



# Alachua County Advisory Board Program

## Health Care Advisory Board

**Brendan Shortley, Chair**  
**Tim Rogers, Vice Chair**

June 30, 2020

Dear Alachua County Board of County Commissioners,

The mission of the BOCC's Health Care Advisory Board is to identify specific gaps in health services for Alachua County residents, therefore the continued financial viability of the CHOICES Healthcare Program Trust has been a topic of concern for the BOCC and the Health Care Advisory Board for quite some time.

The depletion of the CHOICES Trust Fund will greatly impact our ability to help uninsured residents of Alachua County. These individuals have limited access to healthcare. Alleviation of this was the impetus for the CHOICES program. If the funding expires, low-income residents of Alachua County would not have access to much needed healthcare services, including preventive care. CHOICES has provided true government support to the least fortunate among us.

Some agencies use CHOICES dollars to leverage state funding. For example, the Victims of Crime Act increases the availability of trauma counseling to the domestic violence victims in our community, Loss of CHOICES funding, and the match dollars, could increase the City and County's financial burden in relation to law enforcement, jails, social services, etc.

CHOICES funds significant dental efforts as well. Poor oral health can lead to many more severe health issues and places an increased financial burden on Alachua County Health Department funding. The local economy is affected when the poor experience an inability to interview and/or hold a job due to untreated dental pain.

Nonprofit groups providing primary care identify chronic disease states like asthma, diabetes and hypertension, and treat these before they cause severe effects such as stroke and death.

CHOICES funding also includes much-needed psychiatric services. A viable argument can be made that it is not cost-effective to have the police as the central receiving facility. The only two options available without non-profit agencies are a crisis stabilization facility or jail. Frontline clinics that provide psychiatric services such as GRACE and Helping Hands Clinic help alleviate the financial burden to the County.

More information can also be found in "Return On Investment Of Public Health Interventions: A Systematic Review", published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health (<https://jech.bmj.com/content/71/8/827>).

CHOICES funds are being depleted at a rate of \$800,000 per year. We would request that the BOCC allot 10% per year from General Fund starting this year, increasing by 10% each year, as a supplement to the CHOICES funding available. This would create a sustainable base of funding for County's frontline of defense and prevention for the well-being of our community as a whole. Thank you for your time and admirable efforts.

Sincerely,

Brendan Shortley  
Chair  
Health Care Advisory Board