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**Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)**

**Missing Endangered Persons Information Clearinghouse**

**Advisory Board**

**In-Person Meeting**

**Monday, September 9, 2024**

**12 PM to 2 PM (EST)**

**Mission Statement:** Together with the citizens of Florida, we promote the safety of children and other vulnerable populations through public and private collaborations.

**Meeting Minutes**

**Chairperson: Karen Mazzola**

**Welcome**

**Meeting begins 11:59 AM.**

**Roll Call**

**FDLE Attendees:** AC Phillips, SAC Watson, ASAC Geyer, Ashley Bullard, Mehgen Peoples, Abdel Cortez, Megan McDonald, Joshua Taylor

**Board Members:** Chairperson Karen Mazzola, Vice-Chairperson Darry Lloyd, Mr. Dan Campbell, Mr. Bill Corfield, Ms. Stephanie White, Major Jerry Hensley, Ms. Jessica Janasiewicz, Sheriff Walt McNeil, Mr. Brian Moore, Mr. John Pitta, Mrs. Peggy Pitta, Ms. Hilary Sessions, Ms. Brandi Manley, Dr. Kim Spence, Mr. Darry Lloyd, Major Tracy Clark, Mr. Mark Young, Ms. Terri Lynn, Ms. Fran Carlin-Rogers, Ms. Susan Smith, Ms. Julie Collins, Dr. Katherine Gomez, Mr. Logan McGee, Major Sean Visners, Travis Paulk, Kristin Morgan, Captain Peter Bergstresser, Major David Bernhardt

**Non-Board Members:** Kenneth Tucker, Shelly Pedraza

**Organizations and Individuals Represented:** Florida PTA, Office of the State Attorney 8th Circuit, Target Corporation, Florida Public Safety Institute, St. Petersburg Police Department, Florida Association of School Administrators, Leon County Sheriff’s Office, Florida Association of District School Superintendents, Governor’s Legal Office, UCF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, The Jimmy Ryce Center for Victims of Predatory Abduction, Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Florida Department of Children and Families, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, impacted missing families, and private citizens

**Approve 6/7/2024 Meeting Minutes**

* Chief Lloyd moves to approve minutes. Mark Young seconds the motion. The Board votes in favor; the previous meeting minutes are approved.

Chairperson Mazzola reminds members to email GA II Peoples with updated contact information.

**Foundation President Tucker**

* FMCD Foundation President Tucker discusses challenges with funding Florida Missing Children’s Day (FMCD) and the need to expand donation solicitation with sheriff offices and police departments.
* His suggestion is to aim for consistent small donations from more local departments rather than counting on big donations which are dwindling in number due to lack of funding to those departments.
* Hilary Sessions suggests looking to families for statements to use in fundraising; President Tucker explains that this has been suggested in Foundation meetings as well and may be a helpful addition.
* President Tucker makes a general invitation for any suggestions regarding fundraising, and for any people interested in joining the Foundation to contact the Foundation using their email address.

**FMCD After Action**

* Dan Campbell mentioned the wait time for food after the FASRO reception wrapped up its speeches early; people were left waiting for Mission’s scheduled time slot to begin and some left.
* Stephanie White expressed appreciation for the acknowledgement of the fallen bloodhounds via signage at the ceremony.
* There was a consensus by Board members that rehearsal went well and was suitably organized.
* A member notes that FASRO reception was crowded, and the tables were too close together. He also suggests nametags or place cards for invited attendees so that they can be more easily identified to each other.
* Dr. Gomez brought a guest who was new to the ceremony to provide a fresh perspective. She suggested that the ceremony spend more time during the ceremony on the topic of the families.
  + Mrs. Pitta suggests adding a sentence worth of information to the family part of the ceremony to familiarize attendees. There is another suggestion to provide written information, and another to include information like what part of the state each family is from. There is a question of what the families think about the time spent on the ceremony. Hilary Sessions suggests a mention of how old the missing or deceased persons would be today.
  + There was discussion of the live broadcast on the Florida Channel and the one-hour time limit due to that. There was additionally a question regarding the priority of having the live viewers; how many people watch it live versus watching it after the fact?
  + SMAS Bullard says that the Board can request their statistics, but that any change to this must go through FDLE’s legal team.
  + SMAS Bullard says that the families can be asked what information they are interested in or comfortable with sharing during the ceremony in line with the suggestions for more information. She suggests a family member ask them this.
  + She explains that the date missing and place missing from can be announced aloud during the ceremony, but that other information may be sensitive and must be cleared.
  + This year, the printed program included year missing next to each missing or deceased person’s name.
  + Suggestion to include a PowerPoint with more information; SMAS Bullard explains that this cannot be included on stage because the video cameras will not be able to record it properly.
* Dan Campbell notes that the program this year was very good and even better than previous years.

**FMCD Location Discussion**

* GA II Peoples clarified that the Board will not decide the venue for FMCD but can provide input that will be considered when making the final determination.
* Points made by members in favor of the Tallahassee Automobile Museum include parking, air conditioning, space, accessibility, and hosting the safety fair on-site.
* Points made by members in favor of the Capitol include the symbolism and significance of the location, the proximity to the legislative cabinet, and the occasional presence of the Governor.
* Clarification from SMAS Bullard that we already send invitations to all Florida Senate members and representatives.
* AC Phillips suggests moving the event around the state.
  + There is a question of how much press coverage there is on the event in Tallahassee and how much might be gained by moving it elsewhere. GA II Peoples explains that in addition to the Florida Channel, there is additional media present at the event every year. Dan Campbell adds that media travel in from out of town to interview families after the event.
  + Renee Strickland suggests local media events, maybe with the bloodhounds, maybe with local families, around the state, instead of moving FMCD.
* Major Hensley asks about the safety fair hosted at FMCD and whether it is a large factor in choosing the event location.
  + AC Phillips and SMAS Bullard explain that though the safety fair is a good educational opportunity, FDLE holds safety fairs around the state throughout the year and collectively reach over 2,000 children throughout the year compared to an estimated 400 at this year’s FMCD.
* SMAS Bullard explains that moving would mean our local contacts and business relationships will not be accessible and we would be far more reliant on people from local departments being available to help us, which is not a guarantee.

**Nomination Forms**

* Human trafficking: Should the Board use the federal or state definition?
* Members have received copies of our nomination forms and information on the federal and state definitions of human trafficking. They have been asked to review them on their own time and provide any feedback to GA II Peoples by October 1st via email.

**2025 Newsletter /Future Topics**

* Article topics are needed: Members are encouraged to make suggestions.
* Dr. Spence has a contact who is interested in providing statistics and other information on each newsletter. She has information on a training for child safety regarding children with disorders, water safety, and other information.
* SMAS Bullard requests a copy of the information on this and new statistics on autism mortality for FDLE review. Dr. Spence will look into this.
* SMAS Bullard makes a general request that when members find new research out which is relevant to missing persons issues, that they forward it to FDLE for our use in safety publications and other work.
* Dr. Spence suggests creating a simple and brief training, PSA, poster, or similar that can be given to places like hotels with pools, waterparks, etc., that can teach or give reminders about basic water safety in a manner accessible to employees or the public.
* SMAS Bullard explains that most of our training efforts are directed to state or local agencies but that it may be possible to create a PSA with basic information for the public.
* There is a question of whether information on fundraising for FMCD can be included in the newsletter. Mehgen Peoples explains that this would have to be approved by FLDE’s legal department.
* Foundation President Tucker may be able to write an article about fundraising.
* Julie Collins explains that she has resources in education that may be able to write an article if a topic was identified which related in some way to education.

**MEPIC Update by Josh Taylor**

* So far in 2024 the stats on alerts and direct recoveries are as follows:
* 5 amber alerts with 3 direct recoveries.
* 12 EMCAs with 5 direct recoveries.
* 43 MCAs with 4 direct recoveries.
* 144 silver alerts with 10 direct recoveries.
* 109 purple alerts with 1 direct recovery.
* There were additional dozens of alerts worked on where the subject was found before the alert was issued.
* Josh clarifies that by far, most of these issued alerts have been followed by a recovery of some kind, but that many were not a direct result of the issued alert.

**CART update by ASAC Geyer.**

* Upcoming CART meeting in December in conjunction with the ICAC Conference.
* There is ongoing work to maintain relationships between CART and local agencies.
* There are after-action meetings set up to share information learned during local cases with agencies statewide.
* FDLE is seeking a software solution to better track leads in missing investigations.
* Dr. Gomez comments that recently in trainings she has attended, she has seen a shift in the language used which lines up with the Board’s efforts toward emphasizing that runaway children are missing and are in danger. They are less often called runaways in a dismissive manner and more often considered missing.

**Meeting adjourns at 1:45PM.**