



## Legislation Text

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### **BJA Justice and Mental Health Collaboration (B)**

**This is a request for City Commission authorization to execute an agreement if the Mental Health Collaboration Grant is awarded.**

Gainesville Police Department (GPD) has partnered with Meridian Behavioral Health Care to request a BJA Justice and Mental Health Collaboration grant to fund a 2-year, full time city-wide co-responder program, in which a police officer will partner with a masters level mental health counselor. The team will respond to calls for service involving persons with mental illness, mental health care crisis and calls involving emotionally charged situations. The team will also facilitate case staffings where numerous community providers will be asked to collaborate on solutions for high volume users of justice and mental health care services that are currently provided to these individuals in less than optimal ways.

The grant will fund two positions (police officer and mental health counselor) for 24 months. BJA requires a 20% match. The commission is requested to approve funding for approximately 25% of these positions in in-kind match. Meridian is a sub-recipient of the award and the counselor position will be staffed and supported by Meridian.

The GPD and Meridian have a well-established working relationship with both formalized and informal processes in place to better serve our community with mental health care concerns. Currently we operate under a long standing MOU to facilitate Baker Acts. In the 12 years since we established our local Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) we have informally expanded our working relationship.

We have provided training to each other to ensure line level personnel understand what happens in partner disciplines. We meet regularly to work through intermittent issues with Baker Act transfers. Of late, members of GPD have sought help and guidance from Meridian providers on how to better facilitate specific individuals in the community with substantial mental health concerns when traditional answers have not been productive.

Most recently, GPD officers and counselors from Meridian have partnered for four hours about once per week to walk together through the Grace MarketPlace homeless shelter and Dignity Village campground to speak with residents informally and while not in crisis. As the team spoke with residents, they asked them a series of questions to build rapport with members of the community and to survey them on how we can best serve them when they are in crisis. This pilot program has shown the need for a full time co-responder team.

We are seeking funding through Category 3: Implementation and Expansion of the BJA grant for Justice and Mental Health Collaboration.

Total implementation of the 2-year program will require \$295,616.17 in funds. We are requesting \$219,037.59 in grant award. The City of Gainesville will be asked to provide office space (\$6,000 value), materials and supplies (\$10,428), training (\$1,600) and an additional fleet vehicle (\$32,074). The total city contribution will be \$50,102.58 in these itemized in-kind items. The Meridian in-kind match is \$26,476.

The City Commission authorize the City Manager to execute an agreement with BJA and Meridian Behavioral Health Care and any other necessary documents pending review by the City Attorney as to form and legality, should the City be awarded the grant.