



Let's Talk About It Cincy

Community Engagement and Service Delivery

*A Whitepaper on Culturally Grounded, Multi-Generational Wellness
for the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County*

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A Message from Gina

Meaningful change begins with conversation. I have carried that belief through every role I have held, and it is the reason Let's Talk About It exists.

I am a community program and project management professional, and my work has always centered on strengthening communities, expanding access to resources, and supporting individuals and families through education, advocacy, and meaningful engagement. My career spans mental health, substance use prevention, higher education, nonprofit leadership, and corporate partnerships. In each of those settings, I have worked alongside organizations, community stakeholders, and diverse populations to build programs that respond to identified needs and create lasting opportunities for growth and support.

At UMADAOP of Cincinnati, my work focused on mental health education, substance use prevention, recovery awareness, and community-based programming. Through training, facilitation, and collaborative partnerships, I helped create opportunities for individuals and families to access information, strengthen life skills, and engage in honest conversations about mental health and wellness. Earlier, at Howard University, I supported programs serving approximately 2,600 students with disabilities, contributing to program operations, accessibility resources, technology support, and staff management. My path also includes corporate engagement, fundraising, and national outreach initiatives supporting students, families, and underserved communities.

What continues to drive my work is the opportunity to bring people, organizations, and resources together around a shared purpose. Good programs start with listening. When we take the time to understand what a community is telling us and recognize its needs, we can develop thoughtful, sustainable programs that make a real difference in people's lives.

Let's Talk About It Cincy is how I carry that commitment forward here in Cincinnati. We create opportunities for open dialogue, education, and community engagement around mental health and wellness, and we work to make sure people have access to the support and resources they need. This paper explains what we do, how we do it, and why we believe it works.

Gina F. Marr-Hawkins, QMHS, OCPSA

Principal Consultant, Let's Talk About It

1. Executive Summary

Let's Talk About It Cincy (LTAI Cincy) is a community engagement and wellness program serving youth, families, and communities across the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The program is led by Gina F. Marr-Hawkins, QMHS, OCPSA, a community program manager with more than

30 years of nonprofit sector experience and deep roots in Cincinnati's mental health, prevention, and recovery community.

Marginalized individuals, families, and communities face distinct, layered systemic challenges that require more than conventional intervention. They require deep, culturally resonant healing that is relationally grounded and available where people already live, gather, and spend their time. LTAI Cincy is designed around that reality.

Our approach bridges ancestral strength with modern holistic wellness. We treat historical resilience as a protective factor, pair it with practical mental health coping strategies, and organize our programming around the 8 Dimensions of Wellness. We deliver this work through the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), so partners can see how every activity connects to assessment, planning, implementation, and measurable outcomes.

Our outreach is never transactional. It is relational, respectful, and built to last.

What LTAI Cincy Delivers

- **Life Skills Group programming** that gives youth a consistent, welcoming place to build practical skills and talk openly about wellness.
- **Intergenerational "Let's Talk About It" healing circles** that bring youth and elders into the same conversation.
- **Holistic health pop-up workshops** tied to specific dimensions of wellness, from budgeting to mindfulness.
- **Community outreach activations** timed around existing neighborhood gatherings, with warm referrals into behavioral health, prevention, and social services.
- **Youth-led collective spaces** that develop the next generation of peer wellness leaders.
- **Resilience toolkits and evaluation reporting** that leave communities and partners with lasting resources and clear evidence of impact.

2. The Need We Are Responding To

Families across Cincinnati and Hamilton County often carry more than any single service can address. Systemic barriers, stigma around mental health and substance use, unfamiliar systems of care, and the long reach of historical trauma tend to show up together and compound one

another. A family managing several of these pressures at once is unlikely to seek out support on its own, even when services exist close to home.

Our work starts from an observation shaped by years of community practice. The barrier is frequently the distance between people and resources rather than the absence of resources. That distance grows from mistrust, from programs that do not reflect the culture of the people they serve, and from the reality that many people have never been invited into an honest conversation about their own wellness.

LTAI Cincy closes that distance by starting with conversation and shared experience. When people gather to fish, share a meal, or celebrate the holidays together, trust grows naturally. That trust becomes the bridge to information, to peer support, and when needed, to clinical and prevention services.

Where We Focus

Our assessment work centers on the neighborhoods where marginalized families face the highest barriers to wellness resources. Community asset mapping includes Avondale, the West End, Walnut Hills, and Lincoln Heights. We cross-reference local community health data with what we observe in the field so that outreach reaches the zip codes with the greatest need.

3. Our Philosophy

Bridging Ancestral Strength and Modern Holistic Wellness

LTAI Cincy rests on the belief that communities already hold much of what they need to heal. Cultural identity, family history, faith traditions, and the wisdom of elders are sources of strength. Our role is to honor those strengths, connect them with modern wellness practices, and give people a safe and familiar place to put both to work. This is how we transform historical trauma into a foundation of community resilience.

Six commitments guide every program we design.

- **Conversation comes first.** Every program creates room for open, judgment-free dialogue about mental health and wellness, because understanding is where change begins.
- **Meet people where they are.** We go to neighborhoods, community spaces, and existing gatherings rather than waiting for people to find us.
- **Relationship over transaction.** We earn trust through consistent presence, cultural respect, and follow-through.
- **Every generation has a role.** Youth and elders learn from one another, and resilience is passed forward on purpose.
- **Youth voice leads forward.** Young people help shape and lead peer wellness efforts, giving the next generation a clear voice.

- **Build what lasts.** Every engagement leaves behind trained leaders, resources, and workflows that communities and partners can sustain.

4. The 8 Dimensions of Wellness

Wellness is broader than the absence of illness. LTAI Cincy programming is organized around the 8 Dimensions of Wellness, a whole-person model used widely across the behavioral health field and promoted by SAMHSA. Each dimension gives us a practical way to design activities, connect people to resources, and talk about wellness in terms that feel relevant to daily life. Our programming is designed to meet people exactly where they are within each of these areas.

Dimension	How LTAI Cincy Engages It
Emotional	Mindfulness practices, healing circles, and Life Skills conversations that build coping strategies and normalize talking about mental health.
Financial	Financial wellness workshops on budgeting that strengthen everyday money skills for youth and families.
Social	Shared experiences such as community dinners, outdoor outings, and holiday gatherings that build belonging and peer connection.
Occupational	Life skills development and youth leadership roles that build confidence, responsibility, and readiness for work.
Intellectual	Education, facilitated discussion, and localized resource guides that expand what participants know and can act on.
Physical	Physical and nutritional wellness programming, including activities connected to local community gardens and time outdoors.
Spiritual	Partnerships with faith leaders and programming that draws on cultural identity, gratitude, and purpose as sources of strength.
Environmental	Safe, welcoming community spaces and time in nature that support a sense of security and calm.

5. Program Components

LTAI Cincy combines recurring group programming with community-wide outreach. Each component serves a distinct purpose, and together they create several doors into the same goal: people who feel connected, informed, and supported.

Life Skills Group

The Life Skills Group is the heartbeat of LTAI Cincy. It gives young people a consistent, welcoming place to build practical skills, form healthy relationships, and practice talking about how they are really doing. Gina developed and facilitated Life Skills Mental Health Groups during her tenure at UMADAOP of Cincinnati, and LTAI Cincy builds on that foundation. Each gathering pairs a shared experience with intentional conversation, so young people learn through experience as well as discussion.

Intergenerational “Let’s Talk About It” Healing Circles

Our signature sessions bring youth and elders together in facilitated dialogue. The curriculum explicitly blends historical resilience as a protective factor with modern mental health coping strategies, and it uses cultural identity as a source of strength. Young people gain perspective and grounding, elders are recognized as keepers of wisdom, and families leave with a shared language for supporting one another.

Holistic Health Pop-Up Workshops

Interactive pop-up workshops focus on specific dimensions of wellness. Financial wellness sessions cover budgeting. Physical and nutritional wellness programming makes use of local community gardens. Emotional wellness sessions introduce mindfulness practices. Each pop-up is short, accessible, and easy to attend.

Community Outreach Activations

LTAI Cincy maintains an active presence at neighborhood events and gatherings, with a planned cadence of three to four outreach activations or pop-up workshops each month during active engagements. We time activations around existing community gatherings so participation feels natural. At each one, we conduct brief, culturally tailored assessments that surface gaps in behavioral health and wellness resources, and we offer warm referrals to services.

Youth-Led Collective Spaces

We train and prepare youth and young adults to lead peer wellness initiatives and to help bridge generational gaps during community events. Youth leadership keeps our programming relevant to young people and builds a pipeline of community leaders who can carry the work forward.

Resource Navigation and Resilience Toolkits

We develop localized wellness materials and resource directories mapped to the 8 Dimensions of Wellness. Families receive resilience toolkits that connect them to long-term behavioral health, prevention, and social services across Greater Cincinnati, so support continues well beyond a single event.

Community Showcase

Each engagement culminates in a multi-generational wellness celebration featuring local cultural arts, holistic health practitioners, and community resource networks. The showcase honors participants, recognizes partners, and sustains momentum.

6. Service Delivery: The Strategic Prevention Framework

LTAI Cincy delivers its work through SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework, a five-step planning process used by prevention professionals across the country. Aligning with SPF gives funders and partners a shared language for what we do and how we measure it, and it keeps our community-centered approach accountable to a proven structure. Gina holds active credentials as a Qualified Mental Health Specialist (QMHS) and an Ohio Certified Prevention Specialist Assistant (OCPSA) and applies that training at every step.

The table below shows how each step unfolds within a six-month (26-week) engagement.

SPF Step	Core Activities	Timing
1. Assessment	Community asset mapping in high-need neighborhoods; brief, culturally tailored needs assessments at local community events; cross-referencing community health data with field observations.	Month 1
2. Capacity Building	Stakeholder alignment with faith leaders, grassroots organizers, county health networks, and youth advocates; building warm referral pathways; establishing a centralized coordination hub; training youth advocates and volunteers.	Month 2
3. Planning	Designing the culturally tailored healing circle curriculum; building a calendar of 3 to 4 outreach activations per month; curating resource directories mapped to the 8 Dimensions of Wellness.	Months 2 to 3
4. Implementation	Facilitating intergenerational healing circles; delivering holistic health pop-up workshops; launching youth-led collective spaces; connecting participants to support.	Months 3 to 5
5. Evaluation	Monthly progress reports on milestones, attendance, and event logistics; tracking individuals and families linked to services; a final impact report with recommendations.	Months 5 to 6

Guiding Principle: Cultural Competence

SPF asks that every step be culturally competent. For LTAI Cincy, cultural competence is the foundation of the work. Our leadership combines formal mental health and prevention

credentials with long-standing community trust and a specialized understanding of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics within Cincinnati's marginalized communities.

Guiding Principle: Sustainability

SPF also asks that prevention gains endure. We plan for sustainability from the first week by building partner relationships, training youth leaders, documenting workflows, and distributing resilience toolkits that stay with families after an engagement ends. In the final month, we host the Community Showcase and complete a capacity transfer so partners can sustain the outreach footprint on their own.

7. LTAI Cincy in Action: The 2026 Fall and Holiday Series

Our 2026 fall and holiday series shows the LTAI Cincy model in practice. Each gathering is hosted at Madi's House, 2360 Kipling Avenue in Cincinnati, a community partner whose own commitment to a safe space and real support for youth, families, and community aligns closely with ours. All three events take place on a Thursday evening from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. That consistent rhythm makes it easier for families to plan, return, and build trust over time.



Gone Fishing

Thursday, October 29, 2026 | 4:00 to 6:00 PM | Madi's House

Built on the idea that a mental break can be as simple as time by the water, Gone Fishing invites the Life Skills Group to spend an evening fishing and close the night with s'mores at the fire pit.

Time outdoors, shared accomplishment, and easy conversation give young people a healthy, practical way to decompress and a natural opening to talk about stress and self-care.

Wellness dimensions engaged: Emotional, Physical, Social, Environmental



Friendsgiving 2026

Thursday, November 12, 2026 | 4:00 to 6:00 PM | Madi's House

Our annual Friendsgiving Dinner brings the Life Skills Group together with community partners to celebrate life around a shared table.

Framed around gratitude, peace, and unity, the evening gives youth the chance to practice hospitality and connection while strengthening relationships with the partners who support them.

Wellness dimensions engaged: Social, Emotional, Spiritual



Life Skills Gift Giving Event

Thursday, December 17, 2026 | 4:00 to 6:00 PM | Madi's House

The Life Skills Gift Giving Event closes the year with a holiday celebration for the Life Skills Group and invites neighbors, partners, and supporters to take part through gift donations.

The event models generosity, brightens the season for participating youth and families, and shows young people that their community is invested in them.

Wellness dimensions engaged: Social, Emotional

What the Series Demonstrates

- **Shared experience opens conversation.** Fishing, a shared meal, and a holiday celebration create comfortable settings where honest talk about wellness happens naturally.
- **Consistency builds trust.** A recurring day, time, and location lets families build LTAI Cincy into their routine.
- **Partnership extends reach.** Hosting with Madi's House and inviting community partners connects participants to a wider network of support.
- **Seasonal relevance drives participation.** Programming meets families in moments that already matter to them.
- **One gathering serves several dimensions of wellness.** A single evening can support emotional, social, physical, and environmental wellness at the same time.

For event information, contact Gina Hawkins at (202) 738-2458.

8. Leadership

Gina F. Marr-Hawkins, QMHS, OCPSA

Principal Consultant, Let's Talk About It

Gina F. Marr-Hawkins is a senior community program and project manager with more than 30 years of experience across the nonprofit sector, higher education, and corporate partnerships. Her work centers on mental health and substance use prevention, recovery awareness, disability services, and community advocacy. She develops and delivers programs, coordinates grants and stakeholders, manages operations, and builds the trusted relationships that connect individuals and families to education and support.

Organization	Role and Contributions	Years
Let's Talk About It	Principal Consultant. Leads an independent practice focused on mental health, prevention, recovery awareness, community education, and advocacy. Develops program strategies, proposals, and community initiatives that help nonprofit and community organizations translate priorities into accessible programs.	2026 to Present
UMADAOP of Cincinnati, Inc.	Community Project Manager. Led a grant-funded Community Mental Health Advocacy Training initiative across 10 Cincinnati neighborhoods and supported registration of more than 250 residents through canvassing and direct outreach. Developed and facilitated Life Skills Mental Health Groups and the 2024 to 2025 Let's Talk UMADAOP community engagement series. Planned and managed UMADAOP's 45 Years of Recovery Celebration.	2022 to 2026
Howard University	Senior Program Manager, Disability Services & Technology. Managed disability services, adaptive technology, and program operations supporting approximately 2,600 students with registered disabilities. Directed Disability Services and Disability Testing Center operations, coordinated accessible technologies including JAWS and CART, led paraprofessional staff, and served as Veterans Affairs Certifying Official.	2011 to 2020
Kidsave	Director of Corporate Partnerships. Cultivated corporate sponsors, donors, volunteer mentors, and host families for children in foster care, expanded outreach for the Weekend Miracles Program, and contributed to efforts that helped secure \$400,000 in support through the DC Mayor's Office.	2005 to 2008
Earlier Career	Office Manager, Howard University Energy Systems and Physical Plant; Account Manager, Hilton Washington & Towers; GSA Contract Specialist, Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center; Account Executive, NYLCare Health Plans; Director of Public Relations & Marketing, Black College Satellite Network.	1988 to 2005

Selected Career Highlights

- Organized the National Foster Care Month luncheon honoring Dr. Dorothy Height and advanced discussions on young people aging out of foster care with Congressional Black Caucus stakeholders.
- Coordinated national conferences and high-profile programs for the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Labor.

Credentials and Education

- Qualified Mental Health Specialist (QMHS), active
- Ohio Certified Prevention Specialist Assistant (OCPSA), active
- Bachelor of Arts in Communications (Radio, Television and Film), Bowling Green State University

9. Partnering with LTAI Cincy

LTAI Cincy works alongside organizations that share our commitment to culturally grounded, community-centered wellness. Partnerships take several forms, and each one strengthens the network of support available to Cincinnati families.

Partnership	What It Looks Like
Dedicated Community Coordination	A full-time engagement of 40 hours per week over six months (26 weeks), in which LTAI Cincy provides a credentialed Community Coordinator who designs and delivers outreach using the Strategic Prevention Framework. Time is divided among direct community engagement, program development, and administrative tracking. A partner may provide dedicated office space as in-kind support, giving the Coordinator a hub for tracking, administration, and private partner consultations.
Host Site	Community spaces, such as Madi's House, that host Life Skills gatherings, healing circles, and seasonal events.
Referral and Resource	Faith leaders, grassroots organizers, county health networks, and youth advocates who join our warm referral pathways so participants move smoothly from conversation to care.
Event and Community Support	Businesses, foundations, and individuals who support seasonal programming through funding, in-kind contributions, and gift donations.

What Partners Receive in a Dedicated Engagement

- Monthly progress reports covering milestones, participant attendance, and event logistics
- Outcome tracking on individuals and families linked to secondary support networks, clinical services, and prevention resources
- A final impact report with overall engagement metrics, qualitative feedback from participants across generations, and strategic recommendations for ongoing outreach
- Trained youth leaders and established workflows that allow the partner to sustain the outreach footprint

- Localized resilience toolkits and resource directories mapped to the 8 Dimensions of Wellness

10. Measuring Impact

We measure both how well programming is delivered and whether it leads people to the support they need.

Measure	What We Track	Why It Matters
Process	Program milestones, participant attendance, and event logistics, reported monthly	Confirms programming is delivered as planned and reaching people consistently
Outcome	Number of individuals and families linked to secondary support networks, clinical services, or prevention resources	Shows that conversation is leading to real connection with care
Qualitative	Feedback from multi-generational participants	Captures the meaning behind the numbers and guides improvement
Final Impact	Overall engagement metrics, participant feedback, and strategic recommendations	Gives partners a clear record of results and a path for continued outreach

11. Sustainability and Lasting Impact

Every LTAI Cincy engagement is designed to leave the community stronger than we found it.

- **Resilience toolkits** give families permanent, localized resource guides connecting them to long-term behavioral health, prevention, and social services across Greater Cincinnati.
- **The Community Showcase** celebrates community resilience with local cultural arts, holistic health practitioners, and resource networks, keeping momentum alive after programming concludes.
- **Capacity transfer** leaves behind trained youth leaders and established workflows so partner organizations can carry the outreach forward.

12. Conclusion

A stronger community is built when we honor where we have been while equipping ourselves for where we are going. LTAI Cincy puts that belief into practice through a steady presence in the neighborhoods we serve, programs that reflect the people in them, and partnerships that turn conversation into connection with care.

We invite funders, community organizations, faith leaders, and neighbors to join us. Whether you host a gathering, support a season of programming, contribute gift donations, or partner with us on a dedicated outreach engagement, your involvement helps more Cincinnati families find the support they need.

Connect with Let's Talk About It

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