**MEETING MINUTES**

**Florida Department of Law Enforcement**

**Missing Endangered Persons Clearinghouse**

**Advisory Board**

**Conference Call**

**23 March 2021**

**1:30 PM to 4:00 PM (EST)**

**Chairperson: Dan Campbell**

**Attendees-**

FDLE:

SAC Phillips, Ashley Bullard, Monika Mora, Inspector Chad Hoffman, Pete Warren, Jon Roddenberry, ASAC Chad Brown, Mary Coffee, Brendie Hawkins

BOARD:

Dan Campbell, Karen Mazzola, Assistant Chief Antonio Gilliam, Brian Moore, Hilary Sessions, John Pitta, Peggy Pitta, Gary Howze, Peter Burke, Karen Mazzola, Kristen Litteral, Tim Enos, Dr. Spence, Stephanie White, Peter Bergstresser, Floy Turner, Bill Corfield

**Scribe-**

Monika Mora

**Agenda-**

**Welcome & Introduction-**

**Dan Campbell (DC):** We’ve got a full house.

**Ashley Bullard (AB):** We welcome the new representative for Attorney General Ashley Moody, Gary Howze.

**Gary Howze (GH):** Looking forward to representing.

**February Meeting Minutes**

**DC:** Has anyone not had the opportunity to read?

**DC:** Silence as yes. Any questions?

**Peggy Pitta (PP):** In the Captain Gomez section, it says Albert instead of Amber alert.

**AB:** I can fix that.

**DC:** Motion to approve minutes.

**Stephanie White (SW):** Motion.

**John Pitta (JP):** Second.

**Challenge Coin**

**DC:** I would like to turn it over to you, Ashley, to update us on the challenge coin.

**AB:** We’ve added the website.

**DC:** Is the only difference the location of the website?

**AB:** Correct.

**DC:** Notes about color?

**AB:** The foundation is reviewing pricing. We’re not moving forward yet.

**DC:** Comments on location?

**Mary Coffee (MC):** I like it under the white bar.

**Brian Moore (BM):** Second, except closer to the white band.

**AB:** Questions? Minor changes?

**DC:** That’s approved. Thank you.

**DC:** What’s the timeline info on that?

**AB:** The coin will be ready prior to Missing Children’s Day.

**Newsletter**

**DC:** Next thing, issue #3 of the newsletter. I’m excited.

**DC:** Ashley, if you or someone from FDLE can give us a high-level overview.

**AB:** On the first page, the welcome page, we have our updated alerts. We went over the numbers last meeting. The theme is a time of remembrance for families and Don Ryce. We have “Remembering Diana Alvarez.” Remains were discovered in 2020.

**AB:** The second article contains statements made by Ms. Hernandez. The Florida Missing Children’s Day annual ceremony has helped her get to know people in similar situations, and with coping. Even siblings who've lost siblings feel reassurance.

**AB:** Questions?

**AB:** Mary Coffee wrote the article on Don Ryce. It has two parts. Who has not read this? I will leave it on the screen to read.

**DC:** Mary?

**MC:** I’m here.

**DC:** Fantastic job capturing Don and his life, and what he stood for. Incredible job. Thank you.

**MC:** Thank you, it was an honor to do it.

**AB:** Then we have an article from Internet Crimes Against Children, “Protecting Our Most Vulnerable.” It’s about what ICAC does and their work at FDLE.

**AB:** The last page of the newsletter is online child safety tips from ICAC.

**AB:** Lastly, we have the remembrance piece on Tiffany Sessions. Hilary, any words?

**Hilary Sessions (HS):** No, she’s been missing for 32 years and it’s a lifetime for any family.

**AB:** Questions about the newsletter?

**DC:** A couple of things I noticed. I wonder how people not involved in the numbers will know what a direct recovery is.

 **(?):** I agree.

**AB:** You are right, the public may not know the definition.

**Peggy Pitta (PP):** We might add another line to each one, saying those numbers are still active and not resolved.

**Peter Warren (PW):** We have cases where the person is still missing, recovered because of means beyond the alert that are not attributed to direct recoveries.

**PW:** The easiest way is to have a definition of direct recovery next to the numbers; I can create a short blurb.

**MC:** Pete, we have that on the website. Perhaps in addition to identifying what direct recovery is, we could put the URL. Go here to help find those remaining missing.

**Karen Mazzola (KM):** I love it.

**SAC Mike Phillips (MP):** The question is, what do we want to communicate? Because of the alert the kid was found or kids are still missing or both?

**MP:** I like Mary’s idea. I wonder if direct recovery is something we want to communicate.

**DC:** I looked at this as a year-end review.

**N/A(?):** Are there other clearances? We have cleared other alerts not through direct recoveries?

**MP:** Yes, there are other means by which they were recovered. Only 1 or 2 are open, about 19 are closed.

**MP:** We can include the 19, 33, 249 alerts, and then link to the website for more details.

**DC:** It’s a conversation we’ve had in the past, putting this on here. We wanted to show the results. The general information is good for people. Maybe closed incorporates everything, regardless of outcomes. It’s an answer.

**ASAC Chad Brown (CB):** Followed by the number of unresolved?

**Jon Roddenberry (JR):** Unless stuff gets moved around, maybe putting stuff below the numbers, I don’t see where we’d put more details. Point them towards the website.

**DC:** Either a definition of direct recovery, definition in a website, or take away direct recovery, and just say 18 closed cases.

**JR:** Both? Room for a short definition and also point people to the website.

**MC:** If the board would be alright with it, give FDLE leeway to craft solutions and pending your final approval, we can offer it to you in the interest of saving the board’s time.

**DC:** Sounds fine.

**AB:** We can pull it together, maybe add a column. Add it to this newsletter or the next one?

**MC:** We can get this pulled quickly.

**DC:** Anything else for future issues?

**KM:** When would we publish?

**AB:** As soon as it’s done if you want to give Dan final approval, or an email vote like last year.

**KM:** Motion to allow chair final approval.

**BM:** Second.

**DC:** Let’s go into the essay and poster contest.

**AB:** Before we do that, would you all like a summer or fall newsletter?

**DC:** I thought we were doing them quarterly.

**KM:** Publish and promote children’s day before it happens.

**AB:** Hilary proposed an article on past legislation she’s done.

**HS:** The issue:Law enforcement said Tiffany could be wherever she wanted because she was over 18. When Jennifer Kesse disappeared, the same issue occurred. We (Sessions and Kesse Families) put together a law that was submitted through the FL House and Senate. They named the bill after our respective children. Because of that law, MEPIC became the Missing and Endangered Persons Clearinghouse. The new law was no longer children only. Allowed 18 to 25 years persons to fall under missing child, required DNA after 90 days, and was how the Silver Alert was able to be established under.

**HS:** With our law, we’ve helped a lot of people.

**AB:** FDLE can gather information for legislative changes after this session.

**How to correct common Missing Person myths:**

**Brendie Hawkins (BH):** We can push to the sheriff's office and police department through FPCA, Amy Mercer, the advisory board members, then they could disseminate to partners.

**SW:** There are still agencies that are still told 48 hours before a missing person can be reported. I don’t know how to make that clear.

**BH:** We can include statutes referencing missing adults.

**Assistant Chief Antonio Gilliam (AG):** 1-2 pages issue, dedicate it to the top-five common things we see, like waiting 48 hours; The other side, page 2, top-five things parents/guardians need to know about predators/traffickers.

**AG:** Any common themes with agencies and suspects that would be appropriate.

**MC:** I suggest we use the term “common myths”; it doesn’t attribute erroneous error.

**AG:** these are the standards agencies, law-enforcement and sheriff’s offices, need to abide by.

**AG:** Also, how we educate citizens.

**JP:** What about the sheriff’s assistant/chief of police.

**AG:** We could run it to FPCA and FSA to send to sheriff's agencies and then they distribute it to their workforce.

**SW:** Is there a way during their sheriff’s meeting for FDLE to provide that information?

**BH:** We can explore. Maybe MEPIC supervisors can provide training and add that to the existing information.

**SW:** Whenweincorporate the awards to nominate their people, we could bring the bloodhounds.

**(?):** What about setting up a booth and having the dogs at the booth to draw a crowd?

**DC:** Let’s use the newsletter as a forum, whether it’s a myths or misconception, make it a section. This newsletter is a great venue. Let’s use it as a forum.

**CB:** Or an FAQ added to the MEPIC external site, geared towards law-enforcement.

**DC:** Ashley, let’s put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

**AB:** yeah, and we can have new articles drafted.

**MC:** Also, add our partnership publication. We participate with the Chiefs and Sheriffs Association.

**MC:** We’ll make a note to put these issues with the “myths/did you know,” and new laws into it.

**Missing Children’s Day Poster and Essay Contest**

**AB:** We have the 2021 winning poster.

**AB:** We should have a billboard image for the next meeting.

**AB:** We haven’t heard back about the national poster winner. The essay contest is closed. We determined a regional winner, but not statewide.

**MEPICAB In-Person Meeting**

**AB:** We’ve confirmed hotel rooms. The conference room is ready. We’d like to know your thoughts. We will still have a virtual meeting.

**AG:** I would suggest folks say whether they can. They can say it in this forum or email whether they are comfortable. Without a majority, it’s a waste of time.

**DC:** Does a June meeting require a motion or anonymous poll?

**BH:** We can do polling.

**KM:** What about a hybrid meeting? Could we vote on issues?

**BH:** We can do an in-person meeting with half set up tech for a hybrid option.

**BH:** Virtual members may have to email Ashley to vote.

**DC:** We have options. Do we need to discuss ordinances?

**BH:** The city of Tallahassee is still restrictive.

**BH:** We can gather in groups as long as we social distance. We can’t have groups larger than 50. It’s on a month by month basis.

**DC:** Ashley, can you send a request to inquire about preferences with a Friday deadline?

**AB:** Yes, we can.

**JP:** Can we do an unofficial survey in this meeting?

**PP:** Does Staybridge have a max number of people?

**BH:** We can ask.

**AG:** How much time does FDLE need to know if Florida Missing Children’s Day can be in person?

**BH:** Maybe mid-July? DMS told us we could have the event in the courtyard, but no restrooms. There will be construction where the children are dropped off and in the loading zone.

**BH:** We are concurrently planning for in-person, but virtual, as well, in case we can’t meet in person.

**AB:** Key points: both plans, in-person and virtual. No other updates. Doing the event in one day, either Thursday or Friday, instead of splitting it into two days.

**FMCD Nominations**

**DC:** Nominations close May 18. Please let us know where we are on the nominations. We need an update on the criteria.

**AB:** We reached out to the regional SACs, state troopers, police departments, and sheriff’s offices. We’re waiting on the young hero nomination, task force, bloodhounds, and local WEA nominations

**BH:** we don’t have formal nomination forms for the John and Reve Walsh, Evelyn Williams Award or the Commissioners Award. We’ll send it out to the advisory board.

**CART Update**

**Inspector Chad Hoffman:** I am the statewide CART coordinator. Today, I’m going to talk about increasing uniformity in the way dispatchers respond to children with autism. Especially the initial reporting. We are still researching. Dr. Kim Spence has been helping.

**CH:** The dispatch services are not always uniform. It was since 2008 that dispatch centers had certifications in the state. FDLE has the potential to be the avenue to enhance training in the state. It’s a new project FDLE will be working on.

**MEPIC Update**

**JR:** We had a child recovered last night because of the enhanced missing child alert. We wanted to share that with everyone.

**PW:** That recovery last night happened because of trends in the Clearinghouse. We have 24/7 coverage, which increases our response times. A cloud-based URL was in the WEA, and the child was recovered within 20 minutes of the alert going out as a citizen spotted child after Alert was issued.

**PW:** This is a culmination of several state programs we’ve implemented as a Clearinghouse.

**Adjournment**

**DC:** Motion to adjourn.

**Dr. Kim Spence (KS):** Second.

**TOPICS for Next Board Meeting:**

**Summer 2021 Newsletter: ideas already presented at 3/2021 meeting were:**

1. **Article of the evolution of MEPIC since it’s beginning.**
2. **Article on Sessions and Kesse bill that expanded MEPIC**
3. **Article advertising FMCD**
4. **Update on Legislature Session**
5. **Myths/Misconceptions for the public and LE about reporting and receiving a missing person report.**
6. **5 things Parents need to know about child trafficking and predators. (top myths regarding this)**

**Send to Summer 2021 to our partners at FPCA and FSA to help correct LE misconceptions about missing persons as well. Make sure to include FS in the article so they can reference.**

1. **Spring 2021 Newsletter stats. Did these stats incorporate what the Board was trying to say in 3/2021 meeting? Anything else we can incorporate?**
2. **Create a FAQ on MEPIC site to address what LE should be doing in a missing case. “**these are the standards agencies, law-enforcement and sheriff’s offices, need to abide by.”
3. **Send Special Award criteria to Board- any suggestions for nominations**
4. **Billboard image**