

## MINUTES

**Purpose:** Engage Okaloosa County community members in a health improvement process through an open, two-way dialogue to reduce the impact of harmful events such as pedestrian injuries, older adult falls, and substance use and to reduce the housing burden.

**Attendees:** Emily Pickens, Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa); Petra Maddens, DOH-Okaloosa; Greg Cain, Okaloosa County Emergency Medical Services; Robert Bage, Fort Walton Beach Police Department; JB Whitten, City of Crestview; Jason Fulghum, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO); Devon Ravine, City of Fort Walton Beach; Mikiko Tucker, City of Fort Walton Beach; Lauren Hobbs, DOH-Okaloosa; Gretchen Peoples, Florida Department of Transportation; Amanda Colwell, DOH-Okaloosa; Mikiko Tucker, City of Fort Walton Beach; Robert Schohn, Fort Walton Beach Police Department; Jenna McElyea, Bridgeway Center, Inc.; Vanessa D'Aquin, Crossroads Center; Kristopher Staley, OCSO; Catherine Card, Okaloosa County School District.

### Opening – Emily Pickens

- Emily Pickens opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.
- Minutes from the September 20, 2023, meeting were reviewed and approved.
- Emily shared positive Community Engagement Survey results from the previous meeting. Attendees felt their opinions were valued and there was enough time to provide input.

### Action Plan Updates – Robert Bage and JB Whitten

#### Pedestrian Safety Month Debrief

- Chief Robert Bage provided an overview of the group's activities thus far for Pedestrian Safety Month including the press conference, Protecting Pedestrians Videos, and poster contest. He called attendees' attention to the first, second, and third place posters displayed in the meeting room.
- He opened dialogue for feedback on activities and improvements for next year.
  - Catherine Card suggested future videos be shortened to 60 - 90 seconds long for students. Principals can request the videos be shown in homeroom then.
  - Captain Jason Fulghum stated the Sheriff's Office PIO also suggested shorter time lengths be considered for the following year.
- Chief Bage reminded the group of the Best Practices Guide. Members had planned to develop the resource this year but tabled it in September. He asked attendees if anyone was familiar with an existing resource like this.
  - Gretchen Peoples shared she did not know of one but would review FDOT resources and share findings with Emily. Captain Fulghum will also investigate his resources and report back.
  - The group will revisit this action item at a future meeting.

#### Poster Competition Winners and Awards Presentation

- Catherine Card stated Chief Bage and Mayor Whitten would have 10 minutes during the School Board Meeting to present awards and take photos.
- Chief Bage and Mayor Whitten outlined topics to be discussed before announcing winners. Emily will draft an outline based on the discussion and share via email.

- Mayor Whitten will get signatures from the mayors at the Northwest Florida League of Cities meeting. Emily will assist with any remaining.

### **Okaloosa EMS Community Paramedicine Discussion**

- Captain Greg Cain provided an overview of their new Community Paramedicine Program: Crisis Awareness and Referral in Emergencies (CARE). They hope to launch the program in November 2024 with two new full-time positions added.
  - Their goal is to reduce barriers that lead to non-compliance.
    - There is now statutory authority for EMS to transport patients to alternate destinations other than emergency rooms when applicable.
    - This is what allows EMS to transport patients to facilities like Bridgeway's Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Center, instead of the ER.
    - It also provides insurance companies the opportunity to pay for treatment at home via the CARE program, rather than a hospital.
  - EMS will be able to help CARE patients with medication adherence, insurance, case management, and more. After three months, patients will be discharged from the program. The program will utilize a fee-for-service model and complete contracts with most major insurance companies as a preferred provider.
    - He shared insurance companies are beginning to see the value in these programs and the cost savings.
  - It will also help better utilize personnel teams who provide Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) care. The community paramedicine team will respond to low acute calls in a specialized vehicle that is not an ambulance. This leaves the ambulance available for critical calls.
    - Captain Cain shared there is a MedStar program in Ft. Worth, Texas where EMS can provide rides to patients via a partnership with Lyft and other rideshare agencies. The driver will take the patient to urgent care rather than an ER if deemed medically appropriate.
- Captain Cain informed attendees the CARE Program will intersect with the group's efforts, including goals for reducing older adult falls and opioid overdose deaths.
  - For older adult falls, they plan to identify those who report frequent falls. They will enroll them in the program and complete a fall risk assessment. Then, they can assist in modifications to their home, furniture, equipment, etc. to reduce risk.
  - They will also work to get patients to the right resources based on their needs.
- Chief Bage opened discussion among attendees.
  - Mayor Whitten commended EMS on the new program and its intent to close gaps in service. He also expressed a dire need for a facility like Bridgeway's MAT Clinic in Crestview to serve those in the north end of the county.
  - Vanessa D'Aquin shared the difficulties she faces getting patients into primary care. She expressed interest in seeing how the program will reduce these burdens for community members in need, particularly involving the ability to bypass the ER when appropriate.
    - Jenna McElyea echoed concerns about resources and shared they hope to expand the MAT Clinic to 24 hours in the future. She also stated there is not a 24-hour pharmacy available to people who need medications

following an ER visit or are discharged after hours. Attendees agreed this is concerning and presents a significant barrier to medication adherence.

- Chief Bage asked what the group could do to assist with the program. Captain Cain shared they will need assistance connecting participants with the right resources in the community. They will also need help connecting with faith-based and other civic groups to help with home modification projects, etc. for enrollees.
  - Chief Bage stated the Fort Walton Beach Fire Department has a CARES program that does fall assessments. He suggested the Fire Chiefs be invited to the following meeting to continue the discussion on collaboration.
  - He, Mayor Whitten, and Captain Cain will invite them to the November meeting.

### **Action Items – Robert Bage and JB Whitten**

#### **Pedestrian Safety Month Debrief**

- Emily will email Chief Bage the outline. Mayor Whitten will get signatures from the other mayors and Emily will assist with any remaining on Monday.

#### **Okaloosa EMS Community Paramedicine Discussion**

- Chief Bage, Mayor Whitten, and Captain Cain will assist in getting local Fire Chiefs to the next meeting to continue discussion with key stakeholders.

### **Open Discussion – All**

- Emily shared there will be a Community Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Awareness Training at the Crestview Community Center on Monday, November 13<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. This training is open to the public. More trainings will be scheduled across the county with dates and locations to be announced.

### **Closing – Emily Pickens**

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

*Next Meeting – Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. at DOH-Okaloosa*

| <b>Action Items</b>   | <b>Owners</b>                      | <b>Deadline</b>           | <b>Status</b> |
|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Purchase poster contest prizes  | Robert Bage                        | October 23 <sup>rd</sup>  | Not started   |
| Coordinate poster drop off to libraries for display across the County | Emily Pickens                      | October 24 <sup>th</sup>  | In progress   |
| Share Pedestrian Safety Month videos across social media account      | County PIOs, All Members           | ASAP                      | In progress   |
| Finalize signatures from other mayors                                 | JB Whitten                         | October 23 <sup>rd</sup>  | In progress   |
| Develop and email content outline for School Board Meeting            | Emily Pickens                      | October 20 <sup>th</sup>  | Completed     |
| Invite local Fire Chiefs to November meeting                          | Robert Bage, JB Whitten, Greg Cain | November 16 <sup>th</sup> | Not started   |