

*Kevin Austin, Chairman of Board
David Moxley, Vice Chairman
Cliff Collins, Commissioner
Marion Welborn, Commissioner
Frank Zachary, Commissioner*



*Ed Powell, County Attorney
Lisa Hughes, County Manager
Tanya Gentry, Clerk to the Board*

COUNTY MANAGER'S REPORT

February 2, 2024

Medicaid Expansion

During the NCCCMA Conference this week, NCACC Executive Director Kevin Leonard and NCDHHS Secretary Cody Kinsley talked about Medicaid Expansion upon other NCDHHS issues. Exhibit A contains a handout they provided.

Also, during the NCACC Update, they talked about the focus group that has been put together of Commissioners and Managers to discuss the issue all counties are facing of having children in DSS custody staying in DSS offices due to no space in foster homes or facilities. Yadkin County Board Chair, Kevin Austin is co-chairing this statewide focus group. The State has plans and funds available to help with emergency placements.

District Grants

All of the District Grant information was provided to the State last week and Valarie Hunter acknowledged receipt of it and stated she would let Lindsey know if she needs additional information or has questions. Once they confirm they have everything they need, they will send the County a Memorandum of Agreement to sign.

Vehicle Accidents

Three County vehicles were involved in accidents this week, two Sheriff's vehicles had run-ins with deer and an ambulance hit a bollard.

Vacancy Report

This week we have 22 vacancies, excluding the 2 of the 5 positions that were created in December. Over half of these positions (12) are in Human Services. Human Services consistently has the highest number of openings within the County and has hovered around 11-12 vacancies for the last few months. Two of these vacancies are in the Sheriff's Office and 4 in Emergency Services.

Solid Waste RFP

Brock held a pre-proposal meeting for vendors interested in responding to the Solid Waste RFP for collection services and transfer station operations. There were 4 vendors in attendance.

Professional Structural Engineering Services RFQ

The RFQ for Professional Structural Engineering Services to evaluate the cracks in the walks and floors in the Detention Center was issued last week. Letters of Intent were due today and 4 engineering firms submitted letters stating they intend to provide their qualifications for consideration.

VIPER Tower and Communications Center RFP

The RFP for project manager services for the VIPER Tower and Communications Center will be issued next week. It is in its final review.

Legislative Goals

It's time to start thinking about Legislative Goals to submit to the NCACC. The submission process will kick-off in May.

Animal Shelter

The County filed a Petition for Funds in Civil Court this week concerning boarding and care the Animal Shelter provided 4 dogs that were taken by Animal Control and cared for a total of 54 days so far. The request for payment is \$5,460. The case is calendared for February 12.

Gadberry Road Property

The Barney Hill Community Council filed a dismissal of the legal action against the County and Clarks Memorial Church concerning property owned by the County on Gadberry Road. This is the property that had multiple deeds from the Armstrongs to the County, Barney Hill Community Council or Clarks Memorial Church.

Upcoming Dates

February 7 at 10am is the Groundbreaking for the new Government Building on Elm Street. **March 4 at 1pm** is the Groundbreaking at the EMS Outpost in Jonesville.

March 27, 12:30pm-2pm, will be the NCACC District 18 Meeting in Forsyth County. More details to come. County Advocacy Days will be held in **June** over 2 days (evening & next morning) in Raleigh, like last year.

The NCACC Annual Conference will be held **August 8-10** in Forsyth County.



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Focus Items for County and City Managers

DHHS' priorities remain behavioral health and resilience, child and family wellbeing, and a strong and inclusive workforce. As we lean into our priorities, we will focus on (1) keeping vulnerable populations, including older adults or disabled people, safe and well, (2) youth health, (3) ensuring a stable Medicaid that invests in health and makes NC healthier, (4) strengthening the early childhood education system, and (5) improving service delivery.

NC Medicaid for More People

314,000 people have gained health insurance through Medicaid expansion; 87% of those enrolled were automatically enrolled. It is making a difference in their lives. Already, 150K prescriptions have been filled by new beneficiaries.

Supporting our County DSS Partners

- **DHHS distributes financial support to counties to compensate for their efforts in Medicaid expansion.** DHHS distributed over \$8.3M to counties to prepare for expansion, and continues to distribute about \$1.7M monthly to counties to support their implementation efforts, a value that will increase over time and can be used as the county match for eligible Medicaid expenditures.
- **DHHS has decreased county workload through automatic enrollment, increased automation, automated proactive communications, and technical assistance.** Each month, 56K applications and recertifications are being processed automatically with no county caseworker touches. On February 1, NC will become a federally facilitated marketplace determination state so individuals can apply for Medicaid at healthcare.gov, further removing workload and liability from counties. DHHS is providing targeted technical assistance on process improvements and workflow enhancements to county DSS.
- **DHHS has decreased the immediate redetermination workload of County DSS staff by about half** by applying for and receiving a waiver from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to extend eligibility for children under age 19 for recertifications for an additional year.
- **NCDSS is implementing our Regional Support Model**, a holistic approach to meet county DSS' needs through proactive technical assistance. Each of the 7 regional teams will be led by a Regional Director and include 11 program specialists in Child Welfare (3), Child Support (2), Adult Services (2), Economic Services (3), and Business Operations (1).

Serving beneficiaries better through the LME/MCOs

- To better serve the people of North Carolina, reduce complexity, and effectively launch Tailored Plans, **DHHS consolidated the LME/MCOs to four**, Alliance Health, Partners Health Management, Trillium Health Resources, and Vaya Health. Impacted beneficiaries will move to their new LME/MCO on February 1.
- DHHS and the LME/MCOs are actively preparing for **Tailored Plan launch** – including restarting the readiness and testing processes – and we are committed to a July 1, 2024 launch to move beneficiaries into a fully integrated managed care program to best support this population.
- DHHS publishes a monthly **LME/MCO dashboard** of key outcomes of NC's Behavioral Health System. The goal of the dashboard is to publicly track progress on important priorities like reducing the number of children on Medicaid staying in hospital EDs or local DSS offices; reducing the wait time (and ensuring services/supports are in place) for those cleared for discharge from a state facility; and ensuring individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive a service while they wait for a Medicaid Innovations Waiver slot. To access the dashboard and monitor your LME/MCO: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/lmemcotp-dashboardnov/download?attachment>

Strengthening NC Behavioral Health System through a historical investment of \$835M.

- There are many ways to be involved in ensuring more North Carolinians can get care when and where they need it. The recent state budget invests \$835 million in behavioral health and resiliency - \$700 million of which directly supports Governor Cooper's "1 Billion Behavioral Health Roadmap" to better serve people experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, help individuals with behavioral health conditions avoid incarceration, provide services to children with complex needs and to support their families, and to strengthen the behavioral health workforce.
- The department is currently developing its implementation plan for these investments, including how funds will be distributed (e.g., RFP, grants). For more information about on-going funding opportunities with DMHDDSUS, please visit: <https://www.ncdohhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-development-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/mental-health-development-disabilities-and-substance-use-services-grant-opportunities>
- DHHS is also expanding access to school and community-based behavioral health services and specialized treatment settings for children with partners like the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the LME/MCOs.
- We are keeping our county partners, providers, interested parties and the public informed of our progress through a monthly webinar titled "Side By Side with DMHDDSUS." Join the webinars to learn about updates, information, and opportunities for consumers, providers, and the broader public to engage the department on its behavioral health priority.
- Counties should talk with the LME/MCOs about their needs and join the DHHS Crisis Advisory groups here: <https://forms.office.com/g/KEsxyV0tJY>

Supporting Children in DSS Custody

- DHHS expects to launch the **Child and Family Specialty Plan**, a first of its kind statewide health plan to ensure access to comprehensive physical and behavioral health services for Medicaid-enrolled children, youth and families served by the child welfare system, on December 1, 2024. The RFP will be released Spring 2024.
- On January 31, 2024, NCDSS launched the **Emergency Placement Fund**. The \$7.8M fund is intended to temporarily assist county DSS in SFYs 2023-2025 in addressing identified placement needs for children in the custody of the agencies while they await LME location of Medicaid funded treatment options. The goal of the funds is to divert children from staying in DSS offices through promising practices such as the Harnett Model (maintaining a crisis placement through a retainer contract who will accept emergency placements), the Virginia Model (paying a short-term enhanced rate to an identified placement provider that can support a child who needs an exceptional level of supervision), or other local solutions.
- NCDSS implemented the **Kinship Subsidy Program** in November 2023 which provides unlicensed kin providing care to relative children in DSS custody a monthly stipend. Children in foster care do better when placed with kin. DSS goal is to increase the percentage of NC children in foster care living with kin from 25% to 50% in the next four years.

Additional Areas of Interest

- NCDHHS, with DPI, will implement USDA's new permanent summer nutrition program called **"SUN Bucks,"** formerly **Summer EBT**. Many food insecure families will automatically be enrolled.
- Improving/maintaining the health of a community requires the recruitment and retention of a healthcare workforce that reflects the communities in which they work. DHHS has **programs, including loan repayment**, to help rural and underserved communities recruit and retain physicians, nurses, and licensed behavioral health specialists. Find out more on our website.
- **High-quality child care** is essential to North Carolina's economy and our future. With federal funding coming to an end, consistent, long-term investments are needed to help our child care programs stay open and teachers in classrooms. Share stories of what is happening to early education and child care in your community with policymakers. Work with local Chambers of Commerce and SmartStart to find solutions that work for employers, families and your community.