

## MINUTES

**Purpose:** Engage Okaloosa County community members in a health improvement process through an open, two-way dialogue to reduce infant mortality and racial disparities related to infant and maternal health outcomes.

**Attendees:** Emily Pickens, Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa); Jennifer Wilhelm, DOH-Okaloosa; Donna Burns, DOH-Okaloosa; Lauren Hobbs, DOH-Okaloosa; Crystal Harrison, Homeless and Housing Alliance; Bethany Guillory, Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties; Ardelle Bush, Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties; Teresa Ryan, Northwest Florida State College and CALM House; Amarylis Emrick, Freedom Life Compass and Healthy Start Doula; Lynn Wadsworth, DOH-Okaloosa, Amy Miller, DOH-Okaloosa; Linda Flint, Healthy Families; Miriam Pohl; Keishla Barrett, Bridgeway Center; Claudia Chatman, Healthy Families; Chris Hawkins, CDAC Behavioral Healthcare; Vashonda Gafford, Bridgeway.

### Opening – Emily Pickens

- Emily Pickens opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.
- Emily reviewed the meeting's purpose and agenda. She shared results from the Community Engagement Survey from the previous meeting.
- Minutes from the May 11th, 2023, meeting were reviewed and approved.

### Action Plan Updates – Ardelle Bush and Crystal Harrison

#### Fetal Infant Mortality Review Community Action Group Updates

- Bethany Guillory stated three cases were reviewed with quarter. The deaths were found to be not preventable. One case possibly could have been prevented if fetal movements had been tracked, which emphasizes the benefits of Count the Kicks.
- Bethany also shared Healthy Start will hold a memorial service on the National Day for Pregnancy Loss on October 15, 2023. Family members, nurses, caregivers, and friends may attend the service. More information will be shared as available.

#### Recipe for a Healthy Baby Distribution

- Ardelle Bush shared the new TEAM Dad folder featuring the Recipe for a Healthy Baby logo as the back cover.
- She also shared that Healthy Start is updating and re-formatting their community resource guide to accommodate the growing number of resources available.

#### Maternal Advocacy

- Emily asked the group if they knew HCA Destin-Fort Walton Beach closed their NICU. Ardelle shared that nurse and OB-GYN shortages impact the number of babies born at local hospitals, and that Sacred Heart in Walton County has a level 2 NICU.
- Healthy Start will be purchasing memory boxes with journals for families who lose a child by miscarriage or in infancy. Memory boxes will be available through doctor's offices, hospital labor and delivery, and emergency room departments.

### **Breastfeeding**

- DOH-Okaloosa WIC has started virtual breastfeeding classes on the first Wednesday of each month, at 10:00 a.m. Beginning in August, in-person classes in Crestview will be the second Tuesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. Fort Walton Beach in-person classes will be the fourth Tuesday of the month at 4:00 p.m. and classes in Spanish will also be the fourth Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.
- [World Breastfeeding Month](#) is recognized in August and September. The 2023 theme is This is Our Why.
  - Week 1: World Breastfeeding Week – *Enabling Breastfeeding: Making a Difference for Working Parents* (August 1-7)
  - Week 2: Indigenous Milk Medicine Week (August 8-14)
  - Week 3: Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Breastfeeding Week (Aug 15-21)
  - Week 4: Black Breastfeeding Week – *We Outside!: Celebrating Connection & Our Communities* (August 25 – 31)
  - Week 5: Lactancia Latina (September 5-11)

### **Action Items – Ardelle Bush**

#### **Maternal Advocacy**

- Ardelle suggested reviewing maternal and child health-related bills that did not pass but may have best practices or innovative ideas for maternal advocacy. Emily and Lauren will review and report back at the next meeting.
- Amarylis Emrick suggested nurses with local Medicaid offices call pregnant women in between prenatal care visits to check-in and encourage advocacy.
  - She also shared that many women who use substances do not know they are pregnant and cannot afford a \$20.00 pregnancy test.
    - Emily and Lynn Wadsworth will investigate DOH purchasing rules.
- Attendees discussed partnering with faith-based organizations, military contacts, online mom groups, and the NAACP to reach a larger audience.
  - Amarylis has contacts at Lauren's Legacy Pregnancy Center through Destiny Church in Freeport. She will also share with the Niceville online mom group.
  - Donna will reach out to contacts at Eglin Airforce base and the NAACP.
  - Amy will share Hear Her campaign material with WIC clients.
  - Miriam Pohl will ask her church leadership if they can share materials.
  - Vashonda Gafford can share materials with a Black Birthworkers group.

#### **Breastfeeding**

- The group discussed sharing messaging from the Social Media Toolkit for World Breastfeeding Month. The kit will be shared again before August 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Donna contacted HCA Destin-Fort Walton Beach, North Okaloosa Medical Center, and Sacred Heart Emerald Coast to set up informational tables during National Breastfeeding Month.

### **Open Discussion – All**

- Ardelle Bushed shared hospitals have observed a recent upward trend in infant deaths in Florida related to substance use. Emily will work with partners to get local insights.



**Healthy Moms & Babies OCHIP Group Meeting and Healthy Start Fetal Infant Mortality Review Community Action Group (CAG)**  
 Northwest Florida State College, Building 301  
 100 East College Blvd Niceville, FL 32578 & via Microsoft Teams  
 July 13, 2023 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

- Teresa Ryan shared recent passing of a combat medic bill which allows medical technicians from the military to earn one or two years of schooling credit toward a nursing certification.
- Lynn Wadsworth asked if the group would be willing to complete a family planning survey.

**Closing – Emily Pickens**

- Emily thanked attendees for participating and asked them to complete the meeting evaluation form to provide feedback.

*Next Meeting – Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM at Northwest Florida State College*

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Owners</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Status</b>
Invite new partners needed for FIRM CAG	Ardelle Bush, Bethany Guillory	Ongoing	In progress
Invite new members from Niceville Moms Group on Facebook	Amarylis Emrick	September 14 <sup>th</sup>	Not started
Research and obtain trends on maternal substance use in Okaloosa County	Emily Pickens	September 14 <sup>th</sup>	Not started
Invite new members from Eglin Hospital and the NAACP	Donna Burns	September 14 <sup>th</sup>	In progress
Share social media graphics for National Breastfeeding Month	Lauren Hobbs, Emily Pickens	August 1 <sup>st</sup>	Not started
Research and identify opportunities for policies, systems, and environmental change related to maternal advocacy	Lauren Hobbs, Emily Pickens	Ongoing	In progress