



MERIDIAN
HEALTHCARE

Press Release

For Immediate Release | May 26, 2026

For more information, contact advancement@mbhci.org

Strengthening Community Health Through Partnership: Meridian Healthcare Secures Facility to Expand Mental Health Services

Gainesville, Fla. – Tuesday, May 26, 2026, Meridian Healthcare announces that it has received conveyance of the vacant building formerly operating as Shands Lake Shore Regional Medical Center located at 368 NE Franklin St., Lake City, FL. The Lake Shore Hospital Authority (LSHA) oversees this hospital building that closed in August 2020. This vacant medical care building will now undergo repurposed renovations to transform into a comprehensive mental health community resource. This partnership marks a major milestone in expanding access to essential mental health services across North Central Florida.

“Providing these services locally will significantly improve access to care, reduce barriers for patients and families, and allow loved ones to play a more active role in recovery,” said Lauren Cohn, President/CEO of Meridian Healthcare.

The Lake Shore Hospital Authority has demonstrated strong support for the initiative, committing a total of \$4 million in funding for repairs and renovations to resurrect and repurpose this hospital facility. This investment underscores the Authority’s commitment to strengthening the region’s healthcare infrastructure and supporting long-term community wellbeing.

Beyond expanding access to care, the project will also serve as a meaningful economic driver for Columbia County. Establishing these services will increase access, strengthen continuity of care, and allow families to more actively participate in their loved ones’ whole-person recovery. The redevelopment of the long-vacant hospital will create new jobs, support local construction and service industries, and revitalize a key community asset. By attracting healthcare professionals and generating ongoing employment opportunities, the facility will contribute to both improved health outcomes and long-term economic growth in the region.

This project development builds a strong partnership between Meridian Healthcare and the LSHA, with plans now moving from feasibility into implementation. This facility



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transformation will provide critical, life-changing services for individuals and families throughout the region.

About Meridian Healthcare

[Meridian Healthcare](#) is a comprehensive community behavioral healthcare organization located in North Central Florida. With services available throughout the North Central Florida, Meridian maintains [12 patient service](#) centers including: Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Putnam, Marion, Levy, Suwannee, and Union. Meridian is [CARE](#) accredited and licensed by the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Agency For Healthcare Administration. It is our mission that together we'll transform communities from the inside out, by providing life-changing behavioral healthcare. For more information, please visit mymeridianhealthcare.org/ and follow us on social media.

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