



Department of Community Support Services

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Helping People To Improve The Quality Of Their Lives

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Department of Community Support Services (DCSS)

Mission Statement

To provide comprehensive health and human services and establish partnerships to positively impact the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Vision Statement

Community Support Services will be recognized as a community partner and leader in program innovation by providing access to health and human services, which support the sustainable well-being of all residents.

Department Overview

The Department of Community Support Services (DCSS) provides human services and access to healthcare for Alachua County residents. The Department is supported by general fund dollars, grants and donations and is comprised of the following divisions programs and/or initiatives: Children's Services Advisory Board (CSAB), Community Health Offering Innovative Care and Educational Services (CHOICES), Community Agency Partnership Program (CAPP), Community Stabilization Program (CSP), Crisis Center, Foster Grandparent Program, Housing Services, Social Services, Veteran Services and the Victim Services and Rape Crisis Center. The DCSS also is charged with support for numerous state unfunded mandates and outside community partnership programs: Medicaid, Child Protective Team, Indigent Cremation, Health Care Responsibility Act and the Alachua County Medical Examiner's Office. The Department also has oversight responsibility for outside agency collaborative funding to the Alachua County Health Department and Meridian Behavioral Health.

Children Services Advisory Board

Phone-264-6745

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Tom Tonkavich, Assistant Director
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Marie Small, Program Manager
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Children's Services Advisory Board

Mission Statement

Evaluate the needs of the community and propose initiatives to benefit Alachua County's families and children, prenatal to age five, to ensure their health, safety, well-being, and preparedness for future success in school and life. The Board will also advise the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) regarding the creation of a dependent or independent Children's Services Council.

General Description

The BoCC established the Children's Services Advisory Board to:

- make a recommendation regarding the creation of a Children's Services Council as a dependent special district, or holding a referendum on the creation of an independent special district;
- recommend innovative programs for families with children from prenatal to age five
- identify the needs of young children and their families and how to meet those needs in a unified and comprehensive manner
- make recommendations to the BoCC regarding funding for programs serving families with young children
- work with other agencies to end overlapping services

The Advisory Board began meeting on August 10, 2016 and after reviewing a comprehensive needs assessment, identified three (3) priority projects:

- to ensure that every Alachua County baby is healthy through universal and voluntary Registered Nurse home visitations within the first two weeks following birth
- Ensure infant and early childhood mental health promotion, intervention, and treatment is available
- Improve access to high quality, developmentally appropriate early learning and care programs

The Advisory Board is in the process of building a collaboration made up of staff from UF Health and North Florida Regional Medical Center, along with WellFlorida, Inc., the Alachua County Health Department, and various midwives and birthing centers to design the Healthy Baby Home Visit program. Following this, the Board will focus on implementing efforts to enhance the quality of early learning and care programs. The Advisory Board intends to hold a collaborative event to learn more about the mental health and emotional support needs of Alachua County families with young children. This event will focus on identifying the types of additional services needed including those designed to help women with post-partum depression.

The Advisory Board's overarching goal is to ensure **every** Alachua County child is ready for kindergarten.

Community Agency Partnership Program (CAPP)/ CHOICES

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Community Agency Partnership Program (CAPP)

Mission Statement

To reduce the impact of poverty in Alachua County by funding non-profit agencies that provide services in the areas of social service, education and health care.

General Description

CAPP is a yearly competitive grant funding program for which 501(c)(3) organizations with a physical address in Alachua County may apply. Grant funds are designated by Alachua County government to ensure agencies' provision of services in various targeted areas of need.

Funding Priorities for FY2016-17

The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners has designated the following six categories as funding priorities: (1) Child Safety (6-18 yrs of age); (2) Children's Education (6-18 yrs.); (3) Disabilities / Health Maintenance; (4) Homelessness / Housing; (5) Hunger Relief; and (6) Seniors. This current year, \$1,150,000 was awarded to 27 non-profit agencies to conduct 37 programs to help alleviate the effects of poverty on our citizens and community.

Below are just some of the currently funded programs and their providers:

- Medical, Nursing and Dental Care Clinics; Provider: **ACORN Clinic**
- Weekend Hunger Backpack Program (for students); Provider: **Catholic Charities**
- Family Visitation Center (for abused children); Provider: **Children's Home Society**
- After School Care for Children of the Working Poor; **Early Learning Coalition**
- Senior Meals Program; Provider: **ElderCare**
- Developmentally Disabled Therapeutic Day Program; Provider: **ARC of Alachua County**
- Academic Success Program; Provider: **Boys and Girls Club of Alachua County**
- Shelter & Sustainable Independence for Homeless Families; Provider: **Family Promise**
- Gainesville Harvest (distribution of reclaimed food); Provider: **Bread of the Mighty Food Bank**
- Rapid Re-Housing Case Management; Provider: **Alachua County Coalition of the Homeless & Hungry**
- Alzheimer's Therapeutic Day Program; Provider: **ElderCare**
- Emergency Services Campus (for domestic violence victims); Provider: **Peaceful Paths**
- Critical Need Housing Repair; Provider: **Rebuilding Together North Central FL**
- Food Distribution; Housing/Case Management; Provider: **St. Francis House**

Community Health Offering Innovative Care & Educational Services (CHOICES)

Phone-264-6707

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Community Health Offering Innovative Care and Educational Services (CHOICES) Program

Mission Statement

To ensure the stable provision of quality health care services and facilitate access for indigent, medically challenged Alachua County residents by funding area agency health care providers.

General Description

CHOICES is a competitive grant funding program for which governmental and 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations with a physical address in Alachua County may apply. Grant funds are designated by Alachua County government to ensure agencies' provision of services in targeted areas of need.

Funding Priorities for FY2016-17

The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners has designated the following three categories as funding priorities: (1) Medical services; (2) Dental/Oral Health services; and (3) Behavioral/Mental Health services. This current year, \$465,000 was awarded to 5 non-profit and governmental agencies offering 8 programs that provide quality health care to eligible citizens in our community.

Below are currently funded programs and their providers:

- Staying Healthy (medical) and Saving Smiles (dental) programs; Provider: **ACORN Clinic**
- We Care Medical Services and We Care Oral Health Care programs; Provider: **Florida Department of Health in Alachua County**
- Medical and Mental and Behavioral Health programs; Provider: **Helping Hands Clinic, Inc.**
- Mobile Outreach Clinic; Provider: **University of Florida Department of Medicine**
- Health Prevention, Promotion and Education Program (Archer Family Health Care Clinic); Provider: **UF College of Nursing**

Community Stabilization

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Community Stabilization Program

Mission Statement

To reduce the cycle of dependency and provide services and resources vital for economically disadvantaged persons and communities to become self-sufficient.

General Description

The Alachua County Community Stabilization Division is divided into two programs: the Community Self Sufficiency Program (CSSP) and the Community Sustainability Program (CSP). The CSSP is designed to break the cycle of poverty and improve the quality of life of those citizens in need of supportive services. The CSSP provides support and guidance to the clients receiving services from divisions within Alachua County Department of Community Support Services and other County Departments. Through various community partnerships with businesses, faith based organizations, educational institutions and other social service providers the program links clients with appropriate resources. Common issues clients are assisted with include, job referral and employment services, GED preparation and exam, assistance applying for Food Stamps, Social Security Disability, and housing referrals.

The Community Sustainability Program (CSP) is responsible for identifying at risk communities and assisting them in becoming independent and sustainable. The program administers and assists with Medical Respite Care through a contract with St. Francis House, support to various Homeless and Hungry Initiatives, and a partnership with the Santa Fe College Adult Education Career Pathway Steering Committee. Additionally, staff serves as a liaison to the Empowerment Center Citizens Work Group and Empowerment Center Oversight Advisory Board. These two boards provide oversight related to Alachua County's involvement and coordination with the City of Gainesville for the Grace Marketplace homeless assistance center and Dignity Village homeless encampment.

Crisis Center

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Alexandra Martinez, Director

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The Crisis Center

Mission Statement:

To participate in the solution of any human problem whenever and wherever it occurs in Alachua County through emotional support, education, counseling and crisis intervention.

General Description:

In December 1969, Suicide and Crisis Intervention Services Organization was funded in Gainesville, Florida for a five-year period based on a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. When the federal grant ended in 1974, the organization continued to offer its services as an agency of Alachua County government and was renamed the Alachua County Crisis Center (CC). For over 45 years, the center has been responding to any citizen in distress in Alachua County.

The CC offers a full spectrum crisis and suicide intervention program. Through the effective use of highly trained volunteers and graduate students, the CC provides 24-hour/day telephone, face to face and outreach services to any Alachua County resident in emotional distress. Primary services include:

1. Telephone crisis and support counseling;
2. Emergency outreach interventions;
3. Face to face crisis counseling and short term psychotherapy;
4. Information and referral;
5. Community trauma response interventions;
6. Rumor Control;
7. Community education programs;
8. Professional consultations and trainings; and
9. Support services for survivors of suicide.

The CC offers most of its direct services through the use of highly trained volunteers and graduate students in mental health fields. During 2016, five professional staff coordinated and supervised the efforts of some 120 unpaid workers to offer the bulk of CC's services. The CC required over 50,000 hours to fully staff the programs, or 25 full-time equivalent staff.

During the last year, the CC responded to over 40,000 calls from our citizens, often in times of distress and great despair. The Center's face-to-face counselors offered over 4000 hours of counseling service to individuals, couples and families in our community this year.

Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)

Phone-264-6730

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Samantha Fleming

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Alachua County Foster Grandparent Program

Goals

- Enable low-income persons aged 55 and over to remain physically and mentally active and to enrich their lives through high quality volunteer experiences.
- Provide one-on-one mentoring, nurturing, and support to children with special or exceptional needs, or who are in circumstances that limit their academic, social, or emotional development.
- Meet critical community needs that are aligned with national performance measures and provide specific outcomes for the children served.

Eligibility

- Enjoy working with children
- Alachua County resident
- Persons age 55+
- Meet established income guidelines
- Level II Background Screening
- Provide medical clearance from physician
- Complete forty hours of pre-service training
- Able to serve a minimum of 15 hours per week



Benefits

- Be part of a supportive team that witnesses improvements and success in children
- Mental and physical benefits associated with volunteering
- Receive a non-taxable stipend payment of \$2.65 per hour
- Transportation provided or reimbursement for mileage
- Daily meal provided by host site
- Paid personal leave benefits
- Supplemental medical and automobile insurance
- Volunteer recognition
- Have opportunities to meet new people and enhance socialization
- Be part of a learning environment where volunteers share and gain new skills

Funding

The program receives federal grant funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service and has been supported locally by Alachua County Board of County Commissioners since 1973. The program also has an Advisory Council that spearheads fundraising activities.

Getting Involved

The program is always recruiting additional volunteers. If you are interested in enrolling or have questions, please contact the office at (352)264-6731.

Office of Housing (SHIP)

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Ralston Reodica

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Housing Programs

Mission Statement

To preserve and increase the availability of safe, decent and affordable housing opportunities for lower income residents of Alachua County.

General Description

Affordable housing, which can be homeownership or rental housing, is generally defined as monthly rents or monthly mortgage payments including taxes, insurance, and utilities that do not exceed 30% of a household's gross annual income. Housing programs assist families and individuals whose household income are at or below the very low (<50%), low (<80%), or moderate income (<120%) levels of the area median income. Programs are funded through State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), Florida Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and mortgage revenue bonds generated by the Alachua County Housing Finance Authority (HFA).

Down Payment Assistance Program

- First-time homebuyers qualified for a mortgage loan
- Purchasing a new or existing home in Alachua County, outside city limits of Gainesville
- Assistance for down payment, closing costs, and eligible repairs
- Assistance up to \$10,000 as a 0% interest, forgivable loan

Home Repair Program

- Homeowners in Alachua County, outside city limits of Gainesville
- Priority assistance to elderly and special needs households
- Owner occupancy, Primary residence
- Current on mortgage and property taxes
- Repairs include roof, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and accessibility
- Assistance up to \$20,000 as a 0% interest, forgivable loan

Housing Rehab/Replacement (if funded with CDBG grant)

- Homeowners in unincorporated Alachua County
- Owner occupancy, Primary residence
- Rehabilitation of substandard home or demo & replacement of dilapidated home

Rental Assistance (Administered by Social Services Division)

- One-time assistance for renters
- Rental security and utility deposits, rent subsidies for homeless/special needs

Rental Development

- Gap financing for Non-profit and For-profit developers
- Construction or preservation of affordable rental housing
- Other Affordable Housing Incentives

Office of Social Services

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Sarai Cabrera

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Social Services

Mission Statement

To serve as a safety net and to enhance the health and productivity of low-income Alachua County residents by providing information and referrals, access to health services, and short-term financial assistance.

Social Services is committed to helping all Alachua County citizens reach or return to a state of self-sufficiency by providing temporary assistance through a variety of programs.

General Description

Alachua County Division of Social Services (ACDSS) offers general and medical assistance programs to low-income Alachua County residents, who are not eligible for other government assistance programs. ACDSS is committed to assisting individuals, either through the direct provision of services or by referral to other agencies. The target population is Alachua County residents who are at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

Emergency Financial Assistance Programs

- **Housing and Utility Services**
 - Eviction Prevention (rent or mortgage assistance)
 - Utility Assistance
 - Rental Security and Utility Deposits
- **General Assistance**
 - Urgent Special Needs
 - Public Transportation (bus passes)

Essential Services

- Animal services (fee waiver)
- Health Care Responsibility Act (HCRA) – (eligibility determination)
- Indigent Burial and Cremations
- Solid waste assessment (eligibility determination)

Health Services

- Alachua Cares (primary care and prescription services – includes labs and diagnostics)
- Diagnostic services
- Prescription assistance
- Medical supplies
- Vision exams and/or glasses

Victim Services & Rape Crisis Center

Phone-264-6760

Toll free-866-252-5439

Fax -264-6774

Laura Kalt, Director

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Victim Services & Rape Crisis Center

Mission Statement:

To diminish the impact of sexual violence and facilitate recovery to victims and survivors of violent crime by providing 24/7 counseling and emergency outreach.

General Description:

The Victim Services & Rape Crisis Center is a community-based victim service provider and certified rape crisis center (per Florida Statute 794.055 (d) with offices in Alachua, Bradford and Union Counties. The agency's service area consists of rural and urban populations, and services are available to anyone who is the victim of a crime, reported or unreported, in the service area. In addition to the community-based offices in three Counties, the Center partners with the City of Gainesville Police Department to employ advocates that are based inside the Detectives Division at the Gainesville Police Department.

The agency provides comprehensive services to victims and survivors of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, assault, battery, robbery, and homicide. All services are free and confidential for the crime victim and the family members of crime victims. The provision of services, such as 24/7 helpline counseling, emergency outreach response, criminal justice support/accompaniment, face-to-face counseling and therapy is not limited to whether the case moves forward in the criminal justice system. Advocate counselors are on-call 24/7 to respond to requests from any local law enforcement agency or hospital to assist and support victims of violent crime by responding to the location where services are needed.

Office of Veteran Services

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Kim Smith, Director

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Veterans Services

Mission Statement:

To provide professional assistance and advocacy to the Veterans of Alachua County, their eligible dependents and survivors in securing all entitled/eligible Veterans' benefits earned through honorable military service.

Goal:

To assist Alachua County Veterans, their dependents and survivors to efficiently and effectively in applying for any Veteran Benefits that they may qualify for.

Services:

Veteran Service Officers maintain accreditation through the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs to assist Veterans, their eligible dependents and survivors in applying for Veteran's benefits. Veteran Service Officers work as advocates for our clients and also assist in ordering supporting records from various locations and work intensively to develop Fully Developed Claims for benefits.

Below are some of the benefits Veterans, eligible dependents and survivors can receive assistance in applying for.

- **Adaptive equipment:** grants for home improvements for severely disabled
- **Aid and Attendance:** financial assistance for those confined to home/hospital/nursing home
- **Appeals:** guidance in appealing any decision made by the VA
- **Automobile Grants:** grants for automotive equipment for severely disabled
- **Burial Benefits:** assistance with burial/plot expenses
- **Clothing Allowance:** annual clothing assistance for qualified service connected disabled veterans
- **Death/Widows Pension:** financial assistance for surviving spouses of wartime veterans
- **Dependents Benefits:** extra benefits for children of disabled veterans
- **Disability Compensation:** financial compensation for those injured in line of duty
- **Education Benefits:** guidance in applying for higher education benefits
- **Home Loans:** assistance in applying for VA certificate of eligibility
- **Hospital/Medical Care:** assistance in enrolling with VA Medical Care
- **Pension Benefits:** financial assistance for wartime era vets
- **Vocational Rehabilitation:** training for employment/education
- **Tax Exemption:** assistance in ordering supporting documents used to qualify for various Veteran tax exemptions.
- **Triage and Referral:** Triage and referral to area resources by need.