



Baby Business

Vol. 6, 2025



The Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa & Walton Counties is dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of mothers, fathers, and their babies. Every baby deserves a Healthy Start!

Coalition staff pictured above (left to right): Tanya Gonzales, Victoria Worlds, Darrin Miller, Chinaa Williams, Ardelle Bush, Abigail Baumann, Drisana Coons, Danny Griffin, and Amanda Saffelle

Expanding the Healthy Start Doula Program



On March 7-9, 2025, the Healthy Start Okaloosa-Walton Doula Program hosted a doula training in Fort Walton Beach, Florida! GROW Doula Director, Bridgette Jerger, from Indian River Healthy Start travelled to Okaloosa County to train 9 new doulas. These ladies completed a 3-day training course and are now able to serve their communities, supporting mamas-to-be and their newborn babies. We are thrilled to have hosted this incredible event and are so excited to have 5 new doulas serving Okaloosa and Walton Counties!

Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions - Years of Service Awards



In January, our Executive Director, Ardelle Bush alongside Santa Rosa County's Executive Director, Martha Zimmerman received Service Award pins at the annual Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions legislative meeting in Tallahassee, FL. They were recognized for their 25+ years of service with their coalitions. Thank you, Ardelle and Martha for your dedication and endeavors within your communities to improve the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies!!

HSOW PROGRAM UPDATES

Lactation Services (June 2023-present)

Provided by Christina Schaefer, BSN, RN, IBCLC

- 15 clients served
- 25 services provided



Doula Services (June 2024-present)

- 8 contracted doulas serving Okaloosa & Walton Counties
- 12 successful deliveries



T.E.A.M. Dad (2023-present)

- 48 participants in the program
- 21 active participants
- 12 participants successfully completed the program



Fatherhood Program

In December 2024 and March 2025 our T.E.A.M. Dad coaches and program supervisor hosted graduations for 5 fathers who completed 12 sessions with their coach that focused on parenting strategies, improving child development, building healthy relationships, and more! Congratulations dads!!



Children who grow up with involved fathers experience better mental, emotional, educational, and social outcomes.

Welcome, Jacqui!

Jacqui was our guest speaker at last year's annual 'A Light to Remember' event, honoring infants that were lost too soon. Jacqui is a Licensed Counselor who specializes in trauma and other life issues like anxiety, depression, fatigue, upsetting events, grief, and more. Our coalition is beyond excited to have Jacqui on our team as a mental health counselor to provide services to Healthy Start clients.



JACQUELYN "JACQUI" BROADUS, LMHC-S

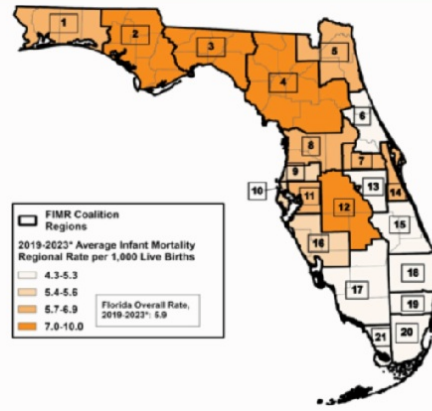
Fetal Infant Mortality Review & Community Action Group Plan

As an active member of the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) team for Region 1, which includes Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties, we are proud to contribute to a team that is dedicated to decreasing infant mortality in the State of Florida. Our Community Action Group (CAG) uses recommendations from FIMR meetings to implement change in our communities.

As we embark on another year, Healthy Start will be updating our annual CAG Action Plan. This plan includes our priority areas and specific activities to reach our goals. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, our priority areas were **Maternal and Infant Health**. Activities to prioritize these areas were distribution of **HEAR Her Campaign** materials to increase maternal advocacy, supplying the 4 Labor and Delivery hospitals with **Charlie's Kids Safe Sleep books** for new mothers, and *much* more.

Infant Mortality Data

Average Infant Mortality Rate by Fetal and Infant Mortality Coalition Regions, Florida, 2019-2023*



Includes 2023 provisional data
Data Sources:
1 Infant Death Counts Query System (FL HealthCHARTS)
2 Infant Death Counts Query System (FL HealthCHARTS)

Florida
HEALTH

Above is a slide from the Florida Department of Health that reveals the average infant mortality rate for Region 1 to be between 5.7-6.9 per 1,000 live births. We're excited at the opportunity to lower this number as we plan our priorities for the coming year!

***National Public Health Week
April 7-13, 2025***



April 7-13 is National Public Health Week! Public health is at the forefront of what we do at Healthy Start. We believe that public health starts with healthy mothers and healthy babies. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of National Public Health Week, we reaffirm our commitment to support, educate, and champion mothers and their babies in Okaloosa and Walton Counties!

Winter Access Meeting



On December 12, 2024, we hosted our Winter Access Meeting, which doubles as the Home Advisory Committee Meeting. During these meetings, updates are shared between healthcare professionals in Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Over 25 community partners attended the meeting. Our featured speaker (pictured above with our Community Liaison, Abigail and Special Projects Coordinator, Amanda) was Kelli Di'Trapano, the executive director of Saving Grace Women's Home. She spoke about her personal recovery from addiction and detailed the scope of her organization's program. Each attendee spoke for 5-10 minutes about their organization and relayed relevant updates. If your organization is interested in attending our Summer Access Meeting in Niceville, FL this June, please reach out to Abigail Baumann at abigail@hsow.org or click the link below to be added to our mailing list!

Access Meeting
Invites



It is time again for the World's Greatest Baby Shower! This annual event will be held on Tuesday, April 29th at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention

Center, from 5:30pm-8:00pm. This event is for new parents, expecting parents, and their family members! Healthy Start looks forward to hosting this exciting event that will welcome approximately 1,300 people. The 50+ informative exhibits, numerous prizes, guest Swag-Bags, and refreshments all add to this lively and fun-filled celebration! Our goal with the World's Greatest Baby Shower is to bring resources to new parents that will help them and their baby succeed, while also showering them with support and congratulations!

Special Thanks To This Year's Top Sponsors!!

Let's talk babies

When you choose to deliver your baby at Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Family Birth Place, our doctors and care teams personalize your care plan to provide the care that's right for you. With our maternal-fetal medicine (MFM) specialist, US News & World Report: High Performing Maternity Care recognition, Level II Maternal Levels of Care Verified Hospital, Baby-Friendly® designation, on-site 24/7 Level II neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), connection to the Studer Family Children's Hospital in Pensacola. You and your baby have access to the region's highest level of pediatric care.



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As you grow your family, you join ours.

Just as every baby is unique, so is every delivery. As your partner in care, HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin's Women's and Children's Center provides a customized birthing experience that begins long before your first contraction and continues well after delivery.

Our maternity services include:

- 24/7 midwifery care with a low-intervention birthing experience
- 24/7 lactation support hotline
- Monthly classes, including: birthing, breastfeeding, and infant and child safety/CPR
- Labor and delivery unit tours for expectant moms





Thank you for caring for Florida's families.

*Proud Healthy Start
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At United Way Emerald Coast, we're dedicated to building stronger communities in Okaloosa and Walton counties. By focusing on financial security, youth opportunities, community health, and resiliency, we work together to create lasting change. Through collaboration, investment, and meaningful partnerships, we engage with our community to make a real impact. Join us in creating a brighter future for all.

Learn more at www.united-way.org



LET'S CONNECT!



@UWEMERALDCOAST

OUR FEATURED PROGRAMS:



PARENTING FOR PREVENTION: Offering evidence-based parenting programs to parents of children birth to teens.



RISE: The Resiliency Increasing Skills and Education (RISE) program provides individual, group, and family support to elementary and middle school students



WFIS: The Women and Family Intervention Services program helps pregnant women ensure their babies are born healthy and drug-free. Services include relapse prevention skill-building.

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Click the button below for our Family Resource Directory.

If you would like a physical copy or are interested in being added to our next copy, please reach out to abigail@hsow.org.

[Resource Directory](#)

Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa & Walton Counties | 850-833-9284
amanda@hsow.org | <http://healthystartokawalton.org/>

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn!



Healthy Start is a free program that provides education and care coordination to pregnant women and families with children under the age of three.

Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties | 1130 Eglin Pkwy Unit 101 8508339284 |
Shalimar, FL 32579 US

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