

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF SOUTHEAST FLORIDA/ FLORIDA INITIATIVE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

The recently completed fiscal period marked the 68th year of Mental Health of America of Southeast Florida (MHASEFL) service to the community. The addition of the Florida Initiative to the organization over five years ago has added another dimension of service to our community and we value that additional component.

The breadth and scope of services continues to expand and provide much needed support to our community.

We are thankful for our funders, BBHC, Broward County, United Way of Broward County, Children Services Council of Broward and Child Net for their support and guidance over the years. This report will outline many of the efforts and outcomes over the past year that MHASEFL/FISP has been proud to produce resulting in exceptional service to our community.

The efforts of the Board and staff have been tremendous in supporting the mission. **The Mission is to promote mental health and victory over mental illnesses and related challenges through education, prevention, advocacy, research, and empowerment.**

While the Board continues to guide the organization's goals and future, the staff and volunteers work tirelessly to bring the vision to life. We are proud of their achievements and the impact that their efforts have made in advancing the mission.

MHA/FISP – SERVICE BY THE NUMBERS

Demonstrating Community Impact: How Mental Health America Serves South Florida

Mental Health America of Southeast Florida (MHASEFL) delivers a comprehensive, community-based approach to mental wellness that spans **prevention, early intervention, trauma response, postvention, and long-term recovery support**. We serve individuals of all ages, from young children to older adults, ensuring that services are accessible, inclusive, and rooted in the diverse realities of those we serve.

Each year, **more than 15,000 children, adults, and families** benefit from our services. Through direct outreach, peer-led interventions, evidence-informed education, and trauma-informed support, MHASEFL ensures that no one faces mental health challenges alone. Unfortunately, due to Broward School District guidelines, our efforts in the Children Services area have been severely impacted resulting in a loss of services to be provided to the school district over the past four years. We continue to work with the school district to resume this work and hope that we will soon be able to continue the work with our Listen to Children and I'm Thumbbody programs.

Trauma and Crisis Response: HEAL Team and LOSS Team

MHASEFL supports individuals and families affected by trauma and suicide through two essential crisis response teams.

HEAL Team (Heal Trauma)

The HEAL Team, funded by the Children's Services Council, provides **trauma-informed support** to children and families impacted by violence, abuse, displacement, or grief. Services include:

- Emotional stabilization and safety planning
- Resources for basic needs and long-term support
- Education on trauma recovery and regulation
- In-person, community-based outreach

By addressing trauma at its root, the HEAL Team helps prevent long-term psychological distress and promotes resilience in families.

LOSS Team (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors)

The LOSS Team provides **immediate, compassionate outreach to individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide**. Responding alongside first responders, trained team members—often suicide loss survivors themselves—help families process their loss, access support groups, and begin the healing process.

LOSS Team services include:

- On-site postvention and emotional first aid
- Connection to counseling, peer support, and navigation services
- Prevention of suicide contagion through direct intervention

This model reduces isolation during moments of profound crisis and encourages long-term healing and connection.

Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention (FISP)

Now housed under MHASEFL, the **Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention (FISP)** enhances MHASEFL's impact through **education, peer mentoring, and postvention services** focused on youth and families.

FISP's key programs include:

- **Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOS) support groups**
- **Youth suicide prevention presentations and mentoring**
- **Parent and caregiver education**
- **Suicide awareness and gatekeeper training** for service providers and community members

Together, these services reduce stigma, increase help-seeking behaviors, and create a more informed and connected safety net for youth and families.

Recovery and Empowerment for Adults: 9MusesArtCenter.org

MHASEFL operates **9MusesArtCenter.org**, one of the only **peer-run, recovery-focused art and wellness centers in Florida**. It serves adults living with mental health conditions by offering:

- Art therapy and creative expression programs
- Peer support groups
- Wellness education, social connection, and vocational training
- A welcoming, judgment-free space for growth and healing

This innovative model promotes self-direction, purpose, and community engagement for hundreds of adults each year.

Inclusive and Equitable Care

MHASEFL is committed to **removing barriers to mental health care**, with a focus on serving low-income, BIPOC, and historically underserved populations. We offer:

- **Multilingual services** in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole
- Programs that are **trauma-informed and culturally responsive**
- No-cost services, with **no insurance or diagnosis required to participate**
- Community-based delivery in homes, shelters, youth agencies, and public spaces

The Impact of MHASEFL

Our impact in the last year includes:

- 15,000+ lives touched
- 150+ families supported
- 70+ volunteers trained and mobilized
- Dozens of trauma cases stabilized through HEAL
- Dozens of families supported immediately after suicide through LOSS
- 300+ adults participating monthly in peer-led recovery through 9MusesArtCenter.org

Conclusion

MHASEFL is more than a mental health provider—we are a **lifeline**, a **bridge to healing**, and a **force for prevention and resilience** in Southeast Florida. Whether helping a grieving parent through our LOSS Team, giving a child their first tools to understand their emotions, or helping a survivor of mental illness reconnect with their creativity, **our impact is tangible, lasting, and deeply human**.

We are honored to serve and build a healthier, more compassionate future for all.

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

MHA/FISP is appreciative for the broad support that allows us to provide our programs and services. Our diverse funding sources have allowed us to be creative and responsive to emerging needs. We value the positive relationships that we have evolved with our primary funders, the Broward Behavioral Health Coalition, Broward County, Broward Children Services Council and Child Net.

This year we successfully hosted the 28th Annual EPIC Luncheon which raised over \$8,000. The event was very well attended by over 180 people and was quite successful in raising awareness for MHA/FISP.

MHA/FISP maintains an updated website through the dedication of MHA/FSIP staff, and they have helped MHA/FISP produce a user-friendly website that is a powerfully positive representation of MHA/FISP. We look forward to our newest partnership with the South Florida Mental Health Summit and EXPO held at the Charlie Dodge Center in Pembroke Pines and the organizing sponsor. It will be a premier event open to the community on all issues related to Mental Health and recovery.

NEW INITIATIVES

Our contracts with BBHC for peer support and drop-in center were renewed. MHA/FISP will be the proud sponsor of this year's event, South Florida Mental Health Summit and EXPO. LL Bean, MHA National grants, Walmart, United Way of Broward County, Memorial Hospital, Henderson Behavioral Health, BBHC, Bristol Myers Squibb among many others.

The Connections Guidebook is available online through the website www.browardconnections.org and is free of charge. It has all the information available in the Connections Guidebook but offers direct links to agencies listed and is updated annually to ensure the information is up to date.

FROM THE CEO:

MHA/FISP is an organization of people who care about the people we serve. Every day our staff and volunteers step up to the challenge to ensure that persons served receive quality services and caring and supportive care. The addition of FISP to the organization has been a win/win in terms of the expansion of services and the intervention on behalf of suicide postvention and prevention.

The Board of Directors continues to be an active partner with the staff and persons served to ensure that services are delivered in a caring and reasonable fashion. The Board has been a tremendous asset to the organization, and I thank them for their time and expertise. The combined Board of FISP and MHA Directors has proven to be a significant tool in the efficiency of the board and directing the mission and vision of the combined agency as MHA/FISP.

We continue to work with all the behavioral health providers in the county in a highly collaborative manner fostering the commitment to those people we serve. MHA has been in the forefront in the development of exciting new peer opportunities, and we look forward to an exciting year in

developing even more programming around this initiative. The addition of a ground-breaking concept of peer support services being combined with Occupational Therapy is unique and I thank BBHC for their continued partnership with MHA/FISP as this project continues to develop and grow.

The addition of providing peer support services on the grounds of the South Florida State Hospital now in its 5th year and has provided the residents of the hospital the opportunity to connect with community resources even before they are discharged from the hospital into the community. The operations at Forest Park are another way in which peer services are delivered in a persons served centric manner and are well received by the residents of the hospital. We thank Well Path (South Florida State Hospital) for their continued partnership and forward-thinking process.

MHA's commitment to the community remains strong and I am proud to be part of this commitment as we move forward at a very challenging time. Early Intervention is the key to mitigating the devastation that mental illness can significantly impact an individual's life.

As MHA celebrates its 68th year of operation in Broward County we continue to be a vibrant and ever-changing agency ensuring our future and the future of the many individuals who have come to rely on our services over the years. I continue to be amazed at the hard-working individuals who help keep our agency providing these vital services to our community. Our Board deserves recognition for their years of dedicated service as well. There are several Board members who have served for many years and value the contributions of the organization and remain committed to the mission.

Paul F. Jaquith, LCSW, CAP
President/CEO