

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD



Board Members

Mr. John Blalock
Ms. Pamela Corbett, MA
Mr. John Davenport, Jr., PE
Dr. James Doub, OD
Dr. Palmer Edwards, MD
Dr. Calvert Jeffers, Jr., DVM
Dr. Charles Massler, DDS
Ms. Heather Parker
Dr. Linda L. Petrou, PhD
Ms. Sharon Pettiford, RN
Ms. Sharon A. Rimm, LCSW
Dr. Peter Robie, MD
Dr. Ricky Sides, DC
Ms. Claudette Weston
Ms. Gloria Whisenhunt, Commissioner

Chair

Mr. J. Phil Seats, R.Ph., MBA

Vice Chair

Mr. Fleming El-Amin, County Commissioner

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING MINUTES June 2, 2021

Board Members Present

Mr. John Blalock, Ms. Pamela Corbett, Mr. John Davenport, 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, Ms. Sharon Rimm, Dr. Peter Robie, Mr. J. Phil Seats, Dr. Ricky Sides, Ms. Claudette Weston, Ms. Gloria Whisenhunt

Board Members Absent

None

Staff Present

Ms. Shontell Robinson, Mr. Joshua Swift, Mr. Victor Isler, Ms. Tanya Donnell, Ms. Lorrie Christie, Ms. Mia Stockton, Ms. Shantele Williams, Ms. Sherita Sutton

Guests Present

None

Call to Order

On Wednesday, June 2, 2021, the Forsyth County Health and Human Services Board held its regularly scheduled monthly meeting virtually. The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Mr. J. Phil Seats at 5:30 p.m.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed by all.

Consideration of Board Minutes for April 7, 2021

The minutes from the April 7, 2021 Health and Human Services Virtual Board Meeting were reviewed. Mr. Seats requested a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Massler made a motion to approve the minutes and Ms. Corbett seconded the motion. A quorum was present. The motion carried and the minutes were approved with 17 votes in favor.

Announcements:

Dr. Robie announced that Mr. Joshua Swift was recognized for being the COVID Hero of the week and asked for a round of applause for all the great work he and his team have done.

Deputy County Manager's Comments – Ms. Shontell Robinson

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

LME/MCO Disengagement Process (Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations)

The Commissioners voted unanimously on 5/20/21 to submit the packet to Secretary Cohen. The goal is to have it submitted within the next 2 weeks. The public comments are still posted on the website. By law, they are required to be posted for 30 days. The expiration date is 6/7/21.

Union, Cabarrus, and Stanley Counties have been approved by Secretary Cohen to realign with Partners. Orange County submitted their packet to Secretary Cohen last week requesting to be realigned with Alliance.

Previously, Mecklenburg County requested to become their own managed care organization; however, they decided to change courses and realign with Alliance. Partners was not able to take Mecklenburg County on at this time.

Cardinal Innovations and Vaya Health announced a consolidation on yesterday pending DHHS (Department of Health & Human Services) approval which would be effective on 6/30/22. It was a surprise consolidation that happened last week.

There is a tentative meeting with NCACC (North Carolina Association of County Commissioners), Secretary Cohen and all of the Cardinal catchment counties on Friday morning (6/4/21). Ms. Robinson had a transition planning team meeting with Partners and the various stakeholders on 6/2/21 at 1:00 p.m. The goal of this team is to ensure a seamless process and hear all voices to help prevent any hiccups.

American Rescue Plan Act

Ms. Robinson shared that staff are working on recommendations to be submitted to the Commissioners. They will receive several from the community as well. Potentially, there will be approximately \$56 million dollars remaining. Staff are working to help determine projects that can be done in the community to help move the needle on the health and human services side and improve the human condition. The team will be going through a more formal strategic plan process with the Commissioners as well as a formal RFP (Request for Proposal) process.

Jail Health Provider Update

The Commissioners voted unanimously to transition from Well Path formerly known as Correct Care to a new jail health provider by the name of NaphCare, effective 9/1/21. Dr. Novacek is working closely with NaphCare, Well Path, and the detention staff to try to ensure a seamless transition. Dr. Novacek can provide an update to the HHS Board during the October meeting.

One of the differences in this contract is the Board of Commissioners is funding a pilot program for a behavioral health unit to be housed in the detention center. It will be a 20-bed unit which will be in addition to the normal mental health professionals there. They will be able to deal with the most severe cases. They will also help those who may be transitioning out of the detention center by providing case management and assisting with making sure their medical needs are met outside of detention. The first year will be a pilot year then the board will decide if they would like to continue funding the program.

Director of Social Services Comments – Mr. Victor Isler
(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)

Corrective Action for SFY 2021-2022 DHHS MOU (Department of Health & Human Services Memo of Understanding)

There will be no corrective action as it relates to the statewide HHS MOU which are our performance measures for this and the next fiscal year. The state has acknowledged this due to the impact of COVID. Performance measures are still being monitored. If there are any opportunities not to pass there will be no corrective action. Performance metrics and plans are still underway to make sure the mark is hit. Mr. Isler gave kudos to his team for the great work that they have done.

Statewide Child Care Spending at 100.2%

Mr. Isler reported that there have been a lot of conversations across the state regarding schools being out for the summer, supervision, quality of care and learning. The state has privileged us to look at full time care for those who previously received part time care which was after school care for K-6.

The spending coefficient was taken up to 1.5% which means the spending will be over the 16-million-dollar allocation; however, when you look at the statewide allocation it is at 100%. The fee is leveled out by the state so there will be no cost to the county. The state has already committed to this because most counties are over the spending coefficient. In showing good stewardship, school aged children were added. The parent fee is waived up to October 2021.

Pandemic EBT (Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer)

The pandemic funds will be issued during the summer months.

ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) State Funds/Governor's Budget

There has been an increase in electronic applications. There is a statewide interest from the Governor's budget to look at FNS (Food & Nutrition Services) technology to help make the application process more efficient for applicants. With the broadband investments that are being pushed by the state, this fits together well.

NC FAST Certification Update

Forsyth County decided to pilot with NC FAST to see how we could move forward with professionalizing the Economic Services staff based on the state's expectation that they will be certified in navigating through the NC FAST system. In the past, there were multiple glitches in this system.

Economic Services Division Program Manager, Ms. Shantele Williams, shared the following update: The core certification has been aligned with the current training integration for staff. In this fiscal year, there have been 11 new hires to take the certification test and they all passed averaging at 91% within 5 days of their hire date. Eighty-one percent of the current Economic Services staff passed on the 1st attempt.

The core certification is a platform through a learning gateway. It is offered over the web with webinars and interaction for staff to learn about NC FAST. Ms. Williams shared that they are happy to see the trends grow and staff are leaving the trainings better informed.

Medicaid Transformation Update

The enrollment across the state was low. Out of the 66,000 beneficiaries in Forsyth County the enrollment rate was approximately 7.9% in comparison to Guilford County who had approximately 8.3%.

If the individuals do not choose, they will be auto-assigned to AmeriHealth Caritas, Healthy Blue, Carolina Complete Health, United Healthcare, or WellCare based on an algorithm. The agency is prepared to field calls to make sure individuals are aware of their auto-assignment and direct them back to the Medicaid Broker who is assigned to Forsyth County.

Emergency Rental Assistance

The agency has been extremely busy with emergency rental assistance. Economic Services Division Director, Ms. Mia Stockton shared the following update:

The program started on 4/5/21 with a collaboration between the City of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. It is for renters only with income of 80% or less of the area median income. There was 12 million dollars allocated which the city and county shared. To date, approximately 653 thousand dollars have been spent. Currently, there are 1975 applications in progress. The application status indicates the following: shows where the applicant is during the submission process; a change based on information received by the agency; applicant has been contacted to verify information; indicates when applicants or landlords are nonresponsive.

When the applicant goes into the Neighborly software system, which is the online process, they will go through a 12-step process. Applicants have been delayed at submitting the information at steps 7, 8, & 9. There is a 3-layer evaluation process of the application. If they are determined to be eligible, based on the 80% or less of the AMI (Area Median Income), the application is submitted to the fiscal team for approval.

There have been a total of 2956 applications submitted, 1975 cases are in progress, 115 cases have been paid, 219 have been withdrawn, 63 cases have been denied. Verification of income is required as well as a lease agreement. Verification of COVID-19 impact period started at 03/2020. The average payout amounts have been approximately \$3,000.00.

Mr. Isler gave Ms. Stockton and her team kudos. In partnership with the city, a federal subsidy was set up in less than approximately 45 days. This was a critical partnership in order to have one process. Ms. Stockton and her team selected a vendor and got this up and running.

Community education had to take place. Several applicants thought that they did not need a reason to be verified and approved. The criteria were issued by the United States Department of Treasury. Applicants in the pipeline who have just signed on and done nothing else have been called by staff to provide assistance. Evictions may still take place due to the time management and proactive measures of the applicant. Once it goes to court it is up to the judge's discretion. All ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accommodations have been accepted and there is a paper application if individuals need to come into the agency to apply. The US Department of Treasury has extended the timeframe through 9/30/2022. The county has already applied for the Emergency Rental Assistance II and been awarded 3.2 million dollars for the next phase which will expire 9/30/2025.

Dr. Massler asked if the 65% acceptance rate is calculated based on the 1975 in progress and the total applications 2956 and Ms. Stockton responded yes and the completion timeframe is on a

case by case situation. Dr. Massler also asked if the payments are retroactive and Ms. Stockton responded after noticing a couple of glitches in the system, the policy was revised to add a 20-day notification requirement that is sent to the applicant. If the applicant does not respond, another notification is sent 10 days prior to the 45th day. If there is no response from the applicant, the case is closed by the 45th day. Dr. Massler asked if the issues come in when the applicants are slow to provide information and Ms. Stockton responded yes, that is the current trend being seen. Mr. Isler added that checks are being written/cut on Tuesdays and Thursdays on a weekly basis.

Dr. Robie complemented Ms. Stockton, Mr. Isler and staff for working hard to process so many applications as quickly as they have, some of which are complicated.

Ms. Whisenhunt asked for clarification on the deadline and Ms. Stockton responded that the guidance from the US Department of Treasury is still in regard to the Emergency Rental Assistance related to COVID-19. Mr. Isler added that the rules may change and the federal government is trying to forecast what the need may be. Once the US Department of Treasury can review the status of the moratoriums and how citizens are responding, there may be changes.

Mr. El Amin asked how the community is notified that these funds are available and what is the involvement of the landlord in this process, and Mr. Isler responded there is an outreach component that is being managed by the city that is reaching out to city and county residents. Direct mailings are going out to residents who have received an eviction notice and to residents who have fallen behind on utility payments. Census data was used to see who fitted in the financial/income criteria. The county and city webpages were also used for outreach.

Based on where we are with the number of applicants and population size, we are within the demand number in comparison to other counties. This is being reviewed by a statewide workgroup. The goal is to get the residents to respond.

DSS and the city participated in an outreach event in the community on 6/5/21 and the City of WS will host an outreach event at the Benton Convention Center on 6/12/21; ERAP application assistance will be provided. DSS will be present as well.

The landlords have to attest to non-evict for 90 days if they accept the funding. The guidelines for this program are not a local decision. They are designed by the US Department of Treasury. Exception: if attempts have been made to work with the landlord and they refuse to accept the funds directly, the funds will go to the tenant with the expectation that the arrears will be paid to the landlord. Mr. El-Amin also asked if Duke Energy has participated in this process. Mr. Isler responded that has been considered; however, direct payments to Duke Energy would not consider the whole person's needs which could create insecurities.

Dr. Petrou asked if people can come back for more funding, why are funds going directly to the tenants, and is there a track record of tenants receiving the funds and actually paying the bills. Mr. Isler responded that this program is treated just as the food & nutrition services payout. The goal of DSS is to determine the eligibility based on the federal guidelines. The policy from the US Department of Treasury has been vetted by the Forsyth County's Legal Team and the Forsyth County Manager's office; therefore, direct payments have been made where necessary. If a claim is placed on a tenant alleging that funds have been misused and no arrear payments or negotiating has been done with the landlord, then a program integrity audit and review will take place.

Ms. Weston shared that she knows two citizens who have received funds and they are very thankful and excited to receive support. She also shared that with the extensive amount of paperwork that has to go into requesting these funds, there should be more confidence placed in the process. Ms. Weston thanked Ms. Stockton for everything.

Mr. Isler shared that the goal is to make sure the board is well informed and thanked Ms. Weston and Dr. Petrou for their perspectives.

Dr. Petrou asked if there is a program for individuals who have to pay a mortgage and Mr. Isler responded yes, the city is offering mortgage assistance through RUMA (Rent, Utilities, Mortgage Assistance) to individuals who meet the criteria.

Mr. Seats asked if we have data to support the misuse of funds and Mr. Isler responded the small amount of data was reviewed based on census tracking to develop a high-level community needs assessment which was required before the funds could be received. There was no solid eviction data. Some of the DSS team had to go do a hand count of the eviction notices at the clerk's office in order to have additional supportive data. The applicants have to attest that they will use the funds appropriately. There have been no reported issues to date.

Mr. El Amin asked what the Program Integrity Team recovers and Mr. Isler responded data shows that Program Integrity has secured from false applications or applications made in error \$104,265.00 this fiscal year. That includes Food & Nutrition Services and Special Assistance Medicaid. As of today, the county has not issued any payment to tenants. The first step is to go through mediation. There are approximately 40 applications in mediation. The City of WS has funded 3 cases.

Director of Public Health Comments – Mr. Joshua Swift
(Complete- detailed handouts on file in the Administrative Binder)

Announcements:

Mr. Swift introduced Ms. Sherita Sutton who is the new Assistant Director at Forsyth County Public Health. She will oversee the Preventive Health Education Division and public information.

Mr. Swift has been asked to participate on a state committee to assist in evaluating Environmental Health's onsite wastewater authorization process. He will be working with 3 other public health directors and DPH (Division of Public Health). This is a laborious process as it takes approximately one year to train someone unless they have been authorized in another county. The goal is to streamline the process while maintaining the integrity of the program.

Fairgrounds Operations

The vaccine site opened on 1/24/21 and closed on 5/24/21. Approximately 80,000 doses were given in 4 months. On average, 8000 to 10,000 individuals were seen each week. Several staff, volunteers, national guard, staff from the state and CCNC (Community Care of NC) provided assistance. Mr. Swift has requested for his staff to tally the number of staff, volunteers and other resources that were used in the vaccine efforts. Mr. Swift expressed his appreciation to the board for volunteering at the clinic.

Vaccine Distribution

Over the last 14 days, there were 610 positive cases which averages out to 44 cases per day. Vaccinations are doing well and they are helping to decrease the spread. Across the county, 46% of the population has been partially vaccinated and 41% of the population has been fully vaccinated. Public Health is working hard to get the majority in the age range of pre-teen, teen, and young adults fully vaccinated. Outreach has been done at the Dash Ball Park and the goal is to go to Bowman Gray Stadium as well. The State Health Director, Dr. Betsy Tilson mentioned that North Carolina has the highest percentage of individuals that still wanted to be vaccinated which is 14%; that would be 40,000 individuals. If that 40,000 can be vaccinated, it would put Forsyth County at 70% of the adult population of 18 and over.

Vaccine Availability

Forsyth County Public Health is taking appointments and allowing walk ups. The Pfizer first doses are available for ages 12 years & up and the Johnson & Johnson and Moderna are available for ages 18 years & up. Public Health will also take individuals who received the first dose at another location. Individuals can make an appointment online by going to: [Bit.Ly/FCNCCovidVaccine](https://bit.ly/FCNCCovidVaccine) or by calling 336-582-0800 from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Mon.-Fri.

During the normal hours for clinics 1, 2, 3, & 4, vaccines are available. The hours are extended on Mon. & Tues. until 6 p.m., on Thur. until 8 p.m. The clinic will be open from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. every second Saturday of each month. Mr. Swift stated that he was proud of his team who went into action working with the school system to plan 4 vaccine events at Northwest and Mineral Springs Middle Schools, and Carver and Parkland High Schools. The event was held during the last period of the day. Parent consent was required. A total of 559 individuals were vaccinated. These sites remained open after school while individuals from the community came to be vaccinated. Parents brought children from other schools also.

Community Vaccine Outreach

Outreach is continuing to focus on historically marginalized populations as well as young adults. Canvassing has been done to focus on census tracks with low vaccine uptake which is information from the state. We have been working with a group by the name of The Twenty who have been working with Public Health for 1 year. Staff have gone out into the community a couple of days before the event to outreach and during the event. The community sites make it more accessible and convenient. Mr. Swift also shared a list of vaccine sites for the month of June. (See handout)

Dr. Robie asked if anyone in Forsyth County has passed away because of Covid-19 and Mr. Swift responded that he would have to check with the medical examiner. Mr. Swift also responded to say that individuals who are getting vaccinated are not getting COVID. The high spread is in individuals who are not vaccinated.

Mr. Seats asked if vaccines will take place at any other schools and Mr. Swift responded that they will not go into schools right now because it is EOG (end of grade) time. Mr. Swift also responded that the Public Health staff will go out to schools during the summer school sessions. They will also make plans to go out in the fall.

Mr. El Amin shared that he has been asked to serve on the State Board of Accreditation for all Public Health Departments of North Carolina. Mr. Seats and other board members congratulated him.

New Business

Fee Schedule 2021-2022

Mr. Swift reported that he would like for last year's fee schedule to be used for the year (2021-2022) due to the pandemic. Plans will be made for the upcoming fall (October) to do a market assessment of all health departments of similar sizes in the triad. Mr. Swift requested that the 2021-2022 fee schedule remain the same as the 2020-2021 fee schedule.

Dr. Robie requested to add the blood test for tuberculosis to the fee schedule because it is more accurate than the PPD (Purified Protein Derivative) skin test. He believes the PPD skin test is becoming obsolete, and the blood test is becoming the most preferred method.

Mr. Swift responded that it is used in the TB (Tuberculosis) clinic for individuals that fall under the State Tuberculosis Program. The two TB nurses in this clinic actively follow up with individuals, most of whom have moved here from other countries. This test is covered by the state because it is a higher fee. When the individuals come into a work site and need a TB test the PBD test is used. Mr. Swift has requested that Mr. Edwin Marshall, who is the Clinic Director, work with the Laboratory Director Mr. Blake Pate to examine how this can be a part of the normal testing which would be good for individuals who are at a higher risk.

Forsyth County Health and Human Services Board Operating Procedures

The board operating procedures require an annual review for the local health department accreditation standards.

Dr. Massler made a motion to accept the 2021-2022 Public Health Fee Schedule and the Forsyth County Health and Human Services Board Operating Procedures as presented. Mr. El-Amin seconded the motion. A quorum was present. The motion carried with 16 votes in favor.

Remote Meetings

After receiving feedback from the board members, Mr. Seats will not recommend that the Health & Human Board resume with in person meetings on a monthly basis. Mr. Seats is recommending keeping the current schedule which is meeting every other month virtually. This topic will be reviewed at the August meeting. Ms. Whisenhunt fully supported this decision.

Committee Update

Legislative Update -- Dr. Linda Petrou

None at this time.

Old Business

None

Announcement

Elections for Board Chair and Vice Chair will be held at the August meeting. Dr. Jeffers and Ms. Whisenhunt are the nominating committee. You may make recommendations to them or make recommendations on the floor at the August meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Seats asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Massler made motion to adjourn and Mr. Seats seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

SAR/tmd

Next Virtual Meeting: August 4, 2021-5:30 p.m.