

Project Abstract: Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners

Pinellas County Human Services | 440 Court Street, 2nd floor, Clearwater, FL 33756
PinellasCounty.org | FOA No: SM-16-007

Project Title: Cooperative Agreement to Support Homeless Individuals
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Federal Funding Requested: \$800,000

Project Summary: Funding from this grant opportunity will increase capacity to provide evidence based mental health and substance abuse treatment services for individuals who experience homelessness and have serious mental illness (SMI), substance use disorder (SUD), serious emotional disturbance (SED), and/or co-occurring disorder (COD). The County will partner and contract with several local agencies providing services including agencies that work with homeless youth, families, and veterans. This funding opportunity also strongly encourages a commitment to permanently house eligible clients. While funding does not support housing, we are looking to increase our housing placement specialists working with the population. It will also allow the County to provide outreach and other engagement strategies for individuals served, including screening and assessment. If awarded, the County's homeless population will be on a path to secure housing, coordinated behavioral health services and reduce their likelihood to use the emergency room for behavioral health and linkage services.

Pinellas County, a densely populated county of nearly one million, is governed by an elected seven member Board of County Commissioners (BCC). For over 50 years, the County, through its Human Services department (HS) has provided programs that encourage access to benefits/services and promote improved health outcomes of low-income and homeless residents. HS administers the federally funded Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) program.

Pinellas County, a FQHC serving homeless individuals, has recognized that behavioral health continues to be a pervasive concern within our communities, often affecting the physical health and safety of our most vulnerable citizens. A critical lack of funding has impacted the availability and integration of services and information sharing, inhibiting stability for many individuals. The result is a greater demand for deep-end, expensive crisis care and repeated entry into the criminal justice system and emergency rooms. The County's internal data from its Pinellas County Health Program for FY 2013 indicates that there were 6,764 total emergency room visits by 3,440 HS clients.

Pinellas County is seeking this additional federal funding to address this critical health care need among the homeless population served by the County's HCH program. In 2014, the County served 1,790 unduplicated patients and anticipates serving nearly 2,500 patients by 2017. One hundred percent (100%) of clients served in the program are screened for behavioral health issues including substance abuse. Of the patients referred, a small percentage of clients actually overcome the barriers and receive treatment. Barriers to treatment for this target population include lack of adequate transportation, lack of insurance, and lack of assistance with follow up treatment.
