



**Date:** April 30, 2021

**To:** Nicole Guillet, County Manager

**From:** Lisa Spriggs, Chief of Administrative Services

**RE:** Revised Recommendation: American Rescue Act Funding

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As an update to our preliminary requests under the American Rescue Act (ARA) Funding, attached is a refined and prioritized list for discussion with the County. Attending the BCC meeting on April 13<sup>th</sup> and listening to the discussion provided a better understanding of the BCC's approach to utilizing these resources to support community investment. The original request included needs related to the John E. Polk Corrections Facility, largely technology infrastructure which has been removed from this list as we feel this discussion is better served outside of the ARA Funding. Additionally, the original request has been modified to address Homelessness Outreach under our Behavioral Services Unit, providing centralized services to more effectively focus on what are often co-occurring issues.

The updated table reflects costs on an annual and three-year basis. Also included for consideration are one-time capital costs. It should be noted that the approach to provision of services is fluid and still being evaluated by our team. In addition, opportunities for collaboration with community partners are being explored and welcomed as part of this service delivery model. The following is a brief discussion of the community needs these resources would address throughout Seminole County.

The Seminole County Sheriff's Office's (SCSO) internal priorities and community investments are based on our greatest needs as a modern-day criminal justice organization and the most significant concerns to the citizens of Seminole County. The well-being of the citizens we have the honor to serve is top priority. SCSO has already taken steps to better address and combat the multifaceted opioid epidemic; implementing new and innovative services in our community through partnerships and collaboration. Still, there is much more work to be done to save lives and prevent further tragedy. Vital improvements to the mental health system are needed that provide a collaborative community approach with stabilization, rehabilitation, and treatment to assist those suffering from untreated mental health disorders.

COVID-19 has further influenced these problems and changed societal trends, which left unaddressed can lead to systemic and compounding problems, including criminal activity. A holistic approach is required to address mental illness that includes co-occurring conditions, homelessness, and other post-pandemic social concerns. These issues demand a strategic and thoughtful positioning of resources to serve our community best. SCSO recently reorganized internally. As part of this reorganization, additional resources were directed toward these areas of community investment. However more funding is required to truly establish an effective system of service to the community.



### **Mental Health and Substance Abuse (Adult Behavioral Services)**

The COVID19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on the health and wellbeing of our community. Impacts that will have lasting effects on our citizens that will be felt for years to come. The pandemic has resulted in an increase in substance use disorders and mental health disorders. A recent study found that 4 in 10 adults reported experiencing anxiety or depression which was up from 1 in 10 in 2019. A survey from June 2020 revealed 13% of adults reported new or increased substance use due to pandemic related stress.

There has been an increase in mental health disorders including Baker Acts, suicides, suicide attempts, and people suffering from anxiety and depression. In 2020, Seminole County averaged 236 baker acts per month, for the first quarter of 2021 the average number of Baker Acts per month is 272. There has been an increase in Risk Protection Orders (RPOs) both submitted, granted and renewed; with roughly 70% of all individuals under a RPO having a related mental health incident or Baker Act. Additional resources are requested to address the increase in mental health crisis incidents including Baker Acts, arrests of individuals with mental health issues, the need for more participation in diversion programs/courts, and assisting/navigating those struggling with mental health issues by offering services and providing follow-up services.

There has been an increase in overdoses with a monthly average of 38 in 2019, 49 in 2020 and an average of 72 per month for the first quarter of 2021. The SCORE team responds to non-fatal drug overdoses and community referrals providing navigation through the treatment process and follow-up. With the increase in overdoses and referrals, resources are requested to provide additional staffing to the response team to adjust the case load to a manageable level.

### **Homelessness Outreach (Behavioral Services)**

Crime is a symptom of another problem. Mental health and substance abuse are two of the most frequent conditions contributing to criminality. These two factors are also seen to occur in our homeless population in Seminole County. In recent months, approximately 20% of the homeless individuals contacted by law enforcement have previously been taken into custody under a Baker Act. From January of 2020 to February 2021, 278 homeless individuals overdosed, which is an average of 20 overdose incidents per month. Additionally, individuals living under these circumstances are more susceptible to become victims of crime. In unincorporated Seminole County alone, there are 44 documented homeless camps, of which 19 are active as of March 19, 2021.

Despite the social service agencies which are available to the homeless within Seminole County, many homeless persons will not encounter or explore their options as they are unaware of the availability of them, are unwilling to work with them, or simply do not have the means or transportation to access them. Many individuals who experience homelessness have or are also experiencing mental health and substance abuse issues. Additionally, social service agencies' outreach efforts are conducted at fixed locations and do not proactively communicate with the homeless who do not seek out their services. Because of this, much of the homeless population is underserved.



Law enforcement must be a part of the effort to solve the problem and address the underlying conditions that led to homelessness. Research throughout the US regarding homeless outreach programs has shown law enforcement agencies have effectively used a model with specially trained officers to address the underlying conditions of homelessness within their communities. Resources would be used to focus on this model in Seminole County. This coupled with our combined efforts through our Behavioral Section will enhance success given the recognition that often times there are co-occurring conditions within this population.

**Juvenile Services – Behavioral Services**

COVID19 has impacted juveniles in various ways, from their schooling to their ability to socialize and de-stress. Many children have fallen behind in school which causes additional stressors. Children have also been affected by the impact of the pandemic on their family and their family’s response to the pandemic. All of these factors directly impact the mental health and wellness of our youth and have resulted in an increase in calls for service and referrals that need to be addressed.

SCSO has had a successful Mobile Crisis Response effort funded through a grant with the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance that is set to expire in December 2021. The funding supported a startup program covering designated areas of the county. SCSO expanded the program to include community referrals. The requested funding resources would allow the Mobile Crisis Response to continue upon grant expiration, would expand the coverage area to the entire county, would provide adequate capacity to work community referrals, would provide for community care coordination, and would provide expanded training efforts. The goal is early intervention, aiding the youth and their parents by connecting them to the most applicable resources and programs based on individual circumstances.

**Mental Health Crisis Center**

Like the Hope & Healing Center partnership, the Mental Health Crisis Center would work collaboratively with a local health care provider(s) to open a stand-alone “one-stop shop” mental health drop-in center. The vision and goal is to provide an option for clinical assessment and evaluation of persons with mental health issues for referral and ultimate placement into the appropriate treatment services. The center may provide for treatment programs. The requested resources would provide for start-up funding for the center, which would in concept also be funded through private donations.

<b>American Rescue Act Tentative Funding Plan</b>	<b>Annual</b>	<b>3 Year</b>
Mental Health Adult	\$ 1,285,000	\$ 3,855,000
Opioid Addiction	395,000	1,185,000
Mental Health Juvenile	1,150,000	3,450,000
Mental Health Center	500,000	500,000
<b>Behavioral Services</b>	<b>\$ 3,330,000</b>	<b>\$ 8,990,000</b>