



Summer 2020 Newsletter

The Healthy Start Community Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties is part of a state-wide system of coalitions, empowered on the local level, to provide services to pregnant women and their babies, based on the need and the resources of the community.

The Healthy Start Coalition is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization led by a volunteer board of directors.

[Visit our website](#)

**In fiscal year 2018-2019, Healthy Start served
585 Pregnant Women and 351 Infants and Children
throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties!**

Thank you. to ALL the OB/GYN Physicians and Labor and Delivery Hospitals throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties for participating in the Healthy Start Prenatal Screening process!

WORLD'S GREATEST
BABY
SHOWER 

In March, the Healthy Start Coalition was set to host The World's Greatest Baby Shower at the Destin Fort Walton Beach Convention Center (formerly the Emerald Coast Convention Center). Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic the coalition made the hard decision to postpone the event.

We are working closely with the Destin Fort Walton Beach Convention Center and are watching the guidance being set forth by the CDC and the Florida Department of Health and our local department here in Okaloosa County. We hope to announce a date for the postponed event soon!

This event would not have been possible without the support of our many sponsors, exhibitors, donations, and volunteers. We look forward to your continued support as we come up with a plan for the World's Greatest Baby Shower in 2021! If you would like to be added to the email list for event updates such as exhibitor and sponsorship opportunities please email our Community Liaison, Jordyn Autry, at jordyn@hsow.org.



Pictured Above: Healthy Staff along with community partner, Tori Woods of Sunshine Health at the Destin Fort Walton Beach Convention Center greeting would-be guests the evening of the postponed event.

Continuing to Connect Families to Home Visiting Services

The Healthy Start Coalition staff has returned to work in the office and has implemented extra safety and sanitation procedures. However, our care coordinators continue to provide our clients services from their homes via telephone or video conferencing services.



Healthy Start Okaloosa County Care Coordinators
Pictured above from L-R: Becky Tillman, Lorraine Colon-Santiago, Nancy DeJesus, Rhonda Riess; Program Supervisors, Lisa Betts, and Ashley McDougald



Healthy Start Walton County Care Coordinators Pictured above from L-R: Peggy Gill, Program Supervisor, and Rosemary Cox

Now more than ever it is crucial that pregnant women and new parents are offered the support and assistance they need to navigate their pregnancy. Our Coordinated Intake and Referral team, also known as **CONNECT** is working hard to link pregnant women and infants to the **FREE** home visiting service that best suits their needs and will benefit their families the most.



CONNECT helps link pregnant women and infants to the home visiting service that suits their needs and will benefit their families the most.

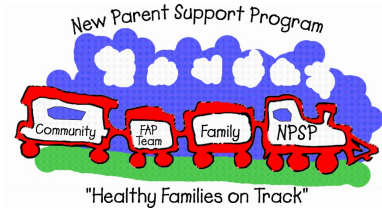
FREE support will be provided over the phone to keep you and your family safe.

Services Include:

- Pregnancy, Childhood, and Parenting Education
- Breastfeeding Education and Support
- Help to Quit Smoking
- Infant Milestones and Child Development
- Family Planning
- Counseling
- Financial Planning and Links to Community Assistance
- Referrals to Other Community Resources

- Infant and Child Safety (Car Seat Safety, Safe Sleep, and More!)

Home Visiting Programs in Okaloosa and Walton Counties:



To refer yourself or make a community referral
for someone you know, call
(850) 833-9284 ~ or ~ (850) 533-4178



Thankful for our Community Partners

The Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties would like to extend our sincerest thank you to Diana Christine and Tori Woods with Sunshine Health for presenting our Executive Director, Ardelle Bush, with a stack of Walmart Gift Cards valued at \$35.00 each and various baby items. We are grateful for community partners who care about the well being of our moms and babies! These gift cards will be used to help Healthy Start clients who have emergency needs.



Pictured Above: Ardelle Bush, Healthy Start Executive Director

A Note of Gratitude from a Healthy Start Client

"I would like to take this time to thank Healthy Start for everything they have done to help my family and I to become whole again. When I first started this program, I was skeptical because too many times I had been let down by people who promised help but never followed through.

This program has provided me with the tools I needed to become a better parent while also learning how to understand my children's needs. Healthy Start connected me to other resources and support throughout my community that I was unaware of. Healthy Start has helped me to love who I have become.

After my newborn arrived, my Healthy Start Care Coordinator continued to teach my husband and me how to recognize our baby's developmental states. I can honestly say that I love my care coordinator. She is truly a blessing, who has never judged me and is always available to take my call if I need her. Thank you, Nancy, and thank you, Healthy Start."

- Kellyshay Valentine, Healthy Start Client



Fighting the Spread of COVID-19

The Florida Department of Health recently purchased 15 million fabric masks to share across the state to help combat the spread of the Coronavirus. We were grateful to receive some of these masks. We have shared them with a handful of community partners, as well as all the OB/GYN providers in Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

If your organization is in need of masks or is in a position to help distribute these to the community, please reach out to our Community Liaison, Jordyn Autry at

jordyn@hsow.org or
(850)833-9284.

*Thank you
for wearing a
face covering.*



Remember, masks should **NOT** be worn by babies under the age of two. Babies have smaller airways and a mask prohibits their ability to breathe and can lead to suffocation. Please do not put a mask or face covering on babies.

Upcoming Coalition Access Meeting Goes Virtual

Twice a year the coalition hosts Access Meetings which are designed to inform organizations, agencies, and businesses in the area about services, health education programs, events, and resources available in the community. These meetings are hosted every other quarter and alternate between Okaloosa and Walton County.

In December of 2019, Anna Tyson from Families First Network (FFN) spoke about FFN's mission, their need for more beds in Region 1, and various recruiting and informational events that were coming up. After, community representatives in attendance were given a chance to share their organization's goals and any important news or upcoming events.



Pictured to the Right:
**(L-R) Jordyn Autry, HS
Community Liaison;
Ardelle Bush, HS
Executive Director;
Anna Tyson, Families
First Network; Gisselle
Bretz, HS Coordinatd
Intake and Referral
Manager; Victoria
Worlds, HS Office
Manager**

We would like to thank all those who attended our December Coalition Access Meeting! The more organizations in attendance, the more we all learn!



Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic the next Coalition Access meeting will be held virtually. Date and time to be announced soon. To be added to the email list and receive updates regarding these meetings please email our Community Liaison, Jordyn Autry, at jordyn@hsow.org.

Swaddling our way to Safer Sleep!



The Healthy Start Coalition recently invested in swaddle sacks used to swaddle newborns while sleeping to help ensure a safe sleep environment. A safe sleep environment is achieved by placing an infant on their back, in their own sleep area; such as a crib or bassinet, with no loose blankets, toys, or bumpers.

In the year 2019, Okaloosa and Walton County had six confirmed sleep related infant deaths.

Just one infant death is one too many and it is one of the many goals of the coalition to

educate all caregivers on what a proper safe sleep environment looks like and provide them with useful tools. These sleep sacks will be given to Healthy Start clients as well as pregnant women at community events and health fairs.

Amazon Smile

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Walton Counties and the moms and babies
in our community by shopping at**



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Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa & Walton Counties | 850-833-9284
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