

# MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OPIOID ABATEMENT FUNDING ADVISORY BOARD

**Meeting Date:** January 8, 2024

**Present:** Christi Hankins– Escambia County Senior Assistant Attorney  
Catherine White – Vice Chair  
Tommy White  
Irv Williams  
Matthew Infinger  
Elizabeth Kissel – County Admin  
Tina Arroyo – Assistant to Board

**Location:** Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building, Board Chambers, First Floor  
221 Palafox Place, Pensacola, Florida

Minutes prepared by Tina Arroyo – Assistant to the Board

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge Allegiance to the Flag.
3. **Approval of the minutes** from November 11, 2023.

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| <b>Motion:</b> To approve the minutes from November 11, 2023    |
| <b>Made by:</b> Irv Williams<br><b>Seconded by:</b> Tommy White |
| <b>Disposition:</b> Motion unanimously passes                   |

**4. Public Speakers – Joel Sampson** - As a 30-year resident of Escambia County, while not a native, I take tremendous pride in what the county and city offer in terms of natural beauty. Over this time, I've had opportunities for career moves to larger markets, and larger salaries, but ultimately chose Escambia County and Pensacola as a place to raise my two children and be the community where I hope to retire someday. I have a great appreciation for the work being done by this board, core Florida Health, Escambia County Health officials, as well as law enforcement. The early efforts appear to me to primarily focus on the so-called end users, those who have already begun and are in the midst of the nightmare of addiction and can only hope that when an overdose happens, someone has access to a Narcan pen. This funnel starts with awareness and ends with action. Our residents are aware of the help that is currently available. Are they aware of what lies along the path of addiction? This plan needs to meet those requirements that have been laid out specifically, including specific attribution. We have this one chance to make a concerted effort to stem the tide and reverse these trends. I'd like to request an RFP for plans to adequately fund an awareness campaign to help prevent and treat abuse, and overdose. Overdose with education also raises awareness of the life risk. The danger they may be facing before they become addicted and become their statistic. Full disclosure. I work for iHeartMedia. I was the program director for a TC one-on-one for 20 years. I moved to digital sales about ten years ago and I believe we have the assets to address these needs and would just like to see an RFP so we can put that plan together. Thank you.

**Public Speakers – Larry Downs Jr.** - Hello. Larry Downs Jr. Plumbing LLC. I'm assuming most of this opioid problem is driven by pharmaceutical companies, corporations, we should say big ones. The Florida surgeon general put out a letter calling a halt to the use of COVID-19 mRNA vaccines. There are problems with it. DNA integration could theoretically impact a human's oncogenes. The genes which can transform a healthy cell into a cancer cell. Florida surgeon general on Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup> reported that Ladapo called for a halt in the mRNA vaccines. The very next day COVID-19 cases spike over the holidays. Hospitalizations emergency room visits, and deaths rise in Florida. I stand with Doctor Joseph Ladapo. He's been calling this since May of 2020. Whenever they start giving you drugs, whether it's through doctor's prescriptions or our government agencies like the CDC, or the FDA, you can't trust any of these people. None of them. Thank you.

**Public Speakers - Dr. Twanna House** - Thank you, vice chair. My name is Doctor Twanna House. I'm a program leader for Nami Pensacola, National Alliance on Mental Illness, as well as a member of the Florida Mental Health Advocacy Coalition. My story is that my 18-year-old son, Rajhon House, died due to a fentanyl overdose two and a half years ago on July 1, 2021. He collapsed on the gym floor at the YMCA downtown. They had to resuscitate him almost six times just to get him to Baptist hospital, just to get him to a stable state. He had just graduated high school at the time, and he moved out of our house 30 days prior. Unfortunately for a healthy 18-year-old boy the fentanyl overdose, along with norfentanyl and dilated was found in his system, according to the autopsy, which resulted in him having a seizure, heart attack, and a stroke to the entire brain that was beyond repair. A few days later, we had to say goodbye to who was not only my son, but my best friend and the gentle giant. I'm turning my trauma into transformation and taking the pain that I have to fight for others, not just me. They've suffered as well. Of course, we all know about the abatement funds that have come from the lawsuits and things like that. One of the things I'm doing on the statewide level is fighting for people with lived experience, and families with lived experience to be able to serve on the statewide advisory council, because right now, the way the statute is written, it doesn't allow for that. I've already been in contact with our state Representative Michelle Salzman, as well as our state senator, Broxson, about changing that. And I could tell you, based on my conversations with them, they're on board with it. I'm grateful that Escambia County, my home county, is doing something concerning this, and I'm just hoping that you will be accountable and integral to US, families like me, people like me that you will use this money to where it's effective. For those that need it, for the families that need it. Thank you for your time.

**5. Public Survey Results – Liz Kissel** – We were able to get our survey out. I am happy to report that we had over 237 respondents who filled out the survey. Either online or from one of our community centers and our libraries. People between the \$50,000 to \$89,000 range were mainly white people between the ages of 35 to 59, which are most of our overdoses. That was the largest majority of people who took the time to fill out the survey. Then we mirrored a different survey, the four categories that we focused on were criminal justice, harm reduction, prevention, and treatment-recovery. The first question we asked on the survey is what percentage of the funding do you feel like should go to each of these categories? The criminal justice had 16 people say 100. Prevention, treatment, and recovery got the most votes. The two highest were community and primary prevention. And that goes back to the marketing of the campaigns. The education of our youth, making sure people realize what this drug does. The criminal justice had three sections. It was law enforcement, community corrections post-incarceration, and social programs. The law enforcement one was funding and training for our local police drug task forces. I will mention that I have engaged in our local school system, and I have a meeting coming up in January to discuss what Escambia County is doing, and what we're not doing, and if there is some room there for us to be able to get into the school systems.

**5. Updated Escambia County Opioid Statistics – Joey Kerman** - I am with Escambia County EMS and lead the Escambia County Core program. Some of the alarming statistics are both the initial and where we finished in 2023. When the data was initially compiled, it was through December 10th, 2023. Escambia County had run a combined total of 10,529 opiate overdose calls from 1/1/2023 to 12/1/2023. We were at 3,753 overdoses for the year. We finished with 3,902. Santa Rosa County over the same period was 1,098 and Okaloosa was 1,897. At the time, it was a 16% increase for Escambia County. We're up to a 19% increase from 2021 to 2023. The demographic makeup was 55% male and 45% female. The primary age range was 30 to 39. They made up 26% of our overdoses, followed by 43 to 49 which made up 16.2%, and then 20 to 29 which made up 15%. The race and ethnicity breakdown was 74% Caucasian, 21.5% black, and 3% Hispanic and Latino. There's also a map that shows the target, and the bottom line and the principle of the map is that it affects every single community in Escambia County, from north to south, from the key to Gulf Breeze to Pensacola Beach.

**5. Updated Escambia County Opioid Statistics – Chief David Torsell** – Madam Vice Chair and board members. Good morning. When we first came to you to give you some information about the process we had in plan for our core program, we had a planned-out strategy for what was best fit for our community and what we thought was going to be the best intention of how the core program would impact our services here. Our Medicaid, medication-assisted therapy, our Mat program is working fantastic. The warm handoffs between the hospitals and us, where we are capturing these patients from transport to hospital before discharge. They come back and get recommended into our program. And we now have additional resources through Lakeview that we've been working with. I'm looking very forward to the centralized receiving facility potentially down the road that's going to be opening to add more resources to our community. We have statements from these people that came into our program that ended their statement with had it not been for the program, I would be dead. I don't think anything could be any more impactful to any one program than somebody saying if it wasn't for what you all are doing as a team, I would be dead. We've assisted in getting them close personal hygiene things, and places to stay. A simple phone, because they need to have communication. I mean, how can you make appointments and call places where you need to go for therapies and treatments if you don't have a way to communicate? They're not going to be successful if you don't give them that full wraparound support. The last piece is our funding strategy that initially was set in place with the state of Florida, which was through the Department of Health, that has ceased. We now fall under the Northwest Florida Health Network, which is through DCF. We have had a tremendous difference in the response with Northwest Florida Health Network as to how quick their turnarounds are, and their communications platforms.



Opioid Survey  
Results and Suspecter (Right click, Object, Open)

**5. Updated Escambia County Opioid Statistics – Denise with CDAC** - I've been at CDAC for 19 years. Throughout current history, alcohol has been the number one drug of choice for our adolescents at a higher rate in Escambia County. And then you're looking at vaping now is the number two drug percentwise when you're looking at nicotine. But if you look at the vaping rate with marijuana use and you combine those two data, it's going to be number one. Vaping is going to be your number one drug of choice. Even exceeding alcoholism, so adolescents are using at a very concerning rate, just not in Escambia County across the whole state. So, when you're looking at prevention, yes, prevention starts I would say below kindergarten because it's not sometimes as far as prevention goes, not necessarily about the drug behavior here. It's about the behavior that we're trying to teach our kids. It's about problem-solving. It's about how they manage these feelings that they're having. So they don't use. Many prevention models out there are good curriculum models that have been known to be successful. When you look at any death related to an overdose, it is horrific and it's terrible no

matter what age. Unfortunately, when we lose adolescents, it's even more traumatic for the family members. Prevention is key because if you get them at three and four, they're hopefully they're not going to use them when they're 35. But we do need to tackle the problem that we're seeing. I would like to comment though on what EMS is saying. There have been some recent, in the last 4 or 5 years, really good, dialog around peer support and case management that is key if you talk to somebody in recovery that's probably going to be one of their key concepts right now. There are a couple of model programs that they are using now for adolescents as well. Like peer support within school systems. But that's key to their success. I think if you talk to anybody in recovery, they're going to say it's people, places, and things around them that are going to get them through those moments. Case management and peer support are going to be key.



Escambia County  
Data.pdf



Escambia Opioid  
Task Force Steering C

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**6. Identify, Narrow down, and approve goals for 2024 - Cathy White** - We must submit to the state. Escambia County unfortunately doesn't fall underneath the Northwest Florida umbrella. However, I have reached out to them. There are some smaller counties that the funding flows through them, just like our core program does. So, they have been able to provide us with some guidance as far as reporting and what we're expected to do to establish those deliverables.

**Motion:** To put before the BOCC the goals for the Opioid Abatement funds:

1. Treatment and Recovery
2. Community Prevention
3. Criminal Justice

**Made by: Tommy White**

**Seconded by: Matthew Infinger**

**Disposition:** Motion unanimously passes

**7. Tru Narc Kits for Pensacola Police Department** – Eric Randall, police chief for the city of Pensacola. If you recall, I was here, uh, months ago, uh, for a request for the very same items. However, through no fault of our own, some things had to be put in place. What we're requesting today is to purchase five true narc devices. For the City of Pensacola Police Department and working with the county attorney's office through an interlocal agreement.

**Motion:** To put before the BOCC the additional funds of \$72,066 for the Pensacola Police Department to purchase the Tru Narc kits requested at the previous meeting totaling \$159,089

**Made by: Tommy White**

**Seconded by: Matthew Infinger**

**Disposition:** Motion unanimously passes

**8. New Business** – Next meeting Monday, February 12, 2024, at 10:00 am

9. **Adjourned** - With no further business to come before the Board, Vice Chair Catherine White declared the Opioid Abatement Funding Advisory Board adjourned.