

Health & Social Services Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM | SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET,
SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 3:01 PM on September 19, 2023, Jon Romine, Facilitator, convened the Health & Social Services Branch meeting with the following members present:

- Troy Churchill, Branch Lead
- David Koester (on behalf of Jorge M Quinonez)
- Jeannine Joy
- Stefanie Ink-Edwards
- Tom Felke
- Dana Begley
- Katie Larsen (on behalf of Lee Health) (non-voting)
- Julie Ferguson
- David Brown
- Maria Espinoza

County Liaison:

- Ben Abes

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Jon Romine, Collaboratory
- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory
- Tracey Phillips, Hagerty Consulting
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Harrison Newton, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Mr. Romine provided an update on the work of the Recovery Task Force and the Recovery and Resilience Planning Process. Ms. Phillips reviewed the process for members and stakeholders to provide feedback on the Initiatives.

Overview of Recent Recovery Task Force Efforts

Mr. Romine provided a summary of the One-on-One meetings with the Recovery Task Force Members and their leadership teams.

Branch Initiative Feedback Summary

Mr. Heere Introduced the first initiative, H&SS01: Mobile Health Clinics. Mr. Romine introduced the Branch feedback and Mr. Newton introduced the feedback from the County. Ms. Larsen described the efforts of Lee Health for one mobile health medical unit with the capacity to serve populations with transportation and access barriers. Ms. Phillips described additional considerations of blue sky and grey sky functions for the initiative. Mr. Abes discussed that state departments work with Lee County on a deployment model in which the planning focuses a network of providers with an emphasis on the coordination of resources. Members discussed the existing network of mobile health care assets and coordination of care for blue and gray sky deployment.

The Support Team introduced the second initiative, H&SS02: Resilience Hubs and the feedback summary. Mr. Newton provided the Lee County feedback summary and the strong opportunities available to be a part of the initiative. Ms. LeSage discussed the role of Initiatives working across Branches and the aspects that touch different topics among Branches. Ms. Everly stated that mobile hubs and resilience hubs would be able to work together in planning for a disaster. Ms. Everly added that communication and branding for the resilience hubs needs to educate the community on how these operate. Members discussed the operation of resilience hubs in blue skies and gray skies. Ms. Phillips stated that implementation of resilience hubs and building partnerships could be the next step to take after this strategic planning process. She added that relevant funding sources often require planning for mitigation and hardening. Ms. Ink-Edwards discussed the need for sustainability and planning for maintaining these hubs, including the need for generators. Mr. Abes discussed how Lee County leveraged funding for the purchase and maintenance of generators for schools. Members discussed the feasibility of this concept and coordination as municipalities rebuild or build new hubs.

The Support Team introduced the third initiative H&SS03: Mental Health Resources and the feedback summary from Branch members, RTF members, and Lee County. Ms. Everly brought up historical efforts to plan a system of care to go after grant funding to purchase a case management system to break down silos of care. Members discussed the needs of the workforce for mental health providers. Ms. Ferguson suggested that changes at the state level to ease licensure requirements/processes could assist with workforce challenges. Branch members discussed that implementation steps to address those issues are moving at the state level.

The Support Team introduced H&SS04: Crisis Intervention Center and the feedback summary. Mr. Newton summarized Lee County feedback and position on this topic. Ms. Phillips brought up the timing of the Community Development Block Grant- Disaster Recovery, Notice of Funding Availability (CDBG-DR NOFA) process and the timing to align grants. Members agreed that this would be combined into one Initiative on mental health resources.

The Support Team introduced H&SS05 Sheltering Strategies for Vulnerable Populations and a feedback summary. Mr. Newton provided context to the technical approach provided by the County. Ms. Phillips brought up the recovery, resilience, and equity funds that are potentially available. Ms. Joy brought up that this Initiative overlaps with others. Mr. Churchill stated that the goal is to bolster these facilities so that their clients can receive care. Mr. Abes brought up the special needs sheltering statute referenced and the clear definition the statute and registry provides. Mr. Abes talked about how there potentially is a population of individuals that may not be addressed here and discussed experts to aid Lee County to finding the best practices to provide for this population. He expressed these practices would need to be built from the ground up and include a series of strategies and partners working collaboratively. Members discussed the needs of vulnerable populations and sheltering across the varying dynamics of sheltering in the time of a disaster. Mr. Abes suggested identifying a group of providers outside of public sheltering. Mr. Brown brought up efforts for a sheltering initiative for children and families with autism and a relationship with the Family Initiative to provide services. Ms. Phillips brought up communication and messaging as critical components of these efforts. Members discussed policies at the state level for sheltering individuals with sensory challenges. Mr. Abes described the relevant existing policies and Lee County's role in sheltering vulnerable populations.

The Support team introduced H&SS06: Hardening Healthcare Buildings and the feedback summary. Mr. Abes brought up the policies for shelters in evacuation zones and challenges with those spaces that could restrict funding. In previous experiences, Lee County has found that healthcare or EMS personnel in shelters led to an export of patients to hospitals

and cautioned expanding healthcare in shelters. Ms. Everly described the movement of vulnerable populations between state operations and hospitals. Members discussed the challenges of care and patient movement at facilities post disaster. Ms. Everly suggested that Mobile Health Clinics and coordination of that care could assist in gray skies and could make healthcare more resilient. Mr. Churchill stated that the intent was to include an assessment to allow healthcare entities to apply for funding to harden facilities across different hazard scenarios. He added that broadening the definition of vulnerable could allow for other needs to be met. Ms. Ink-Edwards suggested that improving clients' experience at shelters could improve their outcomes because medical issues can be worsened by the stress of staying in a shelter. Ms. Phillips explained the consolidation plan for these Initiatives.

The Support Team introduced Initiative H&SS07: Critical Facilities and the feedback summary. Members discussed that these Initiatives overlap, and these facilities all provide healthcare.

Initiative Consolidation

Mr. Romine introduced the recommendations to consolidate and combine Initiatives. Mr. Newton discussed that as Initiatives are combined, subject matter experts do retain the ability to shape the elements of the Initiative. Ms. Phillips discussed that each topic will probably need a facility, workforce, and programmatic concept for each to become a reality.

Questions and Next Steps

Mr. Romine explained the next process steps, and that members will be notified as soon as the next meeting is scheduled.

Public Comment

Manuela Martinez with FISH of San-CAP commented that there are areas of concern for the Health and Social Services Branch. She brought up felons and senior areas in public shelters and concerns of drug testing in shelters. She questioned how to help people that are already vulnerable. She commented that during hurricane Idalia there were pharmacies in Lehigh that were out of power, and they were unable to provide medications.

Stephanie Wardein commented that for group homes with adult residents who have disabilities, critical care and infrastructure are essential. She commented that there are conflicting regulations with APD, DOH and FDEM. With critical facilities there is a

continuum of facilities with a flow of patients and care, this could be included in the overlay. She emphasized the need for a preemptive approach to EMS Coordinator and dispatch system as we may experience stress in a disaster.

Chase Pizaris commented and thanked the Branch members for their attention to details for the initiatives.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Romine thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 4:41 PM.