



WCCY MINUTES

Wakulla County Coalition for Youth

Date | time 09/03/2025 12:30 pm-1:30 p.m. | *Meeting called to order by* Jennifer Phillips

In Attendance

Karen Zak, Jennifer Phillips, Bonnie Wertenberger, Kimberly Mattox, Kerri Barfield, Jen Counce, Laurretta Compton, Debbie Saenz, Novella Franklin, Amber Volano, Samantha Kennedy, Olivia Piazza, Rev Renita Allen-Dixon, Emily Kohler, Kaizsa Threatt, Amanda Madden, Tara Cockman, James Lewis, Lottie Roy, Yolanda Carlson, Jenness Jones, Stacey Bian, Aaron Taylor, Tammy Boone, Erika Jackson, Amy Frazier, Gwen Staten

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from August 2025 Meeting – Lottie Roy and Yolanda Carlson Approved

Agenda Items/Presentation

1. Jennifer Phillips on Bylaws Committee Update:

- Follow-up discussion held regarding proposed bylaw revisions.
- Revisions have been reviewed.
- As outlined in the current bylaws, a full Board of Directors meeting will be scheduled to present the approved revisions.
- Confirmation that the process aligns with existing bylaws and proper procedure is being followed.
- No questions or concerns were raised.

2. Jennifer Phillips on President and Treasurer Vacancies & Elections:

- Regina McQueen has resigned as Treasurer.
- Lottie Roy was nominated for Treasurer by Jennifer Phillips. No other nominations were made. A motion was made by James Lewis to vote on the nomination, and the motion was seconded by Karen Zak.

Voting was conducted by in-person raise of hand/Zoom chat. The vote was as follows: 24 in favor and 0 opposed. Lottie Roy received all 24 votes and was unanimously elected as Treasurer of WCCY. Lottie accepted the position and will assume the office effective immediately.

- Discussion was made about the position of President becoming vacant soon and James Lewis was nominated for the position. Voting for this position will be held next month.

3. Karen Zak on Drug-Free Communities Grant:

August 2025 Update:

- Attended the Fresh Back to School event at the Community Center
 - Distributed 144 Resource Guides
 - Collected 78 parent emails for the coalition newsletter
- Provided 10 Resource Guides to Tara (Capital Area Healthy Start)
- Supplied school planners to COAST Charter School for all 3rd-8th grade students
- Announced release of the first poster for Year 3 Social Norms Campaign

- Members encouraged to take 1-2 posters to display in the community

DFC Year 2 Report:

Objective 1: Increase Coalition Capacity and Strengthen Collaboration:

- Coalition representation increased in 9 of 12 community sectors (all except religious/fraternal organizations, media, and schools).
- Average coalition meeting attendance increased from 16 (Year 1) to 25 (Year 2).
- Coalition participated in 8 local festivals.
- WCCY nominated for Non-Profit of the Year by the Wakulla Chamber of Commerce and recognized as a Friend of 4-H at the annual 4-H Gala.
- Resource and Referral Guide updated quarterly; 533 printed copies distributed and 339 digital views (total reach: 872 families).
- Established youth coalition branch, Future Leaders of Wakulla (FLOW), in partnership with Wakulla 4-H.
 1. FLOW membership grew from 10 to 15 (50% increase).
 2. FLOW youth led multiple community projects:
 - a. Partnered with Health Department to host Bubble Fun Run for children.
 - b. Organized Hygiene Item Drive for local teens in need.
 - c. Hosted “Young at Heart” Valentine’s event for seniors promoting heart health.
 - d. Planned and hosted Safe Space End-of-Year Dance and Summer Game Night, promoting substance-free recreation.
 - e. Participated in multiple roadside cleanups with Keep Wakulla County Beautiful.
 - f. Contributed youth feedback for the coalition’s social norms campaign in partnership with FSU Communication students.
 3. Future goals: Provide advocacy training and increase FLOW involvement in prevention initiatives.

Objective 2: Reduce Youth Substance Use (Alcohol & Marijuana):

- Reached 617 parents at community festivals with flyers linking to free Active Parenting of Teens online program.
- Created system to track link visits for engagement data (to be implemented in Year 3).
- Launched Parent Connection private Facebook group – 54 members to date.
- Established a Parent Information Kiosk at the public library, updated monthly with resources and local event information.
- Continued implementation of social norms campaign:
 1. Campaign goal: Correct misperceptions about peer substance use.
 2. Year 2 slogan: “Join the Crowd” – emphasizes that most Wakulla teens are substance-free.
 3. Messaging displayed on 7 community posters, a high school football banner, and coalition’s Instagram page.
- Implemented Too Good For Drugs curriculum for 52 4th–5th graders at COAST Charter School.
- Expanded prevention lessons to 3 local summer camps, reaching 61 additional youth.
- Plan to expand prevention curriculum to all COAST 4th–8th graders in Year 3.

Challenges:

- Unable to implement prevention curriculum in public schools due to WCSO’s existing agreement to teach it to all 5th graders (adding 8th grade this year).
 1. WCCY shifting to support WCSO implementation to ensure consistency and evidence-based education.
- Lack of local participation in Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS) during 2025 (off year).
 1. Next survey opportunity in 2026 pending school board participation.
 2. Limited data availability restricts ability to measure local youth substance use trends and

program impact.

4. Jennifer Phillips on Library Story Walk:

- The Library Story Walk will be held on 10/25 from 5-8 PM and WCCY will have a table at the Story Walk. We need candy donations and volunteers to help staff table. Contact hello@wccy.org to help.

County Report

Josh Lawhon: No county updates currently.

Sheriff Report

Lt. Tom Mallon/Chase Savary were not in attendance.

School District Report

Simeon Nelson was not in attendance.

Treasury Report

Treasury report deferred until next meeting to allow the newly elected Treasurer time to assume duties.

Partner Reports

Jennifer Phillips (North Florida Learning Center): For youth interested in gaining volunteer hours, please contact Jennifer at: Jennifer.phillips@northfloridalearningcenter.com

Amanda Madden (Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition): The Coalition is conducting its annual needs assessment, which will inform the next five-year service delivery plan. The assessment examines five years of trends related to maternal, child, and paternal health in Wakulla County. The data and findings will be presented at the Annual Meeting on September 24 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and community partners are encouraged to attend and provide input. The coalition is also having their Annual Walk to Remember, held in recognition of Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, scheduled for Thursday, October 9 at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Tallahassee from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Yolanda Carlson (NWF Health): Provided an update and shared several community resources. She introduced the organization's Behavioral Health Pocket Guide, a helpful tool for school staff, counselors, and law enforcement officers that lists local behavioral health providers across the 18 counties covered by NWF Health, from Pensacola to Perry. The guide includes a QR code linking to a digital resource directory similar to 2-1-1 Big Bend, allowing users to search by zip code for nearby services such as free or low-cost mental health counseling, food assistance, and other supports. "TESS" was also discussed, which is an AI chatbot designed to support youth mental health, particularly for middle and high school students. TESS offers a safe space for youth to chat and access guidance when feeling lonely, depressed, or isolated. The system can trigger a mobile response team if certain crisis-related language is detected, ensuring timely intervention for youth at risk of self-harm or harming others.

Jenness Jones (Grace & Mercy Counseling): Grace & Mercy Counseling is a new counseling practice in Wakulla County and Janice has over 20 years of experience in the field, working with individuals from children to adults.

Stacey Bian (DISC Village): Shared updates for Recovery Month activities. She highlighted the main event, a Walk/Run for Recovery, scheduled for Thursday, September 25 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Lake Ella in Tallahassee. The event is free and family-friendly, welcoming community members, vendors, pets, children, and friends. Vendors may participate at no cost as long as they do not charge the community. Stacey also shared that the Crawfordville office has launched Art for Recovery Month, offering community members the opportunity to express themselves through various art mediums. The art sessions are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and are free for all participants.

Caden Gruebel (Future Leaders of Wakulla/4H): “Coffee & Conversations” parent talk series is open to all local adults, covering topics including human trafficking awareness and online safety. A Teen Leadership Summit for ages 11 and up is scheduled for October 13th. Halloween Barktastic Dog Costume Contest will be on October 18 at 2:00 p.m. Follow Wakulla 4-H on Facebook for updates on these and other events.

Lt. Aaron Taylor (FLARNG Night Vision): Lieutenant Aaron Taylor introduced new team members, including Specialist Feinberg and Lieutenant Knight, who will take his position in 2026. He highlighted Red Ribbon Week in October, encouraging schools to request curriculum, and shared details about an Advocacy Day for Substance Abuse Policy on November 18 (training on November 17), organized by Drug Free America and CCA. Members were encouraged to attend to learn about substance abuse trends and advocacy strategies.

Lottie Roy (LWREA): There is not an update yet on the fifth grade essay contest. The LWREA awards three \$1,000 scholarships each year: one to a high school student entering college to study education, one to a college education major, and one to an active educator pursuing further education. She requested contacts for teachers or students in Wakulla County, particularly at Wakulla High School, to help disseminate scholarship information.

Tammy Boone (Wakulla DOH): The coalition is invited to participate in the Keep Wakulla County Beautiful Coastal Cleanup on September 20, where cigarette butts will be collected and weighed to track impact. Additionally, a table/booth will be set up at the Panacea Blue Crab Festival on September 27 to promote the importance of tobacco-free parks and beaches. Members were encouraged to join and support both events.

Amy Frazier/Erika Jackson (Wakulla DOH): Be In the Know Talk – scheduled for September 10, 10:00–11:00 a.m. at the Chamber of Commerce. Flyers were provided to attendees. Prevent Human Trafficking Event – scheduled for September 23, 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the Community Center, featuring speakers from the Sheriff’s Department and Homeland Security. Members were invited to attend.

Kimberly Mattox (FSU Health/Clinical Research Hub): She announced the upcoming FSU Health Expo at the Wakulla Community Center on October 18, noting that many coalition members are already signed up as exhibitors. A few exhibitor tables remain, and Kimberly encouraged additional local representation from Wakulla.

Emily Kohler (Big Bend AHEC): The Tobacco Cessation program: offers free classes both virtually and in person at the Wakulla County Public Library. All staff are certified tobacco treatment specialists. Participants must pre-register, and a secure automated referral form is available for agencies wishing to refer clients. The program also supports substance use recovery facilities, providing counseling and free nicotine replacement therapies (patches, gum, lozenges). Additional services are being offered including the DEEP Diabetes Education Empowerment Program, Tai Chi, and Matter of Balance, all designed for prevention and chronic disease self-management among adult populations. These programs fall under the broader mission of the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) to provide comprehensive health education for adults.

Rev. Renita Allen-Dixon: Unity in the Community will be September 20th from 12-2 PM and WCCY is being recognized and honored at the event.

Novella Franklin (Zeta Phi Beta): No update, but if any agency needs volunteers, please contact her at: baizpresident@gmail.com

Amber Volano (211 Big Bend/Help Me Grow): National 988 Day will be observed on September 8 to raise awareness of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Samantha Kennedy (Wakulla County Extension): She highlighted the Teen Leadership Summit on October 13, where she will lead two sessions: “Living on My Own”, a financial literacy role-play activity teaching budgeting skills, and a session on mindfulness and stress reduction. She also offers QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Gatekeeper Training, a suicide prevention program for participants 18 and older (with exceptions for interested 17-year-olds). Trainings are scheduled over the next three months at varied days and times to increase accessibility, with a \$10 fee per person. More information and dates are available on the Wakulla County Extension website.

Olivia Piazza (TMH/Safe Kids Big Bend Coalition): She announced a Car Seat Safety Event in Wakulla on September 13 at the Kirsten Smith State Farm office. Parents can have their car seats and booster seats properly fitted by certified technicians. Families may register for an appointment or attend without one. Contact Olivia for more information: Olivia.Piazza@tmh.org

Caden Gruebel moved to adjourn the meeting. Lottie Roy seconded the motion. The motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 1:33 PM.

Next Meeting

October 1, 2025 at 12:30 pm at Wakulla County Public Library & Virtually