

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
NORTHEAST REGION SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND  
MENTAL HEALTH

ALACHUA COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

2023 - 2026

# ALACHUA COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TRANSPORTATION PLAN

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# Alachua County Behavioral Health Plan

## **Introduction**

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In accordance with Florida Statute Chapter 394, Part 1, Florida Mental Health Act or the “Baker Act,” Florida Statute Chapter 397, Hal S. Marchman Alcohol and Other Drug Services Act of 1993, and Senate Bill 12, a plan has been developed to organize a coordinated receiving system for acute care services. This transportation plan requires approval by the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) Health Systems (the Managing Entity) and the Florida Department of Children and Families. Upon approval, this document will serve as the transportation plan for Alachua County per legislative intent. The intent of this plan is to describe an arrangement coordinating and improving the access to services within Alachua County and the transportation required under the Baker and Marchman Acts. Further, the plan delineates an arrangement whereby an identified group of persons with special needs, such as persons with hearing impairments or visual impairments, elderly persons with physical frailties, or children and youth may receive psychiatric and addiction services, as well as a range of other services. The document also describes a specialized transportation system that provides an efficient, safe and humane method of transporting patients to receiving facilities, among receiving facilities, and to treatment facilities. The plan also includes details on how to access local Mobile Response Team (MRT) services designed to de-escalate crisis situations and where possible divert individuals as an alternative to transporting them to a receiving facility.

## **Purpose**

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The Alachua County Transportation Plan has been successfully implemented. In the continued best interest of persons in need of behavioral healthcare in Alachua County, it is now agreed that a renewal of the plan will continue the successful established coordinated receiving system, known as the Alachua County Transportation Plan. The Plan insures that individuals on either an involuntary Baker Act or Marchman Act will obtain immediate access to acute care services and reduces the need for inter-facility transfers for psychiatric and addiction services. Coordination of services among providers in Alachua County continues to strive to meet individual needs.

The Plan calls for law enforcement agencies in Alachua County to transport adults as follows:

- Non-Veterans on an involuntary Baker Act to one of the following three facilities:
  1. Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc./CSU
  2. UF Health Psychiatric Hospital
  3. Behavioral Health Center of North Florida Regional Medical Center
- Non-Veterans on an involuntary Marchman Act to one of the following facilities:
  1. UF Health Psychiatric Hospital Addictions Receiving Facility
  2. Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. Addictions Receiving Facility
- Individuals who are Veterans on a Baker Act may be transported to the Malcolm Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, or to one of the following facilities:
  1. Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc./CSU
  2. UF Health Psychiatric Hospital Behavioral Health Center of North Florida Regional Medical Center

Individuals who are Veterans on a Marchman Act may be transported to Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. Addictions Receiving Facility or to acute care at UF Health Shands Hospital

The Plan calls for law enforcement agencies in Alachua County to transport youth as follows:

- Youth under the age of 9 years on an involuntary Baker Act to Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. CSU
- Youth aged 9 – 17 on an involuntary Baker Act to one of the following facilities
  1. Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. CSU
  2. UF Health Psychiatric Hospital
- Youth under the age of 18 years on an involuntary Marchman Act to the following facility
  1. UF Health Psychiatric Hospital

This Plan includes specifications that are consistent with the requirements of Florida Statute 394.462 (1)(a) for transportation to a receiving facility within the Alachua County designated receiving system.

### **Receiving System Capacity in Alachua County**

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- **Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. – 70 Beds**  
4300 SW 13th Street Gainesville, FL, 32608  
Designated receiving facility licensed by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and JCAHO certified
- **UF Health Psychiatric Hospital – 81 Beds**  
4101 NW 89th Blvd, Gainesville, FL 32606  
Designated receiving facility licensed by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and JCAHO certified
- **Behavioral Health Center of North Florida Regional Medical Center – 33 Beds**  
6500 W Newberry Rd, Gainesville, FL 32605  
Designated receiving facility licensed by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and JCAHO certified
- **Malcom Randall VA Medical Center – 48 Beds**  
1601 S.W. Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608  
Receiving facility certified by the JCAHO with services for eligible veterans

**Current Receiving Facility Capacity for Alachua County (by Type and Number)**

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<b>Psychiatric Beds (Baker Act Beds)</b>	<b>Meridian Behavioral HealthCare, Inc.</b>	<b>UF Health Psychiatric Hospital</b>	<b>Behavioral Health Center of North Florida Regional Medical Center</b>	<b>Malcolm Randall Veterans Medical Center</b>
<b>Adult</b>	38	48	33	48
<b>Youth</b>	20	15	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>

*\*Beds may also be used for patients who are voluntarily being admitted.*

*\*\*These beds are jointly designated adult & youth by DCF.*

**Marchman Act Beds**

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<b>Marchman Act Beds</b>	<b>Meridian Behavioral HealthCare, Inc. (Addictions Receiving Facility)</b>	<b>UF Health Psychiatric Hospital</b>	<b>Behavioral Health Center of North Florida Regional Medical Center</b>	<b>Malcolm Randall Veterans Medical Center</b>
<b>Adult</b>	12	18	0	0
<b>Youth</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Choice**

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The Alachua County Transportation Plan endorses the authority to transport persons in need of services under the Baker Act or Marchman Act to a designated receiving facility rather than the nearest receiving facility. The authorized transportation provider will take into consideration individual choice when making a determination of which receiving facility to transport the individual. All persons on an involuntary Marchman Act are to be transported to a licensed detoxification unit or medical facility as specified above in Purpose. Law enforcement may exercise final discretion in the transportation of persons in need of services under the Baker Act or Marchman Act to a receiving facility, licensed detoxification unit, or specified medical facility as indicated in the Purpose section of this Plan.

It is recognized that a law enforcement agency serving as transportation provider under this plan may identify the need for assistance from emergency medical personnel. In such an event, the transportation plan fully supports the use of such personnel.

The Transportation Plan encourages that access to emergency medical care is enabled prior to transport to a receiving facility is provided, specifically in those cases where there is a medical emergency present.

The Florida Statute was adjusted in 2016 to enhance greater coordination between the Baker Act (Mental Health) and the Marchman Act (Substance Abuse) as it relates to multiple aspects of delivery of behavioral health services. The intent of this Transportation Plan is that all organizations engaged in the Plan's implementation commit to striving toward this same goal on behalf of those citizens requiring access to such acute services.

### **Access to Mobile Response Services in Advance of Transportation**

In response to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, Ch. 2018- 3, the Legislature appropriated recurring funds to ensure reasonable access to Mobile Response Team (MRT) services in all counties. The Alachua County Crisis Center contracts with Lutheran Services of Florida to provide MRT services in the County for all youth 25 years old and younger. Using other resources including staff and specially trained volunteers, the Center also provides a mobile response to crisis situations for adults over the age of 25.

The overarching goals of the Alachua County Crisis Center MRT program are to:

- complete an on-site or tele-health assessment of eligible individuals to attempt de-escalation of the presenting crisis and determine if the individual maybe safely diverted from a receiving center, psychiatric hospitalization or diversion from a juvenile justice or criminal justice setting.
- be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide within 60 minutes or less, on-demand crisis intervention services, either on-site or through tele-health, in any setting in which a behavioral health crisis is occurring including, homes, schools, and other locations throughout the community.
- where possible, provide a "warm handoff" for individuals and families to identify resources, provide linkages, and develop strategies for effectively dealing with potential future crises.

Through its Mobile Response Team, the Crisis Center provides the following services:

- Evaluate requests for service to determine if the presenting level of severity meets the clinical threshold for an in-person response.
- Conduct an onsite clinical assessment to determine the need for further examination at a Designated Receiving Facility or licensed substance use provider.
- Assess the risk of suicidal and homicidal thoughts or behaviors and if present develop an individualized safety plan.

- Assess the individual for mood disturbances such as depression, anxiety, delusional thoughts, or hallucinations that may contribute to and exacerbate the crisis.
- Identify family or peer conflicts and other disruptive behaviors that are or may contribute to escalating the crisis.
- Provide ongoing services and follow up for up to 72 hours and when possible, conduct a "warm handoff" by actively connecting the individual to another service provider.

Mobile Response Team services are available for all individuals experiencing an emotional disturbance, mental health or emotional crisis, an escalating emotional or behavioral health symptoms that impact their ability to function within the family, living situation, or community environment, or are in the child welfare system and at risk of placement instability.

Services may be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week by contacting:

Alachua County Crisis Center  
218 SE 24<sup>th</sup> Street  
Gainesville FL  
352-264-6789

### **System Oversight**

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In an effort to resolve complaints, grievances, and disputes which may arise during implementation of the plan, personnel from the Transportation Plan Advisory Committee will regularly meet. The Northeast Region Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Office and LSF Health Systems are responsible for providing oversight to the Alachua County Transportation Plan. The Department of Children and Families and LSF Health Systems have the authority to resolve issues concerning the Transportation Plan, approve interagency agreements, as well as coordinate other services needed for individuals beyond acute care services. The Regional office also has a working relationship with the Agency for Health Care Administration if issues arise beyond the Department's authority.

### **Transportation Plan Advisory Committee**

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The purpose of the Alachua County Transportation Plan (TP) Advisory Committee is to discuss the operation of the TP including data review. The Advisory Committee meets regularly on a quarterly basis to review grievances and assurance of patient rights as related to the TP and discuss the implications of shared data for the system's operation.

The TP Advisory Committee is comprised of, but not limited to, representatives of the following agencies:

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| • Alachua County Crisis Center                            | • Alachua County Department of Court Services |
| • Alachua County Department of Community Support Services | • Alachua County Fire Rescue                  |

- Alachua County Sheriff’s Office
- Behavioral Health Center of North Florida Regional Medical Center
- 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit of Florida Office of the Court Administrator
- Florida Department of Children and Families Substance Abuse and Mental
- Health Program Office
- Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Circuit 8 Office
- Gainesville Police Department
- Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) Health Systems
- Malcom Randall Veterans Medical Center
- Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)-Gainesville
- Partnership for Strong Families
- Santa Fe College Police Department
- UF Health Psychiatric Hospital
- University of Florida Police Department

### **Interorganizational Collaboration**

Implementing an excellent Transportation Plan on behalf of persons in need of behavioral health services requires a significant amount of cooperation, commitment and collaboration from all parties involved. Besides having strong support of law enforcement and the behavioral health providers, Alachua County has engaged in a public planning process, which has strengthened the relationships between all parties responsible for implementing the Transportation Plan in the County. A comprehensive list of all participating parties involved in the Plan’s development is

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Baker Act:** The Florida Mental Health Act.

**Marchman Act:** The Hal S. Marchman Alcohol and Other Drug Services Act

**Receiving Facility:** Any public or private facility designated by the Department of Children and Families to receive and hold involuntary patients under emergency conditions or for psychiatric evaluation and to provide short-term treatment.

**Private Receiving Facility:** Any hospital or facility operated by a for-profit or not-for-profit corporation or association that provides mental health services and is not a public facility.

**Public Receiving Facility:** Any facility that has contracted with the Department of Children and Families to provide mental health services to all persons, regardless of their ability to pay, and is receiving state funds for such purpose.

**Law Enforcement Agency:** the specified law enforcement agencies based in Alachua County which may provide transportation services to those individuals being transported under the auspices of the Baker or Marchman Acts include:



- Alachua County Sheriff's Office
- City of Alachua Police Department
- City of Gainesville Police Department
- City of High Springs Police Department
- Santa Fe College Police Department
- The University of Florida Police Department

**Mobile Response Team (MRT):** provides on-demand crisis intervention services, via tele-health or onsite response, in any setting in which a behavioral health crisis is occurring, including homes, schools, and emergency rooms to evaluate the situation, and de-escalate the crisis when possible in order to divert the individual from the receiving system.