



News Release

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Meridian Awarded Planning Grant Designed to Decriminalize Mental Illness and Addiction in Levy County

Gainesville, Fla. – Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc., the largest provider of mental health and substance use disorder services in North Central Florida, has been awarded a \$100,000 grant to identify and improve jail diversion strategies for individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders in Levy County.

The Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Reinvestment Grant (CJMHSAG) is the only planning grant awarded in the state for 2018 for 2018 and will allow Meridian to implement planning grant activities that are guided by the methodology and resources available from the national Stepping Up Initiative.

“This grant is so exciting for Levy County,” said Leah Vail Compton, Meridian Vice President Forensic Services. “It allows us to implement strategic planning with our community stakeholders toward our vision of a community that no longer needs jails and court to serve as a provider.”

The program’s goal is to increase access to comprehensive evidence-based treatment and recovery support services; while also increasing public safety and reducing criminal justice costs.

This cost reduction will be attained by diverting individuals with mental illness substance use disorders or co-occurring disorders from the jails or from forensic hospitalization.

The grant will also provide law enforcement and other relevant stakeholders with access to additional resources such as Crisis Intervention Team training, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), and Trauma Informed training.

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 eleven counties: Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee, and Union. Meridian is CARF accredited and licensed by the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Agency for Healthcare Administration. 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/>.

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