

MEETING OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COUNCIL (PSC) FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE, MENTAL HEALTH, & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

A meeting of the Public Safety Council for Criminal Justice, Mental Health, & Substance Abuse (hereafter referred to as the PSC) was held on Friday, November 22, 2024, at 12:00 PM in Conference Room B1-501 of the County Administration Building B, 1800 27th Street, Vero Beach, Florida. You may hear an audio of the meeting and review the agenda on the IRC website at www.ircgov.com/Boards/PSC/2024.

PSC Members Present

Eric Flowers, Chairman, Indian River County Sheriff
Ann Berner, SE Florida Behavioral Health Network (SEFBHN)
Suzanne Caudell, Director, Comprehensive Offender Rehab & Education
Kent Campbell, IRC Sheriff's Office (IRCSO) Deputy Chief Correctional Officer
Suzanne Caudell, Director, Comprehensive Offender Rehab & Education
Carrie Lester, Substance Awareness Center of IRC
Shaun Leydon, Treasure Coast Community Health
Rayme Nuckles, Treasure Coast Homeless Services (TCHS)
Virginia Keating (for Joseph Cracchiola), FL Department of Corrections
Tony Barcellona, Substance Awareness Center
Cynthia Cox (for Charles A. Schwab), Chief Circuit Court Judge
Justin Barenborg (for Diamonda Litty), Public Defender's Office

PSC Members Absent

David E. Currey, Vice Chairman, Chief of Vero Beach Police Department
Thomas Bakkedahl, State Attorney
Nikhol Primm, County Judge
Mike Davis, FL Dept of Corrections
Dedilia Finlayson, Detention Facility Director, FL DJJ
Joseph Flescher, Commissioner
Carol Martin, Director of Consumer Services, Mental Health Assoc. of IRC
Nathan Peterson, Chief Probation Officer, FL DJJ
Valerie Smith, National Alliance on Mental Illness
William Wims, President/CEO, New Horizons Treasure Coast
Nicole Menz, County Judge

Others Present

Vicki Soule', Treasure Coast Community Health Inc.
Mike Cianci, Dynamic Life Vero
Wendy Parent, Circuit 19 Court
Virginia Keating, Florida Department of Corrections
Bill Long, Florida State Attorney Office

IRC Staff

Chris Hicks, County Attorney

Ashley Brown, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Chairman Flowers called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm; a quorum was present.

Approval of the PSC Minutes for May 24, 2024 & August 23, 2024

ON A MOTION BY Suzanne Caudell, SECONDED by Rayme Knuckles, the members voted unanimously (12-0) to approve the May 24, 2024 & August 23, 2024 minutes.

Status & Performance Updates for Mental Health Court Program (S. Leydon)

Shaun Leydon, Project Director of Treasure Coast Community Health, provided updates to those in attendance. Regarding budgetary matters, the hospital district has approved the budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Current efforts are focused on collaborating with the hospital district and participating organizations to determine performance measures.

Meetings are scheduled with the hospital district's personnel and auditor to align on specific data points and measures of success. A subgroup, suggested by a council member in a prior meeting, may convene to ensure committee-aligned metrics are identified and tracked effectively.

They are focusing on revisiting and streamlining housing agreements with group home providers to ensure consistency and functionality. Additionally, transitional housing agreements are performing well; however, evaluations will aim to standardize expectations across all group homes.

Mr. Leydon shared that the next Mental Health Court program graduation is scheduled for December 17, 2024. All members are invited to attend, following a successful prior event featuring community appreciation and participation.

They are continuing to develop performance metrics in collaboration with stakeholders. In addition, they are reviewing housing agreements in Q1 of the new fiscal year to improve consistency. Mr. Leydon's updates concluded with acknowledgment of ongoing program efforts and anticipation of the December graduation event.

Opioid/ SUD/ Co-Occurring Needs Assessment-Qualitative Data Report (C. Lester)

Ms. Lester, Executive Director of the Substance Awareness Center of Indian River County, gave a presentation on the Opioid/ SUD/ Co-Occurring Needs Assessment-Qualitative Data Report.

Needs Assessment Overview:

- The final copy of the needs assessment, developed in collaboration with CareCG, will soon be publicly available.
- The assessment combines data and community experiences to address challenges related to substance use disorders (SUD) in Indian River County.

Key Learning Questions Explored:

- Prevalence and trends of opioid and substance use disorders.
- Underlying factors driving SUD, such as trauma, mental health issues, and economic strain.
- Impacts of SUD on individuals, families, and the community.
- Public awareness, access to resources, and service gaps.

Findings and Emerging Trends:

- High rates of alcohol, cocaine, and opioid use, with stimulant use (e.g., cocaine) surpassing opioids locally.
- 20% of adults engage in binge drinking, exceeding the state average.
- Marijuana use among young people is a growing concern, with 73% not perceiving it as harmful.

Challenges Identified:

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACE): 26% of local youth report four or more ACEs, a figure above the state average.
- Mental health issues: 49% of youth report feelings of sadness or depression.
- Economic strain: 44% of households are in poverty or ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) categories.
- Overdose rates: 43.5 per 100,000, significantly higher than the statewide average, with 624 EMS overdose calls last year.

Service Gaps and Barriers:

- Transportation, financial constraints, and provider shortages hinder access to care.
- Stigma remains a major barrier, with over half of individuals reporting experiences of social stigma.

Initiatives and Next Steps:

- Promoting Narcan awareness and availability to address overdose rates.
- Developing a dashboard to monitor trends and indicators.
- Planning annual surveys and five-year reassessments to track progress and outcomes.

Ongoing Actions:

- Disseminate the final needs assessment report once available.
- Support awareness initiatives for Narcan distribution and use.
- Collaborate on reducing stigma and addressing systemic barriers to care.

Lastly, PSC members acknowledged the comprehensive update and thanked Ms. Lester for the detailed presentation and efforts in addressing community challenges.

Commissioner's Matters

There were none as Commissioner Flesher was not in attendance.

Committee Members Matters

Mr. Nuckles commended local outreach workers that are addressing the homelessness crisis. He shared that yesterday alone they were able to get three people into housing. Chairman Flowers commended their great work and informed attendees that the IRC SO hold quarterly meetings regarding issues the homeless face.

Ms. Lester reminded committee members that the SAC is hosting its 3rd annual Family Fun Fest on February 8th. While on the topic of prevention, she discussed their Hidden in Plain Sight trailer that was created in partnership with the school district. It brings awareness to what teenagers are dealing with about both substances and mental health.

Chairman's Matters

Chairman Flowers asked Deputy Cambell to provide updates on behalf of the Sheriff's Department. The IRC SO print shop is in the process of being relocated. Renovations are underway, and printing services may experience delays over the next few weeks.

A discussion was held regarding the challenges of synthetic drug use, such as Delta-8 products, which present difficulties in testing and regulation. In addition, concerns were acknowledged about a new higher-dosage Narcan product that was recently showcased at a recovery symposium. EMS continues to use higher-dose Narcan when necessary, but caution was advised against excessive dosing due to the risk of precipitated withdrawal. The county jail provides two doses of Narcan to every inmate upon release to help mitigate overdose risks.

The council discussed emerging patterns in drug use, including instances where individuals intentionally keep Narcan on hand while using dangerous substances. It was emphasized that addiction alters brain function, driving compulsive drug use despite known dangers.

Public Discussion Items

Mike Cianci thanked the Tall Cop for his visit to Indian River County and for his speaking engagement.

Approval of the 2025 Meetings Dates

ON A MOTION BY Suzanne Caudell, SECONDED by Rayme Knuckles, the members voted unanimously (12-0) to approve the 2025 Meeting Dates with one change: *the November meeting is shifted from the last Friday of the month to the third Friday (11/21/25) due to Thanksgiving.*

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:36 pm.

The next meeting of the PSC is scheduled for **February 28, at 12:00 PM**, in Building B, Conference Room B1-501, at 1800 27th Street, Vero Beach, FL.