



**Together in Partnership
Review Subcommittee
2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Brevard
County Government Center, Florida Room,
Building C, Viera, FL 32940
February 24th, 2025
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

Meeting Report

Members Present: Lisa Bradley, Rebecca Thibert, Joan Junkala, Jean Bandish, Patricia Seibert, Mimi Hanley

Guests Present: Cory Fisher, Stephanie Marsh, George Margoles, Suzy Pereira, Judd Spitzer, Stanley Brizz, Blaise Trettis, Denise Holden

Staff Present: Juanita Jackson, Anita Black, Melissa Brandt

Call to Order/Introductions: The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m., and everyone present made introductions.

County Staff update.

So far, CTS's contract expenditures have reached about \$93k. STEPS has expended \$57,647 of their contract. Circles of Care has been doing work but has not sent any invoices, so we unfortunately do not know what their expenditures look like. A meeting between county staff and CTS is set up for March 12th, 2025. There is also an opioid town hall meeting on March 5th, 2025, at the Cocoa Civic Center.

Public Comment:

Speaker 1- Suzy Pereira

Suzy Pereira with the Blue Plaid Society came and spoke on fentanyl and synthetic drug poisoning education in Florida, particularly in Brevard County. Fentanyl poisoning is the leading cause of death in Americans ages 18-45, with teenagers and children under 14 being the fastest-growing demographic affected. Over 67 adolescents ages 10-29 have died from this epidemic in the past six years alone, with over 65,000 young adults in their 20s. There has been a continuous growth in drug-related deaths, with fentanyl and synthetic drug misuse representing anywhere from 65-75% of deaths in

America depending on the year. Over 3 million lives have been lost to drug-related causes over these last six years, with Florida ranking in at number 2 across the board for total drug-related deaths, total deaths regarding any opioid death, and total deaths in fentanyl. In the last six years, we've encountered 31,962 deaths, and 120 of those deaths were from fentanyl. Out of 67 counties, Brevard County has been ranked top ten in the state for total drug-related, opioid-related, and fentanyl deaths. As for the crude rate, we are ranked top five in the state. That puts us in the top ten in the state total and top five in the state for crude rank year after year. 86% of deaths from opioids are specifically from illicit fentanyl. In terms of the teenage population, in the last six years, we have lost over 10,491 teens to drug-related deaths nationally. Florida ranks number 4 for overall drug-related deaths. 477 children's lives, between the ages of ten and nineteen, have been lost in those six years. When compared to the 10,491 lives, we have lost over 6,700 teens to this issue and 283 of those deaths were attributed to illicit fentanyl use. In-school education is extremely necessary to get those numbers down. Education about Florida's Good Samaritan law could benefit teens as 47% of the deceased nationwide were left by their friends because their friends were too scared to call emergency services for fear they would get in trouble. It could help teach these teens what to do if they're ever caught in a situation and need help. Suzy also talked about American young adults in their 20s. The state of Florida has seen over 6,202 overall drug-related deaths in ages 20-29 and of those, 4,140 were directly attributed to illicit fentanyl use. According to Suzy, Florida ranks number 2 in the nation for overall drug and fentanyl-related twenty-something deaths statewide, and statewide fentanyl accounts for 90% of drug poisoning deaths among young adults ages 20-29. Suzy shared that teenagers are ten times more likely to encounter a fatal drug-related death in their twenties than in their teens and the likely substance that they will encounter is fentanyl. According to the research, data represents a 980% increase in fatalities when transitioning from adolescence to young adulthood. Research suggests that fentanyl education at the teen level is crucial before adolescents enter adulthood where experimentation is more prevalent. Suzy suggested using the opioid abatement money to expand fentanyl education in middle schools, high schools, and colleges, emphasizing fentanyl's danger, its presence in fake pills and loose powders, and its unpredictability. The key takeaway is that early education and proactive prevention strategies are crucial once young people enter their twenties, especially because the likelihood of fatal overdose or poisoning increases drastically. Last, but not least, the program that they created has been successful as they have been invited into many schools such as Eastern Florida, Christian Temple, Odyssey Charter, Satellite High School, River View, Crosswinds, and more. They have been paying for these programs out of their own money, however, through the generosity of donors they are now looking to expand the program and hope to get a program going in Brevard County.

Speaker 2- Blaise Trettis

Blaise Trettis from the Brevard and Seminole County Public Defender's Office came to thank the committee and suggest a rewording to one part of the RFA draft. The part he suggested be reworded was the part where it talks about the support treatment and recovery courts. He suggested that it reads "support adult drug court, post adult post-adjudicatory drug courts, and

juvenile drug courts that provide Evans Bay.” That would eliminate treatment and recovery courts with those words. The important thing he wanted to get at was the post-adjudicatory drug court language since there is not a post-adjudicatory drug court in Brevard County at this time and there hasn’t been one for many years. He also commented on the 28-day program, which he says has nothing to do with treatment and is more of an insurance payment limitation that goes back decades but has no relation to effective treatment.

Speaker 3- George Margoles

George Margoles, the president and founder of Recovery Connections, pointed out to the committee that under the “approved uses” section of the RFA, it doesn’t mention transportation. He mentioned that transportation in terms of recovery is a key ingredient. He also mentioned that, from their perspective, they would want to submit an RFA for the response to that since they do provide dispatch services for Orange and Seminole County. His main question and request is for that to be considered as part of the RFA. He was told that it was included in the RFA as part of the services offered for recovery, but that it did not need to be spelled out specifically.

Determine Focus Areas for Year 2

The draft RFA was discussed and voted on during this meeting. The three approved uses are as follows: support people in treatment and recovery, address the needs of criminal justice-involved persons, and prevent misuse of opioids. Their areas of concentration are also as follows: provide recovery services such as counseling, peer support, housing, housing assistance, FDA-approved medication, and other programs. Support pre-trial services that connect those with opioid use disorder and other conditions to evidence-informed treatment, including MAT, and related services. Also, treatment and recovery courts that provide evidence-based options for persons with opioid use disorder and other conditions. Fund evidence-based programs in schools or evidence-informed school and community education programs and campaigns for students, families, and school employees, as well as school athletic programs parent-teacher, and student associations. Lastly, school-based or youth-focused programs or strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness in preventing drug misuse and seem likely to be effective in preventing the uptake and use of opioids.

A motion was made to approve the draft RFA and its approved uses and selections, and a second was made. The motion was passed and the draft RFA is moving forward.

The meeting adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

The date and time of the next meeting is unknown and is to be determined.