



DOH-OKALOOSA

HEALTH EQUITY

PLAN

July 2022 – June 2025



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I. VISION

The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) worked with members of the Health Equity Task Force to create a vision and tagline that is representative of the work we aim to do in our county. Please note that DOH-Okaloosa utilized members of the Community Health Assessment (CHA) Leadership Team as the Health Equity Task Force. When referred to from this point on in the document, the group will be called the Health Equity Task Force.

These community leaders were utilized to form both groups because the 2022 Community Health Assessment cycle occurred at the same time as the development of the Health Equity Plan, and the two efforts are very closely related. The vision and tagline from the 2022 Community Health Assessment (CHA) were approved to be used because of their clear health equity focus.

The development of the vision and tagline was initially facilitated on June 22, 2021, during a meeting with the Health Equity Task Force. The group was unable to reach a consensus, so a tool was created in SurveyMonkey and distributed to the group. The vision statement with the most votes was selected. At the next meeting on September 8, 2021, it was announced that the vision and tagline below were selected after receiving the majority of the votes (9 out of 24).

Vision: Mobilizing for a healthier Okaloosa.

Tagline: Fostering an Okaloosa that is safe, informed, nurturing, diverse, tolerant, and has access to quality healthcare.

II. PURPOSE OF THE HEALTH EQUITY PLAN

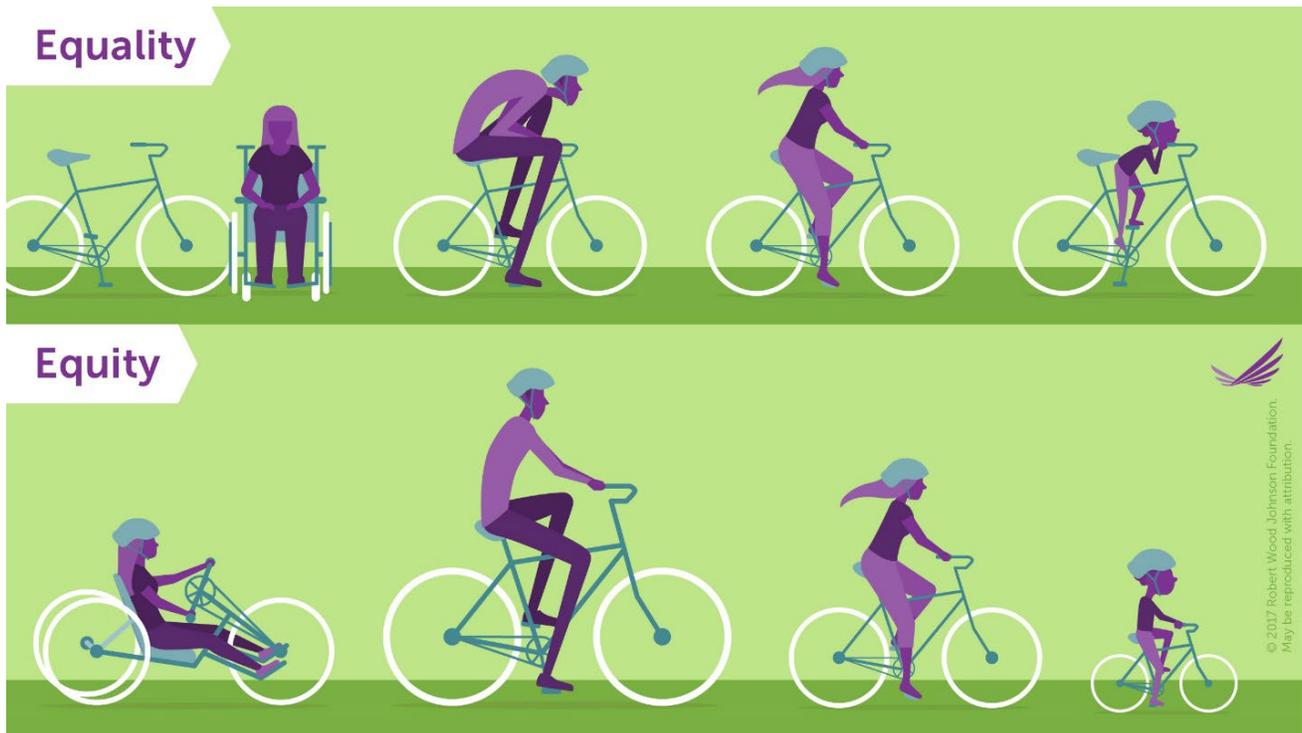
Health Equity is achieved when everyone can attain optimal health.

The Florida Department of Health’s Office of Minority Health and Health Equity (OMHHE) works with government agencies and community organizations to address the barriers inhibiting populations from reaching optimal health. A focus on health equity means recognizing and eliminating the systemic barriers that have produced disparities in achieving wellness. In response to Chapter 2021-1700 of the Florida Statute, effective July 1, 2021, each county health department (CHD) has been provided resources to create a Health Equity Plan to address health disparities in their communities.

The Health Equity Plan should guide counties in their efforts to create and improve systems and opportunities to achieve optimal health for all residents, especially vulnerable populations. County organizations have a critical role in addressing the social determinants of health (SDOHs) by fostering multi-sector and multi-level partnerships, conducting surveillance, and integrating data from multiple sources, and leading approaches to develop upstream policies and solutions. This plan acknowledges that collaborative initiatives to address the SDOHs are the most effective at reducing health disparities.

The purpose of the Health Equity Plan is to increase health equity within Okaloosa County. To develop this plan, the Okaloosa County Health Department followed the Florida Department of Health’s approach of multi-sector engagement to analyze data and resources, coordinate existing efforts, and establish collaborative initiatives. This plan addresses key SDOH indicators affecting health disparities within Okaloosa County. This Health Equity Plan is not a county health department plan; it is a county-wide Health Equity Plan through which the Health Equity Task Force, including a variety of government, non-profit, and other community organizations, align to address the SDOH impact health and well-being in the county.

III. DEFINITIONS



Health equity is achieved when everyone can attain optimal health.

Health inequities are systematic differences in the opportunities groups have to achieve optimal health, leading to avoidable differences in health outcomes.

Health disparities are the quantifiable differences, when comparing two groups, on a particular measure of health. Health disparities are typically reported as rate, proportion, mean, or some other measure.

Equality each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities.

Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, learn, work, live, worship, and age that influence the health of people and communities.

county. Some of these include the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, West Florida Area Health Education Center (AHEC), American Heart Association, American Cancer Society in Action Network, Parents Against Vaping, Epilepsy Florida, Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Sunshine Health, and Simply Healthcare Plans, inc., among others. The Tobacco Free Partnership also includes students from the Okaloosa County School District who are involved in the local Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) clubs.

The partnership was established in 2009 and has nearly doubled in size after recent recruitment efforts. The group was able to expand membership due to partnerships forged during the COVID-19 response as well as networking through existing partnerships within DOH-Okaloosa's community health improvement programs and efforts. The SWAT Coordinator also found success in building the group by improving community visibility, revamping recruitment efforts, sustaining membership, and emphasizing strategic planning.

Members worked to attend more outreach events in the community and networked with local organizations to identify potential new partners. They created a logo and ordered promotional items to increase visibility throughout the community. They also participated in tobacco observance events and provided education to local decision-makers about the partnership. In efforts to sustain membership, they held one-on-one meetings with members to get to know them better and understand their passion areas regarding tobacco. They also worked to maintain an accurate partnership contact list and publicly advertised upcoming meetings. For strategic planning, they worked to create and revise partnership bylaws on an annual basis to ensure they reflect the work being done. They also developed a shared mission and vision and created two committees within the partnership based on member feedback. These committees created goals and strategies that work in alignment with statewide and national goals.

Many members of the Tobacco Free Partnership have a passion for health equity and are working within their own organizations to create more equitable health outcomes for the populations they serve. It is important for them to engage in outreach events like the Ciclovía Street Fiesta and work with racial and ethnic minority leaders because members of these populations are more likely to be targeted by tobacco companies. The tobacco industry often increases their marketing in predominantly Black and African American communities and have shown aggressive marketing for menthol products. Lower income communities also tend to have more tobacco retail stores than other neighborhoods. These lower income communities are often made up of racial and ethnic minority groups.

While tobacco use was not prioritized in DOH-Okaloosa's Health Equity Plan, the Minority Health Liaison is still active in the Tobacco Free Partnership and many of its members are working to achieve health equity in the community.

A. Minority Health Liaison

The Minority Health Liaison supports the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity in advancing health equity and improving health outcomes of racial and ethnic minorities and other vulnerable populations through partnership engagement, health equity planning, and implementation of health equity projects to improve social determinants of health. The Minority Health Liaison facilitates health equity discussions, initiatives, and collaborations related to elevating the shared efforts of the county.

Minority Health Liaison: Christy Craig

Minority Health Liaison Backup: Emily Tash

B. Health Equity Team

The Health Equity Team includes individuals that each represent a different program within the CHD. The Health Equity Team explores opportunities to improve health equity efforts within the county health department. Members of the Health Equity Team assess the current understanding of health equity within their program and strategize ways to improve it. The Health Equity Team also relays information and data concerning key health disparities and SDOH in Okaloosa County to the Health Equity Task Force. The Minority Health Liaison guides these discussions and the implementation of initiatives. This team is also called the Health Equity Committee and functions as a subcommittee of the DOH-Okaloosa Performance Management Council. Members are listed below.

Name	Title	Program
Emily Tash	Community Health Improvement Planning Branch Director	Community Health Improvement Planning Branch
Christy Craig	OPS Health Educator Consultant	Community Health Improvement Planning Branch
Robert “Kirk” Webb	Lead Planning Consultant	Public Health Preparedness
Petra Maddens	Community Health Improvement Section Chief	Community Health Improvement
Amanda Colwell	Assistant Director	CHD Administration
Jessica Durand	Nursing Program Specialist	Ryan White
Meghan Bowman	Nutrition Educator	WIC Public Health Nutrition
Trisha Dall	Environmental Health Section Chief	Environmental Health
Gabrielle Johnson	Environmental Specialist II	Environmental Health
Lauren McWilliams	Administrative Assistant II	Office of Financial and Administrative Services
Meghan Bauman	Nutrition Educator	Women, Infants, and Children

The Health Equity Team met on the below dates during the health equity planning process. The group meets monthly to track goals and implement a comprehensive work plan.

Meeting Date	Topic/Purpose
January 13, 2022	Introduction to Health Equity & Overview of Health Equity Grants, Expectations
February 10, 2022	Relating Health Equity to Your Work
March 10, 2022	Cultural Competency
April 14, 2022	Develop and Approve Committee Work Plan, Goals and Objectives
May 9, 2022	Finalize Committee Work Plan & Health Equity Plan Edits, Goals and Objectives
June 9, 2022	Health Equity Plan, Health Equity Coalition Meeting

C. Health Equity Task Force

The Health Equity Task Force includes CHD staff and representatives from various organizations that provide services to address various SDOH in Okaloosa County. The members of the task force serve on the 2022 Community Health Assessment (CHA) Leadership Team. Because the development of the 2022 CHA and the Health Equity Plan occurred around the same time and used much of the same data, members of the CHA Leadership Team are acknowledged below as fulfilling the role of the Health Equity Task Force. Members of this task force brought their knowledge about community needs and SDOH. Collaboration within this group addresses upstream factors to achieve health equity. The Health Equity Task Force helped to prioritize health disparities and the specific SDOH that impact them in our county. They contributed their expert knowledge, experience, and guidance that informed the development of the Health Equity Plan and the projects that will work to address the prioritized SDOH. Members of the Health Equity Task Force are listed below.

Name	Title	Organization
Aaron Murray	Chief of Police & Executive Director of Campus Safety	Northwest Florida State College
Amanda Colwell	Assistant Director	Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County
Anthony Sawyer	Director of Outreach	90 Works
April Sawyer	Public Information Officer	Okaloosa County
Ardelle Bush	Executive Director	Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties
Bonnie Barlow	Chief Executive Officer	Bridgeway Center, Inc.
Dana Crupi	Executive Director	Early Learning Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties

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Danielle Holley	Human Resources Director	City of Niceville
David Triana	Founder	Connexión Media & United for a Good Cause
Demeika McClendon	Lieutenant	Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office
Emily Tash	Community Health Improvement Planning Branch Director	Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County
Erin Archer	Major	Hurlburt Field
Jennifer Clark	Staff Member	Okaloosa County School District
Joseph "Joe" Gordon	Sargeant	Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office
Kelly Jasen	CEO	United Way Emerald Coast
Lida Deonarine	Chief Quality Officer	North Okaloosa Medical Center
Melanie Sinclair	Director of Trauma	Fort Walton Beach Medical Center
Michelle Burns	Executive Director	Career Source of Okaloosa and Walton Counties
Sandra Wilson	Executive Director	Crestview Area Chamber of Commerce
Nichole DeVito	Human Resources & Risk Manager	City of Destin
Petra Maddens	Community Health Improvement Section Chief	Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County
Robyn Burnett	RN, Health Chair	Okaloosa County NAACP
Sarah Yelverton	Executive Director	Homelessness & Housing Alliance
Sydney Harper	OPS Government Operations Consultant	Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County

The Health Equity Task Force met on the below dates during the planning process. Since the Health Equity Plan was completed, the Health Equity Task Force has continued to meet at least quarterly to track progress.

Meeting Date	Organizations	Topic/Purpose
June 22, 2021	Northwest Florida State College, 90 Works, inc., Okaloosa County, Healthy Start of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Okaloosa County Sherriff's Office, United Way Emerald Coast, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, City of Destin, Okaloosa County NAACP, Homelessness & Housing Alliance, First Judicial County of Florida Okaloosa County,	Community Health Assessment (CHA) Purpose & Overview, Vision Statement & Tagline, 2022 Timeline

	Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County	
September 8, 2021	Northwest Florida State College, Healthy Start of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Okaloosa County Sherriff’s Office, United Way Emerald Coast, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, Okaloosa County NAACP, Homelessness and Housing Alliance of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Bridgeway Center, inc., Crestview Chamber of Commerce, CareerSource of Okaloosa and Walton Counties	Forces of Change Assessment, SDOH Discussion
May 5, 2022	Northwest Florida State College, Healthy Start of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Homelessness and Housing Alliance of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Okaloosa County Sherriff’s Office, CareerSource of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Okaloosa County School District, Early Learning Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Bridgeway Center, inc. 90 Works, inc.	Health Issue Prioritization, Priority Health Issue & SDOH Ranking

D. Coalition

DOH-Okaloosa and DOH-Walton partnered to form the Okaloosa Walton Health Equity Coalition. The coalition will be made up of community partners working to address each SDOH, as well as any other relevant SDOH in the community. Members of the coalition will meet bi-annually during a combination meeting of members of the DOH-Okaloosa and DOH-Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership. Members will discuss strategies focused on the social determinants of health: education access and quality, health care access and quality, economic stability, social and community context, and neighborhood and built environment. They will also provide guidance and assistance with the implementation and completion of the SDOH projects.

The first Health Equity Coalition meeting was held on June 28th, 2022. The meeting occurred in a hybrid format with some attendees meeting in person at the Crestview office of DOH-Okaloosa and others joining online via Microsoft Teams. At the meeting, members discussed the Health Equity Plans of DOH-Okaloosa and DOH-Walton after having reviewed it during the week leading up to the meeting. The Health Equity Plan drafts were shared with invitees on

Monday June 13th along with a reminder about the upcoming meeting and an agenda. The Health Equity Coalition membership listing can be found in Addendum A.

E. Regional Health Equity Coordinators

There are eight Regional Health Equity Coordinators. These coordinators provide the Minority Health Liaison, Health Equity Team, and Health Equity Task Force with technical assistance, training, and project coordination.

Name	Region
Carrie Rickman	Emerald Coast
Quincy Wimberly	Capitol
Diane Padilla	North Central
Ida Wright	Northeast
Rafik Brooks	West
Lesli Ahonkhai	Central
Frank Diaz-Gines	Southwest
Kelly Grove	Southeast

V. HEALTH EQUITY ASSESSMENT, TRAINING, AND PROMOTION

A. County Health Equity Training

The Minority Health Liaison assessed the capacity and knowledge of health equity through several tools used during the 2022 Community Health Assessment process. They include the Okaloosa County Health Survey, the Forces of Change Assessment, and the Local Public Health Systems Assessment. The information provided through these assessments helped to identify knowledge gaps and provided guidance on the topics that should be prioritized for trainings. Below are the dates, topics, and organizations who attended trainings.

Date	Topics	Organization(s) Receiving Trainings
March 31, 2022	Healthy Communities (Introduction to Health Equity, SDOH, Health Disparities)	Epiphany Episcopal Church
April 28, 2022	2022 Okaloosa-Walton Health Equity Summit (Cultural Competency, Housing, Infant Mortality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health, Best Practices)	Children’s Center, A Bed 4 Me, First United Methodist School, DOH-Okaloosa, DOH- Walton, New Zion Tabernacle, Crestview Fire Department, City of Destin, DOH- Escambia, Embrace Florida Kids, Sunshine Health, The Healing Impact, Bridgeway Center, Inc., Baptist Healthcare, Boys & Girls Club of the Emerald Coast, Pensacola State College, Healthy Start Coalition of Santa Rosa County, Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System, Simply Healthcare, University of South Florida, Center for Independent Living of Northwest Florida, CareerSource Okaloosa Walton, Walton Okaloosa Council on Aging, City of Crestview, University of West Florida Emerald Coast, Shelter House, 90 Works, Inc., Crestview Area Chamber of Commerce, WUWF Public Media, DOH-Calhoun, DOH- Liberty, Sisters Alive, Feeding the Gulf Coast, DeFuniak Springs Boys &

		Girls Club, The Now Center for Wellness, Chautauqua Healthcare Services of Lakeview Center, Inc., University of West Florida, Walton County Schools, Humana Healthy Horizons, Okaloosa Walton Homelessness and Housing Alliance, United Way Emerald Coast, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Healthy Start Community Coalition, City of Crestview, DOH- Volusia, Emerald Coast Children’s Advocacy Center, DOH- Wakulla, DOH- Taylor, Walton Community Health Center, DOH- Santa Rosa
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B. County Health Department Health Equity Training

DOH-Okaloosa recognizes that ongoing training in health equity and cultural competency are critical for creating a sustainable health equity focus. At a minimum, all staff receive the *Cultural Awareness: Introduction to Cultural Competency* and *Addressing Health Equity: A Public Health Essential* training. In addition, the Health Equity Team provides training opportunities to CHD staff members throughout the year. Below are the dates and topics of said trainings that have occurred prior to the publishing of this plan.

Date	Topics	Number of Staff in Attendance
January 13, 2022	Introduction to Health Equity	12
February 10, 2022	Relating Health Equity to Your Work	12
February 18, 2022	Health Equity Overview and Application to Your Work	18
March 10, 2022	Cultural Competency	12

DOH-Okaloosa plans to create and implement a comprehensive training plan for staff members based on the results of a brief assessment given in April 2022 to assess training needs for members of the Health Equity Team. Identified areas of need include research and policy development, organizing communities for advocacy, advocating/supporting external partners, and program evaluation. The Health Equity Team has created and implemented a comprehensive work plan that seeks to address these training needs. Each individual training will be evaluated, and feedback will be applied to make trainings more engaging or applicable in the future. One year after the training plan is implemented, the Health Equity Team will re-evaluate the training needs of CHD staff members. This will ensure that training needs are being met, and that relevant, applicable trainings are provided to the current workforce.

C. Minority Health Liaison Training

The Office of Minority Health and Health Equity and the Health Equity Regional Coordinator provide training and technical support to the Minority Health Liaison on topics such as: the health equity planning process and goals, facilitation and prioritization techniques, reporting requirements, and taking a systems approach to address health disparities. The Minority Health Liaison training is recorded below.

Date	Topics
January 25, 2022	Cultural Competency Training
April 12 – 13, 2022	In-Person Minority Health Liaison Training (Florida’s Health Equity Capacity and Roles & Responsibilities, Elements of Healthy, Equitable Communities and Prioritizing SDOH, Developing Health Equity Plans, Developing SMART Objectives, Partnership Building, Health Equity in COVID-19)
May 10, 2022 – June 6, 2022	Grant Writing Trainings

D. National Minority Health Month Promotion



The flyer is for the 2022 Health Equity Summit, held on Thursday, April 28, from 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. (CST). It features a photo of Cynthia Harris, PhD, as the featured speaker. The event is virtual, free, and open to the public. A QR code is provided for registration by April 8, 2022. Contact information for Emily Tash is also included.

VIRTUAL | FREE | OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

2022 HEALTH EQUITY SUMMIT

THURSDAY, APRIL 28

9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M. (CST)

FEATURED SPEAKER:



CYNTHIA HARRIS, PHD
FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY
FLORIDA PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING CENTER

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO REGISTER BY APRIL 8, 2022

CONTACT:
EMILY TASH
MHHE.OKALOOSA@FLHEALTH.GOV
850-344-0691



Each county hosted an event during the month of April to celebrate National Minority Health Month. Okaloosa and Walton County Health Departments partnered to host the 2022 Health Equity Summit on April 28th, 2022. The Health Equity Summit was held from 9:00 – 11:00 AM CST only via Microsoft Teams. Participants registered for the event via SurveyMonkey.

The event was free and open to the public. DOH-Okaloosa and DOH-Walton shared the invitation flyer shown above with their networks of community partners via phone and email. The Health Equity Summit was also advertised through Conexión Media, a local Latinx newspaper. DOH-Okaloosa released a press release with information about the event and staff shared the flyer at numerous outreach events, including the Fort Walton Beach

International Festival, the Fort Walton Beach Boys and Girls Club Opioid Awareness Expo, and the Crestview Triple B Bar-be-que fundraiser.

Dr. Cynthia Harris of the Florida Public Health Training Association and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University served as the keynote speaker for the Health Equity Summit. Seventy-nine attendees tuned in to hear Dr. Harris talk about important issues in our community including older adult health, mental health and substance use, housing, and infant mortality. Participants also heard from Dr. Owen Quinonez, the Senior Health Equity Officer for the Florida Office of Minority Health and Health Equity (OMHHE), and from Carrie Rickman who serves as the Emerald Coast Regional Coordinator from OMHHE. The event concluded with a word from Amanda Colwell, Assistant Director at DOH-Okaloosa, and Ryan Mims, Chief Health Strategist at DOH-Walton. They talked to attendees about the Health Equity Coalition and shared ways to get involved at the local level.

Participants provided valuable feedback for the Health Equity Summit via SurveyMonkey. The responses were reviewed and will be applied to next year's event. Some of the suggestions included having a hybrid meeting format in the future and including more speakers. Many participants submitted positive responses about Dr. Cynthia Harris's presentation and agreed that they learned something new by attending the event.

VI. PRIORITIZING A HEALTH DISPARITY

The Health Equity Task Force identified and reviewed health disparities data in Okaloosa County. Data was pulled from multiple sources including Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Okaloosa County Health Survey, Healthy People 2030, United States 2020 Census, Florida Environmental Public Health Tracking, National Center for Health Statistics, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Department of Children and Families, and more. Information from these resources were used in addition to:

- Research journal articles
- Current events news periodicals
- Communications with community partners
- Peer review publications

The following health disparities were identified in Okaloosa County: prostate cancer deaths, vaccination rates, life expectancy, HIV diagnoses, and infant mortality. Using data from the Okaloosa County Health Survey, key informant interviews, and focus groups, life expectancy was prioritized in the Health Equity Plan. Data concerning life expectancy can be found on the following pages.

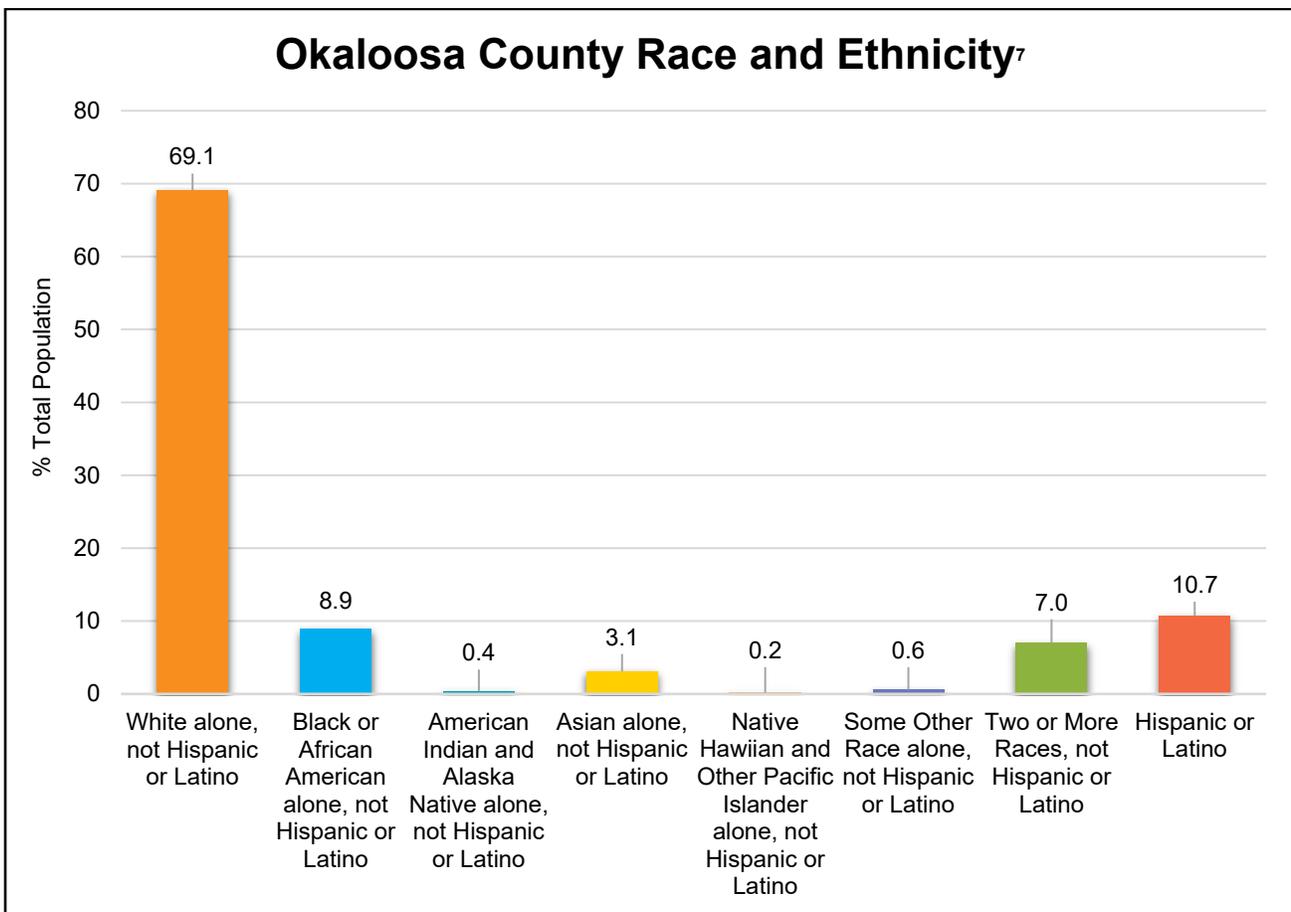
The data provided will seek to inform readers about the priority populations determined by OMHHE, including Black and African American, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Hispanic and Latino, Elderly (Ages 65+), Infants and Toddlers (0-5 Years), people living with disabilities, veterans, LGBTQ+, immigrants, and any other populations identified through research.

It is important to note that there are existing data gaps regarding some of the priority populations in Okaloosa County. For example, there is inadequate local-level data regarding the LGBTQ+ community and immigrant populations. Additionally, there are data gaps regarding priority populations for factors related to neighborhood and built environment as well as social and community context. The Minority Health Liaison worked to include statewide and national data in place of local data gaps, where available. This is clearly notated in the narrative included with any statistic provided.

Okaloosa County Population Demographics

Okaloosa County is home to an estimated 211,668 residents⁴. Okaloosa ranks 26 of 67 counties for total population density based on results from the 2020 Census, with around 227 people per square mile⁶. The most densely populated areas of Okaloosa County include parts of Wright and Fort Walton Beach⁶. Destin, Crestview, and Valparaiso also have areas with large population densities⁶. Okaloosa County is also home to three military bases, which have an impact on many factors like culture, household income, and employment.

While most Okaloosa County residents are White and Non-Hispanic or Latino, there are some areas that are more diverse. This includes parts of Fort Walton Beach, Wright, and Crestview. In Northwest Fort Walton Beach, one community is more than 65% African American or Black according to Census data, and many Hispanic or Latino residents live in the Wright area^{5,8,66}. See the chart below to learn more about Okaloosa’s race and ethnicity demographics.

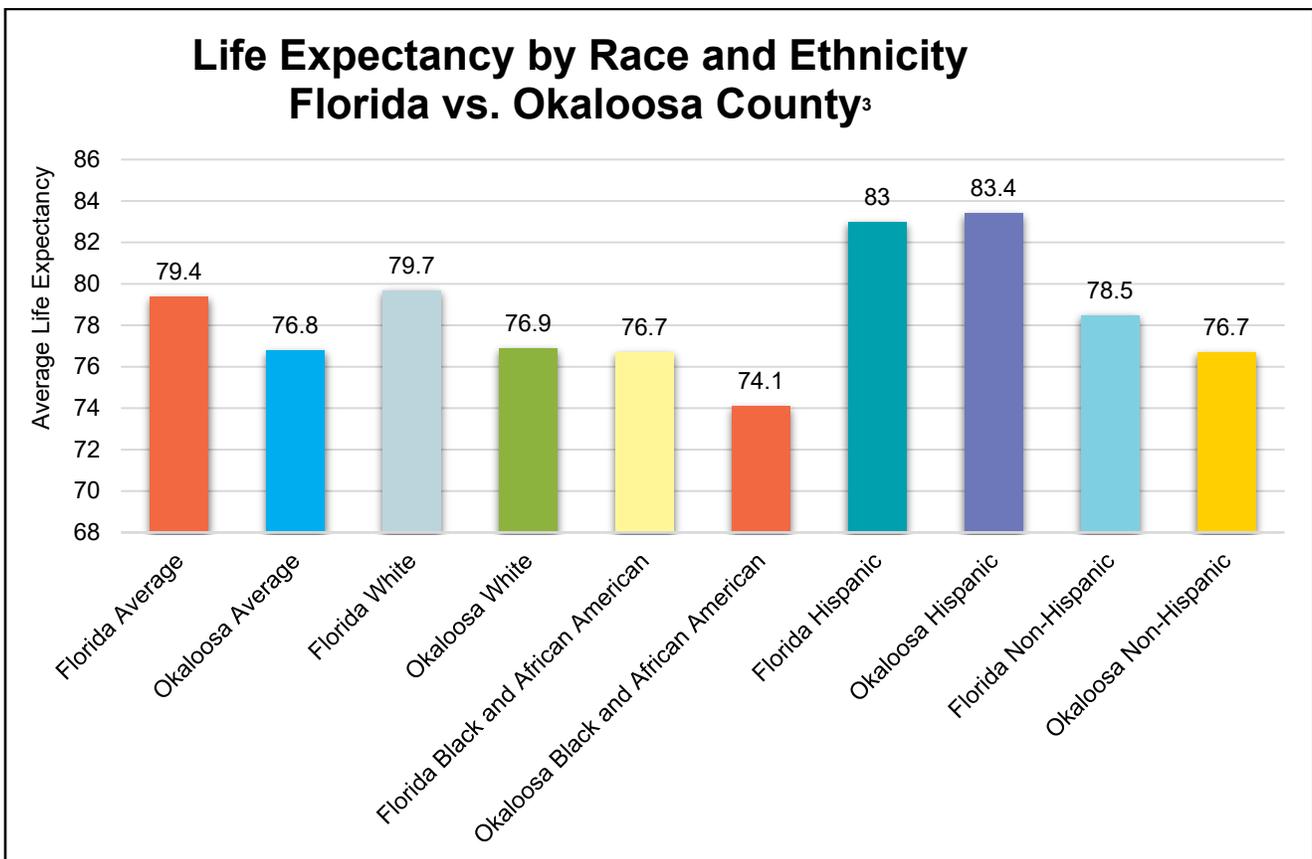


Around 16% of Okaloosa County residents are ages 65 and older⁶⁹. Many veterans live in Okaloosa County. Nearly 22% of residents are veterans⁸⁸. Most veterans living in Okaloosa County are male (86%) compared to female (14%)⁸⁸. A little more than 15% of residents have

a disability^{77,88}. The most common disabilities in Okaloosa County include ambulatory, cognitive, and independent living difficulties^{77,82}.

Life Expectancy Data

Okaloosa County is ranked among the healthiest counties in Florida by County Health Rankings and Roadmaps for both health outcomes and health factors⁶⁵. However, the average life expectancy for Okaloosa County residents is around 77 years, compared to the state average of 80 years¹. Life expectancy in Okaloosa County is higher for women (79 years) than for men (74 years)¹. Life expectancy also looks different for some racial and ethnic groups. Compared to Non-Hispanic or Latino residents, Hispanic and Latino Okaloosans have the highest life expectancy³. White residents also tend to have longer life expectancies and live nearly three years longer than Black and African American residents on average³. See the chart below to learn more.



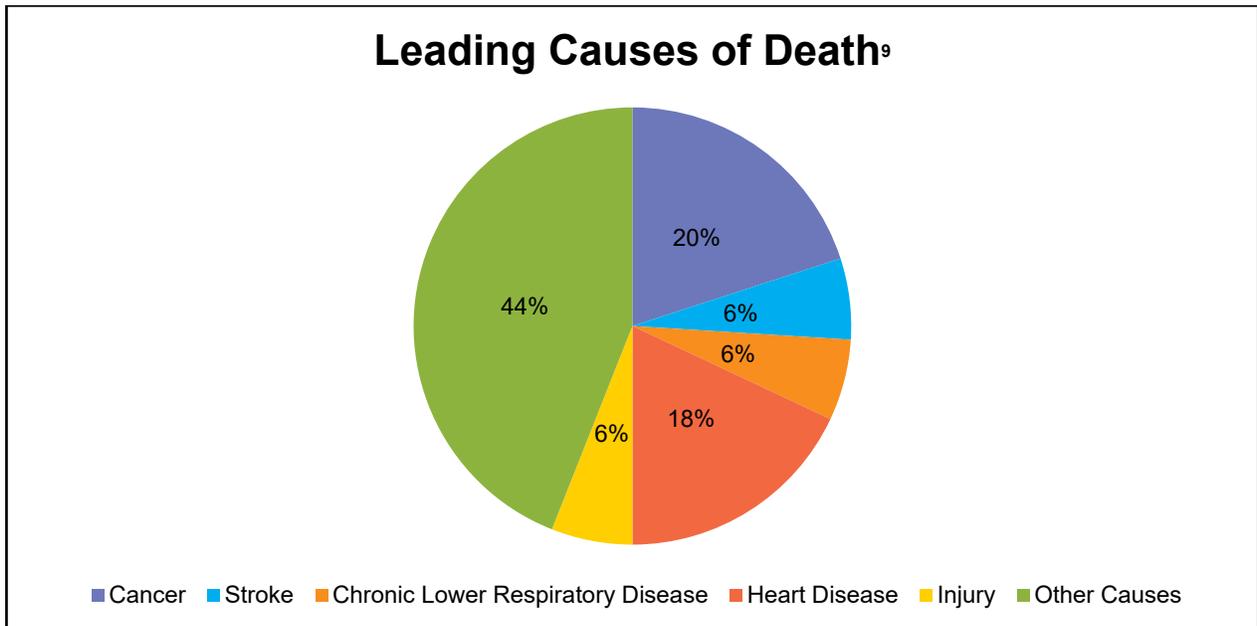
Life expectancy may also look different based on zip code. Some areas of Okaloosa County have higher average life expectancies than others. For example, some Destin residents have an average life expectancy of 82 years^{2,3}. Other areas of Okaloosa County have lower averages. Areas with the lowest life expectancies include Wright and Ocean City^{2,3}. Residents in these areas have an average life expectancy of 74 years^{2,3}. This is an 8-year difference in

life expectancy between people living only 14 to 17 miles from each other. The areas with the lowest life expectancies in Wright and Ocean City have higher percentages of racial and ethnic minorities than most other parts of the county, including Black and African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian residents².

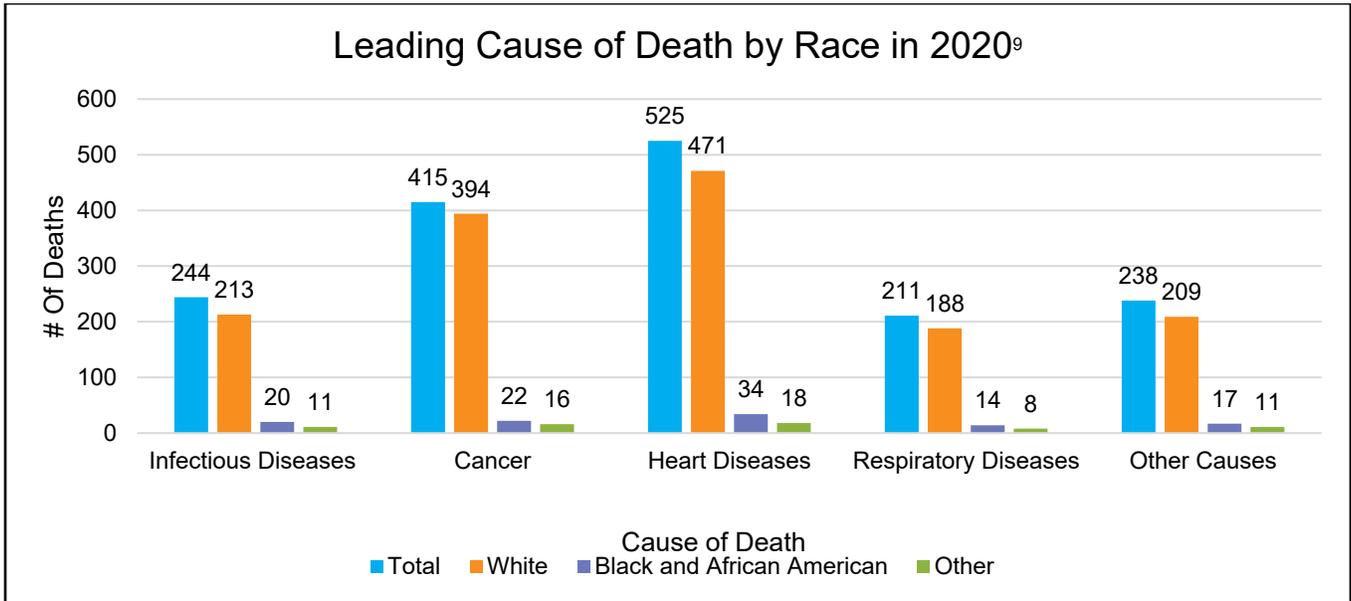
There are also some disparities that can be found in areas with high average life expectancies. For example, there is one area of Destin in the zip code 32541 near Destin Middle School with a life expectancy of 72.7 years^{2,3}. This is a big difference from the surrounding neighborhoods that average 78.3 and 82.2 years^{2,3}.

Leading Causes of Death Data

The leading causes of death for Okaloosa residents are cancer, heart disease, stroke, chronic lower respiratory disease, and injury⁹. Lung cancer is the leading type of cancer death in Okaloosa County, followed by colorectal, pancreatic, and breast cancers⁹. The most common unintentional injury-related deaths vary by age group¹⁰. For adults, poisoning commonly due to drug overdose or excessive drug use, and falls are the most common¹¹. Drug overdose deaths increased in 2020, most commonly due to opioids³⁷.



The top three causes of death for all racial and ethnic groups include heart disease and cancer¹⁷. The leading cause of death and other factors can vary by group. For example, all infectious disease deaths for Hispanic and Latino residents in 2020 were due to COVID-19⁹. For White residents, there were 170 deaths due to COVID-19, 27 from septicemia, and 10 from other infectious diseases⁹. See the chart on the following page for more information.



Infectious disease deaths have increased from 2019 to 2020. The rise in infectious disease deaths is due to the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁷. Around 200 Okaloosa residents died from COVID-19 related mortality events in 2020⁹. Across the state of Florida, 74,590 deaths occurred due to COVID-19 between 2020 and June 3, 2022¹⁰³. In 2020, COVID-19 reduced the overall life expectancy in the United States by 1.5 years¹⁷. On average, White people saw a 1.2 year drop in life expectancy while Black and African American and Hispanic and Latino people lost more than three years¹⁷.

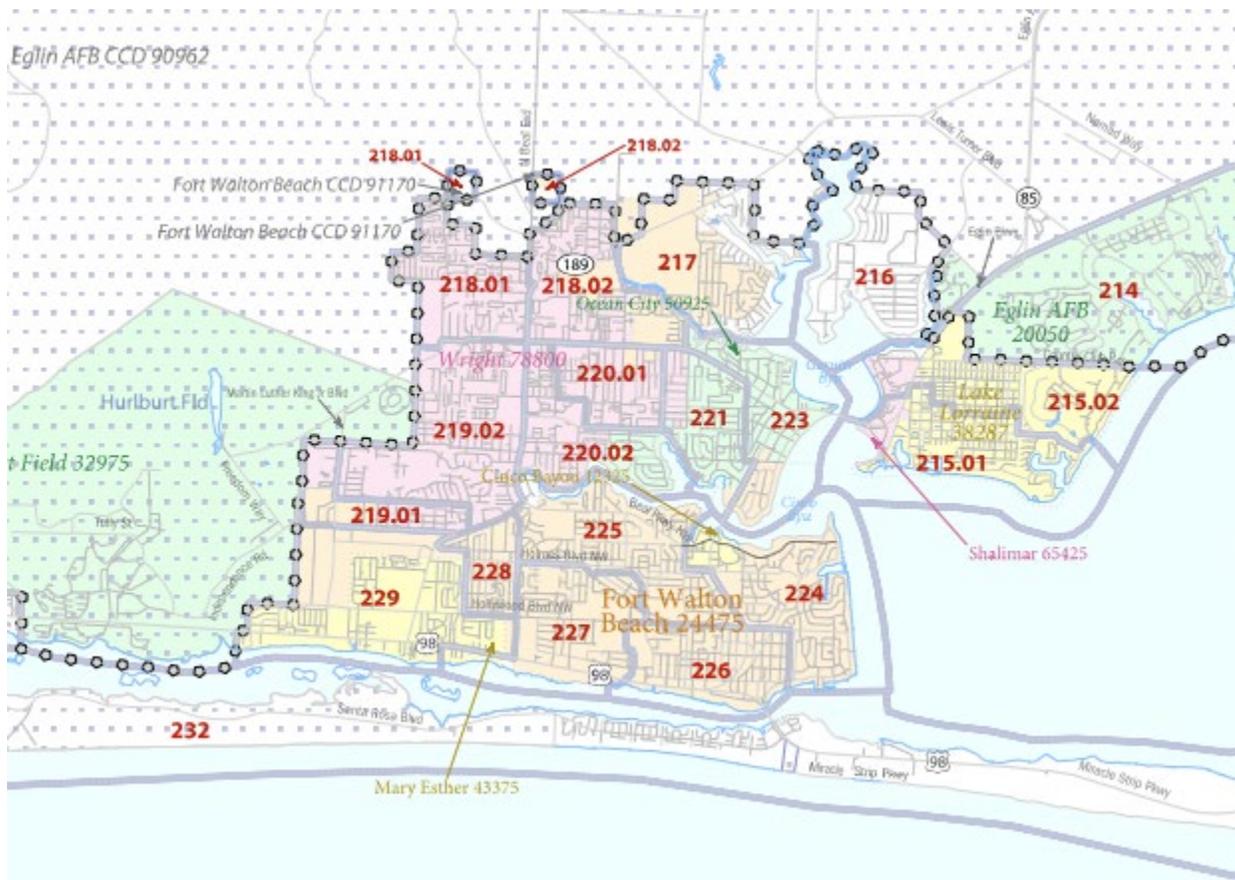
Infant Mortality Data

It is also relevant to highlight infant mortality data in Okaloosa County⁹³. Okaloosa’s infant mortality rate is 6 deaths per 1,000 infants born⁹³. This is the same as the statewide average. However, these rates are strikingly different for some racial and ethnic groups. White infant deaths occur at 4.7 per 1,000 births compared to Black and African American infants at 12.8 deaths per 1,000 births⁹³. This means that Black and African American babies born in Okaloosa County are more than twice as likely to die before their first birthday than White babies⁹³. The Hispanic or Latino infant death rate is 4.3 per 1,000 births, making it the lowest death rate⁹³. It is also lower than the state average of 5.0 per 1,000 births for this group⁹³.

Priority Population Identification

For the Health Equity Plan, DOH-Okaloosa will work to improve the life expectancy of residents in the Wright and Ocean City areas of Okaloosa County. These areas were selected based on United States Census Bureau data because they have the lowest average life expectancy compared to other areas of the county. The Census tracts used were 218.01, 218.02, 219.01, 219.02, 220.01, 220.02, 221, and 223. These specific geographic regions were obtained using the 2020 Census Tract Map for Okaloosa County, Florida. Census-level

data was not available for all indicators and data points referenced in the Health Equity Plan. However, this data was used whenever available. See a portion of the map on the following page for more information or view the full Okaloosa County 2020 Census Tract Map in Addendum C.

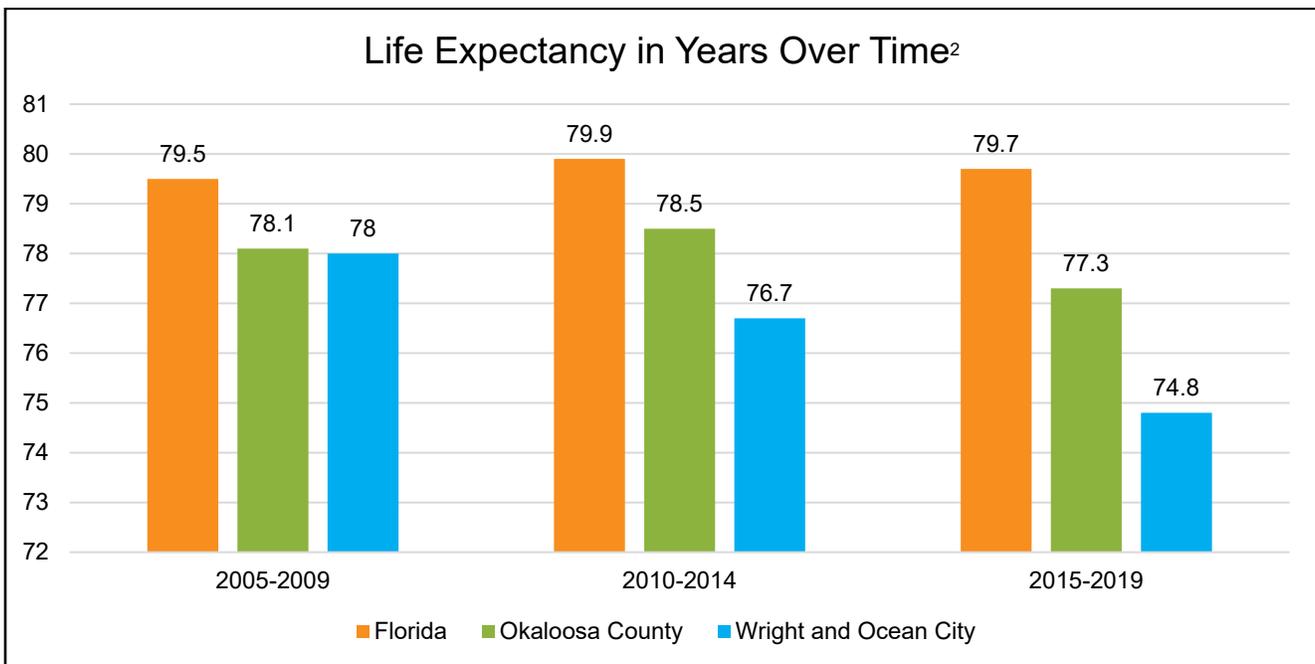


Wright and Ocean City Demographics

On average, Wright and Ocean City residents have a life expectancy of 74.8 years^{2,3}. Their total population is 32,872, making up around 16% of the total Okaloosa County population⁶⁶. Wright and Ocean City are home to more racial and ethnic minority residents than other areas of the county. While many residents are White, an average of 17.5% are Black or African American, including one area which is nearly 50% Black and African American⁶⁶. This is the largest community of Black and African American residents in the county. This same area has the highest percentage of Asian residents in Wright and Ocean City, around 7%⁶⁶. Many residents in these areas identify as Two or More Races or Some Other Race according to responses to the 2020 U.S. Census⁶⁶. Wright has a greater population of Hispanic or Latino residents compared to Ocean City⁶⁶. One area has more than 36% of residents who identify as Hispanic or Latino, of any race⁶⁶. On average, nearly 15% of the population in Wright and Ocean City are Hispanic or Latino⁶⁶. This is higher than the county average of 9.5%⁶⁶.

The population is almost evenly split between male (49.2%) and female (50.8%) residents⁶⁶. The median age is 35.4 years⁶⁶. The youngest average age is 25.5 years in the Southwest corner of Wright and the oldest is 45 years in Northwest Wright⁶⁶. An average of 16% of residents have a disability⁶⁶. This is higher than the Okaloosa (15.4%) and Florida (13.6%) averages⁶⁶. Disabilities are most common among those ages 65 and older with an average of 49% of Wright and Ocean City residents⁶⁶. This is also higher than the state and county averages for this age group by 12.2% to 16.5%⁶⁶.

Another important thing to note is the change in life expectancy over time for these residents. The average life expectancy for the state of Florida has been higher than the Okaloosa County average since at least 2005². It has also been higher than the average for Wright and Ocean City, although the disparity in years has become increasingly apparent with time². The current disparity between the Florida average and our priority population is almost 5 years². Data also shows that life expectancy used to be more comparable to the county average from 2005 to 2009². However, this disparity has increased over the following data cycles going from 0.1 to 1.8 and now a 2.5-year difference². If current trends persist, these gaps will continue to widen when data is released for 2020-2025². Please see the chart below for more details. The chart used the 5-year life expectancy estimated from Florida Health CHARTS at the following Census tracts for Wright and Ocean City: 218.01, 218.02, 219, 220.01, 220.02, 221 and 223.



Data was unavailable regarding veteran status, immigrant status, and LGBTQ+ populations at the Census-tract level. This data was provided in later portions of the Health Equity Plan using statewide or national data where appropriate.

VII. SDOH DATA

Social Determinants of Health (SDOHs) are conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, play, and worship that affect a wide range of health and quality-of-life risks and outcomes. The SDOHs can be broken into the following categories: education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, social and community context, and economic stability. The Health Equity Team identified multiple SDOHs that impact life expectancy. They are listed on the following pages.

Social Determinants of Health



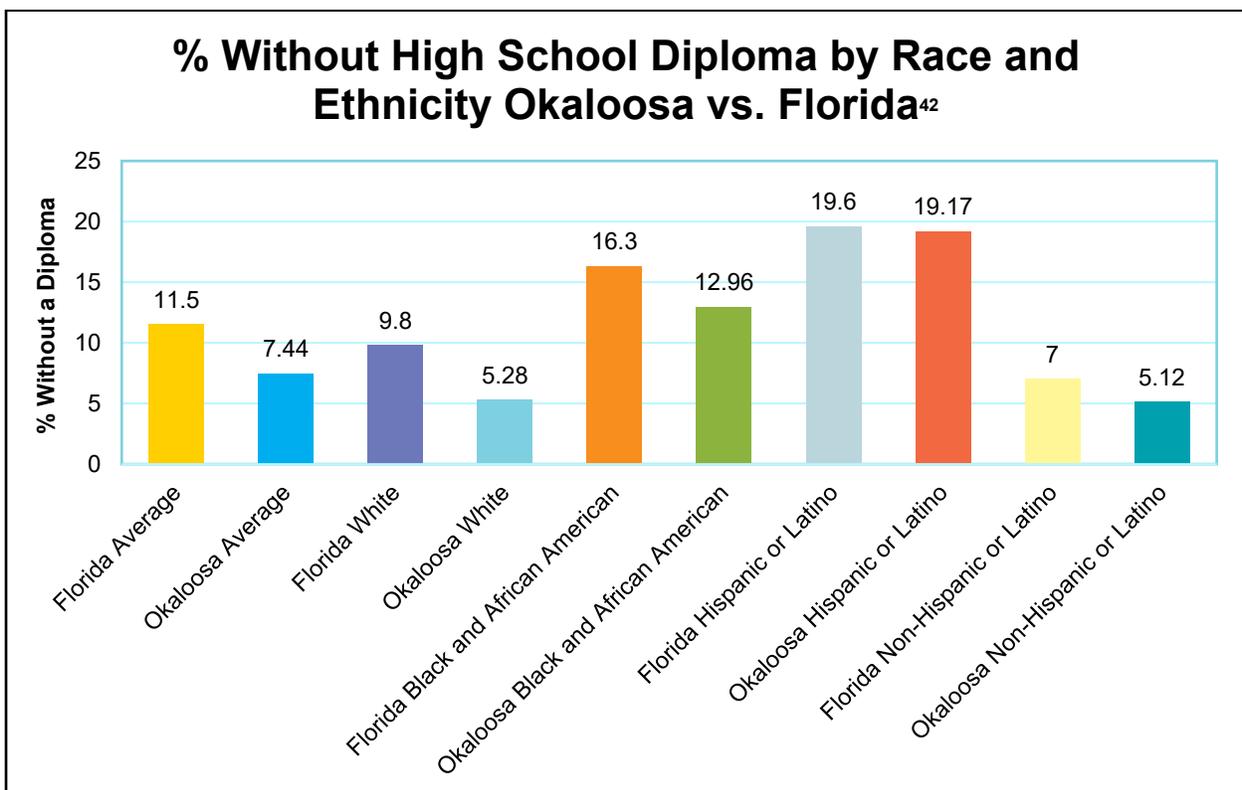
A. Education Access and Quality



Education Access and Quality Data in Okaloosa County

Okaloosa County High School Graduation Rates by Race and Ethnicity

In 2020, the percent of Okaloosa County residents who did not have a high school diploma was 7.4% compared to Florida at 11.5%⁴². The percentage of Okaloosa’s Black residents ages 25 years and older who do not graduate high school was more than twice as high as White students⁴². Hispanic or Latino residents were more than three times as likely to not have a high school diploma⁴². See the chart below for more information.



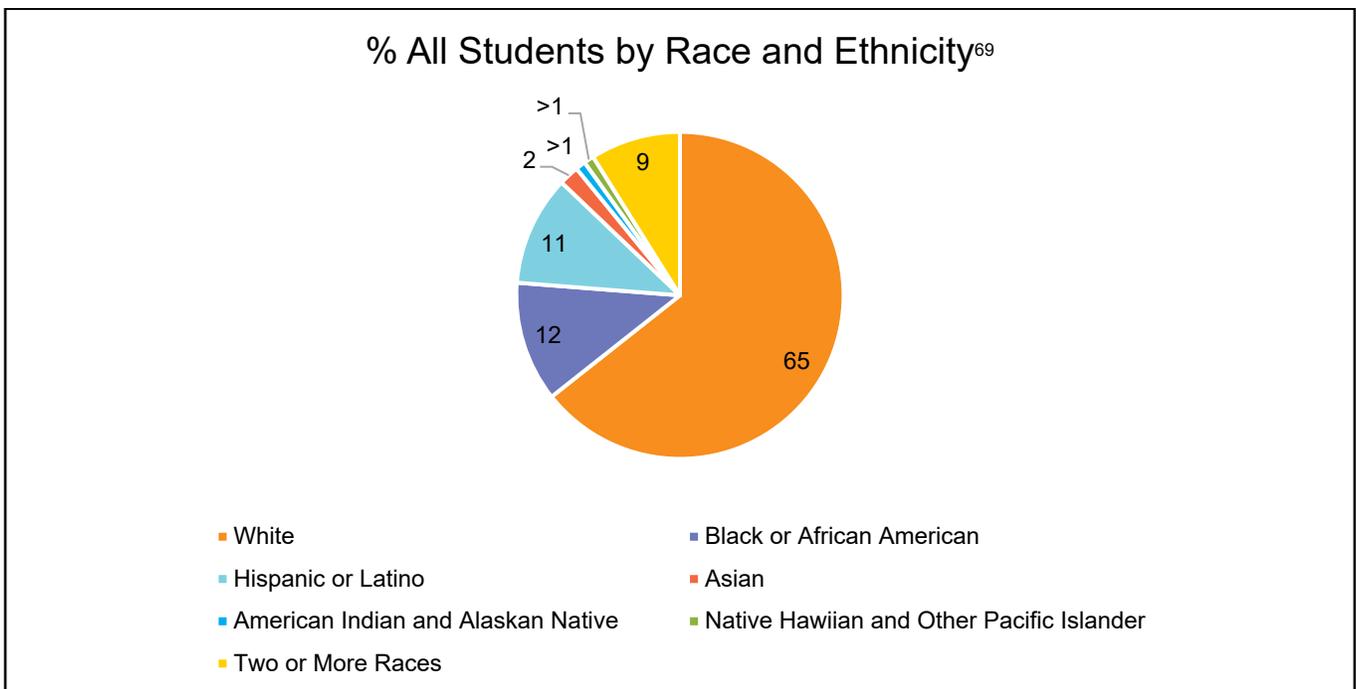
On average, 92.6% of Okaloosa County adults ages 25 years and older have at least a high school diploma⁶⁶. For residents of Wright and Ocean City, the high school graduation rates are between 78.1% and 91.1% with an average of 87%⁶⁶.

High School Graduation Rates Among Students with Disabilities

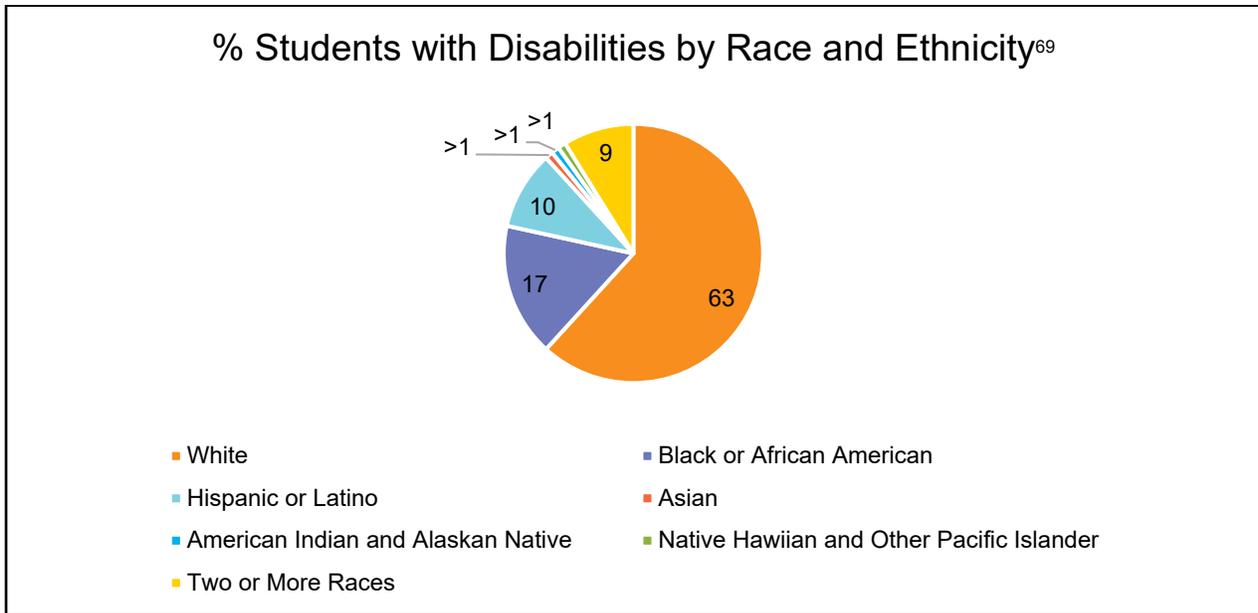
Ability level can also be an indicator of educational attainment. The Florida Department of Education monitors data regarding IEPs amongst students. These are Individualized Education Plans, used to assist a student with an identified disability in school^{69,70}. During the 2018-2019 school year, there were 32,461 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in Okaloosa County⁶⁹. Around 17% of enrollees were students with a disability⁶⁹. More than 85% of students with an IEP at the time of graduation receive a standard diploma, and around 7% of students with IEPs drop out of school⁶⁹. Both indicators meet or perform better than the statewide education targets for these metrics⁶⁹.

Okaloosa County meets many of the educational benchmarks for students with disabilities. However, there is room for improvement regarding math and reading proficiency, as neither of these indicators meet the statewide benchmark and are below target by 15% or more⁶⁹. English and mathematic skills are vital for all ages. This knowledge helps students enter the workforce successfully and learn important skills like budgeting, communication, problem solving, health literacy, and more⁷¹.

It is also important to assess disability prevalence by students' race and ethnicity. Overall, the Okaloosa County student body ages 6 through 21 has similar demographics to the general county population. See the graph below for more information.



See the chart below to compare the overall Okaloosa County student population to students with disabilities. Please note that the percentages of student race and ethnicity based on disability are similar to the general student body, except for Black and African American students⁶⁹. Black and African American students make up 12% of the general student body and 17% of those with a disability⁶⁹. This shows a disparity related to disability status in Black and African American students in Okaloosa County.



There are also differences in disability prevalence by the type of disability. The chart below shows the percentages of students by race and ethnicity who have three types of disabilities, including Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBD), and Intellectual Disabilities (IND). SLDs include, but are not limited to, dyslexia, dysgraphia, or developmental aphasia⁷⁴. SLDs do not include learning issues related to hearing or visual disabilities, limited English proficiency, cultural, or economic factors⁷⁴. EBDs present as persistent and consistent emotional or behavioral responses that affect educational environments and are unrelated to age, culture, gender, or ethnicity⁷³. INDs are defined as having significantly below average intellectual or adaptive functioning with delays to academic skills during the developmental phase of life⁷³. See the chart below for more information about each disability type by student race and ethnicity.

% Students with Disabilities by Race and Ethnicity ⁶⁹					
Race and Ethnicity	% Total Student Body	% All Students with Disabilities	% Students with SLDs	% Students with EBDs	% Students with INDs
White	65%	63%	57%	55%	56%
Black and African American	12%	17%	19%	29%	25%

Hispanic or Latino	11%	10%	13%	4%	10%
Asian	>1%	>1%	>1%	>1%	>1%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	>1%	>1%	>1%	>1%	>1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	>1%	>1%	>1%	>1%	>1%
Two or More Races	9%	9%	9%	12%	7%

Education and Health

High school graduation rates are known to impact life expectancy. This is because research shows that better educated people live longer, healthier lives than those with less education^{18,31}. To improve life expectancy, Okaloosa County is addressing the SDOH that produce racial and ethnic disparities related to achieving a high school diploma.

The Impact of Education Access and Quality on Life Expectancy

Education Access and Quality		
SDOH	Vulnerable Populations Impacted	How the SDOH Impacts Life Expectancy
Literacy	Low-income, People Living with Disabilities	Literacy is a measure for academic success, and educational attainment leads to longer life expectancy ^{19,31,75}
Preschool Education Program Enrollment	Low-income Children, Black or African American Children	Families with low income are less likely to enroll children in preschool compared to families with higher income ²⁷ . Children that attend these programs have increased academic achievement and improved social emotional skills ^{27,40} . These skills improve life expectancy
Early Childhood Development	Low-income	Social and educational support in early childhood improves health across the lifespan ²⁷
Broadband Internet Access	Rural, Low-income, Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups, Older Adults	Residents lacking broadband internet access are unable to participate in activities like virtual learning opportunities, job opportunities, and online health services which can impact educational attainment and life expectancy ^{43,76} . Around 87.2% of Okaloosa residents live in households with access to broadband internet. In the Wright and Ocean City areas the average is lower at 84.4% ⁶⁶ . Some parts of these areas have as low as 74.3% and 77.1% ⁶⁶

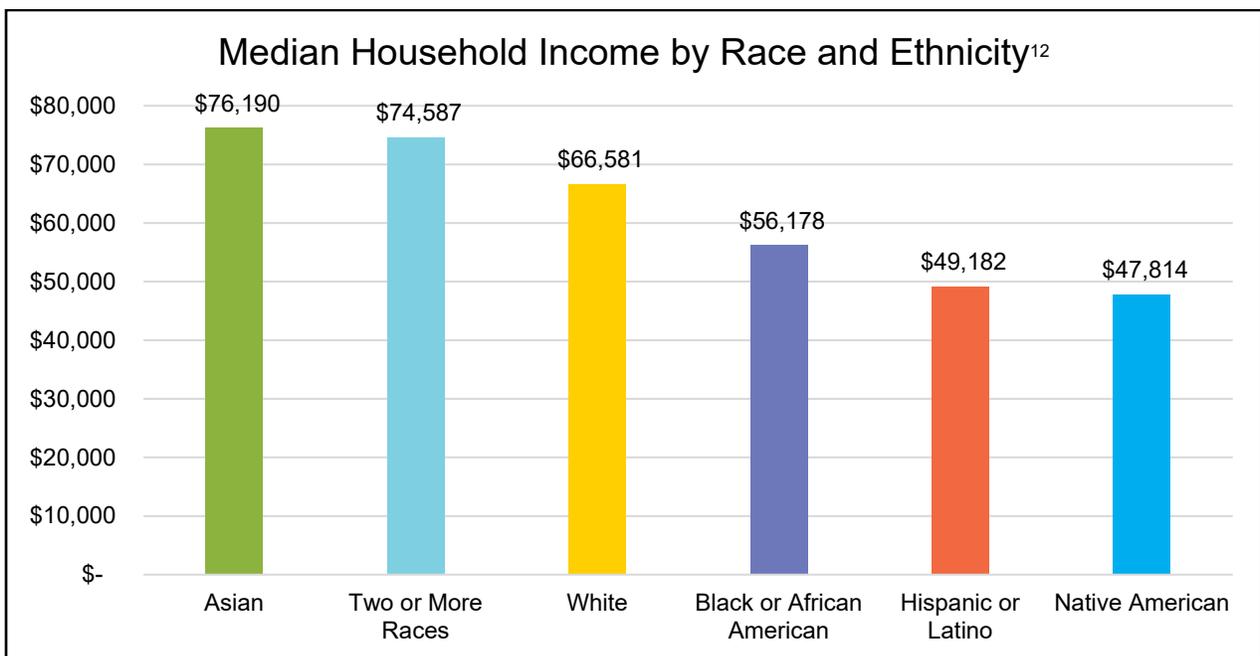
B. Economic Stability



Economic Stability Data in Okaloosa County

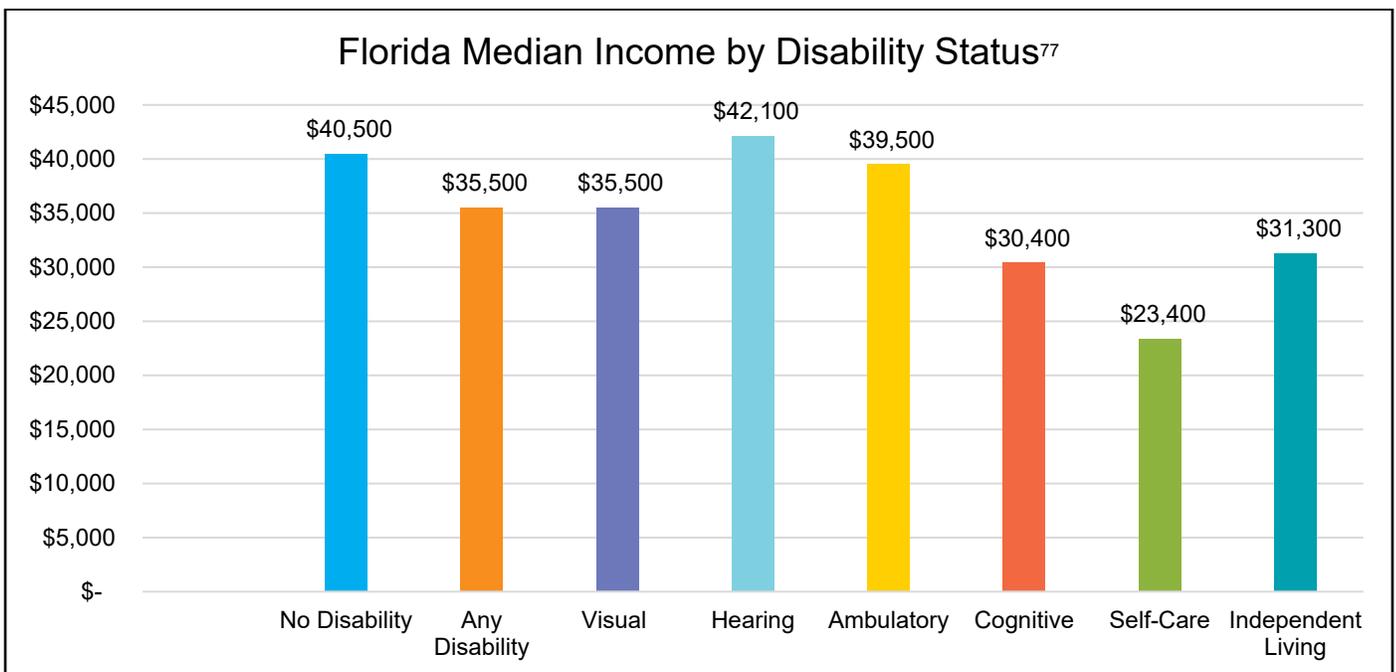
Median Income Earnings by Race and Ethnicity

It is important to note that although Okaloosa County has a high median household income of \$63,412 compared to Florida at \$55,660 and the United States at \$62,843, income disparities still exist¹³. Hispanic or Latino and Native American residents earn less than all other Okaloosa residents¹². The highest earners are those who identify as Asian or Two or More Races¹². The disparity, or difference, between the highest median household income and lowest median household income is around \$28,376¹². On average, White households make \$10,403 more per year than Black or African American households¹². See the chart below to learn more.



Income Earnings by Disability Status

People living with disabilities in Florida make an average of \$3,000 less per year than Floridians without a disability⁷⁷. The median income of a working-age adult with a disability was \$37,500⁷⁷ in 2018. For a household, the median income was around \$47,800 compared to \$64,800 in households without a family member living with a disability⁷⁷. The median income can change significantly depending on the type of disability⁷⁷. Those living with self-care, cognitive, and independent living disabilities earn the lowest incomes^{77,78,79}. There is a disparity of almost \$20,000 per year between those living with hearing disabilities and those with self-care disabilities⁷⁷. People living with a disability are also more likely to be unemployed and living in poverty than those without a disability^{77,82}. See the chart below for more information.



Living Wage Calculations

Residents of Wright and Ocean City have a median household income of \$51,774⁶⁶. The lowest earning area of Wright and Ocean City has a median household income of \$24,668 and the highest is \$61,324⁶⁶. Even the area with the highest median income is around \$2,000 less than the Okaloosa County average⁶⁶.

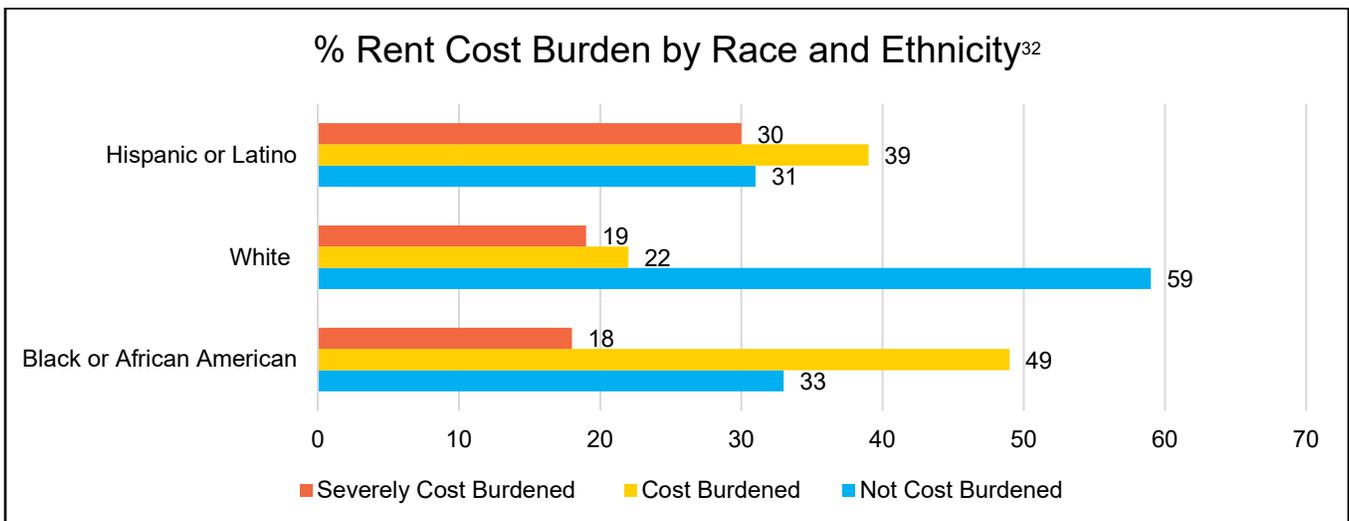
On the following page you will see a chart with a living wage breakdown for Okaloosa County. This shows the yearly costs for a single adult and a family with two adults and two children. The annual income needed for a single adult is \$30,782³³. This means a single person would need to earn \$14.80 an hour to meet their expense needs in our county³³. For a family of four, both adults would need to earn \$41,170 with an hourly rate of \$19.97³³.

Okaloosa County Living Wage Breakdown ³³		
Yearly Costs	Single Adult (No Children)	Family (2 Adults and 2 Children)
Food	\$3,177	\$9,305
Childcare	-	\$15,378
Medical	\$2,792	\$9,249
Housing	\$10,720	\$12,681
Transportation	\$5,113	\$13,896
Civic	\$1,811	\$4,127
Other	\$2,875	\$6,216
Taxes	\$4,294	\$11,486
Annual Income	\$30,782	\$41,170 (per adult)
Living Hourly Wage	\$14.80	\$19.79 (per adult)

The state of Florida’s minimum wage is \$10.00 per hour⁴⁴. In November 2021, Florida voters approved a plan to incrementally increase the state’s minimum wage to \$15 an hour by the year 2026⁴⁵. While some residents make enough money to live based on this living wage calculation, there are still many who are unable to afford some basic living expenses to pay for rent, groceries, or important medications.

Okaloosa County Rent Burden by Race and Ethnicity

Another important factor for economic stability is affordable housing¹⁵. In Okaloosa County, 21% of renters are considered severely cost burdened³². This means that the cost of their rent takes up more than 50% of their household income³². This burden is also felt by some groups more than others. Around 30% of Hispanic or Latino renters are severely cost burdened³². That percentage is 19% for White renters, and 18% for African American or Black renters³². This data matches national trends. See the chart below to learn more about rent burden.



Although there is no Census tract data available about rent burden, there is data on housing units and renting or owning a home in the Wright and Ocean City areas. There are 14,862 housing units available in Wright and Ocean City⁶⁶. This makes up around 15% of the total housing units in Okaloosa County⁶⁶. Around 12,900 of these housing units are currently occupied⁶⁶. This means around 87% of those units have people living in them⁶⁶. When looking at individual Census tract areas of Wright and Ocean City, it's clear that some areas have more occupied units than others. For example, one area of Wright has 98% of its units occupied⁶⁶. The least occupied area has an average of 85.1% occupancy⁶⁶. The average occupancy for Okaloosa County is 81% and 83% across the state of Florida⁶⁶.

The type of housing also differs throughout the area⁶⁶. Most residents of Wright and Ocean City rent housing units rather than own them⁶⁶. On average, 55% of residents are renters compared to only 34% of the overall Okaloosa County population and 33.8% across the state of Florida. Some areas of Wright have 77.9% and 84.9% renter-occupied units⁶⁶. Around 7.7% of Wright and Ocean City residents occupy a mobile home and 1.2% live in a boat, RV, van, etc⁶⁶. Both the percentage of mobile home units and boat, RV, van, etc. units are higher than the county average⁶⁶.

This is important to note because housing instability is an indicator of poor health outcomes⁸⁰. This includes many challenges such as rent cost burden, overcrowding, substandard housing, and other issues⁸⁰. When there's less housing available, lower-income residents are often forced to rent substandard housing that exposes them to more environmental hazards than the general population⁸⁰. They may also have to resort to sharing housing, which can lead to overcrowding⁸⁰. Overcrowding has been shown to impact mental health, stress levels, social health, and sleep⁸⁰. It can also increase the risk of infectious disease, which has only become more relevant considering the recent COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on housing instability⁸⁰.

Okaloosa County Housing by Age and Disability Status

Housing and rent burdens also disproportionately affect older adults and those living with disabilities⁹⁰. Housing is considered affordable when it does not cost more than 30% of a family's household income⁹⁰. Seniors who are the head of their household and families with persons living with disabilities are more likely to experience cost burden and severe cost burden, where households spend 50% or more of their income on housing-related expenses⁹⁰. For members of these populations, having access to affordable housing can mean the difference between living at home in an affordable housing situation, or being forced into more restrictive settings like assisted living facilities and nursing homes⁹⁰.

Poverty by Geographic Area

Some areas of Okaloosa County experience poverty more than others. Ocean City and Fort Walton Beach both have zones identified as high poverty areas^{2,13}. This means that 20% or more of the population live below the poverty level. Living below the poverty level means that a family makes a certain amount of money per year depending on how many family members

they have¹⁴. For example, for a family of four, the federal poverty level for 2022 is \$27,750 or less¹⁴. These numbers are used to help decide what federal benefits people might qualify for to receive help, like Medicaid, Section 8 low-income housing assistance, or tax credits, pending other eligibility criteria⁸¹. Wright, Florida also has zones identified as possible high poverty areas^{2,12}. This means that residents living in those communities have slightly less than 20% of their population living below the poverty level. Around 10% of Okaloosa County residents live in poverty according to the 2020 Census^{2,12}. This is less than the state average of 12.4%^{2,12}. However, even if 10% does not sound like much, it equals just under 20,000 residents in Okaloosa County^{2,13}.

Okaloosa County Employment Status

Employment status can vary by factors like disability status and a person's race or ethnicity. As of April 2022, people with a disability have a statewide unemployment rate of 5.7% compared to 3.0% for those without a disability^{82,83}. This rate fluctuated between 2020 and 2022, reaching the greatest disparity in May 2020 with disabled persons having an unemployment rate of 26.9% compared to an average of 13.9% across the state^{82,83}. This can be attributed to the trends seen nationwide during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employment status also looks different across racial and ethnic minority groups. According to a quarterly report from the Economic Policy Institute, Black and African American Florida residents have the highest unemployment rate at 5.3% compared to Hispanic and Latino residents at 3.2% and White residents at 2.8%⁸³. Unfortunately, there is no available data for Asian American and Pacific Islander residents in Florida due to small sample sizes.

Nationally, Hispanic or Latino workers were 55% more likely than White workers to be unemployed between January and March of 2022⁸³. Black and African American Florida residents have a lower unemployment rate than the national average⁸³. However, no state saw a Black or African American unemployment rate below 5% in 2021 or through March 2022⁸³. White residents have reached near or within 1% of the national average unemployment rate before the COVID-19 pandemic between January and March 2022⁸³.

Differences can also be seen when looking at national unemployment data by age, race, and ethnicity. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data from January 2021 through March 2022 shows high unemployment rates for all races were seen in those ages 16 to 19 and 20 to 24 years⁸⁴. For adults ages 65 and older, Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino residents experienced higher unemployment rates⁸⁴.

Employment by Veteran Status and Disability

In the state of Florida there are an estimated 1,400,000 veterans, making Florida one of the top three states with the largest veteran population^{86,87,88}. More than 50% of Florida veterans are ages 65 and older⁸⁷. Around 611,000 veterans are estimated to currently be in the civilian labor force⁸⁹. Around 4.5% of those veterans are unemployed and 7% have lived below the federal poverty level within the last year^{86,88}. Nearly 30% of all Florida veterans have a disability⁸⁸. Okaloosa County is home to more than 32,500 veterans^{85,88}. This can be attributed to the large military community and the three military bases that are spread across the county.

More than half of the veterans in Okaloosa County are between ages 35 and 64⁸⁸. Around 20% are ages 65 to 74⁸⁸. The veteran unemployment rate for Okaloosa County is 3.8% and around 4% of veterans reported income below the federal poverty level within the last year⁸⁸. More than 22% of veterans in Okaloosa County have a disability⁸⁸.

Income Inequality and Health

Income and other economic stability indicators have strong influences on health and life expectancy for the priority populations. Members of the LGBTQ+ community face disparities for income earnings, showing that an estimated 27% of LGBTQ+ individuals in Florida earn less than 24,000 each year compared to 21% for the general population⁹⁵. These factors can lead to decreased life expectancy, poorer health outcomes, and increase risk for serious conditions like heart disease²⁰. Those with low incomes are also more likely to face chronic stress, which increases the risk of serious health conditions like mental health issues, digestive conditions, heart disease, heart attack, high blood pressure and stroke, and memory and concentration impairment²². Research also shows that how much money you make is the number one predictor of health status in the United States, and that having a higher income is associated with longer life expectancy^{64,91}. To improve life expectancy, Okaloosa County is addressing the SDOH that produce disparities related to income and expenses.

The Impact of Economic Stability on Life Expectancy

Economic Stability		
SDOH	Vulnerable Populations Impacted	How the SDOH Impacts Life Expectancy
Employment	Uninsured, Underinsured, Minimum Wage Workers, Unemployed, Those Living with a Disability, Black and African Americans, Hispanic or Latino Residents, Older Adults (65+), Veterans with a Disability, LGBTQ+	Employment is linked to a person’s ability to afford necessities. It is also often the source of health insurance for most workers ⁴⁴ . Those without health insurance are at a higher risk of poor health outcomes and are less likely to visit the doctor to receive preventive care like screenings and checkups. ⁴⁴ Around 96.8% of Wright and Ocean City residents are employed ⁶⁶ . This is higher than the county average of 95.9% and the state average of 94.6% ⁶⁶ .
Income	Hispanic or Latino, Native American, Black and African American, Low-income, Those Living with a Disability, Older Adults (65+) with a Disability, LGBTQ+	Lower income leads to stress ^{20,22} . Chronic stress is a risk factor that increases rates of serious health outcomes like mental health conditions, heart attack, heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure ^{20,22, 90} .
Expenses	Hispanic or Latino, Native American, Black or African American, Disabled, Older Adults (65+) with a Disability	Rent burdens and higher cost of living expenses leaves little room for necessities like nutritious groceries and important medications needed to live a healthy life ^{20,32,33, 90}

C. Neighborhood and Built Environment



Neighborhood and Built Environment Data in Okaloosa County

Okaloosa County Food Access and Food Insecurity

Food access and food insecurity is an important factor in Okaloosa County. Around 12% of Okaloosa residents are food insecure⁴⁸. This means that they do not have consistent access to enough food for a healthy and active life⁴⁷. Around 19% of Okaloosa County residents live within a half-mile of a healthy food source compared to 28% statewide⁴⁹. According to the 2022 County Health Rankings, 11% of residents have limited access to healthy foods compared to an average of 8% across the state⁶⁴. This shows the percentage of the population who are low income and do not live close to a grocery store. Living near a healthy food source makes it easier to access healthy food options instead of unhealthy choices^{49,64}. Okaloosa County is home to approximately 481 farms⁵⁰.

Okaloosa County Public Transportation

Okaloosa County does not have a comprehensive public transportation system. The Okaloosa Transit Cooperative serves participating areas including Cinco Bayou, Crestview, Destin, Fort Walton Beach, and Niceville¹⁶. There are 10 routes listed on the Okaloosa County Transit Service Route Map that the Emerald Coast (EC) Rider buses take⁵². During the summer, buses run Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM with stops every 20 minutes at designated areas⁵². During winter, times are more variable and only certain routes are available⁵². Riders with a disability qualify for a reduced fare ride after obtaining a valid EC Rider Reduced Fare ID card⁵². Medicare cards can be used as proof of eligibility for older adults to receive reduced fare rides⁵².

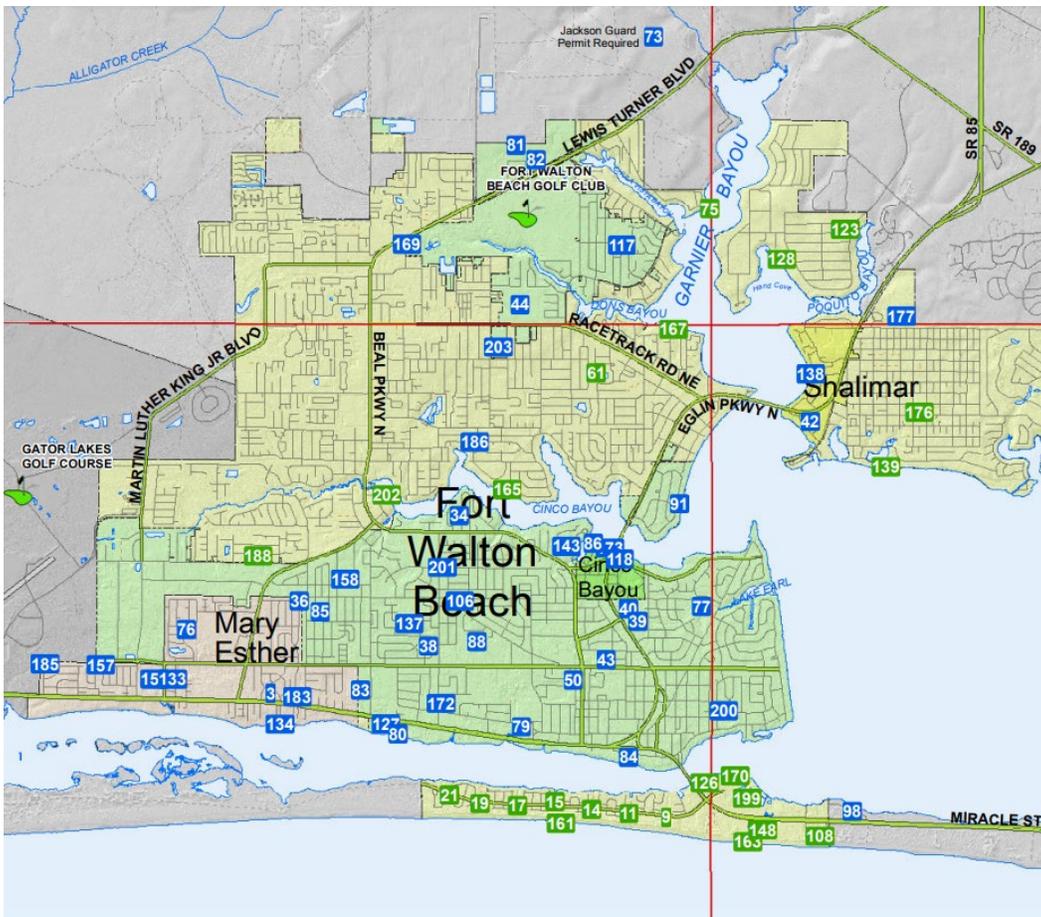
The EC Rider does not provide transportation on holidays⁵². There is also a Dial-a-Ride option where residents are required to make a reservation to be picked up and dropped off at specific times⁵². See the map on Addendum B for the bus routes. Most residents of Wright and Ocean City drive a car, truck, or van to work either alone or through a carpool⁶⁶. Around 1.8% of residents walk to work compared to 1.7% across the county and 1.4% statewide⁶⁶.

Okaloosa County Public Parks

More than 40% of Okaloosa County residents live within a half-mile of a public park²⁶. There is a public park or recreation area in all geographic regions of Okaloosa County, including the rural portions in the North end of the county²³. Okaloosa County is also home to numerous

public beach areas where residents can exercise and enjoy the coast²³. These recreational sites are open to the public and offer opportunities for outdoor exercise and movement. These resources are important, because most children and adults do not get the recommended amount of physical activity²⁵. Having access to places for physical activities, like walking trails and parks, encourages residents to exercise more often²⁴. According to the CDC, the closer you live to a park, the more likely you are to use the park for exercise²⁴. Only 30% of Okaloosa County adults are considered to have a healthy weight²⁵. Additionally, only 26% of Okaloosa County middle school and high school students reported being active for at least 60 minutes each day²⁶. This is higher than the state average of 19.5%²⁶.

There are nine public access facilities located in the Wright and Ocean City area of Okaloosa County⁶⁸. This includes Sylvania Heights Playground, Sunset Park, Pryor Middle School and Choctawhatchee High School sports facilities, Ron Crawford Recreation Center, Don and Susan Stillwell Park, and three public access boat ramps⁶⁸. See a portion of the map below from the Okaloosa County Parks Department for exact facility locations⁶⁸. See Addendum D for a map of all parks in Okaloosa County.



Okaloosa County Homelessness

Homelessness can impact many different types of people including families, people who are employed, veterans, and older adults^{39,90}. Some data concerning homeless residents in Okaloosa County is combined with data from Walton County in Florida's Council on

Homelessness 2020 Annual Report when referring to the Okaloosa-Walton Continuum of Care. Statistics provided for only Okaloosa County will be specified as such. Please also note that data from the 2020 Annual Report may have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of homeless residents in the Okaloosa-Walton Continuum of Care has decreased since 2016⁸⁹. In 2019 there were an estimated 399 homeless residents, and a point-in-time count from 2020 estimated 351 homeless residents⁸⁹. In a singular 2020 count, there were an estimated 372 homeless Okaloosa County residents⁸⁹. This data was combined with 2019 data due to the impact of COVID-19 on data collection procedures⁸⁹. Across the state of Florida, there are an estimated 27,211 homeless residents for 2020⁸⁹. There were 28,591 homeless Floridians in 2019 and 28,591 in 2018⁸⁹. More than 17% of homeless Floridians are considered severely mentally ill⁸⁹. Around 12% have a substance use disorder, 8% are survivors of domestic violence, and 1.6% are living with HIV or AIDS⁸⁹.

Homelessness by Gender, Age, Veteran Status

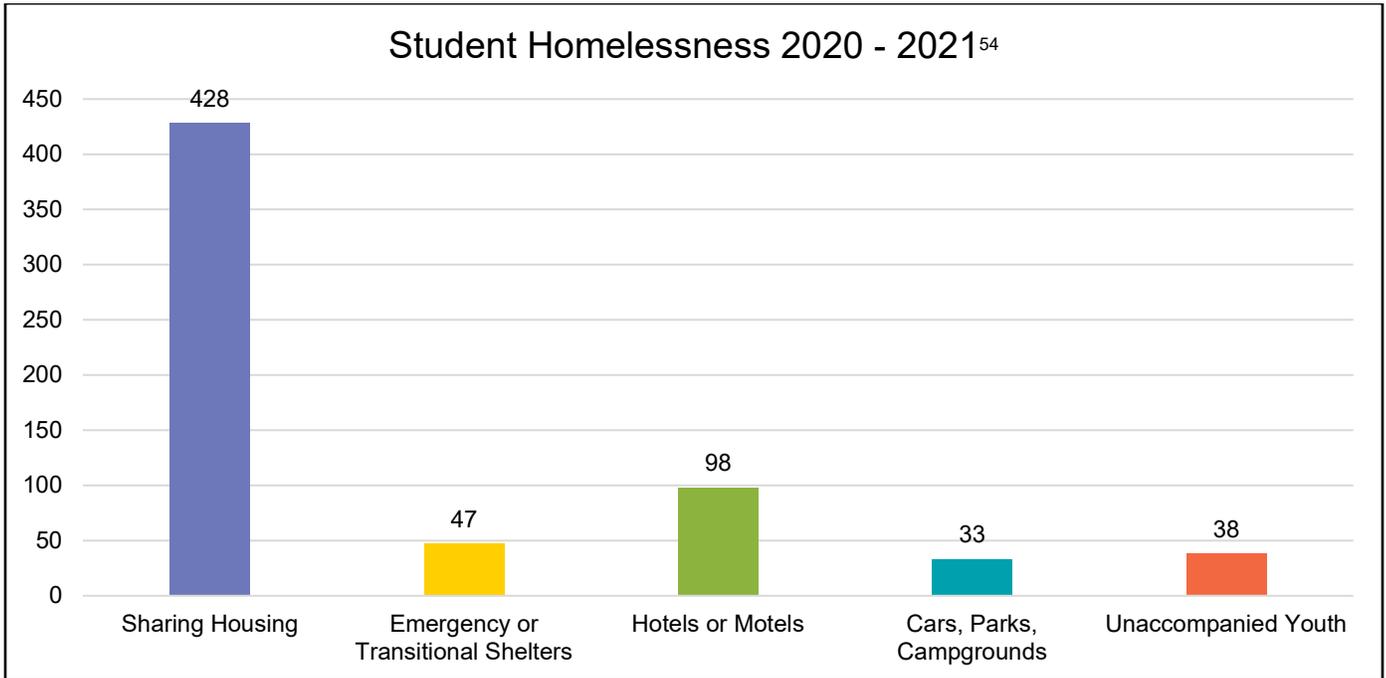
Most homeless Floridians are Male (64.4%)⁸⁹. Around 34% are Female, 0.2% are Transgender, and 0.1% identify as Gender Nonconforming⁸⁹. More than 75% of homeless residents are 24 years or older⁸⁹. Around 17% are under age 18, and 7% are ages 18 to 24⁸⁹. The percentage of homeless veterans in Florida increased from 8.3% in 2019 to 8.8% in 2020⁸⁹. This equals around 2,378 veterans who are homeless⁸⁹. In the Okaloosa-Walton Continuum of Care, it is estimated that there are around 31 homeless veterans⁸⁹.

Homelessness by Race and Ethnicity

Most homeless Florida residents are Non-Hispanic or Latino (85.6%) compared to Hispanic or Latino residents (14.4%)⁸⁹. More than 55% are White⁸⁹. Nearly 40% are Black or African American⁸⁹. Around 4% identify as Two or More Races, 1.3% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.4% as Asian, and 0.2% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander⁸⁹.

Homelessness Amongst Students

Students in Okaloosa County also experience homelessness. More than 600 students experienced homelessness during the 2020-2021 school year⁵⁴. This number was higher during the 2018 to 2019 school year, where an estimated 1,132 students were homeless^{54,89}. Please note that the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted the data collected from 2020 to 2021. Many students experiencing homelessness were sharing housing⁵⁴. Others were living in emergency or transitional shelters, hotels or motels, in cars, parks, or campgrounds, or were unaccompanied youth⁵⁴. Please see the chart on the following page for more information.



Built Environment and Health

Someone’s neighborhood and built environment is known to impact life expectancy. This is because research shows that a lack of nutritious foods leads residents to make unhealthy food choices and leads to chronic diseases, which lowers life expectancy⁴⁹. It is also important to understand the relationships between homelessness and reduced life expectancy⁹¹. Experiencing homelessness significantly reduces someone’s life expectancy⁹¹. On average, people who have experienced homelessness have an average life expectancy of only 50 years⁹¹. This is 27 years shorter than the average life expectancy in Okaloosa County and 30 years shorter than the state average in Florida. Other factors like transportation, housing quality, and access to parks also impact life expectancy^{24,36,53}. To improve life expectancy, Okaloosa County is addressing the SDOH that produce disparities related to neighborhood and the built environment.

The Impact of Neighborhood and Built Environment on Life Expectancy

Neighborhood and Built Environment		
SDOH	Vulnerable Populations Impacted	How the SDOH Impacts Life Expectancy
Transportation	Low-income, Rural Residents, Elderly, Disabled Residents, Agricultural Workers	Okaloosa County does not have a public transportation system that runs across the entire county ⁵² . Limited transportation resources reduce access to important services that impact life expectancy ⁵³

Access to Nutritional Food	Low-income, Rural Residents	Around 12% of Okaloosa County residents are food insecure, meaning they do not have consistent access to enough food for a healthy and active life, which lowers life expectancy ⁴⁹
Parks	Rural Residents	Around 41% of Okaloosa residents live within ½ mile of a park. Residents of Wright and Ocean City have access to nine public facilities, including three parks or playgrounds ⁶⁸ . This helps residents access free opportunities to exercise and improves life expectancy ²⁶
Average Commute Time	Rural Residents, Low-income	The average commute time for Wright and Ocean City residents is 26.6 minutes compared to the county average of 24.5 ⁶⁶ . The longer time someone spends in a vehicle traveling to work, leaving less time they have for healthy activities like exercise ⁶⁶
Car Ownership	Low-income, Agricultural Workers	An average of 6.9% of Wright and Ocean City households do not have a vehicle ⁶⁶ . This is higher than the county average of 4.2% ⁶⁶ . Around 44% of households only have one vehicle and less than 14% have three or more ⁶⁶ . Since there is limited public transportation available in Okaloosa County, residents must get to work in other ways, like driving a vehicle, carpooling, or walking
Housing Quality and Safety	Low-income, Older Adults, Adults Living with Disabilities, Persons Experiencing Homelessness, Agriculture Workers	Safe homes promote good mental and physical health ^{35,90} . Poor housing quality can impact physical health due to environmental issues and increase stress ^{36,90} . Environmental issues include lead paint, poor air quality, and other hazards ^{36,90} . Other factors that can influence life expectancy are structural safety, water quality, and the presence of mold ^{36,41,90}

D. Social and Community Context



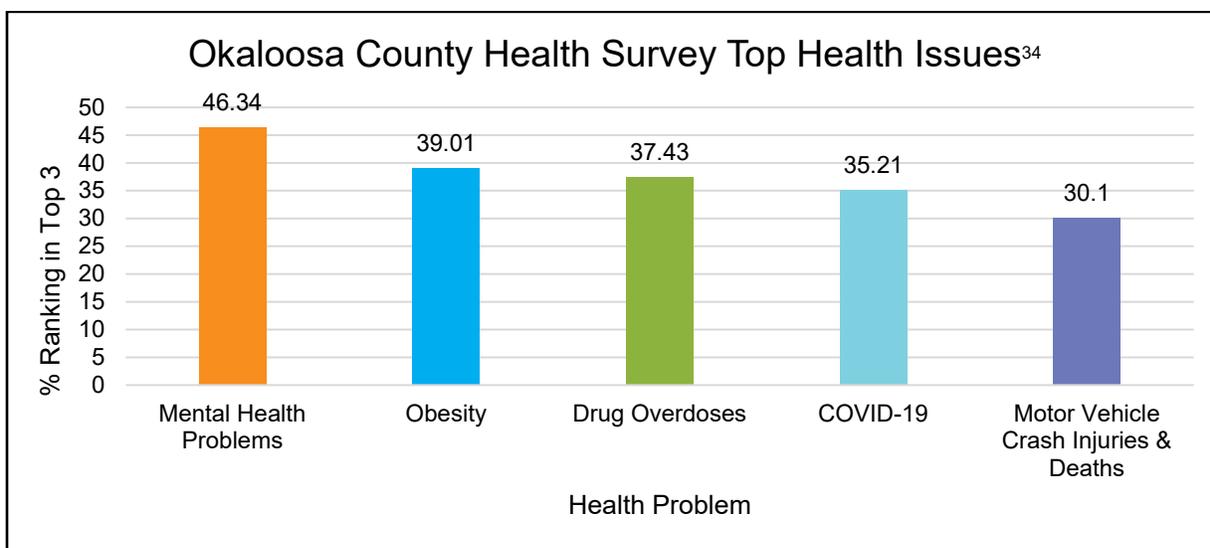
Social and Community Context Data in Okaloosa County

Okaloosa County Substance Use and Mental Health

Substance use and mental health were ranked as one of the top three health issues in the Okaloosa County Health Survey by 38% of residents³⁴. Around 54% of residents also ranked

street opioids/fentanyl use as one of the top three risky behaviors in Okaloosa County³⁴. Residents expressed concern for addiction stigma in the community and shared a desire to see people be helped instead of shamed for their addiction³⁴.

Okaloosa County residents also ranked obesity, drug overdoses, COVID-19, and motor vehicle crash injuries as top concerning issues in the community³⁴. This shows that the public is aware of many health problems like poor mental health, environmental issues, and drug addiction. Around 69% of residents also stated in the Okaloosa County Health Survey that they feel there is a sense of community responsibility and that residents are proud to live in Okaloosa County³⁴. See the chart below for more information.



Violence, Suicide, Crime, and Mental Health Outcomes

According to data from 2018 to 2020, Okaloosa County has more cases of rape, forcible sex offenses, suicide, alcohol-confirmed vehicle crashes, and domestic violence offenses per 100,000 residents than the state of Florida average^{96,97}. This is also true for hospitalizations from mental disorders, especially among those ages 18 to 24, 22 to 24, 25 to 44, and 75 or older⁹⁶. There is a gap in data concerning race and ethnicity for the aforementioned statistics.

Okaloosa County residents report having had an average of 3.7 unhealthy mental days in the past 30 days according to 2019 data⁹⁸. This is slightly higher than the statewide average of 3.6 days. More than 16% of Okaloosa residents reported that their poor physical or mental health kept them from doing usual activities on 14 or more of the past 30 days⁹⁹. Around 31% of Okaloosa County Middle and High School students reported feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row during the 2020 school year and stopped doing usual activities¹⁰⁰. Data for 2020 and 2021 is not currently available for some metrics provided by Florida Health CHARTS but is likely higher due to mental health trends related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social Health for LGBTQ+ Populations

LGBTQ+ Floridians make up around 4.6% of the total state population⁹⁵. This makes Florida the 12th largest state for the LGBTQ+ community⁹⁵. Most LGBTQ+ individuals are White (51%), Hispanic or Latino (30%), or Black and African American (12%)⁹⁵. Around 52% are female and 48% male⁹⁵. The average age is 39.4 years, with most LGBTQ+ Florida residents being between the ages of 18 to 24 and 24 to 34⁹⁵.

Data shows that members of the LGBTQ+ community often have low levels of social support⁹⁴. They may also have strained relationships with family or community members, which can cause immense stress⁹⁴. This lack of social support makes members of the LGBTQ+ population more likely to face homelessness than the general population⁹⁴. They are also more likely to experience discrimination and hate crimes and be targets for sexual and physical violence⁹⁴. Additionally, they face many health disparities that are linked to social stigma⁹⁴. This has been shown to prevent them from seeking medical care and other important services⁹⁴. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are also more likely to have higher rates of psychiatric disorders, anxiety, depression, substance and tobacco use, suicide, HIV, and other sexually transmitted diseases⁹⁴.

Social and Community Impact on Health

Social and community context is known to impact life expectancy. This is because research shows that mental health issues and substance use lower life expectancy. Homelessness is also shown to reduce life expectancy by around 50 years⁵⁵. To improve life expectancy, Okaloosa County is addressing the SDOH that produce disparities related to substance use and mental health.

The Impact of Social and Community Context on Life Expectancy

Social and Community Context		
SDOH	Vulnerable Populations Impacted	How the SDOH Impacts Life Expectancy
Discrimination	Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups, Persons Living with Disabilities, LGBTQ+, Black and African American Women	Many residents ranked racism as a top three health issue in the Okaloosa County Health Survey ³⁴ . Perceived discrimination is associated with increased mortality risk and lowered life expectancy ⁵⁶ . Members of the LGBTQ+ population face discrimination from their families, peers, and health care providers, especially for those who identify as transgender ⁹⁴ . Black and African American women are also statistically shown to be listened to less by their providers than White women. This form of discrimination can lead to increased pain and worsening health conditions, which impacts their life expectancy.

Stress	Low-Income, Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups, Persons Experiencing Homelessness	23% of residents making less than \$25,000 per year reported that poor mental and/or physical health kept them from doing usual activities on 14 or more of the past 30 days ³⁴ . For residents making \$25,000 to \$49,999 this was 18% and 11% for those making \$50,000 or more ³⁴ . Chronic stress leads to a higher risk of poor health outcomes like heart disease, stroke, and poor mental health, which reduce life expectancy ²¹
Support	Low Income, Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups, LGBTQ+	93% of Okaloosa residents that took the Okaloosa County Health Survey reported that they feel supported by the local faith-based network and that they provided opportunities to help individuals and families ³⁴ . This positive perception of support can help increase life expectancy ⁵⁷

E. Health Care Access and Quality



Health Care Access and Quality Data in Okaloosa County

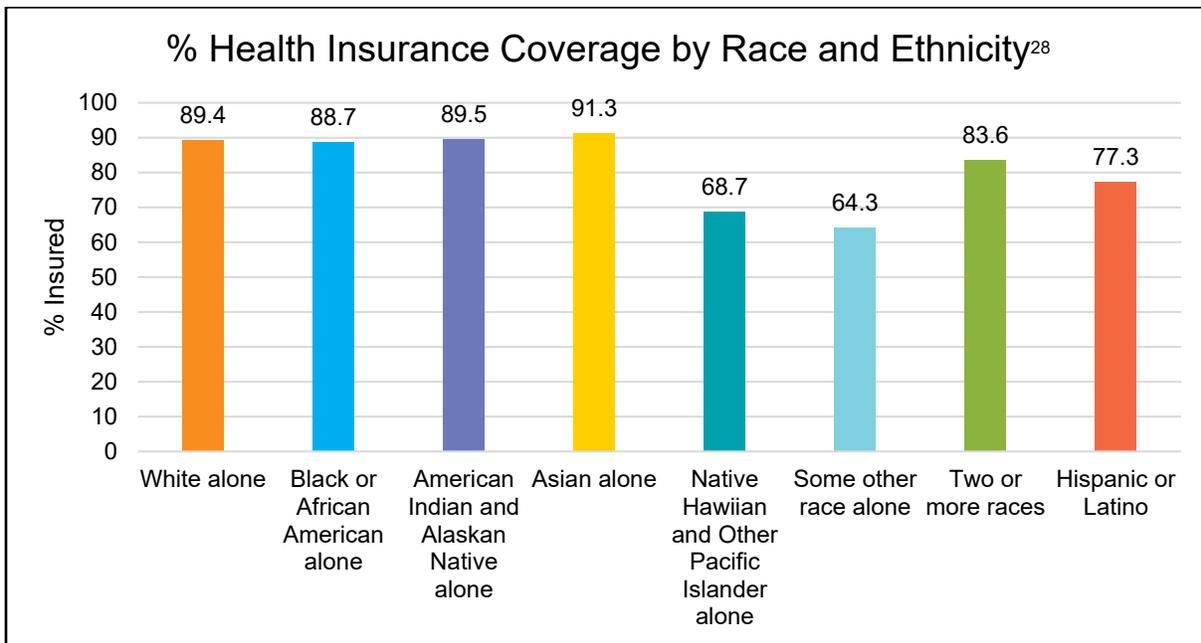
Okaloosa County Health Care Access by Geography

In the Okaloosa County Health Survey, 41% of residents said they are not satisfied with the healthcare system in Okaloosa County³⁴. There are three hospitals located throughout the county. Two are located at the South end of the county⁶⁷. This includes Fort Walton Beach Medical Center in Fort Walton Beach and Twin Cities Hospital in Niceville⁶⁷. North Okaloosa Medical Center is in Crestview in the North end of the county⁶⁷. Okaloosa County also has Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Air Medical Services, and Advanced Life Support (ALS) Fire stations throughout the county⁶⁷. However, many service providers are located at the South end of the county⁶⁷. The only mental health services provider, Bridgeway Center, Inc., is in Fort Walton Beach. OASIS, the primary resource center for those living with HIV/AIDS is also located in Fort Walton Beach⁶⁷. There are only three EMS stations serving the North end of the county, where Crestview, Baker, Laurel Hill, and Holt are located⁶⁷. Since Okaloosa County lacks a comprehensive transportation service, this can add to the barriers residents face when trying to access health care⁵³. This may mean that residents must take bus rides that arrive hours before their appointment time because that is their only transportation option. For others, this may mean they cannot utilize the public transportation system because the routes do not reach their house or go near their doctor’s office. Others may not be able to take

time off from work to ride the bus on the established transportation system to get to appointments or access medical care.

Okaloosa County Health Care Access by Insurance Coverage

Access to health care can also be viewed through two other indicators: health insurance coverage and provider availability. According to recent data, more than 88% of Okaloosa residents are insured²⁸. This means that around 12% of Okaloosa residents are uninsured²⁸. This is slightly higher than the rates across the state, with 87.3% insured and 12.7% uninsured²⁸. Most Okaloosa County residents have private insurance coverage²⁸. Around 40% have public coverage, and 12% are uninsured²⁸. Please note that these percentages will not add up to 100% because people can have more than one type of insurance coverage. There are also differences in insurance status based on race and ethnicity. Asian and White residents have the highest rates of insurance coverage²⁸. See the chart below for more information.



Less than 80% of Okaloosa County residents living in Wright and Ocean City have health insurance coverage⁶⁶. This is less than the Okaloosa County average of 88% and Florida average of 87%⁶⁶. Most residents have private insurance coverage⁶⁶. Around 58% have private insurance and 36% have public insurance⁶⁶. On average, 73% of Okaloosa County residents have private insurance and 33% have public insurance⁶⁶. Please note that some people may have more than one type of coverage and the percentages will not add up to 100%. Many residents under the age of 19 are without insurance in Wright and Ocean City. This is 17% in these areas compared to 7.4% on average across the county⁶⁶.

It is also important to remember that Wright and Ocean City have a high percentage of residents who are employed⁶⁶. Almost 97% of residents are employed, which is higher than the average for Okaloosa County and the state of Florida⁶⁶. However, the percent of employed residents with health insurance coverage is lower than the county and state averages⁶⁶. Only 74% of Wright and Ocean City residents who are employed have health insurance⁶⁶. The average for Okaloosa County is nearly 83% and the state is 83.2%⁶⁶. There are also disparities depending on where people live within Wright and Ocean City. For example, one Census tract of Wright, FL shows that less than 62% of employed residents have health insurance⁶⁶. This is more than a 21% difference in insurance coverage between this area and the county average⁶⁶. This means that nearly 750 of the 1,928 working residents in that area of Wright are employed but do not have access to health insurance⁶⁶.

LGBTQ+ and Agricultural Worker Health Insurance Coverage

While there is a gap in local-level data for health insurance coverage by the LGBTQ+ population, national data shows that members of this community are twice as likely to be uninsured when compared to the general population⁹⁴. The William's Institute estimates that around 21% of LGBTQ+ Floridians are uninsured, compared to 15% statewide⁹⁵. Members of the LGBTQ+ community are also less likely to receive cancer screenings and more likely to face discrimination from health care providers⁹⁴.

Agriculture workers face many barriers to good health including exposure to extreme weather, variable income dependent on natural factors, and environmental hazards like pesticide exposure¹⁰¹. Many Florida farmworkers are Latin American and Caribbean immigrants who may have limited English proficiency and limited understanding of U.S. culture or our health care system. Fear of deportation is also a significant barrier for undocumented farm workers¹⁰¹. Immigrants are more likely to be uninsured than the general population¹⁰¹. They also experience higher rates of poverty and are unable to legally obtain driver's licenses for transportation¹⁰¹. Additionally, farmworkers who are migrant spend time traveling with the seasons and face other difficulties accessing care related to a mobile lifestyle, like provider availability and geographic access to health care facilities¹⁰¹. The National Center for Farmworker Health estimates that there are around 108 crop workers and 334 livestock workers in Okaloosa County, totaling 443 agricultural workers¹⁰². Data is unavailable about immigration status, race, and ethnicity.

Okaloosa County Health Care Access by Provider Availability

Provider availability is also an important factor. There needs to be enough providers in the area to provide care to residents for a variety of health services. The Healthy People Initiative set a standard for how many providers are needed in a county based on the number of residents⁵⁸. Okaloosa County meets the goal for number of providers per resident for dentists but does not meet the goal for family doctors and mental health providers^{59,60,61,62}.

The Baker and Laurel Hill areas of Okaloosa County have been designated as medically underserved for primary care by the Health Resources and Services Administration (NRSA)²⁹. The rural populations are predominantly White (89%), Non-Hispanic or Latino communities⁶⁶. Around 22% of Baker residents are disabled and 18% in Laurel Hill⁶⁶. Less than 6% of residents live under 10% of the federal poverty level, but 100% of Baker families with a female head of household and children under the age of 18 are living in poverty⁶⁶. For Laurel Hill, this is around 75%⁶⁶. The NRSA has also identified shortages for dental, mental health, and primary care services across Okaloosa County³⁰.

Health Care and Health

Health care access impacts life expectancy because those who cannot access health care are at a greater risk of experiencing poor health outcomes that reduce life expectancy. Health care quality also impacts life expectancy. Quality care produces the most optimal health outcomes. According to the Okaloosa County Health Survey, only 59% of residents report being satisfied with the health care system²³. To improve life expectancy, Okaloosa County is addressing the SDOH that lead to disparities in health care access and quality.

The Impact of Health Care Access and Quality on Life Expectancy

Health Care Access and Quality		
SDOH	Vulnerable Populations Impacted	How the SDOH Impacts Quality of Life
Health Coverage	Low-income, Migrant, Hispanic or Latino Residents, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander residents, LGBTQ+, Agricultural Workers	Health insurance coverage is linked to access to screening services and preventive care, better management of chronic diseases, access to hospital-based care, and overall measures of good health ^{28,38}
Provider Availability	Rural Residents, Uninsured, Low-income Residents, Older Adults, Those Living with Disabilities, Low-income Families with a Female Head of Household and Children Under 18 Years Old	Provider availability affects a person’s use of healthcare services. When there are shortages of providers, especially in important fields like mental health and primary care, it makes it difficult to access care. This is especially relevant for those living in rural or underserved areas as well as anyone who cannot access transportation to reach providers based on geographic barriers ^{58,38}

VIII. SDOH PROJECTS

The Minority Health Liaison worked with leaders across the county, including government agencies, nonprofits, private businesses, and community organizations when developing the Health Equity Plan. During development, the Minority Health Liaison took into consideration the prioritized health disparity and the impactful SDOHs identified by the Health Equity Team, the Health Equity Task Force, and community feedback.

A. Data Review

The Health Equity Task Force reviewed data, including health disparities and SDOHs, provided by the Minority Health Liaison and the Community Health Improvement Planning Branch Director. Data was reviewed by the Health Equity Team and the Health Equity Task Force during scheduled meetings and through the approval process of the 2022 CHA document. The Health Equity Plan was also reviewed by the Health Equity Coalition and the DOH-Okaloosa Performance Management Council for approval and feedback.

B. Barrier Identification

During the Forces of Change Assessment, members of the Health Equity Task Force worked collaboratively to identify their organizations’ barriers to addressing the SDOHs relevant to their organization’s mission. Members discussed the forces (trends, events, and factors) that lead to opportunities or threats in our community. Common themes were explored as well as collaborative strategies to overcome barriers. Members who could not attend the meeting completed a form in SurveyMonkey to provide their feedback and insight. Forces were categorized into larger groups including political, economic, social, technology, geography and environment, health, and demographics.

Forces	Opportunities	Threats
Political		
Governmental bodies Funding Changing Community Leaders	Increasing focus on substance abuse and mental health; local government engaged in public health; new leadership	No control over budgetary changes; Politics impact public health decisions; Governmental mistrust; Political divide
Economic		

Business growth & Development Military Employment	Local growth and development; Military brings in high-paying jobs to area; Low unemployment rate	Wealth and wage gaps among residents; Limited professional diversity; Low-paying jobs
Social		
Racism & intolerance Faith-based network Educational system Crime Transportation	Strong faith-based network and educational system; Limited entertainment for youth and adults; Active volunteer networks	Increased crime and violence; Public transportation system disagreements; Limited healthy food options
Technology		
Connectivity issues Telehealth Telework Social media	COVID-19 increased telehealth and telework options; Opportunity to use social media to connect	Certain areas of county have limited Internet access, fewer resources; False information being spread
Geography & Environment		
Rural areas Population split between North and South Okaloosa Housing & construction Coastal location Global warming	Tourism and snowbirds being funding to area; Need for outreach in rural areas; Opportunity to improve way-finding; Need for increased tourist education; Need for sidewalks and/or bicycle lanes	Traffic visibility concerns; Roadway wear and tear and increased traffic from tourism; Increases in crashes and injuries; Coastal location brings weather events (i.e. hurricanes, flooding); Military land coverages reduces housing areas
Health		
Disease & illness Substance use COVID-19 Mental health Physical health	Youth resiliency needed; Need for mental health promotion; Increased awareness of nicotine harms; Beaches and parks provide exercise options	COVID-19; Governmental and medical provider mistrust; Global travel; Substance use; Mental health concerns; Tourist injuries and deaths; Medical care options
Demographics		
Aging population Global travel Increasing population Increasing diversity	Governmental focus on addressing public health concerns; increasing focus on health equity	Long-term planning needed for aging population; Lack of community resources

C. Community Projects

The Minority Health Liaison and Health Equity Team researched evidence-based strategies to overcome the identified barriers and improve the SDOH that impact the prioritized health disparity. This information was used to collaboratively design community projects to address the SDOHs. The Mobilizing for Action Through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model was used to design the projects. Plans included short, medium, and long-term goals with measurable objectives. These projects were reviewed, edited, and approved to ensure feasibility.

At the time the projects were being developed, DOH-Okaloosa was working to complete the 2022 Community Health Assessment and preparing to host a large community meeting that will be used to shape the 2023-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP will be developed to guide Okaloosa County community members and organizations in a collaborative effort to address local health priorities. The Health Equity Task Force and DOH-Okaloosa leadership aim to place a greater focus on health equity in the new CHIP. The goals, objectives, and action plans that the community develops for the 2023-2026 CHIP may create new partnerships and opportunities for additional SDOH projects. These will be updated in the annual revisions of the Health Equity Plan.

DOH-Okaloosa developed three community projects to address the social determinants of health that impact life expectancy in Okaloosa County. These projects are the Childhood Literacy Project, Community Poverty Simulation Project, and Born Learning Trail Project. Each project has a story board and corresponding goals and objectives table that describes the project. Please view the story boards on the following page for more details.

Childhood Literacy Project

Problem: Only 54% of Okaloosa County children have the literacy skills needed to succeed once they reach kindergarten

Background: Literacy is an important skill needed for academic success, including graduating from high school and obtaining jobs with living wages. This project seeks to improve the percentage of children with these skills on the standardized test that replaces the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener, beginning in the 2022 school year.

Scope: Okaloosa County students from preschool age to third grade

SDOH Addressed: Literacy, income

Priority Populations: Children in preschool through third grade who live the Wright and Ocean City areas

Team Members: DOH-Okaloosa, Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast, Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative, United Way Emerald Coast, Healthy Okaloosa Childcare and Faith-Based organizations

*Please note that some partner contributions included data provision, expert counsel, and other steps not directly related to program implementation or development

Project Goals and Objectives: Please view the chart below in the Health Equity Plan for all project goals and objectives.

Root Causes and Barriers: Income and the ability to afford books and other literacy resources may be a barrier for some parents. Others may work shifts that do not allow them to be home for longer periods of time to read to their children. Some parents may not understand how important it is to read to children or know how much time they should spend doing these activities with their children. Some parents may also be unaware of local resources like public libraries where they can receive books for free and attend literacy-related activities.

Project: What will you do to improve the inequity?

DOH-Okaloosa worked to ensure the project aligns with other important local, state, and national plans and guidelines. Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) guidelines were also used for development. This included assessing funding, partnership capacity, and feasibility of project scope. DOH-Okaloosa also worked to address the National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards and plans to work to ensure all materials provided through this project meet the standards, including the Health Books for your Preschooler guide and information sent out with the books and school supply kits.

DOH-Okaloosa will work with United Way Emerald Coast to assist in expanding their capacity to provide literacy kits to 85 children in Okaloosa County through their existing grant with DoorDash. DOH-Okaloosa will also create a Health Books for your Preschooler guide to share with community partners, especially targeting childcare and faith-based organizations. This guide will increase awareness of the free resources for literacy and is designed to be a tool to make reading more accessible, especially for low-income residents. This project seeks to improve the percentage of Okaloosa County children who are "kindergarten ready" based on the new assessment that replaces the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener in the 2022 school year. The project will be updated as relevant details and procedures are released regarding the standardized test.

*Please note that this project description is in draft form and may be edited later as challenges and opportunities arise.

Results: Please note that this area will be completed once the project has ended.

Next Steps: Please note that this area will be completed once the project has ended.

Community Poverty Simulation Project

Problem: Income disparities and unequal rent cost burden

Background: Hispanic and Latino and Black African American residents earn less than residents that identify as White, Asian, or Two or More Races. They also face greater rent burdens compared to White residents.

Scope: Healthy Okaloosa program participants including worksite leadership, parents, teachers, caregivers, and congregation members, CHIP partners, and other community partners

SDOH Addressed: Employment, income, expenses, health care access

Priority Populations: Those serving the Wright and Ocean City areas

Team Members: DOH-Okaloosa, Healthy Okaloosa Program Participants, CHIP partners, Missouri Community Action Network, University of West Florida

*Please note that some partner contributions included data provision, expert counsel, and other steps not directly related to program implementation or development

Project Goals and Objectives: Please view the chart below in the Health Equity Plan for all project goals and objectives.

Root Causes and Barriers: Root causes of income inequality include educational attainment disparities, access to resources like broadband internet, job availability, and literacy. Rent cost burden has become an increasing issue nationwide. With the housing market at a record high, renters are unable to find affordable housing or move out of rental units. The rising prices of essentials like groceries and childcare place additional burdens on residents with lower incomes.

Project: What will you do to improve the inequity?

DOH-Okaloosa worked to ensure the project aligns with other important local, state, and national plans and guidelines. Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) guidelines were also used for development. This included assessing funding, partnership capacity, and feasibility of project scope. DOH-Okaloosa also worked to address the National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards and plans to work to ensure all materials and services provided at the community poverty simulation meet these standards.

DOH-Okaloosa will work to train 8 staff members to become poverty simulation facilitators and develop a facilitator guide for continuity. Staff will then work to host an annual community poverty simulation. Attendees will be recruited from the Healthy Okaloosa programs, CHIP groups, and other community partner networks. Emphasis will be placed on those serving the Wright and Ocean City areas. At the end of the simulation, attendees will be given a community resource guide that includes resources to enhance access to health care, child care, and income support and engage in open discussion. They will be encouraged to share this guide with the populations they serve. Attendees will be given a survey via email after the simulation, where they can report that they shared the community resources guide with the population(s) they serve and DOH-Okaloosa can track whether the project was successful in increasing access to these services.

*Please note that this project description is in draft form and may be edited later as challenges and opportunities arise.

Results: Please note that this area will be completed once the project has ended.

Next Steps: Please note that this area will be completed once the project has ended.

Born Learning Trail Project

Problem: Low literacy rates and reported exercise

Background: More than 40% of Okaloosa residents live within a half-mile of a public park or walking trail, but many report they do not get the recommended amount of exercise. United Way developed Born Learning trails to increase exercise, literacy, social health, and community engagement through one cohesive project.

Scope: Okaloosa County residents living nearby to an existing public park, walking trail, or playground that could benefit from the addition of a Born Learning Trail

SDOH Addressed: Parks, social and community context, literacy

Priority Populations: Wright and Ocean City residents

Team Members: DOH-Okaloosa, City of Fort Walton Beach, Early Learning Coalition of the Emerald Coast, Okaloosa County Parks Department, United Way Emerald Coast

*Please note that some partner contributions included data provision, expert counsel, and other steps not directly related to program implementation or development

Project Goals and Objectives: Please view the chart below in the Health Equity Plan for all project goals and objectives.

Root Causes and Barriers: Some root causes of residents not getting enough exercise, despite nearly half the population living near a public park, could include neighborhood safety, streetlight and sidewalk conditions, and other built environment factors. Longer commute times or parents working long or night hours could also be barriers to accessing these resources in the neighborhood. Another barrier could include resident knowledge of the parks, walking trails, and playgrounds near them, or the roads and highways that must be crossed in order to safely access them.

Project: What will you do to improve the inequity?

DOH-Okaloosa worked to ensure the project aligns with other important local, state, and national plans and guidelines. Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) guidelines were also used for development. This included assessing funding, partnership capacity, and feasibility of project scope. DOH-Okaloosa also worked to address the National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards and plans to work to ensure all materials and services provided throughout the project meet the standards, including the parks resource guide and trail signs at the Born Learning Trail(s).

DOH-Okaloosa will work with United Way Emerald Coast and the City of Fort Walton Beach to determine which public parks or walking trails would be most beneficial for a new Born Learning Trail. Emphasis will be placed on those with the greatest access for residents in the Wright and Ocean City areas. DOH-Okaloosa staff will also use data from the Okaloosa County Parks Department to create a resource guide of all parks, walking trails, and other public recreation areas to be shared with community partner organizations based on geographic location. This will be done to increase awareness of parks that are available nearby. Project leadership will assess funding and determine capacity to implement one or more Born Learning Trails in the Wright or Ocean City area.

*Please note that this project description is in draft form and may be edited later as challenges and opportunities arise.

Results: Please note that this area will be completed once the project has ended.

Next Steps: Please note that this area will be completed once the project has ended.

IX. HEALTH EQUITY PLAN OBJECTIVES

Life Expectancy

Health Disparity Objective: By 2025, increase the life expectancy of Okaloosa County residents residing in the Wright and Ocean City areas by six months, from an average of 74.8 to 75.3.

This objective used the U.S. Census tract map and Florida Health CHARTS data from 2016 to 2020 to create average life expectancies for both the Wright and Ocean City areas of Okaloosa County to create the above metric.

Childhood Literacy Project

Childhood Literacy Project Goals and Objectives					
	Lead Entity and Unit	Lead Point Person	Evaluation Measure	Baseline Value, Year	Target Value
Long-Term Goal:					
To improve childhood literacy rates in Okaloosa County.					
Objective: By June 30, 2025, increase the percent of Okaloosa children meeting the kindergarten readiness indicators from 54% to 55%*.	DOH- Okaloosa	Jennifer Wilhelm	Florida Department of Education Kindergarten Readiness indicator data increase**	54% (2022)	55%
Medium-Term Goal:					
To increase the capacity to provide no-cost resources about health and literacy for preschool aged children in Okaloosa County.					
Objective: By June 30, 2023, the Health Books for your Preschooler guide will receive a ranking of 7 out of	DOH- Okaloosa	Jennifer Wilhelm	Guide evaluation form to be completed by parents, Library	Score of less than 7/10 (2022)	Score of greater than 7/10

10 or higher on the guide evaluation form.			Story Time attendees, etc.		
Short-Term Goal:					
To improve access to literacy and educational supplies available in Okaloosa County.					
Objective: By May 31, 2023, distribute at least 1 literacy kit per month to 85 children in Okaloosa County for at least six months.	United Way of the Emerald Coast	Kelly Jasen	Kit distribution records	0 kids receive literacy kits for at least six months (2022)	85 kids receive literacy kits for at least six months

*The objective seeks to raise the percentage by 1% by 2025 because the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener is being changed. There is no current data on how the new assessment will score children in Okaloosa County, and it may greatly fluctuate in the first three years of implementation or longer.

**Please note that Florida will no longer be using the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) for standardized testing purposes¹⁹. The 2021 school year was the last year this was used. Data from the 2021 school year will be assessed and cross-referenced with priority locations in the Wright and Ocean City areas. The above objectives will be updated based on the new standardized testing procedures put into place by the Florida Department of Education in the 2022 school year.

Community Poverty Simulation Project

Community Poverty Simulation Project Goals and Objectives					
	Lead Entity and Unit	Lead Point Person	Evaluation Measure	Baseline Value, Year	Target Value
Long-Term Goal:					
To improve access to community resources for employment, income, expenses, and health care.					
Objective: By June 30, 2025, more than 25% of organizations attending the poverty	DOH- Okaloosa	Emily Tash	Poverty simulation follow-up	0% reporting referrals made	25% reporting referrals made

simulation will self-report that they referred a colleague, client, or member of their faith-based congregation to a resource for employment, income, or expenses.			survey responses	(2022)	
<p>Medium-Term Goal:</p> <p>To improve awareness of the impact of employment, income, and expenses on the life course.</p>					
<p>Objective:</p> <p>By June 30, 2023, at least 50% of Community Poverty Simulation attendees will self-report having learned something new about the impact of employment, income, and expenses on the life course according to the simulation evaluation form.</p>	DOH-Okaloosa	Emily Tash	Simulation evaluation form	0% of attendees self-report they learned something new (2022)	At least 50% of attendees self-report they learned something new
<p>Short-Term Goal:</p> <p>Increase capacity to provide education and training about rent cost burden and income disparities in Okaloosa County.</p>					
<p>Objective:</p> <p>By December 31, 2022, all DOH-Okaloosa staff who received poverty simulation facilitator training will score 80% or higher on the readiness assessment.</p>	DOH-Okaloosa	Emily Tash	Missouri Community Action Network Trainer Readiness Assessment	Staff score 0% on the readiness assessment (2022)	Staff score 80% or higher on the readiness assessment

Born Learning Trail Project

Born Learning Trail Project Goals and Objectives					
	Lead Entity and Unit	Lead Point Person	Evaluation Measure	Baseline Value, Year	Target Value
Long-Term Goal:					
To improve access to community parks in Wright and Ocean City while also promoting literacy, social and community context, and physical activity.					
Objective: By June 30, 2025, increase the percent of Ocean City and Wright, FL residents living within a 5-mile radius of a Born Learning Trail from 0% to at least 80%*.	United Way of the Emerald Coast	Kelly Jasen	Okaloosa County Parks and Recreation Park listing; 2020 US Census Tract Population Estimates	0% of residents of Wright and Ocean City, FL live within a 5-mile radius of a Born Learning Trail (2022)	At least 80% of residents of Wright and Ocean City, FL live within a 5-mile radius of a Born Learning Trail
Medium-Term Goal:					
To improve awareness of existing parks and trail facilities in Okaloosa County.					
Objective: By June 30, 2023, 35 community partners will receive a listing of public parks and recreation facilities within a 5-mile radius of their city center.	DOH- Okaloosa	Lauren Hobbs	Park listing dissemination emails, printed copies distributed at meetings	0 partners received the public parks and recreation facilities listing (2022)	35 partners received the public parks and recreation facilities listing
Short-Term Goal:					
To assess all parks located in the Wright and Ocean City areas based on their					

DOH- OKALOOSA

Health Equity Plan

Objective: By December 31, 2022, project leads will complete a comprehensive assessment of the nine public parks in the Wright and Ocean City areas.	DOH- Okaloosa	Emily Tash	Park built environment assessment tool**	0 parks assessed (2022)	9 parks assessed
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*This objective was calculated using the 2020 Census Tract Map and Okaloosa County Parks Department interactive map. Mileage parameters were established from the farthest points of Wright and Ocean City, FL to the nearest and furthest parks according to the park listing. Please note that this metric may change slightly once a park location(s) is chosen in cooperation with United Way and the City of Fort Walton Beach who services the Wright and Ocean City Areas.

**The comprehensive assessment tool will be developed based on previous successful assessments in literature. It will assess factors like safety, streetlights, walkability, sidewalk quality, crime, facility equipment quality, and average number of visitors.

Project Alignment Table

Okaloosa County SDOH Project	2017-2021 Florida State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP)	Healthy People 2030	2018-2022 DOH- Okaloosa Strategic Plan	2018-2022 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)
Childhood Literacy Project	Maternal and Child Health Strategy 2.3: Integrate health equity into the public health system and communities by incorporating elements of health equity into policies and programs that impact maternal and child health populations.	Childhood and Adolescent Development Goal— EMC-D01: Increase the proportion of children who are developmentally ready for school. Childhood and Adolescent Development Goal— EMC-D03: Increase the proportion of children who participate in high-quality early	Priority 2: Live a Long and Healthy Life Goal 2.1: Increase healthy life expectancy	

		childhood education programs		
Community Poverty Simulation Project	<p>HE Strategy 1.2: Improve information sharing, availability, and access to educational opportunities related to understanding and addressing health equity, cultural competency/sensitivity, and SDOH.</p> <p>HE Strategy 1.3: Influence changes in organizations and communities to increase the awareness, capacity, and proficiency of Florida’s workforce as it relates to issues pertaining to health equity, cultural competency/sensitivity, and SDOH.</p>	Economic Stability Goal—SDOH 04: Reduce the proportion of families that spend more than 30% of income on housing.	<p>Priority 2: Life and Long and Healthy Life Goal 2.1: Increase healthy life expectancy</p>	<p>Strengthening Families Goal 1: To increase capacity for affordable housing.</p> <p>Strengthening Families Objective 1.1: By December 31, 2021, decrease the percentage of Okaloosa County renters who are considered severely rent cost burdened from 22% to 20%.</p>
Born Learning Trail Project	<p>Healthy Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity Strategy 2.1: Promote policy, systems, and environmental approaches to increasing physical activity opportunities within the built environment for Floridians of all ages</p>	<p>Healthy People 2030: Create neighborhoods and environments that promote health and safety.</p>	<p>Priority 2: Live and Long and Healthy Life Goal 2.1.1 Increase the healthy weight of children and adults</p>	<p>Promoting Healthy Lifestyles Focus Areas: poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, unhealthy weights, tobacco/nicotine use, chronic disease, access to healthy food</p>

	through coordination with local government and stakeholders.			
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X. PERFORMANCE TRACKING AND REPORTING

Ongoing communication is critical to the achievement of health equity goals and the institutionalization of a health equity focus. The successes of Health Equity Plan projects are shared with OMHHE, partners, other CHDs, CHD staff, and the Central Office through systematic information-sharing, networking, collecting, and reporting on knowledge gained, so that lessons learned can be replicated in other counties and programs. Regional Health Equity Coordinators facilitate systematic communication within their region.

The Minority Health Liaison serves as the point of contact in their county for sharing progress updates, implementation barriers, and practices associated with the Health Equity Plan. The Minority Health Liaison is responsible for gathering data and monitoring and reporting progress achieved on the goals and objectives of the Health Equity Plan. At least quarterly, the Minority Health Liaison meets with the Health Equity Team to discuss progress and barriers. The Minority Health Liaison will also meet with the Health Equity Team twice per year and otherwise update them with progress via email communication. The Minority Health Liaison tracks and submits indicator values to the OMHHE within 15 days of the quarter end.

Annually, the Minority Health Liaison submits a Health Equity Plan Annual Report assessing progress toward reaching goals, objectives, achievements, obstacles, and revisions to the Regional Health Equity Coordinator and Coalition. The Regional Health Equity Coordinator and Coalition leaders provide feedback to the Minority Health Liaison and the Health Equity Task Force from these annual reports. The Minority Health Liaison then submits the completed report to OMHHE by July 15th annually.

XI. REVISIONS

The Health Equity Task Force will review the Health Equity Plan annually to identify strengths, opportunities for improvement, and lessons learned. This information is then used to revise the plan as needed.

Revision	Revised By	Revision Date	Rationale for Revision

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ADDENDUM A

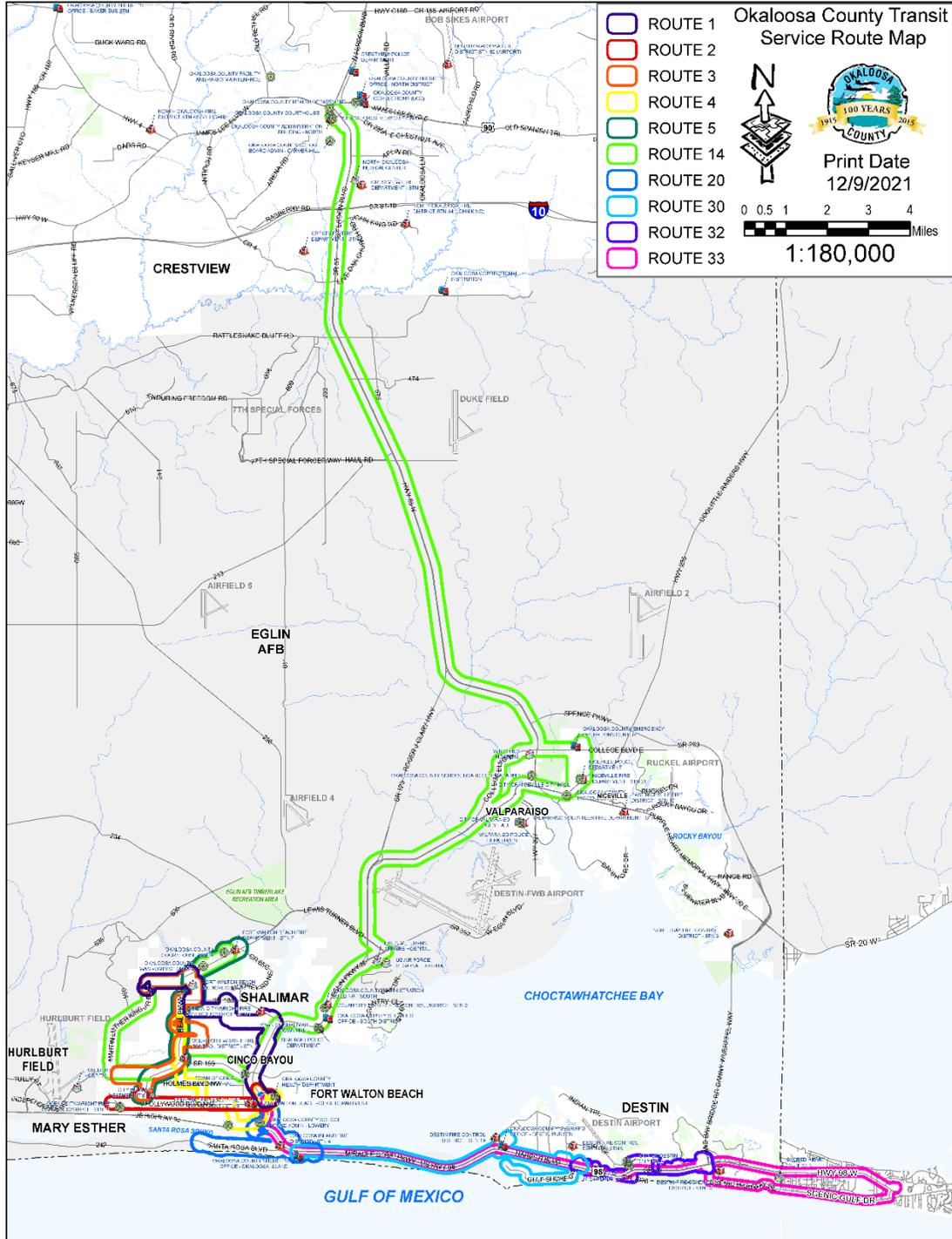
Okaloosa-Walton Health Equity Coalition Members		
Name	Title	Organization
Bonnie Barlow	Chief Executive Officer	Bridgeway Center, Inc.
Ardelle Bush	Executive Director	Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties
Tiffany Honrada	HRQ Coordinator	Bridgeway Center, Inc.
Robyn Burnett	Health Committee Chairperson	Okaloosa County NAACP
Dana Crupi	Executive Director	Early Learning Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties
Bethany Guillory	Special Project Manager	Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties
Kelly Jasen	Chief Executive Officer	United Way Emerald Coast
Demeika McClendon	Lieutenant	Okaloosa County Sherriff's Office
Tracie Moorer	Adult Care Social Worker	NWF Health
Cristeia Salter	Women's Substance Abuse Outreach Specialist	CDAC
Jessica Trimboli	Sergeant	Okaloosa County Sherriff's Office
Autumn McAllister	Director of Prevention and Intervention Services	Chataqua Healthcare Services
Karen Englert	Senior Home Health Specialist	Gentiva Hospice
Melanie Sinclair	Director of Trauma	Fort Walton Beach Medical Center

DOH- OKALOOSA

Health Equity Plan

Megan Morton	Physical Therapist	PT Solutions
Emily Tash	OPS Health Educator Consultant, Minority Health Liaison	Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County
Amanda Colwell	Assistant Director	Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County
Petra Maddens	Community Health Improvement Section Chief	Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County
Christy Craig	OPS Health Educator Consultant, Minority Health Liaison	Florida Department of Health in Walton County
Ryan Mims	Chief Health Strategist	Florida Department of Health in Walton County

ADDENDUM B



ADDENDUM C

2020 CENSUS - CENSUS TRACT REFERENCE MAP: Okaloosa County, FL

