**Meeting Minutes**

**Florida Department of Law Enforcement**

**Missing Endangered Persons Clearinghouse**

**Advisory Board**

**In-Person Meeting with Virtual Option**

**March 9th, 2022**

**12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. (EST)**

**Attendees-**

FDLE:

Ashley Bullard, Jon Roddenberry, ASAC Chad Brown, Brendie Hawkins, Megan Bohnenberger, Jon Rigsby, PPA Peter Warren, Rachel Salus, Kathy Cutler, Alexis Snell

BOARD:

Dan Campbell, Assistant Chief Antonio Gilliam, Ms. Stephanie White, Director Steven Outlaw, Honorable Walt McNeil, Ms. Karen Mazzola, Dr. Kim Spence, Dr. Katherine Gomez, Mr. Travis Paulk, Captain Peter Bergstresser, Brianna Ratkiewicz, Brian Moore, Julie Collins, Susan Smith, John Robertson, Hilary Sessions, Emmy Kyllonen, Major Tracy Clark, Mark Young, Terri Lynn, Tawanna Spann, Assistant United States Attorney Francis Williams, Chief Darry Lloyd & Gary Howze

GUEST:

Joe Butler

**Introductions**

* Round of introductions. Announced that meeting is being recorded. Quorum reached for voting.
* Membership changes:
  + Major Tracy Clark, Tallahassee Police Department
  + Mr. Mark Young, Jimmy Ryce Center
  + Ms. Terri Lynn, Jimmy Ryce Center
  + Ms. Tawana Spann, parent of Jabez Spann
  + Mr. Frank Williams, Assistant U.S. Attorney
  + Mr. Darry Lloyd, Chief of Investigations, State Attorney’s Office

**Meeting Minutes 11/2021**

* Please send bylaws, strategic plan to Board.
* Quorum is 14 people.
* Dan- approve minutes, 2nd Spence

**History of MEPIC**

* Peter Warren: 90’s Adam Walsh went missing, the missing person movement started in Florida and because of this, Florida was the first to have the Missing Child Information Clearinghouse (MCIC). 2000, FL instituted an AMBER Alert, 2001 added the missing child alert, 2007, MCIC changed to MEPIC and started SILVER Alerts and accepted all cases instead of just children. Also added the Missing Unidentified Initiative. 2015 the Sexual Offender and Predator System started working with MEPIC as both programs have overlapping people. Also have the Enhanced Missing Child Alert. Last year was hugely successful with the Alert. Other law enforcement agencies are interested in the alert.
* Purple Alerts coming out July 2022. More information to come later. For people suffering from mental illness which are imminent danger.

**Autism Training**

* Dispatchers are generally not sworn law enforcement. Sometimes they are connected to local law enforcement and sometimes they are private organizations. Dispatchers are critical to law enforcement as they are the initial contact for information.
* As of March 1, after 90 days since launch, around 3,000 individuals have taken the new Autism training.
* Looking to provide training and resources to initial level law enforcement as well. Sarasota County have changed their initial response to missing persons with people with autism so they have quicker responses to key areas when a missing person goes missing. Dispatch has also started identifying immediately and getting MEPIC on standby.
* FDLE partnered with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to present a webinar hosted by the International Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). APCO has over 35,000 membered dedicated to providing public safety expertise. FDLE will attend the State APCO conference and present on missing children with autism.
* FDLE is also speaking with the International Association of Chiefs of Police about curriculums that can be enhanced in regards to missing children with autism.
* Inspector Hoffman, State CART Coordinator, is in Bay County presenting to the regional National Emergency Number Association members. These are all the 911 dispatch centers in NW Florida.
* Inspector Hoffman will continue presenting across the state until the regions of the state have been introduced to the Autism Awareness Training for Telecommunicators.
* Assistant Chief Gilliam: Dr. Spence and FDLE have created something that will save lives. Dispatch has a script that they use to keys. In the past, there has not been a uniform list across the state with questions about missing persons with autism.
* Peter Warren: Expecting this training to go National.

**Ashley: DARE and MEPIC Partnership**

* Partnership has been successful; going to conferences together and having our materials passed out at events DARE goes to has led to increased engagement
* Events:
* Unable to waive conference fees. Children’s week and Café would not waive fee. Safety Fair at Tallahassee Southwood.
* Question: Can we get the Foundation to source the money on conferences?
* The Foundation is paying for all the extra safety fair materials that we have been giving out. A trailing team has offered to help the Foundation get in touch with bigger corporations in Tampa to see about events and possible funding.
  + We want to source info on events from AB members statewide to further boost engagement. Free is important. If there are any events in your area please let SMAS Hawkins or Ashley Bullard.
  + On FMCD we would have 200 5th graders at the event, however with the safety fair in the past year, we have had around 3,000 individuals reached.
  + Chief Enos, FASRO, has invited MEPIC to attend the FASRO conference and waived the fee as an exhibitor.

**FMCDF Website Review**

* “Beat the Clock” flyer with missing myths has been successful; printed on giveaway bags. The Foundation has provided all of the safety fair gear, as part of the gear, the plastic giveaway bags have the Beat the Clock myths on the bags.
* FDLE App added to website. At safety events we bring out a poster board going over the Mobile App that covers missing persons and sexual offenders/predators. You can search the offenders/predators at their registered addresses in your area up to 5 miles, your neighborhood, by offender. The app has different coding for offenders and predators. A lot of people are interested in this aspect. Available in the app store for Apple and Android.
* FDLE App missing person searches MEPIC’s active cases only. So not the FCIC missing persons or cases that have not been sent to MEPIC.
* The Foundation website has an Advisory Board page.
* If the Board wants to see something or wants to change something, please let Ashley know.
* Sheriff McNeil: There is an African American Missing webpage.
* The Foundation has a page “Have you Seen Me?” page. This highlights the long term missing in Florida that MEPIC has.
* Events FDLE is attending will be displayed on website.
* Newsletter page on website offers the ability to subscribe.
* Pete: FDLE realized that we lost a lot of children to water. We work with FEMA to get the alerts out via geolocation. FEMA will take access away if FDLE misuses their system. The Enhanced Missing Child Alert has not had any public pushback about not issuing it. The Alert notifies people in the immediate area and in their community. Public is very receptive to alerts and looking if it is in their backyard.
* Is there a way to notify when the new contests go out?
* The DJJ runs the contest. DOE and FDLE advertise for the contests by sending out emails, memo’s, advertising on websites. We can send out the contest information for the poster contest to the Advisory Board. We also send it out to other distribution lists like FSA and FASRO.
* The Foundation website now has a safety events page where upcoming events will be listed. The safety events push out a lot of different issues to the public. Stephanie White usually partners with a bloodhound for these events or organizes one. The dogs are the best attraction to drawing kids to the table. Daren the DARE lion also joins the table now with the partnership with DARE.
* Karen Mazzola: Can we revisit the question of whether the AB should have a social media account?
* SMAS Hawkins: Facebook was previously made but never used, we could revisit the idea and see if one or several people would volunteer to manage it; this could not be FDLE members. If a member wants to volunteer to manage a social media account?
  + - Stephanie White volunteers
* Recent uptick in views
* Please contact Ashley Bullard or SMAS Hawkins with any requests to add info to the website

**Newsletter Review/New Newsletter Suggestions**

* Chairperson Campbell: Does the board agree we should keep “No waiting time” as the #1 myth?
  + Could fool readers into thinking it’s the same list
  + We should take that risk.
* Does anyone have suggestions of myths to add?
  + Suggestion of “stranger abductions are the most common”
    - Correct, but we don’t want to encourage the public to be unwary of strangers.
* No other comments on Myths and Misconceptions. This newsletter is mostly stats and not topics.

Suggestions for future article topics?

* Highlight the telecommunicator training.
  + SMAS Hawkins: Suggest a rotating “perspective” feature with stories from the POV of various people involved in missing cases.
    - A parent
    - An investigator
    - A child, potentially an autistic child
    - A sibling
    - An analyst (potentially a story of a successful direct recovery)
  + Suggestion to introduce a MEPICAB member each issue.
  + Terri Lynn volunteers to interview parents over phone and write an article.
* Signup sheet for newsletter articles passed around.
* Frank Williams: Many instances for runaway kids have sex trafficking and sexual victimization. Is there any topics like this that have been discussed in depth with the Board? The volume of children being victimized is greater than the public understands. It may be worthwhile that when missing children alerts go out for runaways that we include that they may be trafficked. Might help us recover them. Some John’s and adult females will report underage children if they find out.
* Jon Roddenberry: When we talk about imminent danger, some of the calls indicate they are being trafficked. This affects the alert that goes out.
* Assistant Chief Gilliam: Is law enforcement aware of this? Did they seem aware of the signs of being trafficked?
* Frank Williams: No. There are still misconceptions on runaways, especially repeat runaways. The 2nd or 3rd runaway attempt and they are not reported anymore.
* FDLE: Would Frank Williams be willing to do a presentation on human trafficking?
* Dan: Can we find a way to bring in an article to Newsletter for trafficking. What is imminent danger? What to look for?
* Frank Williams: He would be happy to do a human trafficking presentation to the Board that could then parts could be disseminated through the newsletter. The presentation is very sobering and may not be for everyone.
* Brianna Ratkiewicz: DJJ did a large study on juveniles that were trafficked after going into custody. Will have to speak to DJJ chain of command before moving forward with possible collaboration.
* FDLE: We will facilitate communication with Mr. Frank Williams and DJJ.
* Assistant Chief Gilliam: Can Legal come in and do a quick 15-minute presentation on Sunshine Law for new and existing members?
* Susan Smith: FDLE came and did a presentation but one of the things the presenter did was carry two cards. One a regular business card and the other a dummy card such as Coco’s Nails in case someone went through their wallet.

**Motion to approve newsletter. Karen Mazzola**

**Motion seconded.**

**Vote: All Approved. No opposed.**

**Nomination forms**

* SMAS Hawkins: Question arose last June as to whether the board should loosen definition for tracking award, or create a second category to allow both tracking and detection to be awarded separately. Should we consider a new category for K9? Also review all existing nominations and criteria.
* Karen Mazzola: Are there certain categories that do not get nominations for or only one?
* SMAS Hawkins: There are always categories that do not get nominations or only one. FDLE looks year-round at possible nominations. If there are not nominations that come in, we will reach out to agencies directly. Sometimes individuals do not get nominated for state and then get a national missing person award. Law enforcement will sometimes forget about what happened in the past and not nominate them.
* FDLE: In the past there would be great bus drivers that would not get nominated as they were city bus drivers. Should school bus driver category be expanded to include city bus drivers? Do we want to change the criteria to be broader for these nomination forms?
* Chairperson Campbell: Should we address nomination criteria for each award one by one?
  + Citizen of the Year
    - Should we remove wording requiring nominee’s actions to be “exceptional” or “extraordinary”? etc. Can we have something that starts minute that leads to a recovery. Such as one comment to a law enforcement officer leads to a recovery. Does the language make people hesitate to nominate a person?
    - FDLE: The more awareness of Florida Missing Children’s Day and our outreach, the more engagement we get. With more people pushing these ideas to law enforcement, school boards, etc. the more engagement naturally comes back.
    - One motion to approve all changes regarding the topic across all forms.
    - PPA Warren: If the purpose is to cast a broader net, could we test it this year and review next year?
    - Decision to leave this award criteria unaltered
  + School Bus Driver
    - Could simply exclude “school” from the criteria to allow us to include city bus drivers if one is nominated.
    - SMAS Hawkins: To be fair, other bus drivers/trains can be considered for Citizen of the Year if something happens.
      * This has traditionally been one of the foundational awards for FMCD due to the fact that they work directly with children.
    - Decision to remove criteria referring to action being “exceptional, extraordinary, outstanding, or heroic”.
    - Keep the school bus criteria.
  + Jimmy Ryce Trailing Team of the Year
    - Stephanie White: we shouldn’t take away from the history of the Jimmy Ryce award, but the electronics detection dog considered last year also deserved to be recognized.
    - Do not modify the Jimmy Ryce Trailing Team of the Year Award.
* We could create a more generalized K-9 award, or we could create a further generalized award that person/K9 could fit in.
  + - Terri Lynn: We could create another Jimmy Ryce “Exceptional Service” award.
    - Move forward with a general miscellaneous award to include both K9’s and individuals instead of K9’s only. That way there is not a year where there are no applicants. There are no requirements that say every award has to be filled. However, the Board tries to award every category.
    - Chairperson Campbell: Do we have any limitations on number of awards?
      * Foundation pays for award costs.
    - PPA Warren: We have to think of the length of the ceremony.
      * SMAS Hawkins: We may be able to add one award, but likely not two.
    - Suggestion to create a general award for human or animal
      * SMAS Hawkins: we can spitball ideas, then send out a SurveyMonkey to all AB members

**Motion to remove “exceptional, extraordinary, outstanding, or heroic” criteria.**

**Motion seconded; passed.**

* + Other concerns regarding awards:
    - Ashley Bullard: Wording in Law Enforcement Task Force/Team Award specifies that nominees are sworn; however, we have in the past awarded teams that include analysts.

**Motion to replace “be a sworn, active law enforcement officer” with “include a sworn, active law enforcement officer”. Karen Mazzola**

**Motion seconded; Spence. Passed. No objections.**

**MEPIC Update**

* Introducing SCIAS Cutler as a new MEPIC supervisor
* Jon Roddenberry: Alerts are only a smart part of what MEPIC does. They open cases from DCF, law enforcement, and the public. These cases start getting worked with analytic checks, investigative checks, and locating the person. The work with local LE to follow up on leads and investigative support. Local law enforcement does not realize what MEPIC can provide to the agency. Especially the small agencies in rural areas that do not have the resources to run all the check. So far this year, 538 cases have been opened. We have had some direct recoveries due to analysts digging through old information and other avenues. Per month MEPIC averages opening 2200 cases.
* How can MEPIC market the information to agencies about resources?
* Jon Roddenberry: They have met with Pensacola region to provide a MEPIC presentation to the CART meetings. MEPIC is planning on partnering with CART further and providing more presentations about resources to law enforcement.
* Florida Missing Children’s Day will be at the Capitol again this year. We have been informed that we should not have any problems with construction as they will try to work with us. More information about changes would be down the road.

**Motion to adjourn.**

**Seconded; passed.**

**Adjournment at 4:15 p.m.**