



Central Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration

July 23, 2026, 10:00am-12:00pm EST

Hybrid

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance: In-Person - 60
Virtual - 76
Total – 136

Full Attendee List is Provided in Appendix A

Location: Summit Church Orlando, 735 Herndon Ave, Orlando, FL 32803

Hosts/Facilitators: Department of Children and Families Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH) – Diveka Anderson, Regional Collaboration Coordinator; Morgan Schell, Central Region SAMH Director

Meeting Focus: Housing Access, Stability, Coordination, and Supportive Services for Individuals with Behavioral Health Needs

I. CALL TO ORDER

Diveka Anderson, Regional Collaboration Coordinator, called to order the Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Quarterly Meeting at 10:00 A.M. on Thursday, July 23, 2026.

II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Morgan Schell welcomed attendees and introduced herself as the Central Region SAMH Director. She provided a brief overview of the featured panel discussion and noted that panelists would introduce themselves shortly. Appreciation was extended to all partners participating virtually and in person.

Housekeeping reminders were provided for both virtual and in-person attendees. Virtual participants were asked to remain muted except during the question-and-answer period and public comment, use the raise-hand feature when requesting to speak, state their name and agency, and enter their name and organization in the chat for attendance purposes. In-person attendees were asked to silence their phones, sign in for attendance, and were provided with facility and restroom directions.



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III. HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL SERVICES PANEL

Panelists introduced themselves and described their organizations, populations served, and connection to housing access, housing stability, behavioral health, recovery support, and supportive services.

Introductions

- **Terence Thomas** – Senior Director of Crisis Inpatient, Marion County: SMA Healthcare: described behavioral health and supportive services provided across multiple Florida counties.
- **Janna Souvorova** – Chief Planner, Orange County Housing and Community Development: described oversight of federal and local housing funds, rental assistance, affordable-housing development, facility improvements, preservation, and special-needs housing initiatives.
- **Sandra Newson** – Vice President of Resident Services, Carrfour Supportive Housing; Board Member, Florida Supportive Housing Coalition: described Carrfour's role as an affordable-housing developer, property manager, supportive-services provider, behavioral-health provider, and Medicaid partner.
- **Brian Postlewait** – Chief Operating Officer, Homeless Services Network of Central Florida; Board President, Florida Coalition to End Homelessness: described Continuum of Care responsibilities, coordinated entry, grant administration, data sharing, and communitywide homelessness-response planning.
- **Gary A. Siplin** – Board Member, Orange County Housing Finance Authority: described the Authority's use of tax-exempt bonds and financing tools to support affordable single-family and multifamily housing.
- **Magge Gonzalez** – Founder and Executive Director, Project Empath/Empath Care Partners: described housing and wraparound supports for low-income Medicaid recipients, youth aging out of foster care, veterans, and families.
- **Yabercia Perez-Cubillan** – Chief Program Officer, Aspire Health Partners: described Aspire's integrated behavioral-health continuum and housing-related partnerships, including work serving veterans and families.
- **Janice Roberson** – Director of the Family Home, Orlando Union Rescue Mission: described a trauma-informed, faith-based, long-term shelter and case-management model focused on education, employment, savings, housing-debt resolution, and sustainable independence.
- **Coreen Garrity** – PATH Lead, Mid Florida Homeless Coalition: described street outreach and engagement across rural and suburban communities in Citrus, Lake, Sumter, Hernando, and Marion counties, emphasizing individualized responses and coordination with partner agencies.



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- **Thomas Garver** – Outreach/Services Coordinator, Oxford House: described Oxford House's peer-run, self-supported recovery residences and the importance of safe, sober housing for sustained recovery.

Panel Discussion – Facilitated by Morgan Schell

Discussion Question: What realistic actions could this group take over the next six to twelve months to improve housing coordination for individuals with behavioral health needs across the Central Region?

- Panelists emphasized that housing solutions require consistent participation from local governments, housing finance authorities, Continuums of Care, developers, behavioral-health providers, hospitals, recovery organizations, and community-based organizations.
- Agencies were encouraged to participate in their local Continuum of Care and other community housing coalitions so that behavioral-health populations are represented when scarce resources and priorities are determined.
- The Orange County Housing Finance Authority identified tax-exempt bond financing as a potential resource for qualified developers proposing affordable single-family or multifamily housing.
- Homeless Services Network emphasized that Central Florida has an extreme shortage of units affordable to households with very low incomes and that prevention, rental assistance, housing development, and coordinated advocacy must occur together.
- Hospital and inpatient representatives described short stabilization periods and the difficulty of discharging individuals who lack housing, identification, benefits, transportation, medications, or reentry supports after incarceration.
- Orange County Housing and Community Development explained that federal and state funding is often governed by broad eligibility categories and competing priorities; therefore, local partners must communicate clear community needs and support targeted funding strategies.
- Several panelists stated that housing described as "affordable" is frequently inaccessible to the people most in need because of income requirements, credit standards, deposits, prior evictions, utility debt, criminal-history barriers, and requirements to earn two-and-a-half or three times the monthly rent.
- Panelists emphasized the need for bridge and transitional housing that allows individuals enough time to stabilize, enter treatment, secure employment or benefits, repair housing debt, save money, and transition into permanent housing.
- The discussion emphasized that supportive housing requires sustainable funding not only for development, but also for operating subsidies, case



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management, behavioral-health services, transportation, medication access, and other wraparound supports.

- Oxford House identified landlord stigma as a major barrier to expanding recovery housing, despite the structure and shared financial responsibility within peer-run homes.
- Panelists discussed the severe affordability gap for individuals relying on SSI or SSDI and the growing number of older adults experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- Participants were encouraged to learn about available housing inventory and Florida Housing's Link units, which may provide access for extremely low-income individuals with special needs or histories of homelessness.
- Panelists emphasized that homelessness should not be treated solely as the result of behavioral health, substance use, unemployment, disability, or justice involvement. Those factors increase vulnerability, but the underlying shortage and cost of housing must also be addressed.
- The group identified education, shared resource inventories, earlier placement on housing waiting lists, greater landlord engagement, housing navigation, and stronger alignment among treatment, housing, and benefits systems as immediate opportunities.

Audience Question and Answer Discussion

- An attendee asked how individuals can remain stable after placement when they still face medication, transportation, income, and daily living barriers. Panelists recommended intensive and targeted case management, medication follow-up, benefits coordination, transportation assistance, budgeting support, relapse-prevention supports, and regular contact.
- Participants discussed the importance of street outreach and intentionally engaging people living in encampments or wooded areas. Mid Florida Homeless Coalition and other outreach partners were identified as examples of organizations meeting individuals where they are.
- The group discussed reentry barriers for individuals leaving jails or prisons, including lack of identification, suspended benefits, no insurance, disrupted family connections, and limited time for inpatient providers to restore documentation and supports. Stronger pre-release planning and warm handoffs were recommended.
- An attendee asked whether incarceration or institutional settings are appropriate environments for people whose justice involvement is connected to untreated mental illness or homelessness. Panelists stated that jails are not suitable treatment or housing settings and emphasized diversion, decriminalization of homelessness-related behaviors, and community-based alternatives.



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- Homeless Services Network shared that a substantial number of people entering local jails were homeless at entry and that short jail stays for nonviolent offenses create significant public costs while often worsening housing barriers.
- The panel concluded that diversion, supportive housing, transitional options, outreach, and coordinated case management are more effective and humane than relying on emergency departments, shelters, or jails as default responses.

IV. IMPACTFUL MOMENTS: SUCCESS STORIES

Diveka Anderson presented three success stories (full narrative contained on slides and to be shared in recap materials):

1. Tri-County PATH Partnership: Following a referral from the Homeless Coalition of Polk County, the Tri-County PATH Program connected two individuals experiencing homelessness with identification documents, benefits, healthcare, behavioral-health services, temporary housing, and income-based permanent housing. Both showed improved stability and quality of life.
2. Veteran Family Homeownership: Aspire Health Partners, Homeless Services Network, and Habitat for Humanity helped a Veteran family move from housing instability to homeownership through case management, housing counseling, rental assistance, financial coaching, and supportive housing services.
3. Recovery and Peer Support: An individual who previously received youth and recovery services from SMA Healthcare later returned as a peer support specialist. The story emphasized the lasting impact of recovery-oriented care, mentorship, second chances, and employment opportunities for individuals with lived experience.

V. POST-MEETING SURVEY RESULTS AND PROPOSED HOUSING WORKGROUP

Morgan Schell reviewed results from the April 2026 post-meeting survey, which included 21 responses:

- 62% of respondents identified homelessness as a current behavioral-health need in the Central Region.
- 52% identified funding as a major need.
- The most frequently recommended actions were increased funding and resources, expanded cross-agency collaboration, and improved communication among providers and systems.



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- 67% identified the Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration as effective in bringing agencies and partners together.

Based on the survey results and the housing-panel discussion, DCF will send an interest email regarding formation of a Housing and Residential Services Workgroup. The workgroup will continue the discussion beyond the quarterly meeting, identify regional focus areas, develop action items, and formulate recommendations that may be included in the Central Region annual report submitted to DCF Headquarters.

Stakeholders with subject-matter expertise, direct service experience, lived experience, policy knowledge, development experience, or other relevant perspectives were encouraged to volunteer.

VI. WORKGROUP UPDATES

Peer Supports Workgroup

- Cheryl Bello, STEPS, Inc., reported that participation continues to grow and that members are sharing emerging practices and agency experiences.
- Background screening remains a primary topic. The workgroup has discussed coordination between DCF and the Agency for Health Care Administration regarding Level 2 screening requirements.
- The background-screening exemption handout developed with DCF support has helped agencies guide prospective employees through the process and, in some cases, expedite hiring.
- Jillian Audit, Recovery Connections, presented Seminole County peer-support outcomes for the fiscal year. Reported activities included 4,217 recovery-support sessions, 255 telephone support sessions, 332 completed referrals, 287 actively engaged participants, and 563 unduplicated participants served.
- Additional supports included bicycles, emergency grocery orders, cellular phones and service cards, laptops for participants enrolled in school, recovery-housing assistance supported by county and Managing Entity funding, and Uber Health transportation.
- Recovery Connections reported 3,124 calls to the 407-Recovery helpline in Seminole County, successful linkages to Medication-Assisted Treatment, and around-the-clock access to information-and-referral specialists and certified peer specialists.



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Accessibility/Expansion of Child and Youth Services Workgroup

- Dr. Valerie Holmes, Family Partnerships of Central Florida, introduced a presentation on youth vaping, with emphasis on youth in foster care and other at-risk youth.
- The workgroup reviewed factors contributing to youth vaping, including advertising, flavored products, accessibility, celebrity and peer influence, normalization within families, and marketing targeted to young people.
- Presenters discussed reported increases in nicotine and THC vaping, substance-use concerns, vaping-related psychosis, Baker Act presentations, and deeper involvement in child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems.
- Stanley Brizz, Executive Director of Uplift Drug Coalitions, described prevention initiatives including I Choose Me, Better Without It, and Move Into Light. Strategies include developmentally appropriate education, youth-focused media, local influencers, culturally and linguistically responsive messaging, family engagement, stigma reduction, and integration of prevention throughout the continuum of care.
- Fawn Moore, Chief Operating Officer of Heartland for Children, described a Circuit 10 partnership among child welfare, juvenile justice, courts, law enforcement, group-care providers, DCF, and other partners.
- The partnership uses memoranda of understanding and shared data to review calls for service at group homes, identify recurring trends, improve trauma-informed responses, and provide targeted technical assistance between quarterly meetings.
- Through sustained collaboration and data review, calls for service at group-care settings reportedly declined from approximately 150 per month to approximately 75–85 per month.
- The partnership also strengthened prevention and education efforts related to cannabis and vaping and incorporated drug-prevention expectations into provider agreements.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Diveka Anderson opened the floor for public comment.

- Sheena Early, Florida Department of Health, asked about shared housing for Veterans and whether tiny-home or pod-style communities with shared laundry, hygiene facilities, health care, and behavioral-health services could provide temporary housing while permanent solutions are developed.
- Orange County Housing and Community Development explained that shared housing, tiny homes, hotel conversions, and similar models may require zoning



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and land-development changes. Accessory dwelling units are increasingly permitted in some areas, and the Live Local Act's "Yes in God's Backyard" provisions may allow religious institutions with available land to develop affordable housing, subject to applicable requirements.

- Homeless Services Network advised that Veterans who may be eligible for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs services should be referred into the coordinated system so outreach and housing-navigation partners can engage them. HSN noted that the community tracks known Veterans experiencing homelessness and uses multiple housing interventions.
- Panelists stated that shared housing may be appropriate in some circumstances but is not a universal solution. Residents' preferences, safety, vulnerability, compatibility, support needs, and long-term housing goals must be considered.
- The Florida Supportive Housing Coalition representative emphasized the need for additional education regarding innovative housing models, development financing, rehabilitation funding, local housing finance agencies, and ways to bring supportive housing into communities.
- Shelley Katz, LSF Health Systems, announced via the chat, a Zero Suicide Summit in Ocala on September 3, 2026. Flyers were made available, complimentary registration was noted for first responders, and all interested partners were invited to attend.

VIII. CLOSING REMARKS

Diveka Anderson thanked the panelists, workgroup representatives, attendees, and community partners for their participation, expertise, and continued collaboration. She noted that a recap email, including meeting materials, would be distributed to attendees. Stakeholders interested in joining the Peer Supports Workgroup or the Accessibility/Expansion of Child and Youth Services Workgroup were encouraged to contact her. She also shared that information regarding the proposed Housing and Residential Services Workgroup would be distributed following the meeting.

Diveka announced that the next virtual statewide Lunch and Learn is scheduled for Thursday, September 3, 2026, and the next Central Regional Behavioral Health Interagency Collaboration quarterly meeting will be held on Thursday, October 22, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. Registration information and additional details will be shared closer to each event.

Morgan Schell expressed appreciation for the discussion, ongoing partnership, and collaborative efforts occurring throughout the Central Region.



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IX. ADJOURN

Diveka Anderson adjourned the meeting at 12:01 PM EST.



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Appendix A

Alana	Christianson	Orlando Health Behavioral Health Hospital
Alison	Fulford	Department of Juvenile Justice
Amanda	Maxim	HCA Healthcare
Amanda	Reineck	Family Partnerships of Central Florida
Amanda	Carballea	IMPOWER
Angela	Burdue	School District of Osceola County
Angela	Gambino	Aetna Better Health of Florida
Anna	Kesic	IMPOWER
April	Busby	Department of Children and Families
Babette	Hankey	Aspire Health Partners
Brett	D'Aoust	Central Florida Treatment Centers
Brian	Postlewait	Homeless Services Network of Central Florida
Brian	Geyman	HCA Healthcare
Candace	Barnes	Peace River Center
Carlos	Ortiz	Department of Children and Families
Catherine	Rea	Heart of Florida United Way 211 and 988 Services
Chasity	Russell	IMPOWER
Chauneva	Garlington	Department of Children and Families
Cheryl	Bello	STEPS, Inc.
Christian	Slater	Department of Elder Affairs
Christopher	Austin	Department of Children and Families
Claudia	Swonger	Brave Health
Claudia	Hash	Lake Mary Police Department
Clint	Hauger	The Vines Hospital of Ocala
Coreen	Garrity	Mid Florida Homeless Coalition
Cory	Fisher	C.A.M.P. Orange
Daniel	Cody	C.A.M.P. Orange
Deana	Green	Mental Health Resource Center
Deanna	Faggard	Seminole County Sheriff's Office S.C.O.R.E. Unit
Debra	Koronka	Harbor House of Central Florida
Dhanya	Lotfallah	Department of Health
Diana	Gutierrez	Harbor House of Central Florida
Diane	Pauray	HCA Healthcare
Diveka	Anderson	Department of Children and Families
Donna	Evanecky	Polk County Sheriff's Office



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Dr. Christine	Cauffield	LSF Health Systems
Dr. Valerie	Holmes	Family Partnerships of Central Florida
Earl	Hunt	Department of Children and Families
Emily	Garten	Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health
Erin	O'Brien	Gulf Coast JFCS
Evonie	Harris	Winter Park Police Department
Fawn	Moore	Heartland for Children
Gabriel	Berio	School District of Osceola County
Gary	Siplin	Orange County Housing Finance Authority
George	Margoles	Recovery Connections
Gerald L.	Smith	HCA Healthcare
Giselle	Antoine	IMPOWER
Gosby	Gibson	Orlando Health Inc.; The Healing Tree
Harlee	James	Department of Children and Families
Heather	Gunn	HCA Healthcare
Holly	Vida	Polk County Board of County Commissioners
J. Pat	Strollo	Strollo Architects
James	Witherspoon	Seminole County Community Health
James	Riddle	Lake Mary Police Department
Janelle	Adorno	North Tampa Behavioral Health
Janet	Stringfellow	Volunteers of America of Florida
Janice	Roberson	Orlando Union Rescue Mission
Janna	Souvorova	Orange County Housing and Community Development
Jean	Tucker	Department of Children and Families
Jennifer	Del Rosso	Casselberry Police Department
Jill	Kolasa	Hernando School District
Jillian	Audit	Recovery Connections
Jodi	Hawthorne	Tenth Judicial Circuit of Florida
Jonathan	Rockstraw	Department of Children and Families
Karen	Kanashiro	Catholic Charities of Central Florida
Karie	Arch	Harbor House of Central Florida
Karla	Rodriguez	Bethany Christian Services
Katherine	Diaz	Catholic Charities of Central Florida
Kayla	Martin	Orange County Florida
Kelly	Garrett	Volunteers of America of Florida
Kimberly	Stratton	Children's Home Society of Florida
Lance	Morgan	Department of Children and Families



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Lidia	Galeas	Seminole County Community Health
Lisa	Roberts	UCF CARD
Lucien	Laroche	Optum Behavioral Health
Magge	Gonzalez	Project EMPATH
Marielle	Asencio	HCA Healthcare
Marina	Daher	Central Florida Behavioral Hospital
Mark	Sherrod	Department of Children and Families
Mary	Moore	Polk County Government
Matt	Adams	The Glass House
Maya	Namnum	Lotus Behavioral Health
Meghan	Harrigan	Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services
Michelle	Norman	Ocoee Police Department
Michelle	Rutilius	Orange County Public Schools
Monica	Killins	Lake County Schools
Monica	Araujo	Catholic Charities of Central Florida
Morgan	Schell	Department of Children and Families
Natasha	James	Lake County Schools
Nichole	Moore	Strollo Architects
Nidia	Medina	Hispanic Family Counseling, Inc.
Nikaury	Muñoz	Central Florida Cares Health Systems
Olivia	Littleton	One More Child
Patricia	Sierra	Department of Juvenile Justice
Patrick	Heidemann	Disability Rights Florida
Priscilla	Smith	Health Quality Innovators
Raegan	Waugh	Charlie Health, Inc.
Raven	Reid	Department of Children and Families
Raymonde	Louime	HCA Healthcare
Rebecca	Belanger	Mental Health Resource Center
Rick	Thomas	Winter Park Police Department
Robert	Roy	Department of Children and Families
Ronique	Bain	Department of Health
Rosa	Chaves	Department of Children and Families
Ryan	Perretti	HCA Healthcare
Samone	Franklin	Department of Children and Families
Sandra	Marrero	BayCare Behavioral Health
Sandra	Newson	Carrfour Supportive Housing
Shaina	Joseph	Agency for Health Care Administration



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Shannon	Fournier	HCA Healthcare
Shayni	Sloan	University Behavioral Center
Sheena	Early	Department of Health
Shelaine	Campbell	NAMI Hernando
Shelandra	Battle	Department of Children and Families
Shelley	Katz	LSF Health Systems Managing Entity
Sherry	Ledbetter	Department of Elder Affairs
Stacey	Legel	Kissimmee Police Department
Stanley	Brizz	UPLIFT Drug-Free Coalitions
Stephanie	Boyd	Department of Children and Families
Steven	Marks	Orlando Health Behavioral Health Hospital
Taylor	South	Tri County Human Services
Taylor	Coakley	Department of Children and Families
Terence	Thomas	SMA Healthcare, Inc.
Teresa	Even	BayCare Health System
Thomas	Garver	Oxford House, Inc.
Timothy	Macsuga	UHS, Inc.
Timothy	Williams	Winter Park Police Department
Tina	Morgan	Department of Children and Families
Traci	Klinkbeil	Department of Children and Families
Trinity	Schwab	Central Florida Cares Health System, Inc.
Ute	Gazioch	Florida Behavioral Health Association
Whitney	Emmert-Bush	Acadia Healthcare
Yaberci	Perez-Cubillan	Aspire Health Partners
Yentl	Lega	Aetna Better Health of Florida
Yvette	Del Nodal	Marion County Public Schools
Zoha	Khan	Department of Children and Families