

**ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL (HHSAC)**  
**GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**  
January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tara Haley, Chair; Howard Hitzel, Vice Chair; Kathleen Patneau

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Shannon Nazworth; Deanna Jones; Leslie Barstow; Chip Cover

**STAFF PRESENT:** Shawna Novak, HHS Director; Joe Cone, HHS Assistant Director; Juliette Maronel, HHS Admin Coordinator; Katrina Tanner, HHS Contract Coordinator; Tracy Dillon, Social Services Manager

**VISITORS:** Marion Blohm, Lana Sample, Kenice Taylor  
**Virtual-** Suzanne Clulow, Anita Daniel, Brittany Spangler, Brian Robinson, Nangela Pulsfus, Chynequa King, Judy Dembrowski, Tara Wildes, Kelly Franklin, Candace Ray, Dennis Maneja, Dawn Bell, Michelle Colee, Taylor Hodges, Lori Vogel, Sara Rutan, Nangela Pulsfus, Candace Ray

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:** Tara Haley called the meeting to order at 4:01pm. Quorum was not present.

**MINUTES:** Quorum was not present so the minutes will be reviewed and approved at the next General meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Tara Haley opened the floor for public comment, and no comments were offered.

**REPORT FROM COMMISSIONER ARNOLD:** Commissioner Sarah Arnold was not present.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Continuum of Care (CoC) Update: Anita Daniel

- NOFO-related litigation between HUD and several states/National Alliance to End Homelessness is ongoing, leaving the process at a standstill. Both sides have requested a quick judicial decision, anticipated in February. Until then, NOFO activities remain paused, though preparation continues for a new NOFO expected to include major changes. Key proposed shifts include moving emphasis from permanent supportive housing to transitional housing and reducing the renewal cap from 90% to 10% to increase competitiveness and diversify funded programs.
- The Point-In-Time Count is not being widely publicized due to delayed HUD guidance, though HUD has since advised continuing with last year's approach. A few improvements are being implemented, including a more targeted strategy, stronger coordination with law enforcement, and the use of more experienced volunteers. These changes aim to improve accuracy and significantly reduce the number of observations-only surveys by prioritizing volunteers who can directly engage with individuals and gather needed information. The PIT count is scheduled for January 27<sup>th</sup>, with results planned for presentation at the CoC annual meeting in May.

## **NEW BUSINESS:** Overview of Independent Agency On-Site Monitoring:

Shawna Novak provided an update on the recent on-site compliance monitoring conducted November 18<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> by the HHS QA staff, with Katrina Tanner attending one scheduled visit. Eight agencies and fifteen programs were reviewed for adherence to funding agreements and achievement of performance outcomes. HHS QA staff noted strong cooperation from agencies during the process.

- **Summary of Findings:**

- **Invoicing:** No significant findings- most agencies submitted invoices/payments on time with no more than one late invoice and funds expended in compliance with contractual requirements.
- **Performance Measures:** No significant findings- agencies generally achieved most performance measures in compliance with contractual obligations.
- **Quarterly Reporting:** Some findings- most agencies submitted reports on time, with one agency missing deadlines, though many agencies did not include required supporting documentation.
- **eCivis Research:** Some findings- most agencies met the research requirements, but some missed one or more required monthly submissions.
- **HHSAC Attendance:** Some findings- most agencies attended regularly, but some agencies missed more than one meeting.

- **Strengths Identified:**

- Consistently submitting monthly invoices
- Appropriate expenditure of funds
- Majority of performance measures achieved
- All but one agency submitted quarterly report exhibits on time

- **Areas for Improvement:**

- Submit quarterly reports by required deadlines
- Include supporting documentation for quarterly data
- Complete monthly eCivis research
- Attend all HHSAC monthly meetings

Katrina noted that FY24 data was used for this review, and agencies have already shown improvements in FY25, which will be reflected in future RFP scoring for FY27.

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

- Shawna Novak thanked the agencies that participated in the needs assessment conducted by Syra Health. The assessment is approximately 65% complete, with over 900 citizen survey responses and 18 nonprofit responses received. The final report is expected in April. Shawna also noted that all agencies will be required to submit an RFP in May, as there will be no carry-forward funding. Additional organizations may also apply and compete for available funds.

## **FUNDED AGENCY UPDATES:**

**Early Learning Coalition (ELC):** Brittany Spangler (ECS4Kids) reported that Florida has not been affected by the federal childcare funding freeze and operations remain normal. The state has received guidance on required verification and is working with Health and Human Services to provide the necessary information. Brittany noted that January 1<sup>st</sup> marked the opening of VPK enrollment for the 2025–2026 program year. All Florida children who turn four on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> are eligible, regardless of income. ELC is also actively enrolling families in the

School Readiness program and sending weekly funding notices. Agencies were encouraged to refer families who may need childcare assistance.

Betty Griffin Center (BGC): Kelly Franklin reported that in December, BGC answered 124 helpline calls and served 291 individuals- 203 adults and 88 children- with 77 of those individuals staying in the emergency shelter. BGC also supported 98 families through the Adopt-a-Family program, providing holiday gifts through community donors.

St. Augustine Youth Services (SAYS): Dennis Maneja reported that all programs are performing well. In December, the MRT program completed 31 assessments with an 87% diversion rate from Baker Act placement. The CAT team served 36 families and had 5 successful discharges. December was also busy with outreach efforts, including providing meals and gifts to the kids and families they serve. MRT held a joint luncheon with EPIC's co-responder program to strengthen community collaboration. Dennis also announced the groundbreaking ceremony for the Independent Village on January 28<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm and all were invited to attend.

Council on Aging (COA): Brian Robinson reported the 2025 program numbers- across their six senior centers, 2,271 individuals participated, and four of the centers served a total of 31,156 meals. The Independent Living Services Department case-managed 205 clients and assisted 449 individuals through the Care Connection Department, which included installing grab bars, yard work, and building 16 new handicap ramps. The Prescription Drug Assistance Program served 277 seniors, saving an estimated 3.1 million dollars in medication costs. At the Sunshine Center adult day care, 59 seniors attended and 572 caregivers participated in the Caregiver Support Program. The Integrated Memory Enhancement Program had 122 participants. For the Home Delivered Meals Program, 365 seniors received a total of 43,673 meals. Overall, COA served 4,336 seniors in 2025.

St. Francis House (SFH): Judy Dembowski reported that in calendar year 2025, SFH served 968 individuals through shelter, outreach, day drop-in services, and meals. The clients who accessed shelter programs, 48% exited permanent housing which is well above the national average of 32%. She recognized staff for their strong performance despite current economic and housing challenges. Lastly, she noted that Council members will receive invitations to visit SFH through the "Get on the Bus" and Lunch-and-Learn events, which alternate monthly. These include breakfast at the Limelight Theatre with a tour of St. Francis House, or a lunch and tour of Port in the Storm.

Emergency Services & Homeless Coalition (ESHHC): Marion Bluhm reported that the women's sober house is currently empty, but a family will be moving in on Monday, bringing the campus to full occupancy. Surveyors were recently onsite near the location of the upcoming new office, and the team is also making repairs in the pantry in preparation for another house expected to become available in the next 6-8 months. Marion mentioned looking forward to participating in the PIT count this month.

Epic Behavioral Healthcare: Nangela Pulsfus reported that EPIC served more than 7,000 clients in the community. The newly implemented warm-handoff program has significantly improved continuity of care after inpatient stays, increasing follow-through from about 20% to 60% and reducing recidivism and relapse. EPIC is launching a second co-responder team in partnership with Director Wildes and the sheriff's office. The current team responded to over 700 calls last year and diverted 18 unnecessary Baker Acts or incarcerations. The team also provided care coordination, organized donations such as washers and refrigerators, and secured over 100 door-alarm sensors to help prevent elopement among individuals living with Alzheimer's. The Second Wind Village has opened, with 8 units in total-3 currently filled- and interviews underway for the remaining units. Tara Haley added that she hears firsthand about the team's strong work through a master-level counseling intern she supervises who is placed at EPIC on weekends.

Good Samaritan/Wildflower Clinic: Chynequa King reported that the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new West Augustine Medical Center is scheduled for Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. The space will be shared with EPIC Behavioral Health, and Wildflower will offer medical services at that location. Two new dentists have been added to the clinic, beginning January 19<sup>th</sup>, providing an additional 16 hours of dental coverage. The Herbert Street "Home Clinic" will

continue offering dental services and every Wednesday pre-natal/ women's health appointments are available. The organization is also currently in the middle of its annual campaign.

### **COMMUNITY PARTNERS:**

SMA Healthcare: No representative present.

Department of Health: Kenice Taylor reported on a successful joint training event held in partnership with SJC Health & Human Services and the SJC Housing & Community Development program. The training focused on team building, customer service, and improving warm handoffs by walking through six client-experience scenarios. Approximately 70 staff participated, and confidence levels in navigating clients between departments increased from 21% to 75%. Staff shared positive feedback, and the Department plans to repeat and expand the training next year by including additional external programs to further strengthen resources and support.

UF Health St. Johns: No representative present.

Public Safety: Director Wildes added to EPIC's earlier update, noting that diversions from Baker Acts and jail placements resulted in an estimated \$200,000 in cost savings last year, though the true impact is likely higher. The department is working on standardizing how these savings are measured. A new case management software system funded through an LFS grant has been purchased and is awaiting implementation. The co-responder unit will be moved to the Criminal Investigative Division to collaborate more closely with the school threat-assessment team. Commander Bill Worley brings extensive experience and passion for mental health initiatives and will oversee the unit.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

The next General Meeting is scheduled for February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 4:00pm via Microsoft Teams and in person at the Health & Human Services Kingfisher Conference Room, 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

**ADJOURNMENT**: Meeting adjourned at 4:37pm