

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD



Board Members

Mr. John Blalock
Ms. Carmelita Coleman
Mr. John Davenport, Jr., PE
Dr. James Doub, OD
Dr. Palmer Edwards, MD
Dr. Brooke Griffith
Dr. Calvert Jeffers, Jr., DVM
Dr. Charles Massler, DDS
Dr. Linda L. Petrou, PhD
Ms. Sharon Pettiford, RN
Ms. Sharon A. Rimm, LCSW
Dr. Peter Robie, MD
Mr. J. Phil Seats, R.Ph., MBA
Dr. Ricky Sides, DC
Ms. Gloria Whisenhunt, Commissioner

Chair

Ms. Heather Parker

Vice Chair

Mr. Fleming El-Amin,

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES HYBRID BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 7, 2024

Board Members Present

Mr. John Blalock, Ms. Carmelita Coleman, Dr. James Doub, Dr. Palmer Edwards, Mr. Fleming El-Amin, Dr. Calvert Jeffers, Dr. Charles Massler, Ms. Heather Parker, Dr. Linda Petrou, Ms. Sharon Pettiford, Dr. Peter Robie

Board Members Present via Hybrid

Dr. Brooke Griffith, Ms. Sharon Rimm

Board Members Absent

Mr. John Davenport, Mr. J. Phil Seats, Dr. Ricky Sides, Ms. Gloria Whisenhunt

Staff Present

Ms. Shontell Robinson, Mr. Joshua Swift, Ms. Lorrie Christie, Ms. Tanya Donnell, Ms. Christa Smith, Ms. Nihya Payne, Ms. Kathryn Bullock

Guests Present

None.

Call to Order

On Wednesday, February 7, 2024, the Forsyth County Health and Human Services Board held its regularly scheduled bi-monthly hybrid meeting. The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Ms. Heather Parker at 5:33 p.m.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed by all.

Welcome New Board Member

Ms. Parker welcomed the newest Health & Human Services Board member, Ms. Carmelita Coleman to her first in-person meeting.

Consideration of Board Minutes for December 6, 2023

The minutes from the December 6, 2023 Health and Human Services Bi-monthly Hybrid Board Meeting were reviewed. A discussion regarding revisions to the minutes was held. Public Health Director Joshua Swift revised information on page 11 and 12 for accreditation purposes.

Ms. Parker requested a motion to approve the minutes with the changes. Dr. Petrou made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. El-Amin seconded the motion. A quorum was present. The motion carried and the minutes were approved with the changes with 13 votes in favor.

Public Comment Period

None.

Deputy County Manager's Comments – Ms. Shontell Robinson *(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)*

Announcements

Ms. Robinson announced that this was the first meeting for Ms. Christa Smith as the new Forsyth County Department of Social Services Director. Ms. Robinson congratulated Ms. Smith and the board members gave a round of applause.

Ms. Robinson also announced that Public Health Director, Joshua Swift received a Health Promoter Award at the 2024 Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration and Award Ceremony.

Strategic Planning Process

Ms. Robinson announced that work has begun on the Health & Human Services Strategic Plan. An initial planning meeting with the directors occurred on November 28, 2023. Dr. Steve Orton from the Institute for Public Health has been contracted to assist with planning. There is a cross-sectional team from across Health & Human Services. Four sessions have been planned. The length of time for each meeting depends upon the amount of time it takes with the consultant. January 26, February 2, February 23 and March 8 are the next planned meetings. Ms. Parker and Mr. El-Amin are participating in some of the sessions. Ms. Robinson shared that the goal is to have one plan in order to focus on one vision and one mission. Ms. Robinson added that Ms. Nihya Payne who is the Health and Human Services Evaluation & Planning Manager and her team are working behind the scenes to assist with planning. Ms. Robinson wanted to make sure everyone knows that the Health & Human Services newsletter is a public document, so please share. The HHS team will continue going out into the communities at least once a month so information can be shared. This includes the rural communities as well.

Ms. Parker added that she was impressed with the way the facilitator engaged the group and the group was excited to work with him. Mr. El-Amin shared that through the help of the facilitator, he could see the consolidation working to eliminate silos and work together with more conduciveness.

Health and Human Services Evaluations Projects – Ms. Nihya Payne, Health & Human Service & Evaluation & Planning Manager

(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)

Ms. Nihya Payne begin by announcing that the town of Rural Hall will be hosting a Shred & Med event on May 4 from 9 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Members of the community can have documents shredded and drop off medication to be disposed of.

Ms. Payne shared that her team consists of two very hard-working Business Process Analysts, Ms. Barbara Knotts and Ms. Destane Williams. Ms. Payne and her team have been charged with exploring additional ways to make the campus become more efficient

Ms. Payne reported that she and her team have been working on two activities that will help advance services towards integration, resource sharing and customer centered approaches.

The first activity was to add three kiosk check-in stations to the DSS lobby. The kiosk allows customers to quickly check in for one or more services, and it reduces wait times and eliminates long lines. Six months after the kiosks were deployed, a customer survey was conducted using the five-star rating approach. The survey helped identify if the process was user-friendly and if it created any barriers. A lot of excellent feedback was received around checking in at the kiosk, overall visit and the customer service delivery. Kiosks will be added across the HHS Campus. Ms. Robinson added that this process will be a centralized intake portal that will help minimize the process for customers with one entry.

Ms. Payne reported that the second activity was a Health & Human Services Bridging the Gap Employee Resource Fair. The purpose was to bring HHS staff together to learn more about resources available on this campus. The Resource Fair was a huge success and Ms. Payne will be planning this as an annual event.

Mr. El-Amin asked how many people took the survey regarding the kiosk and Ms. Payne reported that one hundred customers took the survey, and it ran from December 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. Dr. Jeffers asked prior to the kiosk being deployed how many navigators have been used to assist customers in the lobby. Ms. Payne responded one; however, when customers come in now, they can go straight to the kiosk if they choose to.

Ms. Payne reported, with the kiosk implementation, DSS was able to use the data to reclass seven positions in the Economic Services Division. Ms. Smith added that these staff members received a pay increase and the process was made to be more efficient.

Director of Social Services Comments – Ms. Christa Smith

(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)

Medicaid Expansion

Ms. Smith reported that the open enrollment period was November 1, 2023 through January 16, 2024. The expected foot traffic was not increased; however, there was a drastic increase in electronic applications. In December 2023, there were 2855 applications compared to 1665 in December 2022. As of January 30, 2024, 2987 applications have been taken compared to 1871 in January 2023. She also reported that recruitment is going well with filling the Medicaid Expansion positions and that 9 out of 33 are left to be filled. Medicaid staff has taken advantage of the overtime opportunities to help lag time and ensure that the citizens of Forsyth County receive benefits in a timely manner.

In your handout, you will find a link for the Medicaid Expansion dashboard, feel free to explore it. It will show you the number of adults who are enrolled in Medicaid Expansion. You can see information from Forsyth County as well statewide information. In December 2024, 272,937 enrolled and the majority were by automatic conversion. By January 2024, there were 314,101 statewide and 10,500 countywide and by January 2024 there were 11,900. This will trend up for a while before it levels off.

Dr. Petrou asked what the leveling off point will be and Ms. Smith responded that the best estimates we have were taking data from other states. In reviewing other states, who led the pathway, statistics showed a forty percent increase nationwide. You can review age groups, sex, ethnicity and race on the dashboard.

Forsyth County by Age Group and Sex

- The largest age group and race are white ages 19-21
- Males (44.1%) are represented less than females (55.9%)
- Ethnicity largest group is “not Hispanic” (84.5%)
- By race, largest group is 51.9%

Recruitment and Retention

Ms. Smith announced that the deputy director’s position has been posted. She reported that her division directors are working hard on retaining employees by offering events that can bring cohesiveness to their groups and to the agency. Activities have included a hot cocoa bar, pancake breakfast and end of year luncheons.

Adult Protective Services Multi-Disciplinary Team (APS MDT) Material Release

After surveying other counties and discovering what has worked for them, FC Adult Services is bringing the concept of the Multi-Disciplinary Teams statewide. Ms. Smith reported that Forsyth County has already been practicing this concept for a while and she is excited to see what the state does with it.

- **The Forsyth County Elder Abuse Task Force** meets monthly with Law Enforcement, District Attorney, Medical Staff, Adult Protective and Guardianship Services to discuss trends and challenges to make sure partners are in place to assist Adult Protective Services issues.
- **Adult Services Ethics Committee** meets to discuss Adult Services cases which present ethical challenges to develop the best service plan.

- **Partners/Adult Services Division/Behavioral Health Monthly Collaboration** meets between various Partners Health LME/MCO (Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organizations) and members of the ASD staff to discuss shared clients who have high acuity needs and engage in service planning.

Dr. Robie asked if there are contact persons from Social Services at the hospitals to answer questions and Ms. Smith responded that there are Medicaid Eligibility Specialists deployed to each hospital to actually answer questions and determine eligibility. Ms. Smith added that there is a potential opportunity to deploy Food & Nutrition Eligibility Specialists to Atrium Health.

Mr. El-Amin asked if there are any issues with undocumented individuals and Ms. Smith responded there are a number of issues that arise with undocumented customers. One is making sure they receive the same services as a legally documented adult.

Director of Public Health Comments – Mr. Joshua Swift

(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)

WeCare Bus: Mr. Swift began by thanking the Forsyth County Commissioners for approving approximately \$100,000 of COVID funds to make upgrades to the WeCare County bus, all county departments will use it. These upgrades will allow more community outreach.

NC Division of Public Health: Public Health will be seeking Behavioral Health funds from the General Assembly in the short session.

Accreditation: The virtual accreditation site visit will be on March 11 and 12 and the in-person accreditation site visit will begin on March 13. Mr. Swift will be requesting three Health & Human Services board members to participate on March 13, during the interviews.

Budget Preparations 2025: Public Health is in budget preparations but the tricky factor during this budget season is that Forsyth County Public Health will not receive numbers from the state until mid-February.

Vacancy Rate: Vacancy rate has decreased by half of what it was since January 2023 (from 24% to approximately 12%).

Annual All Hands-on Deck: Mr. Swift reported that the “Annual All Hands-on Deck (AHOD)” started the last week of January. This time is spent in brainstorming sessions where several ideas come from the front-line staff.

Strategic Plan: The implementation of Public Health’s Strategic Plan started in January. The action team is Mr. Swift and the four Assistant Health Directors along with their direct reports. The Health & Human Services Board will be updated on this plan twice a year.

Respiratory Season: Mr. Swift reported that we are approaching the end of the respiratory season in North Carolina. Public Health has been advised to wrap up the administration of the vaccine for RSV. Mr. Swift reports that they have a small amount of the vaccine for children on hand through the VFC (Vaccines for Children) program. He plans to request more in the 2024-2025 budget.

Community Health Services

WIC (Women, Infants and Children): Public Health is preparing for the State Audit. Forsyth County breastfeeding average is higher than the state average. Forsyth County's average is 40% and the state's average is 38%.

Lab: COLA (Commission on Office Laboratory Accreditation) and CLIA (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments) Accreditation site visit was held on February 1, 2024. Staff are working through a few corrective action issues that were identified.

School Health: Mr. Swift reported that planning for spring immunization events to be held at the high need schools has begun. The event is planned for the Saturday before and the Saturday after school begins. Mr. Swift estimates that 200 to 300 vaccines will be given. When the new school year begins, there is a 30-day window for all students to receive their vaccines.

Environmental Health

Vacancies in Food, Lodging and Institutions increased to six. The team continues to complete FDA (Food & Drug Administration) Retail Regulatory program standards.

Onsite Wastewater: Mr. Swift shared that the Onsite Wastewater team received a ground penetrating radar from regional ARPA funds which will increase accuracy of field work and help prevent injuries.

Internal Health Services

Dental: Patients seen in the clinic increased due to Medicaid Expansion. Preventive Dental Health will celebrate their 50-year anniversary.

Emergency Preparedness: Reassessing inventory of preparedness items and personal protective equipment supply as well as tabletop exercises. The goal is to maintain a six-month supply.

EPI (Expanded Programme on Immunization): Continuing outreach in the community - doing food desert surveys. Churches and food banks use this information to better focus their efforts.

Quality Assurance/Medical Records: QR (Quick Response) codes installed in patient exam rooms and waiting areas.

Personal Health Services

Clinics: Increasing capacity due to nurses completing trainings in child health enhanced role and STI enhanced role.

Refugee Clinic: Demand has increased.

Vacancy: Only one nurse vacancy in clinics.

Private Health Insurance Billing: Goal to start billing is July 1, 2024.

Preventive Health Services

POSSE: Starting education and testing again at the Forsyth County Detention Center.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: Hosted employee fitness nights. Youth and parents participated in Painting with a Twist. There are now six healthy corner stores.

Coalitions and Community Engagement: Added two new Minority Diabetes Prevention Programs - expanded to Surry and Yadkin counties. Infant Mortality Reduction Committee will promote and participate in the Annual Walk. Award from the state of \$500,000 per year for the next two years to partner with Guilford County to focus on Infant Mortality Reduction.

Healthy Forsyth: Planning for Community Conversation Part II in the Spring of 2024.

Dr. Robie thanked Mr. Swift for working so hard with the RSV vaccine. He shared that several pregnant women are seen at the Downtown Health Plaza who are uninsured and they need the RSV vaccine. The vaccine is recommended between 32 to 36 weeks of pregnancy, the infant is vaccinated at birth with the hopes that this will reduce the infant mortality rates.

Behavioral Health Services Comments – Ms. Denise Price

(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)

Pharmacy: Continuing to see an increase in dispensing of medications prescribed by the Employee Wellness Clinic, with the first fill of a prescription on the formulary being dispensed at no cost to the employee. Thus far, Medicaid expansion has not resulted in less people coming to the pharmacy; however, more of the cash paying customers are beginning to use Medicaid.

Stepping Up: In January, four participants graduated. Ms. Price thanked Mr. John Blalock and Commissioner Whisenhunt for attending the graduation and invited everyone to attend the next graduation.

Amber Humble, the Behavioral Health Services Supervisor, has been appointed to a North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services Advisory Committee focusing on individuals who are justice involved.

Substance Use Health Education

Stigma Index Survey: Ms. Price reported that they have been working on this survey with technical assistance from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), Shatterproof, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and others. There were 254 responses to the English survey and 15 responses to the Spanish survey. The national partners consider these results to be good for the population size of our community.

- 90% of those surveyed identified as either having a mental health challenge or a family member or close friend does
- 58% of those responding believe that a person can still be in recovery even if they do not abstain from substances
- 85% of those responding believe that everyone should have access to naloxone/ Narcan
- 97% of those responding believe that people can recover from substance use disorder with proper support
- Medication Assisted Treatment is widely accepted.

Lessons from A Glance: Ms. Price reported that they recognized the need to be careful with language and terminology, such as active addiction and substance use disorder. Also, an alarming number of individuals responding to the survey reported that they do not know where they can obtain Narcan/naloxone so we need to be deliberate in communicating that no-cost Narcan/naloxone can be obtained at: Forsyth County Pharmacy, Public Health, vending machine at the detention center, and by contacting Annie Vasquez. Further, it can be obtained at no cost

from Twin City Harm Reduction Collective, the local certified Syringe Service Program and can be purchased at over the counter at retail stores for approximately \$50 per kit.

Forsyth County Overdose Calls

EMS Overdose Responses:

- 223 from 12/23-1/24
- 136 males, 83 females, 4 unspecified
- Ages 1- 86
- Age 3 youngest to be administered naloxone
- Age 78 oldest to be administered naloxone
- 13 deaths (ages 26-61, 10 males, 3 females)

Mr. Blalock asked where/how would a one year old have an overdose. Ms. Price responded that it is usually accidental.

Ms. Robinson asked Ms. Smith if DSS is seeing reports on overdose infant deaths and Ms. Smith responded to say that the children are normally transported to the hospital and since the hospitals are mandated reporters, they reach out to DSS to make a child abuse report.

EMS Overdose Responses

Ms. Price reported that when EMS responds, they may not know exactly what is causing the medical distress. If someone is unconscious, EMS may not assume an overdose. If there is any indication this could be an opioid overdose, they will administer the naloxone/Narcan.

When a person overdoses on opioids, the opioids sit on top of the receptors and the naloxone or Narcan bounces opioids off of the receptors enough to restore breathing.

Ms. Coleman asked if there is an emergency response team and Ms. Price responded that the Behavioral Evaluation Assessment and Response Team (BEAR) operates within the Winston-Salem Fire Department and responds to behavioral health crises as an alternative to law enforcement dispatch.

MIH (Mobile Integrated Health) also responds to behavioral health crises and is preparing to onboard four new Peer Support Specialist positions to respond to post overdose responses. MIH paramedics are preparing to be able to administer bridge doses of MAT maintenance in the community if an individual is awaiting connection to a community provider.

Ms. Robinson added that Mobile Integrated Health is operated by the Forsyth County Emergency Medical Services and Opioid Settlement funds are used to fund the new peer positions.

Ms. Carmelita asked how many staff members are on this team. Ms. Price responded, there are seven paramedics and four peer support specialists. The peer support specialists are available to help guide individuals to next steps and assure connections to care.

Dr. Jeffers asked what is the difference between active addiction and substance abuse. Ms. Price stated that Substance Use Disorder is a clinical diagnosis for a condition in which there is an uncontrolled use of a substance despite harmful consequences. Addiction is often used to describe a state of dependence.

Dr. Robie asked is there a way to determine if fentanyl was used in the overdoses. Ms. Price responded fentanyl is in much of the illicit drug supply in our county. We have three pharmacists in the Forsyth County pharmacy with over one hundred years of combined experience and they can't detect the difference between a fake and real pill. Sometimes someone will think they are buying or receiving one drug, but in fact it is a fake pill containing fentanyl.

Dr. Robie asked who is responsible for paying for the Naloxone. Ms. Price responded that Partners has provided Behavioral Health Services with Naloxone to stock the vending machines, and they gave \$100,000 to help purchase last year. The state provides Naloxone on occasion and Twin City Harm Reduction which is our local certified syringe program provides Naloxone as well. They receive it through other avenues that Behavioral Health Services is not eligible for because they only give it to individuals using substances, whereas the County distributes to anyone that wants to have naloxone on hand. Twin City also purchases intramuscular naloxone which costs significantly less than the nasal version. Behavioral Health Services has also been authorized to utilize Opioid Settlement Dollars to purchase naloxone this fiscal year.

Dr. Robie asked if this process is a limitation to the product and Ms. Price responded that our primary manufacturer does have quotas on the amount of generic product (naloxone) that can be purchased at a time. Kathryn Bullock, Pharmacy Manager, closely monitors the inventory on hand so a new order can be placed as soon as they are eligible. This helps us to minimize the cost.

Dr. Edwards asked if there have been reports of Xylazine. Ms. Price responded yes and shared that Xylazine can cause horrific wounds. Ms. Price reported that Xylazine is a veterinary tranquilizer and it is being cut into drugs.

Ms. Price announced that the 2025 funding opportunities opens today for Opioid Settlement dollars and Behavioral Health Maintenance of Efforts dollars. The application process will remain open until March 1, 2024.

Educational Opportunity – Pharmacy **Kathryn Bullock, Pharmacy Manager**
(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)

Ms. Bullock shared that the Forsyth County Pharmacy was originally permitted as the pharmacy for Reynolds Hospital on July 13, 1950, permit was reissued on October 17, 1969. The current location is 650 N. Highland Avenue in the Annex 1 building. Hours of operation 7:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The pharmacy remains open on Thursday nights during the Public Health clinics so customers can get prescriptions filled.

Formulary:

- Limited formulary retail pharmacy which is open to the public
- Prescription inventory budget of \$2.5 million annually
- Primarily stock Behavioral Health medications
- Limited antibiotics and medications for blood pressure, thyroid and diabetes

Ms. Bullock reported that 8,980 prescriptions between July 2023 through December 2023 dispensed as follows: Behavioral Health 65%, Public Health 23%, Wellness 5% and Other 7%.

Payments Accepted

- Cash-the cost of medication including a small dispensing fee
- Insurance-most are accepted including some private, Medicaid, Medicare D and eWIC
- Patient Assistance Program (PAP)-provided by drug manufacturers for uninsured or under insured individuals

Ms. Bullock reported that the Behavioral Health Senior Office Assistant, Carolyn Wheeler, who is very knowledgeable manages the PAP program. Individuals may have to provide tax information and/or pay stubs. The drug manufacturers verify insurance and income. The requirements are set by each company.

Ms. Bullock reported that individuals may be sent to other community resources if the pharmacy is not able to help. Other resources: Crisis Control, Downtown Health Plaza, Community Care Center and Federally Qualified Health Center which is United Health Centers.

The pharmacy also fills medication for prescriptions written by Public Health practitioners. All manufacturers participating in the Medicaid Program must provide medications to the 340B program at reduced prices. This program will help mitigate rising drug prices. The customer has to meet eligibility requirements.

Ms. Bullock reported that the pharmacy provides medication for EMS (Emergency Medical Services) and they dispense Narcan under the NC Standing Order at no cost. The pharmacy also provides Narcan for distribution during community events and to stock the vending machine located in the jail lobby. Ms. Bullock's goal is to be able to supply medication to treat substance use and administer long-acting injectables.

Dr. Edwards asked if the pharmacy has adequate funding. Ms. Bullock stated that she would increase the budget if she could and would offer better prices for substance use customers. Even using Good RX in the communities, the price of substance use treatment medications remain high.

Ms. Price added that the settlement dollars have given them options to go into spaces they previously could not go into and with a small cushion in the Pharmacy budget through Maintenance of Effort (MOE) dollars may be used as well. Dr. Edwards asked if this was a one-time payout. Ms. Price stated these safety net funds have been in place for the past seven years and the settlement dollars have to be applied for annually.

FROST Committee Update -- Mr. John Blalock, Ms. Sharon Rimm

Mr. Blalock informed the Board that there was a great virtual FROST meeting on January 17th. Most of the meeting was used to hear from two non-profit organizations about their free technology applications. The first, Treatment Atlas by Shatterproof, is a free application for those seeking addiction treatment. It offers a very user-friendly way for people to link up with a variety of resources in the community and has an effective needs assessment component to help guide users to the most appropriate resources. The second, Brave App, is another free application aimed at preventing overdose deaths and is a particularly helpful solution for people

at risk of solitary drug use. During the community roundtable part of the last FROST meeting, we were excited to learn that the WSFCS Substance Use and Safety Intervention Specialist had recently been filled after years of being vacant. This resource plans to partner with others in the school system to work on a variety of things such as substance use prevention as well as policies to enhance naloxone supplies in our schools. The next FROST meeting will be held on March 20th at 11:30am and will be in person. The Committee will make sure a reminder is sent out to the Board in advance for anyone interested in joining. Lastly, the Committee is very excited about the next round of Opioid Settlement funding requests and is looking forward to reviewing those applications.

Legislative Committee Update -- Dr. Linda Petrou

(Complete- detailed handout on file in the Administrative Binder)

Dr. Petrou reported that currently the Legislature is out of session. =.

Shadowing Opportunity- Moments of Reflection

None at this time.

Public Health Update Policy on Policies

Mr. Swift apologized to the board for this oversight. He reported that he met with the consultant this afternoon. Although the board approved the Policy on Polices in December 2023, an update was necessary.

The update made to page 2, D, The Health and Human Services Board will annually review this Policy on Policies (GW-01), Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Development Plan Policy (GW-49), and any others deemed necessary to the provision of the essential services of public health.

Ms. Parker asked for a motion to accept the revised Policy on Policies. Dr. Massler made a motion that the revised Policy on Policies be approved, and it was seconded by Dr. Robie. A quorum was present. After question and vote, the motion carried as proposed and revised Policy on Policies was approved with 12 votes in favor.

Adjournment

Ms. Parker asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Petrou made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

SR/tmd **Next Hybrid Meeting: April 3, 2024-5:30 p.m.**