Research Teams

Immigration Justice
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The Immigration Research Team has been researching how to improve local and state policies to provide justice for our immigrant community. This includes:

- Making sure that immigrants who need to evacuate are not afraid to take shelter during emergencies. We have met with local officials and the Red Cross to learn about their policies and are advocating for safety training for volunteer shelter site coordinators and signage and other materials on site to prevent intimidation or illegal detention by ICE.
- Advocating for improved process of review for U-Visa Certifications for immigrants who are victims of crime.
- Gathering information on impacts of the federal and state's policies on our local social and economic conditions. Collaborating with others to design forums and other outreach to counter confusion and deliberate dis-information and to reach consensus on needed policies.
- Gathering information on sources of financial support for local organizations providing deportation defense of unaccompanied migrant children.
- Building coalitions with other organizations around the state such as the local Undocumented Youth and Families Task Force. Immigrants are Welcome Here! in Orlando and the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility.
- Documenting the pattern of local law enforcement vehicle stops of immigrants. Working to obtain information on immigrants detained in our jails that Leon County Sheriff's office has refused to share citing ICE policies.

Food Insecurity
Susan Robinson
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This team is researching programs and services within the Tallahassee-area food system, identifying gaps in service, and advocating for meaningful solutions to address those needs.

- Have developed a comprehensive chart of local food systems identified to date.

- Learning about the vital services provided across an eight-county area through Big Bend 2-1-1. Call data highlights that the most frequent needs involve affordable housing, mental health, and food access.
- Actively participating in developing the Tallahassee Area Food Council's structure and goals. Collaborating with former leader of the Montgomery County, Maryland Food Council to gather insights on best practices and potential hurdles.
- Determining how to best support the progress of implementing the now constructed Griffin Heights Grocery Store.
- Researching how to improve transit options for residents without access to fresh, nutritious food. Navigating public transit with groceries remains a major barrier for residents without personal vehicles, particularly as 2-1-1 no longer has the funding to deliver boxed meals.

Affordable Rental Housing for Very and Extremely Low-Income Residents
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- After working with our county leadership to successfully create an affordable housing Gap Financing Program this research team has moved into monitoring mode. The team is maintaining close contact with county and city staff to ensure that the financing for affordable rental housing projects continues to be implemented.

Gun Violence
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This team is researching how local violence prevention efforts reach the people most at risk, while building relationships among residents, faith leaders, service providers, and law enforcement.

- CAJM members have attended Leon County Sheriff's Office performance reviews of the Council on the Status of Men and Boys. A summary of the Community-Based Violence Intervention and Prevention evaluation raised concerns that the focused deterrence strategy was not implemented as intended for people at highest risk. The team is seeking the final report and continuing to ask how outcomes are measured.
- Through *United for Peace*, CAJM brought pastors and law enforcement leaders together to listen and explore how they can work toward safer neighborhoods. A 90-day reconvening is planned for October 19 to continue that conversation and identify next steps.

- The team has been learning from Connection First about restorative justice and how community-based responses could contribute to violence prevention in Leon County.

Mental Health
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The Mental Health Research Team is identifying gaps in Leon County's mental health system and researching practical ways to strengthen care for people living with mental illness.

- Reviewing mental health hospitalization and Baker Act data to better understand demand for services. It is also seeking information from 2-1-1 Big Bend, local providers, and people with direct experience of the system.
- Holding conversations with Apalachee Center have highlighted a shortage of structured residential options for people with serious mental illness, particularly those who need more support than outpatient care can provide. The team is researching supportive housing and what happens when people leave hospitals or jail without stable care and housing.
- The team has met with NAMI, Apalachee Center, and the Gainesville Opportunity Center to learn about the *Clubhouse* model, which offers peer-led support and connection for people in recovery. It is exploring what would be needed to establish such a program in Tallahassee.
- The research is also examining limited access to providers who accept Medicaid, gaps in crisis-response funding, and the stigma that can keep people from seeking help.