

# **Alachua County Advisory Boards CJMHSAG Grant Cycle 5 Accomplishments Report 2020 - 2023**

---

<b>Date</b>	July 2023
<b>Board/Committee Name</b>	Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Grant Planning Committee (CJMHSAG)
<b>Chairperson</b>	Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler
<b>Staff Support</b>	Amy Weber, Court Services
<b>Board Liaison</b>	Carl Smart, Interim Director, Court Services

## **Brief History of Committee**

---

Established May 22, 2007, to further prior interests of the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to prepare a grant application for the Florida CJMHSAG as required by §394.656, Florida Statute (2007). In January 2008, Alachua County was awarded by Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) a three year CJMHSAG State grant totaling \$999,000 with matching funds from Alachua County. The grant funded a Forensic Diversion Team (FDT) that was implemented in July 2008. The original grant expired March 27, 2011.

Alachua County was awarded a CJMHSAG expansion grant totaling \$750,000 over three years effective March 28, 2011. Alachua County allocated \$166,500 annually in general fund support as a match for this grant. The expansion grant focused on blending the original FDT with the Forensic Specialist Team (FST) operated by Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, serving additional people with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders through more cost-effective community based treatment. Additionally, new partnerships were formed with Vocational Rehabilitation and Florida Works to provide a greater array of services.

In January, 2014, Alachua County was awarded by DCF a three year grant for \$1.2 million. The successful grant preparation was overseen by the Planning Committee as part of its role identified in the Statute. Matching funds are being provided by the County from the General Fund as well as \$148,530 in in-kind support from the Department of Court Services. The total funding available in grant and matching funds for the CJMHSAG Program is \$2,458,530.

In September 2016, a CJMHSAG Expansion and Implementation Grant was awarded by DCF to Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. as applicant and grantee agency, for the period April 1, 2017 through March 31, 2020. The purpose of the Grant was to support the development of an Alachua/Bradford Consortium to serve a greater geographic region with forensic diversion and related supportive services. The amount of the Grant was \$1.5 million, which was matched by a total of cash and in-kind services of \$1,651,419 from

three sources: Alachua County, Bradford County and Meridian. The matching funds specifically provided by Alachua County included \$1,110,000 in cash through the Mental Illness Work Group, also via the General Fund and \$240,000 for in-kind personnel services, including the Benefits Coordinator and Criminal Justice Liaison (50% time) from the Department of Court Services.

On April 1, 2020, the CJMHSAG Grant No. 5 commenced, with a grant award of \$1.5 million to Meridian Behavioral HealthCare, Inc. as the recipient agency. The grant award from DCF also carries with it the same level of cash match commitment from Alachua County at \$1.1 million. In addition, there is the same level of in-kind match from Alachua County at \$240,000, for two positions based at Court Services: 1 FTE Benefits Coordinator, and .2881 FTE Criminal Justice Liaison.

At the end of Grant No. 5 on March 31, 2023, the Forensic Diversion Team served 373 clients annually on average.

Application for CJMHSA grant renewal did not occur due to lack of availability of state dollars/opportunities for grant submission for Criminal Justice Reinvestment initiatives. Recurring state dollars were procured by Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. through the managing entity Lutheran Health Systems. This funding allows Meridian's Forensics Multidisciplinary Team (FMT), to continue working with citizens charged with felony crimes and have been identified as Incompetent to Proceed (ITP) or Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGI populations) in Alachua County, through early engagement, specialized clinical care, and care coordination.

Meridian continues discussion with Alachua County regarding funding opportunities to provide care coordination and specialized clinical services for other criminal justice involved citizens with mental health or mental health/substance abuse issues. Currently, Meridian is accepting referrals from the jail and legal professionals for Meridian's continuum of care including outreach, psychiatric, residential substance abuse, addiction receiving facility, crisis stabilization and outpatient clinical/therapeutic services. Meridian will continue to explore grant opportunities to serve this population.

The CJMHSAG grant supports a County initiative designed to increase public safety, avert increased spending on criminal justice, and improve assessment and treatment options for adults who have a mental illness, substance abuse disorder, or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders, and who are in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Across the five grant programs, the overall purpose has remained steadfast, with different features added for purposes of expansion and enhancement to improve quality, accessibility and coordination of services.

## Highlights of the CJMHSAG Program Grant 5

---

- Expansion of the following Services under the 2020-2023 contract:
  - Early in-jail biopsychosocial assessments for inmates with extended stays or who need prerelease stabilization
    - 47 individuals received biopsychosocial assessments while in jail, primarily in conjunction with screening processes for Mental Health Court (MHC), with 33 (70%) of those clients accepted into the program. 36% of the participants either successfully completed, or remain on the MHC docket as of the end of the current quarter
  - Provide treatment to inmates prior to release from jail using evidence-based case management and treatment models.
    - Throughout this grant cycle, peer specialists and clinicians conducted group sessions at Alachua County Jail and Bradford County Jail, subject to COVID protocol restrictions. Bradford County was more restrictive than Alachua allowing sessions for only three weeks in Year 2, Quarter 1; but weekly sessions for substance abuse have been ongoing since the last week of the second quarter of year 3. During that time, 109 clients were served, with 45 attending multiple weeks (2 to 8 sessions). In Alachua County COVID restrictions were less protracted; however, intermittent. Two groups were offered weekly: Substance Abuse and Healthy Minds/Healthy Lives. The life of grant total served is 282 individuals, with 153 attending multiple weeks (2 to 20 sessions).
  - Provide transitional housing in Meridian Lodge and dedicate at least eight transitional beds for Program participants, review and identify additional housing options, and assist participants with support required to attain self-sufficiency.
    - Housing subsidies are addressed under Variables of Interest, page 8 above. During the grant period, The Lodge allocated 8 beds designated for Forensics clients. Additionally, new housing resources, including recovery homes in the Gainesville community, were obtained to provide additional transitional options for clients obtaining assistance through other resources (Social Security) or employment.
    - Partnership development addressed by forming more comprehensive relationships with community employment resources, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Gainesville Opportunity Center, and Career Source. Other resource partnerships include Library Partnership, local food banks, and community action agencies.
- Continued Mental Health First Aid training, based on an evidence-based community education curriculum being provided to law enforcement, first responders, court services, teachers, clergy, and community providers
- Expansion of the Co-Responder Model to now include the Alachua Sheriff's Office Co-Responder Team and the Gainesville Police Department Co-Responder Team
- Conduct early in-jail biopsychosocial assessments for inmates with extended stays or who need prerelease stabilization

- Provide transitional housing through the Meridian Lodge with dedicated beds per the needs of the Forensics' Program
- Continuing substance use outreach groups in the Alachua County jail
- Initiating mental health outreach groups in the Alachua County jail led by a master's level clinician

### **Mission Statement**

---

The mission of the CJMHSAG Planning Committee is to promote a system of identification, assessment, and negotiation to effectively divert those with mental illness, co-occurring substance abuse, homelessness, and involvement in the criminal justice system from the jail to appropriate services and housing.

### **Vision Statement**

---

A community that no longer needs jails and courts to serve as the primary provider of mental health and addictions treatment.

## Major Accomplishments 2020 - 2023

---

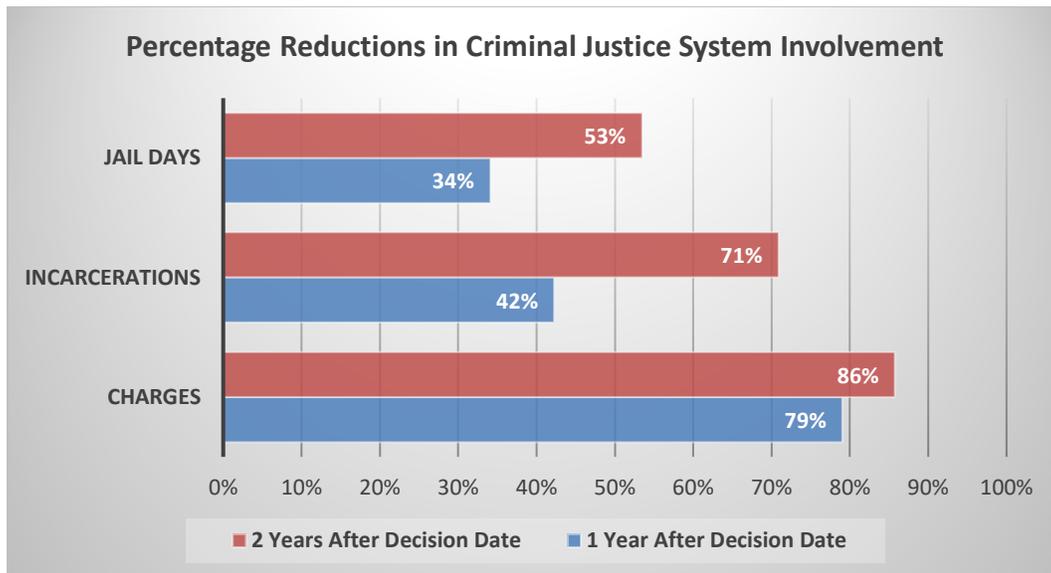
- Participants averaged over 87% of days in the community vs. days in jail since the program's inception
- 880 active program participants screened during Grant Cycle 5
- 438 participants were served throughout Grant Cycle 5
- Provided additional jail and community based competency training resulting in the diversion of 100 individuals from the State Hospital under Grant 5
- Conducted four quarterly CJMHSAG Planning Committee meetings per year, as required by Florida Statute 394.656
- Continued community outreach by providing training for the following:
  - Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)
  - Trauma Informed Responses for Criminal Justice
  - Mental Health training for new-hire 911 dispatch operators
  - Forensic Specialist Training
  - Mental Health First Aid
  - Competency Restoration
  - 916 Forensic Model
- Enhanced violence risk assessment efforts through administration of the HCR-20 V3, including tracking and measurement
- Continued efforts have been made to emphasize more services at Intercept 1 (Sequential Intercept Model) with specific prevention outreach continued at Grace Marketplace, the BOLD Program, SOAR, CIT, 911 Dispatch, Gainesville Police Department, Department of Corrections, Alachua County Sheriff's Office, and the Department of Children & Families
- Supported the continued implementation of the new Mental Health Team, a combined unit of GPD and Meridian which provides outreach and diversion services at the pre-booking stage to those in a mental health crisis in the City of Gainesville
- Peer Specialists continue to regularly assist in the mental health specialty courts. This has been a tremendous success in mentoring participants and families. An innovative new program WRAP (Wellness, Recovery, Action, Plan) has been used by the Peer Specialists with participants who are successfully transitioning out the program
- Initiated a broader community education piece directed toward building increased community awareness of the CJMHSAG initiative and its impact, participating through the Alachua Stepping Up Initiative and other forums
- Concentrated efforts have been made to promote a Trauma Informed community by giving SAMHSA Trauma Informed Responses training to our stakeholders. The team continues to provide specific evidenced based trauma informed care and therapy with participants in the program
- Continued CIT training and Mental Health First Aid training for law enforcement personnel and community providers

# Goals & Objectives for Grant Cycle 5 2020 - 2023

## Goal 1 – Increase Public Safety

The goal is being met as demonstrated by the reduced criminal recidivism among the participants. This ultimately results in fewer arrests, charges, and jail days for admitted clients. **From October 2018 through September 2020**, there were 182 admitted clients which had some form of contact with the criminal justice system in Alachua County. Contact with the criminal justice system was significantly reduced in the 12 and 24-month periods following their admission into the program.

The graph below summarizes the magnitude of the reductions in charges, incarcerations, and jail days:

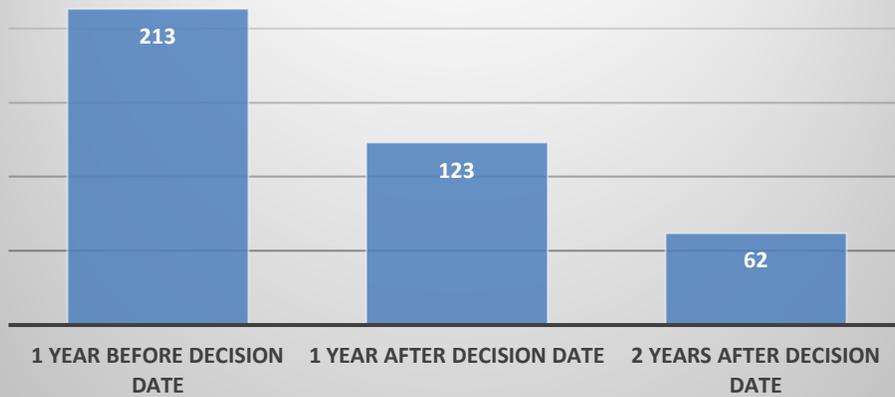


The below graphs portray the number of charges, incarcerations, and jail days in the time periods one year before, one year after, and two years after admission. These measures all show a reduction in criminal recidivism, which is evidence of increased public safety.

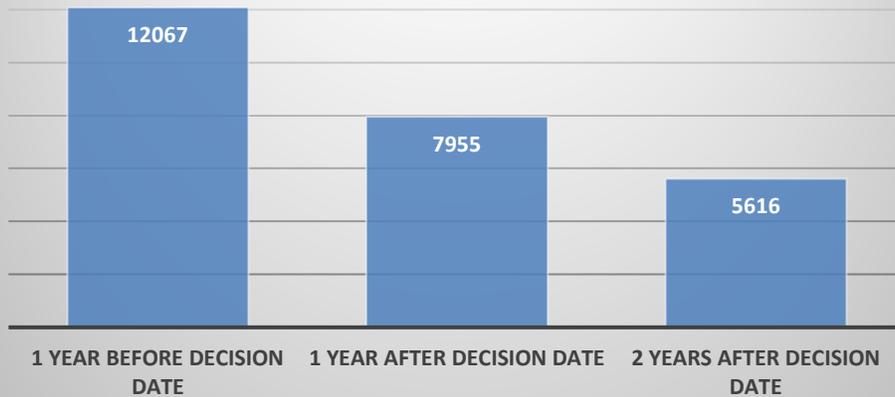
## Charges



## Incarcerations



## Jail Days



## Goal 2 – Increased Assessment and Treatment Options

---

The Forensic Team continues to provide information and outreach to stakeholders to encourage expedited jail release for appropriate candidates. This process remains effective but requires continued outreach and education, due to changes in personnel and system processes. Support remains among all the stakeholders for jail diversion initiatives. During Grant 5, 174 participants in forensic treatment were directly admitted into treatment from Forensic Felony and Mental Health Courts. Many other court ordered clients were also expedited directly as a result of attorney advocacy. Of the non-accepted cases, efforts are made to refer to more appropriate treatment such as inpatient.

## Goal 3 – Avert Spending on Jail Incarceration

---

The following chart compares the costs of incarceration for clients prior and after their admission into the program. Clients spent a total of 12,067 days in jail in the one-year period prior to their admission, but only 7,955 days in jail in the one-year period after their admission. Clients spent 5,616 days in jail in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year following their admission. Therefore, for participants admitted into the program, there is a noticeable decline in the number of days jailed. At an estimated \$105.59 per day for “regular” jail (Alachua County blended rate for all inmates’ costs) and an estimated \$265 per day for psychiatric inmates, the program is clearly bending the curve on future costs. Based on the reduction of jail days and the daily cost figures, the Program saved between \$681,162 (blended) and \$1,709,515 (psychiatric) on clients in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the program.



## **Goal 4 – Avert State Spending for FS916 (Forensic) or FL394 (Civil) Hospital Beds**

---

At the end of Grant Cycle 5, there were 157 participants who were actively participating in the Forensics Program. 73 were receiving case management services in the community. 60 of the participants were receiving treatment services, treatment groups, and individual sessions in the community.

91% of all participants screened and enrolled in services were diverted from entry into a State Mental Health Treatment Facility. This achievement surpassed the Program goal set with Florida DCF which was a benchmark of 45%. In addition, 43 of the total participants were considered Incompetent to Proceed or Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity pursuant to Ch. 916 and placed on conditional release orders in the community monitored by the Team's Forensic Specialists. A total of 100 participants also received competency restoration services in the jail or community throughout Grant Cycle 5.

## **Goal 5 – Enhance Collaboration**

---

**The CJMHSAG Program's partners and collaborators continue to be expanded and now include:**

- Veteran's Administration
- Department of Children and Families
- Alachua County FACT Team
- Office of the State Attorney
- Office of the Public Defender
- Court Services
- Alachua County Sheriff's Office
- Bradford County Sheriff's Office
- Gainesville Police Department
- University of Florida Police Department
- Alachua and Bradford Boards of County Commission
- National Alliance for Mental Illness-Gainesville Chapter
- Alachua County Crisis Center
- 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court
- Department of Corrections Probation and Parole
- 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court Administration
- Gainesville Opportunity Center
- Gainesville Peer Respite
- Gainesville Police Department Brave Overt Leaders of Distinction (BOLD) Program
- Reentry Coalition of Alachua County,
- Gainesville Fire Rescue Community Resource Paramedics
- Career Source of North Central Florida
- Santa Fe College
- Catholic Charities
- House of Hope

**In the spirit of such partnerships and to maintain opportunity to share information developed by members of the Forensic Team, the following trainings have been provided to the community stakeholders during Grant Cycle 5. These trainings have the benefit of expanding to additional criminal justice and behavioral health systems' staffs' evidence-based practices which are considered within the respective fields as state-of-the-art training and education curriculums. The accumulated training by the Team represented hundreds of hours:**

- Crisis Intervention Team Training to 142 Law Enforcement Officers & 911 Dispatchers
- Mental Health First Aid Training for Public Safety and Standard Training to 219 Stakeholder Agency Representatives, Public Safety & Criminal Justice Professionals, etc
- “How Trauma Informed Care Improves Criminal Justice Responses” Training Provided to 36 Community Stakeholders and Local Resource Officers

## **Program Success Stories**

---

### **Success Story 1**

D. M. was admitted to Alachua County Mental Health Court on 7/15/2021, with a significant prior history of substance use and mental health challenges leading to former incarceration, unhealthy relationships, and other obstacles. Initially, Mr. M. expressed several barriers, including a lack of family or recovery support, no stable housing or income for basic needs, and no significant prior history of treatment success. While initially, Mr. M. faced some adversity overcoming a significant history of trauma and substance use, along with symptoms of mental illness, he entered short-term residential treatment, followed by a transition to virtual Intensive Outpatient while attending Forensic treatment. Mr. M. showed progress in the program by maintaining sobriety for over a year, adapting to multiple treatment formats, successfully completing them, and obtaining stable housing with Meridian's Williams Manor. He successfully transitioned to long-term support and recovery-based living with a graduation in February of 2023.

### **Success Story 2**

After being voluntarily admitted to the Alachua County Mental Health Court, Mr. S. was initially resistant to complying with certain requirements, and was critical toward the effectiveness of individual and group therapy, as well as peer support. However, his willingness and desire to examine and understand how to care for himself, gain social support, and feel a sense of belonging were key to his success. Mr. S became a role model for his peers by practicing mindfulness and developing strong coping skills, while actively self-monitoring and learning to manage his symptoms. He co-facilitated some peer groups and served as a resource for peers to learn how to effectively engage in treatment. Mr. S was able to secure a job, maintain stability within and outside of the program, and utilize his support systems. Plans for his future include his intent to “go back to college, continue working, become a peer specialist” and a desire to “continue doing good.”