

ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL (HHSAC)
MEETING MINUTES
June 5th, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tara Haley, Chair; Deanna Jones; Leslie Barstow

MEMBERS ABSENT: Howard Hitzel, Vice Chair; Chip Cover; Kathleen Patneau; Shannon Nazworth

STAFF PRESENT: Shawna Novak, HHS Director; Joe Cone, HHS Assistant Director; Juliette Maronel, HHS Admin Coordinator; Katrina Tanner, HHS Contract Coordinator; Commissioner Sarah Arnold, BCC Liaison

VISITORS: Suzanne Clulow (Public Comment), Marion Blohm, Rose DiMuzio

Virtual- Nangy Pulsfus, Chynequa King, Sara Rutan, Kelly Franklin, Brian Robinson, Dawn Bell, Victoria Hapner, Valeria Duquette, Sandra Jackson, Schuyler Siefker, Maria Pagan

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Tara Haley called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. Quorum was not present.

MINUTES: Minutes cannot be approved since quorum is not present.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Tara Haley opened the floor for public comment. Suzanne Clulow then introduced herself, sharing her long-standing advocacy for attainable housing. A founding member and former treasurer of the Wildflower Clinic, she now volunteers as a mentor to help seniors navigate support systems. She thanked the community for its continued dedication and efforts.

REPORT FROM COMMISSIONER ARNOLD: Commissioner Sarah Arnold, speaking on behalf of herself and the county commissioners, expressed gratitude for the collective support for Joy during Tuesday's meeting. She highlighted Joy's commitment as a strong advocate for Health and Human Services.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Continuum of Care (CoC) Update from Victoria Hapner: CoC received their contingent draft contracted funding amount from DCF yesterday and began reviewing the figures. The proposed amount reflects a 13% decrease compared to the previous year. They are currently preparing a comprehensive report to illustrate funding trends over the years, highlighting that they have weathered more significant reductions in the past and continued to operate effectively. The report will be shared with the CoC groups soon.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. RFP Proposals (Katrina Tanner)

- Katrina announced that the application deadline was Friday, May 30. With the submittal phase now complete, the process has entered the evaluation phase, running from May 30 through June 27. During this time, the blackout protocol remains in effect.

2. Meeting Cancellation

- Shawna noted that June 19 is a holiday, and July 3 precedes another holiday. Tara mentioned that a follow-up email and public notice will be issued regarding the cancellation of both meetings.

3. CoC Point-In-Time Presentation (Victoria Hapner)

- The 2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count reported a total of 316 individuals, a noticeable decrease from the 431 counted in 2024—and the lowest total recorded between 2018 and 2025. Staff confirmed the data was rigorously reviewed, verified, and meets HUD guidelines.
 - i. After much deliberation, this year's count includes only those who were personally interviewed or whose identities were confirmed through known observations. Unknown observational data was intentionally excluded, in contrast to prior years where those figures were included.
 - ii. A review of their PIT methodology is now underway. Based on research by Victoria and Judy at SFH, they concluded that observations taken after dawn should not be included. As a result, a task force is being assembled to refine the reporting process, evaluate HUD requirements, and improve the accuracy and clarity of future submissions.
 - iii. During the discussion, Leslie Barstow noted that this year's count might be influenced by a recent law regarding public camping. She asked whether this legislation could have impacted on the numbers. Victoria responded that it's likely a contributing factor, citing feedback from individuals experiencing homelessness who were reluctant to participate in the count out of concern that doing so might expose them to legal consequences. A meeting with the St. Augustine Police Department and St. Johns Sheriff's Office is scheduled to further explore and address these concerns.
- In other updates, the City of St. Augustine is in the process of developing a day services drop-in center in the area. The first phase is planned to include amenities such as a pavilion, laundry facilities, and showers, as well as hosting Dining with Dignity. Phase Two aims to establish space for service providers to deliver medical, dental, and behavioral health services, along with other vital resources to better serve individuals in need.
 - i. Barry will be presenting an update on the drop-in center during the CoC general membership meeting on Wednesday at 9:45 AM at the Whetstone Building. This will be an opportunity to learn more and ask questions.
 - ii. When Shawna asked about operational funding for the center, it was noted that the city will cover basic facility costs such as utilities. However, they are actively seeking a partner organization to manage and deliver services on-site and exploring potential state appropriations to help support ongoing operations.
- **Sheltered/Unsheltered Count:** This year's count reflected a continued prevalence of unsheltered individuals, with numbers in the low 300s, while the sheltered population totaled nearly 200.
- **Chronic/Non-Chronic:** A total of 106 chronically homeless individuals and 210 non-chronic individuals were interviewed during this year's count. This breakdown continues a consistent pattern observed in past years regarding the disparity between the two groups. Notably, a decline in both categories was seen this year, which is viewed as a positive trend in overall homelessness reduction.
- **Various Demographic Counts:** This year's data showed increases across all demographic categories, as illustrated in comparative charts from 2024 and 2025. In 2024, the count recorded 16 veterans, 26 youth (ages 18–24), and 68 aging individuals. In 2025, those figures rose to 17 veterans, 39 youth, and 112 aging individuals. Additionally, 27 children (ages under 18) were reflected in the 2025 count—marking the first time children have been represented as a distinct category.
 - i. Tracy inquired about the inclusion of the child category this year and Victoria clarified that the 2025 data allowed for a more detailed breakdown, whereas previous years' datasets did not capture children separately. Victoria has requested access to the raw data from prior years for a more complete comparison because these numbers may be present in past counts but not properly reflected due to data limitations.
 - ii. There was particular interest in the sharp rise in aging individuals, with numbers nearly doubling from the previous year. This trend has been corroborated by stories and input from service providers, street outreach teams, and other community partners. Conversations with Community Solutions and other groups in different regions suggest this increase in elderly homelessness is occurring more frequently in Florida than in other areas.
 - 1. Victoria noted that many of these individuals are experiencing homelessness for the first time, often following a breakdown in personal relationships. The most common scenario involves a spouse passing away, which shifts households from two incomes to one, leaving

individuals unable to afford their previous living arrangements. An increasing number of seniors are now living in their cars, representing a deeply concerning and prevalent theme in the region.

- **Health Outcomes:** The breakdown of health outcomes this year remains consistent with patterns seen in previous years. Notably comparing 2024 to 2025, there was an increase in reported mental health conditions (49/65), special education (27/40), and physical health conditions (49/54), while instances of drug or alcohol dependency saw a decline (78/65). These trends reflect the continued impact of priority and outreach services targeted at individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Cause of Homelessness:** Most survey responses were due to financial breakdown at 25.6% and relationship breakdown at 28.7%. The remaining data is health reasons 11.6%, legal 7.3%, other 3.7%, and unknown/refused to answer 23.2%
- **Community Feedback:** Surveys collected from individuals experiencing homelessness identified several key barriers and areas for improvement in service delivery.
 - i. The need for affordable housing and low-income options was the most frequently stated concern, mentioned 97 times. Respondents also emphasized the importance of keeping families together and fostering a better understanding of addiction. Transportation emerged as a significant challenge, with many relying on bicycles to get around. While some areas are bike-friendly, much of the region is not—posing a major obstacle to access. Participants also expressed a desire for positivity, safe spaces, and encouragement from providers and the community. Additionally, there was strong interest in having a larger shelter or a multi-purpose community facility offering a broader range of resources. Many of these concerns are expected to be addressed with the completion of the upcoming drop-in center, which will expand access to essential services and support.
- PIT information is available on the CoC website. For any questions, feel free to contact Victoria directly.

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

1. Shawna, Joe, and HHS department managers Jenny, Michelle, and Tracy recently gave a presentation at the Citizen 101 Academy. The event was well received and regarded as a success, with strong interest and positive feedback from participants. Rose, who attended the current meeting, was one of the academy's participants and has since graduated from the sessions. The presentation provided an opportunity to showcase the meaningful and impactful work being done by HHS staff. The next session is scheduled for this fall during daytime hours, and enthusiasm continues to build—with a waitlist of approximately 100 individuals already eager to participate.
2. Shawna and Joe presented the department's two budgets on May 8th. As of now, no additional updates have been received. The only area flagged for potential cuts involved independent agencies, which may be impacted if a rollback rate is implemented.
3. The Commission recently gave consensus—alongside input from the Board, Joy, and other members of the administration—to begin planning for an official St. Johns County (SJC) Day. Inspired by similar initiatives in other counties, SJC Day would celebrate everything that makes the county exceptional. It presents a valuable opportunity to showcase local programs, services, and community spirit. Juliette will represent HHS on the planning team, and updates will be shared as the initiative takes shape.

Funded Agency Updates: Currently in the blackout period, so there are no updates.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

SMA Healthcare: Sandra didn't have any current updates.

Department of Health: Shane Lockwood was unavailable and did not provide an update.

UF Health St. Johns: Victoria noted Paige is out of office and they don't have any updates at this time.

Public Safety: No representative present.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The June 19th Executive Meeting and July 3rd General Meeting will be cancelled. The next General Meeting is scheduled for August 7th, 2025, at 4:00 PM at the Health & Human Services Center, Kingfisher Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084, and via Microsoft Teams.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting was adjourned at 4:26pm