

**Wake County Health and Human Services Board
Meeting Minutes
November 16th, 2023**

Board Members Present:

Lily Chen
Maty Ferrer Hoppmann
Wanda Hunter
Terry McTernan
Dr. Jananne O'Connell
Ann Rollins
Dr. Kelcy Walker Pope
Birchie Warren
Commissioner James West
Dr. Mary Faye Whisler

Guests Present:

Deidre McCullers

Staff Members Present:

Nannette Bowler
Sheila Donaldson
Ann Godwin
Anika Hamilton
Caroline Harper
Kevin Harrell
Duane Holder
Brittany Hunt
Tony Johnston
Rebecca Kaufman
Dr. Caroline Loop
Dr. Joel Lutterman
Annemarie Maiorano
Jenelle Mayer
Janny Mealar
Ken Murphy
Tina Payton
Toni Pedroza
Kathryn Thompson
Dr. Joseph Threadcraft
Lechelle Wardell
Dana Webb-Randall

Call to Order

Chair Ms. Ann Rollins called the meeting to order at 7:37 A.M.

Next Board Meeting – December 14th, 2023

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Ann Rollins asked for a motion to approve October 26th, 2023 meeting minutes. There was a motion by Dr. Mary Faye Whisler and Commissioner James West seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Ms. Christine Kushner, Treasurer, Ms. Brittany Hunt (Executive Assistant to the Health and Human Services Board) provided the Treasurer's Report. In October, the fund was reported as \$8,330.92. There had been no change in the fund since, so the monies remained at \$8,330.92. Stipends had been processed for the third quarter and were anticipated to be seen in the December Treasurer's Report.

Health and Human Services Board Consumer of Health and Human Services Vacant Seat Applicant Mr. Trey McBrayer

(Presented by Ms. Ann Rollins)

The Health and Human Services Board Nominating Committee was putting forth the application of Mr. Trey McBrayer to fill the vacant Consumer of Health and Human Services seat. Mr. McBrayer was unanimously voted to be recommended to fill the seat before the Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC).

It was noted that, if Mr. McBrayer was approved to fill the Consumer of Health and Human Services seat by the BOC, there would be two remaining vacancies: Optometrist and physician. The optometrist position had long remained vacant. The physician seat, however, was currently filled by Dr. John Perry. Dr. Perry would be stepping down from his seat on the Board once a replacement for the seat had been confirmed. He would remain on the Public Health Committee. Dr. Perry shared his enjoyment of his time serving on the Board.

2023 October Public Comment Responses

(Presented by Ms. Ann Rollins)

Ms. Ann Rollins provided updates to queries posed during the 2023 October Health and Human Services Board meeting during the public comment section.

- There was a concern voiced about the number of handicapped parking spaces available at the Somerset Health and Human Services Building (4401 Bland Rd., Raleigh, NC 27610) and how there may not be enough as legally required for a parking lot so large. Though two spaces currently available were found to be in compliance with regulations, two additional handicapped spaces would be designated so that the building was more accessible.
- A concern had been voiced about a lack of signage informing visitors to County buildings that weapons were not allowed. This seemed to be a misunderstanding as signs were prominently displayed. For Somerset in particular, Ms. Annemarie Maiorano (Deputy Director of Operations) confirmed that a sign was present.
- The need to address concerns with those having phobias of animals during Animal Services presentations was shared with Animal Services who would be working to incorporate the change in future presentations.
- While the amount of agenda items on a typical Health and Human Services Board meeting meant that introductions for everyone in attendance was difficult, there had been a “Who’s Who” printout created with the pictures, names, and titles of Wake County staff commonly in attendance of Board meetings. Similar information (pictures, name, seat held on the Board, and appointment of that seat) was provided for Board members. This would be updated for each Board meeting based upon presenters and interested attendees.

2024 Legislative Advocacy Event

(Presented by Ms. Ann Rollins)

Ms. Ann Rollins discussed the proposed 2024 legislative advocacy event that the Health and Human Services Board hoped to hold to provide high-level priorities to local legislators. Historically, the reception had been held at the home of former Board member Dr. Sharon Foster with around thirty to thirty-five in attendance. After Board members shared talking points with legislators and other stakeholders, they would commonly go on a walk to wrap up the event. An advocacy reception had not been held in several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic followed by scheduling issues. At a previous Board meeting, Mr. Ben Canada (County Manager’s Office Chief of Staff) made a presentation and invited Board members to forward bills and/or topics that he could provide updates on periodically.

Opening the floor to comments, Ms. Rollins prompted members to consider what location might be best. Downtown might be a convenient location for elected officials as they would be in short session and not in one central location during the months of January or February (the two months proposed for the reception).

Mr. Ken Murphy (Senior Deputy County Attorney) advised that the County Governing Board held legislative priorities that Board members would want to be aware of so as not to say anything contrary. Though this was not a likely scenario, it was still important to emphasize. The talking points would include and be informed by the priorities set forth by the Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC). Commissioner James West stated that some session goals were finalized in the BOC's last work session alongside Mr. Philip Isley (Litigation Attorney and Lobbyist). Deputy County Manager Duane Holder stated that there had been meetings between himself, Ms. Nannette Bowler (Health and Human Services Director), Mr. Canada, and the Executive Committee of the Health and Human Services Board (Ms. Rollins, Ms. Wanda Hunter, and Ms. Christine Kushner).

Ms. Maty Ferrer Hoppmann asked if the event would be scheduled for a weekend or weekday date. Ms. Rollins recalled that though the event had historically been held on a Sunday, there had been a previous suggestion to utilize the cafeteria of the legislative building during breakfast on a weekday. However, this was when legislators were in long session and actively in the building. Since this event would be when they were in short session, a neutral location with no cost but plenty of parking would be ideal. Sunday had been found to be flexible for most members in the past, but this could be reconsidered to a weekday near the end of working hours (4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. for example).

Commissioner West confirmed that downtown would be a central location for the Wake County delegation. Ms. Hoppmann suggested the YMCA on Rock Quarry Road or the Chavis Community Center. Ms. Rollins recalled that the Board had held a retreat at the Walnut Creek Wetland Center in 2020 right before the pandemic caused nationwide closings. This location had a trail for walking to continue the tradition from previous advocacy receptions. Commissioner West added that he had worked on the Wetland Center when on the Raleigh City Council and that the location could be ideal as it was in an underserved area (Southeast Raleigh).

Ms. Rollins encouraged members to continue considering locations and submitting ideas as the Board finalized details on the reception.

Ms. Rollins reminded Board members that the tour of the South Wake Landfill would be next week on November 21st. The tour came highly recommended from both Ms. Rollins and Ms. Hunter who had taken the tour previously. She recognized Dr. Joseph Threadcraft (Environmental Services Director) and his staff for helping to coordinate this tour. A tour of the animal shelter would be planned for early 2024 once details of the reception had been confirmed. Ms. Rollins also thanked those who attended the tour of the Wake County Dental Clinic and strongly encouraged Board members to tour the clinic in the future as it was very educational.

Environmental Services Director's Update

(Presented by Dr. Joseph Threadcraft)

Dr. Joseph Threadcraft (Environmental Services Director) shared the following:

- Last week Animal Services provided a business plan presentation to the Budget Office. Water Quality was scheduled to present their business plan on December 11th. These presentations give the opportunity to see clarifications and guidance as well as share challenges being faced.

- The Health and Human Services Board's scheduled tour of the South Wake Landfill would be on November 21st. However, attendees should fill out their selection for lunch by noon on November 17th.
- An ongoing discussion with staff touched on two different business models: Customer centric and complaint. Staff were reminded of these models to emphasize the need for situational awareness. The Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC) and County Manager's Office, for instance, both use the customer centric model that places the customer experience as the priority for determining if staff are successful in delivering services. While diametrically opposed, the complaint model bases success on the right level of responsiveness as well as not receiving a significant number of complaints. In order for staff to be successful, they needed to understand what model they were operating under at any given time. Typically, those who had ten to fifteen years of experience in government work relied on the complaint model while newer employees as well as the County Manager operated under the customer centric model.

Health and Human Services Director's Update

(Presented by Ms. Toni Pedroza, Ms. Nannette Bowler, Ms. Rebecca Kaufman, and Mr. Duane Holder)

- Ms. Toni Pedroza provided an update on the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) backlog on applications and recertifications mentioned during the October Health and Human Services (HHS) Board meeting.
 - The problems with timeliness in completing FNS applications and recertifications were continuing. Ms. Pedroza acknowledged that this was terrible for those impacted and that staff never want any recertifications or benefits to be delayed.
 - For context, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, approved FNS applications needed to be recertified every six months. This requirement was waived starting in 2020 so no recertifications have taken place for three years until the formal recognition of the end of the public health emergency (PHE, also known as Public Health Unwinding). While staff were trying to prepare for the recertifications to return (as well as the loss of maximum allotment for benefits waiving salary considerations to give the most benefits allowed for a family's size), no formal date was announced until a month out of the waiver ending. This meant both staff and the community were blindsided and the amount of applications and recertifications has grown to mammoth proportions. While there is still an effort to reach out to those who are not recertifying in a timely manner, there are some in the community who have submitted on time that have yet to receive their benefits due to the sheer number of reviews being conducted by staff.
 - At least twelve staff members have been released from their normal duties to be reassigned to FNS full-time. Leadership is also in the process of hiring temps to help catch up on recertifications. Staff continue to partner with food pantries across Wake County so that anyone needing immediate resources can be connected to a food pantry.
 - Quality assurance (QA) measures for both FNS and Medicaid had also been lifted. Typically, staff performance evaluations are partially informed by QA measures that staff must meet on their cases. The goal is to allow staff to concentrate all of their time on processing cases.
 - The stress on the staff is incredibly high with overtime and work during evenings and weekends now common. Ms. Pedroza admitted that while leadership was doing everything that they could to support this overtime, FNS staff did not have a work-life balance at the moment due to the momentous amount of applications and recertifications.
 - Ms. Pedroza explained that when staff had less than a year's experience in FNS (as is the case for 26 staff members), they are not producing at the same level as an experienced staff member.

- This information was being shared as many Board members were active advocates in the community. Calls to FNS grew to a degree that was not manageable for Case Managers already struggling to address the backlog. Thus, two teams are now taking and answering phone calls so that Case Managers could continue to process applications and recertifications.
- The hope and the goal is to return to the pre-COVID-19 timeliness of 95% in FNS. Staff are working above and beyond typical work hours and their duties to rightsize the timeliness issue.

Ms. Maty Ferrer Hoppmann asked if the number to call in was the 919-212-7000 line and what information could be provided during that call. The phone number (which is to the Wake County call center) was confirmed to be accurate as staff knew to connect callers inquiring about FNS to the appropriate team. Staff in the call center were equipped to check the status of a person's application.

Ms. Wanda Hunter asked if a conversation had been held detailing a contingency plan in case a similar crisis occurred in the future so as to avoid people going hungry. Every person came with different needs and different circumstances needed to be considered for those needs to be addressed. Someone who is living in a hotel, for example, may find the resources of a food pantry to be an ill fit as they have no way of preparing or cooking the food. Because of federal regulations, this may not fall immediately to Wake County staff, but Ms. Hunter encouraged staff to voice these concerns so that they may be known to state and federal government. Deputy County Manager Duane Holder confirmed that these conversations were actively happening and that creative thinking for solutions was extremely encouraged and regularly sought. Staff were working with the Finance Office to evaluate outside resources and develop relationships to assist with any future backlog. He stated that staff were in an environment where they were willing to try different things.

Ms. Nannette Bowler (Health and Human Services Director) emphasized that a community effort was needed beyond what staff was doing in order to understand the population not being served. Staff had been as proactive as possible given the sudden shift in FNS requirements. This was not an issue isolated to Wake County but was instead being felt statewide. Proactive measures that had been done, were present, or would be sought included the following:

- Seventy-four positions approved by the Wake County Board of Commissioners (BOC).
- Beginning in 2022 in anticipation of the PHE ending, the Data Analytics unit mapped every single process in FNS intake and certification. This helped to identify low-hanging fruit to be immediately addressed and rectified to expedite the process.
 - One example of this was the dual entry of information – once in NC FAST and once in OnBase. This dual entry was causing an additional seven minutes per case that was alleviated by only entering case information into one system.
 - As Mr. Holder had mentioned, leadership would be meeting with the Finance Office the following day to pursue hiring a consultant. This consultant would address the following pain points identified through the Data Analytics' process mapping.
 - Assist with training. Onboarding 74 people with a case processing method that is complex is a huge demand. Ms. Bowler attested to the complexity having sat with staff to see a case processed. Because of the overload, Customer Specialists at Regional Centers were currently conducting interviews for Economic Services staff. This was, however, a temporary solution.
 - Ms. Hunter asked Ms. Bowler if she had filled out a (faux) application to see the process from the client's side. Ms. Bowler had not yet had the opportunity to do so given the depth of the crisis.

- Evaluate the impact of QA measures. An outside entity was needed to analyze the QA data as the current amount of questions and measures that need to be met are causing an extra burden on the staff.
- Construct an action plan similar to the contingency plan mentioned by Ms. Hunter seeking ways to improve processes.

Ms. Bowler shared that any interested Board members could be connected to a staff member to see firsthand what it takes to certify a single case. It was, admittedly, an extremely laborious process. There was concern for staff and their well-being with working such extended hours. Ms. Bowler praised Ms. Kathryn Thompson (Economic Benefits Assistant Division Director) and her team for the unbelievable amount of work, meetings, and check-ins being done every single day. While many efforts had been made to support this change as it was anticipated, the amount of applications and recertifications have caused serious ramifications for both clients and staff alike. Ms. Pedroza added that in October 2023, FNS was averaging 236 new applications per day. Staff were hyper aware of those impacted the most by this backlog and were even trying to collect food for food banks with a box for donations at County buildings. The issues were varied with some recertifications being submitted timely and processed late and other recertifications coming in late and impacting the client's benefits.

Ms. Hoppmann thanked staff for looking into this issue so seriously. The impacts were most certainly felt on the frontlines of vulnerable communities. Even in the largest food banks in North Carolina were having to consider minimizing the amount of food given per person/family due to the enormous need. She reminded the Board that the need was ever-growing with immigration bringing more vulnerable people and families to the community.

The State system for applying for FNS benefits (ePass) was discussed. It was revealed by Ms. Hoppmann that sitting down with just one person to fill out the ePass application took two hours of time. Because of this, her staff relied on paper applications. Ms. Pedroza did share that there was no difference in processing times between an application received in ePass versus hard copy. One large challenge for staff was the need to interview families as part of the FNS recertification process. Staff are working weekends and nights in part to try to catch families outside of normal business hours. Many times additional information is needed and, if the family is not able to be contacted, this causes a delay. Ms. Hoppmann encouraged sharing the common documentation that is missing so that community advocates could emphasize the need for these documents. Ms. Ann Rollins agreed and suggested a document detailing talking points to help those helping the people apply and recertify.

The issues with ePass were well documented and Ms. Bowler shared that staff were in constant communication with the State to identify how to improve the system. These issues were the very reason staff distrusted the NC FAST system when it was instituted and requested their own (OnBase). However, as mentioned above, the dual entry for NC FAST and OnBase had caused delays in processing recertifications. Mr. Holder thanked Board members as the insight into how ePass was impacting the community directly was helpful to hear in the ongoing efforts to address these issues.

There was the discussion of a similar crisis occurring in six months' time (as once an application is approved, that family must recertify every six months). When asked if this six-month turnaround could be extended, Ms. Pedroza explained that it was part of a federal rule. The need for informing federal officials was needed from community advocates in the field as well as from County staff. The latter was occurring from the American Public Health Association (APHA) and their local chapter. Ms. Bowler was an active member of APHA and an annual meeting allowed identified issues to be put into white papers by the Executive Director and Legislative Advocacy Committee. It was organizations pushing advocacy as a whole (as well as the stories from the frontlines) that brought change. However, sometimes even advocacy was not enough. Ms. Pedroza recalled that there had been a push from the North Carolina

Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS, including all 100 counties in the state) for a step-down plan for COVID-19 waivers as well as FNS benefits to soothe the frustration and impact on clients. They also advocated for COVID-19 waivers to continue. None of these requests were granted. When advocacy is done at the State level, it is brought before federal government for the final decision of whether or not to honor the request. “No” was not always the answer – staff had advocated for and received additional benefits for families during COVID-19 (an increase to every family across the nation – something that had not occurred for a decade).

A discussion on benefits – even those dated back to when an application was received – emphasized the dire nature of food insecurity. Even if food was promised a week in the future, hunger was not something that could be ignored or mitigated with anything but food. It was the need – already large and growing daily – that demanded a level of advocacy spanning both staff and community partners. Board members needed to be leaders in this advocacy (as outlined in the proposed advocacy reception mentioned above) to best leverage their collective voice to those able to enact change. It is finding and bringing additional voices to the table that will be a challenge that must be surmountable to serve the most vulnerable.

Dr. Mary Faye Whisler commented that information and data systems commonly suffered from the impacts of time, more and more complex cases, and lack of proper (and thoroughly vetted) updates. An antiquated system could cripple such services in a time of crisis just as much as a newly updated one complete with glitches and unintended consequences and limitations compared to previous versions.

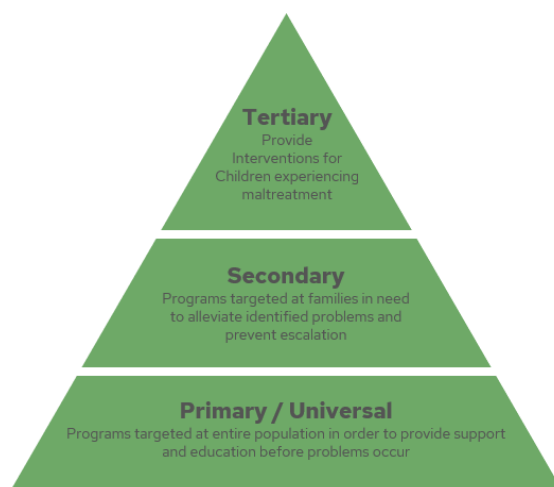
Ms. Bowler thanked the Board for their discussion and encouraged members to acknowledge and thank staff for the insurmountable work that is being done.

- Ms. Nannette Bowler, Wake County Health and Human Services Director, shared information about Neighborhood Networks (NN), a partnership between Wake County Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS).
 - The County was always seeking opportunities to partner with WCPSS on behalf of children and families. With the support of Commissioner Matt Calabria and the Board’s own Commissioner James West, NN was launched.
 - The following schools were chosen as NN schools through a collaborative assessment of data from Wake County HHS and the WCPSS. This selection process involved a comprehensive analysis of various factors (determined and put forth by WCPSS staff), including the frequency of Child Protective Services (CPS) reporting, academic needs of the students, the number of students received free and reduced lunch, and the overall requirements from each school. The focus stayed on elementary schools as staff want to assist children and families early on with treatment available for older siblings in the home.
 - Adams Elementary
 - Forest Pines Elementary
 - Forestville Road Elementary
 - North Ridge Elementary
 - Southeast Raleigh Elementary
 - The following key milestones were shared.
 - On September 12, 2023, the WCHHS NN Leadership Team and WCPSS Student Support Services Leadership Team met with the five school principals to introduce NN. This meeting facilitated open dialogue, encouraged questions, and successfully garnered unanimous support from all principals who warmly welcomed the program into their schools.
 - A kickoff training and meeting was held on September 22, 2023, with essential NN stakeholders to establish processes, specify eligibility criteria, review the NN

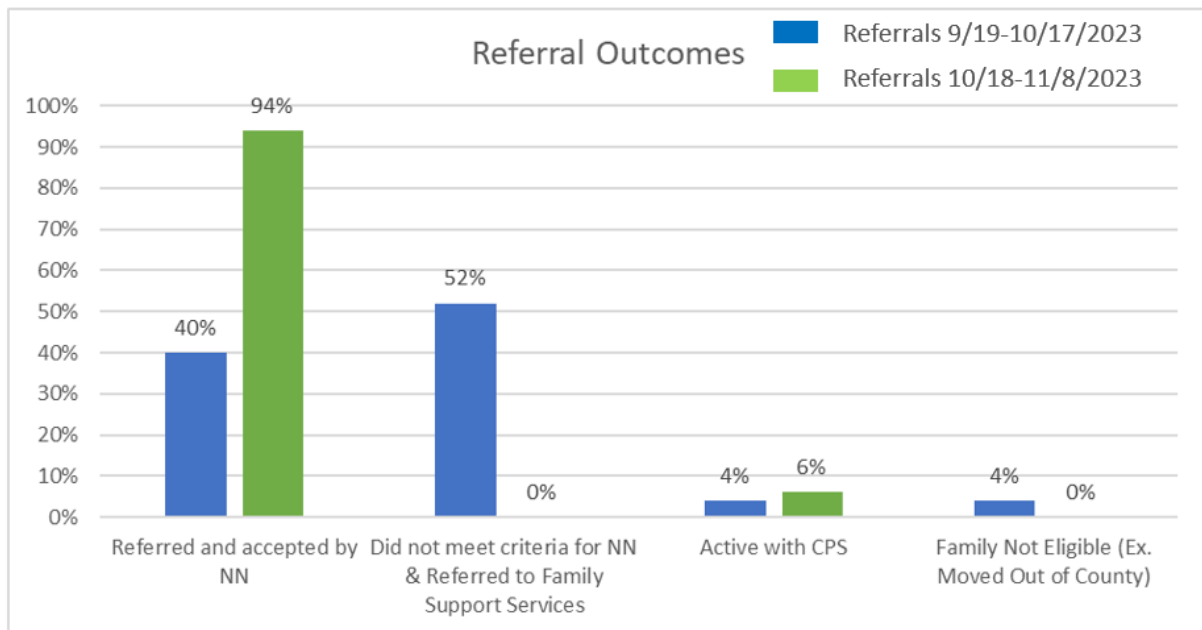
handbook, and discuss marketing materials and strategies. These stakeholders consisted of WCPSS team members (principals and Student Support Services team representatives) and WCHHS Child Welfare (CW) staff (Director, Assistant Division Director, CW Program Manager, and NN Staff).

- As of October 18, 2023, all schools have held their multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings. Some schools are meeting more frequently to nurture relationships, discuss referrals, and ensure the ongoing success of the implementation.
- NN Social Workers (SW) have been assigned to the Regional Centers near their respective schools. This approach offers families the opportunity to access services within their own communities.
- As of November 16, 2023, WCPSS has referred 42 families (an NN SW to family ratio of 1:12) to the NN. In other words, each Social Worker will work with up to twelve families at a time.
- Details for eligibility for NN are as follows:
 - Family has had engagement with Student Support Services and meets the following criteria.
 - One of the following academic issues:
 - Student has attendance issues.
 - Student is performing below grade level.
 - Student has social and emotional needs.
 - Parent has expressed concerns regarding their child.
 - And any of the following:
 - Family has family support needs (informed by the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) i.e., financial, housing, mental health, health, etc.).
 - Family has sociological issues (e.g., immigration, refugee, acculturation, discrimination).
 - School has not been able to engage and/or contact the family.
 - Communication has not been positive or involvement with the school has been underserved and/or underrepresented.
 - Family shows interest in working with the partnership.
 - Ms. Bowler noted that, initially, families with a CPS history were ineligible to receive NN services. They were instead referred to Family Support Services (FSS). However, the criteria has been updated to include support for families in preventing repeat maltreatment. As a result, families with a history can now access NN services. Staff always want to be purposeful about evaluating what is working and what is not and tailoring the program to best meet the needs of the children and families.
- Next, the methodology behind Prevention services was reviewed.

Prevention Services Overview



- For additional context:
 - Primary/Universal: Population-based.
 - Secondary: Where NN is – preventing escalation.
 - Tertiary: Family Support Services. Actively working with the family.
- The referral process was then outlined.
 - Step 1: The Student Support Team (SST) Representative identifies a student in need of NN services and recognizes the crucial role of the MDT in evaluating referrals. The MDT assesses all referrals to determine if the family qualifies for NN Services and reaches a consensus that the student would benefit from them. Once this determination is made, the SST Representative proceeds to make contact with the family to schedule an appointment.
 - Step 2: The SST Representative meets with the parents, provides information about NN, and obtains their consent to release information to WCHHS for referral.
 - Step 3: The WCHHS NN Intake Coordinator receives the referral and conducts screening, which may include checking for CPS history if applicable. They also make contact with the referring SST representative for any additional questions as needed.
- Referral outcomes are outlined in the graph below.



**As of 10/18/2023, WCHHS revised eligibility criteria to include families with previous CPS substantiations

- Finally, next steps were provided.
 - WCPSS and WCHHS will host their NN quarterly meeting on December 5, 2023 to evaluate processes, showcase achievements, address potential obstacles, and create strategies to tackle any concerns.
 - Complete the budget expansion process to secure program sustainability beyond the conclusion of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds (currently used to fund NN).

The goal, of course, is to intervene and set the families up for success so that they never enter the foster care system down the line.

Commissioner James West commended staff for the NN program. Though defining what a vulnerable community actually is can depend upon numerous factors, the criteria selected by WCPSS did seem to reach a vulnerable population. Ms. Ann Rollins likened NN to the Partnership for Educational Success where she worked on behalf of WCPSS linked with an HHS staff member to serve fifty schools. At the time, the outcome data was mixed. Ms. Bowler stated that the SDoH would inform the evaluation tool being formed by the Data unit. Another outcome that would be critical would be ensuring that the family did not receive a future CPS referral.

Ms. Rollins shared that, with Partnership for Educational Success, attendance was critically importance as multiple missed courses commonly aligned with poor academic performance. Gathering participation of parents helps in this regard as some families have (a) parent(s) who do not speak English as a first language. Ms. Bowler recalled that, at a previous position, some parents were unaware of what a parent teacher conference was or the grading scale used for courses (leaving them unaware of failing grades earned by their child(ren)). By connecting the parent(s) with a Social Worker, there was an advocate available to them during the conference to help make any issues clear.

Ms. Wanda Hunter asked how the new school assignment plan would impact NN given that, largely, students will now attend schools closer to their homes. This may have an impact upon those with high-level needs. Ms. Bowler said that this was a consideration. Many of the students travelling longer

distances to their schools could very much be considered an additional vulnerability criteria. A Social Worker could go into the community where the child resides for connectiveness as well as understanding of the landscape of where they live. Ultimately, the ever-changing school assignments may be an ongoing issue to evaluate and monitor.

As far as the data for the students involved, the five Social Workers work alongside the principals and Student Support System team to access applicable information to the NN process. The intent is to work with the schools. Ms. Rollins cautioned that this may cause access issues if the Social Worker had to work in a crisis situation or consistently seek out information by physically driving to the school in question. Ms. Lily Chen asked if demographic information was available. This would be dependent upon WCPSS moving forward. Finally, Dr. Kelcy Walker Pope asked how long families would be tracked with the program. Ms. Bowler explained that though this would be evaluated and potentially revisited, the current plan is to track a family for at least a year. This would, of course, be impacted by the amount of progress a family had made in the program.

- Ms. Rebecca Kaufman (Health Director) discussed the following:
 - Staff were extremely excited to announce the arrival of the new Medical Director Dr. Joel Lutterman. The roles of Medical Director had been fulfilled by staff in the interim, but the position itself had sat vacant for two years.
 - Dr. Lutterman stated that though he had joined the County on November 1st, he was already struck by how generous and encouraging colleagues had been. It was clear that though the Medical Director position itself was vacant, staff had stepped in so as to make the search and transition seamless. Board members welcomed Dr. Lutterman to Wake County.
 - Mr. Kevin Harrell (Preventive Health Director) provided an overview of the two-day World AIDs Day event. Calendar invites and further details would be forwarded through Ms. Brittany Hunt (Executive Assistant to the Health and Human Services Board).
 - Wake County Pre-World AIDs Day Reception – Red Ribbon Social: Held on November 30th from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Contemporary Art Museum (CAM) Raleigh, this event will focus on art, music, wine, and refreshments. The event will feature queer artists of color available to talk about their artwork. Attire is business or business casual.
 - Wake County World AIDs Day 2023 – Red Ribbon Gala: Held on December 1st from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. in the Cannon Room in Raleigh, this is a celebratory event highlighting and standing in solidarity with people living with HIV/AIDS. Dr. David Malebranche (Senior Director of Global HIV Medical Affairs for Gilead Pharmaceuticals) will serve as the keynote speaker. Attendees are asked to wear red as a sign of unity. Registration is required for attendance and space is limited. Community partners will be providing hairstyling, makeup, and, in some cases, clothing for clients. Ms. Kaufman explained that some clients had been seeking services for over twenty years and the donations made the event all the more special. She also thanked Mr. Harrell for coordinating the two-day event.
- Deputy County Manager provided the following organizational update.
 - The County Attorney's Office was recently contacted by the State concerning the way the County's Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) division was organized. Specifically, there were statutes and rules having the EHS program report to the Local Health Director (LHD). In Wake County, the LHD is Ms. Rebecca Kaufman (Health Director). Organizationally, EHS currently lives under Environmental Services (ES) but staff maintain a close working relationship with Health and Human Services (HHS) staff.

- After consultation between the County Attorney's office and State official, there was a decision to reorganize the EHS units directly under Public Health. This process has started and the transition is anticipated to be completed by February 15th, 2024.
- Staff were notified the day before and Mr. Holder wanted to make the Board aware. He stressed, however, that there would be no impact to the operations of the HHS Board. The Board is already enforcing all of the EHS rules and fee setting requirements. The change will only be on the staff side with the reporting line. Instead of these staff members ultimately reporting to Dr. Joseph Threadcraft (Environmental Services Director), they would instead report to Ms. Kaufman and then Ms. Nannette Bowler (Health and Human Services Director).
- Some functions held under EHS are restaurant inspections, pool inspections, septic system permits, wastewater, and drinking wells. All of these programs and staff will move organizationally under Public Health.
- Dr. Threadcraft and Dr. Caroline Loop (Deputy Director of Environmental Services) will still oversee their divisions (such as Animal Services and Solid Waste) outside of EHS. This change has prompted the County Manager's Office to look at its broader organization and some changes may be forthcoming that could potentially impact Dr. Threadcraft and/or Dr. Loop. However, Mr. Holder stressed that these changes would only be positive in nature and not negative.
- Mr. Ken Murphy (Senior Deputy County Attorney) explained that the programs impacted all operate on authorization from the State. This authorization allows this staff to do their work in the field, so staff had to accommodate this request. While the change is based on statute, it is not one singular statute but a group of them as well as administrative rules. Some of these rules were enacted after the County consolidated its Social Services and Human Services functions in 1996.
- For many of the details related to this reorganization, the Board is not involved. Mr. Murphy gave the example of a malfunctioning septic system. Staff who permit and review septic system compliance do so under State rules and local regulations. If there is a violation, staff addresses it through a notice of violation and a discussion with the property owner. If the issue is not resolved after these measures, the case appears before Mr. Murphy on behalf of the County to file a lawsuit with the court asking to order the property owner to fix their septic system. Such cases already appear before Ms. Kaufman and will continue to do so under the new reporting structure. In essence, service delivery would not change. It was only the reporting structure that would be reorganized per request of the State to the County to maintain the authorization for EHS staff to do their jobs.
 - Mr. Holder added that the goal was to have the transition be seamless to the people EHS serves. The only possible change would be if a case was elevated that would have previously gone to Dr. Threadcraft, it would now be taken to Ms. Kaufman.

Dr. Mary Faye Whisler, as the Chair of the Public Health Committee, asked if some of the functions of the Committee (such as fee setting presentations normally done by ES) would remain the same. Ms. Kaufman stated that the only change would be that such reports from EHS would come from Environmental Health, Division of Public Health instead of ES. However, the same staff would be making the presentations. There would also be no change to the Public Health Committee's name.

Ms. Wanda Hunter noted that Dr. Threadcraft was very intentional about team building. The success of this initiative was clear in the caliber of the staff as well as the informative tours recently provided. How would staff be supported to make this transition seamless to them? Mr. Holder confirmed that this was a conversation actively occurring. He added that County Manager David Ellis wanted to be intentional

about being transparent with staff. To this end, the announcement was in-person with a hybrid Teams option involving all of Dr. Threadcraft's staff – not just EHS. Ms. Bowler, Ms. Kaufman, and the Public Health leadership team were also in attendance. During the meeting, staff were told all that the County Manager's Office knows about this transition and committed to talking to staff directly throughout the transition process. This will not be something done to staff but instead with staff. As with any job, there are tasks staff are completing outside of their job descriptions and perhaps unbeknownst to even ES leadership. The desire is to ensure that they are a part of this process to voice those services. EHS staff are very efficient and operate extremely effectively and the County does not want to lose this level of excellence. Because Wake County was the only county in North Carolina organized the way that it was, there is hope that staff can lean on peers to learn how to best move forward with the reorganization.

Temporary Advisory Committee (TAC) Report

(Presented by Ms. Lily Chen)

Ms. Lily Chen, Co-Chair of the Mental Health Temporary Advisory Committee (TAC), shared her report. Mental Health was the first of the five TACs formed in alignment with the Health and Human Services Board's five priorities (access to integrated services, food insecurity, mental health, senior services, and social and economic mobility) to present to the Board since their inception earlier in the year. The remaining four TACs would be providing reports at upcoming Board meetings. Though absent from this Board meeting due to a conflict, Ms. Tanyetta Sutton (Co-Chair of the Mental Health TAC), was also an active leader in the Committee.

The Mental Health TAC has met three times so far to great success (each time immediately following the Board's meeting in the Somerset Building location in room 1700 (4401 Bland Rd., Raleigh, NC 27610) from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.). Meeting minutes could be shared as desired. The following mission statement had been formed for the Committee:

“To advocate and empower individuals, families, and communities to achieve mental wellness through education, equitable distribution of resources, and authentic community partnerships with all stakeholders.”

There was an immediate and clear need to advocate for a resource guide for the Wake County community to inform individuals of where to access mental health services. Wake County's 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA, https://livewellwake.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/LWW_CHNA-2022-FINAL.pdf) noted on chart 10 (pages 115 through 117) that only 44.1% of respondents (9.9% strongly agree and 34.2% agree) were aware of how to find mental health resources in their community. This means that the majority are not confident in how to access mental health resources and that those who could be supportive are perhaps unaware of the needs of this population. This creates a concerning situation where those who may have a dire need of services are not receiving help due to not being aware of where to go, general stigma surrounding mental health services, and distrust in government and nursing staff. The distrust, in particular, is extremely valid as mental health is such a personal journey and many in vulnerable communities already felt ostracized by these entities.

In response to this identified crisis, Ms. Chen stated that the Committee would like to uplift communities through community partnerships with active and ongoing participation. For example, Community Health Workers may be a prime resource not only because of their expertise but also due to trust established within underserved communities. Training advocates and community partners to be subject matter experts (SMEs) in mental health could help build capacity to change the landscape for this vulnerable population. Ms. Chen shared her own personal story of assisting a refugee with obtaining food and how the client stated that the biggest challenge in Wake County was health and mental health. From having a language

barrier to lack of transportation tailored to seniors to suffering from food insecurity, the obstacles were very real and very impactful.

Of course, the question of who will do this work was posed. Does the County have staff capacity to coordinate all of these resources and engage the community? How can the community be engaged by Board members and advocates alike? There are numerous initiatives and stakeholders invested in promoting mental health services in Wake County. But if those stay siloed, the ones that they wish to serve suffer the consequences. There was already a challenge of getting community partners to attend the Mental Health TAC meetings consistently – who was not at the table and sharing their voice without ever having come to a single meeting? Ms. Chen quoted Dr. Brock Chisholm (first Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)) who stated, “Without mental health there can be no true physical health.”

Ms. Chen thanked Ms. Ann Rollins and Ms. Wanda Hunter for their guidance for the Committee as well as Mr. Kevin Harrell (Preventive Health Director). She also recognized Ms. Christine Kushner (who took minutes for the Committee), Mr. Birchie Warren, and Ms. Maty Ferrer Hoppmann of the Health and Human Services Board for being a part of the Committee. Ms. Nannette Bowler (Health and Human Services Board) commended Ms. Chen for her report and stated that the formation of the five TACs had allowed Board members to hone their passion and involvement in a far different and more engaged way than they had in the past.

Committee Chairs Update

(Presented by Ms. Ann Rollins, Dr. Mary Faye Whisler, and Ms. Wanda Hunter)

In lieu of time, Ms. Ann Rollins (Health and Human Services Board Chair) informed Board members that the Regional Networks report was included in the agenda packet.

Dr. Mary Faye Whisler (Public Health Committee Chair) shared that the Public Health Committee did not meet in November. Thus, there was no report from the Committee at this time.

Ms. Wanda Hunter (Social Services Committee Chair) recalled that the Social Services Committee had met on November 2nd. During that meeting, there were conversations surrounding the McKinney-Vento program (a federal program focused on the needs of the youth experiencing homelessness, <https://www.wcpss.net/mckinney-vento>). The Committee was excited to welcome Ms. Michelle Mozingo (McKinney-Vento District Liaison at Wake County Public School System (WCPSS)) to present on the program. If interested in attending, Board members should reach out to Ms. Brittany Hunt (Executive Assistant to the Health and Human Services Board) to receive the event invite and additional details.

• Public Comments

- Ms. Deidre McCullers brought up the following concerns:
 - Request for extended time for public comments. Currently there are five minutes allotted on Board agendas for public comment, but additional members of the public attending means that more time could be used.
 - Request for those who present at meetings to stay until the public comment in case there are questions for the presenter.
 - Could members of the public attend the planned Health and Human Services Board advocacy reception and, if so, where could they register to attend?
 - Could members of the public attend the Neighborhood Networks (NN) quarterly meeting scheduled for December 5th?

- Ms. Nannette Bowler (Health and Human Services Director) clarified that this was a staff meeting.
- For those families identified by Neighborhood Networks (NN), would there be an option for an advocate for the families to be present?
 - Ms. Nannette Bowler (Health and Human Services Director) said that though the family would need to identify that advocate themselves, they would be very welcome to attend meetings with the families and staff.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 A.M.

Board Chair's Signature:  **Date:** 12/04/2023

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Brittany Hunt