



# 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 (CSS)**

## **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), Cooperative Agreements to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI), Crisis Center, Foster Grandparent Program, Housing Services, Social Services, Veteran Services and the Victim Services and Rape Crisis Center. The DCSS 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 has oversight responsibility for outside agency collaborative funding to the Alachua County Health Department and Meridian Behavioral Health. Additionally, the Department provides staff support to several BoCC Advisory Boards including the Children's Services Advisory Board, Empowerment Center Oversight Board, Health Care Advisory Board, Veteran Services Advisory Board, and Victim Services Advisory Board. The Department also provides staff support to the newly established Independent Taxing District, the Children's Trust of Alachua County.

**CABHI Program**  
**(Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals)**

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## **CABHI Program**

### **(Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals)**

#### **Mission Statement:**

Increase Alachua County's capacity to coordinate and provide the following components to adults, youth, and families who are experiencing homelessness and are affected by serious mental illness, substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders:

- Outreach and engagement of the homeless population
- Evidence-based behavioral health treatment,
- Permanent supportive housing,
- Supportive employment,
- Peer support, and
- Other individualized recovery support services.

#### **General Description:**

The Alachua County Department of Community Support Services, working in partnership with Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. and other key community partners, implemented the Alachua County Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI) program as part of our ongoing commitment to increase service capacity for our area's homeless populations, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. CABHI expands our local capacity to provide comprehensive, evidence-based treatment and services for adult individuals, unaccompanied youth and families who are experiencing homelessness in conjunction with their own or a family member's mental illness, substance use or co-occurring disorders.

Through an evidence-based Care Coordination model, a multidisciplinary team offers comprehensive permanent housing, treatment, benefits assistance and other recovery supports based on each person's strengths, choice and needs. The primary objectives of this collaborative, community-based program are to increase housing tenure, support continued treatment gains, and, as a result, promote positive recovery outcomes for the individuals and families receiving services.

# Children Services Advisory Board

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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, implemented three (3) innovative projects:

- The NewboRN, Nurse home visiting program offers every woman delivering a baby that was delivered and will reside in Alachua County the opportunity for a nurse home visit within about one week of delivery. This is to assure the health, safety, and well-being of both the mother and infant. Home visits are completed by either a Registered Nurse or a Certified Mid-wife.
- The CHILD Center is a project designed to transformative learning practices for the professionals working in the field of early learning and care. Working in partnership with the UF Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, staff at the CHILD Center develop and learn new teaching and classroom management techniques. The Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County working with UF Anita Zucker Center staff help transfer the new practices developed at the CHILD Center to other early learning and care centers in Alachua County
- Healthy social and emotional development is critical to a young person's success. Family supports are also critical to overcoming the impacts associated with traumatic Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) associated with child neglect and abuse, domestic violence, and substance abuse. Working together, Meridian Behavioral Healthcare and Partnership for Strong Families have staff at five early care and education centers located throughout Alachua County. The staff include licensed mental health clinicians working in the classrooms to help the other professional's response best to disruptive classroom behaviors. Additionally the licensed clinicians work with children and families to assure healthy social and emotional development. Partnership for Strong Families staff are there to assist families with needed supports.

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 competitive grant program for which non-profit, 501(c)3 organizations with a physical address in Alachua County may apply. The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners has designated the following six program 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 nearly \$1,288,000 was awarded to 29 non-profit agencies to conduct 39 programs to help alleviate the effects of poverty in our community.

Below are a representative sample of 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 and Alzheimer's Therapeutic Program; Provider: **ElderCare**
- Developmentally Disabled Therapeutic Day Program; Provider: **ARC of Alachua County**
- Spirited Girls! Program; Provider: **PACE Center for Girls**
- Shelter & Sustainable Independence for Homeless Families; Provider: **Family Promise**
- Gainesville Harvest (distribution of reclaimed food); Provider: **Bread of the Mighty Food Bank**
- Emergency Services Campus and Child and Youth Programs (for domestic violence victims and their children); Provider: **Peaceful Paths**
- Critical Home Repair Program; Provider: **Rebuilding Together North Central FL**
- Homeless Housing, Case Management, and Food; Provider: **St. Francis House**

# Community Health Offering Innovative Care & Educational Services (CHOICES)

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## **(CHOICES) Program**

### **Community Health Offering Innovative Care and Educational Services**

#### **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 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 for targeted areas of need.

#### **Funding Priorities**

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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Marie Small, Program Manager

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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 serve 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. Staff also serve as the liaison for the Children's Services Advisory Board and its mission to assure every Alachua County Child is ready for success in kindergarten.

## Crisis Center

Phone-264-6785

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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:

- Telephone crisis and support counseling;
- Emergency outreach interventions;
- Face to face crisis counseling and short term psychotherapy;
- Information and referral;
- Community trauma response interventions;
- Rumor Control;
- Community education programs;
- Professional consultations and trainings; and
- 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 2018, six professional staff coordinated and supervised the efforts of some 120 unpaid workers to offer the bulk of CC's services. The CC required over 40,000 hours to fully staff the programs, or 25 full-time equivalent staff.

During the last year, the CC responded to over 44,000 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.

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# Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)

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Satori Days

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# *Alachua County Foster Grandparent Program*

## ■ **Goals:**

- Develop opportunities for senior citizens willing to share their experience, abilities, and skills for the betterment of their community and themselves to service children and youth in their communities
- 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
- Be in reasonably good health
- Complete forty hours of pre-service training
- Able to serve a minimum of 5 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**

For more information on how you may become a Foster Grandparent volunteer or know of someone who may be interested in volunteering please contact the Foster Grandparent Program office at (352)264-6731 or email us at [fgpmail@alachuacounty.us](mailto:fgpmail@alachuacounty.us)

## Office of Housing (SHIP)

Phone-337-6284

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Stephen Weeks

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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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# **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
  - **General Assistance**
    - Urgent Special Needs
    - Public Transportation (bus passes)
- **Rapid Rehousing Program**
  - Case Management
  - Deposits
  - Rental Assistance (RRH only)
- **Essential Services**
  - Animal services (eligibility determination)
  - Health Care Responsibility Act (HCRA) – (eligibility determination)
  - Indigent Burial and Cremations
  - Assessment Hardship Exemption for County Solid Waste/Refuse, Fire, and Stormwater (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

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Fax -264-6774

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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, stalking, 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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# **Veterans Services**

## **Mission Statement:**

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

## **Goals:**

To assist Alachua County Veterans, their dependents and survivors to efficiently and effectively apply for Veteran Benefits.

## **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, 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.