



Northeast Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

January 15, 2026, 11:00am

Alachua County Public Library- Tower Road Branch and Virtual via Teams
3020 SW. 75th St. Gainesville, FL. 32608

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance:

In-Person: 13

Virtual: 55

Total: 68

Full Attendee List is Provided in Appendix A

Host/Facilitator:

Department of Children and Families Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) –
Harlee James, Regional Collaboration Coordinator; Idris Gaines, Regional Operations Manager

Presenter:

Brett Buell, Director of Business Development, Gainesville Opportunity Center (GOC)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Harlee James called to order the Northeast Region Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration meeting at 11:00 AM

II. WELCOME

Harlee James welcomed attendees. She introduced the Department of Children and Families SAMH staff in attendance and the meeting Presenter, Brett Buell.

III. PRESENTATION – GAINESVILLE OPPORTUNITY CENTER

Brett Buell presented an overview of the Gainesville Opportunity Center and the Clubhouse model. Topics included the following:

- Clubhouse Model History
 - Recovery Through Work
 - Activities offered at the GOC
 - Kitchen, Cleaning, Garden, Office and Media
 - Employment & Education
 - Transitional Employment (TE) and TE Partners
 - Supported Employment and Independent Employment
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- Education
- Social Events
- Community Partners and Community Support
- Membership Eligibility and Becoming a Member
- Making a Donation
- Bike Day

Brett Buell shared details regarding the upcoming Bike Day event hosted by the GOC. He concluded the presentation and transitioned to the question-and-answer portion of the meeting.

Question and Answer:

Patrick Stallwood, BAYS Kids, asked whether the GOC provides housing assistance to program participants.

- Response: **Brett Buell** stated the GOC provides indirect housing support through partnerships with housing providers such as St. Francis House and Grace Marketplace.

Ashley Williams, UF Health St. Johns BRAVE, asked about current membership numbers and average clubhouse size.

- Response: **Brett Buell** reported the GOC assists approximately 15 individuals per day. He stated the GOC currently maintains two transitional employment positions with plans for growth. He noted the clubhouse serves approximately 80 members within a 90-day period using flexible scheduling. Transportation was identified as a barrier to access.

Cheryl Virta, NAMI Jacksonville, asked whether the clubhouse serves individuals with developmental disabilities in addition to mental health diagnoses.

- Response: **Brett Buell** confirmed the GOC serves individuals with developmental disabilities.

Laurie Gerhard, community member, requested clarification regarding the role of the Managing Entity. She requested information regarding compensation, grant oversight, and the authority responsible for GOC guidelines.



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- Response: **Brett Buell** explained the Managing Entity provides program funding and operational support. He stated the Managing Entity conducts audits to ensure adherence to the Clubhouse model. He clarified the GOC does not provide payment to the Managing Entity. He described the Managing Entity as a passthrough organization responsible for determining regional program investment priorities. He noted the GOC is affiliated with Clubhouse International as a model agency and follows standards established by this international organization.

Deborah Richmond, E Nini Hassee, expressed support for the work of the GOC and its importance to the community.

Karen Chrapek, Volusia Recovery Alliance, asked about differences between Renew Café in Volusia County and the GOC.

- Response: **Brett Buell** stated he was not familiar with Renew Café. He explained that within the GOC no jobs are designated as staff only or member only. All members have access to available work opportunities.

IV. IMPACTFUL MOMENTS

Harlee James shared impactful moments from the Northeast Region.

- An Impactful moment from the Gainesville Opportunity Center included the story of Karina and her progress in rebuilding confidence and stepping into leadership as an advocate.
- A second Impactful moment featured James and his growth at the GOC through collaboration and recognition by the Gainesville Police Department Co Responder Team.

V. WORK GROUP SURVEY DATA

Idris Gaines, DCF SAMH Regional Operations Manager, discussed the formation of workgroups based on prior survey data. Six proposed focus areas were presented:

- Coordination of Services
- Education & Resources
- Rural & Small County Services
- Housing, Transportation & Capacity
- Special Populations



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- Systems & Policy Concerns

Idris Gaines stated the goal was to narrow the six areas to three workgroups for implementation during the year. Coordination of Services was described as focusing on infrastructure and system mechanics. Education and Resources was described as focusing on workforce development. Rural and Small County Services, Housing Transportation and Capacity, and Special Populations were described as addressing service gaps. Systems and Policy Concerns, Housing Transportation and Capacity was described as focusing on capacity related issues.

Idris Gaines opened the floor for open discussion.

Brett Buell, Gainesville Opportunity Center, emphasized the importance of coordination of services and collaboration within the field.

Patrick Stallwood, BAYS Kids, identified transportation as a significant regional concern.

- **Idris Gaines** noted the Northeast Region is largely rural and capacity must be considered when addressing transportation needs.

Gregory Stewart, UF Health Shands, shared in the chat the importance of coordination of care and access across the care continuum.

Karen Chrapek, Volusia Recovery Alliance, emphasized housing and transportation as critical needs for individuals in recovery.

- **Idris Gaines** stated workgroup success would require participant leadership and encouraged members to consider areas aligned with their experience.

Lindsay Thompson, UF Health St. Johns BRAVE, shared information regarding the BRAVE program supporting youth. She expressed support for Coordination of Services as a workgroup focus. She also shared information regarding LSF Uplift and faith-based engagement.

Natalie Moore, Living Hope Therapy, shared in the chat the importance of integrating faith-based resources.



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Angie Adams Martin, CMS Healthcare, shared in the chat interest in system level and policy changes to reduce barriers.

Gregory Stewart, UF Health Shands, shared in the chat the recommendation to involve state representatives in workgroups.

- **Idris Gaines** emphasized the importance of inclusive system development and requested completion of the post meeting survey.
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VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Harlee James opened the floor for public comment.

Shakitta Fitzgerald, Gainesville Opportunity Center, asked about after school mental health group programs for children.

- **Harlee James** stated she would provide resources via email following the meeting.
- **Lindsay Thompson**, UF Health St. Johns, shared information regarding the BRAVE program and its integration within the school system.

Patrick Stallwood, BAYS Kids, shared information regarding BAYS home-based family therapy services for adolescents. He noted challenges related to long term care transitions and identified a need for adolescent autism services.

Nancy Baez, LSF Health Systems, shared information regarding the upcoming North Central Florida Human Trafficking Task Force Meeting and Symposium scheduled for January 21.

- **Idris Gaines**, DCF SAMH Regional Operations Manager, requested the registration link be shared in the chat.

Ginger Griffeth, Partnership for Strong Families, requested clarification regarding workgroup frequency and the release of the Commission 2025 report.



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- **Idris Gaines**, DCF SAMH Regional Operations Manager, confirmed workgroup frequency would be determined by the collaborative. He stated the Commission report would be posted on the website and follow up would be provided.

Dana Huggins, SEDNET, shared via chat that some CARD locations provide social groups for teenagers. Availability varies by location.

Laurie Gerhard, Community Member, shared via chat concerns regarding access to mental health services for individuals with autism spectrum diagnoses.

- **Harlee James** stated this barrier has been identified in prior meetings and continues to be addressed with appropriate agencies.

Harlee James closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

VII. CLOSING REMARKS

Harlee James thanked participants for their engagement and feedback. She encouraged follow up communication and provided contact information for herself and Idris Gaines.

She shared the QR code for the post meeting survey. Harlee James closed the meeting with a final thank you to all attendees

VIII. ADJOURN

Harlee James adjourned the meeting at 12:09 PM.

Minutes Submitted by: Harlee James



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APPENDIX A

Adam	Hiers	Levy County Sheriff's office
Angie	Adams-Martin	Sunshine Health
Annette	Christy	Baker Act and Marchman Act Reporting Center - University of South Florida
April	Busby	Department of Children and Families
Ariel	Drescher	Alachua County Crisis Center
Ashley	Williams	UF Health St. Johns Care Connect
Asta	Trinh	Department of Children and Families
Blaire	Taylor	TSI Cares Network
Brandy	Williams	
Brandy	Stone	Gainesville Fire Rescue
Brett	Buell	Gainesville Opportunity Center
Brittany	Flora	LSF
Brock	Birtolo	Flagler OARS / Discover & Recover
Carol	Gardiner	E-Nini-Hassee
Carrie	Baird	Flagler Cares
Chelsey	Jones	Optum/UHC
Cheryl	Virta	NAMI Jacksonville Florida, Inc.
Cristina	Perez	Department of Children and Families
Dana	Huggins	SEDNET 3A
Deanna	Uhl	Flagler County Sheriff's Office
Deborah	Richmond	E-Nini-Hassee
Desirae	George	United Way of Northeast Florida
Erin	Whitaker-Houck	LSF Health Systems
Ginger	Griffeth	Partnership for Strong Families
Gregory	Stewart	UF Health Shands
James	Huffman	Gainesville Opportunity Center
James	Weaver	Partnership for Strong Families
Jeremy	Goldman	St Johns County Sheriff's Office
Jesse	Kemper	Department of Children and Families
Jessica	Davis	Gateway Community Services, Inc.
Jorge	Passalacqua	Department of Children and Families
Josh	McCumber	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners



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Joy	Bennink	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
Justen	Ostreicher	Partnership for Strong Families
Karen	Chrapek	Volusia Recovery Alliance
Kristy	Amburgey	Flagler Cares & One Voice for Volusia
Laureen	Pagel	Starting Point Behavioral Healthcare
Laurie	Gerhard	Community Member
Laurinda	Andujar	Department of Children and Families
Lianna	Hernandez	Florida Center for Behavioral Health Workforce
Linda	Spadaro	Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville
Lindsay	Gamboa-Thompson	UF Health St. Johns
Lismarie	Pacheco	LifeStream Behavioral Center
Lucas	French	Department of Children and Families
Melinda	Sczepanski	Partnership for Strong Families
Nancy	Baez	LSF
Natalie	Moore	Living Hope Therapy
Nicole	McAtee	Devereux
Nikayla	Bagmon	Florida Department of Health in Clay County
Olivia	Hollier	Alachua County Sheriff's Office
Patrick	Heidemann	Disability Rights Florida
Patrick	Stallwood	BAYS Kids
Phil	Kabler	CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services
Quana	Perry	Department of Children and Families
Regina	Ford	UF Health Jacksonville
Sabrina	Howland	Bradford County School District
Salvatore	Gintoli	SMA Healthcare



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Sarah	Kim	Gateway Community Services, Inc.
Shakitta	Fitzgerald	Gainesville Opportunity Center
Sheryl	Dick-Stanford	APD/Agency for Person's w/Disabilities
Suzanne	Mailloux	NAMI Jacksonville
Tara	Wildes	St. Johns County Sheriff's Office
Tara	Bryant	Optum
Timothy	Macsuga	UHS
Tonia	Heronemus	Dayspring Village
Tonya	Harrison	Department of Children and Families
Ute	Gazioch	Florida Behavioral Health Association
Valoria	Thomas	Department of Children and Families