

**ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL (HHSAC)**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tara Haley, Chair; Howard Hitzel, Vice Chair; Deanna Jones; Chip Cover  
**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Leslie Barstow; Kathleen Patneau; Shannon Nazworth

**STAFF PRESENT:** Shawna Novak, HHS Director; Joe Cone, HHS Assistant Director; Juliette Maronel, HHS Admin Coordinator; Tracy Dillon, Social Services Manager; Commissioner Sarah Arnold, BCC Liaison (virtual)

**VISITORS:** Marion Blohm, Dawn Bell, Brittany Glisson, Shane Lockwood, Joseph Ghela

**Virtual-** Anita Daniels, Tara Wildes, Nangy Pulsfus, Jean Roth, Chynequa King, Judy Dembowski, Kristine King, Paige Stanton, Sara Rutan, Kelly Franklin, Schuyler Siefker

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:** Tara Haley called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Quorum was present.

**MINUTES:** Tara Haley opened the floor for a motion to approve the previous 4 meeting minutes (1/2 General, 1/16 Executive, 2/6 General, & 2/20 Executive). Howard Hitzel motioned to approve meeting minutes. Deanna Jones seconded the motion; the minutes are approved unanimously by the Council.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

**REPORT FROM COMMISSIONER ARNOLD:** Commissioner Sarah Arnold expressed concerns about new commissioners prioritizing mileage rollbacks, which could impact departments like HHS. At the last BOCC meeting, Joy Andrews was tasked with having departments create two budget options: one recommended and one with rollbacks. Federal funding cutbacks are also causing uncertainty, with nonprofits across northeast Florida expressing concerns. Six months ago, while chair, Commissioner Arnold strengthened the federal lobbying team by hiring Continental Strategy, with our main contact being Katie Wiles, daughter of Susie Wiles, President Trump's Chief of Staff. Katie Wiles now serves as SJC's federal lobbyist. Commissioner Arnold proposed inviting her to speak to the HHAC committee about federal funding plans. Shawna Novak agreed to coordinate with Adam Tecler to schedule this, with council members supporting the idea. Commissioner Arnold emphasized urgency, suggesting Katie Wildes could provide valuable insights for strategic planning. Tentative dates are set for April 3 or May 1, depending on her availability.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Continuum of Care (CoC) Update from Anita Daniel:
  - a. Federal financial assistance remains paused following a White House directive in January. HUD funding is still uncertain, but per DCF, operations continue as 'business as usual'. Next steps will be determined once updates become available.
    - i. Awaiting news from DCF on the 2025-2028 contract amendment. The current DCF contract year ends June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. There are several key changes anticipated in these contracts, including fund assessments based on both performance and non-performance metrics. Evaluating the impact to ensure they are using their allotted funds as intended.
      1. Award funds will be allocated based on performance metrics. 10% will go to CoCs that have reduced overall homelessness from 2014 to 2024, with larger declines earning more. Another 10% will be distributed based on success in transitioning homeless individuals

into permanent housing, though SJC may face challenges due to the lack of such housing. Finally, 5% will be awarded to CoCs excelling in reaching new homeless individuals while maintaining a low overall homelessness rate.

- b. Everyone is invited to the CoC Annual Meeting on Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> in the Muscovy/Osprey rooms at HHS or livestreamed on Facebook. The event begins with sign-in and networking at 8:30 AM, followed by the meeting at 9:00 AM, and concluding by noon. Those interested will receive the registration link. Key agenda items include voting for new board members and reviewing insights from this year's PIT data.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **1. 2024 Annual Report Finalization**

- a. Shawna highlighted the report overview, due April 1st to Joanne in the BOCC office, summarizing the council's activities, goals, and objectives for 2025, along with a review of the prior year. Katrina has been conducting desk monitoring of funded agencies, but there are plans to reintroduce onsite monitoring. Upcoming goals include issuing an RFP for funding, conducting a formal human service needs gap analysis, continuing to require monthly attendance from funded agencies, continuing to follow CoC activities, and continuing to review quarterly outcomes of funded agencies.
- b. Tara Haley opened the floor for a motion to approve the 2024 Annual Report. Howard Hitzel motioned to approve; Chip Cover seconded the motion; the report was approved unanimously by the Council.

### **2. FY 2026 RFP Timeline Finalization**

- a. Shawna announced that application instructions and the link will be posted on the website on Monday, April 21<sup>st</sup>. Though Katrina was absent, Shawna shared updates on her work with eCivis to transition the application process, which will have some changes. Katrina aims to test the system as an applicant before submissions go live. A guide and instructional materials will be provided, but funded agencies can reach out to her for technical support, and she may coordinate with eCivis as needed.
- b. Tara notated applications are due Friday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, preliminary scores will be announced on August 7th, with final funding recommendations voted on during the council executive board meeting on August 21<sup>st</sup> where quorum is required.
- c. Tara Haley opened the floor for a motion to approve the 2026 RFP Timeline. Chip Cover motioned to approve; Howard Hitzel seconded the motion; the timeline was approved unanimously by the Council.

## **Health & Human Services/County Administration Update- Shawna Novak, Director, Health & Human Services**

- Shawna stated that budget guidelines were issued to county staff on Monday, and a draft timeline for the county administrator's workshop is being prepared. A preliminary 4% inflationary increase has been issued, with independent agencies hopefully receiving the same. However, if the rollback is adopted, funding could be impacted. As Commissioner Arnold mentioned earlier, there will be needs outline and the effects of a rollback. A directors' meeting next week may provide further updates.
- For April's Child Abuse Prevention Month, HHS and SAYS will host a prevention event on April 9th from 4–7 PM at the SAYS campus, featuring food, games, and activities.
- Regarding the needs assessment, Shawna requested the previous RFP and noted that an ad hoc committee within HHSAC had been involved in the past.

## **Funded Agency Updates:**

**Early Learning Coalition (ELC):** Dawn Bell shared that they are currently enrolling school readiness children aged 0-4 and anticipate beginning enrollment for school-age children in the coming weeks. In previous weeks, the state approved a rate increase for providers but did not allocate additional funding to support it. As a result, enrollment had to be paused for the past couple of months to avoid a financial deficit. Previously, they were serving 4,000 children per month, but if the new funding model remains the same with the rate increase, they expect to serve only 3,200.

Betty Griffin Center (BGC): Kelly Franklin shared that this past Monday, they hosted a breakfast featuring a keynote address from the CEO of the Florida Partnership to End Domestic Violence and two survivors spoke about the services they received from BGC. Commissioners and other special guests were in attendance to show their support, and Kelly expressed great gratitude for the commissioners joining and their ongoing contributions. In February, they served a total of 340 survivors—256 adults and 86 children. Of those, 59 adults and 36 children received shelter services, and 129 hotline calls were. Lastly, BGC is currently in the midst of the recertification process.

Council on Aging (COA): Jean Roth is covering for Brian. She introduced herself as the manager of the Independent Living Services, which falls under their Social Services department. This program provides in-home services to help seniors remain in their homes for as long as possible. She noted that in the past three weeks, they received four high-risk Adult Protective Services (APS) referrals from DCF. Two of these cases involved individuals who lacked food and had no way to prepare meals, so they were assisted through the Meals on Wheels program. The other two referrals involved spouses caring for partners with dementia who were in crisis. To support them, a respite service was arranged, providing an aide to care for the individual with dementia, allowing the caregiver to rest. Receiving four high-risk referrals in such a short timeframe may indicate emerging trends. She emphasized the importance of HHS funding in continuing these critical services.

Emergency Services & Homeless Coalition (ESHC): Marion Blohm reported that they recently provided care to a mother who just gave birth and became a U.S. citizen last week. They are currently working on their final house renovation, which is expected to be completed in 6–8 weeks. Tomorrow, they will be signing contracts for their expansion plan. In about a year, they anticipate having their new office built. Following that, they will begin the second phase of the duplex project and will provide updates as they progress.

Good Samaritan/Wildflower Clinic: Chynequa King reported that after reviewing historical data for FY 22-23 and FY 23-24, they discovered a 47% increase in patient visits. Their main challenges include the need for additional space, increased supply prices, and limited funding. Their on-site point-of-care lab is successfully testing for the most common medical diagnoses. They have partnered with Baptist's Buddy Bus to provide on-site mammograms and with Ascension St. Vincent to bring their dental bus to Hastings, now offering fillings and exams on-site. Lastly, she emphasized that they are always seeking healthcare professionals to volunteer to provide care to residents—even just three hours per quarter—across all medical fields.

St. Augustine Youth Services (SAYS): Sara Rutan shared that the CAT and Coaches programs remain at full capacity, with a steady waitlist of individuals ready to enroll as soon as spots become available. In February, their mobile response team served 24 children, primarily referred through schools, achieving an 87% diversion from the Baker Act. She also reminded attendees about the SAYS Child Abuse Prevention event scheduled for April 9th, which will be open to families.

St. Francis House (SFH): Judy Dembowski shared that, like her peers, she is closely monitoring funding cuts that are impacting clients and constituents, leading to an increase in individuals—particularly youth and the elderly—falling into crisis. As an agency, they are deeply appreciative of the support their programs receive from HHS. They are actively seeking ways to enhance their services, providing more and better resources without increasing financial strain. To further their efforts, she and her operations manager will travel to Miami at the end of the month to visit the Chapman Partnership, which operates two shelters—an 800-bed facility in Miami and another in Homestead. These shelters run an employment program directly within their facilities, and they are interested in adapting a similar model on a smaller scale for their adult clients. As their shelter expands, they recognize the need for a more formalized approach to this service. Overall, everything else is going well.

Epic Behavioral Healthcare: Kristine King shared the latest detox and residential client numbers for their fiscal year, which began in July. Since then, the EPIC Recovery Center has served a total of 430 clients, including 360 detox clients and 124 residential clients. She emphasized that these numbers represent unique individuals per program—clients who undergo detox multiple times are counted only once in that category. She also highlighted the upcoming 29th EPIC Annual Flower and Garden Expo next weekend at Sykes Family Farm. The event will feature a wide variety of nurseries and growers and will be held on Saturday, the 15th, from 9 AM to 5 PM, and Sunday, the 16th, from 10 AM to 3 PM. Parking is \$5 per person, and the expo will offer a great children's area and food trucks for attendees to enjoy.

## **COMMUNITY PARTNERS:**

**SMA Healthcare:** No representative present.

**UF Health St. Johns:** Paige Stanton shared that their community health needs assessment that was approved by the board in December has been printed as a hard copy for the hospital. Some copies will be distributed to community stakeholders, and it is also available on the hospital's main webpage. She noted that the assessment contains a wealth of information, developed through a partnership with Blue Zones and the Northeast Florida Hospital Alliance. She also highlighted the upcoming BRAVE Summit on March 26th from 3–7 PM at the STA amphitheater. Ticket sales have been exceptionally high, with 1,500 tickets already sold—faster than in previous years. She is excited for what is expected to be the largest gathering of high school students from across the state. The event is free for all high school students, and those interested can reach out to her for flyers, QR codes, or other materials to help spread the word in the community.

**Department of Health:** Shane Lockwood shared that the Buddy Bus was recently at HHS, providing 10 mammogram appointments. Plans are in place to bring the bus back soon and explore additional locations to improve accessibility for the community. They continue to distribute car seats and assist with installations. With another event scheduled for April, they expect to have given out over 100 car seats in the past year. Additionally, the WIC department continues to grow more mobile, visiting numerous facilities to extend their reach, with one staff member dedicated solely to community assistance and outreach.

**Public Safety:** Director Tara Wildes reported that the co-responder team has now been fully active for a couple of months and can share some data. Previously, they averaged 34 contacts per month, though some were duplicates. With a full-time team in place, that number has increased to 88 per month, and additional part-time team members will be added soon. The co-responder team's responsibilities have expanded to include assisting with Risk Protection Orders (RPOs), court-issued mandates in Florida that restrict firearm and ammunition access for individuals deemed a potential danger to themselves or others. By supporting these cases, the team ensures a consistent approach to response and follow-up, helping individuals access necessary services like mental health support. Their role also includes addressing Silver and Purple Alerts, which involve missing individuals with cognitive impairments. Silver Alerts pertain to those with dementia or age-related conditions, while Purple Alerts focus on adults with mental or cognitive disabilities. By responding to these alerts, co-responders help maintain continuity in outreach and care efforts. Additionally, the team has participated in 14 multidisciplinary meetings with service providers, strengthening collaboration and increasing community awareness of available resources.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**Executive Meeting:** Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, at 3:30 p.m., in the Muscovy conference room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084 and via Microsoft Teams.

**General Meeting:** Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 4pm in the Kingfisher conference room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084 and via Microsoft Teams.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting was adjourned at 4:42 pm