

# CareSouth Carolina welcomes newest MAT provider



CareSouth Carolina welcomes Sheila Blossom, FNP, as the newest MAT provider for multiple locations across the Pee Dee.

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) is

the use of FDA-approved medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a “whole-patient” approach to the treatment of substance use disorders. MAT patients must receive counseling, which could include different forms of behavioral therapy.

These services are required along with medical, vocational, educational, and other assessment and treatment services. The prescribed medications used in MAT programs work to normalize brain chemistry, block the euphoric effects of alcohol and opioids, relieve physiological cravings, and normalize body functions without the negative effects of the abused drug.

Sheila comes to CareSouth Carolina with six years of experience in nursing experience in cardiac and public health. She believes that MAT services are vital to the success of treating patients with opioid addiction.

“We’re here as a vehicle to help,” Blossom said. “This additional resource promotes a focus on healing and restoration. This isn’t just about gaining back your well-being over substance abuse, but about gaining back your life.”

Sheila received her Master of Science Degree in Nursing (Family Nurse Practitioner) at Walden University and her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing at Francis Marion University.

To Sheila, the most rewarding part of this program is seeing the positive outcomes that are produced in the patient’s life. She will be providing MAT at Rubicon, Alpha and Trinity Behavioral Services, as well as the CareSouth Carolina office in Cheraw.

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her spouse, family and friends and loves to travel.



# Patient Connect

CareSouth Carolina, serving your local area since 1980.

MARCH 2022

## March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Colorectal cancer is the second-most common cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. It’s expected to cause about 52,980 deaths during 2022.

The American Cancer Society estimates that there will be 104,270 new cases of colon cancer and 45,230 new cases of rectal cancer in 2022.

### Symptoms:

In many cases, colorectal cancer has been known as a “silent killer,” not showing any symptoms until the disease is much farther along.

- Changes in bowel movements, including constipation and diarrhea
- Bleeding or cramping in your rectum
- Feeling like you can’t empty your bowels completely or urgently need to have a bowel movement
- Persistent pain in your abdomen, such as cramps, gas or pain
- Dark patches of blood in your stool
- Discomfort or bloating in your belly
- Unexplained fatigue; loss of appetite and weight loss
- Pelvic pain

### Prevention:

The most effective way to reduce your risk of colorectal cancer is to get screened routinely beginning at age 50, though sometimes it should be earlier depending on your family history and risk.

Making lifestyle changes can help reduce the risk of Colorectal Cancer. Eating a variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains; drinking alcohol in moderation, if at all; not smoking; frequent exercise; and maintaining a healthy weight can reduce your risk, as well.

Talk with your provider to determine your risk and to schedule a screening.



### MEDICAL LOCATIONS:

Hartsville • Society Hill • Bennettsville • Bishopville • Cheraw • Chesterfield • Dillon • Lake View • Latta • McColl

### PHARMACY LOCATIONS:

Hartsville • Society Hill • Bennettsville • Bishopville • Cheraw • Latta • McColl • Chesterfield

To make an appointment, please call 866.498.0399.

[www.caresouth-carolina.com](http://www.caresouth-carolina.com)

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Amy Cook,  
LISW-CP/S



Robin Hope Gibson,  
LPC, LPCS

## CareSouth Carolina announces changes to Behavioral Health Leadership

CareSouth Carolina announces two new changes to its leadership team. Amy Cook, LISW-CP/S, who was previously the Assistant Director of Behavioral Health, has stepped into the role of Director of Behavioral Health. Robin Hope Gibson, LPC, LPCS, has stepped into the role of Behavioral Health Clinical Supervisor.

Cook has been a part of CareSouth Carolina for 16 years and dedicated the last 4 years to the role of Assistant Director of Behavioral Health. She will be taking over for Liz Kershner, LISW-APCP, who served at CareSouth Carolina for 29 years and just recently retired in December 2021.

“Liz Kershner built this program from the ground up and implemented the model of Integrated Behavioral Health Care,” Cook said. “It’s a special collaboration between the Medical and Behavioral Health Care Providers where we are able to provide services that treat the “whole person”, in one setting to improve the health and wellbeing of every patient. Liz did a phenomenal job in leading the Behavioral Health Department. She taught me everything I know and I have grown professionally and personally because of her.”

Under Kershner’s leadership, CareSouth Carolina was one of the first community health centers in the nation to begin screening for clinical depression, just like a vital sign, and having behavioral health counselors in every office allowed the organization to provide complete care to its patients.

Now, The CareSouth Carolina Behavioral Health Department consist of 16 licensed Behavioral Health Providers, a licensed Clinical Psychologist, Behavioral Health Case Manager, and a Behavioral Health Program Manager. The Behavioral health counselors provide services in each of the CareSouth Carolina medical offices and school-based counseling services to 11 schools within our service area. In addition, the Medication-Assisted Treatment Program (MAT) was started a little more than a half-decade ago. The MAT Program provides services to individuals who suffer from Substance Use Disorders/Opioid Use Disorders. It is the largest in the state among federally-qualified health centers (FQHCs).

Cook said that her primary goal moving forward is to maintain the quality and integrity of the Behavioral Health Program that was started by Kershner. She will continue to ensure that each patient at CareSouth Carolina receives evidence-based quality care and looks forward to building upon the strong foundation that has already been set.

“As we move forward, we are going to focus on continuing this legacy that Liz built,” Cook said. “We will continue to utilize evidence-based practices to meet the needs of our patients. We will focus on expanding school-based counseling in our service area to improve the health and wellbeing of our children and adolescents. We will focus on decreasing the stigmatization of Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Disorders through educating our communities, patients, and their families. My goal is to be a great leader to this amazing Behavioral Health team and to move this program forward as we ensure quality care to all our patients.”

Gibson, who has served at CareSouth Carolina for 11 years and has more than 20 years of experience as a counselor, will step into the role of Behavioral Health Clinical Supervisor. In this role, she will look to identify opportunities for improvement, provide feedback for educational purposes, provide clinical supervision/guidance, and support to the Behavioral Health Staff. She will give support to Cook in continuing to build the program.

“We want to maintain this amazing department that Liz has built and continue further growth,” Gibson said. “We’ll continue to look for ways to offer more evidence-based services to patients, decrease barriers to treatment, and enhance our existing programs.”

Cook said that Gibson has been innovative in her approach to engaging counselors and providing both guidance and education before she was ever even offered the role.

“Robin and I have a strong working relationship and I have confidence that she and I will build a strong partnership that will help to move this program forward,” Cook said.

To schedule an appointment with a CareSouth Carolina provider, please call 1-843-309-8301.



Shankana Johnson, NP

## CareSouth Carolina welcomes new Value-Based Care Nurse Practitioner

CareSouth Carolina welcomes Shankana Johnson, NP, as the newest provider assisting with the Value Based Care Team.

Johnson has more than 10 years of experience in nursing leadership experience and received her Master of Science in Nursing (Family Nurse Practitioner) at Walden University and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the USC Upstate Mary Black School of Nursing.

The value-based care team works with insurance contracts, studies quality care metrics & MLR (Medical Loss Ratio), works to ensure patients are efficiently navigating the system, partners with groups inside of CareSouth Carolina for effective telemedicine and telecommunication treatment, as well as many other duties.

“CareSouth Carolina is very family-oriented,” Johnson said. “I’m looking forward to being able to provide access to care for those who might not be able to receive it otherwise. I love helping people and meeting new people, so this role is perfect for me.”

Outside of work, Johnson enjoys spending time with her family, traveling, and shopping.