

**City of Gainesville Five-Year Consolidated Plan
Stakeholder Meeting: Social Service Providers
March 18, 2013 | 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

Thomas Center
302 NE 6th Avenue, Building A, Spanish Court
Gainesville, Florida



MEETING SUMMARY

City of Gainesville is in the process of drafting a Five-Year Consolidated Plan for FY 2013/2014-2017/2018 to create a strategic and unified vision for HUD funding over the next five years. In order to develop this vision, City of Gainesville conducted a series of stakeholder meetings during March 2013 to collect input and comments related to the Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

On March 18, 2013, the City conducted a stakeholder meeting at the Thomas Center, 302 NE 6th Avenue at Spanish Court. Approximately eight individuals representing social and public service interests attended the meeting. Organizations represented included but were not limited to:

- Three Rivers Legal
- No Limit Outreach Foundation
- Early Learning Coalition of Alachua City
- Meridian Behavioral Healthcare
- Child Advocacy Center
- Helping Hands Clinic

In an effort to provide an environment that would allow for all attendees to be heard a three tier approach was conducted. The first was to present an educational PowerPoint which provided background on the purpose of drafting a Five-Year Plan, which activities and area are eligible for HUD funding, and the schedule that City of Gainesville will follow to adopt the Five-Year Plan in 2013. The second was a questionnaire asking participants about their experiences working with City of Gainesville to administer HUD funds both in the past and present. The third was an open discussion where participants were asked to discuss issues and concerns publicly.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire allowed for attendees to convey their familiarity with HUD programs administrated by City of Gainesville and to provide input on obstacles to and priorities for fund administration over the next five years. The questionnaire included five questions in an open-ended format. Seven individuals returned questionnaires during the Social Services stakeholder meeting.

Challenges identified through the questionnaire included barriers to employment, homelessness and a lack of trust between the City and its homeless population, lack of free mental health counseling and healthcare, lack of coordination/information exchange to enhance services to clients, human trafficking and child abuse/neglect, lack of job training and placement, and overall poverty.

Priorities identified through the questionnaire included affordable and safe housing, employment assistance, family justice and legal aid, mental health/substance abuse counseling (primary, triage and behavioral healthcare), development of a system for single point of entry for clients and information exchange between providers (case management), develop a co-located family safety center, help for homeless adults, and "safety net" skills including financial counseling and assistance.

Open Discussion

During the discussion, participants were asked to speak openly regarding issues and concerns affecting their respective stakeholder group. Participants were very engaged in this portion of the meeting. A number of issues were brought to City of Gainesville's attention. These issues are listed below, specific to the Social Services stakeholders:

- Healthcare
 - Priorities:
 - Support structure for medical, psychological and behavioral services
- Safety and Advocacy
 - Priorities:
 - Collocated Family Safety Center (strategic initiative)
 - Navigable/user-friendly, one-stop with essential services in single location
 - Child advocacy services
- Employment and Legal Assistance
 - Priorities:
 - Job training/job placement
 - Legal services (e.g. prevent discrimination based on arrest record)
 - Support and advocacy; follow-up particularly important for veterans
 - Helping veterans to navigate social security, supplemental income, disability, etc.
 - Building trust between providers and veterans to avoid homelessness
- Capacity to Facilitate Systems of Care
 - Priorities:
 - Broader case management approach (e.g. continuum of care) that "works"
 - Consolidated forms, etc. through single portal or database
 - Assistance to person without internet or other means of accessing essential services (e.g. customer service venue)
 - Systems that avoid duplicative steps and focus on what people actually need to move toward self-sufficiency

Conclusion

Although there are many issues that the Social Service Providers stakeholders felt are important, there are a few items that were stressed throughout the meeting as being of the highest priority:

- Healthcare and Mental Health Counseling
- Family Safety and Advocacy
- Employment and Legal Assistance
- Capacity to Facilitate Systems of Care

For questions regarding the Five-Year Consolidated Plan, please contact John Wachtel at 352.393.8565 or wachteljs@cityofgainesville.org.

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More information can be found at www.cityofgainesville.org