

Office of Circuit Judge

DAWN CALOCA-JOHNSON
Circuit Judge
Second Judicial Circuit



Leon County Courthouse
301 S. Monroe St
Tallahassee, Florida 32301
(850) 577-4301; FAX (850) 577-4475

May 10, 2011

Hon. John E. Dailey
Chair, Board of County Commissioners
Leon County Courthouse, 5th Floor
301 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Re: Mental Health Court Funding

Dear Mr. Dailey:

I am writing to inform you that the Leon County Mental Health Advisory Board voted unanimously at its meeting on May 4, 2011 to request that the Leon County Board of County Commissioners authorize an emergency restructuring of the previously approved Mental Health Court funding. Recent developments have created the need for this request. We are grateful that you have funded Mental Health Court from July 1, 2011 through September 30, 2011. We hope to work with county staff to prepare an RFP for future services starting October 1, 2011.

Your staff has informed the Court the intent of the Board of County Commissioners was that the program should remain essentially the same for this interim funding period. Unfortunately, Apalachee Center, Inc., as of June 1, 2011, declines to continue to be the fiscal agent for, and consequently subcontract services with, Ability First, as required by the original grant and MOU. Additionally, Apalachee Center has not filled the case manager position nor provided required and timely reports and services to the Court under the original grant and MOU since January 2011. This has resulted in both felony and misdemeanor Mental Health Court failing to satisfy its purpose. Because Apalachee Center, Inc. is unwilling to execute a similar MOU for the continued funding period from June 1, 2011 through September 30, 2011, the felony and misdemeanor Mental Health Court will continue to fail to satisfy its mission, but on a larger scale because key subcontractors such as Ability First will no longer be able to provide services to mental health defendants.

For Mental Health Court to continue, the program needs to be restructured so that funds spent for case management and pretrial release should be diverted to Leon County Probation and the Office of Court Administration to pay for these services, instead of Apalachee Center. Further, the Mental Health Advisory Board recommends that the remaining monies be allocated to Apalachee Center and Ability First based upon their proportion of clients in Mental Health Court, to allow these organizations to continue to provide their unique services to the program. This would alleviate Apalachee Center from serving as the fiscal agent for other organizations under this program, satisfying their concerns, and hopefully get the program back on track.

Re: Mental Health Court Funding
 May 6, 2011
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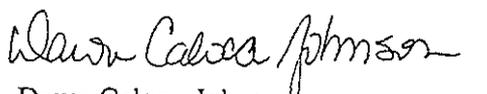
This recommendation also applies to the one month period from June 1, 2011 through June 30, 2011, when the MOU has expired, limiting the use of the original DCF grant funds to only a Transition Case Manager employed by the Leon County Probation Division. The balance remaining of the DCF grant must be returned to DCF due to grant restrictions. To satisfy the intent of the Mental Health Advisory Board as exhibited in their vote, Court staff tentatively proposes to re-allocate already approved Leon County general revenue funding as follows:

Organization	Purpose	Funding for June 1, 2011 - September 30, 2011 (Leon County General Revenue Funds)
Leon County Probation Division	Fund Pretrial Specialist and Transition Case Manager positions	\$26,227.00
Office of Court Administration	Fund Court Case Manager position	\$14,189.00
Apalachee Center, Inc.	Competency restoration training for defendants with mental illness (misdemeanor cases)	\$5,901.67
Ability First	Competency restoration training for defendants with mental retardation (misdemeanor cases) and TBI (for misdemeanor and felony cases)	\$11,803.33
Contingency Funds	Emergency costs	\$843.00
Other		\$58,964.00

The Mental Health Advisory Board hopes that this proposal will break the current impasse that is preventing Mental Health Court from functioning as designed and that would allow it to realize its full potential in coordinating services to criminal defendants with mental health concerns, while continuing to reduce costs to the taxpayer.

We further hope that you may be able to place this request on the agenda for the May 24, 2011 meeting of the Board of County Commissioners, such that the reorganization will be well underway prior to the expiration of the MOU on May 31, 2011. We appreciate the time and patience you have given this valuable program.

Respectfully submitted,


 Dawn Caloca-Johnson
 Chair, Mental Health Advisory Board

- CC: Hon. Akin Akinyemi
 Hon. Bryan Desloge
 Hon. Kristin Dozier
 Hon. Nick Maddox
 Hon. Bill Proctor
 Hon. Jane G. Sauls
 Hon. Charles A. Francis, Chief Judge
 Hon. Ron Flury, County Judge
 Mental Health Advisory Board members