



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **St. Pete City Council Unanimously Approves New Program Partnership for a Safer St. Petersburg**

St. Petersburg City Council acted today to improve response to non-violent emergency calls by unanimously approving the launch and funding of a multi-year, \$3 million pilot program named the Community Assistance and Life Liaison program (CALL). This is a Gulf Coast JFCS-led program in partnership with St. Petersburg Police Department, and will begin immediately with a 9-month pilot with the option for an additional two year renewal.

With this innovative step toward re-imagined public safety for the City of St. Petersburg, the CALL program is among the first such partnerships nationally between a major city police department and a social services agency.

“This initiative is a bold step forward as our nation works to reform policing and strengthen our communities,” says Dr. Sandra E. Braham, CEO and President of Gulf Coast JFCS. “We are proud to partner with the St. Petersburg Police to respond to social, family, and behavioral health crises and humanitarian needs, which in the midst of the pandemic have become even more pronounced.”

“I am confident that this partnership will benefit both the police department and the community by ensuring we respond with the most appropriate resources for our residents when they are in crisis,” remarks St. Petersburg Police Chief Anthony Holloway.

Positioning social workers and mental health professionals to respond to non-violent and non-criminal calls for service, this program addresses the growing need for police and social service agency partnerships. The CALL program provides response to calls such as disorderly intoxication, drug overdose, behavioral health crisis, suicide intervention, truancy, homeless complaints, and neighborhood disputes. Gulf Coast JFCS was awarded the city contract largely due to their commitment to leveraging their large network of internal and community resources to make referrals based on individual needs. The program will roll out in multiple phases and is currently hiring clinical supervisors and community navigators.

Gulf Coast JFCS has been serving Florida since 1960. The Agency is non-religious serving all people with a mission to protect the vulnerable and help people achieve fulfilling lives by empowering individuals and strengthening families. Last year, nearly 37,000 individuals in our communities were assisted by one or more of Gulf Coast JFCS’s more than 50 programs. Learn more at [www.gcjfcs.org](http://www.gcjfcs.org).

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