

Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

February 29, 2024

8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

In-Person and Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams:

<http://floridahealth.gov/DPACMeeting>

Welcome/Introductions

Melissa Jordan, MS, MPH, Assistant Deputy Secretary for Health, Florida Department of Health, opened the Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council (DPAC) meeting. Ms. Jordan thanked the DPAC members, designated appointees, and other participants for their continued partnership. Ms. Jordan asked Jon Conley, Florida Department of Health, to proceed with the roll call.

The following members or designees were in attendance:

Melissa Jordan, MS, MPH (Florida Department of Health)
Joe Spataro for Ashley Moody (Office of the Attorney General)
John McClellan for Mark Glass (Department of Law Enforcement)
Jeffrey Cece, MS, CPM for Shevaun Harris (Department of Children and Families)
Amy Vanness for Ricky Dixon (Department of Corrections)
Tracy Shelby for Eric Hall, Ed.D. (Department of Juvenile Justice)
Jonathan Stephens for Manny Diaz, Jr. (Department of Education)
Captain Derrick Rahming for Dave Kerner (Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles)
Captain David Rodriguez for Major General John Haas (Department of Military Affairs)
Doug Simon (Governor's Office of Policy and Budget)
Sheriff Peyton Grinnell (Governor Appointee: Drug Enforcement, Lake County Sheriff's Office)
Beth Labasky for Peggy Sapp (Governor Appointee: Substance Abuse Prevention, Informed Families)
Melanie Brown-Woofter (Governor Appointee: Substance Abuse Treatment, Florida Behavioral Health Association)
Dean Inserra (Governor Appointee: Faith-Based Substance Abuse Treatment, City Church Tallahassee)
Colonel Chris Rule for Sheriff Chad Chronister (Governor Appointee: Expertise in Drug Enforcement and Substance Abuse Programs and Services, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office)
Sheriff Chris Nocco (Governor Appointee: Expertise in Drug Enforcement and Substance Abuse Services, Pasco Sheriff's Office)
Jennifer Grandal for Judge Steve Leifman (11th Judicial Circuit Court of Florida)

Guests and Staff:

Jon Conley (Florida Department of Health)
Maggie Dilger (Florida Department of Health)
Jonathan Feazell
Jesseka Forbes (Agency for Health Care Administration)
Timothy Hay (Florida Department of Education)
Jennifer Johnson (Florida Behavioral Health Association)
Chris Kimball (Florida Department of Health)
Tina Pettingill
Vaden Pollard (Florida Department of Law Enforcement)
Dan Renaud (Florida Recovery Schools)
Chrystal Thompson (Florida Department of Health)
Stuart Waldo (Florida Department of Health)
Michael Wegman (LEAD Inc)
Julie Yocca

Opening Remarks

Ms. Jordan provided an overview of the meeting agenda and the presentations to follow.

She indicated that National Poison Prevention Week was March 17-23, 2024, which was established by Congress in 1961 as a public awareness week to raise awareness of poison prevention and safety. The Florida Poison Control Centers received 131,607 calls in 2022, addressing exposures and inquiries regarding toxic substances. For emergencies, call 1-800-222-1222, a 24/7 service providing fast, free, and confidential help. Visit floridapoisoncontrol.org for details.

Business

1. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes from October 25, 2023:

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes. Motion carried, all in favor. Minutes were approved with no opposition.

2. Presentations:

a. Presentation on State Assistance for Fentanyl Eradication (SAFE) – Vaden “Shane” Pollard, Deputy Commissioner, Investigations and Forensic Science with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

In 2023 the Florida Legislature established the SAFE program and provided \$20 million in funding for law enforcement across Florida to conduct investigations designed to combat illegal fentanyl activity. The funding allows reimbursement for fentanyl-related investigative activities, such as overtime, travel, investigative supplies and equipment, contracted services, training, and other costs associated with law enforcement investigations.

Deputy Commissioner Pollard indicated that, as of February 2024, there have been 59 arrests, approximately 20 kilos of fentanyl seized, approximately 12,000 fentanyl pills seized, 17 kilos of a variety of other illegal drugs and multiple firearms seized, and numerous fentanyl-related overdose deaths are also being investigated because of several of these open investigations.

He mentioned that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement 2022 Annual Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons Report shows Florida’s drug-related deaths decreased by 3%. The occurrence of fentanyl, and death caused by fentanyl, decreased by 3%, while the occurrence of fentanyl analogs in decedents increased by 40%. Fentanyl remains the most frequently occurring drug identified in decedents and the most frequent drug found to have caused the death of most decedents.

Commissioner Pollard shared with the DPAC that Governor DeSantis has requested the continuation of this program and proposed an increased budget of \$25 million for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. With approval from the Florida Legislature, this program will continue to help Florida’s fight against fentanyl.

b. Presentation on Florida Recovery Schools – Dan Renaud BS, CAP, ICADC, Founder and Executive Director of Florida Recovery Schools

Mr. Renaud presented an overview of the Recovery School concept and shared that Recovery High Schools offer specialized education for students battling substance abuse. He explained that the schools provide a supportive environment, blending academics with addiction recovery services like counseling and peer support. He noted that by addressing the root causes of addiction while ensuring academic progress, these schools empower students on their path to sobriety and success.

He indicated a key strength of these schools lies in the community and peer support they foster, countering isolation and stigma. This support reduces the risk of relapse and equips students with coping skills for long-term recovery, benefiting both individuals and communities.

Mr. Renaud mentioned that investing in Recovery High Schools can lead to significant long-term cost savings by preventing substance abuse-related burdens on health care, criminal justice, and social services. Despite their efficacy, these schools serve less than 10% of those in need, highlighting the need for expanded access to intensive post-treatment services, especially during the critical first 60 days after treatment.

3. Discussion of Roles and Responsibilities of DPAC:

Jon Conley provided a brief review of the roles and responsibilities of the DPAC. The official charge of the Statewide Drug Policy Advisory Council (s. 397.333, Florida Statutes) is to provide an analysis of the substance abuse problems in the state and make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature for developing and implementing a state drug control strategy.

Mr. Conley noted the four main areas or responsibilities for the DPAC: analysis, research, and recommendations; public awareness, response, and enhancing treatment programs; funding and program evaluation; and reporting. He explained the DPAC's primary responsibility is to understand and analyze substance abuse issues across the state from all perspectives, including interdictions of law enforcement, prevention strategies, and rehabilitation, and make recommendations as to what appears to work and what might not be working to improve efforts to ultimately eradicate drug and substance abuse in our state.

Doug Simon mentioned it would be helpful if the work of the DPAC is in front of the legislature more in the future.

Sheriff Chris Nocco expressed interest in researching opening mental health facilities in the state instead of spending money on other resources that have proven to not have the same level of success. Ms. Jordan mentioned the DPAC may benefit by hearing from a representative from the Office on Homelessness or the Florida Behavioral Health Association. Jeff Cece offered to discuss this with DCF.

DPAC members were encouraged to meet with their agencies and organizations to explore and share new ideas regarding drug policy in our state and bring back those suggestions at the next quarterly meeting of the DPAC.

4. Agency and Member Updates:

Amy Vanness, Department of Corrections

The Florida Department of Corrections had no additional updates for the DPAC.

Tracy Shelby, Department of Juvenile Justice

The Department of Juvenile Justice reported that the Florida State Court's Steering Committee on Problem-Solving Courts is currently in the process of providing best practices for juvenile drug courts. The document should be finalized soon and will be shared with the council.

Jesseka Forbes, Agency for Health Care Administrative

The Agency for Health Care Administration had no additional updates for the DPAC.

Melissa Jordan, Florida Department of Health

The Florida Department of Health updated that in response to the DPAC's objectives to improve workforce development, it has been hosting Jonathan Feazell, a fourth-year medical student at the University of

Kentucky. One of Mr. Feazell's focus areas is drug policy and he has been working with the Florida Department of Health to understand public health strategies at the county health departments regarding substance use and treatment.

Mr. Feazell took a moment to ask Vaden Pollard with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement about the supply and demand of different drugs. They discussed the changing prices of illicit drugs like methamphetamines and fentanyl. Mr. Feazell noted it could be useful to analyze trends from law enforcement to see if drug prices are impacted in counties that have established robust intervention programs.

Beth Labasky, Informed Families

Informed Families reminded the DPAC that the organization is promoting the "Lock Your Meds" campaign. Lock Your Meds is a national campaign to raise awareness for the proper storage of prescription medication. Through a partnership with Publix pharmacies in the southeastern United States, Informed Families is promoting prevention messaging on opioid prescription drug abuse.

John McClellan, Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement announced that Kristen Brennan will be the new designee on the DPAC for FDLE moving forward. Additionally, the FDLE is continuing its work with Operation Lone Star and Vigilant Sentry to combat illegal drugs coming into the United States and Florida.

Captain David Rodriguez, Department of Military Affairs

The Florida Department of Military Affairs indicated that the FY 2024-25 Florida National Guard State Plan was submitted to the National Guard Bureau and is awaiting signature by General Haas and Governor DeSantis. The FY 2024-25 plan includes greater emphasis on the fight against fentanyl, which is ranked number one based on its hidden threat assessments. The Department of Military Affairs has also been partnering with the Florida Highway Patrol on Operation Safe Highway, a state and local law enforcement interdiction strike force that seeks to intercept human smugglers and traffickers, illegal weapons, and narcotics. Military Affairs is deeply invested in the fight against fentanyl.

Captain Derrick Rahming, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles reported that in the last year Operation Safe Highway had nine operations with the most recent being a week before the DPAC meeting.

Jeffrey Cece, Department of Children and Families

The Department of Children and Families noted the most recent provisional data released by the Medical Examiner's Office which shows trends in decreased overdose deaths in Florida and expressed gratitude to the DPAC for its hard work and dedication since its inception.

Doug Simon, Governor's Office of Policy and Budget

The Governor's Office of Policy and Budget echoed the significant accomplishment of the decrease in overdose deaths in Florida while noting the state's population continues to increase. He also mentioned that Florida Youth Survey shows a continued decline in high school drug use.

Sheriff Chris Nocco, Pasco Sheriff's Office

Pasco Sheriff's Office had no additional updates for the DPAC.

Sheriff Peyton Grinnell, Lake County Sheriff's Office

Lake County Sheriff's Office had no additional updates for the DPAC.

Dean Inserra, City Church Tallahassee

City Church Tallahassee had no additional updates for the DPAC.

Jonathan Stephens, Department of Education

The Department of Education updated the DPAC that it is revamping data collected for incidents that occur on school grounds through a system called School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR). By 2025, the system should create uniformity on how incidents are reported, which includes drug use, drug distribution, and sales.

Jennifer Grandal, 11th Judicial Circuit Court of Florida

The 11th Judicial Circuit Court of Florida updated the DPAC that the Supreme Court approved three new sets of best practices for its problem-solving courts (Dependency Drug Courts, Veterans Courts, and Mental Health Courts). The court also approved a new problem-solving court certification program. A pilot program will start with adult drug courts in July of 2024. Expansion to other problem-solving courts is expected in the future.

Sheriff Chad Chronister, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office had no additional updates for the DPAC.

5. Public Comments/Open Discussion:

No public comments were received.

6. Adjournment:

Before closing the meeting, Ms. Jordan reminded DPAC members that the DPAC operates in the Sunshine Law and members should not discuss DPAC business with other members outside of meetings.

The date for the next DPAC meeting will be announced and publicly posted soon.

A motion was entered to adjourn. The motion was carried with no opposition. The meeting was adjourned at 10:18 a.m.