

# OKALOOSA COUNTY

Community Health Improvement Plan  
2022 - 2027

## 2023 Annual Report





# Letter to the Community

The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) is pleased to present the 2023 Annual Report of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP follows a strategic methodology to address the identified health priorities in the Community Health Assessment (CHA) by aligning our goals with those of our community partners, medical providers, and local government agencies. The current 5-year CHIP cycle began in December 2022.

The findings from the CHA were presented at the Okaloosa Health Summit and led to the selection of the top four priority areas that Okaloosans wish to address. The highest ranked issues became the Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership (OCHIP) groups that will work to address key issues throughout the CHIP cycle:

- Healthy Behaviors
- Healthy Children
- Healthy Communities
- Healthy Moms & Babies

Each OCHIP group works through a collaborative process to develop the goals, objectives, and strategies that address their priority health issues. These issues include topics such as nicotine use, youth exposure to substance use, pedestrian safety, high rent cost burden, and infant mortality. The groups implement evidence-based strategies to achieve measurable improvement in each priority area. Their progress is reviewed annually to ensure they continue to reflect the needs of the community. This report provides updates and key successes during the 2023 calendar year.

DOH-Okaloosa is committed to working alongside our partners to improve the quality of life for Okaloosa County residents and visitors. We would like to thank our community members and leaders for their contributions to this community-driven plan.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth "Beth" Smith, MSN, RN  
County Health Department Administrator  
Health Officer

*Elizabeth Smith*



# 2022-2027 Okaloosa County Community Health Improvement Plan 2023 Update

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# Overview

This is the 2023 Annual Report of the Okaloosa County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The five-year plan was published in December 2022. The activities and collaborative efforts of the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) and community partners are reflected within this report.

While the CHIP is a community-driven and collectively owned health improvement plan, DOH-Okaloosa is charged with providing administrative support, tracking and collecting data, and preparing the plan. The CHIP is revised annually, in collaboration with OCHIP Champions and group members.

## Health Issue Prioritization Process

It would be impossible to tackle all health issues mentioned in the Community Health Assessment (CHA) at the same time and attain measurable improvement. Addressing a small number of health issues in a coordinated, rigorous manner is more effective than uncoordinated efforts aimed at multiple problems. Identifying a few priorities allows our community to concentrate limited resources to achieve the greatest impact on key issues. Stakeholders considered the magnitude of the issues presented in the CHA and developed six focus areas: Healthy Moms & Babies, Healthy Children, Healthy Adults, Healthy Behaviors, Healthy Places, and Healthy Communities.

On September 8, 2022, DOH-Okaloosa hosted the Okaloosa Health Summit. Attendees reviewed data presented in the CHA and voted via SurveyMonkey to narrow the priority areas from six to four. The top identified priority areas became workgroups.

## Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership

The Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership (OCHIP) is a group of agencies, organizations, businesses, and community members who work to improve the health of Okaloosa County residents. OCHIP has four workgroups: Healthy Behaviors, Healthy Children, Healthy Communities, and Healthy Moms & Babies. OCHIP includes 120 members from 54 agencies across multiple disciplines.

Each OCHIP group has goals, objectives, and strategies that form their action plan. During meetings, members report out on progress and work together to develop evidence-based action steps to accomplish goals.

## OCHIP Action Plan Updates

This report includes updates to each OCHIP group's action plan. Data referenced in the action plans is provided annually by the lead reporting agency unless otherwise noted. County-level data for Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System indicators are collected every three years. The Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey and Florida Youth Tobacco Survey collect county-level data every other year. All data in this report was accessed through FLHealthCHARTS. Target values for objectives were developed with a statistical projection tool from the National Center for Health Statistics, using at least five years of data unless otherwise noted.

# Accomplishments

DOH-Okaloosa is extremely proud of the accomplishments of each OCHIP group during the first year of the CHIP cycle. Some of the most notable accomplishments include the Handle with Care policy expansion, initial development of an opioid linkage-to-care initiative, and comprehensive Pedestrian Safety Month campaign. Key actions and successes from each group are highlighted throughout this report within their corresponding priority area.

Below are a few of the collaborative accomplishments that spanned more than one OCHIP group. These initiatives were lead by various OCHIP Champions who identified opportunities for cross-collaboration.

## International Overdose Awareness Day

Healthy Behaviors and Healthy Communities members recognized International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31, 2023. The Cities of Crestview and Fort Walton Beach presented mayoral proclamations. Eleven organizations displayed purple pinwheels to raise awareness, including United Way Emerald Coast, Fort Walton Beach Police Department, and West Florida Area Health Education Center.

*Healthy Behaviors Strategy 1.2.1*

*Healthy Communities Strategy 1.3.1*

## Born Learning Trail Installation

OCHIP members helped install two Born Learning Trails. The trails are designed by United Way to increase family engagement and encourage physical activity. They include social and emotional learning elements with different prompts at eight stops along the trail. Parkgoers can enjoy these trails in Fort Walton Beach.

*\*This strategy was incorporated through alignment with DOH-Okaloosa's Health Plan.*

*Healthy Children Strategy 1.1.4 and 3.2.2*

## Substance Use Resources

Multiple OCHIP groups worked to develop educational materials for substance use in Okaloosa County. This included an informational card for the public with key statistics and a list of local resources for help. A large format sticker was also created with first responders in mind. It includes resources and a QR code with more information about specific organizations they can connect community members to for assistance. This initiative is an update to a previous project from the last CHIP cycle.

*Healthy Behaviors Strategy 1.2.1*

*Healthy Children Strategy 1.1.5*

*Healthy Communities Strategy 1.3.1*

# Priority Areas



# Healthy Behaviors

The Center for Health and Justice states, “access to effective, low-threshold, community-based substance use treatment and supportive services, along with intensive overdose prevention interventions are essential” (2019). Members of the Healthy Behaviors OCHIP group know this to be true. The group’s priority areas include alcohol and drug use, opioid overdoses, Narcan distribution and outreach, re-entry, and tobacco use. They aim to help those experiencing ‘life-controlling circumstances’. This includes release from a correctional or mental health facility, domestic violence survivors, and others in need of reintegration services.

## Action Plan Successes

### Adult Pre-Arrest Diversion

In May 2022, members completed a matrix designed to identify local resources available to residents. They assessed opportunities before, during, and after an incident (i.e. arrest, incarceration, release from a correctional or mental health facility). Members recognized a disparity in opportunities available before an event, and researched best practices. At the time, adult pre-trial diversion was available in Okaloosa County. However, pre-arrest diversion, also known as adult civil citation, was not available. The group sought assistance from the Civil Citation Network and met with local law enforcement leadership to gain insights into potential program development.

State Attorney Ginger Madden attended a group meeting in November 2023, where she stated all counties in Circuit One will have a pre-arrest diversion program available soon. Okaloosa County hopes to launch in spring 2024.

### First Responder Briefings

When discussing diversion, local leaders advocated for real-time solutions for officers to use their discretion in helping community members. OCHIP Champion Stephanie Wedel worked with DOH-Okaloosa staff and other key members to develop a first responder community resource briefing. This includes a PowerPoint with key resources and a one-page handout for easy reference.

Members began providing these trainings to first responder organizations in February 2024.

## Navigating the Action Plan

The action plan depicted on the following page(s) includes the goals, objectives, and evidence-based strategies used by the OCHIP group to enact change. It is updated annually to reflect changes, accomplishments, and opportunities.

\*Denotes a CHIP objective or strategy in the group's action plan was revised in collaboration with partners since the original publication of this report in 2022.



## Healthy Behaviors OCHIP Group Action Plan

**Goal 1** | To reduce the number of adults engaged in nicotine, alcohol, and substance use.

**Objective 1.1** | By December 31, 2025, decrease the number of people participating in heavy or binge drinking from 18.8% (2019) to 17.5%.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System	18.8% (2019)	17.5%	18.8% (2019)	Decision Required	Petra Maddens, Deb Willis
<p><b>Strategy 1.1.1:</b> Increase education on the health impacts of binge drinking.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.2:</b> Improve reintegration for community members who have experienced life-controlling circumstances.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> Strategies to impact this objective have not begun. Focus has been on re-entry efforts related to substance use and opioid overdose responses. Members will re-assess alcohol-related strategies in 2024 before choosing to adapt or abandon.</p>		

**\*Objective 1.2** | By December 31, 2027, reduce the number of EMS responses to suspected drug overdoses including opioids by 2.5%.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
EMSTARS	1,178 (2021)	1,148	1,204 (2022)	Not On Track	Stephanie Wedel, Jenna McElyea, Katherine Beedie
<p><b>Strategy 1.2.1:</b> Increase awareness of fentanyl safety and education.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.2:</b> Improve reintegration for community members who have experienced life-controlling circumstances.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.3:</b> Assess community needs through GIS mapping.</p> <p><b>*Strategy 1.2.4:</b> Implement evidence-based public health and/or public safety strategies to reduce opioid overdoses.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> (1.2.1) Members developed an educational rack card for the public and resource sticker for first responders.                      (1.2.2) Members explored a service referral platform, Unite Us, to assist with re-entry and diversion.                      (1.2.3) DOH-Okaloosa staff provided a data presentation of overdose hotspots in the county. ODMAP data sharing will be explored further in 2024 to provide accurate, up-to-date data to inform outreach efforts.                      (1.2.4) Members are working to develop an opioid overdose intervention program modeled after the Naloxone Plus pre-arrest diversion pathway.</p>		

**Objective 1.3** | By December 31, 2025, increase the percent of adult current smokers who tried to quit smoking at least once in the past year from 61.9% (2019) to 62.5%.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System	61.9% (2019)	62.5%	61.9% (2019)	Decision Required	Deb Willis, Okaloosa County Tobacco Free Partnership Members
<p><b>Strategy 1.3.1:</b> Increase education on the amount of nicotine in products.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.3.2:</b> Conduct targeted nicotine cessation outreach.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> Strategies to impact this objective have not begun. Focus has been on re-entry efforts related to substance use and opioid overdose responses. Members will re-assess alcohol-related strategies in 2024 before choosing to adapt or abandon.</p>		

# Healthy Children

Like the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, members of the Healthy Children OCHIP group believe that “children and families deserve a community free from the negative impact of substance misuse and drug activity”(2022). The group's priority areas include Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), exposure to alcohol and drugs, mental health, access to care, resiliency, child abuse, and food insecurity.

## Action Plan Successes

### Handle with Care Policy Expansion

Handle with Care launched in 2018 as a partnership between the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and Okaloosa County School District. Fort Walton Beach was the first local police department to onboard in 2022. Crestview and Niceville Police Departments began steps to onboard in 2023. The school district received 45 Handle with Care notifications during the 2023 calendar year.

### Drug Endangered Children Trainings

The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (DEC) trained 37 community partners in May 2023. Eleven trainers received additional instruction to teach the DEC Approach and DEC Awareness curriculum. Since becoming trained, members have hosted Community DEC Trainings for local elected officials, communities, and organizations across Okaloosa County.

### Family Field Day

On November 19, 2022, the the Healthy Children OCHIP group hosted a community event to celebrate Family Engagement Month. There were kickball games, activity stations, and a play area for small children. Around 75 people attended and 35 organizations had a booth to share information and resources. The group partnered with the Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast to give out free tablets to eligible families. Emerald Coast Social Sports provided equipment for kickball and Cinco Baptist Church loaned their carnival games for younger children. The Elks Lodge in Fort Walton Beach provided food for attendees.

## Navigating the Action Plan

The action plan depicted on the following pages includes the goals, objectives, and evidence-based strategies used by the OCHIP group to enact change. It is updated annually to reflect changes, accomplishments, and opportunities.

\*Denotes a CHIP objective or strategy in the group's action plan was revised in collaboration with partners since the original publication of this report in 2022.

## Healthy Children OCHIP Group Action Plan

**Goal 1** | To reduce the negative impact of substance abuse on children and communities.

**Objective 1.1** | By December 31, 2027, decrease the number of Okaloosa County students who report having four or more ACEs from 26.8% (2020) to 25.8%.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey	26.8% (2020)	25.8%	21.9% (2022)	Objective Exceeded	Sgt. Jessica Trimboli, Danielle Wilson, Teri Schroeder
<p><b>Strategy 1.1.1:</b> Host community events to raise awareness.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.2</b>   Hold Train-the-Trainer event to increase number of National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children instructors.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.3</b>   Distribute student survey to assess student exposures and needs.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.4</b>   Increase opportunity for student social engagement and support.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.5</b>   Expand the Handle with Care initiative to include additional law enforcement agencies, EMS, fire, and early childhood education.</p> <p><b>*Strategy 1.1.6</b>   Increase awareness of link between DEC and human trafficking.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> (1.1.1) The group hosted Family Field Day on November 19, 2022. Around 75 community members attended with 15 organizations present. On September 23, 2023, members attended the Cruisers and Cops community event to provide education and information. Attendees received education on DEC and ways to get involved.</p> <p>(1.1.2) In May 2023, National DEC trained 37 people. Eleven became trainers, increasing the group's capacity to provide trainings locally.</p> <p>(1.1.4) DOH-Okaloosa purchased <i>Lambi Learns About Addiction</i> books. In 2024, members will distribute the books to key partners.</p> <p>(1.1.5) Niceville and Crestview Police Departments began steps to onboard. In March 2023, the group filmed an educational video to promote the policy to other agencies and the public.</p>		

**Objective 1.2** | By December 31, 2025, decrease the rate of school environmental safety incidents from 18.6 per 1,000 (2021) to 17.8 per 1,000 for K-12 students.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Department of Education	18.6 per 1,000 (2021)	17.8 per 1,000	33.7 per 1,000 (2022)	Not On Track	Sgt. Jessica Trimboli, Danielle Wilson, Emily Pickens, Teri Schroeder
<p><b>Strategy 1.2.1</b>   Increase awareness of Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Lock Down and Secure procedures.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.2</b>   Hold Train-the-Trainer event to increase the number of partners training on Lock Down and Secure procedures.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.3</b>   Coordinate training and promote alert system with non-Okaloosa County School District facilities serving children.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> (1.2.3) Sgt. Trimboli met with key stakeholders at the Okaloosa County School District regarding notifications and began the process to integrate early learning facilities nearby into the procedure.</p>		

## Healthy Children OCHIP Group Action Plan (Continued)

**Goal 2** | To reduce food insecurity among Okaloosa children.

**Objective 2.1** | By December 31, 2025, increase the number of Okaloosans aware of food distribution services by 100 people.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
DOH-Okaloosa spreadsheet	0 (2022)	100	0 (2023)	Not on Track	Sgt. Jessica Trimboli, Danielle Wilson, Emily Pickens

**Strategy 2.1.1** | To increase community knowledge and coordination of food distribution services.

**Strategy 2.1.2** | To determine needs and expand food pantry services within Okaloosa County.

**Results:** The group has not yet begun working toward this objective. DOH-Okaloosa was tasked with completing a PACE-EH project, and will work with members of the OCHIP group to begin these strategies in early 2024.

**Goal 3** | To improve access to healthcare for children.

**Objective 3.1** | By December 31, 2025, decrease the percent of overall students who, in the past year, felt sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row and stopped doing usual activities from 30.2% (2022) to 29.7%.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Youth Tobacco Survey	30.2% (2022)	29.7%	30.2% (2022)	On Track	Sgt. Jessica Trimboli, Danielle Wilson, Emily Pickens, Teri Schroeder

**Strategy 3.2.1** | Foster student engagement in mental health promotion.

**Strategy 3.2.2** | Increase awareness of mental health and social health status of young children and adolescents.

**Results:** The group has not yet begun working towards this objective. In 2024, they plan to re-assess action steps and identify potential partners to engage with. This includes United Way of the Emerald Coast and United for a Good Cause, as they currently lead related initiatives.

**Objective 3.2** | By December 31, 2025, decrease the percent of female students who, in the past year, felt sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row and stopped doing usual activities from 40.3% (2022) to 39.6%.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Youth Tobacco Survey	40.3% (2022)	39.6%	40.3% (2022)	On Track	Sgt. Jessica Trimboli, Danielle Wilson, Emily Pickens, Teri Schroeder

**Strategy 3.2.1** | Foster student engagement in mental health promotion.

**Strategy 3.2.2** | Increase awareness of mental health and social health status of young children and adolescents.

**Results:** The group has not yet begun working towards this objective. In 2024, they plan to re-assess action steps and identify potential partners to engage with. This includes United Way of the Emerald Coast and United for a Good Cause, as they currently lead related initiatives.

**Healthy Children OCHIP Group Action Plan (Continued)**

**Objective 3.3** | By December 31, 2025, increase the number of schools participating in the Florida Heiken from 37 (2022) to 41.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
DOH-Okaloosa spreadsheet	37 (2022)	41	44 (2023)	Objective Exceeded	Brenna Tillman, Davonna McLemore
<p><b>*Strategy 3.3.1</b>   To maintain the number of schools participating in the Florida Heiken vision program.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> DOH-Okaloosa Health Educator Consultants in the School Health program exceeded the original objective of increasing the number of schools from 37 to 41. 44 schools were registered as of December 2023. There are 44 total schools in Okaloosa County.</p> <p>*The objective was met and the strategy has been updated to maintain participation from all schools.</p>		

# Healthy Communities

Healthy Communities OCHIP group members believe that “where we live shouldn’t determine how long or how well we live. In our communities, we all should be surrounded by conditions that enable us to live the healthiest life possible” (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022). The group’s priority areas include infrastructure, rent costs and workforce housing, social support, injury prevention, and pedestrian safety.

## Action Plan Implementation

### Pedestrian Safety Month

The Healthy Communities OCHIP group developed a three-part campaign for Pedestrian Safety Month. The group launched Pedestrian Safety Month with a press conference on October 2, 2023. Public Information Officers from Okaloosa County and the Cities of Crestview, Destin, and Fort Walton Beach developed three educational videos that were shared throughout the month. The group also hosted a Pedestrian Safety Poster Contest in partnership with the Okaloosa County School District and supported local Walk, Bike, Roll to school events at seven schools and three Head Start locations. This initiative will become a yearly campaign moving forward.

### Older Adult Falls

In October 2023, members heard from Okaloosa County Emergency Medical Services regarding their plans to implement a new Community Paramedicine program. The group plans to assist their efforts by recruiting representatives from organizations that serve older adults and local fire departments to provide input on a fall risk assessment. Members will continue working towards reducing older adult falls in 2024.

### Okaloosa Walton Housing Summit

In November 2023, the Florida Departments of Health in Okaloosa and Walton Counties began developing plans to host a Regional Housing Summit in May 2024. A Housing Steering Committee was formed in December. Both the Healthy Communities OCHIP group and the corresponding workgroup in Walton County were asked to provide input and expert guidance regarding speakers, event structure, and recruitment. The group will continue efforts on their workforce housing goal in 2024.

## Navigating the Action Plan

The action plan depicted on the following pages includes the goals, objectives, and evidence-based strategies used by the OCHIP group to enact change. It is updated annually to reflect changes, accomplishments, and opportunities.

\*Denotes a CHIP objective or strategy in the group’s action plan was revised in collaboration with partners since the original publication of this report in 2022.

## Healthy Communities OCHIP Group Action Plan

**Goal 1** | To reduce harmful incidents in Okaloosa County.

**\*Objective 1.1** | Objective 1: By December 31, 2025, reduce the rate of emergency department visits from motor vehicle traffic-related injuries to pedestrians and pedalcyclists from 50.7 per 100,000 (2021) to 19.2 per 100,000.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Agency for Health Care Administration	50.7 per 100,000 (2021)	19.2 per 100,000	31.2 per 100,000 (2022)	On Track	Robert Bage, JB Whitten, Emily Pickens, Jason Fulghum, Mercedes Feris
<p><b>Strategy 1.1.1:</b> To educate residents and visitors about pedestrian and pedalcyclist-related safety risks.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.2:</b> To assess infrastructure and policy needs in relation to pedestrian and pedalcyclists-related injuries and deaths.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.3</b>   To assess funding opportunities related to infrastructure needs.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> (1.1.1) Members developed the Protecting Pedestrians video series in partnership with local PIOs. The videos were shared via social media by 14 partner organizations and the four participating municipalities.</p> <p>(1.1.2) The group outlined plans to develop a Best Practices Guide in 2024 to share with Okaloosa County municipalities.</p>		

**Objective 1.2** | By December 31, 2025, reduce the rate of emergency department visits and hospitalizations due to falls for adults ages 65 and older from 7,522 per 100,000 (2021) to 7,348 per 100,000.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Agency for Health Care Administration	7,522 per 100,000 (2021)	7,328 per 100,000	8,099.6 per 100,000 (2022)	Not On Track	Robert Bage, JB Whitten, Emily Pickens, Greg Cain
<p><b>Strategy 1.2.1:</b> To educate older adults about fall-related safety risks.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.2:</b> To assess policies and procedures associated with fall-related injuries and deaths.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.3:</b> To assess funding opportunities related to older adult needs.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> (1.2.2) The group began partnering with Okaloosa County Emergency Medical Services to recruit organizations that serve older adults and local fire departments to collaborate on a fall risk assessment project for their new Community Paramedicine efforts.</p>		

## Healthy Communities OCHIP Group Action Plan (Continued)

**\*Objective 1.3** | By December 31, 2027, reduce the rate of opioid overdose deaths from 31.0 per 100,000 (2021) to 30 per 100,000.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Department of Law Enforcement	31.0 per 100,000 (2021)	30 per 100,000	50.4 per 100,000 (2021)	Not On Track	Robert Bage, JB Whitten, Emily Pickens, Jenna McElyea, Dr. Karen Brown
<p><b>Strategy 1.3.1:</b> To educate community leaders about opioid and fentanyl-related safety risks.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.3.2:</b> To assess and improve policies and procedures associated with opioid overdoses and deaths.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.3.3:</b> To identify funding opportunities related to the opioid crisis.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> (1.3.1) Members displayed signage and purple pinwheels to spread awareness of International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31<sup>st</sup>. The Cities of Crestview and Fort Walton Beach developed mayoral proclamations in observance. (1.3.2) Members provided input and support of the opioid linkage to care initiative being developed in Healthy Behaviors, modeled after the Naloxone Plus Pathway. They assisted with the development of 'Your Life Was Saved Kits' and began work with EMS to gain approvals and develop an implementation plan for kit distribution in 2024.</p>		

**Goal 2** | To reduce the housing burden in Okaloosa County.

**Objective 2.1** | By December 31, 2027, increase the number of affordable and available rental units from 83 per 100 renters up to 60% area median income (AMI) to 85 per 100 renters at 60% AMI.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
UF Shimberg Center	83 per 100 renters (2022)	85 per 100 renters	83 per 100 renters (2022)	On Track	Robert Bage, JB Whitten, Anthony Sawyer, Emily Pickens
<p><b>Strategy 2.1.1:</b> To identify opportunities to share information on strategies and partnerships to leverage funds.</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.1.2:</b> To assess funding opportunities related to infrastructure needs.</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.1.3:</b> To identify policy opportunities to reduce rent cost burden and increase workforce housing.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> (2.1.1) Members began partnering with Walton County's workgroup to host a Regional Housing Summit in May 2024, including education on key topics like local and state policies, 'the missing middle', housing density, infrastructure, and more. (2.1.3) Multiple members participated in workgroup sessions for the development of Okaloosa County's Workforce Housing Strategic Plan in partnership with the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners.</p>		



# Public Health in Action: Pedestrian Safety Month

## Pedestrian Safety Press Conference

The Healthy Communities OCHIP group launched Pedestrian Safety Month with a press conference on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. The event included presentations from both OCHIP Champions Chief Robert Bage and Mayor JB Whitten. Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel read a proclamation and Chairman of the Board Trey Godwin shared remarks.

## Protecting Pedestrians Video Series

Public Information Officers from Okaloosa County and the Cities of Crestview, Destin, and Fort Walton Beach developed three educational videos that were shared throughout the month. The videos illustrate how pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists should interact in roundabouts, crosswalks, and school zones.

## Pedestrian Safety Poster Contest

Members partnered with the Okaloosa County School District to host a district-wide poster contest. Students were asked to submit posters showing how they get to school safely. More than 140 submissions were received. Posters were judged by the Community Traffic Safety Team. Winners in the Committee's Choice, Elementary, Middle, and High School categories were recognized at a School Board meeting on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. Winners received a \$100 gift card, goody bag from the Florida Department of Transportation, and a certificate signed by all Okaloosa County mayors.

## Participating Agencies

City of Crestview  
City of Destin  
City of Fort Walton Beach  
Crestview Housing Authority  
Florida Department of Transportation  
Fort Walton Beach Police Department  
Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County  
HCA Fort Walton Beach- Destin Hospital  
Latin Flair Events

North Okaloosa Medical Center  
Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners  
Okaloosa County Tourism and Development Council  
Okaloosa County Emergency Medical Services  
Okaloosa County School District  
Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office

## Collaboration is Key

The success of the Pedestrian Safety Month campaign required multi-agency collaboration throughout.

The poster contest certificates included signatures from each mayor currently serving in Okaloosa County. Some members speculated this was the first document to boast that accomplishment in recent history.

The logistics of the poster contest included constant communication and collaboration between the School District, DOH-Okaloosa, Community Traffic Safety Team, and the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officers.

The Protecting Pedestrians video series was developed by media staff from four different agencies. Videos were filmed at numerous locations across the county and required coordination from videographers, photographers, editors, actors, narrators, and more.

# Healthy Moms & Babies

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “the infant mortality rate is an important marker of the overall health of a society” (2022). Members of the Healthy Moms & Babies OCHIP group know this to be true. Their priority areas include breastfeeding, eliminating the Black-White infant mortality gap, and reducing the overall infant mortality rate.

## Action Plan Successes

### Fetal Infant Mortality Review Community Action Group

The Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties is charged with facilitating a Fetal Infant Mortality Review. Members from various participating agencies gather to review de-identified infant mortality cases. They assess available data to determine if the death could have been preventable via education, policy change, or another form of intervention.

The Healthy Moms & Babies OCHIP group acts as the Community Action Group for the local FIMR body. Staff from the Healthy Start Coalition share information about new case reviews during each OCHIP meeting, including the determination of whether or not the death was deemed preventable. For preventable deaths, the group shares information and recommendations on community initiatives or efforts that could have potentially assisted or acted as a preventive factor. Members take the information provided during meetings and work to advocate for change in the community.

### Maternal Advocacy

Members of the group work to promote various initiatives that support maternal advocacy, including the CDC’s HearHER campaign and Count the Kicks. Healthy Start Coalition staff share HearHER educational materials with local OBGYN offices. Other group members share messaging and graphics via social media. The group developed a Social Media Toolkit and corresponding plan for sharing targeted messaging. This also includes Count the Kicks media. DOH-Okaloosa promotes Count the Kicks in social media advertising and to local worksites as part of breastfeeding friendly employer kits.

## Navigating the Action Plan

The action plan depicted on the following pages includes the goals, objectives, and evidence-based strategies used by the OCHIP group to enact change. It is updated annually to reflect changes, accomplishments, and opportunities.

\*Denotes a CHIP objective or strategy in the group’s action plan was revised in collaboration with partners since the original publication of this report in 2022.

## Healthy Moms & Babies OCHIP Group Action Plan

**Goal 1** | To reduce the infant mortality rate.

**\*Objective 1.1** | By December 31, 2025, reduce the Black-White infant mortality gap from a rate of 9.6 per 1,000 live births (2020) to 8.8 per 1,000 live births.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics	9.6 per 1,000 live births (2020)	8.8 per 1,000 live births	6.7 per 1,000 live births (2022)	Objective Exceeded	Ardelle Bush, Emily Pickens, Lynn Wadsworth, Amarylis Emrick, Miranda Smollen
<p><b>Strategy 1.1.1:</b> To promote best practices in prenatal, infant, and maternal care.</p> <p><b>*Strategy 1.1.2:</b> To distribute Recipe for a Healthy Baby materials to key audiences.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.3:</b> To promote comprehensive breastfeeding policies through the Healthy Okaloosa Worksites program and Florida Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Award.</p>			<p><b>Results:</b> (1.1.2) Members share key messaging including safe sleep and breastfeeding at health fairs, outreach events, and local OBGYN offices. Healthy Start partnered with lactation consultants to provide scholarships to improve access to breastfeeding support resources. (1.1.3) 14 employers are currently certified as Breastfeeding Friendly in Okaloosa County.</p> <p>*Members will re-evaluate this objective in 2025 and update the target value as needed.</p>		

**\*Objective 1.2** | By December 31, 2027, reduce the overall infant mortality rate from 5.1 per 1,000 live births (2020) to 4.2 per 1,000 live births.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics	5.1 per 1,000 live births (2020)	4.2 per 1,000 live births	7.7 per 1,000 live births (2022)	Not On Track	Ardelle Bush, Emily Pickens, Theresa Ryan, Amarylis Emrick, Miranda Smollen

*\*This objective utilizes the same strategies as Objective 1.1 above.*

**\*Objective 1.3** | By December 31, 2025, reduce the Black-White preterm birth gap from 4.4 per 1,000 live births (2019) to 4.2 per 1,000 live births.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics	4.4 per 1,000 live births (2019)	4.2 per 1,000 live births	5.4 per 1,000 live births (2022)	Not On Track	Ardelle Bush, Emily Pickens, Lynn Wadsworth, Amarylis Emrick, Theresa Ryan, Miranda Smollen

<p><b>Strategy 1.1.1:</b> To promote best practices in prenatal, infant, and maternal care.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.2:</b> To educate the community about maternal advocacy.</p> <p><b>*Strategy 1.1.3:</b> To improve awareness of the risks of smoking while pregnant and promote local cessation resources.</p>	<p><b>Results:</b> (1.1.1) Healthy Start began implementation of a Doula Program in 2023. The program should launch fully in 2024 and improve access to prenatal care providers. (1.1.2) Healthy Start promoted the HearHER campaign from the CDC and messaging from Count the Kicks to improve awareness. DOH-Okaloosa will launch a social media campaign with these messages in 2024.</p>
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## Healthy Moms & Babies OCHIP Group Action Plan (Continued)

**Objective 1.4** | By December 31, 2027, reduce the Black-White low birth weight gap from 3.8 per 1,000 live births (2020) to 3.5 per 1,000 live births.

Data Source	Baseline Value	Target Value	Current Value	Objective Status	Person(s) Responsible
Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics	3.8 per 1,000 live births (2020)	3.5 per 1,000 live births	4.8 per 1,000 live births (2022)	Not On Track	Ardelle Bush, Theresa Ryan, Amarylis Emrick, Emily Pickens

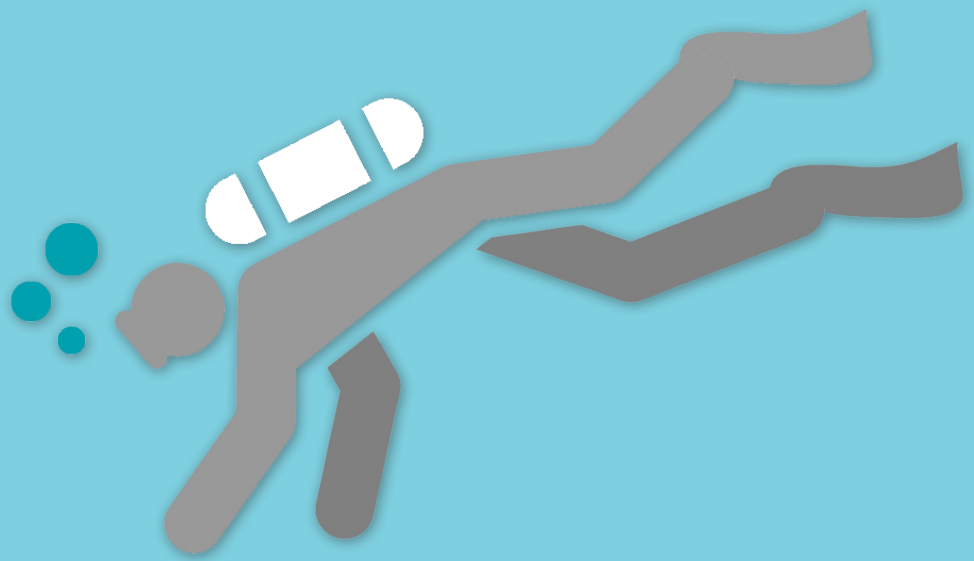
*\*This objective utilizes the same strategies as Objective 1.3 above.*

# Challenges & Opportunities

Over the past year, OCHIP members have dedicated their time and efforts to enacting the various evidence-based strategies outlined in their respective action plans. As expected when working on complex community-wide issues, there were both challenges and opportunities that emerged. As they were identified, each challenge or opportunity was addressed within the OCHIP group. OCHIP Champions assisted with the development of each corresponding strategy. As applicable, action plans were updated to accommodate for the opportunity or pivot due to an emerging challenge.

Priority Area	Challenge/ Opportunity	Strategy
<b>Healthy Behaviors</b>	Action plan needed an update to better reflect priorities	Held brainstorming session to identify resources, capacity, and needs for reintegration; Adjusted action plan accordingly
<b>Healthy Children</b>	(1) Member ownership of action plan and action items; (2) Progress of non-DEC action plan items	(1) Assign group roles (i.e. training lead, event lead, mental health lead) in alignment with member passion areas; (2) Identify members with expertise and/or recruit new members to ignite action
<b>Healthy Communities</b>	(1) Engaging hospital partners; (2) Managing multiple goals across varying priorities	(1) Targeted outreach to key individuals in healthcare system via leadership; (2) Schedule multiple meetings on one topic before moving on, so action items are accomplished
<b>Healthy Moms &amp; Babies</b>	Re-engaging partners post-COVID	Consistent outreach from existing members to ensure meetings reflect the entirety of the local maternal and child health network
<b>All OCHIP Groups</b>	(1) Substance use impacts all priority areas, but often leads to working in silos; (2) Membership retention and engagement; (3) Opioid settlement and CORE funding availability	(1) OCHIP Champions meet quarterly to discuss overlap and collaboration; (2) DOH-Okaloosa shares meeting information with all members to promote cross-participation; Plan to complete a partnership evaluation in 2024 to gain better insights into partner engagement/needs; Internal group leads share Community Engagement Survey results to begin each meeting; (3) Partnered with Okaloosa County in December 2023 to provide community feedback and identify needs

# Acknowledgments



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David Triana, United for a Good Cause  
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Nick Tomecek, Okaloosa County  
Teri Schroeder, Okaloosa County School District  
Kelly Jasen, United Way Emerald Coast  
Michelle Burns, Career Source of Okaloosa and Walton Counties

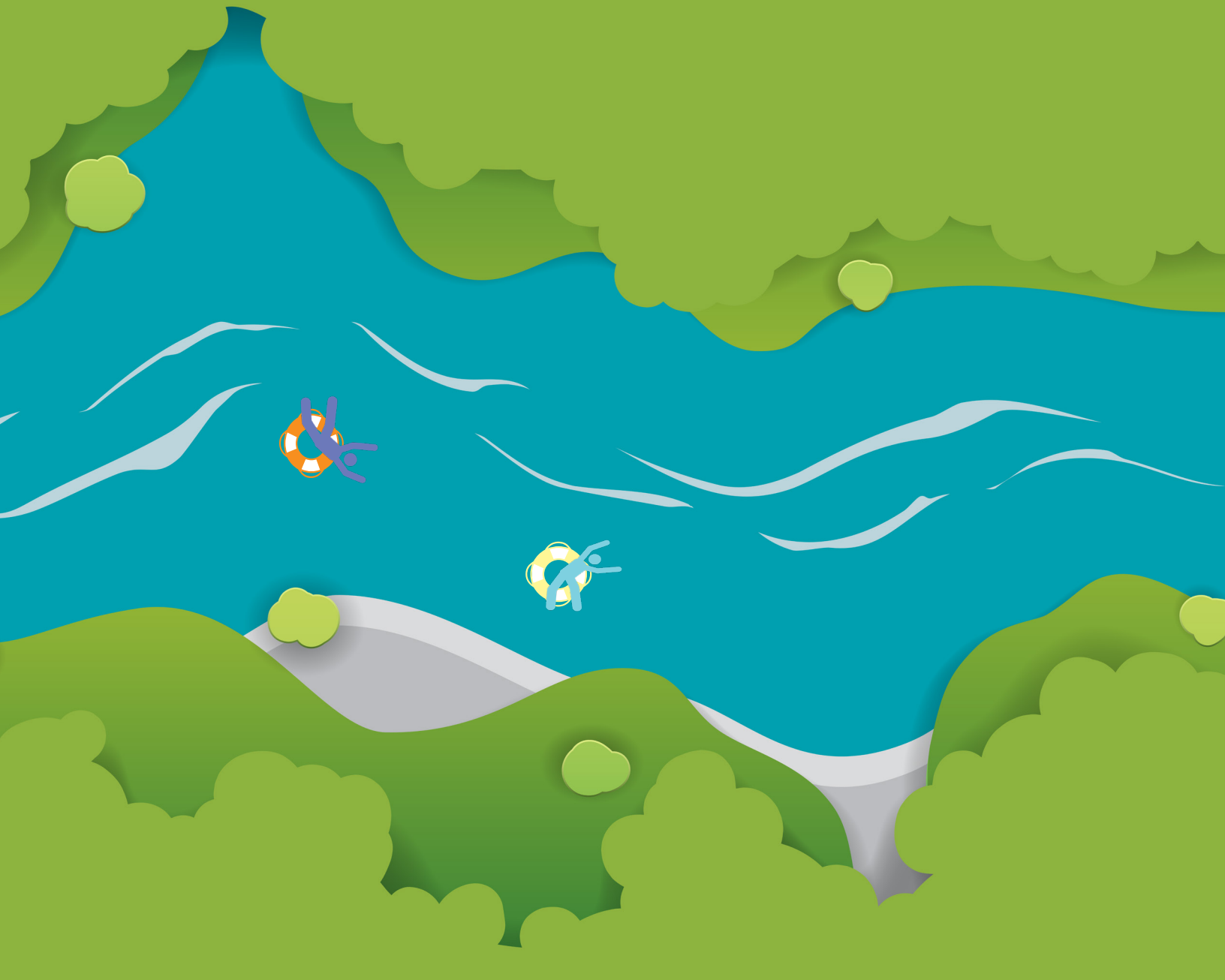
## DOH-Okaloosa Internal Core Support Team

Allison McDaniel	Emily Pickens	Susan Wagner
Amanda Colwell	Katherine “Kat” Beedie	Trisha Dall
Amy Miller	Lauren Hobbs	
DeeDranae “Dee” Cole	Lynn Wadsworth	
Elizabeth “Beth” Smith	Petra Maddens	

## OCHIP Champions

Ardelle Bush, Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties  
Chief Robert Bage, Fort Walton Beach Police Department  
Danielle Wilson, Emerald Coast Children’s Advocacy Center  
Deb Willis, West Florida Area Health Education Center  
Mayor JB Whitten, City of Crestview  
Sergeant Jessica Trimboli, Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office  
Stephanie Wedel, Freedom Life Compass

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**Okaloosa County**

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