

Thriving Mind South Florida: 2025 Talking Points

ABOUT US

Thriving Mind South Florida is the non-profit organization that ensures safety-net access to evidence-based care for people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders for the southern region of Florida. Created by Florida statute and funded by the Department of Children and Families and other state, federal and local agencies, Thriving Mind and six other Managing Entities offer the most accountable and cost-effective services for behavioral health in Florida. While initially created by contract and statute to meet needs of uninsured and underinsured, the Managing Entity mission has expanded greatly. Thriving Mind now manages community-wide programs like Florida 988 and Mobile Response and Receiving Facilities, which are made available to the public regardless of income. **Thriving Mind has been repeatedly reaccredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), with zero “out of compliance” ratings for any practice standards. COA noted: Thriving Mind has achieved accreditation meeting the highest national standards in practice excellence.**

FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Thriving Mind's network includes over 40 non-profit healthcare provider organizations with overhead capped at 10 percent. Since inception, Thriving Mind's operating rate has remained below 5 percent. This stable safety-net system of highly accountable non-profit providers and low-overhead quality assurance supports the success of mental health and substance use treatment and prevention services in Florida. Thriving Mind submits more than 65 reports annually to the Department of Children and Families, detailing business practices, contracting requirements, performance outcomes, and expenditures.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Mobile Response Team (MRT) Network:** Thriving Mind offers the only MRT network in the state with region- wide and timely in-person responses, as well as one of the highest volume, multi-lingual Florida 988 crisis lines. Demonstrating MRT effectiveness, our regional law enforcement partners have a long history of Baker Acting approximately 80 percent of the calls they respond to (diverting 20 percent to treatment).
- **988 implementation.** Worked with the state and county to implement 988, the new National Suicide Prevention Hotline.
- **First in State Children's.** SRT The 16-bed SRT program, located at Citrus Health Network and funded through Thriving Mind, accepts referrals from both Thriving Mind and Broward Behavioral Health Coalition (BBHC). The 16 beds are divided between the two counties: eight for individuals from Miami--Dade and eight for individuals from Broward.
- **First in State Living Room.** The Living Room model is a community crisis respite program that offers people experiencing a mild mental health crisis an alternative to hospitalization. Individuals can receive services at the Living Room for up to 23 hours. When people experience a mental health crisis, they are faced with the decision to go to the emergency department or to try to manage the crisis themselves. This provides an option of services in the crisis continuum.

THRIVING MIND POPULATION SERVED

Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, with a known population of 2.8 million, has approximately 1,020,538 documented adults at less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. This translates to approximately 277,586 adults with serious mental illness (SMI) and substance use disorders (SUD) in South Florida. Of that 277,586 in need, about 33,505 annually receive treatment services through the safety net system operated by Thriving Mind. A total of 378,823 individuals receive our services, including treatment as well as prevention.

Our prevention efforts alone reach over 340,000 people using only a fraction of total budget, making it one of our most cost-effective programs.

2025 NEEDS ASSESSMENT PRIORITIES

Thriving Mind South Florida (Thriving Mind) is pleased to announce the release of the 2025 Triennial Behavioral Health Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment included robust survey engagement, followed by highly-attended in-person community engagement via focus groups and in-person meetings. This process included individuals served, community stakeholders, peers, families, and Network Service Providers (NSPs).

The 2025 Triennial Needs Assessment for Thriving Mind, the Managing Entity (ME) serving Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, usefully informs on community needs regarding service capacity, gaps and opportunities. Under our contract with the Department, we use this resource in collaboration with the Department to inform plans and priorities.

This important assessment was conducted over nine months and integrates all of the above plus multiple external data sources, including socio-economic and health indicators. For example, Thriving Mind Individuals Served data (Fiscal Years 2020–2024) included three major surveys, 13 focus groups, and three community town hall sessions (made available virtually and in-person). This multi-method approach ensured that findings reflected both quantitative trends and lived experiences of service providers, persons served, and stakeholders.

Priority Recommendations

Suicide Prevention – Identify gaps in public awareness and increase peer-specific outreach. Work to identify additional funding sources for suicide prevention.

Housing – Expand affordable and supportive housing options, improve Independent Living Setting/Assisted Living Facility (ALF) oversight, and integrate behavioral health needs into housing eligibility. While Thriving Mind prioritizes housing concerns, our role as a Managing Entity is limited by funding and statute. For context, the term “ILF” is often used to refer to shared-housing living arrangements, which are not regulated by any entity, and are common in Miami-Dade County. Shared-housing living arrangements are not required to provide any kind of oversight or supervision. Individuals living in these types of living arrangements are expected to have the skills to live independently. NSPs often place individuals, upon discharge, in shared housing due to lack of affordable housing options.

Navigation and Awareness – Develop accessible resource guides, expand outreach via social media and community events, and leverage ride-share partnerships to address transportation barriers.

Family and School-Based Engagement – Increase parent education, enhance school partnerships, and implement teacher training in mental health identification.

Peer Support – Standardize training, supervision, and role definitions; address stigma and ensure equitable compensation.

Care Coordination – Strengthen cross-agency communication, reduce administrative barriers, and develop shared protocols for warm handoffs.

The data and community input presented in this assessment highlight both the complexity and the opportunity within the Southern Region’s behavioral health system. Sustained investment in housing, workforce capacity, coordination, and culturally responsive services will be essential to meeting current needs and preparing for future challenges.

Contact: John W. Newcomer, M.D., jnewcomer@thrivingmind.org,
Direct: 305-860-0653 or **Assistant:** 786-235-7147
www.thrivingmind.org