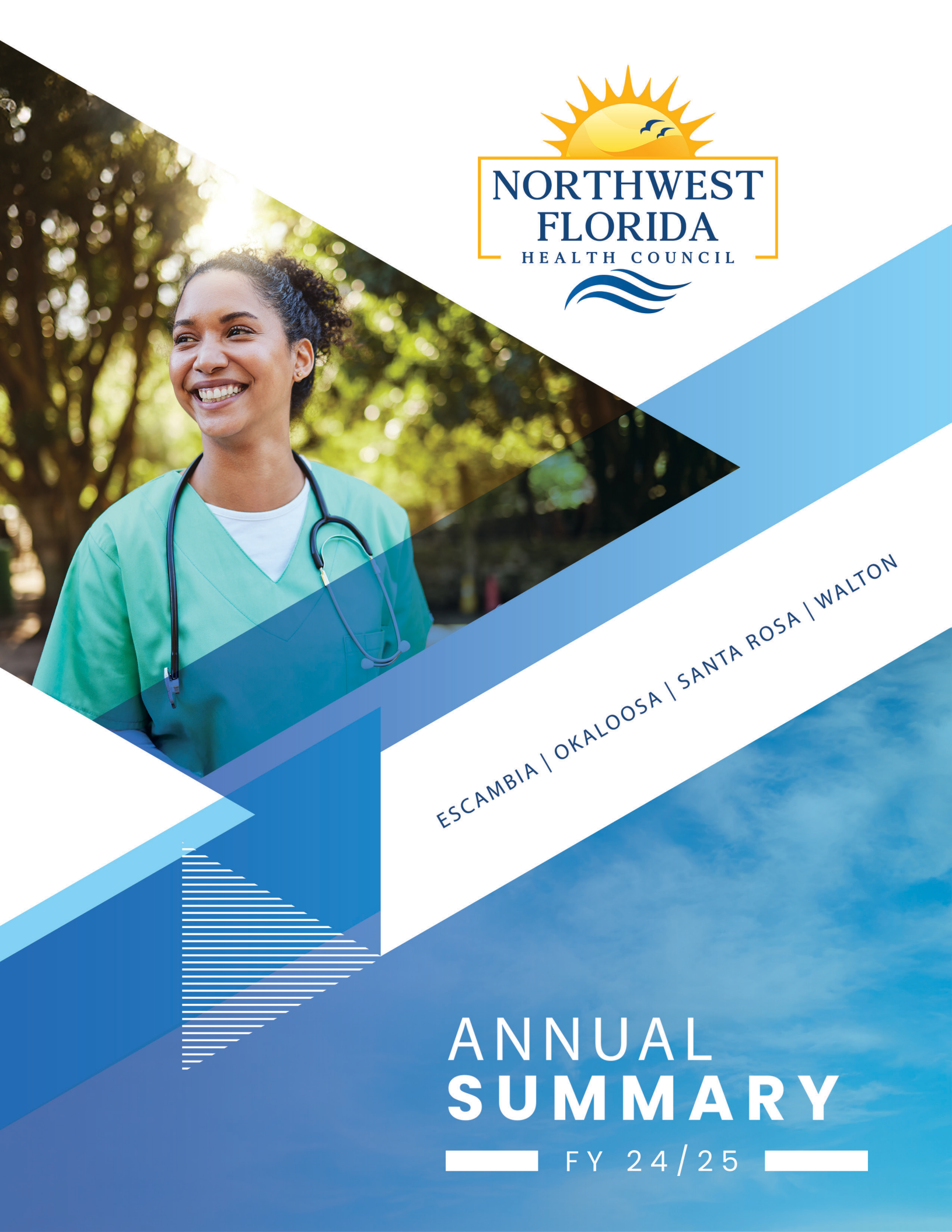




**NORTHWEST
FLORIDA**
HEALTH COUNCIL



ESCAMBIA | OKALOOSA | SANTA ROSA | WALTON

ANNUAL SUMMARY

— FY 24 / 25 —

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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 social determinants of 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 reminded us of how much we can accomplish when we stay focused on what matters: listening to our communities, building relationships, and working together to improve health for everyone in Florida's District One.

Throughout the 2024–2025 fiscal year, our board and staff have stayed committed to supporting programs and partnerships that meet real needs. You'll read about some of that work in the pages ahead—from our Health Screenings Program that brings preventive care closer to where people live, to the STAR Program, which provides those undergoing Breast Cancer treatment with financial support for living expenses and medical items. We've created a Strategic Planning Guide to help local organizations develop health plans and strengthen grant applications, using reliable data and shared priorities to bring more health funding into our region. We've been proud to contribute to Florida's Statewide Rural Health Plan, helping make sure the voices of our rural communities are 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 all call home. Together, we're working toward better health across the region—not with one-size-fits-all solutions, but by listening, adapting, and meeting communities where they are.

As we look ahead, our vision isn't just about growing as an organization—it's about deepening our connections, strengthening partnerships, and finding new ways to serve. We're grateful for your trust and support, and we hope this summary gives you a clear view of what we've accomplished and where we're headed. Most of all, we hope it reminds you that we're here, and we're in this together.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. Merritt". The signature is stylized, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

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.



JULES KARIHER
CHAIRPERSON
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
ASCENSION SACRED HEART



CHANDRA SMILEY
VICE CHAIRPERSON
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
COMMUNITY HEALTH NWF



BONNIE BARLOW
SECRETARY
OKALOOSA COUNTY
BRIDGEWAY CENTER



JEFF FLETCHER
TREASURER
SANTA ROSA COUNTY
LAKEVIEW CENTER



MATT DOBSON
SANTA ROSA COUNTY
FL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



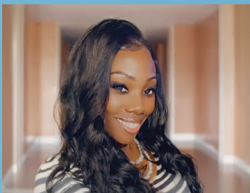
ANNA DYESS
SANTA ROSA COUNTY
NWF AGENCY ON AGING



VONDA GOODISON
OKALOOSA COUNTY
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE



HOLLY HOLT
WALTON COUNTY
FL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



AMINAH JOHNSON
OKALOOSA COUNTY
FL NURSES ASSOCIATION



SARA LEFEVERS
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
BAPTIST HEALTH CARE



JENNIFER MORRIS
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
ASCENSION SACRED HEART



J.O. ZACHOW
ESCAMBIA COUNTY
CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Our Board of Directors is united by a deep commitment to improving the health and well-being of the communities we serve. Together, we bring diverse perspectives, shared values, and a strong sense of purpose. Through collaboration, data-driven planning, and community partnerships, we are working every day to make Florida's District One a better, stronger place to call home.

JULES KARIHER
CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MISSION

To enhance the health, well-being, and resiliency of Northwest Florida communities through equitable 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, education, and equity.

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 24-25 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.

// DISTRICT 1 STRATEGIC PLANNING GUIDE

This project equips local organizations with strategic tools, data, and guidance to develop strong, aligned, and evidence-based proposals, enhancing the ability to secure funding and improve community health.

// EDUCATION & AWARENESS

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

// HEALTH SCREENINGS 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.

// HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLANS

We actively support Florida's State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP), County Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs), and the State Rural Health Plan by contributing research, facilitating partner engagement, and conducting needs assessments to guide data-driven strategies.

DISTRICT 1 STRATEGIC PLANNING GUIDE

\$1,067,305 IN GRANT FUNDING

The District 1 Strategic Planning Guide helped secure \$1,067,305 in grant funding for Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton counties in FY 2024-2025.

HIGHLIGHT: 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 recurring grant, provided by the Florida Breast Cancer Foundation, offers direct financial support to patients by covering nonmedical 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.



"I AM IN MY FIFTH YEAR AT STAGE FOUR BREAST CANCER. I HAD TO LEAVE MY CAREER IN THE MEDICAL FIELD IN 2021 DUE TO TREATMENT. YOUR HELP IN RELIVING SOME OF THE FINANCIAL PRESSURE AND STRESS MEANS MORE THAN WORDS CAN EXPRESS."

**-TINA,
STAR RECIPIENT
SANTA ROSA COUNTY**

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, ensuring they can continue treatment without added financial stress.

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



HIGHLIGHT: 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:

Two 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, OR TO SETUP
A MOBILE SCREENING AT YOUR LOCATION**



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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 and sustainable funding, 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**

**50**

PARTNERSHIPS

We established 50 new partnerships across our service area to collaboratively address key community health priorities.

**84**

OUTREACH

We engaged in 84 outreach and planning opportunities to strengthen health policy, and support state and local efforts.



GROWTH & SUSTAINABILITY

Northwest Florida Health Council is strategically building long-term sustainability by balancing traditional grant-funded models with income-generating services such as consulting, data analysis, and training. This approach allows us to create a more stable financial foundation while continuing to expand programs that directly benefit the residents of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton counties.

To support this mission, we've strengthened our internal capacity by employing staff specifically focused on identifying and securing grants that align with the region's most pressing health needs. These efforts not only bring new funding into the area but also help us remain agile and responsive to changing community conditions. By blending

development with mission-driven programming, we ensure that our services remain both impactful and sustainable over time.

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](https://www.nwflhc.org) or call (850) 381-2990.



// THANK YOU TO OUR FY 24/25 FUNDING PARTNERS



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