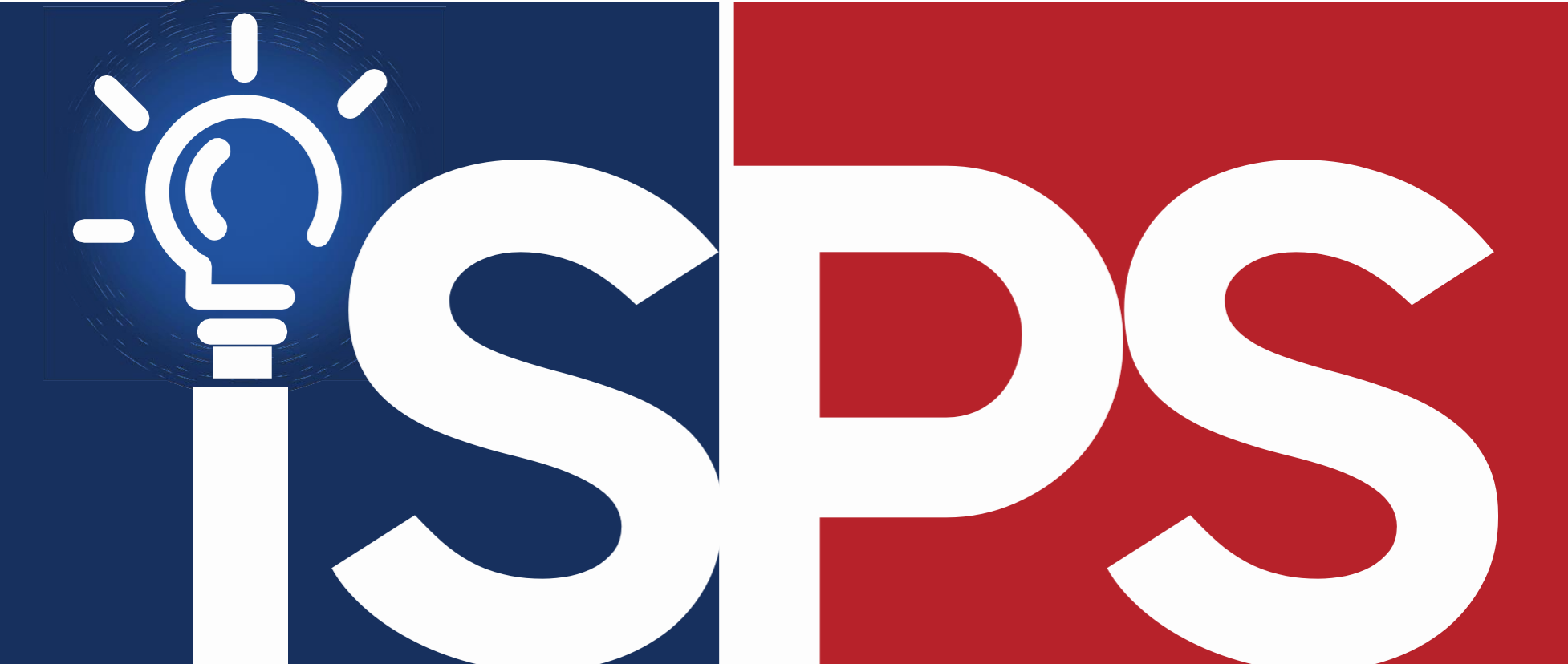


ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE



INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC POLICY SOLUTIONS

ENHANCE. EDUCATE. ENGAGE.

Table of Contents

[ISPS Mission.....3](#)

[Working Together South St. Petersburg Group.....4](#)

[Objectives for the Group Overall.....5](#)

[Executive Summary.....6](#)

[Discussion Points.....8](#)

[Participants.....9](#)

[Summary of Meetings.....12](#)

[Summary of Needs.....13](#)

ISPS Mission

The Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions at St. Petersburg College is dedicated to advancing academic excellence, community engagement, economic vitality and public understanding through high-quality, solutions-directed, non-partisan public policy programs. Its purpose is to enrich the education experience, engage with local government to promote unity and efficiency, facilitate economic activity, and involve citizens in their college and government.

ISPS seeks to educate the community in the following ways:

1. Promote student engagement
2. Enhance civic and community involvement
3. Serve as a center for public discourse
4. Identify economic initiatives

Visit us at <https://isps.spcollege.edu/> or Follow us on:



Working Together

South St. Petersburg Group



Watson Haynes
President
Pinellas County Urban League



Jennifer Yeagley, M.A.
Chief Executive Officer
St. Petersburg Free Clinic



Kimberly G. Jackson
Executive Director
Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions

Objectives for the Group Overall

- 1. Foster connections among organizations working in and/or serving the South St. Petersburg community**
- 2. Enhance support and access to relevant services for individuals in the community**
- 3. Promote cross-sector collaboration**

Executive Summary

In the fall of 2020, the Institute for Strategic & Policy Solutions partnered with the St. Petersburg Free Clinic and the Pinellas County Urban League to convene leaders across sectors whose service areas include South St. Petersburg, as well as Pinellas County more broadly, to better understand the landscape of community need at the current stage of the COVID crisis, encourage collaboration across organizations and prepare for emerging needs as we head into 2021.

The consensus of the group - which included nonprofit sector leaders, funding organizations, leaders in the faith community, elected officials and small business owners - was that meeting basic needs continues to be a critical priority; however, needs beyond the basics of food and shelter, are also at a critical stage.

For example, organizations like the St. Petersburg Free Clinic noted that numbers of individuals served in and through its food programs (through which the organization provides food directly to families, as well as distributes food to partners throughout Pinellas County to do the same) are nearly triple what they were a year ago. Organizations like People Empowering & Restoring Communities (PERC) noted the persistent need for shelter. However, Empath Health indicated that the need for grief counseling was at an all time high; Area Agency on Aging noted the need to address social isolation among seniors; and the City of St. Petersburg spoke to the digital divide among students and the need to ensure access. Additional specifics are further detailed in the following pages.

What we have learned is that COVID has vastly exacerbated a need for *all* services for not just those who are already traditionally underserved, but for those who may have been “holding on” and now find themselves in crisis. As Rev. Watson Haynes, CEO of the Pinellas County Urban League shared: they are seeing an influx of individuals who have been employed for decades, reaching out for services for the first time.

Amid this cacophony of current need is the looming housing crisis. As a result of federal programs drawing to a close, and local funders, whose COVID-related resources were in many cases linked to these federal stimulus programs, having exhausted their COVID crisis funds, the next emergency our community faces is the eviction of thousands of people who have been unable to keep up with their rent or mortgages who may soon face homelessness. Also looming is a mental health crisis, which is expected to coincide with the later stages of COVID as economic distress, isolation, and the ongoing unknowns as to when the crisis will end continue to pile onto those already grasping at scarce and dwindling resources.

The upcoming legislative session can offer critical relief to community across Florida, and specifically, Pinellas County. A coordinated plan that delivers real and immediate aid to individuals, additional funding and resources for service providers, stimulus to small businesses, and consistent communication to Floridians will make the difference in whether and when Pinellas County will recover - and thrive - beyond COVID.

Discussion Points



- What are you seeing in terms of need at this stage of the COVID crisis?
- What are you doing to meet that need: same work, new work, more communication, additional funding, new initiatives, etc.?
- What do you need to continue effectively meeting current and emerging community needs?
- What are you seeing in terms of need at this stage of the COVID crisis?
- What has changed about what you're doing to meet community need?
- What post-COVID planning are you doing?
- Have any successful collaborations been formed since our last meeting?

Participants

Ann Marie Winter, Area Agency on Aging
Watson Haynes, Pinellas County Urban League
Melissa Meshill, Senator Jeff Brandes' Office
Lisa Brody, Bay Area Legal Services
Rebecca Nessen, Metro Inclusive Health
Dorothy Myles, Pinellas Opportunity Council
David Jezek, YMCA of St. Petersburg
Micki Thompson, 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares
Julie Rocco, Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg
Jane Walker, Daystar
Beth Houghton, Juvenile Welfare Board
Dr. Bilan Joseph, Early Learning Coalition
Shaina Bent, St. Petersburg Free Clinic
Sheryl Zeitler, St. Petersburg Free Clinic
Patty Sawyer, Pinellas Opportunity Council

Jessica Estevez, Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg
Sylvia Acevedo, Gulf Coast JFCS
Michael Jalazo, PERC
Karen Davis-Pritchett, Empath Health
Nikki Capehart, City of St. Petersburg
Tiffany Reddick, Well for Life
Jessica Lews, Former Rep Jennifer Webb's Office, Rep. District 69
Duggan Cooley, Pinellas Community Foundation
Rep. Michele Rayner, District 70
Carl Lavender, Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg
Ronnell Montgomery, St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce
Erik Smith, Inclusivity

Area Agency on Aging

Seniors biggest needs are for food, utilities support, housing and, if not tech savvy, decreasing social isolation. AAA is focusing on meeting basic needs, like increased food delivery.

Sen. Brandes' Office

Increase in need for social services across the board and in particular basic needs: rent payment, housing, utilities, wifi payment, food

Bay Area Legal Services

Providing housing and eviction mitigation services. Changed language in materials to encourage people to contact them before they get evicted so they can try to prevent eviction from happening

Pinellas County Urban League

Seeing a new type of need: folks with long-term employment and working history are suddenly unemployed and in need, where they haven't had need before. Working through the community to meet employment, education and other basic needs

JWB

Stepping up to fund need where COVID CARES support isn't. Eventually this kind of "crisis" funding will drop off and the need for housing in particular will remain high. Concern about this as funding sources aren't readily available for individuals facing eviction.

Metro Inclusive Health

Seeing an increase in need for behavioral health services. Implemented telehealth model/tele case management and using digital and social platforms to create connections

Pinellas Opportunity Council

Providing emergency assistance for housing and other bills. Seeing critical need for basic needs and bills to be covered given significant increase in unemployment. Remote meetings with clients have increased efficiency.

2-1-1 Cares

Has provided 19M in direct assistance over the last six months. 11/13 was the last day to apply for COVID cares assistance.

Empath

Long term care workers are exhausted and burned out. There are many ongoing psycho-social needs among clients. Have been leveraging telehealth and social media. Working with VA on a food drive to meet veterans needs.

GCJFCS

In need of creative ways to support immigrants and/or refugees who do not have documents and need services.

YMCA

Child-care staff are burned out; maintaining necessary protocols is difficult. If anyone knows of anyone who could benefit from neighbor-to-neighbor holiday program, please refer to the YMCA. Working with more partners more broadly than before to meet complex client and community needs.

PERC

Need for hot food, rent and utilities. People are worried about all the support that will run out at the end of December.

New Hope Baptist Church

Need help to support their program providing housing for teens aging out of foster care. Providing rental, utilities and food assistance to neighbors. Also provide clothing first Saturday of every month.

Inclusivity

Focusing on racial equity amid pandemic and in particular the importance of flu shots and continued vigilance around COVID.

SPFC

Continuing to distribute significant amounts of food through We Help food pantry four days per week and delivering food to partners throughout the County. Continuing to increase scope of healthcare services as new patient numbers are increasing. Working on partnerships with American Heart Association and several area civic groups to meet neighborhood-based need.

Summary of Meetings

October

- To view the meeting transcript, click [here](#).
- To view the live chat transcript, click [here](#).

November

- To view the meeting transcript, click [here](#).
- To view the live chat transcript, click [here](#).

Summary of Needs

- **Providing rapid support to mitigate evictions**
- **Behavioral health supports for adults and children (esp. children who have been in unstable home environments during COVID and are now back in school)**
- **Food distribution partners and access to nutritious food**
- **Financial support for expenses related to home repairs and home improvements**
- **Affordable childcare**
- **Financial support for the payment of HOA fees to avoid eviction**
- **Art supplies for The Well for Life's child/youth programs**
- **Innovative virtual programming solutions involving youth and families (burnout for online platforms is taking its toll)**
- **Need to engage whole families (parents and children) in supports for youth and children**
- **Access to digital technology**
- **Volunteers to support/mentor small business owners**
- **Loosening up of guidelines in terms of who can qualify for different types of community support**
- **The concern about worsening circumstances as the pandemic continues and after CARES funding expires on 1/1 was expressed by multiple partners.**

Pinellas Community Foundation

Here are our thoughts and concerns for 2021:

- Food insecurity is on the rise – each of our food banks is letting us know that the number of people seeking help is increasing. More help will be needed in 2021, if this trend continues to hold.
- The CDC Moratorium on Evictions expires on 12/31/20. Unless renewed, there is likely to be a significant increase in eviction actions. We anticipate an increase in evictions in 2021, regardless of the status of the moratorium. Programs are in place through 12/30/20 to assist landlords and tenants in resolving issues, including the payment of back due rent, however, without continued assistance through 2021, evictions will continue at a faster pace than anticipated.
- The impact of COVID-19 on behavioral health is often unseen. Worries and concerns about healthcare and financial issues create the perfect storm that exacerbates and strains good mental health. Social distancing and isolation, although helpful in mitigating COVID-19, create greater behavioral health needs. 2021 requires decisive action from our community to continue addressing behavioral health needs, and if addressed, we can emerge from the pandemic with greater resilience.

Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services

What are you seeing in terms of need at this stage of the COVID crisis?

- Like many of the organizations in the Tampa Bay area, Gulf Coast JFCS has continued to see the destabilizing impact of COVID. Clients who were once stable and self-reliant have found themselves having to reach out for help. We have seen job loss, depletion of community resources, closure of agencies that we rely on for our work (courts, SSA, USCIS, etc).

What are you doing to meet that need: same work, new work, more communication, additional funding, new initiatives, etc.?

- We continue to lean in on the community for resources, private and public grants, and looking for new partnerships that can strengthen the foundation for the clients we serve.

What do you need to continue effectively meeting current and emerging community needs?

- Financial resources to address the hierarchy of basic needs. Additionally, partnership with new employers, resources, including ones that help support staff dealing with this crisis.

Needs on the horizon?

- These sorts of initiatives like the one spearheaded by Working Together in South St. Petersburg which offers the opportunity to leverage one another's resources, and shared experiences.

Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County

- Affordable housing
- All available flexibility with SNAP
- ALL available flexibility with Medicaid and CHIP
- Eviction moratorium
- Limited Unemployment benefits
- Appropriate public health strategies - masks, small size groups, etc

St. Petersburg Free Clinic

2021 Anticipated Needs (What will SPFC address? Where will we need support?)

- Access to fresh, healthy food to distribute throughout the County will continue to be critical
- COVID is also highlighting gaps in access to healthcare that were visible pre-pandemic and have now been exacerbated: 1) access to specialty care and non-emergent procedures for patients to prevent manageable issues from becoming emergencies; 2) access to prescription meds that are unaffordable for many who lack insurance; 3) expansion of health partnerships and education that support patients in managing chronic disease (like diabetes)
- Expansion of navigation of services: with the service landscape changing as a result of COVID, and needs soaring, our neighbors require hands-on support to navigate toward appropriate services and resources
- Affordable, accessible ongoing behavioral health services that support stress management, trauma recovery and ongoing support for recovery from substance use

Bay Area Legal Services, Inc.

2021 Anticipated Needs (What is on the horizon?)

- Continued funding for Eviction Mitigation efforts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing stability and preservation is critical for individuals and families with children. With an anticipated end to Federal CARES ACT dollars, and a possible extension of the CDC Eviction Moratorium, continued funding to provide Eviction Mitigation and Assistance will be needed to prevent a local increase in homelessness
- Support for the work of Medical Legal Partnerships and the positive role that they can play in addressing social determinants of health that area serving as barriers to positive health outcomes for low income and marginalized communities

YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg

The YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg has always been more than a building. The Y is about people – people from all backgrounds and walks of life who come together to improve their lives, nurture their families and strengthen their community. For more than a century, the Y has played an essential role in helping our community endure during times of uncertainty and societal strain. The current COVID-19 pandemic is another challenge that none of us will soon forget.

In Spring 2020, the YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg teamed up with other regional YMCAs, Feeding Tampa Bay, the St. Petersburg Free Clinic and OneBlood to respond to community needs. We found effective ways to use our collective resources to offer solutions to social voids and help our neighbors through food distributions, blood drives, outreach to isolated seniors and child care for essential workers. We moved several programs to virtual platforms, including our YReads literacy program and key health initiatives such as the Diabetes Prevention Program and Delay the Disease Parkinsons' Program. Although we closed all our locations for more than two months (March-May) to protect the health of our community, we continued to serve kids and families in need through our three YMCA Preschool Academies and YMCA Youth Relief Care for Essential Workers Camp. And even after reopening, the YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg continues to adjust services based on the ongoing pandemic and economic impacts of 2020.

A growing need for our organization is to keep up with the demand for safe, high-quality and affordable child care. While we have the facilities and programs in place to meet the needs, staffing is becoming a greater challenge.

As the largest child care provider in the city of St. Petersburg, offering a nurturing environment for children to learn, grow and develop is a top priority for our organization. Our ability to deliver this vital need is contingent upon hiring and retaining qualified staff. The child care and teaching industry has been greatly impacted by the pandemic, with many industry professionals leaving the field. For those who remain, added demands are leading to burnout. Our current child care and early childhood development team members worked tirelessly -- often working extended hours -- during the spring lockdown, throughout the summer and into the present day with little to no breaks. In summary, competition for good talent has increased and additional resources are needed to acquire and retain staff.

The YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg moves into 2021 with a continued overall focus on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. We believe everyone should have access to Y programs and services that help them learn, grow and thrive. There are significant economic and health disparities in our community and we seek to use our influence to convene partners and leverage resources to ensure equitable access for all.

Empath Health

- Additional funding and increasing the number of permitted enrollees for the PACE (Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly). Many families or residents may be hesitant to place their loved one in a Skilled Facility/Nursing Home. The PACE Program provides services for people 55 and over that have a chronic condition and is eligible for Medicaid/Medicare. The services include Primary Care, Rehabilitative services (PT/ST/OT), socialization through the Adult Daycare Center and in home support.
- Creative and innovative ways to partner with making our EPIC food pantries more available when people cannot safely travel to our physical pantry and/or our bldgs. need to close. Access to funding that allows for partnerships with delivery services for free or at a greatly reduced rate
- Greater use of and access to technological resources, if clients unable to come to office for support (EPIC and Community Counseling)
- Recruitment and Retention of healthcare staff, (especially RNs), it is essential to have access to PPE (N95 mask in all sizes) and vaccines
- Flexibility of funders to recognize the impact that the pandemic is having on attaining goals and not being penalized
- Subsidizing the cost for people impacted by grief/loss due to the pandemic that cannot afford the \$20 counseling fee
- Partnering with other community based agencies to utilize our counseling center to support their communities with their grief/loss issues related to the pandemic.



The Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions has been convening conversations on COVID to collect data and gauge the community's needs. We will continue to work with our community partners in the next year to further our mission on providing solutions-directed discussions.

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