

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of County Commissioners

May 30, 2024



### Okaloosa Announces New Efforts in Opioid Epidemic with Revive Awareness Day Event

**(Okaloosa County, Florida)** – Okaloosa County, in partnership with the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County, will host a press conference for Revive Awareness Day on Thursday, June 6 at 9:30 a.m. at the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County, located at 221 Hospital Drive, NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548. During the press conference, the County, Department of Health, and several community partners will recognize the importance of Revive Awareness Day and announce plans to take additional action in the opioid epidemic in Okaloosa County.

“The opioid epidemic continues to impact too many lives in Okaloosa County,” said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Paul Mixon. “I am thankful we have come together across multiple agencies with community leaders in a focused partnership that will confront the disease of opioid addiction in our community.”

Okaloosa County recently executed plans to use Opioid Settlement funding to establish the Coordinated Opioid Recovery (CORE) Network in the County. CORE is a comprehensive addiction care initiative in Florida that disrupts the cycle of addiction and provides patients with tools for recovery.

“Drug overdose deaths due to opioids continue to rise each year in Okaloosa County,” said Elizabeth Smith, Health Officer of the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County. “It is amazing to see so many of our community partners working together to develop new programs to create better outcomes and access to services for individuals affected by substance use.”

Funds have been allocated in Okaloosa County to support a variety of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery programs.

Some of those programs include:

- Bridgeway Center, Inc. will provide critical, life-saving services by expanding the current 12-hour availability of outpatient detoxification to 24/7. This expansion will bring various new resources to Okaloosa County including access to 24/7 substance misuse information; 24/7 access to Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid misuse; and rapid access to integrated patient care for first responders.
- Okaloosa County will establish a Community Paramedicine program, in which Community Paramedics, specially trained and equipped to engage in opioid-related patient assessments, will visit with at-risk patients in their homes or other convenient setting, to treat and screen for the effects of opioid use disorder and associated comorbidities. Educational opportunities and referrals to additional support programs through strategic partners set this model apart from traditional home-based care.

- The Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership (OCHIP) worked to develop a post-overdose response team initiative. The team includes a law enforcement officer, community paramedic, and behavioral health clinician. They will respond to the homes of residents who have overdosed within 24 to 72 hours, and provide them linkage to local substance use treatment and support services. The program will pilot with the Fort Walton Beach Police Department in mid-June and then expand county-wide.

### **Signs of an Overdose**

All Floridians need to know the signs of an overdose, which include:

- Small, constricted “pinpoint pupils”
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or not breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Cold or clammy skin
- Discolored skin, especially lips and nails
- Limp body

### **What to do if you suspect someone is overdosing**

If you suspect someone has overdosed, call 911 immediately.

Administer naloxone (Narcan) if available, lay the person on their side to prevent choking, and try to keep them awake and breathing until emergency assistance arrives.

Learn more about the CORE Network at <https://www.flcorenetwork.com/get-help/>

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