



News Release

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Meridian's Co-Responder Program Proves to be Vital in Providing Community-Solutions for Citizens Experiencing Mental Illness

The Co-Responder Program Enters Its Fourth Year and Continues Its Partnership with the Gainesville Police Department and Alachua County Sheriff's Office

Gainesville, Fla. – Meridian's Co-Responder program was established in 2018, in partnership with the Gainesville Police Department (GPD), to provide community-based solutions for citizens suffering with mental illness or substance use disorders, who often find themselves involved with the justice system.

The Co-Responder program works in partnership with the Gainesville Police Department (GPD), and was expanded into the Alachua County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) in June 2020. Teams consist of one GPD/ACSO officer and one Meridian clinician.

This evidence-based approach provides a positive form of outreach, community education, and crisis de-escalation. The model also leads to fewer arrests and repeat encounters with law enforcement, as well as reduced use of force in encounters with people suffering with a mental health or substance use disorder crisis.

Since inception, the GPD/Meridian Co-Responder team has had outstanding outcomes resulting in 268 jail diversions and 284 Baker Act diversions through direct engagement in the community.

Along with reaching this milestone, Meridian and the Co-Responder team is recognizing Corporal Shelley Postle for her significant contributions and tireless commitment to the behavioral health community, helping to establish and grow the Co-Responder model in Alachua County.

Jeremiah Alberico, vice president of Diversion and Recovery at Meridian said, "the skills and insight that Corporal Postle brings to the team as an experienced Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Officer, holding a masters in Forensic Psychology, has been instrumental and invaluable to Meridian, the Gainesville Police Department, and to our community."

Meridian will seek to expand the Co-Responder program in coordination with all our partners in an effort to provide quality options for those effected by mental illness and substance use disorder.

For more information on the Meridian Co-Responder program, please visit www.mbhci.org/treatment-and-service/outreach-prevention-services/co-responder-team/

Meridian Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. is a comprehensive community behavioral healthcare organization located in North Central Florida. With services available throughout the region, Meridian maintains offices in these eleven counties: Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Suwannee, and Union. Meridian is CARF accredited and licensed by the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Agency For Healthcare Administration. Its mission is to promote the health, recovery, and well-being of those affected by mental illness and substance use disorders through prevention, coordinated treatment, and supportive services and is based on the vision that hope, recovery, and wellness are within everyone's reach. For more information, visit <http://mbhci.org/>.

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