



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance: Total 80

Hosts/Facilitators: Department of Children and Families – Valoria Thomas, Regional Operations Analyst; Jessica Durant, Regional Operations Manager; Idell Gayman, Regional Operations Supervisor

Presenter: Leeanne Sacino, Executive Director of Florida Coalition to End Homelessness

Full Attendee List is Provided in Appendix A

I. CALL TO ORDER

Valoria Thomas called to order the second quarterly Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration Meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, August 15th, 2025.

II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jessica Durant, Southeast Regional Operations Manager, welcomed attendees. The following individuals provided introductions:

Valoria Thomas, Regional Operations Analyst, Department of Children and Families

Idell Gayman, Regional Operations Supervisor, Department of Children and Families

Leeanne Sacino, Executive Director, Florida Coalition to End Homelessness

III. PRESENTATION – FLORIDA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS

PowerPoint presentation was provided by Leeanne Sacino, Executive Director of Florida Coalition to End Homelessness, on The Homeless Response System. The mission of the Florida Coalition to End Homelessness is to work collaboratively to prevent and end homelessness in Florida through advocacy and education.

An overview was provided on the Homeless Continuums of Care (CoC), coordinated entry system, Homeless Crisis Response System, and state and federal initiatives. In addition to,



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

homelessness in Florida and advocating for your clients. Data and how to access resources were shared, including information on the CoC network. A homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates services to address homelessness were shared.

Suzanne Rodriguez, Baptist Health South Florida, inquired about obtaining identification (ID) for individuals experiencing homelessness and, in a shelter, sharing concerns regarding access to services without an ID.

Leeanne Sacino, Florida Coalition to End Homelessness, responded to Ms. Rodriguez stating that they may contact the CoC in their region to obtain information and resources.

Idell Gayman, DCF, also shared if an individual is receiving food assistance and/or Medicaid, individuals may provide a copy of their award letter to the FLHSMV and request a Florida ID card at no cost.

Kristen Guerrise, National Youth Advocate Program, requested information on CoC contact sheet for each region. Florida Coalition to End Homelessness | CoC site link was shared via chat for all to access.

Silvia Quintana, Broward Behavioral Health Coalition, shared concerns regarding the gap between HUD housing prioritization and service availability and further inquired about where to house individuals to receive wraparound services.

Leeanne Sacino, Florida Coalition to End Homelessness, responded to Quintana stating there are other resources such as the Challenge Grant which can be utilized for this issue. Sacino went on to share that this is an identified gap and is a federal administration priority.

Marc Hopin, Alpert Jewish Family Service, inquired as to how Florida will address House Bill 1365 and persons being hospitalized. Sacino stated the changes to the Baker Act have been enacted but hospitalization is not a permanent solution, there are concerns with limited resources, especially in rural areas, and Sacino went on to say it remains a housing issue inevitably.

Leeanne Sacino, Florida Coalition to End Homelessness, shared each of the CoC has their own assessment tool, with the majority utilizing the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). There are communities that have chosen to move away from utilizing this tool or they have changed the wording.

Laurie Gerhard, LAB, asked if the team has considered refurbishing malls that have closed to create housing.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

In response, Sacino stated they are exploring hotel/motel refurbishing to address this barrier. Sacino went on to share that following HB1365, there has been push back from communities with shelters being denied but CoC's have implemented mobile shelter buses as a work around.

Idell Gayman, DCF, inquired as to any suggestions or resources to overcome the stigma regarding people experiencing homelessness and how they are treated.

Leeanne Sacino, Florida Coalition to End Homelessness, stated there is a dramatic production/play currently on display in Orlando which illustrates and addresses this topic. The play explores the reactions of neighbors to a person experiencing homelessness sitting on a park bench, highlighting the importance of treating the unhoused as human beings.

IV. SUCCESS STORIES

Jessica Durant and Valoria Thomas shared several success stories shared with DCF by Broward Behavioral Health Coalition (BBHC) and Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network (SEFBHN), their network service providers, and individuals in our community. Ms. Durant thanked those that shared with us and went on to state that DCF hopes to incorporate success stories in future regional collaboratives. Success stories shared during the August regional collaborative for the Southeast Region were as follows:

- Jacob's story was featured on [Forever Families](#) highlighting the Young Adult Transition Program. Gulf Coast JFCS Life Coaches supported his recovery and return to school to study music production. Now, Jacob maintains his mental wellness, engages in Youth MOVE Broward and other young adult events, and shares his music as part of his recovery.
- A co-responder success story shared by BBHC/South Florida Wellness Network. On December 31, 2024, a disoriented military veteran was compassionately assisted by two Fort Lauderdale police officers. Using the co-responder model, they connected him with Scott from South Florida Wellness Network, leading to urgent medical care and behavioral health services through Henderson Behavioral Health.
- Paul came to Mental Health America (MHA) of the Palm Beaches seeking purpose and connection, and through the Fern Street Clubhouse—supported by SEFBHN—he found both. The Clubhouse's work-ordered day model empowered him to develop skills, strengthen social connections, and take concrete steps toward independence, improved mental health, and employment.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

- The final success story was in support of Rebel Recovery and their Medication-Assisted Peer Support Program (MAPS). A MAPS participant, previously in and out of jail and prison, showed significant growth and maturity and upon her last release, she recognized she wasn't ready for recovery—until this time, when she reached a turning point, feeling "sick and tired of being sick and tired." She embraced change through the program, learning tools like journaling, self-reflection, and WRAP techniques to sustain recovery. After graduating, she became a Peer Mentor, now leading a step study group through Step 4.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION

a. In what ways can we involve people with lived experience in shaping collaborative strategies?

Alexandra Bembanaste, Fellowship House, recommended advocacy meetings or specific meetings on this topic, as well as handing out surveys to clients.

Kristen Guerrise, National Youth Advocate Program, suggested board representation.

Margaret eCambre Borges, HCA Woodmont, shared at Woodmont they have outpatient clients that have already graduated who would be very interested and asked to be contacted directly to assist.

Connie Ridgeley, His House Children's Home, recommending forming an alumni group for those who have successfully been through programs.

b. What opportunities exist to expand collaboration into underserved or rural areas?

Connie Ridgeley, His House Children's Home, recommended utilizing inroads to schools as a potential location or opportunity to get information on what is available to the public.

Laurie Gerhard, LAB, suggested mental health care in the public health department(s), collaboration between DCF and DOH.

Jill Sorensen, SEFBHN, recommended partnering with primary care.

Jennifer Robinson, DCF, shared information on Peer-Led Storytelling Platforms. Create safe spaces like panels, community events, or digital story archives where people with lived experience can share how they overcame challenges. Frame stories around resilience and growth, not just struggles.

Laurinda Andujar, Heal the City Inc., stated the public library system offers community events and is a great place to start.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

Renee Dimond, Boca Raton Regional Hospital, inquired as to whether there are mobile care vans/vehicles to go to where the people are located.

Allison Bruchwalski, Fort Lauderdale Behavioral Health, responded to Dimond by sharing the Rotary Connection, a free bus service launched by the Rotary Club of Fort Lauderdale which connects individuals experiencing homelessness with essential services.

Jessica Durant, DCF, offered to expand on this topic offline by contacting local facilities and providers to inquire about the availability/information on mobile care vans/vehicles available in the Southeast Region.

c. What existing partnerships have been the most impactful in supporting behavioral health outcomes in our region?

Melanie Kranker, Communities Connected to Kids, shared in Circuit 19 there is a supervisor's system meeting where agencies come together bi-monthly to discuss gaps, strengths, waitlists and new programs. Jill Sorensen shared that the same is offered in Circuit 15 as well.

Jessica Durant, DCF, shared information on the local community courts offered in the Southeast region as an example of an impactful and existing partnership where individuals can connect with multiple agencies.

Allison Bruchwalski, Fort Lauderdale Behavioral Health, expressed a need for receiving facilities and law enforcement to bring back a regular connection in Broward County. Recommended a monthly or recurring meeting to speak about current practices, successes, challenges or barriers.

Gayle Giese, FLMHAC/NAMI, stated she would like to see partnerships with Baker Act receiving facilities that include peers, family members and other supports to work with discharge planning staff so a viable treatment plan with support is developed so we do not lose people upon release from the facility.

Jessica Durant, DCF, shared training on Baker Act offered by FADAA in collaboration with DCF. The training has been updated to include legislative changes and available to the public.

d. What training or joint professional development would strengthen our ability to work together?

Laurinda Andujar, Heal the City Inc., recommended Grief Recovery training and Isis Williams suggested Continued Trauma-Informed training and system collaboration meetings.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

Renee Dimond, Boca Raton Regional Hospital, requested information on any social media groups or sites that offer known resources and whether there is an option to ask questions in real time.

Jessica Durant, DCF, shared the DCF site where you can utilize the get help feature and search by county for mental health and substance use resources, in addition to the provider locator located on each of the Managing Entities sites. The inquiry system and Southeast Region team inbox was shared as an option to submit questions in real time.

Jill Sorensen, SEFBHN, emphasized the importance of Language Matters for cross-agency collaboration, in addition to ROSC/wraparound principal alignment.

e. How do we ensure all agency voices (large and small) are represented and engaged in collaborative efforts?

Jennifer Robinson, DCF, stated treat people with lived experience as subject-matter experts on their own experiences, not just as "testimonies. Celebrate contributions from small agencies and people with lived experience equally in public forums and written reports.

Isis Williams, DCF, emphasized the importance of inviting all agencies to the table and engagement during system meetings, in addition to utilizing email surveys, and public café or forum sessions in the community.

VI. FUTURE COLLABORATIVES

Valoria Thomas transitioned to a brief presentation on future collaboratives, which included an overview of the first quarterly regional participation outcomes. In addition to and based on survey data from the May Meeting, DCF shared statewide top priorities, statewide identified resources and supports needed, statewide lunch and learns, and meeting location preferences.

A brief summary on the Lunch and Learn series was provided, including information on their first presenter Bikers Against Child Abuse and closed out with sharing the October Lunch and Learn will feature Jay Reeve, CEO of Apalachee Center.

Statewide responses regarding future meeting locations for the collaborative were shared and DCF went on to state that they are currently exploring the best location for 2026 and will announce their decision during the November 2025 meeting.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Silvia Quintana, BBHC, requested guidance from DCF on federal executive orders that impact the behavioral health system of care and the Managing Entities as it relates to the use of funds and immigration.

Laurinda Andujar, Heal the City Inc., shared information on an upcoming event in Hollywood, Florida on suicide prevention and mental health awareness. The event will feature poets, musicians, artists, and presenters and all are welcome. DCF will collect event information and share with the group in follow-up email.

Jessica Durant, DCF, to follow-up with individual parties regarding outstanding items or concerns and encouraged all participants to contact their local SAMH program office designate staff with any questions, concerns, or opportunities to further collaborate. No further comments.

VIII. CLOSING REMARKS

Jessica Durant and Valoria Thomas thanked attendees for their valuable feedback and engagement during the meeting.

To promote open communication and future collaboration, a direct line of communication for any follow-up questions or input was shared, including the SER inbox SER.SAMH.Support@myflfamilies.com and contact information for the Southeast Regional Operations Manager. Additionally, Ms. Durant encouraged attendees to add her to any meetings that may help our work and in support of this initiative.

Lastly, Ms. Durant shared the next scheduled quarterly meeting for Southeast Region will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams on November 12th, 2025, with FAR notice and invite to register to be shared with further details.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Jessica Durant adjourned the second quarterly Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration Meeting at 11:08 a.m. on August 15th, 2025.



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

APPENDIX A

Alexandra	Bembanaste	Fellowship House
Alfonso	Starling	Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office
Allison	Bruchwalski	Fort Lauderdale Behavioral Health Center
Alyssa	George	Community Care Plan
Andrew	Wilson	DCF SAMH
Barbara	Moody	Rtelifelife Services, Inc
Carol	Fiddis	Drug Abuse Treatment Association, Inc
Christina	Eubanks-Camp	Henderson Behavioral Health
Cindy	Arenberg Seltzer	CSC of Broward County
Clara	Alevy	agency for Persons with Disabilities
Connie	Ridgeley	His House Children's Home
Connie	Reece	SEDNET
Corbette	Stafford	Department of Juvenile Justice
Danica	Mamby	Broward Behavioral Health Coalition, Inc.
Dawn	Liberta	Health Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Broward County
Dawn	Mitchell	Foot Print Success Clubhouse
Dennis	Miles	Children's Home Society
Desiree	Rodriguez	Community Care Plan
Diana	Born	Children's Home Society of Florida
Diane	Sasser	Henderson Behavioral Health
Dr. Brandy	Pidermann	Changing Tides Therapy/Children's Harbor
Elaine	Rotenberg	Alpert Jewish Family Service
Elizabeth	Lombardo	AAA Broward
Gayle	Giese	FLMHAC (also NAMI Broward)



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

Grace	Jimenez	BHSF
Grace	Marquez	Broward Health Medical Center
Guillermo	Suarez	FL DCF-Office of Substance Abuse & Mental Health
Harlee	James	DCF
Idell	Gayman	Department of Children & Families
Janelle	Batista	DCF SAMH HQ
Jeffrey	Lefton	Delray Medical Center
Jennifer	Gonzalez	West Kendall Baptist Hospital
Jennifer	Robinson	DCF SAMH
Jenny	Garcia	Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network
Jessica	Durant	DCF Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Jessica	Vera	SCMH
Jill	Sorensen	Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network
Joanna	Greene	Martin County Human Services
Johanna	Macfarlane	Baptist Health South Florida
John	Novy	DCF Adult Protective Services
Katherine	Alonzo	Public Defender - 19th circuit
Kofoworola	Payne	DCF SAMH
Kristen	Desimone	Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel
Kristen	Guerrise	National Youth Advocate Program, Inc
Larry	Rein	ChildNet, Inc.
Laurie	Gerhard	LAB
Laurie	McKeefry	Henderson Behavioral Health
Laurinda	Andujar	Heal the City Inc.
Leeanne	Sacino	Florida Coalition to End Homelessness



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

Leigh	Markowitz	Disability Rights Florida
Lindsey	Shatters	New Horizons of the Treasure Coast
Lisa	Baird	Humana
Lisa	Fonteyn	Public Defender - 19th circuit
Margaret (Maggie)	de Cambre Borges	HCA Florida Woodmont Hospital
Marc	Hopin	Alpert Jewish Family Service
Mark	Dhooge	Kids In Distress & Family Central
Mary Claire	Mucenic	School District of Palm Beach County
Mayra	Reimer	Henderson Behavioral Health
Megan	Sease	PEOPLE ENGAGED IN ACTIVE COMMUNITY EFFORTS INC
Melanie	Kranker	communities connected for kids
Melinda	Blostein	Public Defender
Melissa	Reesor Martin	Archways
Michael	Licciardiello	Agency for Health Care Administration
Michael	Tomczak	ABA Centers of Florida
Michelle	Miller	Martin County Human Services
Michelle	Thomas	Florida Palms Academy
Narendra	Patel	Community Care Plan
Pamela	Stierwalt	Children's Medical Services with Sunshine State Health Plan
Patrick	Heidemann	Disability Rights Florida
Philip	De Veronica	Memorial Healthcare System
Renee	Dimond	Boca Raton Regional Hospital
Ruth	Hook	PEACE
Silvia	Quintana	Broward Behavioral Health Coalition
Suzanne	Rodriguez	Baptist Health South Florida



Southeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

August 15th, 2025, 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

Thresia	Gambon	FCAAP
Tina	Jacomino	Baptist Health Transfer Center
Valoria	Thomas	DCF SAMH
Vernicca	Wynter	Broward County Public Schools
Isis	Williams	FL. Department of Children and Families
Yolanda	Brown	Seventeenth Judicial Circuit - Court Administration