



**Together in Partnership
Steering Committee Meeting Report
Monday, July 28th, 2025, 9:30 a.m. -11:00 a.m.
Brevard County Government Center, Viera
Commission Chambers, 1st Floor, Building C**

Members Present: Lisa Bradley, Chana Speir, Sharona Franklin, Traci Klinkbeil, Amanda Walker, lean Bandish, MeriBeth Misch, Kaylin Woods, Patricia Seibert, Phil Scarpelli, Caroline Joseph-Paul, Maria Bledsoe, Raina Walker, Gina Iannone, Omar Bohler, Gabrielle Bargerstock, Doug Reynolds, Rebecca Thibert

At-Large Members Present: Lindsay Gregg, Sarah Slone, Terrell Melvin, Jeanie Raciti, Davine Vincent, Christina McPherson, Abigail Jones, Ruby Washington, Jessica Miles, Laticia Griffin

Guests Present: Bennie Perry, George Margoles, Steve Dalsemer, Denise Devlin, Laura McCarthy, Johnette Gindling, Elmer Espinal, April Smith, Elizabeth Fears, Lauren Miller, Bonnie Ferguson, Jonathan Weiss

Call to Order/Introductions: The meeting was called to order by Rebecca Thibert at 9:30 a.m. Introductions were made by everyone present.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made to approve both the March 24th, 2025, and May 19th, 2025, minutes, pending changes, and a second was made. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Updates: No chairman updates

A presentation by Melissa Brandt was made regarding the Opioid Abatement Funding. Another presentation by Recovery Connections of Central Florida regarding how they got started and what they are all about was presented right after.

Together in Partnership Reports:

1. **Family Strengthening/Infant Mental Health Task Force/Healthy Start Coalition:** The Child Safety Initiatives' annual action plan is in its final review phase. They are still looking for individuals who are interested in reviewing said plan, and they welcome any additional feedback. Healthy Families reported that they just had a state site visit, and they are very proud to report that they performed very well and are hitting their metrics on virtually all of the state measurements. As for Healthy Start, their online trainings have officially launched. All programs are still open, there's no wait lists, and they are accepting referrals.
2. **Child Abuse Prevention Task Force (CAPTF):** No representative present.
3. **Brevard Prevention Coalition (BPC):** They are finishing up programming for their I Choose Me initiative in both Brevard and Seminole for the summer. They've served 14 sites and are now preparing for the school year. They were also able to expand out and work with the YMCA in one of the cities in California, and did an I Choose Our Activity with the kids, which went very well. They did a guided painting with them and showed them how to express themselves creatively.

For their Better Without It program, they are looking for schools to partner with. They are looking to start providing substance use prevention service tables for prom, homecoming, graduation, and pep rallies, where they can educate the students/youth on the dangers that are out in the world, what to look for, how to stay away from substances, and how to have a good time without drugs or alcohol.

They plan on rolling this out this school year and every year thereafter.

For their Better Without It drug diversion program year two stats, they've received 302 referrals and a success rate of 95%. This success rate is for drug and THC-related expulsions only. The overall success rate, which includes non-drug-related offenses that led to non-completion, is 86%.

With their Move into Light initiative, they have a new Move into Light website, which can be found at www.moveintolight.org. It has all of the things that they're working on in the community, as well as their upcoming events. They were also able to work with Brevard County Jails and provide addiction education classes. They've done two so far and plan on putting more on the books.

They are having their second event for their Do It for P civic group on September 20th in Melbourne from 10 AM to 2 PM at Carver Park. It will be called Do It for P Community Health Fair. It will be in

collaboration with Burrell Medical School's Students' National Medical Association. They will be providing free examinations (i.e., blood pressure checks, blood sugar checks, wound care, and vision screening) and education for everyone who attends.

They are hiring for a Community Outreach Specialist in Titusville. Stanley was selected again to be a hope ambassador for the 2026 RX and Elicit Drug Summit. He now also serves on the advisory council, which helps spotlight our region and build national connections. They are also currently working on renaming their organization as they now serve Seminole County and have services used across the state and beyond.

4. **Brevard Homeless Coalition (BHC):** On August 7th, they have one of their continuum of care general membership meetings. This one is going to be an agency-to-agency resource fair. So, this is an opportunity for agencies to come together to learn more about each other, to connect, and to share resources. The resource fair will be during their typical meeting time, which is 9:30 AM to 11 AM. It'll be at the center for collaboration in the Space Coast Health Foundation building.
5. **Family Partnerships of Central Florida:** They are seeing trends, particularly in Central Florida and within Brevard County, in the lesser of number of children coming into care for the last two and a half months. They are also seeing a smaller number of children who are currently in out-of-home care at an all-time low as well. They have been in an ongoing state since their transition, which is now a year and a half since they transitioned from a singular county to four counties, and constituting two circuits. They've decided that they were going to re-engineer the designation of case management organizations to one per county. In Brevard County, they will retain Family Allies, which has been their case management agency for about the last decade, and they have also been working with Camelot Community Care, Thompson Family Services, and Gulf Coast Jewish Services for the Tri-County area. They are looking to restructure community advocacy boards to be representative of each county, to be unique to the county, for the county, by the county. They will be looking to recruit people from the community. Their goal is to have small but focused groups that are going to be working on a couple of things, such as bringing awareness to the dependency world, child protection, making sure that kids are being looked at in a protective factor, making sure that their well-being needs are being met, etc.
They've been working with Wings of Grace, Ways for Life, and a developer in the organization, and they are establishing, right now, 24 units for youth who are aging out of foster care. It is looking so promising that the developer now wants to reinvest another SO-plus units right here in Brevard County. It's going to be focused on a

transitional model, so that just for a couple of years, they get them grounded, and then they move on, so that other waves of youth who are coming in are going to have placements that are available to them. It will also have an overlay of service oversight and mentorship and the likes, because they need that as well. They are actively seeking mentors as well for things such as life skills, finances, etc.

6. **Career Source Brevard Flagler Volusia:** The NextGen program serves young adults between the ages of 16 to 24. During the summer, they do have a specific summer program that serves juniors and high and seniors in high school, but the NextGen program is a year-round program. They also have recovery works. This is a program that is specifically designed for individuals who've been directly or indirectly impacted by opioid or substance misuse disorder. They have a total of three people enrolled so far. The program is designed to serve 39 individuals, though.

The other program they have is a non-custodial parent employment program. It's for individuals who've been mandated to pay child support. They could be unemployed or underemployed and experiencing difficulties. They do not pay for their child support but instead offer services that lead towards training, retraining, and employment.

There is an AARP Back to Work SO-plus program, which is directly through the AARP Foundation and has been in place since 2015, and they serve individuals, both men and women, or anyone who needs the service as long as they're 50 years old or more. They provide workshops on how to be competitive in today's market by helping them create and launch a successful job campaign. They also offer one-on-one assistance to help them secure new employment or better employment. We also have a 24/7 online platform learning system called Skill Up Brevard Flagler Volusia. When you go to their website, just look for Skill Up. You do not have to be registered to look for work. It has over 7,000 courses, so there's a course on there for everyone to be able to improve their skills, whether it's Microsoft Office, some industry-specific courses, and some of those courses are also offered in Spanish. They're also partnering with United Way to offer money management and budgeting classes for their customers.

7. **Domestic Violence Task Force:** **update came prior to the meeting via email**

They met on June 12, 2025, and had a speaker, Serene Harbor's IFP Project attorney Jason Bagwell, who spoke about Injunctions for Protection. Their next meeting is Thursday, August 21, 2025, from 12 pm-1 pm in the Florida Room of Building C, Viera Government

Complex. They had moved the meeting back a week from the usual date to accommodate the Space Coast Human Trafficking Task Force's Symposium on 8/14/25 at the EFSC Cocoa Campus.

8. **Florida Department of Children & Families:** On August 5th, there will be a child and family well-being council meeting from 6 to 8 PM, either on Teams or in person. Go to myflfamilies.com to find out. This month will be Foster Youth Voice Month. They usually do have foster youth at these meetings, and they do participate and give updates. On August 8th, they have their behavioral health interagency collaboration. This is through the Department of Children and Families, our substance abuse and mental health program, as well as the agency for healthcare administration. It will take place on Teams. August 14th is the Space Coast Human Trafficking Task Force's annual symposium for human trafficking. It will be at Eastern Florida State College from 7:30 AM to 12 PM. There'll be breakout sessions, and it is free to everybody.

They also have the family and children's summit that they have annually again in Orlando. This is a statewide summit, but they do have folks there from all over the country. It is September 3rd to the 5th,

9. **Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ):** They are really trying to focus on the families that are overwhelmed and unable to take care of their children. These are also known as lockouts, where they have families that, based on a delinquency issue, a kid comes into the juvenile screening unit, and they are screened, and then, for whatever reason, the family doesn't want to pick them up. They are seeing a growing number of these situations. They try to find placement for them; it could be with a relative, it could be at a respite site, but it is a growing concern, and they're seeing it more and more every day. They're really trying to brainstorm and find out ways to support the families and to support the systems that support the family, in order to make sure that those kids are taken care of and don't end up homeless.

They just met on July 24th for their juvenile justice circuit advisory board meeting, which is a quarterly meeting and is also a circuit-wide meeting. Their two other committees also met: their student achievement committee and their pre-arrest delinquency committee, which both meet a month prior to the main meeting. They are finding that 90% of domestic violence cases are being diverted and are being left with no file. Giving pre-arrest delinquency citations and having kids go through the pre-arrest delinquency citation program are optimal for this situation to avoid seeing the same kids/families in the system again. When these kids are arrested in the community, only

34% of those kids are getting that pre-arrest delinquency citation, so it brings the numbers for Brevard's overall numbers down to 44%, which is well below the state average. The statute requires any circuit underperforming in utilization to report to the legislator. We fortunately report above that, because Seminole County is looped in with us, and Seminole County is operating well above the 70%. With them being at 77%, they bring our numbers up. Although they don't bring Brevard's numbers above 70%, which means we still report to the legislature as a result, they are bringing Brevard's numbers up.

What that means is that the data is showing that those kids are still getting diverted despite the domestic violence. They're still getting diverted to diversion. So, the large push of the juvenile justice circuit advisory board is really to focus on that because the memorandum of agreement is so old that most of the folks that signed that agreement no longer exist and now that we have that standing data to show that those kids are getting that pre-arrest diversion program after the fact, it leads us to believe that that if we gave it to them before the fact, we will not see those kids because again, as that trajectory goes, that recidivism rate also rises as well. That's one thing that the juvenile justice circuit advisory board is really focused on.

They are also focused on student achievement, hence the student achievement committee. They recently launched a SNAP program, which stands for stop now and plan. The grant for that was awarded to Crosswinds Youth Services. It helps the kids who have a huge impulsivity issue, anger management, and it deals with anti-bullying; but a lot of the kids, especially in the delinquency system and especially in the dependency system, are overwhelmed, and they have issues with impulsivity. **SNAP** is driven to focus on that. It is an evidence-based model that really uses a tablet interface that kids can kinetically respond to on an anonymous basis. It is a 13-week program that allows them to integrate with it. The facilitator gets those responses, and they guide the discussion based on that. We've seen about three different previews of it. Currently, they have a group going on in Brevard County, and they have a group going on in Seminole County, and they're getting ready to launch two other groups with a third group that's going to be an all-female group because they're gender specific groups. They're in their fourth week for their first group, and they're getting ready to launch their second group. They don't just do it at Crosswinds either. Wherever the large population of referrals comes from, they create a wait list, and they do it there. Right now, they're focused on the Palm Bay area, and then they have one going on in Titusville right now. They're going to try to do one in Cocoa based on that number of kids as well.

10. **National Center for Innovation and Excellence:** They had their 2025 National Wrap Around the World Conference in June. It was

June 25th through the 27th. A lot of practitioners from all over the country came and learned more about wraparound. Wraparound is a way or a methodology of working with families to include their support. They have family voice and choice. It is their choice how they want to work with the organization. Brevard Cares utilizes wraparound to work with families here in Brevard County. They are working with Brevard Cares on the Brevard Behavioral Health Expansion Grant, and it's been going well. They're about to wrap it up in September for their first year. It is a 4-year grant that is designed to help families who are impacted by children with serious emotional disturbances gain access to evidence-based mental health services, services that are really going to help these families move forward in a good way, so that they don't have them going into other systems. Prevention is the purpose. They're about to wrap that whole year up, and the team is currently serving 51 families.

They are partnering with the real church to offer parent support to three underserved areas. It's going to be held at apartment complexes: Oak Meadows in Cocoa, Candlewood Estates in Cocoa, and Tropical Manor in Merritt Island. There'll be different topics held at each of those apartment complexes, and they will also offer tutoring for the children. Families are able to self-refer. They do work with the CARES team that does some of their referrals, but they do have a process where families can call if a family has a child who is either at risk of or has a serious emotional disturbance.

Unfinished Business: Under Sheriff Douglas Waller has been appointed as a member to the tip committee as well as the recommendations committee, with Brett Carman as his alternate.

Recommendations for the recommendations committee member selection. 5 members were appointed in addition to the sheriff's office members.

New Business: No new business.

Public Comments:

Laura McCarthy - The Brevard Recovery Fest is coming September 13th at the Melbourne Auditorium. She also got to do a crisis intervention training with the Seminole County Sheriff's Department, and she trained 35 new deputies on the neuroscience of addiction and understanding the disease model. She's going to go back and do trauma-informed care with them as well, with their advanced CIT training.

Their recent mental health event was a huge success, and they are talking about doing it again next May for National Mental Health Month.

April Smith - April is the founder and director of Forever Angels of Brevard, a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Their mission is to support families who have suffered the unimaginable loss of a child, sibling, parent, or close loved one. They also walk alongside individuals battling substance use disorders and mental health challenges, ensuring they are not alone in their journey toward healing and recovery. At Forever Angels of Brevard, they believe that no one in our community should have to grieve in silence or struggle without support. They provide compassionate outreach, memorial services, grief counseling, resources, and advocacy for those seeking sobriety. They offer tangible help assisting individuals who cannot afford extended rehabilitation and/or life-saving medications such as Brixadi, Sublocade, and Vivitrol.

They are actively working with the Drew McGuire Foundation to establish a relapse prevention, dual diagnosis, and sober living facility: a vital step in addressing the root causes of addiction and providing long-term, sustainable care for those in need. Their work also includes raising awareness and providing life-saving tools by distributing free Naloxone, CPR responder kits, and offering hands-on training for overdose response. Their goal is to place Naloxone stands throughout Brevard County in high-traffic public areas equipped with medication, Narcan, and instructional guides so anyone can save a life when seconds matter. They're engaging with Brevard County schools and jail systems and aligning their efforts with programs like Fentanyl Fathers, Scared Straight, and Victoria's Voice Foundation to educate shared life experiences and prevent future tragedies. They're having their second annual Forever Angels of Brevard bike poker run taking place on Saturday, August 30th, in partnership with Space Coast Harley-Davidson on Palm Bay Road. Kickstands go up at 10:00 a.m. The event will be joined by a strong network of community partners and vendors including but not limited to Circles of Care, Brevard Prevention Coalition, One Blood Mobile Donation Center, Project Noel, Texas Roadhouse, Texas Pictures Documentary Team, Free Naloxone, CPR Training Stations, Sandy Marx - a mom who provides handmade blankets for individuals in recovery, the Drew McGuire Foundation, American Legion Writers, and since the DEA summit, the Brevard County Sheriff's Office will be joining as well. Additionally, Texas Pictures documentary on YouTube will be filming powerful documentaries here in Brevard for a second time on August 28th and 29th, highlighting stories of loss, healing, and hope. Forever Angels is expanding across Florida, including Pulk and Santa Rosa counties, and into East, West, and Central Tennessee. As such, they will soon become Forever Angels of America with Forever Angels of Brevard standing as the founding chapter.

Terrell Melvin (Brevard Prevention Coalition) - The opioid task force meeting will be on Wednesday, July 30th. It is virtual, and it's going to be from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM. At that meeting, Lotus Behavioral Health will be presenting on their program for adolescents, boys, and girls in need of residential treatment for substance use and co-occurring mental health conditions. Also at the meeting, Stanley will be giving other updates related to the opioid abatement and substance misuse prevention in our region.

Motion to adjourn with a second.

The meeting adjourned at 11:11 a.m. The next meeting will be on **September 29th, 2025, at 9:30 am**, at 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Building C, Commission Chambers, 1st Floor.

 9/29/25
Leigh McElroy Date