

# KEYS TO HOME

SERVING NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA

## COC General Membership Meeting

July 18, 2025, 10:30AM-12:00PM via HYBRID

Location: Goodwill Career Conference Center and Microsoft TEAMS

### Attendees

Mikal Cartier, Taskforce	Sarai Cabrera, Alachua County Social Services
Jacob, Toner, Taskforce	Tara Franks, Catholic Charities Putnam
Keanna Johnson, Taskforce	Amanda Nazaro, Gainesville Co. Housing Authority
Rena McCann, Taskforce	Lauri Schiffbauer-Black, St. Francis House
Litasha White, Taskforce	Tavia Sumpter, St. Francis House
Leon Upshaw, Taskforce	Stella Echols, Putnam County Caring/ T.O.S.S.
B. Amber Moats, Taskforce	Ayesha K, Peaceful Paths
Donna Ramirez, NHDC	Ron Hall, Alachua County Housing
Eddie Cutwright, City of Palatka Affairs	Gladys Jones- Heart of Putnam
Caroline Ruff- Looney, Community Action	Ernest Hull, The Salvation Army of Alachua Co.
Phil Kabler, CDS	Diana Phillips, Catholic Charities Putnam
Patricia Langford, Another Way, Inc	Bea Awoniyi, Santa Fe College
Claudia Tuck, Alachua County CSS	J.B. Brown, Santa Fe College
Angela Darby, Passionate Putnam Partners	Brett Buell, Gainesville Opportunity Center
Kesha Davis, Lee Conlee House	Marlon Gayle, Levy County BOCC
Charnice Johnson, VOAF SSVF	Athena Ross, VOA SSVF GNV
Sabrina Miller, Catholic Charities Gainesville	Mal Lea, Meridian
Tyler Levin, GRACE street outreach	Denise Fanning, Catholic Charities Gainesville
Rachael Ryan, Family Promise of Gainesville	

### **I. Welcome and Call to Order (Claudia Tuck)**

The meeting was called to order at 10:33 am.

#### ***a. May Meeting Minutes (Claudia Tuck)***

Tara F. made a motion to approve May meeting minutes. Rachel R. seconded. Unanimous vote to approve minutes.

### **II. Collaborative Applicant Report**

#### ***a. CoC Financials (Rena McCann)***

All grants have been fully expended as of June 30, 2025, and all contractual deliverables have been exceeded. For the **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)**, in May, 223 clients served in emergency shelters, 19 in prevention, and 23 in rapid rehousing. **The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** grant was also fully spent by the end of June, with all deliverables met. There were 9 individuals, and 3 families served with financial assistance and 32 individuals and 9 families with case management. The **Challenge Grant** had 90 individuals served under housing needs, 285 under program needs, and 97 under service needs. For **the Challenge – Unsheltered grant**, 95 individuals served in May. The **ESG Rush grant** had 23 clients serve in May.

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**b. CoC Leadership Council New Appointment(s) (Keanna Johnson)**

Effective July 1st, two additional counties—Dixie County and Union County—have been added to the CoC coverage area. Dixie County appointed Commissioner Daniel Wood, and Union County appointed Commissioner Michelle McNeal.

**c. CoC Committees Update (Keanna Johnson)**

We now have Chairs and Co- Chairs for all the committees Housing Action, Outreach and PIT, Data Performance and HMIS. Michelle Sherfield will chair the Housing Action Committee, with Pamela Worsham serving as co-chair. Their next meeting is scheduled for September 10th. Dr. Bea Awoniyi will chair the Outreach and PIT Committee, with Mark Watson as co-chair. The next meeting is set for September 11th. Charnice Johnson will chair the Data Performance and HMIS Committee. The co-chair will be Sheila McCoy. The next meeting is scheduled for August 8th. Members who need meeting invitations should contact the CoC team.

**d. Collaborative Applicant Annual Evaluation (Claudia Tuck)**

The Executive Committee met to evaluate the performance of the Collaborative Applicant. The Executive Committee determined that the Collaborative Applicant made significant efforts and exceeded expectations during the first year. While there were minimal recommendations for improvement, the committee noted that some areas had not yet had sufficient time for full implementation. Overall, the evaluation was highly favorable, and the committee expressed deep appreciation for the progress made. Claudia thanked Taskforce for their exceptional work in advancing the CoC and helping to expand its reach, including the successful addition of Dixie and Union Counties.

**e. 25-26 CoC Funding Awards (Jacob Torner)**

The CoC held a procurement process for funds awarded to 20 programs amongst 9 agencies this fiscal year. Services funded include street outreach, rural outreach, incarcerated/released outreach, domestic violence outreach and emergency shelters, single and family shelters, diversion services, housing services, and more. Included in Putnam funding increases this year is Catholic Charities Putnam for housing services and a new partner Putnam Caring Coalition who is providing PATH outreach and diversion services. All agencies were thanked for submitting applications and information when requested.

**f. 2025 (26-27) HUD NOFO (Jacob Torner)**

HUD has announced its intent to release the 2025 Continuum of Care (CoC) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). All CoC partners are invited to begin preparing for an application focused on Treatment & Recovery, Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness, Reducing Returns to Homelessness, Increasing Earned Income for Participants, This year's NOFO will also open doors for new project types, including street outreach and transitional housing programs. All are asked to stay closely tuned-in for updates.

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The proposed federal Reducing Homelessness Through Program Reform Act was discussed. Key highlights included two-year HUD NOFO authorities, updates to assistance caps on certain programs including not more than 6 months of arrears for rent/utility after moving costs, CoC programs staff hiring, retention and compensation study, greater inspection flexibility, ESNAPS improvements, research and subsequent best practice guidance for support services including mental health and substance use, reinforcing lived experience involvement, evaluating coordinated entry for system improvements, involving CoCs in evaluation processes, eligibility documentation barrier review, HUD-VASH data sharing with HMIS, pilot programs for people not meeting current McKinney-Vento homeless definitions for purposes of improving gainful and permanent employment, and a budget for USICH.

It was also discussed that on July 13, the House released its draft fiscal year (FY) 2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill. The THUD Appropriations Subcommittee met and passed the bill nine to seven. Key highlights were shared from The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO):

- Public Housing Fund:
  - Operating Fund: \$4.975 billion, a reduction of \$501 million from FY 2025.
  - Operating Fund Shortfall: \$25 million, level funding with FY 2025.
  - Capital Fund: \$2.286 billion, a reduction of \$914 million from FY 2025.
- Section 8:
  - Voucher renewal funding (Housing Assistance Payments): \$32.145 billion for voucher renewal funding. This would be the same funding as the prior year.
  - Administrative Fees: \$1.975 billion, a reduction of \$795 million.
  - Tenant Protection Vouchers: \$375 million. The bill would allow tenant protection vouchers to be used for Emergency Housing Voucher families that would otherwise be terminated because of a lack of funding. This would be an increase of \$38 million.
  - Mainstream Vouchers: \$743 million level funding as FY 2025.
  - Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA): \$17.127 billion for project-based rental assistance, a \$637 million increase.
- Community Development:
  - HOME: The House bill would eliminate funding for the HOME program. This would be a reduction of \$1.25 billion compared to FY 2025.
  - CDBG: \$3.3 billion, level with FY 2025.
  - Homeless Assistance Grants: \$4.158 billion, an increase of \$107 million compared to FY 2025. This amount includes funding for Continuums of Care, Emergency Solutions Grants, and the National Homeless Data Analysis Project.
  - Choice Neighborhoods: The House would eliminate funding for the program, a reduction of \$75 million compared to FY 2025.

The Chair thanked the speaker for the report and requested clarification regarding eligibility limitations. The speaker explained that the proposed changes currently appear to focus on arrears payments. The

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Co-Chair requested that detailed information be shared in a timely manner. The speaker confirmed that the relevant details will be included in the meeting minutes by the upcoming week. The Chair expressed appreciation to the speaker for staying informed and tracking all the moving components.

### **III. Committee Reports**

#### **a. *Coordinated Entry (Claudia Tuck)***

The groups provided an update on the current assessment tool process. Claudia Tuck noted that, after evaluation, the decision was made to discontinue efforts to implement Place Value and instead continue utilizing the VI-SPDAT assessment tool. Keanna confirmed that this decision was made in consultation with HUD Technical Assistance and reflects a broader trend among other Continuums that had explored alternative tools but are now returning to VI-SPDAT. All providers are reminded to use the appropriate version of the VI-SPDAT based on the client's population.

#### **b. *Data Performance and HMIS (Charnice Johnson)***

Charnice J. shared that the team is currently focused on ensuring all data is complete and accurate in preparation for the HMIS system transition. This includes removing duplicates and correcting issues with older grants and project configurations. Leon Upshaw followed with an overview of current data quality scores for HUD-funded partners. CCG&V improved by 2.9%. CC Putnam reached 99.98%, positioning them to be the first agency to achieve 100% data quality. Grace improved by 0.2%. Family Promise increased by 2%, and NHDC rose to 97%. St. Francis House also improved by about 1%

##### ***i. HMIS Vendor Transition Implementation Timeline (Leon Upshaw)***

August 22 – September 4, both the current and new HMIS systems will be inaccessible. Agencies are encouraged to prepare intake forms for this downtime. A sample form from Family Promise has been shared with agency admins and will be made available in the HMIS news section. Leon will continue supporting agencies and coordinating efforts to ensure a smooth transition.

#### **c. *Lived Experience (Rachel Ryan)***

A meeting was held last month with several members of the Lived Experience Committee, resulting in two to three additional referrals for participation. The team is continuing to work with Albert Townsend from the National Alliance to End Homelessness to ensure the committee is structured and supported appropriately. They are still in the process of developing policies and exploring options for providing stipends to committee members. Progress is ongoing, and another meeting is planned for August.

#### **d. *Outreach (Bea Awoniyi)***

The Outreach and PIT Committee has met consistently over the past few months, with strong attendance and engagement. The committee is currently focused on developing safety protocols and procedures to ensure an accurate and safe Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. To support this preparation, the committee will begin meeting on a monthly basis moving forward.

#### **e. *Housing Action (Michelle Sherfield)***

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The committee is currently working on developing a one-page pitch to introduce the CoC's housing efforts to potential landlords, aimed at quickly communicating what is being asked and encouraging landlord participation. Additionally, a landlord toolkit is being developed to provide resources and clearly outline the benefits of partnering with the CoC. The goal is to increase housing availability by engaging local landlords and equipping them with the information they need to make informed decisions about participating. The next committee meeting is scheduled for September.

**f. *Homeless Prevention (Sarai Cabrera)***

Since the last meeting, the piloting phase of the HHP SAT tool is currently underway. The pilot period is scheduled to close on Friday, August 1st. Following the pilot, the committee aims to meet in late August to review feedback, address any issues, and potentially revise the tool or develop score ranges, as none were initially included. The goal is to return to the September meeting with a finalized tool and recommended scoring criteria. Additionally, the committee hopes to engage newly added counties and will announce a meeting location once finalized.

**IV. Member Spotlight – Catholic Charities Bureau- Putnam (Diana Phillips)**

Tara Franks, Regional Director of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of St. Augustine, provided an overview of services across St. Johns, Putnam, and Flagler Counties. Catholic Charities, which began in the late 1800s as an adoption agency through St. Mary's, has grown to include regional offices—St. Augustine (est. 1975) and Putnam County (est. 1993). The primary focus in this region is emergency financial assistance, including ESG, TANF, Challenge Grants, and emergency food services. Additional programs include Rural outreach services in Putnam County and Crescent City. The Weekend backpack food programs for students. A senior program delivering food to homebound seniors, mainly in St. Johns County, with plans to expand to Putnam. The Small clothes closet, and community food pantry operated from the Putnam office. Diana Phillips, the sole staff member at the Putnam office, manages all grants and services locally. Catholic Charities recently lost a part-time NCBA-funded front desk position but welcomes volunteers to support the office with phones and appointments. Tara expressed gratitude for the increased TANF support, which directly benefits local families in need. She emphasized their appreciation for being part of the CoC and the ongoing support for vulnerable residents of Putnam County.

**V. Member Spotlight – Lee Conlee House (Kesha Davis)**

Keisha Davis, Program Director of the Lee Conlee House, shared that it remains the only certified domestic violence shelter in Putnam County. The organization provides emergency shelter for women and children, while outreach services extend support to men as well. Their mission is to help survivors rebuild and regain independence following domestic violence. The shelter operates a 24/7 crisis hotline; their outreach team runs seven programs, offering services such as court advocacy, child advocacy, prevention programming, and a new supportive housing program. With funding received this year, the Lee Conlee House was able to expand its shelter by eight additional beds in a separate building. This allows them to better accommodate larger families and survivors who may need more privacy, including those with teenage boys or live-in caregivers. Despite setbacks—including a lightning strike that required

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significant electrical repairs—they successfully completed the expansion and resumed operations. Their outreach program includes four dedicated advocates (with all staff capable of providing outreach services), offering housing referrals, financial assistance, budgeting help, utility and deposit payments, and school-based prevention initiatives. Keisha emphasized that survivors do not have to enter the shelter to receive services—they can access outreach support while remaining in the community. The agency also offers safety planning and resource navigation for individuals still in abusive situations.

## **VI. Member Comments (Claudia Tuck)**

### **Gainesville Opportunity Center Fall Festival Open House**

Each year, the Gainesville Opportunity Center (GOC) hosts a Fall Festival Open House in early November. This community event takes place on a Friday from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM and features a cookout, music, and opportunities for connection. All community partners, stakeholders, and friends are invited to attend, table, and tour the facility. The event is designed to foster relationships and raise awareness about GOC's work in supporting adults living with mental illness. It typically draws strong community engagement, including visits from the sheriff, city and county commissioners, and the mental health co-responder teams. GOC encourages both leadership and frontline staff to attend and learn more about the services they provide.

### **CDS Expanding Services with New DJJ Partnership**

CDS is excited to announce expansion into new lines of service. In addition to its current *SNAP (Stop Now and Plan)* programs—offered both in clinical office settings and in schools and communities—CDS is launching a new initiative to serve youth under the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) probation and supervision. As part of this expansion, CDS now holds a direct contract with DJJ to provide **mentoring services** in **Levy, Gilchrist, and Dixie Counties**. This new program aims to support justice-involved youth through structured guidance and positive engagement. More updates will be shared as the implementation moves forward.

### **ERAP Legal Services Ending Soon – Referrals Still Accepted**

This is a reminder that ERAP Legal Services will officially end on September 30, 2025. This includes services provided through both Three Rivers Legal Services and Florida Legal Services. There is still time to refer clients, especially those in need of legal support with dissolutions, creditor issues, or other qualifying cases. These services have made a meaningful impact—reducing household liabilities, increasing income access, and even securing financial awards for many. Please continue sending referrals while services are still active.

### **Housing Development Update**

The hotels recently purchased for affordable housing are currently under construction. The first set of units is expected to be ready by October, and efforts are underway to create a tenant list.

### **Central Florida Community Action: Hurricane Emergency and Leadership Preparedness Program**

Central Florida Community Action will host a Hurricane Emergency and Leadership Preparedness program on August 9th from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at Heritage Park, 116 North Main Street, Williston. The event will provide hurricane preparedness tip packages and will include a raffle for a generator. Given the recent hurricane impacts across many counties, this event aims to shift from a reactive to proactive approach to disaster readiness. Community partners are

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encouraged to attend, set up tables, and share information. A flyer with more details will be distributed soon for the entire CoC to share widely.

## **Alachua County Sheriff's Office Community Fun Day**

**Saturday, August 2nd at 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM Location: 2621 SE Hawthorne Rd**

Join us for a fun-filled day at the Sheriff's Office with activities for the whole family! Alachua County Fire Rescue will be on-site with their water truck, spraying water for those who want to join in the fun. There will also be a garage sale-style event with items for purchase, informational tables, and details about available job opportunities. Lunch will be provided free of charge. This event is a great chance to get to know your local Sheriff's Office, learn about available resources, and enjoy a welcoming community atmosphere.

## **New Positions at the COC**

We are pleased to announce the addition of two new positions to the CoC staff. Congratulations to Amber M. on her promotion to Director of Coordinated Entry. The new positions are Housing Partnership Manager and Rural Engagement Manager, both of whom will report directly to Amber. The Housing Partnership Manager will serve as a landlord liaison, building connections with landlords throughout Alachua County and the rural areas, and will collaborate closely with the Housing Committee. This position will also assist agencies needing support with housing clients during the coordinated entry process. The Rural Engagement Manager will focus on fostering relationships with partner agencies, local government, and officials in the rural regions of our service area.

## **Updates on Scottish Inn Renovations**

We anticipate the property will be ready to open on or shortly after October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, with construction completion targeted for September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Once open, the site will offer 31 efficiency units designated for individuals referred through the Coordinated Entry system for either rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing. Although there have been some delays due to unexpected construction issues and pending state approvals, we are optimistic about the impact this project will have on increasing available housing options. More updates will follow as the project nears completion.

## **VII. Adjournment (Claudia Tuck)**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 p.m. The next meeting will be held September 19, 2025, 10:30a.m. -12p.m. Hybrid at CDS Behavioral Healthcare in Gainesville.