



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees: Department of Children and Families - Asta Trinh, Jessica Durant, Valoria Thomas, Agency for Health Care Administration - Devona Pickle; Broward Behavioral Health Coalition - Danica Mamby; Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network - Jill Sorenson; School District Palm Beach County - Mary Claire Mucenic; Health Care District of PBC - Max Sonnenschein; New Horizons of the Treasure Coast - Veronica Wade, Margaret Wynter; NAMI Broward County/ Florida Mental Health Advocacy Coalition – Gayle Giese; HCA Florida Woodmont Hospital – Nelson Rivera, Magaret DeCambre Borges; Larkin Community Hospital- Debbie Acevedo; Port St. Lucie Hospital – Jay Bumgarner; Henderson Behavioral Health - Diane Sasser, Lee Greenstein, Alice Bouhadir, Laurie McKeefry, Mayra Reiner, Heather Pennington; Broward County Public Schools – Shedrick Dukes, Jayme Fuentes; ChildNet - Larry Rein; Communities Connected for Kids - Melanie Kranker; Office of the Public Defender - C17 Melinda Blostein; Rebel Recovery - Nancy McConnell; Alpert Jewish Family Services- Elaine Rotenberg, Marc Hopin; Florida Department of Education - Connie Reece; Port St. Lucie PD – Bret LaGrejo; South Florida Wellness Network - Susan Nyamora, Sandra Reyes; Delray Medical Center/Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office - Jeff Lefton; PBC Youth Services Dept - Elisa Cramer; CMS/Sunshine Health- Pamela Stierwalt; Community Care Plan - Alyssa George; Archways – Melissa Reesor Martin; St. Lucie Public Schools – Stacey Cason; Weber MH, P.A. – Laurie Weber; PEACE – Megan Sease, Sherry Miller; 1st UUPB – Rev. Latifah Griffin; Mandala – Alexis Altier; Drug Abuse Treatment Association (DATA) – Carol Fiddis; Recovery Coach – Inez Camacho; Telfort Lournicha

I. CALL TO ORDER

Valoria Thomas called to order the Regional Behavioral Health Interagency May Meeting at 11:02 a.m. on Tuesday, May 13th, 2025.

II. WELCOME

Jessica Durant, Regional Director, welcomed attendees. The following individuals provided introductions:

Jessica Durant, Regional SAMH Director, Department of Children and Families



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

Valoria Thomas, Regional Collaboration Coordinator, Department of Children and Families

Asta Trinh, Chief of Regional Operations and Initiatives, Department of Children and Families

Devona Pickle, Bureau Chief, Agency for Health Care Administration

III. PRESENTATION- OVERVIEW OF SAMH

PowerPoint presentation was provided by Valoria Thomas, highlighting the Department's goals, strategies, and initiatives. An overview of the Managing Entities service array, SAMH program office duties, and funding sources was provided. Data and resources such as the Baker Act Dashboard, Department public inquiry system, and Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Statewide Switchboard were shared.

Dr. Rotenburg and Marc Hopin, Alpert Jewish Family Services, requested any data analysis or information to explain the decrease in the Baker Act data overview. In addition, clarification was requested on a discrepancy in the fiscal year data totals.

Asta Trinh and Jessica Durant, DCF SAMH, discussed annual and triennial reports available to the public on this topic, including Managing Entity Needs Assessment and the Behavioral Health Gap Analysis prepared by Ernst and Young (EY) earlier this year. Asta Trinh also referenced the increase in the number of Mobile Response Teams.

Rev. Griffin, PEACE, inquired about the funding at the federal level and impact to those funding sources briefly discussed during the presentation.

Asta Trinh, DCF SAMH, confirmed the Department is working with the Managing Entities to ensure they are made whole. The schedule of funds is still pending.

Jill Sorensen, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network, emphasized the downward trend they have seen in Okeechobee and other counties. Also, data and observation show an increase in the level of acuity amongst children, and likely amongst adults as well.

Jessica Durant, DCF SAMH, stated the data is based on data submitted to the Baker Act Reporting Center by designated receiving facilities. This is statutorily required. Jessica Durant will follow-up with designated receiving facilities in Southeast region to discuss Baker Act Data Collection System and Baker Act Dashboard.

Melinda Blostein discussed the increase in arrests and individuals in jail under a Baker Act or commitment to state hospital pending transfer, further stating there may be a correlation with the data shared.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

Asta Trinh briefly discussed the number of individuals pending return for Broward County, as this has an impact on bed availability.

Jill Sorenson, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network, explained this is not a new issue and there is a need for law enforcement data.

Alexis Altier, Mandala, shared concerns regarding an increase in the number of Baker Acts completed by residential staff and whether those are being captured in the dashboard.

IV. PRESENTATION- OVERVIEW OF AHCA

PowerPoint presentation was provided by Devona Pickle, on behalf of Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), highlighting the Florida Medicaid Program, Medicaid Covered Services, and high-level overview of Fee-for-service and Florida Statewide Medicaid Managed Care. In addition, information was provided on how to file a complaint online or through the Medicaid Helpline.

Lee Greenstein, Henderson Behavioral Health, inquired if AHCA would be open to reinitiating the quarterly meetings held by AHCA and the health plans. Multiple attendees were in support and requested additional information.

Devona Pickle, AHCA, offered to discuss further. Jessica Durant to follow-up with Devona Pickle for further discussion.

Danica Mamby, Broward Behavioral Health Coalition, discussed the Annual LMH Meeting facilitated by BBHC and shared the challenges reported by those in attendance, of which included licensure delays, and concerns as to social security, staffing, and the overall impact on funding. Shared law enforcement report increases in individuals experiencing homelessness due to delay in benefits. As a result, providers are having to use Managing Entity funds to assist with stabilization.

Danica Mamby, Broward Behavioral Health Coalition, inquired about rate increase for Behavioral Analysts.

Devona Pickle, AHCA, will share concerns related to licensure with Kim Smokes. As to the increase in rates, no current update or information. Will need to wait and see the budget.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

Jessica Durant, DCF SAMH, requested Danica share a copy of the Annual LMH Meeting notes and concerns in writing with the program office for follow-up with Devona Pickle. Summary of items include delays in application, appeals, and appointments.

V. REVIEW OF SURVEY DATA

Valoria Thomas transitioned to PowerPoint presentation with review of surveys completed following the kick-off meeting in February and the next steps survey completed in March. A statewide and regional summary of participation outcomes and future topic ideas were shared. Based on the survey responses in the Southeast region, the top three identified needs were forensics, funding restrictions, and peer support services. Valoria emphasized why this information matters, and the need for increased participation to effectuate real change.

Recommendations will be presented to the commission to aid in identifying opportunities for enhancement within the behavioral health system of care. DCF will begin to collect updated needs assessments and GAP analyses from partner organizations. Valoria encouraged attendees share their agency reports or assessments with the Department and meeting participants. Input at the regional level will ensure that local needs are represented and addressed in our planning efforts.

Megan, PEACE, requested clarification as to the Southeast Region being the only region with two Managing Entities.

Asta Trinh, DCF SAMH, shared that in other regions there is overlap amongst the Managing Entities. Southeast Region Managing Entities do not overlap with any other regional program office.

With no other comments on the review of survey data, Asta Trinh shared the quarterly meetings will remain regionally based but there will be room for growth and breakout meetings in the future. The Department must first assess where we are, what we have, and the direction of future meetings following this first year and annual report due to the Commission.

VI. GROUP DISCUSSION

Valoria Thomas transitioned to group discussion, starting with a refresher on the four focus areas identified by the Statewide Commission's 2024 report and shared during the February kick-off meeting. Participants were encouraged to utilize this portion of the meeting to work together to identify group priorities within the four categories outlined by the Commission.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

In support of the four focus areas, attendees provided responses to the following questions:

1. Where do we see gaps in collaboration between agencies, and what's getting in the way?

Veronica Wade, New Horizons of the Treasure Coast, discussed recent concerns with engaging local law enforcement and shared her praise for the collaboratives and the opportunity to address these gaps.

Asta Trinh, DCF SAMH, shared they are in the process of scheduling meetings with local law enforcement and County Sheriffs to discuss the Department's role and what they have to offer. They will start with the County Sheriffs and Ms. Trinh requested feedback on any topics or areas of concern please be shared so that they may be discussed further during those individual meetings.

Alexis Altier, Mandala, shared a lack of resources specifically for the geriatric population and unfunded individuals experiencing homelessness. Went on to share information on a hotel in Okeechobee that the County was converting for use by this population but was recently notified that it was no longer an option.

Nancy McConnel, Rebel Recovery, stated one contributing factor is the County has enacted laws directly impacting people experiencing homelessness. People are being arrested and released back to the street, only to be rearrested and the cycle continues to repeat.

Melissa Reesor Martin, Archways, identified a gap in education amongst agencies, understanding the systems of care, and types of residential that may be utilized to divert from state hospital. Recommended DCF and those in attendance create or share resources and training opportunities.

Asta Trinh, DCF SAMH, shared information on the Community Liaison Team and trainings/presentations offered such as the Alternative Placements presentation. Flyer on available sessions will be shared following this meeting.

Elisa Cramer, PBC Youth Services Dept, provided follow-up and offered to share recent legislation that addresses public sleeping overnight, County response, and additional resources for those experiencing homelessness. Ms. Cramer also confirmed the Board of County Commissioners voted to utilize a former hotel in Palm Beach County as housing and support for veterans and seniors; additional information will be shared for distribution.

Asta Trinh, DCF SAMH, shared the August meeting will include a presentation by the Homeless Coalition.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

Margaret de Cambre Borges, HCA Florida Woodmont Hospital, inquired about the CAR-4 beds and requested an update on availability. Participants confirmed the beds are currently full, further indicating a need for additional beds.

2. What supports or resources are needed to better align law enforcement, hospitals, and behavioral health providers during a crisis?

Dr. Nelson Rivera, HCA Florida Woodmont, stated that Woodmont has a voluntary unit with beds available. Although patients may be Baker Acted, once the Baker Act is lifted and they are transferred to voluntary status, they would be able to be admitted to Woodmont. Helpful for other facilities to be aware.

Margaret Wynter, New Horizons of the Treasure Coast, emphasized services such as care coordination and wrap around to bridge gaps and to better assist individuals coming into the system. Increase in successful follow-up and continuity of care.

Mayra Reimer, Henderson Behavioral Health, shared a need for increased communication and sharing of information amongst providers. Currently no mechanism but if facilities, including private facilities, were able to share or confirm whether an individual is already linked with a provider or could locate individuals in the continuum of care, this would address a gap and enhance efforts.

Melinda Blostein, Office of the Public Defender (Circuit 17), emphasized the importance of having local law enforcement presence in meetings. Shared concerns regarding receiving facilities not filing petitions for state hospital, individuals being arrested while on a unit at a Baker Act receiving facility, and laws in Broward County impacting those experiencing homelessness.

Gayle Giese, NAMI Broward County, spoke in support of data collection and tracking. Further stated 988 offers tremendous promise but emphasized funding for the call centers and ensure their database is up to date. Ms. Giese expressed the need to involve families and other advocates, ensure individuals and staff are utilizing forms that would allow the parent or advocate to participate in their care.

Nancy McConnell, Rebel Recovery, shared the need to eliminate silos and need for a system that all can access. Identified gap in Palm Beach County, individuals with persistent mental illness are released from the hospital or jail with a prescription but lack support with filling their prescription or they do not have a safe place to keep it.

3. What data are we currently collecting — and how confident are we in its accuracy and usefulness?

Melanie Kranker, Communities Connected for Kids, agency currently collects data on psychotropic medication prescribed to children. Finding information is not accurately entered into FSFN or caregivers are not sharing that information with their case managers, difficult to ensure accurate report out. Continuing to work on this and how to obtain this information from Medicaid plan, caregivers, and facilities.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

Lee Greenstein, Henderson Behavioral Health, identified a need for innovative systems that talk to each other because although there are multiple data systems, none of the available systems help benefit care coordination.

4. How could we reallocate existing resources for greater impact and/or what challenges do providers face in accessing or managing behavioral health funds?

Broward County care coordination teams are being used as a stop gap measure for housing due to the lack of funding available for housing. Identifiable need for additional housing and residential treatment, sharing available options, which would in turn allow those interventions and services to be utilized appropriately.

Mayra Reimer, Henderson Behavioral Health, in support of the need for additional housing, discussed the impact on the Managing Entity, the increase in difficulty and use of dollars to address those gaps and additional stressors. Need to focus on affordable housing or affordable alternatives for those individuals because all resources are going to housing.

Jill Sorensen, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network, discussed the challenges with Florida Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) clients and the transition to Medicaid. The Managing Entity must ensure there are enough dollars to support those needs that Medicaid does not cover.

Jeff Lefton, Delray Medical Center/PBSO, shared that the Health Care District of Palm Beach County received \$10 million from the County Commission for the construction of a \$60 million dollar project for single point of access to the behavioral health acute care system. Mr. Lefton recommended since we already have Baker Act Receiving Facilities that provide this service, could that \$60 million in funding be spent more affectively. At a minimum, could the Baker Act receiving facilities be a part of the discussion about how the acute care system currently operates and what modifications could be put into place to assist in making it more efficient. In addition, those funds could possibly be used to create and/or supplement programs and services that would reduce the need for deeper end services.

Melanie Kranker, Communities Connected for Kids, discussed funding used to support a child in care and the significant amount of dollars that are being used for high utilizer children that foster homes will not accept, furthering the support and need for housing.

Jill Sorensen, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network, requested an update from AHCA on Mobile Response Team (MRT) as a covered service. Jill also inquired amongst those in attendance, if they anticipate any barriers.

Lee Greenstein and Diane Sasser, Henderson Behavioral Health, responded with significant concerns regarding MRT as a covered service, citing difficulty in predicting availability, staffing, and reimbursement. General concerns with billing in real time, typically in a crisis environment.

Jill Sorensen, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network, recommended AHCA provide a presentation on the new MMA plan and/or recent changes to plans in the Southeast region.

Asta Trinh, DCF SAMH, confirmed the plans are invited and encouraged to participate in quarterly meetings. AHCA and the MMA plans will be afforded the opportunity to present in



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

the future but due to time constraints alternative options may be explored such as lunch and learns.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

May 13th, 2025, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Palm Beach County Library – Canyon Branch

8915 Senator Joe Abruzzo Ave., Boynton Beach, Florida 33472

Veronica Wade, New Horizons of the Treasure Coast, requested assistance with access to the Baker Act Data Collection System. Jessica Durant to follow-up.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Multiple parties expressed an interest in extending meeting time or allotting time before/after for networking at future in-person quarterly meetings.

Jessica Durant to follow-up with individual parties regarding outstanding items or concerns and encouraged all participants to complete the survey.

No further comments.

VIII. CLOSING REMARKS

Asta Trinh, DCF SAMH, shared the next two meetings will be held virtually but the first quarterly meeting to be held in 2026 will be held in-person and in Broward County. A permanent virtual or hybrid option is not currently available and would require approval by executive leadership. Location will be a question on the survey, further encouraging input and survey responses as this will dictate future meetings.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Valoria Thomas adjourned the Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Quarterly Meeting at 1:00 p.m. on May 13th, 2025.