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CITY OF GAINESVILLE

2006 MAR -9 AM 11:02 051091

Jeb Bush
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.
Secretary

3/7/2006

Gainesville City Commission
P.O. Box 490, Station 19
Gainesville, FL 32601-0490

*7th March 27
Agenda*

City Council Members,

This is a request for the City to add approval of a letter of support to the agenda of the City Commission. The letter of support is for a federal grant to provide substance abuse and mental health services to the homeless.

I presented a brief description of the proposed project to the GRACE for the Homeless Implementation Committee of which Mayor Hanrahan is the Co-Chair. The Mayor was in attendance when the Committee voted unanimously to support the application and requested both the City and County send formal letters of support. The Mayor expressed strong support for the project as did many other attendees at the meeting.

Attached are a description of the proposed project and a draft letter of support. The grant must be in the mail April 3, 2006. If you have any questions we will be happy to answer them. Please let us know when the letter of support will be discussed and we will send a representative to the meeting.

Sincerely Yours,

Diane Dimperio
Director Program Development
Alachua County Health Department

cc: ccom

cc: Kurt Lannon | Sharon Williams - sorry for the late notice - Debra

February 28, 2006

To SAMHSA Review Committee,

The City of Gainesville is mobilizing the community to implement its recently adopted 10 year plan to end homelessness. We are calling it the GRACE (Gainesville region/Alachua County Empowerment) for the Homeless. Due to the education of our advocates and county staff we have come to understand that homelessness is a public issue needing a widespread response. Homelessness and its contributing factors affect the community through lost productivity and poor utilization of resources. We are working with our sister government, Alachua County, and community leaders to implement the plan that was endorsed by both City and County governing boards.

The City, the County and private sector will be allocating funds to implement GRACE for the Homeless. We are inviting the Federal Government to partner with us in addressing the issues that contribute to the cycle of poverty and homelessness. It is well established that substance abuse and severe mental health problems are associated with homelessness. Our local survey shows that about 12% of our homeless cite Mental Health and Substance abuse as the primary cause of homelessness and that 23% suffer from mental health problems and 10% suffer from substance abuse problems. We have an excellent Substance Abuse program in Alachua County that provides detox and residential services but the need for case management and outpatient services exceeds the resources.

The Helping Hands Clinic offers a unique opportunity to expand culturally sensitive outpatient mental health and substance abuse services. This community faith based program has an excellent reputation among the advocates and is trusted by the homeless as a safe place to turn for help. That they are inundated with requests for mental health and substance abuse services is a tribute to their reputation in the community.

The collaboration of the College of Medicine, Helping Hands and the County Health Department is a strong partnership that builds on the unique strengths of each. We hope that our community will be able to use some federal dollars to supplement the local funds that will be allocated to provide transitional housing, job skills and other services needed to address and eventually eliminate homelessness.

Sincerely,

Pegeen Hanrahan
Mayor of the City
Of Gainesville

Helping Hands: Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for the Homeless

Helping Hands is a private non profit community based [501 (c)(3)] organization created to provide health care and related services to the homeless. Helping Hands operates out of a Church located in Downtown Gainesville and offers health care every Monday night. Twice a month the U.F. College of Medicine Department of Psychiatry sends residents and a faculty member to provide mental health services. The psychiatrists provide direct patient services, prescribe needed medication and refer to Meridian for Detox and residential services.

The demand for mental health services at Helping Hands is increasing due to both the need among the homeless and referrals from other community agencies. Helping Hands is currently staffed entirely by volunteers and receives donations for supplies and medication. The Program Director Randy Stacey MSW coordinates all aspects of the program: he recruits volunteers, accepts donations and coordinates clinical services and activities. The clinic volunteers include 21 professional staff, and five clerical staff.

The services current resources are inadequate to effectively respond to the needs of the homeless. The most recent study of homeless in Alachua County shows the incidence of substance abuse and serious mental health issues is around 30%.

The County Health Department is collaborating with Helping Hands and the Department of Psychiatry (DOP) to expand their ability to effectively address the mental health and substance abuse needs of the homeless population through application for funds through the US Department of Health and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The plan that will be implemented through receipt of federal funds will include: 1) expansion of the psychiatric services at Helping Hands Clinic from twice a month to weekly; 2) provision of follow up psychiatric care at the DOP clinic; 3) intensive case management services offered by two case managers supervised by an experienced Mental Health professional, and; 4) access to needed medications through pharmacy assistance programs.

The DOP will be responsible for providing the clinical expertise and professional services. Helping Hands will provide the clinical site, initial identification and referrals for program services, ongoing medical care and program identity. The County Health Department will provide program infrastructure including financial and project management.

The grant is due April 6, 2006 and would begin October 2006. It could provide up to 2 million dollars over a five year period.

