



May 4, 2021

Councilman Ron Salem
City of Jacksonville
Office of the City Council
117 W. Duval Street, Suite 425
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Dear Councilman Salem,

The I.M. Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless, Inc. (Sulzbacher), would like to take this opportunity to thank you profusely for all you did last year to advocate for the funding and launch of the new and innovative project- the Mental Health Offender Program.

As you know-this has been a very exciting pilot and thus far through the first quarter -has seen some impressive outcomes. This project, which was championed by you at the City, Chief Judge Mahon on the court side, Sheriff Williams from JSO, Melissa Nelson, our State Attorney and Judge Coffey, our Public Defender-has been an incredible collaborative success.

As in all pilots, as the implementation begins you recognize that there are additional needs in order to make the program work more smoothly in the future. It is with that in mind that we request consideration of this increased service proposal. As staff works with the very vulnerable and ill client base, they are finding the need for a dedicated vehicle to visit them at hotels, take them to appointments, to shop for groceries, bring them in for their court appearances etc. There is more travel involved than originally anticipated and for many of the clients they are too sick to navigate the bus system safely. We are requested to purchase a pre-owned van in order to allow for all of the transportation needs.

We have also discovered that many of the people coming out of jail and released to the MHOP staff are actively psychotic and completely unmedicated. Putting someone in this condition directly into a hotel has proven in some case to be unsuccessful and problematic. In the Miami model, they have a safe place where they can put these very ill people for the first couple of weeks until they can become stabilized. We would like to create such a place at Sulzbacher. We actually have a wing of rooms that could be renovated for this purpose-it is currently office space; we would also locate all of the MHOP staff to the same wing so that the entire program could be self-contained. We do have some rehabbing/furnishing needs in order to make that work.

Lastly, we have realized the need for a freezer and refrigerator in the MHOP project in order to keep food for those in the hotels and we need some additional technology for communication between the clients, staff and the court system. This is in the form of 20 prepaid cell phone for the clients and 2 laptops for the staff which will better facilitate the virtual court sessions required.

We are therefore requesting consideration of the following funding which will assist in making the MHOP program function more smoothly as we actively look to grow the program next year:

Funding Needs

- Rehab wing at Sulzbacher to add 5 MHOP stabilization rooms and 4 MHOP offices-this includes adding 3 security doors, painting, furnishing a community room and repairing bathroom and laundry room **\$25,000**
- Furnishing for 5 MHOP rooms- this includes bed,TV, mini fridge, chest and bedding **\$4,800**
- Communication Equipment- 20 phones with prepaid minutes and 2 laptops **\$6000**
- Pre-owned 6 passenger van and wrap- to transport clients to hotels and required appointments **\$39,000**
- Fuel for van- \$500 per monthx4- **\$2000**
- Client Personal Needs (clothes, bedding etc.) - **\$500**
- Client Food - **\$500**
- Travel- training, conferences, Miami visit **\$5,000**
- .2 Psychiatrist-psychiatrist is spending far more time-**\$22,000** (Sulzbacher will match)
- .5 FTE-Salary and benefits-Rapid Rehousing Housing Case Manager- **\$30,000**

Total funding Request: \$133,800

We are very excited about the preliminary success of the Mental Health Offender Program pilot. As we look to the future and as we learn more from our friends in Miami we seek to improve on our model as we go along. The amazing success that they have achieved in Miami has happened over many years, our goal is to replicate that success here in Jacksonville. This is an extremely challenging clientele, some of the most vulnerable people in our community. We are already seeing these people's lives change for the better in the short time this project has been in operation and that has been very gratifying.

We appreciate the strong support and partnership that City Council has historically afforded Sulzbacher- we feel that the partnership has always been mutually beneficial. We particularly are grateful for your personal advocacy and commitment to this critical project.

Thank you for your consideration,

Cindy Funkhouser
President and CEO