

Starting Off Right

A Quarterly Newsletter from
Healthy Start Coalition of Jefferson,
Madison & Taylor Counties, Inc.

FALL 2011



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How Is Your Voice?



Guardian ad Litem
A POWERFUL VOICE FOR
FLORIDA'S CHILDREN
FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM
PROGRAM

Learn how to be the voice for a child who has been abandoned,
neglected or abused. No previous experience required. You
can make an enormous difference in the life of a child.

Training is FREE!!!

Number of Abused, Abandoned, and/or Neglected Children Served in the Third Judicial Circuit as of 10/14/2011:

County	Dependency Cases	Criminal Cases	Out of Circuit Cases	Total # of Children
Suwannee	62	34	13	109
Hamilton	14	7	1	22
Lafayette	4	4	1	9
Columbia	161	18	17	196
Dixie	66	9	1	76
Taylor	33	16	3	52
Madison	26	2	3	31
TOTAL	366	90	39	495



Contact: Niki Crawson, Volunteer Recruiter, Guardian ad Litem Program
nicole.crawson@gal.fl.gov • Office: (386) 364-7720, Ext. 103 • www.gal.fl.gov

The Guardian ad Litem (GAL) program is a network of professional staff and community advocates partnering to provide a strong voice in court and positive systemic change on behalf of Florida's abused, neglected, and abandoned children. Individuals 21 and older can apply to volunteer with the Guardian ad Litem Program; no legal experience is necessary. Prospective volunteers complete 30 hours of training over several weeks at no cost to the individual. Day and evening training classes are offered and, once certified, volunteers can schedule their service hours around their own personal schedules and those of the children in the program.

The total numbers in the statistical data above includes both Dependency Cases and Criminal Cases. Criminal Cases are those in which the State of Florida has chosen to criminally charge the alleged perpetrator. The Third Judicial Circuit Guardian ad Litem Program works with both dependency and criminal cases because of receiving special grant funding that provides additional staff to assist with

the criminal cases. Not all GAL Programs in Florida work on criminal cases.

Please note that you may also visit our National CASA website as well for additional information at www.casaforchildren.org.



Linda Peacock (left), Guardian ad Litem case worker for Madison and Taylor counties, provides information to one of her newest volunteers, Angelina Curtis.



GOOD NEWS!

Infant Mortality Down in Florida

Provisional data at www.flpublichealth.com shows that infant mortality in Florida has decreased to 6.5 for 2010 from 6.9 in 2009.

START Talking START Telling

Anyone who has ever been a victim of sexual assault or abuse is encouraged to call the 24/7 Hotline number:

850-584-8808

Trained advocates will offer counseling and information and give callers their full range of options. Callers do NOT have to report to law enforcement. Taylor County has a Sexual Trauma Assault Response Team or START. The multiagency START was created to ensure a comprehensive victim-centered response to sexual assault that is compassionate and supportive of the victim.

Jefferson County Health Department "After Hours Clinic" Now Open on Tuesdays, 5 pm–8 pm

Medical services offered:

- Primary care
- Physicals
- Family planning

Dental services offered:

- Complete comprehensive care for adults and children
- Emergency dental care

State Representative Bembry Visits Shared Services

Each month the Healthy Start Coalition of Madison, Jefferson and Taylor Counties conducts its monthly Shared Services meetings, where local health, education and social service providers exchange updates and hear from guest speakers regarding timely issues in their respective areas. On Wednesday, Aug. 31, State Representative Leonard Bembry joined the Madison County meeting, where he discussed funding challenges facing many of the organizations in attendance.

Noting the pros and cons of the state's balanced budget requirements that have led to substantial cutbacks and even closures for providers throughout the state, Bembry praised the group's mission and graciously reiterated his availability going forward. Coalition Executive Director Donna Hagan responded, stating that they need local legislators to urge all tri-county communities, including faith-based, to get behind key health initiatives. Among these initiatives, Hagan

provided a brief overview of the Whole Child Connection resource for the legislator, emphasizing the program's comprehensive online resource that is designed to serve the underrepresented, high-need populations of the region.

Poor health outcomes and disparities exist across almost all categories, ranging from maternal and fetal health to chronic and sexually transmitted diseases. A native of the area, Bembry was both sympathetic and outspoken regarding the urgency to support these and other issues that were mentioned, further noting that, while budget challenges are inevitable, services are still desperately needed. Resolute to continue to bring positive change, however, all present agreed they would continue to dig in and hold on regardless of the economy, even if that often means longer hours with smaller staffs.

The Shared Services meetings are regularly scheduled for the last Monday (Taylor), Tuesday (Jefferson) and Wednesday (Madison) of each month, although schedules periodically change due to calendar conflicts. Please phone Cindy Hutto at (850) 948-2741 for details or to request to be a guest speaker. She may also be reached by email at cjhutto@healthystartjmt.org.



State Representative Leonard Bembry visited the Madison County Shared Services on Aug. 31, 2011, where he expressed his admiration for the way providers were performing in spite of dramatic funding cutbacks.

Madison County Officials Issue Breastfeeding Proclamation

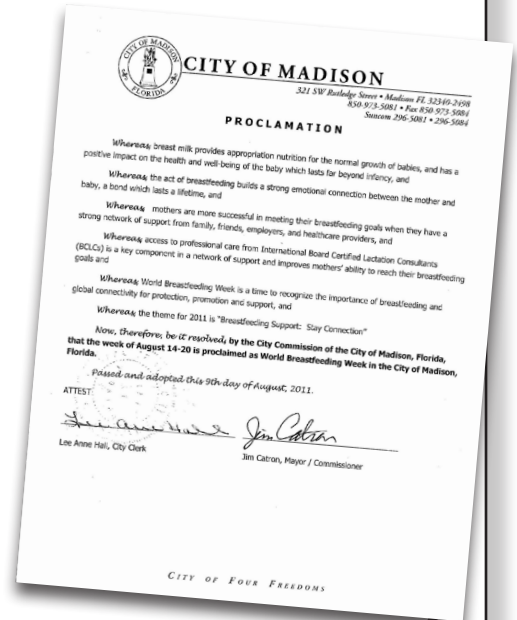
The Healthy Start Coalition of Jefferson, Madison and Taylor Counties is dedicated to improving maternal and infant health throughout the tri-county area. Among the initiatives supported by the coalition is breastfeeding, which was also the focal point of United States Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin's Call to Action issued in early 2011. In order to expand local awareness of this international concern, the coalition reached out to the Madison County Board of County Commissioners and the City of Madison Commissioners in August 2011, requesting each issue a resolution supporting National Breastfeeding Month.

Officials in each jurisdiction enthusiastically agreed, with several personally acknowledging the proven benefits of breastfeeding for positive developmental outcomes. The proclamation read as follows:

Whereas, breast milk provides appropriate nutrition for the normal growth

of babies, and has a positive impact on the health and well-being of the baby which lasts far beyond infancy; and whereas, the act of breastfeeding builds a strong emotional connection between the mother and baby, a bond which lasts a lifetime; and whereas, mothers are more successful in meeting their breastfeeding goals when they have a strong network of support from family, friends, employers, and healthcare providers; and whereas, access to professional care from International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) is a key component in a network of support and improves mothers' ability to reach their breastfeeding goals; and whereas, World Breastfeeding Week is a time to recognize the importance of breastfeeding and global connectivity for protection, promotion and support; and whereas, the theme for 2011 is "Breastfeeding Support: Stay Connected;" now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Commission of the city of Madison, Florida, that

the week of August 14–20 is proclaimed as World Breastfeeding Week in the city of Madison, Florida. Passed and adopted this 9th day of August, 2011. Attest Lee Anne Hall, City Clerk and Jim Catron, Mayor/Commissioner.



Fl♥rida KidCare

Through Florida KidCare, the state of Florida offers health insurance for children from birth through age 18, even if one or both parents are working. There may be many reasons a child doesn't have health insurance coverage

— a parent has lost their job, a parent's employer doesn't offer insurance or the parent(s) simply can't afford it. Whatever the reason, KidCare, Florida's health insurance program for kids, may be able to help...even if the applicant has been turned down in the past.

With Florida KidCare, kids can be covered if they get sick or have an accident. They will also get regular check-ups, dental care, immunizations, prescription drugs and more. And their

parent(s) will be in control, with insurance that makes them feel secure.

Parents may apply online at www.floridakidcare.org or call 1-888-540-5437 to request an application or for more information. If they have applied for Florida KidCare before, they should call 1-800-821-5437 to update their information.

If anyone has questions or would like assistance applying, they should call Tonya Bell at 850-253-5355.

Safe Sleeping Habits for Your Infant and the Battle Against SIDS

Susan J. Potts, Human Services Program Consultant at the Florida Department of Health urges Floridians, "Always place your infant on his or her back for bedtime, as well as naps, and discuss the importance of sleeping safety with any childcare provider you may have."

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, babies who are used to sleeping on their backs and are then placed to sleep on their tummies are 18 times more likely to die from SIDS. Even placing an infant on his or her side to sleep is not recommended because of the possibility that the baby could roll over.

After a baby is born, take charge of the sleeping environ-

ment by making sure it is a safe and restful place. It is important to avoid putting infants to sleep in adult beds, chairs, sofas, waterbeds, or cushions with adults or larger children. Instead, place a baby in a safety-approved crib with a firm mattress and a well-fitted sheet.

For more information, visit www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/mch/Parenting/concerns/safesleep.html.



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*Whole Child Advisor
and Community Health
Educator*

FDA Warns Against Counterfeit "Morning After Pill" Evital

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is warning consumers not to use the emergency birth control medicine labeled as Evital. This product may be a counterfeit version of the "morning after pill" and may not be safe or effective in preventing pregnancy. It may be in distribution in some US Hispanic communities. The packaging label says "Evital Anticonceptivo de emergencia, 1.5 mg, 1 tablet," by "Flutter Domull."

Online Now! www.wholechildtricity.com The Premier Online Directory of Comprehensive Services for the Whole Family

The engine of the Whole Child program is the Whole Child Connection, a simple but comprehensive online tool that is completed with the assistance of a trained Whole Child Advisor or community partner. After completing a customized questionnaire, a profile is created for the client that launches a computerized outreach to all local providers based on the needs identified in the profile. Visit www.wholechildtricity.com today to discover this incredible tool and community resource directory.

**Coalition Presents at Statewide Conference**

Madison County was well received at the 2011 Annual Statewide Prevention Conference held in Orlando. Below is an excerpt from one attendee's workshop evaluation:

*Kids were great! :)
A lot of good info on the program*

Congratulations to Tonya Bell and Merv Mattair for their invitation to present at this year's Annual Statewide Prevention Conference. They provided group sexual health education to a group of young men and young ladies during the early summer using the evidence-based *Making Proud Choices* curriculum. This Madison County project was made possible through the Department of Education, Office of Healthy Schools, and the Healthy Start Coalition of JMT.

The presentation was well received with Tonya and Merv garnering top marks from most of those in attendance. The group largely appreciated the testimonials given in person by several of those who attended the summer sexual health education classes.

The full agenda for this year's conference can be found at faspc.org.



The National Dating Abuse Helpline is the direct service provider behind loveisrespect.org, operating the 24/7 phone, text and chat services. The Helpline is a national, 24-hour resource specifically designed for teens and young adults and is accessible by phone or internet. The Helpline offers real-time, one-on-one support from peer advocates to those involved in dating abuse relationships as well as concerned friends, parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement and service providers.