



# News Release

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## **Meridian Receives Award of Excellence in Behavioral Healthcare Management**

**April 5, 2017, SEATTLE, WA** – Meridian Behavioral Healthcare inc., received the National Council for Behavioral Health’s Award of Excellence in Behavioral Healthcare Management for their Forensics program at the NatCon17 Gala. The awards were given to organizations who are working hard to improve the lives of Americans living with mental illnesses and addictions.

Meridian’s CEO, Maggie Labarta, PhD., said when accepting the award “This program is especially meaningful to us because it brings Meridian’s vision of hope, recovery and wellness to some of the most disenfranchised members of our community. For example, when one participant enrolled, he had been out of prison for *only 6 months* of his 36-year adult life due to numerous violent infractions. Although there were challenges along the way, including a return trip to jail, he has now been in treatment and out of jail for multiple years, and has not committed any violent offenses. His success story is just one among the hundreds of people the Forensic program has touched.”

The Meridian Forensics Team is a multidisciplinary, multi-agency group of professionals whose primary goal is to prevent and divert potential participants from involvement with the criminal justice system, extensive incarcerations and/or commitment to forensic state hospitals. The team improves community mental health based on the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM), utilizing outreach, intervention, and treatment services. The team also provides outreach, training, and collaboration with key stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, the Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole, the courts, attorneys and county governments.

“The credit for this award and the work it represents belongs our Forensics team, and our partners in the courts, local government, and law enforcement agencies who stand with us and, it belongs especially to the clients who, through hard work and willingness to let us help them, are transforming their lives” stated Labarta.

Alachua County as a community is extremely committed to improving how we approach mental health and our judicial system. This award is a great testament to the hard, quality work Meridian has contributed to the communities it serves.

*NOTE TO PHOTO EDITORS: Photos of specific winners are available on request. Please contact [aaroncohenpr@gmail.com](mailto:aaroncohenpr@gmail.com).*

**Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc.** is a comprehensive community behavioral healthcare organization located in North Central Florida. With services available throughout the region, Meridian maintains offices in these ten counties: Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee, and Union. Meridian is CARF accredited and licensed by the Florida Department of Children and Families. Its mission is to promote the health, recovery, and well-being of those affected by mental illness and substance use disorders through prevention, coordinated treatment, and supportive services and is based on the vision that hope, recovery, and wellness are within everyone’s reach. For more information, visit <http://mbhci.org/>.

### **About the National Council for Behavioral Health**

The National Council for Behavioral Health is the unifying voice of America’s mental health and addictions treatment organizations. Together with more than 2,800 member organizations, serving 10 million adults, children and families living with mental illnesses and addictions, the National Council is committed to all Americans having access to comprehensive, high-quality care that affords every opportunity for recovery. The National Council was instrumental in bringing Mental Health First Aid to the USA and more than 1 million individuals have been trained.

*In 2014, the National Council merged with the State Associations of Addiction Services (SAAS). To learn more about the National Council, visit [www.TheNationalCouncil.org](http://www.TheNationalCouncil.org).*

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