trainings led by colleagues and provides support to other organizations, including meeting with students at the Boys & Girls Club.

Danielle has celebrated several successes over the past year. In October, she passed her licensure exam and officially became a Licensed Social Worker. She also considers it a victory that students throughout the school now recognize her—something she’s reminded of when she hears her name being called in the hallway.

Looking ahead, Danielle is excited to be part of the planning committee for the upcoming Elevate Youth, Elevate Joy event. She also enjoyed attending Prevention Day at the Capitol, where she connected with agencies from across the state, met partners behind programs she had previously only heard about, and helped represent JBA’s work alongside colleagues.

Through her dedication to connection, support, and community collaboration, Danielle continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of Jefferson County students every day.



UNDERSTANDING 7-OH: WHAT COMMUNITIES SHOULD KNOW

Marketed as natural, but the risks are real.



What Is 7-OH?

A growing number of products on the market contain 7-Hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), a powerful psychoactive compound that occurs naturally in very small amounts in the plant Kratom, which is native to Southeast Asia. While the natural plant contains only trace levels of this compound, many products being sold today contain highly concentrated forms of 7-OH produced in laboratories. These products are often marketed or mislabeled as natural kratom products and promoted as helping with focus, pain, or anxiety.

Where Are 7-OH Products Sold?

7-OH products are widely available online and in retail locations such as gas stations and vape shops. They may appear as chewable or dissolvable tablets, gummies, oils, vape pens, or liquid “shots.” The packaging often resembles energy drinks or candy, which can create the misleading impression that these products are safe or natural alternatives to prescription medications.

What Are the Risks?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved 7-OH for medical use, and its safety has not been established. Reported risks associated with kratom

or 7-OH products include liver toxicity, seizures, breathing problems, and the potential for substance use disorder. Regular use can also lead to dependence and withdrawal symptoms similar to those seen with opioids. Short-term effects may include nausea, increased heart rate, and difficulty breathing.

How Common Is Use?

Although 7-OH use is still relatively uncommon, nearly one million youth and young adults report having used kratom at some point. Increasing awareness is important because many 7-OH products are mislabeled and sold without clear information about their contents.



What Can Communities Do?

Community coalitions and prevention partners can play an important role in addressing emerging substances like 7-OH. This includes educating the public about the risks, strengthening youth refusal skills, working with retailers and business groups to enforce age restrictions, and informing policymakers about responsible product marketing and access.

What to Do in an Emergency

In an emergency involving a suspected overdose, Naloxone may help reverse opioid-like effects. Call 911 immediately if someone is unresponsive or needs urgent medical attention. You can also contact Poison Control (1-800-222-1222) or visit poisonhelp.org for guidance. Additional information is available from the FDA and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO).

Check out these resources:

- [1. Kratom 101: What You Need to Know](#)
- [2. Preventing The Next Wave of the Opioid Epidemic: What You Need to Know About 7-OH](#)

CRISIS INTERVENTION TRAINING



This **40-hour training** is designed to prepare law enforcement officers to effectively and safely respond to individuals experiencing mental health crises. This comprehensive training covers de-escalation techniques, mental health awareness, local resource navigation, and practical scenario-based exercises.



April 13-17, 2026
8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Before April 5th
20 participants maximum



Our Location
128 INDUSTRIAL BLD. KEARNEYSVILLE, WV



Expert Instructors

Including law enforcement professionals, behavioral health providers, and community experts.



Service Credits

This training provides 40 in-service credits through LEPSIS.

Participants will:



Gain skills in de-escalation and crisis communication



Enhance their understanding of mental health and SUD



Engage in role-play scenarios and interactive exercises



Learn to connect individuals in crisis with appropriate community services



- Business casual attire; uniforms not required
- Drinks and snacks provided; break for lunch each day
- Full participation required; completion certificate awarded
- Active engagement expected throughout



THE
MARTINSBURG
INITIATIVE

Questions?

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What You Can Do to Prevent Your Child From Drinking Alcohol or Using Other Drugs

Be aware of potential risk factors, including:

- Significant life transitions, such as graduating from middle or high school or getting a driver's license;
- A history of social and emotional problems;
- Depression, anxiety disorders, or other mental health issues;
- A family history of alcohol or other substance use disorders; and
- Hanging out with friends or peers who drink alcohol or use other drugs.

Be a positive role model.

- Don't drink alcohol or use other drugs and drive, and don't get in a car if the driver has been drinking or using other drugs.
- Don't use prescription medication that wasn't prescribed by your doctor. And don't misuse medication that was prescribed to you.
- Get help if you think you have an alcohol- or other drug use-related problem.
- Don't give alcohol or other drugs to your child or their friends and peers. Explain that underage drinking and other drug use are never acceptable inside or outside your home.
- Know where you keep all of your alcohol and prescription medication, and always remind your child and their friends and peers that these substances are off-limits.



Work with schools and communities to ensure that they:

- Support and reward young people's decisions not to drink alcohol and use other drugs;
- Identify and intervene with kids who are engaged in alcohol and other drug use;
- Create, enforce, and promote rules that prevent underage drinking and other drug use; and
- Develop acceptable behavior agreements that are established, well-known, and applied consistently.

Provide support and give space for growth.

- Be involved in your child's life. Go to their school events and extracurricular activities, ask about their day, follow through on your commitments to them, and set aside time to do things together.
- Stay actively engaged in their social media activity. Talk with them about the differences between appropriate and inappropriate content and emphasize that what gets posted online can be there forever.
- Encourage their independence while establishing appropriate limits.
- Make it easy for them to share information about their life by actively listening and asking open-ended questions.
- Know where they are, what they're doing, and whom they're spending time with.

- Meet and get to know the parents or caregivers of their friends and peers. Share your rules about not allowing underage drinking or other drug use.
- Find ways for them to be involved in family life, such as participating in fun family activities and events, helping with house projects or weekly meal planning, doing chores, or volunteering together in the community.

Set clear rules and expectations.

- Brainstorm with your child about ways they can have fun without drinking alcohol or using other drugs.
- Encourage them to avoid parties and other gatherings where alcohol or other drugs are present. And don't allow underage drinking or other drug use at get-togethers in your home.

- Tell them to never drink alcohol or use other drugs and drive or get in a car driven by someone who has been drinking or using other drugs.
- Help them find services and support if you're worried that they're using substances.
- Create and sign a family agreement form where you agree to help keep them substance-free and they agree to not drink alcohol or use other drugs.
- Learn more about the risks and dangers of underage drinking and other drug use by visiting talktheyhearyou.samhsa.gov and using #TalkTheyHearYou on social media. Share and discuss this information with them.



Use Screen4Success.

Talking with kids early and often about the risks and dangers of underage drinking and other drug use can help keep them safe. But how do you know if your child needs more support, and where do you go to find it? Screen4Success will help you better understand your child's health, wellness, and wellbeing and find resources to help address their needs.

HELPFUL RESOURCES



Use and share Screen4Success.



Download and use "Talk. They Hear You." mobile app.



Subscribe and listen to "What Parents Are Saying" podcast.



Download and order "Talk. They Hear You." materials online from SAMHSA Store.



Download and read full "Tips for Teens" fact sheet series.



Download and read other SAMHSA underage drinking prevention and reduction materials.