



MEMORANDUM

AGENDA ITEM #V.C

DATE: JULY 15, 2024

TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: STAFF

SUBJECT: SFRPC REGIONAL CONFERENCE



On May 31, 2024, the South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC) hosted its annual conference at Nova Southeastern University with more than 160 attendees. This year’s topic was “Closing the Gaps: Supporting Mental Health through a Continuum of Housing and Supportive Services.”



More than twenty housing and mental health practitioners, elected officials, and community stakeholders shared their knowledge on important issues facing the residents of Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe Counties. Four panels discussed various aspects of the mental health crisis in South Florida including the continuum of care, housing and financial considerations, sustainable solutions, and local success with behavioral health implementation.



The President and CEO of the Florida Hospital Association, Mary Mayhew, gave a keynote address on the most important factors in supporting individuals with mental illness. SFRPC Chair Steve Geller (Broward County Commissioner and former Florida State Senator), SFRPC Second Vice Chair René García (Miami-Dade County Commissioner and former Florida State Senator), and Broward County Mayor Nan Rich (former Florida State Senator)



gave opening remarks and insightful contributions throughout the conference. Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust Chairman Ronald L. Book facilitated a discussion with the audience on opportunities for action.

The SFRPC thanks all its attendees, sponsors, Council Members, and supporters for making the conference a success. We look forward to continuing our conversation on mental health/housing in the coming months.

Attached please find the DRAFT Meeting Proceedings for your review and information. For full conference information, please visit: <https://sfregionalcouncil.org/closing-the-gaps-supporting-mental-health-through-a-continuum-of-housing-and-supportive-services/>

Recommendation

Information only.



South Florida Regional Planning Council
Proudly serving South Florida since 1974

**Closing the Gaps: Supporting Mental Health through a
Continuum of Housing and Supportive Services**

Nova Southeastern University
The Carl DeSantis Building Atrium
3301 South University Drive
Davie, FL 33328

Friday, May 31st, 2024
9:10 AM to 3:15 PM



9:10 A.M. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Honorable Steve Geller, SFRPC Chair, Broward County Commissioner, Former Florida State Senator

[South Florida Regional Planning Council](#) (SFRPC) Chair Steve Geller introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the conference. Chair Geller described the SFRPC's mission as the regional planning agency for Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe Counties and gave an overview of its various programs and responsibilities. The SFRPC is focused on regional planning and represents about 2.7 million people living in Miami-Dade County, 2 million people living in Broward County, and 82,000 people living in Monroe County. The SFRPC serves as the designated Economic Development District for South Florida pursuant to the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA). The SFRPC assists with technical assistance for local governments and manages successful Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs for small businesses and COVID-19 impacted businesses.



Senator Steve Geller

Every year the SFRPC hosts an annual conference on a different topic as well as a joint conference with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC). The seven counties represented by SFRPC and TCRPC constitute roughly a third of the state of Florida's population. Chair Geller stated that this year's SFRPC's conference topic, mental health and housing, is an important topic and emphasized there is a huge gap for people with mental health issues seeking housing. The SFRPC has hosted many programs on affordable housing in the past, including two Southeast Florida mayor's roundtables with officials from Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe, and Palm Beach counties.

Chair Geller thanked the sponsors of the conference and their leaders: [Nova Southeastern University](#) (President George Hanbury), [Broward Healthcare](#) (CEO Shane Strum), and [Memorial Healthcare System](#) (CEO Scott Wester). Chair Geller noted that more than 200 people registered to attend the conference. He recognized SFRPC council members that were in attendance or registered: Miami-Dade County Commissioner for District 13, and former Florida State Senator for District 36 René García; Plantation City Councilmember Denise Horland; Miami-Dade County Commission Chairman Oliver G. Gilbert, III; and Cooper City Mayor Greg Ross. Chair Geller recognized various local and state elected officials who registered to attend the conference including SFRPC council members Denise Horland (Council member for the City of Plantation), Greg Ross (Mayor of the City of Cooper City), and Beam Furr (Broward County Vice Mayor). He also recognized Julie Klahr with the law firm of Goren, Cherof, Doody & Ezrol, P.A. representing SFRPC Legal Counsel Sam Goren. Lastly, Chair Geller recognized Ron Book, lobbyist for the Florida Regional Councils Association (FRCA) and Chairman of the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust.

Chair Geller thanked Senator García and his Chief of Staff, Iraida Mendez-Cartaya, for their crucial assistance in organizing the conference. He stated that Senator García was one of his closest friends in the Florida Legislature. Chair Geller spoke highly of Senator García and how effective he is as a legislator and leader on mental health and healthcare issues. Chair Geller also thanked his Chief of Staff, Jacqueline Garcia-Arteaga, and his commission aide, Barbara Kopec. Chair Geller thanked SFRPC staff that assisted in the planning and execution of the conference including Executive Director Isabel Cosio Carballo, Deputy Director Randy Deshazo, Community & Economic Development Program Manager Eralda Agolli, Director of Finance & IT Leo Braslavsky-Soldi, Director of Administration Kathe Lerch, and Administrative Coordinator Alex Santana. Finally, he thanked all speakers and moderators for their participation and support.

Chair Geller introduced Nan Rich, Mayor of Broward County and former Florida State Senator.

The Honorable Nan Rich, Mayor of Broward County, Former Florida State Senator

Senator Rich began by sharing that she served in the Florida House of Representatives with then-Representative García, and they worked very well and became dear friends. She was a member of the Florida Legislature for 12 years and later was elected to the Broward County Commission. She thanked the SFRPC for inviting her to the conference to deliver remarks and serve as a panelist. She has focused a lot of her energy on social services and currently serves as chair of Broward’s Housing Continuum, the Coordinating Council of Broward County, and Broward Behavioral Health Coalition (BBHC). She has found herself returning to the same issue again and again, which is the affordable housing crisis in Broward County. Miami-Dade County is in the same boat, she noted.



Senator Nan Rich

In 2018 the voters of Broward County overwhelmingly approved the creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Unlike the Sadowski trust fund in Tallahassee, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund is a lockbox and every dollar that goes into the fund must be spent on affordable housing. More than \$123 million has been invested in affordable housing finance with more than 5,000 new affordable rental units built since 2018. The Broward County Commission recently adopted [“Housing Broward: 10-Year Affordable Housing Master Plan”](#). It provides a critical framework for addressing the county’s affordable housing crisis and is the first countywide master plan in the State of Florida. It was developed in conjunction with Florida International University’s (FIU) Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center and its Deputy Director Dr. Ned Murray. The Master Plan provides a coordinated, integrated approach which connects affordable housing with other policy topics including the “Housing First” model, economic development infrastructure, climate change, land use, and transportation. Senator Rich stated that if individuals and families have a decent place to live, they will more readily engage

in mental health and other services. Furthermore, she stated that the solution to homelessness is affordable housing; not putting people into an encampment, the Broward County jail, or the Miami-Dade County jail. Specialized teams of licensed clinical practitioners are being sent to the areas where individuals with mental illness live to give them the support they need.

The Honorable René García, SFRPC Second Vice Chair, Miami-Dade County Commissioner, Former Florida State Senator

Senator García thanked everyone in attendance and emphasized that mental health is a very important issue to him, South Florida, and the whole state of Florida. He recognized Florida State Representative Joel Rudman (District 3) from the Panhandle and thanked him for his presence. Senator García stated that we need to come together as a community to address the critical issues affecting the area, specifically the mental health crisis.



Senator René García

Senator García introduced Mary C. Mayhew, President and CEO of the Florida Hospital Association. Ms. Mayhew is the former Secretary of the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). Prior to her appointment by Governor Ron DeSantis, she served as Deputy Administrator and Director of Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). She previously served for more than 6 years as Commissioner of the State of Maine’s Department of Health and Human Services. For more than 11 years, she served as Vice President of the Maine Hospital Association.

9:25 A.M. - 10:00 A.M. Keynote: The Big Picture: The Most Important Factors in Supporting Residents with Mental Illness

Mary C. Mayhew, President and CEO of the Florida Hospital Association

Ms. Mayhew stated that there is momentum in the state of Florida to improve the system of care for individuals with mental illness. She added that mental health services system was not designed to be person-centric, patient-centric but progress is being made. There has to be more support to gain the funding needed for care, wraparound services, social determinants, and housing to produce the best outcomes for individuals with mental health issues. She stated that “we have finally seemed to have broken down the stigma.” The COVID-19 pandemic was a “gasoline can over the fire” and there has been a skyrocketing demand for mental health services for children and adults since that time.

There is a moral imperative to do better. Data must be used to guide, influence, and inform the infrastructure necessary for mental health services

More than 70% of people in U.S. jails and prisons have at least one diagnosed mental illness or substance use disorder, or both (45%). Less than half of people with a history of mental illness receive mental health treatment while in local jails. Florida jails/prisons are not equipped to deal with this population. When released many rely on hospital emergency departments. Twenty-five percent (25%) of persons experiencing homelessness have a diagnosis of at least one serious mental illness. People with



Mary Mayhew

serious and persistent mental illness don't "just get cured." They will have a certain intensity of needs then the intensity will decline. They will ebb and flow throughout that continuum to the most acute (in-patient hospital or potentially a state facility) and then upon discharge in need of robust community-based services. What we lack in this state and in this country is robust community-based services. Just like in physical health, we don't spend a lot of money on prevention, early intervention, and primary care. We need to think the same about mental health. Decades ago there was deinstitutionalization because of class action lawsuits that said it is not right to lock people up because they have a mental illness. Now the U.S. Department of Justice has been looking at whether there are individuals in the community that are not receiving services and are at risk of becoming re-institutionalized.

Twenty-eight million Americans are experiencing a mental illness and are not being treated. More than 1.6 million adults in Florida are experiencing a mental illness and are not being treated. Ms. Mayhew highlighted the work of Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers (CCBHCs). These centers offer 24/7 wraparound services to assist in stabilizing those experiencing a mental health crisis in welcoming and cost-effective settings. It is a working continuum of care that meets the patient where they are and streamline their care from the hospital to crisis services/centers and insert follow-up care. In Southeast Florida (Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe, and Palm Beach) there are 9,758 Licensed Behavioral Health (BH) Beds, which makes up 35% of all behavioral health beds in Florida. If one is trapped in the revolving door of emergency departments, it is a far more expensive entry point to the healthcare system than community-based mental health services.

DATA from Ms. Mayhew's Presentation

Data for Florida hospitals that provide behavioral health services:

- 37 behavioral health hospitals.
- 78 hospitals that are Baker Act Receiving Facilities.

- 27 General Hospitals (separate psychiatric units).
- 108 Outpatient Mental Health Facilities.
- 205,712 Inpatient Admissions.
- 149,912 Emergency Department visits.
- 8,030 Total Psychiatric Beds.
- 88 hospitals in Florida offer Behavioral Health Services.
- Adult Psychiatric Beds, 6,837 beds for 17.4 million adults.
- Child Psychiatric Beds, 711 beds for 4.1 million children.
- There are a total of 1,982 psychiatric beds for adults in South Florida.
- 806 beds in Broward, 893 in Miami-Dade, 25 in Monroe, and 258 in Palm Beach.
- There are a total of 183 psychiatric beds for children in South Florida.
- 74 in Broward, 70 in Miami-Dade, 0 in Monroe, and 39 in Palm Beach.

Ms. Mayhew shared that in South Florida there are a total of 1,539 residential treatment facility licensed beds out of 3,510 statewide. A long-term Mental Health Residential Treatment facility is any licensed facility that must sustain a 0-day average or greater length of stay (LOS).

- 481 facilities in Broward, 481 in Miami-Dade, 14 in Monroe, and 563 in Palm Beach.
- Medicaid does not cover the cost of room and board. Forty percent (40%) is spent on therapeutic services; 30% is spent on medical services.
- The remaining 30% is spent on support services.
- The lack of coverage for room and board presents a financial burden on the patient and facility.

Data about Florida compared to other states:

- Florida has the lowest amount of per capita mental health spending in the country with \$36.05 per capita.
- Maine spends \$362.75 per capita; 10x more than Florida. California spends \$174.98. Massachusetts spends \$113.37. New York spends \$251.12. Texas spends \$45.23.
- Florida Ranks 43rd in Mental Health Workforce Availability.
- Two-thirds of every dollar of scarce government spending on mental health is allocated to stand-alone psychiatric hospitals rather than community-based mental health services.

Data about homelessness in Miami-Dade County:

- Miami-Dade County has a population of 2,673,837. There were 5,617 Homeless Admissions in 2022.
- There has been a decrease of 10.7% since 2021.
- Payment was based on Medicaid total (31%), Self-Pay (26%), Medicare Total (17%), Commercial Health Insurance (14%), Non-Payment (8%), and grouping of other payers (4%).

Data about homelessness in Broward County:

- Broward County has a population of 1,947,026. There were 1,707 Homeless Admissions in 2022.
- There has been a decrease of 17.4% since 2021.
- Payment was based on Self Pay (34%), Commercial Health Insurance (21%), Medicaid Total (20%), Medicare Total (17%), Non-Payment (5%), and grouping of other payers (3%).

Ms. Mayhew highlighted the important work being done by Florida Assertive Community Treatment Teams (FACT) teams. FACT is a 24/7 community-based, multidisciplinary team providing a holistic, comprehensive, and individualized approach to services for adults who have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness. The team's goal is to provide person-centered and long-term care and promote recovery, reduce hospitalizations, and enhance the individuals with serious mental illnesses the ability to live independently in their community.

Ms. Mayhew emphasized the importance of applying for federal and state grants that currently exist for housing individuals suffering from mental illness and substance abuse disorders. Data regarding how many individuals are housed and for how long needs to be kept to determine if progress is being made. She stated that in Florida there exists robust [Health Management Information Systems \(HIMS\)](#) that can be used to inform future decisions. An evidence-based measure to determine accountability and success is to see how someone that was discharged from in-patient psychiatric unit behaves in society for seven days. AHCA has that data and needs to be evaluating performance.

10:00 A.M. - 10:45 A.M. Success Stories: The Housing Toolkit in the Continuum of Care

The panel included: John W. Newcomer, M.D. (moderator), President and Chief Executive Officer of Thriving Mind South Florida; Victoria Mallette, Executive Director of the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust; The Honorable Nan Rich, Mayor of Broward County, Former State Senator for District 34; Chair of the Coordinating Council of Broward County, Chair of Broward Behavioral Health Coalition; and Amanda MacCormack, Chief Program Officer for Broward Housing Solutions. Dr. Newcomer introduced the panelists.

Amanda MacCormack, Chief Program Officer for Broward Housing Solutions

Ms. MacCormack stated that there are more than 27,000 people diagnosed with a severe persistent mental illness (SPMI) living in Broward County. [Broward Housing Solutions](#) serves more than 300 clients within 197 rental units across Broward County. Residents live with roommates or their families in one-, two-, or three-bedroom homes.

Residents live with roommates or their families in one-, two-, or three-bedroom homes. Through the referral and clinical support service of community-based mental health providers, Broward Housing



From left: Senator Nan Rich, Amanda MacCormack, Victoria Mallette

Solutions is able to offer affordable subsidized rent to tenants and their family for only 30% of their gross monthly income. Various funding support and partnerships provide the remaining 70%. Permanent supportive housing (PSH) provides multiple benefits for individuals including cultural and community supports, mobile and on-site supports, assertive engagement, in-reached health and social services, tenant security, harm reduction, flexibility and affordability, and trauma-informed care.

Victoria Mallette, Executive Director of the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust

Ms. Mallette stated that there are about 1,033 homeless individuals in Miami-Dade County and 15,000 people come through the system every year. She believes that the most important social determinant of health is housing. Resources are available including psychiatric nurse practitioners, substance abuse providers, and community health centers. We can make people better on the street but in order to end homelessness we need to provide housing. Housing is where true wellness begins. On any given day in Miami-Dade County there are 2,700 people in shelters including single adult men, single adult women, and families with minor children. There are more than 400 families with minor children in the system. There are more than 1,000 school-age children who are in high school or below.

Ms. Mallette stated that the [Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust](#) has general and specialized outreach teams who provide medical care and primary care across Miami-Dade County. The Trust is also funding emergency shelter beds. Fifteen percent (15%) goes to the Domestic Violence Oversight Board for the operation of centers. This is in addition to the Community Action and Human Services Department. The Trust funds “rapid re-housing” which is short to medium term rental assistance with lighter touch support. For example, a security deposit can be paid, rent can be paid up to two years, etc.

The Trust administers proceeds of a 1% Food and Beverage Tax. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the Food and Beverage Tax proceeds are dedicated to homeless housing and services and leveraged with federal, state, local and other resources dedicated to providing housing and services for the homeless, including survivors of domestic violence. The Trust administers grants and oversees operations for more than 120 housing and services programs operated by more than 20 non-profit providers and government entities. Over 9,000 emergency, transitional and permanent housing beds have been developed by or through the Homeless Trust since its inception in 1993. Trust Providers

include Camillus House, Carrfour Supportive Housing, Chapman Partnership, and Miami Homes for All. Trust Partners include Camillus Health Concern and Thriving Mind.

The Honorable Nan Rich, Mayor of Broward County, Former Florida State Senator

Mayor Rich stated that when she first ran for the Broward County Commission one of the first things she did was visit all the programs in Miami-Dade County and saw that Miami-Dade was far ahead of Broward County. She stated that affordable housing is the solution. Broward County does not have as much shelter capacity as Miami-Dade County, but it is working on it. Two programs Broward County is working on is the Landlord Recruitment Program and the eviction prevention program. The Landlord Recruitment Program has 500 landlords who are willing to have homeless tenants. They have lowered the barriers for entry. The County is involved in paying security and other requirements and provides a bonus incentive. The eviction prevention program was started a year ago through Legal Aid of Broward County. While prevention needs more attention and funding, at least 279 families have been saved from being evicted. These would have been all first-time homeless families. Memorial Healthcare System has a robust program on hospital discharges and is working with the Salvation Army. Broward Health is working on setting up a similar discharge program.

John W. Newcomer, M.D., President and Chief Executive Officer of Thriving Mind South Florida

Dr. Newcomer noted that there have been challenges with local hospitals. He stated that there are about 20-plus Baker Acts every day in hospitals. Some people need to be discharged to make room for others.

11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. Moderated Panel Discussion: Housing and Financial Considerations

The panel included: Paul Imbrone (moderator), Board Chairman of Thriving Mind South Florida; Bill Aldinger, Director of Policy and Special Programs for the Florida Housing Finance Corporation; Alex R. Ballina, Miami-Dade County Public Housing and Community Development (PHCD) Director; Stephanie Berman, CEO of Carrfour Housing; William King, Director of Housing and SOAR Entitlements for Broward Behavioral Health Coalition; and Eddie Gloria, Acting CEO of Camillus House.

Paul Imbrone, Board Chairman of Thriving Mind South Florida

Mr. Imbrone, of [Thriving Mind South Florida](#), stated that South Florida has seen an unprecedented shortage of affordable housing options and skyrocketing rents. Hit hardest are those from low-

income communities. Persons experiencing mental illness and substance abuse disorders are especially impacted. Identifying land and property owners who will work with the system is difficult. Seeking investors and foundations to support housing is one of the many challenges we face. Mr. Imbrone introduced each panelist.



Paul Imbrone

Bill Aldinger, Director of Policy and Special Programs for the Florida Housing Finance Corporation

Mr. Aldinger stated that there are significant challenges to affordable housing needs across Florida. There was a time when the focus was mainly on South Florida. In Broward and Miami-Dade counties the focus was on a one-person household earning \$40,000. He mentioned that Governor Ron DeSantis initiated the “Florida Hometown Heroes Housing Program” provides down payment and closing cost assistance to first-time, income-qualified homebuyers so they can purchase a primary residence in the community in which they work and serve.

Mr. Imbrone asked Mr. Aldinger about SB 102 (Live Local Act) and its effects. Mr. Aldinger shared that SB 102 provided an additional \$711 million in state funding and appropriations for Florida Housing’s programs as well as the local SHIP program. The [Florida Housing Finance Corporation](#) has funded preliminary financing available to three Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) properties for a new pilot program. A small portion of the units each of the new properties – 20% or a minimum of 15 units – will house “High Utilizers,” that is, persons who are high users of public behavioral health crisis services or are a high priority for diversion from acute health care services and institutional settings. The focus of this three-year pilot is on those “High Utilizers” who are part of the state's behavioral healthcare system through the Managing Entities and are facing housing instability due to their behavioral health care situation. Another program offered by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation is its Catalyst Program which provides community-based organizations and state and local governments with technical assistance to meet affordable housing needs.

Another program is the Predevelopment Loan Program (PLP) which helps nonprofit and community-based organizations, local governments, and public housing authorities plan, finance, and develop affordable housing. Eligible organizations may apply for a loan of up to \$750,000. PLP funds may be used for costs such as rezoning, soil tests, engineering fees, title searches, appraisals, feasibility analysis, legal fees, audit fees, earnest money deposit, impact fees, insurance fees, commitment fees, administrative costs, marketing expenses and acquisition expenses. These activities must be part of a nonprofit or governmental organization's efforts to develop affordable housing.

Alex R. Ballina, Miami-Dade County Public Housing and Community Development (PHCD) Director

Mr. Ballina stated that Miami-Dade County is implementing a new, fresh, data-driven, holistic approach now. He stated that the County needs to think outside the box since there is only a finite amount of land that can be used to produce affordable housing. He praised Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and Senator García for their leadership on this issue. What makes housing challenging is all the socio-economic factors that need to be dealt with. In south Miami-Dade County, existing affordable housing units will be redeveloped. The County is partnering with Camillus House, the Homeless Trust, and others to provide supportive housing. The Section 8 program opened in February. There were 132,000 applications in a two-week period with only 5,000 vouchers available.



From left: Bill Aldinger, Alex Ballina, William King

[Miami-Dade Public Housing and Community Development \(PHCD\)](#) is responsible for more than 9,000 units of public housing. The County has 93 public housing sites, 6,451 public housing units, and 8,444 residents. The average income is \$17,112. The average rent is \$310. The average U.S. Housing and Urban Development Annual Contributions Contract (ACC) is \$540. The average rent potential is \$850. About 19,000 housing choice vouchers (HCVs) from the federal government are allocated across 13 districts. Close to 7,000 landlords participate in the program. Due to zoning changes and increased demand, more density has been created. Even if the federal government gave 100,000 vouchers there are not enough units or participating landlords. This is a critical inflection point for the county and community. In May 2022 Miami-Dade County passed a Tenant’s Bill of Rights ordinance and created an Office of Housing Advocacy

William King, Director of Housing and SOAR Entitlements for Broward Behavioral Health Coalition

Mr. King stated that [Broward Behavioral Health Coalition, Inc.](#) (BBHC) was created in 2011 and serves as Broward County’s local managing entity. It is responsible for the contracting, monitoring, clinical quality oversight and performance improvement of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF)/State funded behavioral health services. BBHC works with [NAMI Broward County](#) to eradicate the stigma associated with mental illnesses and to improve the quality of life for all affected individuals. NAMI Broward County provides free support groups, education classes and seminars, legislative advocacy, and information for people in the community living with mental illness as well as their loved ones. Programs include Family-to-Family, Peer-to-Peer, Basics, Provider Education, and Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training for law enforcement personnel.

Eddie Gloria, Acting CEO of Camillus House

Mr. Gloria stated that hundreds come each day to [Camillus House](#) to access shelters, clothing, showers, and food. Camillus House has 11 different sites across Miami-Dade County. 1,700 people sleep at facilities each night. Behavioral health services are provided as well. He thanked Victoria Mallette and the Homeless Trust for its collaboration and for setting the standard of continuum of care in the country. Camillus House's rapid rehousing program provides rental assistance and support services to those in need. While the program varies by an individual's circumstances and needs, they aim to help participants transition to independent living within six months. Camillus House has 60 beds for treatment and 30 more for post-treatment in its 450-bed campus in the Miami Medical District. He emphasized that the community does not need more shelter beds but rather more treatment, housing, and supportive services. He stated that he once spoke to then-Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Superintendent Alberto Carvalho who stated that actuaries will take into account the reading capacity of boys in the 3rd grade to figure out how many jail cells are needed in the future.



From left: Eddie Gloria and Stephanie Berman

Stephanie Berman, CEO of Carrfour Housing

Ms. Berman stated that [Carrfour Supportive Housing](#) has been building affordable housing for the past 30 years, mainly in Miami-Dade County and now some work outside of Miami-Dade. Carrfour was established in 1993 by the Homeless Committee of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. It is the leading not-for-profit provider of supportive housing in Florida and has supplied homes for more than 10,000 vulnerable men, women and children. She emphasized the lack of understanding about the need for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Components of PSH include affordable housing where a resident pays no more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities. The resident has a lease, services are flexible, services are resident-driven, services are voluntary, level of services and need changes over time, and there is integration with the surrounding community. Some examples of Carrfour's work includes Northside Commons in Miami, Alice Moore Apartments in West Palm Beach, and Southwest Hammocks in Pembroke Pines.

12:30 P.M. Cafecito Chat: From Lived Experiences to Sustainable Solutions: Real Stories of Housing and Mental Health Support

The panel included: Senator García; Sandra McQueen-Baker, CEO, Fresh Start; Kristi Messer, Board President, TaskForce Fore Ending Homelessness; Nova Southeastern University Assistant Dean of Bachelor Degree Programs; Derek S. Moore, Peer Services Manager, Thriving Mind South Florida; and Susan Racher, Board Chair, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Miami-Dade County.



Senator Rene Garcia

The Honorable René García, SFRPC Second Vice Chair, Miami-Dade County Commissioner, Former Florida State Senator

Senator García began the panel conversation by sharing brief details about his personal story of observing a close family member experience homelessness and mental health struggles in recent years. His nephew spent a few days living in the streets of South Florida after suffering some unfortunate events, which led the Senator and his family to lean on the support of friends and family, as well as

colleagues, to help locate his nephew and bring him back to safety at home.

Senator García held strongly to the belief that all the conversations had at the session were extremely important and would provide a unique opportunity to shed light on the topic of mental illness and housing.

Derek S. Moore, Peer Services Manager, Thriving Mind South Florida

Mr. Moore of [Thriving Mind South Florida](#) shared his story of his experience with homelessness and his journey getting out of it. He is currently in long-term recovery from a depressive disorder diagnosis, a 20-year addiction to alcoholic substances, two suicide attempts, and homelessness. His struggle with homelessness was last experienced after a usual workday as a professional man in which the voices in his head grew loudest and prompted him to walk off his job and drive three days to Miami. He attributed his difficulty in attempting to “find his way” to his mental health issues. While he had a profession, a place to live, and a car to drive, ultimately, it was his mental health struggles that “drove” his story.

Susan Racher, Board Chair, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Miami-Dade County

Ms. Racher shared that just like many families, she knew nothing about mental illness previous to her own experience with it. Now she understands the health history between her husband and herself plays a key role in her own children’s experience with mental illness. She emphasized that waiting until a moment of crisis is the worst time to learn about the resources available, the steps to take, and the people to reach out in times of need. The [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI),

which she chairs, was an incredible resource in helping her and her family connect the dots of helplessness and inability to cope. Before NAMI, she was unaware that her son, who was well-adjusted in society and on his way to college, was in fact on ground zero for mental health illness onset. Due to her lack of awareness, it was not until her son's psychotic break that she began to understand the background of the issue. She is a strong advocate for education and awareness for parents, teachers, neighbors, and family members to learn about mental unwellness. She looks back and wishes she would not have waited as long as she did to take action toward a solution and emphasizes the importance of supporting families and individuals facing mental illnesses.

Sandra McQueen-Baker, CEO, Fresh Start

Ms. McQueen-Baker of [Fresh Start of Miami-Dade Inc.](#) began sharing her story by speaking about her own experience of mental health illness while tending to a depressive son and a father with dementia. She acknowledged that homelessness could get to any individual at any time, which is commonly understood from experiences with natural disasters such as hurricanes and events such as market crashes which can cause anyone to lose everything in the blink of an eye. She believes that the role of a peer specialist is incredibly valuable in helping others, and brings rich and unique experiences, resources, and education to the table. She believes that a peer specialist can speak to the heart of those in need in a meaningful manner that no one else can.



From left: Derek Moore, Sandra McQueen-Baker, Ms. Racher

Kristi Messer, Board President, TaskForce Fore Ending Homelessness, and Nova Southeastern University Assistant Dean of Bachelor Degree Programs

Dr. Messer of [TaskForce Fore Ending Homelessness](#) and Nova Southeastern University emphasized that as an assistant dean and with her experience working with healthcare and training providers, she realized that the streets are the real classroom and invaluable in their ability to teach about the very topics that books may mention. In 2010, her department received a \$4 million grant to write a medical school curriculum on homelessness and, through the opportunity, she realized that so much work was needed alongside stakeholders to understand issues comprehensively. Because of her efforts, medical students are now required to spend time with people who have been homeless, and this provides a unique perspective. In terms of her own experience, she shared that in 1999 her youngest child developed a serious health condition that required them to spend months at a children's hospital away from home and live in a Ronald McDonald house. After hospital discharge, she and her family lost their house and had no other option than to check into a family shelter for herself, her husband, and their three kids. This eye-opening experience taught her many things, including the importance of implementing structural competency and the opportunity to train

healthcare providers in topics like upstream factors, e.g. property, housing, and inaccessibility to health.

Responses to Audience Question (Mr. Moore and Ms. McQueen-Baker)

A member of the audience thanked the panel for sharing their stories and asked how difficult it is to recruit volunteers, and what members of the community can do to help with the issue. Ms. Racher answered by mentioning the importance of “wrap-around services.” A purposeful volunteer position is important in helping support groups and family groups with their education programs. Volunteers



Audience Member

may not have all the answers but as connected members, become a key component of the continuum. Mr. Moore briefly stated that there are four “ingredients” that he identified helped him keep coming back: home, health, community, and purpose. Ms. McQueen-Baker shared how the Liberty City Miami neighborhood was not always the safest or most resourceful but was the safest option for her family to call home at a time in her life. Although she experienced challenges when she lived there, it was a place that allowed her children to have a

place to lay their heads down at night. She is happy to see how the neighborhood has been revitalized over the years and hopes for services to continue growing within the community because so many people need to know how to navigate resources. Shelter, a sense of community, and a sense of purpose help members come together and can help encourage someone to volunteer.

Ms. Racher

Senator García continued the conversation by asking the panel members to point out, based on their experience, the good and the bad aspects of the system. Ms. Racher shared that in her son’s journey, it was wonderful that he had a place to live, two friends who could room with him for free, medical care, transportation, peer support, and family support. Although he may have only sat in a corner of any location, he was well-supported. She stated that NAMI supported groups and families and was essential in helping the homeless and mentally ill heal, attain resources, and find a house. She identified some intervening first steps such as parental support groups and gyms before individuals and their families give up on themselves.

Responses to Audience Questions (Dr. Messer and Ms. McQueen-Baker)

Another member of the audience shared that a point she believes has been missed is the role of social security, as they don’t provide financial assistance with an issue such as substance abuse until the situation has scaled up to the acquisition of health concerns. She asked the panel what the

community can do as one body to intervene in the social security issues.

Dr. Messer stated that on a day like today when a large group of unlikely individuals come together and understand the scope of work, discipline is key. Bringing a diverse body of people together helps kick-start necessary conversations and can help move towards integrating innovative and strategic solutions. The panel spoke to the point that being a powerful group in the mental health community and banding together strengthens the voices that can then help in the legislative issues and help find solutions for them. Ms. McQueen-Baker mentioned that Thriving Minds is under good leadership and it helps immensely in bridging necessary gaps. Sitting on boards and attending meetings, coming together with the necessary information, and pushing forward advocacy work on an everyday basis is what is needed to keep things moving. It is also important not to just promote some behavioral health data, but also to let legislators know of the importance that the topics carry for the group and that all of the desired actions are aimed at saving children's lives and help serve peers. Dr. Messer said that the group can bring positive change through volunteering and understanding how legislation works. Any one person can be an agent of change, but they must start somewhere. There is value in education, training, and awareness, but these tools must be used to teach people about stopping the stigma and teaching about what mental health and homelessness is truly all about.

1:30 P.M. Moderated Panel Discussion: Local Success with Behavioral Health Implementation

The panel included: Dr. Newcomer, Sandra Veszi Einhorn, Executive Director, The Coordinating Council of Broward; Maria Hernandez, Community Impact Chief Program Officer, United Way Broward; Scott Hansel, CEO, Chapman Partnership; Laura Naredo, Chief Operating Officer, Thriving Mind South Florida; The Honorable Ari Abraham Porth, Circuit Court Judge, 17th Judicial Circuit; and Barry Reiman, Psy.D., Vice President, Recovery Unplugged Behavioral Health.

John W. Newcomer, M.D., President and Chief Executive Officer of Thriving Mind South Florida

Dr. Newcomer provided the audience with an overview of South Florida solutions as an introduction to the next moderated panel discussion. He began by explaining that just as there are housing providers, there are also mental health providers, of which there are more for-profit than non-profit providers. Clients come into the providers' offices with commercial insurance such as Florida Blue while others come in with Medicare and Medicaid.



John W. Newcomer, M.D.

There are seven regional nonprofit managing entities in Florida, with the total portfolio of providers estimated at 300. The statute that created managing entities began with funding them as the payer of last resort for the uninsured, who lived below a certain poverty level. The national crisis hotline number 988 can be called 24/7 from any location within the United States and will connect a person to a call center that specializes in mental health and substance use crises and can help dispatch mobile response teams. The Baker Act law is an important underpinning of the system of mental health crisis support, with the issue arising from law enforcement being the sole implementer until mobile response teams got traction.

The Statewide Behavioral Health Commission has found that the managing entity system is the most accountable performance-based system that there is. Dr. Newcomer shared that Thriving Minds is one example of the seven managing entities. With an operating budget of about \$140 million a year, the organization can use its assets to procure the services necessary. At Thriving Mind, Dr. Newcomer and his team complete plenty of prevention activities where they work with school programs and in certain high-risk communities. Demonstrating Thriving Mind's Fiscal Year 2022-2023, budget demonstrated that less than 5% of the expenditures of the organization go towards administration, with most of the money going out on the street. Some of the many services that Thriving Minds provides include crisis stabilization units and prevention programs.

Sandra Veszi Einhorn, Executive Director, The Coordinating Council of Broward

This panel was moderated by Ms. Sandra Veszi Einhorn of the [Coordinating Council of Broward](#). Ms.



From left: Scott Hansel, Laura Naredo, Maria Hernandez, The Honorable Ari Abraham Porth, Sandra Veszi Einhorn, Senator René García, Barry Reiman

Einhorn commenced the last panel discussion by posing the following question: What are the challenges and obstacles to ensuring that clients receive support and connection to services after they are placed in housing?

Barry Reiman, Psy.D., Vice President, Recovery Unplugged Behavioral Health

Mr. Reiman of [Recovery Unplugged Behavioral Health](#) stated that the biggest obstacle is finding housing. He mentioned that there is now a virtual program offered to address the problem of people not being able to attend programs in person. The virtual intensive outpatient program focuses on primary mental health and substance abuse, and it is also available in Spanish, making it more widely accessible. Dr. Reiman stressed the point that without a firm foundation, after the first storm, houses (or in this case individuals) will topple.

Scott Hansel, CEO, Chapman Partnership

Mr. Hansel of the [Chapman Partnership](#) expressed that the handoff after first receiving services to being released is the biggest challenge. Counselors and psychiatrists are available when admitted into a facility but continue to be incredibly important once people leave the facility. Social connectedness and a sense of community is important, and without it, there arises a major problem.

The Honorable Ari Abraham Porth, Circuit Court Judge, 17th Judicial Circuit

Judge Porth mentioned that when clients are assigned to his court, the members work to set the clients up for services thereby setting them up for success. He believes that every individual who enters his court should be on a conditional release plan in custody, without it they are at risk of going into custody. Examples of conditions include regular check-ins with a supervising officer, not committing additional crimes, and/or staying away from drugs or alcohol. He explains that being in custody is the last place that you would want someone with mental health to be.

Laura Naredo, Chief Operating Officer, Thriving Mind South Florida

Ms. Einhorn followed the discussion by posing the question: What are the myths and misconceptions of mental illness? Ms. Naredo stated that a great misconception is that it is a choice to have the illness and substance abuse addiction. Another misconception is that these individuals are violent. In reality, a vast majority of people who are suffering are non-violent and are 10 times more likely to be a victim of crime than a perpetrator.

Dr. Reiman, Ms. Naredo, and Ms. Hernandez

Ms. Einhorn then asked: What role can businesses and faith-based organizations play in supporting the needs of homeless individuals with behavioral health needs? Dr. Reiman responded by stating that all people need to come together, and there is no room for competition in this field. Although there are programs and facilities, it is important to understand that there are allies. Everyone is one bad decision or one bad event away from being in the position of being homeless or mentally ill, and with that vulnerability, it is important to have support. “People must be treated like people despite where they come from or where they have landed.”

Ms. Naredo stated that collaboration and education are provided through businesses and organizations. Ms. Hernandez mentioned that everyone must be willing to be a part of the solution. While churches help in the public sector, private sector companies help perform training and mentoring. There are opportunities for the business community to provide financial assistance through fundraising and other means to help alleviate the cost of resources.

Judge Porth and Dr. Reiman

When asked what innovative models panelists have observed to be successful in treating people with behavioral health conditions and getting them off the street, Judge Porth shared that the

[sequential intercept model mapping](#) helped map out the temperature of what is right and wrong. The court created a felony mental health diversion program and through it, 100 cases of clients were dismissed, and they were set up for success with prospects of a better future. This model mapping assists in the identification of resources, gaps, and barriers in existing systems to support recovery, safety, and justice system diversion as well as to support the development of local strategic action plans. Dr. Reiman mentioned that music is currently being used through Recovery Unplugged as a catalyst to break down barriers, even for the overwhelming percentage of people who are not musically inclined.

2:30 P.M. Facilitated Discussion with Audience – Opportunities for Action

Ron Book, Chairman of the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust

Mr. Ron Book, Chairman of the [Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust](#), led a session of the program by taking questions from the audience and continuing to bridge ideas together. Mr. Book expressed the importance of many conversations that were developed throughout the conference program and emphasized the need for regionalism when discussing mental illness and homelessness.

Senator Geller responded to Mr. Book's comment by stating that the Regional Planning Council is working towards improving regionalism and that is why Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe county partners were invited to the event. Meetings with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council that occur twice a year are also effective in bringing regional voices together.



Audience Member

An audience member asked if Mr. Book or any other members present could help her think of ideas for diverting money from jailers and police officers to help provide optimal mental health care and preventative care. Mr. Book responded by explaining the process by which certain “money pots” can be tapped into and the support of which members it is imperative to persuade. Another member explained that Judge Porth has helped with a jail diversion program, which uses sequential intercept mapping to help divert people before they get to the point of arrest.

Another audience member mentioned that businesses such as his have been tremendously impacted by homelessness, and businesses have had to move locations as a result. Although he has befriended the homeless, he also understands the businesses' perspective. He commended South Florida for the number of services that it provides to help the homeless but addressed the reality that there continue to be gaps in both information and services. Mr. Book responded agreeing that needs



Ronald L. Book

and gaps need to be addressed to effect change. However, he also acknowledged the statistics of homelessness in South Florida with respect to other major cities around the nation and shared with the audience that Miami-Dade County is far better at providing services and helping those who need them through a variety of resources. He mentioned organizations such as the [Chapman Partnership](#), [Camillus House](#), [Lotis House](#), and several others for their great work in helping find solutions.

Mr. Book stated that he was grateful to the South Florida Regional Planning Council, Senator García, and Senator Geller, along with all participants for opening the floor for the kind of dialogue that was experienced throughout the event. He emphasized the need to work together as a community to get through these important issues in a sustainable and resilient manner.

3:15 P.M. Closing Remarks from Senators Geller and García

Senator García and Senator Geller wrapped up the event program by thanking the speakers and audience for their attendance, participation, and support for the conference. Senator Geller responded to Mr. Book's comment about regionalism, stating that this was the whole point of the Regional Planning Council and that is why he was proud of chairing the Council's board. He commended Senator García for being a true leader to all those in attendance and throughout South Florida. Senator García concluded by thanking Senator Geller and all the event participants for being present. He emphasized the need for all partners to come together as a community because anything that happens to one area or county can affect another within the region.



From left: Senator René García and Senator Steve Geller

Next Steps:

Under Development

Additional information as well as meeting powerpoints can be accessed at:
<https://sfr regionalcouncil.org/closing-the-gaps-supporting-mental-health-through-a-continuum-of-housing-and-supportive-services/>

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