



## Neighborhood Services Department

Administration Division

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## MEMORANDUM

To: Cheri Coryea, Manatee County Administrator  
From: Ava Ehde, Neighborhood Services Director  
Date: September 17, 2019  
Subject: RE: Panhandling Discussion

### Executive Summary

There is no single answer to why people panhandle. Each panhandler's history is unique and often very private. Many of them are unwilling to share or do not trust the systems in place. The Neighborhood Services Department (NSD) staff helps to address many of the gaps in resources and services experienced by members of the panhandling community. These gaps in need include affordable housing/rapid rehousing, transportation, substance abuse, mental health, food deficits, reentry from incarceration, domestic violence, health and dental care, and unemployment/underemployment. For many in the panhandling community there are co-occurring issues such as substance abuse and underemployment.

### NSD internal resources and services serving this community

The successful work of Neighborhood Services is often the result of continuous relationship building as we connect people in need with the programs and services offered through our department and within the Non-profit community.

- Aging and Eligibility – This section supports the indigent, aging and underinsured with prescription services, health care, ambulance fee payment assistance, burial, and senior services to help allow our mature community members stay at home with a variety of programs such as case management, respite care and EHEAP (Emergency Home Energy Assistance Program). The staff of this section also support the special needs clients, especially during emergency conditions.
- Children's Services – This dedicated millage allows the NSD contract management staff to oversee contracted programs for the prevention and treatment of Manatee County's neglected, abused, or at-risk children and to fund programs to serve economically disadvantaged children.
- Adult Services – NSD staff manage the contracts for the adult non-profit programs which serve adults over eighteen in our community. Included in this area are substance abuse and mental health programs at Centerstone and homeless support such as Turning Points (CCH).

- Veteran's Services – The Veterans program supports veterans, veteran's dependents, reservist or National Guard members, surviving spouse or children of veterans and active duty service members. Assistance is provided to help understand the claims process, the rules and regulations of the VA system, and how to appeal claims as well as how to apply for other state and local benefits.
- Library job and social service help – Our library professionals support job fairs, resume building, and assist with job and social service applications. They also connect the community to the wide range of local resources and services.
- Probation team – The probation staff provides post sentencing supervision for misdemeanor cases. Pretrial release oversees offenders until they are sentenced and includes oversight of EM (Electronic Monitoring). The OWP (Offender Work Program) enables offenders to pay a fee to work providing lawn service to county facilities instead of being incarcerated. Savings include additional workforce for Property Management Department, \$87/day (cost of incarceration), and the offender maintains their job which helps the economy. Finally, this team also provides assistance to veteran's court and drug courts
- Health care – This area includes a wide range of initiatives to care for our uninsured and underinsured while reducing costs and volume at local emergency rooms which are often used as primary care facilities at emergency room rates. Ready examples of current pilots include the Peer Coaching program (Opioid addiction) and Patient Health Care programs.
- Neighborhood Connections – This section works directly with neighborhoods to determine needs and address any barriers to success.
- Criminal Justice – This section works directly with the jail medical contracts and as liaison to the PSCC (Public Safety Coordinating Council) which reviews criminal justice data and trends and recommends actions. The PSCC is working with Centerstone on a CJMHSR Reinvestment Grant (Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse) grant. One of the requirements was to have a SIM (Sequential Intercept Model) which focused on Mobile Crisis, Diversion and Engagement for Homeless and Mental Health in June 2019 to work on homelessness and reentry from incarceration.

### **Local resources and services**

- Shelters – There are a variety of programs including day shelters, emergency homeless shelters, halfway houses, permanent affordable housing, drug and alcohol rehab, supportive housing, shared housing, rooming house or boarding house, and transitional housing. Ready examples include HOPE Family Services (domestic violence shelter) and Salvation Army.
- Turning Points or CCH (Community Coalition on Homelessness) – This location does not provide shelter housing, but all the other needed supports such as a 2,000-calorie meal daily, showers and laundry facilities, clothing, an address to collect mail, housing assistance, barber services, health care and bicycles for transportation.
- Substance Abuse programs – Peer Coaching program, Centerstone, Operation Par (methadone and suboxone programs)
- Uninsured and underinsured Health and dental care - We Care Manatee, Genesis, Turning Points, LECOM Dental, Blake and MMH residency programs, MCR Health, RAM (Remote Area Medical) event, Manatee County Community Paramedicine program,

Centerstone, CAN Community Health, DCF (Department of Children and Families), Medicaid office (share of cost), DOH Manatee

- United Way Suncoast – UW partners with many local organizations such as Unidos Now and the American Red Cross to provide community help
- Food Banks -There are nearly 70 faith-based programs such as Our Daily Bread and Woodland Community Church focusing on providing food to the community in need
- Faith Based institutions – A wide range of faith-based institutions offer support such as local Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Services, and the Archdiocese of Venice. These groups provide housing assistance, utility support, food and services to elderly and special needs community.

### **Pilot avenues and key programs implemented elsewhere**

**Day work** – there are several programs across the nation which provide day work at a reasonable wage, a meal and often support to locate housing. The work itself benefits the community. There are programs which clean up ground debris or pick up solid waste, maintain yards and roadways, paint murals and even hire out to local businesses. The work provides these community members with dignity, food, cash and helps to connect them to services. Some examples include:

- [Albuquerque's There's a Better Way program](#) has cleaned up 894 city blocks, collected 256,741 pounds of waste and provided 6,666 jobs since its inception in September 2015. Additionally, 355 have received mental health and/or substance abuse services, 76 have obtained permanent employment and 21 families have been placed into stable housing. The city has partnered with St Martin's Hospitality Center to transport and feed workers during the day and offer connection to services after work.
- Portland Maine's [Opportunity Crew](#) is a panhandling to work program where money is earned by cleaning up public areas. The City's divisions of social services and Parks work together to supervise six people two to three days per week and afterwards the workers also obtain job training and employment support. The Opportunity Crew can be hired by local businesses for a contribution of \$1300 per week. The contribution helps provide jobs and meals for the workers along with other support services.
- San Jose, CA's [Downtown Streets Team](#) which reports an average monthly of 16 people obtaining jobs and 12 people housed along with a marked increase in improved self-esteem, pride and or sense of self-worth
- [Denver Day Works](#) employs people to clean up the streets, landscape and provide general maintenance. Participants receive breakfast and lunch while they are working, bus fare to worksites, and access to employment specialists.

### **HOT/HOST (Homeless Outreach Teams/ Homeless Outreach Street Teams)**

- [Austin's HOST](#) is an initiative that operates by using existing resources (City of Austin Community Court, Austin Police, Austin EMS, Integral Care and the Downtown Austin Alliance) proactively before the community member reaches a state of crisis. Started in 2016, it consists of two police officers, two behavioral health specialists, one paramedic and one outreach social worker. It connects adults living on the street to housing, case management, mental and primary health care and alcohol and drug treatment.
- [Sarasota HOT](#) The Sarasota Police Department created a Transient Liaison position and added a mental health specialist to work with the transient populations in 2014. Today

the HOT includes a sergeant, four officers, and two civilian case managers. The team focuses on outreach to educate, encourage and eventually to enforce when the first two actions fail.

**Campaigns are put in place to educate the community on lasting and impactful change:**

- Change the Way We Give - San Antonio Department of Human Services and the South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homelessness have launched a text-to-give campaign to provide a meaningful way for residents to give to organizations serving people at risk of becoming or experiencing homelessness. [SAGIVES](#) Texting 41444 to SAGIVES can submit funds directly to the Alliance.
- Louisville, KY - [Give a Better Way](#) campaign seeks to give people a hand up versus a hand out. The hope is that after the initial startup \$120,000 the campaign would be self-sufficient. Goodwill will partner to pick up those willing to forgo panhandling and take them to a paying job and a meal. Additionally, they would be connected with mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- [Meaningful Change, Not Spare Change](#) in Houston which is a community campaign to relocate and redirect panhandlers to agencies. The Way Home provides permanent housing and supportive services for homeless adults and families.
- [HelpCOS](#) in Colorado Springs offers a hand up, not a handout too. It collects funds, beds for the shelter, and a continuum of care.
- National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty [#I Ask for Help Because Campaign](#) just came out in early August 2019. It seeks to dispel panhandling myths, address the underlying causes of homelessness and poverty and repeal anti-panhandling ordinances.
- Donation meters/boxes strategically placed to discourage residents from giving money directly to panhandlers. Cities such as San Francisco, Denver, Baltimore, Daytona, Orlando and West Palm Beach have placed parking meter model collections in high traffic areas to collect donations for the organizations which serve panhandlers and homeless members of the community.

Homeless Initiatives

- [Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative](#) is in place to reduce and end homelessness in Hillsborough County through partnership and collaboration. It partners homeless service providers, government officials, advocates, business and community leaders, and people who are homeless to develop effective prevention and intervention services for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.
- [Rapid Re-housing](#) program through the National Alliance to End Homelessness provides short term rental assistance and services. The goals are to obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency and stay housed.