

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, August 22, 2025, 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/2025.

PSC Members Present

Carrie Lester, Chairman, Thrive IRC
Joseph Flescher, Commissioner
Eric Flowers, Indian River County Sheriff
Ann Berner, SE Florida Behavioral Health Network (SEFBHN)
Diamonda Litty, Public Defender's Office
Joseph Flescher, Commissioner
Valerie Smith, National Alliance on Mental Illness
Suzanne Caudell, Director, Comprehensive Offender Rehab & Education
Shaun Leydon, Treasure Coast Community Health
Tony Barcellona, Thrive
Leigh Anne Uribe for Rayme Nuckles, Treasure Coast Homeless Services (TCHS)
Kent Campbell, Dept of Corrections
Barbara Devoe for Carol Martin, Director of Consumer Services, Mental Health Assoc. of IRC
Cynthia Cox for Charles A. Schwab, Chief Circuit Court
Gregory Jackson, New Horizons Treasure Coast
Joseph Cracchiola, FL Department of Corrections

PSC Members Absent

Nicole Menz, County Judge
David E. Currey, Vice Chairman, Chief of Vero Beach Police Department
Dedilia Finlayson, Detention Facility Director, FL DJJ
Thomas Bakkedahl, State Attorney
Nathan Peterson, Chief Probation Officer, FL DJJ
Nikhol Primm, County Judge

Others Present

Angela Rosado-Jones, IRC SO
Vicki Soule, Treasure Coast Community Health Inc.
George Lynch, Dynamic Life Vero
Wes Samons, Thrive IRC
Demetria Williams, Take Flight Counseling & Consulting
Meredith Egan, United Way of Indian River County
Bill Long, State Attorney Office
Wendy Parent, Circuit Court
Kyleigh Motiwala, Thrive IRC

IRC Staff

John Titkanich, County Administrator
Ashley Brown, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Chairman Lester officially called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm; a quorum was present.

Approval of the PSC Minutes for May 23, 2025

ON A MOTION BY Joseph Flescher, SECONDED by Diamond Litty, the members voted unanimously (16-0) to approve the May 23, 2025 minutes with one following revision:

Change the term "CORE" to court.

Report from Indian River County Opioid & Substance Use Task Force

a) Update from Wes Samons

Mr. Wes Sammons provided an update on the ongoing efforts and priorities of the Indian River County Opioid & Substance Use Task Force. He reported that the Task Force continues to make progress based on findings from the community needs assessment, with current efforts focused on the development of a centralized intake and arrest diversion program.

Mr. Sammons explained that planning is underway for a 24/7 walk-in and recovery center, modeled after successful programs elsewhere in Florida, including one in Fort Lauderdale. Meetings and a site visit are being coordinated to gather best practices that can be adapted locally. Potential locations for the facility are being evaluated, and the Task Force is working to identify key partners for implementation, including law enforcement, emergency medical services, and community response agencies.

Additionally, the Task Force continues to plan ways to strengthen referral pathways and data tracking systems. Mr. Sammons noted that a frequent challenge is ensuring that initial assessments (such as those at the McKay Connection Center) ask the right questions to uncover underlying substance use issues, so individuals are referred to the proper resources.

b) Update from Meredith Egan, Chief Executive at United Way Of Indian River County

Ms. Meredith Egan, presenting on behalf of the Task Force, provided a detailed overview of the proposed opioid settlement funding process and implementation framework, which had been developed collaboratively by the Task Force. She distributed draft copies of the proposed process and application documents for Council review.

Ms. Egan reminded members that the County is currently in Year Two of the Florida Opioid Settlement Funding, with approximately \$1.1 million available across Years Two and Three. Since the settlement spans an 18-year period, the goal is to establish a clear, consistent, and strategic process for investing funds to achieve the greatest long-term impact in addressing opioid misuse within Indian River County. While the Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network manages the disbursement of funds, the Public

Safety Council retains decision-making authority regarding allocations. Ms. Egan noted that the first funding cycle was somewhat rushed and reactive, and the new process aims to bring greater structure, transparency, and accountability to future allocations.

She outlined the framework's core elements, including:

- Organizational eligibility criteria
- Funding priorities informed by the community needs assessment
- Proposal requirements and reporting standards
- Evaluation and review processes
- An ambitious, but necessary, timeline to expedite the distribution of funds to meet urgent community needs

The proposed process also provides flexibility for applications from a range of providers — including nonprofits, for-profit providers, public-private partnerships, and government entities — recognizing that a collaborative, multi-sector approach will be necessary to address the full spectrum of opioid-related challenges.

Ms. Egan emphasized that all recommendations will be data-driven and evidence-based, aligned with the established strategic priorities, and that the Task Force remains committed to reviewing, scoring, and ranking proposals for presentation to the Public Safety Council. The Council's final recommendations will then advance to the Board of County Commissioners for approval.

Discussion: Opioid Settlement Funds Administration – Southeast Behavioral Health Network (SEBHN)

Following Ms. Egan's presentation, a lengthy discussion took place among committee members regarding the administration and distribution of opioid abatement settlement funds managed through Southeast Behavioral Health Network (SEBHN).

The Chairman noted that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) previously approved additional funding to SEBHN to cover administrative costs associated with managing the settlement funds. Committee members engaged in an extended dialogue to clarify the roles of SEBHN, the Opioid Task Force, and the Public Safety Council in the review and allocation process.

Representatives from SEBHN explained their contractual role with the County in overseeing and disbursing settlement dollars, including their authority to manage contracts, ensure compliance with state and federal reporting requirements, and provide technical and administrative support. Committee members expressed appreciation for SEBHN's expertise but also emphasized the need for local input and transparency in the evaluation of funding applications.

Members discussed several options for administering the upcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) process, including whether applications should be received by SEBHN, United Way, or through the County's purchasing process. Consensus was reached that the Opioid Task Force—previously established and recognized by the BOCC, should continue evaluating community needs and making funding recommendations to the Public Safety Council.

After discussion, the Council agreed that SEBHN would:

- Develop and release the RFP and accept applications,
- Provide administrative and technical support throughout the process,

- Oversee contract management, disbursement, and reporting functions.

Applications will be reviewed and ranked by the Opioid Task Force, with recommendations brought back to the Public Safety Council for approval prior to final consideration by the BOCC. The County will assist with public dissemination of the RFP through its website and communications channels to ensure broad community awareness.

ON A MOTION BY Joseph Flescher, SECONDED by Diamond Litty, the members voted unanimously (16-0) to recommend that the Opioid Task Force evaluate and rank funding applications, with SEBHN to administer the RFP, manage contract oversight, and coordinate reporting. Final recommendations will be presented to the BOCC for approval.

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

Mr. Leydon reported on the most recent quarter for the Mental Health Court Program:

- Funding: Both the Hospital District and Indian River County have committed to funding the Mental Health Support Program for the upcoming fiscal year, covering operational portions and direct care services.
- Participant Intake: 24 new individuals entered the program during the last quarter.
- Referrals: A slight reduction in community case-management referrals was noted, due to staffing issues at New Horizons (two candidates withdrew or did not work out).
- Engagement Rates: Approximately 25 %–30 % of clients are utilizing community case-management services.
- Therapy Services: Four referrals to the Mental Health Association in Indian River County for therapy in the last quarter (roughly 1–2 per month).
- Housing Needs & Incarceration: Eight participants required supportive housing placement; seven participants remain incarcerated while housing/residential options are explored.

Outcomes:

- Hospitalizations: Zero among participants who were case-managed over the past three months.
- Arrests: Two arrests among that same cohort, with a combined total of approximately five days served.
- Program Size: The program currently has just under 120 active participants.
- Graduation: The next graduation is scheduled for October 7th.

Commissioner's Matters

Commissioner Flescher noted that he had shared his thoughts extensively during the earlier discussion regarding the opioid settlement funds administration and expressed his appreciation that the Council reached a consensus on how to proceed.

Committee Members Matters

There were none.

Chairman's Matters

Chairman Lester reminded the Council that, due to the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, the next Public Safety Council meeting will be held one week earlier than usual. She requested that the Recording Secretary distribute a calendar invitation to all committee members to confirm the updated meeting date.

Public Discussion Items

There were none.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:01 pm.

The next meeting of the PSC is scheduled for **November 21st, at 12:00 PM**, in Building B, Conference Room B1-501, at 1800 27th Street, Vero Beach, FL.