

Starting Point Behavioral Healthcare is seeking support for a legislative appropriation of \$500,000 this session to renovate and expand the only behavioral health facility in West Nassau County. This renovation will not only increase behavioral health service capacity but also add conference space with video conferencing capabilities which will be available to all members of the community. This type of resource does not exist anywhere in West Nassau.

The concrete building was constructed in 1981 and purchased by Starting Point in 1994. It is 8,598, square footage, which sits on one acre of land. The building has a maximum capacity of 238 people and with these renovations it could become an approved shelter for our community. The renovation to this 38 year old structure will improve access to the 70 West Nassau residents that are using it daily and expand capacity to see those that are currently driving 20 miles each way to be seen in our Yulee location. The Local Public Health System assessment in 2018 noted that Hilliard and Callahan are federally-designated Health Professional Shortage areas and while we have experienced improvements in social and behavioral health; death rates due to overdose, poisoning, and suicide are still higher in comparison to neighboring counties. This renovation will fulfill an unmet need by providing essential and lifesaving services in our own community. There will also be an addition of outdoor facilities to promote and increase exercise and wellness activities.

The largest benefit of this project is the increase in access to care that Tele-psychiatry provides. The 2015-2018 Partnership for a Healthier Nassau Cohort identified access to care, behavioral health services, and transportation as priority health issues for the county. The addition of Tele-psychiatry services will not only address all of these identified problems it has also been shown to reduce boarding costs at local hospitals, and increase discharge rates, and mitigate employee burnout. Recipients of tele-psychiatry services reports increase patient satisfaction, decrease travel time and travel expense. The video conferencing capabilities will also increase communication and collaboration between healthcare providers.

We feel that this project is strongly aligned with the county's mission to enhance the quality of life and provide for the well-being of our citizens and the environment.