Every baby deserves a healthy start
The Healthy Start program and Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition are celebrating a special milestone: 30 years!

In 1991, faced with an alarmingly high infant mortality rate, then-Governor Lawton Chiles and First Lady Rhea Chiles convened a group of community leaders and challenged them to build local coalitions to improve birth outcomes. The result was the landmark Healthy Start program. Chiles signed Healthy Start into law on June 4, 1991, and the Northeast Florida Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) - Seeking Safety

The R.O.S.E. Project
Recovery Obtained through Strength and Empowerment
Make a NOISE.
Prevent Infant Mortality.
Make a Difference.

Coalition becomes the organizational home for efforts to enroll uninsured kids in the Florida KidCare program.

FIMR Community Action Team opens in a Springfield storefront, focusing on substance-involved pregnant and parenting women and young girls in their households.

The Azalea Project opens in a Springfield storefront, focusing on substance-involved pregnant and parenting women and young girls in their households.

Northeast Florida selected to test FIMR-HIV project.

The Governor signs the Healthy Start legislation to reduce infant mortality and improve birth outcomes. The law expands Medicaid coverage for pregnant women and funds education, risk-reduction services & community coalitions.

Five county health departments in NEFL receive funding to provide Healthy Start services.

Disparities in infant mortality examined using Perinatal Periods of Risk (PPOR).

The Magnolia Project opens to address preconception health.

Coalition completes first service delivery plan, identifying maternal-child health needs in Northeast Florida.

Gov. Lawton Chiles passes Healthy Start legislation to reduce infant mortality and improve birth outcomes. The law expands Medicaid coverage for pregnant women and funds education, risk-reduction services & community coalitions.

Five county health departments in NEFL receive funding to provide Healthy Start services.

Help Them Thrive Birth to Five Launches.

Healthy Start & Healthy Families are integrated in high-need areas of Jacksonville.

The Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition is created. The late Phil Gilbert, executive vice-president of Duval County Medical Society, serves as founding chairman.

Project Impact, a fetal and infant mortality review project, examines cases with the worst outcomes & makes recommendations for future improvements.

Healthy Start providers expand with the addition of Shands Jacksonville and Healthy Families. Physicians and hospitals targeted in new outreach program to increase Healthy Start screening rates.

MomCare initiated as part of new Healthy Start Medicaid Waiver.

MomCare Faith-based Hold Out the Lifeline launched.

Local agencies take part in Friendly Access, attending the Disney Institute to increase customer service and satisfaction with health care, to increase access and use during pregnancy.

The AWE Ministers Alliance receives funding for Body & Soul, a faith-based healthy weight initiative.

First Infant Mortality Prevention Program launched in Jacksonville.

Coalition hosts first annual conference.

Coalition is founded to promote and protect breastfeeding.

Florida Healthy Start Coalition officially incorporated on November 18, 1991 to place control in the hands of the community, build systems of care and coordinate a diverse array of services on behalf of the highest-risk moms and babies.

In 2011, for our 20th anniversary, we shared the stories of 20 people impacted by Healthy Start, the Coalition and our variety of programs and services. [Read their stories here.](#)

One of our VERY FIRST Healthy Start babies, who is all grown up now, was featured on WJXT News 4 in November. [Hear her story here.](#)
Celebrating more first birthdays

Healthy Start is celebrating 30 years of helping to provide our babies a positive path to a great future.

Since 1991, infant mortality – the death of a baby before their first birthday – has dropped significantly and indicators like starting early prenatal care, teen pregnancy rates and smoking during pregnancy have improved. Most important, communities are now engaged in understanding and addressing this important problem and its underlying causes.

Our commitment to collaboration and to addressing infant mortality within a broader community context provides the foundation for our efforts. The Coalition’s work centers on three key areas: saving babies, strengthening families, and building communities.

The Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition has served more than 200,000 families in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties since its formation – through Healthy Start and a myriad of programs and initiatives developed based on the diverse needs of the community. More than 90 percent of our funding is utilized to provide direct services to pregnant women, new mothers, infants, fathers and families.

But because infant mortality is a community problem, it takes a community to solve it. There are underlying societal & structural root causes of infant mortality that also must be addressed. Every baby deserves a healthy start!

FAYE JOHNSON
Chief Executive Officer,
Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition

Adapting to COVID-19

As COVID-19 continued to impact the Northeast Florida community and nation, the Coalition ensured programs adapted to the pandemic and that families received the support and education they needed.

- Participants were able to participate in virtual and socially-distanced drive-through events, including the Magnolia Project/Healthy Start Community Baby Shower sponsored by Rep. Tracie Davis; Black Maternal Health week diaper and food give-a-ways; National Women’s Health Week; and the Nurse-Family Partnership graduation.
Regional infant mortality rate drops for second year

Since 1991, more babies are living to celebrate their first birthdays as infant mortality has dropped more than 35 percent in the region and state. The regional infant mortality rate declined for the second year in a row in 2021, though it continues to trend higher than state and national rates. The rate decreased from 7.3 to 7.1 deaths per 1000 live births, according to data from the Florida Department of Health, compared to 5.8 deaths per 1000 live births at the state level, and 5.6 deaths nationally.

There were 128 babies who died before their first birthday during the year, the equivalent of eight classes of kindergarteners.

Racial disparities also persist: The infant death rate for white babies was 4.8 deaths per 1000 live births, compared to 12.8 deaths for black babies. Racial equity in birth outcomes is a key focus of the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition.

Ongoing Data to Action Work Plan

The Coalition conducted a complete review of all infant deaths in 2018, coupled with an analysis of fetal and infant deaths using the Perinatal Periods of Risk. With support from Florida Blue, Baptist Health and UF Health Jacksonville, the Coalition examined key medical, system, social and environmental risk factors contributing to these deaths and linked them to actionable strategies. A multi-year plan based on the results was developed with objectives focused on policy, an infant mortality awareness campaign, engaging grassroots leaders, a medical home pilot, increasing quality of care, colocating outreach staff in prenatal care offices and addressing provider bias. Activities to meet the objectives include:

- Identifying a Fetal & Infant Mortality Review Action Plan Director to focus on plan implementation.
- Training 25 Make a Noise, Make a Difference Community Advocates to provide Infant Mortality education in zip codes 32208, 32209, and 32210.
- System of care pilot placed an outreach staff in one prenatal care office beginning in May 2021 to address the social determinants of health, screen clients and link them to home visiting programs.
- Infant Mortality Article published and posted on the Duval Medical Society’s website.

Our supporters

Thanks you to the following agencies and individuals who have made the work of the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition possible in 2021!

Leslie Allen
Hans Alvarez
Baptist Health
Peggy Boord
Carol Brady
City of Jacksonville, Kids Hope Alliance
CompassMSP
Megan Denk
The Dorothy Wilson Mabry Family
Pauline Drake
Florida Agency for Health Care Administration
Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions
Florida MIECHV
Florida Blue
Florida Department of Health
George Koury & Associates
Harvey’s Community Bag Program
Janice Hawkins
Health Federation of Philadelphia
Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida
Healthy Start MomCare Network
Mark Hudak
Humana
Jack and Jill of America
Jacksonville Port Authority
Jim Moran Foundation
Carol Neil
Javacia Owens
PGA Tour/THE PLAYERS Championship
Regions Bank
Sunshine Health
TECO Energy
Unitarian Universalist Church
U. S. Department of Health & Human Services
Walmart
Wolfson Children’s Hospital
Rosana was a single, Spanish-speaking pregnant woman who lived in a hazardous, open-roof trailer with her teenage son and her uncle. She was concerned about raising her newborn in this trailer since it had poor ventilation, water leaked in and critters would enter.

AmeriCorps member Sabrina Lee, serving with the CONNECT Coordinated Intake & Referral program, received Rosana’s case and helped Rosana acquire housing assistance by taking on the role as her liaison between the Jacksonville and Puerto Rico housing authorities and being in constant contact with her landlord, supervisor from JHA, her employer and the manager of Oaks of Durkeeville apartments.

After Sabrina endlessly advocated for her and guided her throughout the whole process, she finally stood by Rosana as she put her keys into the lock of her new home.

Rosana was in awe at how beautiful the place was and exclaimed “For me this is a palace,” as she entered the home she was dreaming of: an affordable, safe and stable place to raise her family.

Connect: A success story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Health Corps AmeriCorps</th>
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<tr>
<td>35,689.55 hours of services provided</td>
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<td>18,530 units of service provided</td>
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<td>41 members served</td>
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<th>Healthy Start</th>
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<tr>
<td>3,299 prenatal HS services</td>
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<td>5,866 infant HS services</td>
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<tr>
<td>2,946 interconception care HS services</td>
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<th>Nurse-Family Partnership</th>
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<td>51 graduates from the program</td>
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<tr>
<td>$29,392.16 in American Rescue Plan funds distributed to families in need</td>
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<tr>
<th>The Rose Project</th>
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<tr>
<td>3 certified recovery peer specialists provide support to women</td>
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<tr>
<td>45 women served in program</td>
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<th>Seeking Safety</th>
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<tr>
<td>1,139 home visits provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>149 clients served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104 plans of safe care completed</td>
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C& R: Connect

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<th>6,471 clients that completed Initial Intakes referred to home visiting services</th>
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<td>64.1% referred clients completing initial intakes</td>
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I joined the Magnolia Project at the age of 13. After completing high school and beginning college, I was able to still receive clinic services and participate in weekly meetings due to the assistance from my case manager.

I graduated from the 16-week Leadership Academy training class, nominated by my case manager who also helped me to accomplish my goals. I had the honor to advocate for funding in Washington D.C. and in Tallahassee, FL. with then board member Rev. Tommy Rogers, then Magnolia Project Director Faye Johnson (now CEO) and then Executive Director Jennifer Gornto. The experience was priceless.

During that time, I volunteered for many years for the March of Dimes, participated in several of the fundraising walks, and National Women’s Health Week, sharing my story with Congresswoman Corrine Brown and State Rep. Mia Jones.

Growing up in a high teen pregnancy zip code, the women of the Magnolia Project TRIED THEIR BEST to keep me active in positive activities and because of this, I’m currently employed at UF Health Jacksonville as a Respiratory Technician. I am also excited to give back and help the Magnolia Project by leading their community council!
The Make a Noise! Make a Difference! social marketing campaign, first launched in 2008, was revived in 2021 to increase awareness of infant mortality and contributing factors. The new phase of the campaign is funded by the Kids Hope Alliance/City of Jacksonville and utilizes a diverse approach of media and community engagement.

During National Infant Mortality Awareness Month in September, 25 trained infant mortality advocates spread across the Jacksonville zip codes with the highest infant death rates to provide education and facilitate conversations about how to improve birth outcomes. Throughout the month, approximately 7,000 flyers, 5,000 rack cards and 300 posters on preventing infant mortality were distributed to businesses and individuals in zip codes 32208, 32209 and 32210. The advocates were trained in the “Make a Noise! Make a Difference! Prevent Infant Mortality” curriculum, which was designed for community residents who want to know the facts about infant mortality and share the information with their community.

**ROSE Project begins peer recovery services for families in home visiting**

The Coalition now offers peer recovery services to moms enrolled in home visiting programs. The ROSE Project launched in June 2021, through funding from the Florida Department of Health and the Overdose Data to Action grant, and allows the Coalition to pair a peer specialist with moms to complement the services they are already receiving and assist with the recovery process.

ROSE stands for Recovery Obtained Through Strength and Empowerment and offers support and advocacy for women seeking recovery through resilience and ongoing wellness, while ensuring they have the skills needed to nurture and care for their children. Services include:

- One-on-one support from a Certified Recovery Peer Specialist
- Support groups and life skills courses
- Goal planning
- Recovery wellness plan for long-term care

ROSE services are available to pregnant and postpartum mothers who reside in Duval County and are actively using substances or in recovery.

During Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Awareness Month in October, the Coalition and community partners trained more than 100 people on safe sleep through the the Community Action Group Safe Sleep Subcommittee. The trainings ensured professionals and community members in the region had important information on how to prevent sleep-related deaths.

A total of 173 people across 19 agencies were trained. The trainings were held for apartment complexes, Florida Department of Health employees, home visiting agencies, Healthy Start providers, day cares, WIC providers & community members.

The Fetal & Infant Mortality Review Case Review Team makes annual recommendations based on death reviews conducted. The Community Action Group is a group of volunteers and partner agencies that takes those recommendations and develops and implements street-level outreach activities through several subcommittees.

The ROSE Project began peer recovery services for families in home visiting programs, offering support and advocacy for women seeking recovery through resilience and ongoing wellness.
System of care pilot addresses medical siloes, social determinants of health

The Coalition launched a new system of care/medical office pilot to address the social determinants of health that impact birth outcomes and break down the barriers between the medical and social service fields. The pilot, funded by Baptist Health, places a Coordinated Intake & Referral staff person at Ascension St. Vincent’s Family Medicine Center to screen clients, enroll them in services and help them navigate challenges.

The pilot was developed as a recommendation from the 2018 Fetal & Infant Mortality Review process. A key finding was that health and social services are fragmented and uncoordinated, along with the funding that supports them. Expanding the pilot to additional prenatal care offices is a key focus of the Coalition. Three more OB partners have been identified and will join the pilot in 2022.

Board early literacy initiative

The Coalition Board of Directors collected books throughout the year to distribute to parents in home visiting programs to encourage reading and family bonding. The books were distributed to families with information and education on the importance of early literacy.

WELLcome Home program enters second year

The WELLcome Home program, a universal nurse home visiting initiative in collaboration with Baptist Health and Wolfson Children’s Hospital, entered it’s second year of providing new moms with a home visit immediately after hospital discharge to provide critical post-delivery health education and referrals.

Mothers who deliver at Baptist Downtown receive a complimentary follow-up phone call after discharge, and are then offered a voluntary home visit with a registered nurse. During the home visit — which have been virtual visits during the COVID-19 pandemic — the WELLcome Home nurse home visitor provides information on infant and maternal care; breastfeeding and nutrition; safe sleep and other infant safety topics. The nurse home visitor also assists with follow-up medical appointments, additional lactation support and providing community referrals for any family needs.

Early Childhood Health Equity Landscape Project brief

The Coalition was one of eight initiatives featured in a brief entitled “Embedding Equity in Early Childhood Initiatives.” As part of the larger Early Childhood Health Equity Landscape Project, the brief highlights how the initiatives have set equitable goals and outcomes, the supports that they and their communities received, the barriers they faced in maintaining a focus on equity and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and racism on their work. The brief, released in April 2021, is a joint publication of Child Trends and the National Institute for Children’s Health Quality (NICHQ) and was supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Coalition CEO Faye Johnson shared information on the agency’s initiatives, how we embed health equity in our projects and the role that addressing the structural and root causes of infant mortality plays in our work.

Magnolia Project expands partnership with Agape Family Health

The Magnolia Project expanded its partnership with Agape Family Health Services to provide a full array of prenatal, well-woman and primary care services at its two community-based locations. Agape, the local federally qualified health center, joined the new Magnolia East location (6024 Merrill Rd) as the clinical provider in April 2020, and began services at Magnolia West (5300 N. Pearl St.) in May 2021.

The Magnolia Project is a special federally-funded Healthy Start initiative to improve the health and well-being of women during their childbearing years in Jacksonville zip codes with high rates of infant mortality and racial disparities (32208, 32209, 32211 and 32277).
**Who We Are**

**ADMINISTRATION**
Faye Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Erin Addington, Chief Operating Officer
Cynthia Ball Nixon, Chief Financial Officer
Jim Allen, Senior Accountant
Elizabeth Golden, Office Assistant
Kristin Toliver, Staff Accountant
Cheryl Ware, HR + Operations Manager

**AZALEA PROJECT**
Tiffany Knight, Project Director & Director of Program Performance

**CONNECT: COORDINATED INTAKE & REFERRAL**
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Latoya Brown, Family Partner Team Lead
Lisa Cunningham, Family Partner
Pamela Griffin, Family Partner
Rodnae Johnson, Community Liaison
Ebony Mayham, Family Partner
Lisa Miller, Family Partner
Kara Ramesar, Family Partner

**FATHERHOOD PRIDE**
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Nikolas Duke, Case Manager
Mitchell Miles, Case Manager
Heather Rollinson, Community Liaison

**HEALTHY START**
Cathy Dupont, Program Director

**MAGNOLIA PROJECT**
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Lacrecia Anderson, Data Entry Clerk/Community Health Worker
Michelle Clark, Team Leader/Supervisor
Karen Cohen, Case Manager
Takaiyh Davis, Front Desk Coordinator
Earnestine Jackson, Case Manager
Antionette Martin, Women’s Intervention Specialist
Nina Odom, Outreach Specialist

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Camille Saunders, Program Coordinator

**NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP**
Trina Reed, Program Manager

**SEEKING SAFETY**
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Pamela Vicars, Nurse Home Visitor

**ROSE PROJECT**
Sandra Gates, Recovery Peer Specialist
Carly Poole, Recovery Peer Specialist
Jermaine Williams, Recovery Peer Specialist

**WELLCOME HOME**
Susan Douglas, Nurse Home Visitor

**CONSULTANTS**
Samantha Brewer, Graphic Designer
Robert Christopher, Nurse Supervision
Tracy Claveau, FIMR Coordinator
Tina Johnson, FIMR Maternal Interviewer
Lisa Pelle, Quality Improvement
Angela Peterson, FIMR Maternal Interviewer
Cheryl Wright, Make a Noise, Make a Difference intervention
Eighth & Whitner Group, Infant Mortality Project
Sauti Plus, Make a Noise! Make a Difference social marketing
ruckus, Make a Noise, Make Difference social marketing

**DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDERS**
Children’s Home Society
Florida Department of Health Baker
Florida Department of Health Duval
Florida Department of Health Nassau
Inspire to Rise
UF Health Jacksonville

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**2021 Coalition Membership**

Nicole Alexander, MD
Leslie Allen
Stephen Baker, PhD
Peggy Boord, Treasurer
Meaghan Crowley
John Davis, MD
Megan Denk
Pauline Drake, Esq., Chair
Janice Hawkins

Mark Hudak, MD, Vice Chair
George Maxey
Carol Neil, PhD
Jeannie Potthast
Tealeauba Revels
Rev. Tom Rodgers
Jason Roth
Judge R. Anthony Salem
Tiffanie Williams, PhD, Secretary

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