



ANNUAL SUMMARY

FY 25/26

ESCAMBIA | SANTA ROSA | OKALOOSA | WALTON

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ABOUT



Founded in 1982, Northwest Florida Health Council has been a steadfast advocate for public health, education, and community well-being across Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton counties.

As a trusted nonprofit, NWFLHC has continually evolved to address the region's changing health needs through collaboration, innovation, and data-driven solutions. As one of 11 Local Health Councils in Florida, it was established by the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to assess community health needs and guide policy development. In 1992, Local Health Councils became statutory under Chapter 408 of the Florida Statutes, solidifying their role in statewide health

planning. While each council is tailored to its region's unique needs, all share the common mission of improving community health and strengthening Florida's public health efforts.

Today, NWFLHC takes a comprehensive and community-focused approach to addressing critical health needs across the region. With a strong emphasis on improving quality of life and addressing the external conditions effecting health, the council serves as both a planning partner to the State of Florida and a direct resource for our communities.

NWFLHC works to shape public health policy, improve health outcomes, reduce disparities, and expand access to care. These efforts are rooted in a deep commitment to building strong, healthy, and resilient communities throughout Northwest Florida.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

NEIGHBORS AND COLLEAGUES,

I'm grateful for the opportunity to share this year's Annual Summary with you on behalf of the Northwest Florida Health Council. This past year has shown what is possible when we stay focused on what matters: listening to our communities, building partnerships, and working together to improve health across Florida's District One. The 2025–2026 fiscal year has been a year of growth, visibility, and action for our organization.

We remain committed to supporting programs and partnerships that meet real needs in the communities we serve. You'll read about some of that work in the pages ahead, such as the Health Screenings Program, which brings preventive care, health education, and resources closer to where people live, and the STAR Program, which provides financial support for living expenses and medical-related needs for those undergoing breast cancer treatment. This year, we also increased outreach at community events, in coalitions, and in rural communities, connecting directly with residents across Northwest Florida.

A major milestone was the launch of our mobile health unit, which strengthens our ability to provide screenings, education, outreach, disaster preparedness, and support. We also expanded our work through our partnership with Direct Relief, supporting access to essential health-related resources and building capacity for community-based care.

This year also highlighted the strength of regional collaboration. Partners across Northwest Florida came together to pursue a large Rural Health Transformation Program grant effort focused on improving rural health access, workforce development, prevention, nutrition and food access, care coordination, and long-term system sustainability. That work showed the power of our region to band together around shared priorities and advocate for needed resources.

We continued our education, planning, and data work, helping local organizations identify needs, strengthen health initiatives, and develop more competitive grant applications. We were also proud to contribute to Florida's Statewide Rural Health Plan, helping ensure rural voices remain part of the statewide conversation.

None of this happens alone. Our staff show up every day because they believe in this work. Our board members give their time and expertise because they want to see real progress in the communities we call home.

As we look ahead, our vision is not just about growing as an organization. It is about deepening connections, strengthening partnerships, and finding new ways to serve. We are grateful for your trust and support, and we hope this Annual Report gives a clear view of what we have accomplished and where we are headed. Most of all, we hope it reminds you that we are here, and we are in this together.



KYLE MERRITT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Council's Board, composed of twelve appointed members from the four county commissions, ensures that the health needs of local communities are effectively addressed. This governance structure underscores our commitment to advancing comprehensive health education and research, actively enhancing the overall well-being of our region.



CHANDRA SMILEY
CHAIRPERSON
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
COMMUNITY HEALTH NWF



JEFF FLETCHER
VICE CHAIRPERSON
SANTA ROSA COUNTY
LAKEVIEW CENTER



BONNIE BARLOW
TREASURER
OKALOOSA COUNTY
BRIDGEWAY CENTER



ANNA DYESS
SECRETARY
SANTA ROSA COUNTY
NWF AGENCY ON AGING



MATT DOBSON
SANTA ROSA COUNTY
FL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



VONDA GOODISON
OKALOOSA COUNTY
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE



HOLLY HOLT
WALTON COUNTY
FL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



AMINAH JOHNSON
OKALOOSA COUNTY
FL NURSES ASSOCIATION



JULES KARIHER
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
ASCENSION FLORIDA



JENNIFER MORRIS
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
ASCENSION SACRED HEART



JOY POWELL
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
BAPTIST HEALTH CARE



MIKE WHITE
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
TORGERSEN CONSULTING

“Serving on the Board of Northwest Florida Health Council is a reminder that strong communities are built through listening, partnership, and thoughtful action. This year, our Board remained focused on supporting work that responds to real needs across District One while strengthening connections among local organizations, health partners, and community leaders. We are proud to help guide a mission centered on improving health and quality of life across Northwest Florida.”

CHANDRA SMILEY
CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MISSION

To enhance the health, well-being, and resiliency of Northwest Florida communities through access to healthcare, collaborative planning, programming, advocacy, and education.

VISION

An environment where every individual in Northwest Florida has the opportunity to live a healthy, fulfilling life, supported by a robust and responsive healthcare system and a community committed to wellness and education.

PRIORITIES

// HEALTH PLANNING

Conducting detailed assessments to identify and prioritize regional health needs.

// OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Implementing programs that educate the community on various health topics and promote healthy lifestyles.

// ADVOCACY FOR HEALTH POLICIES

Promoting policies and programs that foster health and wellness within our communities and region.

// ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Facilitating access to healthcare services and disseminating important health information to the public.

// SUPPORT FOR LOCAL INITIATIVES

Providing resources and assistance to local health projects and programs to maximize their impact.

FY 25-26 SERVICES

// STAR PROGRAM

Our Supporting Treatment And Recovery (STAR) Program helps ease financial strain for Breast Cancer patients by covering living and medical expenses, ensuring ongoing care and better health outcomes, while filling a key local funding gap.

// HEALTH PLANNING & COORDINATION

Through strategic planning and consulting, we bring organizations, partners, and communities together around shared health priorities while providing data and guidance for strong, evidence-based planning.

// EDUCATION & AWARENESS

The Council provides tailored health education and health promotion strategies to the community through public events and customized sessions for partners, covering topics like grant writing, physical health, and local health resources.

// HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAM

This program provides mobile screenings for heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and vision across our service area, making preventive care more accessible. This initiative supports the health priorities outlined in local Health Improvement Plans by addressing prevention, early detection, and intervention.

// AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATION (ACHA)

We conduct quarterly nursing home data reporting, facilitate Certificate of Need public hearings, and performs site visits for new or expanding nursing home and hospice facilities; critical tasks that require ongoing coordination and staff support.

// DIRECT RELIEF PARTNERSHIP

Our partnership with Direct Relief includes access to health-related supplies, medical resources, and support materials for community-based outreach. These resources are distributed freely at health screenings, education events, preparedness functions, and during service activities.

NORTHWEST FLORIDA HEALTH COUNCIL FUNDING \$1,054,713 IN GRANT FUNDING

We secured \$1,054,713 in grant funding for Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton counties in FY 2025-2026.

STAR PROGRAM

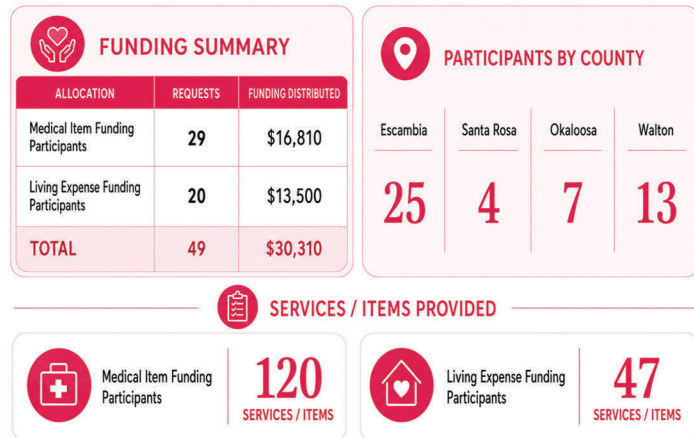
SUPPORTING TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

Breast cancer is a leading health concern in Northwest Florida. This grant helps patients continue treatment by covering living expenses and medical needs, easing financial stress in Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton counties.

With over 700 new breast cancer cases annually in District 1 and a high rate of late stage diagnoses, many patients face financial challenges that threaten their ability to stay in treatment. This grant, provided by the Florida Breast Cancer Foundation, offers direct financial support to patients by covering non-medical costs like housing, utilities, transportation, wigs, and prostheses. By reducing these burdens, the grant helps improve treatment adherence, supports better health outcomes, and provides meaningful relief to those navigating both cancer and financial hardship.



July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026



The application process is designed to be simple and accessible, with just two eligibility requirements: applicants must live in District 1 and provide a letter from their healthcare provider confirming they are currently in treatment or recovery. Keeping the process straightforward is essential, as too many barriers can discourage those in need from seeking support.

Applications are submitted through a secure online system and reviewed by a committee of four community members, one from each county. This team carefully considers each request and the applicant's expressed needs. Approved applicants may receive up to \$750 to help cover essential living expenses and medical items. To date, we have supported every eligible applicant.

For more details about the STAR Program or to view the support request application, scan the QR code.



MOBILE HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAM

Many residents face significant challenges in accessing essential health screenings due to factors such as distance, cost, and limited transportation options. These barriers often lead to delayed diagnoses of preventable conditions.

To address these challenges, our Mobile Health Screenings Program actively delivers vital preventive care directly to communities across Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties. By bringing services to community centers, faith-based organizations, workplaces, schools, public events, and more, we've improved access to health screenings for thousands of residents.

// COMPREHENSIVE SCREENINGS:

We provide screenings for **diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and vision** using the same high-quality equipment found in traditional medical offices.

// MOBILE-BASED ENGAGEMENT:

Our dedicated Mobile Health Teams operate daily, ensuring broad coverage and **accessibility throughout the service area.**

// CARE COORDINATION:

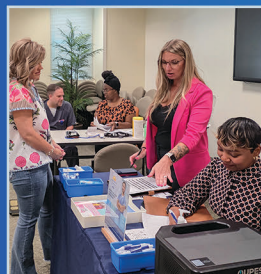
Participants identified as at-risk receive **personalized assistance**, including connections to primary care providers, optometrists, or chronic illness management programs.

// EDUCATION:

Specialized educational materials are distributed to inform individuals about their health and necessary next steps.



**SCAN THE QR CODE
TO LEARN MORE**



**MORE THAN
9000
HEALTH SCREENINGS**

completed this year, helping connect community members to early detection, prevention, and better health outcomes.

**WE VISITED
197
LOCATIONS**

this year, bringing health screenings and wellness resources directly into communities across our region.

DIRECT RELIEF

Direct Relief is a humanitarian aid organization that partners with local providers to improve access to health, wellness, and emergency-related resources for communities. Their support helps organizations like Northwest Florida Health Council provide practical, everyday assistance directly to residents across our region.

Through this partnership, Direct Relief provides donated supplies such as hygiene items, personal care products, household essentials, cleaning supplies, and other health-related resources that help meet immediate needs. These items are distributed free of charge at health screenings, community outreach events, and other opportunities across Northwest Florida.



SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED IN DISTRICT 1

This reflects the total number of Direct Relief supplies distributed during the fiscal year. These essential hygiene, personal care, household, cleaning, and health-related items helped meet everyday needs while extending care and support into communities across District 1.

7105

VALUE OF DISTRIBUTED SUPPLIES

The value of these donated supplies represents meaningful support for local residents. Through this partnership, Direct Relief helps us strengthen wellness, preparedness, and community care across Northwest Florida.

\$58,016.81

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

At Northwest Florida Health Council, our work is rooted in strong community engagement and meaningful partnerships. We believe that lasting change starts at the local level—by listening to residents, collaborating with local leaders, and working side by side with health and education organizations across our service area. Together, we plan and support initiatives that improve health outcomes and enhance quality of life for everyone in Northwest Florida.



HEALTH PLANNING FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

We start by listening to what our communities need. Then, through strong partnerships, research, and funding acquisition, we turn that insight into programs that make a real difference. It's not just about data, it's about people and our commitment to improving lives across Northwest Florida. **—Trudy McCall, Community Programs Manager**



176

PARTNERSHIPS

We've established 176 partnerships across our service area to collaboratively address key community health priorities.



344

OUTREACH

We engaged in 344 outreach and planning opportunities to strengthen health initiatives, and support state and local efforts.



\$92,000+

PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENT

Through contracts, we helped support partner organizations working to make our district healthier and stronger. These partnerships reflect our commitment to local impact.



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Through grants and contracts designed to meet real community needs, we invested in regional efforts that support people, strengthen local services, and help build healthier communities across Northwest Florida.

\$1,112,730

THANK YOU TO OUR FY 25/26 FUNDING PARTNERS



We invite partners, funders, and community-minded organizations to invest in Northwest Florida Health Council. Supporting our work means directly contributing to the health, resilience, and prosperity of our local communities. Your investment helps us grow, innovate, and deliver lasting solutions that make Northwest Florida a healthier, stronger place for all.

For more information about the Council, or to explore partnership and funding opportunities, visit NWFLHC.org or call (850) 381-2990.

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