

Jefferson County Whole Child Coalition

Sep 24, 2024

9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

UF/IFAS Extension Office – 2729 W. Washington Highway, Monticello

Present:

Donna Hagan, Tonya Bell, Cindy Hutto, Brandi Turner, Elizabeth Schmidt, Laura Blue, Tori Taylor, Cumi Allen, Zandria Appling, Christina Ash, David Boatwright, Lisa Hill Boatwright, Eric Evans, Andy Huntley, Amy Liem, Molly Lord, Tracy Melin, Dawn Merrix, Jean Munn, Janie Register, and Susie Hernandez.

Agencies Represented: Healthy Start Coalition, Healthy Families Seven Rivers, Endeavors, Department of Juvenile Justice, Battlefront, TEAM Dad, FL Cares, Help Me Grow, Disc Village, Florida Legal, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Big Bend, Big Bend AHEC, FSU CARD, and FDLRS Miccosukee.

Tonya Bell opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She told us that there will be a Halloween event in Taylor County on Oct 31st.

Elizabeth Schmidt, HSCJMT, advised about the Current State of the Infant. There were 15 infant deaths amount our three counties from 2022-2024. There were also 197 low birth weight infants. The root causes of these deaths were birth mothers who were obese at the time of pregnancy. The percentage of each county where the pregnant mothers were obese were as follows: Jefferson County - 33.9%, Madison County 40.1%, and Taylor County was 39.7%. The Florida average of women that had substance exposure during pregnancy was 3%. The percentage of Taylor County women that were exposed was 6.6%. Other areas of preconception health were environmental exposures and mental health. We need to work together to make a difference to help!

She also told us about the Moving Beyond Depression program. They are trying to bring the provider (instructor) to therapists.

Tracy Melin with Big Bend AHEC advised that they offer Tobacco Cessation and Diabetes Education in person and virtually as well. The courses are all free of charge. They also offer online Health Insurance navigation and Medicaid applications. She and Allison Weiman teach Mental Health First Aid too.

Brandi Turner with Healthy Families 7 Rivers reported that they have filled the bi-lingual position. This curriculum monitors development of children that speak Spanish. She is a big asset to our team.

Jean Munn, Disc Village Jefferson County, informed us that they are Drug Prevention Specialists that assist with drug treatment. She said that Taska Williams is hosting a Block Party in October for children in kindergarten - 12th grade. They are asking for vendors and volunteers to assist with this event.

Amy Liem with Florida Legal told us that they focus on families that have barriers to Medicaid and they also provide assistance to people that don't have internet and/or that they only speak Spanish.

Andrea Appling, Endeavor, said that they provide Disaster Case Management assistance to 10 counties. Their main office is in Tallahassee, and they have a staff of 25 people. They are accepting referrals from previous hurricanes. They also offer long term Recovery Groups for homeowners and renters as far as paying their monthly mortgages or rent as well as relocation. Endeavor works closely with FEMA too.

Janie Register, FDLRS, screen children ages 3 – 5 provide to make sure that the children are developmentally ready to attend school. Parent training is available as well.

Eric Evans with FL Cares reported that they build wheelchair ramps, platform steps, repairs, landings, and grab bars or any type of home accessibility projects. He asked for volunteers to assist him with projects in Madison. Last year they assisted with 300 projects.

Christina Ash, Department of Juvenile Justice, advised that they provide resources (hygiene and food) for families in the Big Bend area.

Andy Huntly, Help Me Grow, said that they provide Developmental Screens for ages 0 – 8 to find out if there are any mental health concerns. They try to detect these things as early as possible.

Dawn Merrix, FSU CARD, advised that they provide short-term consultation services to individuals and families to help with autism-related issues at home, in the community, at work, upon request. They are also partnered with the Jefferson County Schools to do training, online services and overall support. She stated that it is best to find out in the first 3 years of a child's life if a child has autism or not. The quicker they find it, the quicker they can help.

Cumi Allen, with the Madison and Jefferson County Health Departments, told everyone that they are seeking an LPN for the Madison and Jefferson offices. The vacancy is advertised on People First and Facebook.

David Boatwright, TEAM Dad Coach, focuses on men and their mental health. He empowers, advocates, and mentors Dads.

Molly Lord of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Big Bend was our VIP speaker for this meeting. She advised that this is her 2nd year servicing Jefferson County Schools. She said that they are looking for volunteers to be Big Brothers Big Sisters. It requires a minimum of 4 hours a month, one hour per week. The mentor is the child's friend and mentor. The child must be willing to participate in the program. The visits should be done during school, no holidays, and it work for the needs of the child. The minimum requirements to be a mentor is to be there for child during the school year and the ages of a mentor should be between 16 and 73 years of age. They do reference checks on volunteers, and they have many children on a wait list.

This was our last meeting of 2024 for Jefferson County.

Minutes taken by Laura Blue