



Sobrius Appoints Former Virginia Behavioral Health Commissioner Nelson Smith as Chief Executive Officer Decorated U.S. Army Veteran and Statewide Reform Leader to Guide Next Phase of Growth

Galax, VA January 20, 2026 Sobrius, a rapidly growing behavioral-health provider serving communities across Virginia, today announced the appointment of **Nelson Smith, FACHE**, as its new Chief Executive Officer. Smith joins Sobrius following his tenure as Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), where he led one of the most ambitious behavioral-health transformation efforts in the nation.

A decorated U.S. Army Special Forces veteran and seasoned healthcare executive, Smith brings a rare combination of operational expertise, policy leadership, and mission-driven service to Sobrius at a pivotal moment in the company's expansion.

A Proven Leader in Behavioral Health Transformation

Appointed by Governor Glenn Youngkin in 2022, Smith served as a principal architect of Right Help, Right Now, Virginia's three-year, \$1.4 billion plan to modernize crisis response, expand treatment capacity, and strengthen the state's behavioral-health workforce. Under his leadership, the initiative achieved major statewide milestones, including:

- A 59% reduction in fentanyl-related overdose deaths since the initiative's launch.
- Expansion of mobile crisis teams from 36 to more than 110 statewide, with average response times under 50 minutes.
- Doubling of crisis stabilization capacity across Virginia.
- Significant improvements in state hospital staffing, reducing vacancy rates and saving the Commonwealth more than \$40 million.
- Creation of the first public-facing performance dashboard for Virginia's 40 Community Services Boards, integrating data from 14 disparate electronic health record systems.
- Streamlined licensing processes that reduced approval timelines from two years to approximately 90 days, changes that directly enabled providers like Sobrius to expand more rapidly.

Prior to his state leadership role, Smith served as CEO of multiple behavioral-health hospitals and as Chief Administrative Officer and Vice President of Behavioral Health Services at CJW Medical Center. His career began with 15 years of distinguished service in the U.S. Army's 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), where he earned the Green Beret, the Purple Heart, and four Bronze Star Medals, including one with a "V" device for valor. Smith holds an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and a B.A. from Thomas Edison State University. He is fluent in Arabic.

A Vision for Sobrius' Next Chapter

Smith joins Sobrius at a time of accelerating demand for high-quality, person-centered substance use disorder treatment. With locations in Bassett, Galax, and Lynchburg, Sobrius delivers residential and outpatient treatment programs rooted in evidence-based care and a uniquely supportive, "whole-person" model.

"Sobrius has built a powerful foundation one that treats people with dignity, compassion, and a belief in their ability to heal. I'm honored to lead this organization into its next phase of growth. Virginia has made tremendous strides in behavioral health, and Sobrius is positioned to help drive the next wave of innovation in treatment access, quality, and outcomes." - Nelson Smith

Smith's vision centers on expanding Sobrius' footprint, strengthening partnerships with insurers and community providers, and advancing a model of care that supports the whole person, mind, body, and spirit.

A Milestone Moment for Sobrius

"Nelson's leadership record is extraordinary," said Matt Feehery, CEO Sobrius, "He has transformed systems, built high-performing teams, and delivered measurable results for some of the most complex behavioral-health challenges in the country. Bringing him to Sobrius is a defining moment for our organization and for the communities we serve."

Sobrius' model emphasizes small-group treatment, home-like environments, and a deeply human approach to recovery. With Smith at the helm, the company plans to expand its services, strengthen clinical innovation, and deepen its commitment to helping individuals build sustainable, fulfilling lives in recovery.

About Sobrius

Sobrius is a Virginia-based behavioral-health provider offering residential and outpatient substance use disorder treatment programs. With locations in Bassett, Galax, and Lynchburg, Sobrius delivers compassionate, evidence-based care in supportive, home-like settings. Its client-focused model engenders trust, accountability, and meaningful connection throughout the treatment journey. Sobrius is committed to treating the whole person, mind, body, and spirit and empowering individuals to build rewarding, sustainable lives in recovery.

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