BRUNSWICK COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ADVISORY BOARD
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
August 23, 2021 6:30 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER/SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS: The regular monthly meeting of the Brunswick County Health and Human Services Advisory Board was called to order by Dr. Flint King at 6:30 p.m. in the Health Services Lobby (Building A).

A. PUBLIC COMMENT: Dr. King asked for public comments. There were none.

B. SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Dr. King asked if there were any special presentations.

II. REGULARLY OCCURRING ITEMS:

A. ATTENDANCE:

1. The following members were present:
   Dr. Flint King, Chairman
   Dr. Jerry Smith
   Mr. Hubert Reaves
   Ms. Lisa Narron
   Mr. Gene Ward
   Dr. Justin Asbury
   Mr. Michael Norton
   Dr. Allen Williams
   Mrs. Pat Sykes

2. Members absent:
   Mrs. Cindy Carver

3. Staff members present:
   David Stanley, Health & Human Services Director
   Cris Harrelson, Health Services Director
   Cathy Lytch, Social Services Director
   Anita Hartsell, Veteran Services Director
   Danny Thornton, Environmental Health Director
   Cherie Browning, Director of Nursing
   Marjorie Rayl, Quality Assurance Specialist
   Maureen Hubbard, WIC Director

4. Guests present: None

B. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Minutes for the monthly meeting held on **July 26, 2021** were reviewed. Dr. King asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Mrs. Sykes noted that although the attendance roster was correct in noting her absence at the July meeting, the first page of the minutes showed her both absent and in attendance. It was also noted that Dr. Lawler needed to be removed from attendance. Mr. Stanley noted the errors needing correction. **Mrs. Sykes moved to approve the minutes with the aforementioned changes. Mr. Ward seconded the motion. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous. (Closed)**

C. **AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS:** Dr. King asked if there were any adjustments to the agenda. There were none. **Mrs. Sykes moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Ward seconded the motion. The vote to approve the agenda as presented was unanimous. (Closed)**

D. **STAFF AND COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. **VETERANS SERVICES:** Mrs. Hartsell reported that, for Persian Gulf War Veterans, the VA has initiated a regulatory process of adding asthma, sinusitis, and rhinitis, to include rhinosinusitis, to the list of chronic disabilities, based on an association with exposure to fine, particulate matter during their military service. The presumption is for veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations starting in August 1990 and/or after September 19, 2001, in Afghanistan, Syria, Djibouti, and Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War. The presumptive condition must manifest within 10 years following service. Mrs. Hartsell discussed the Veteran Smiles Foundation, a non-profit organization established to help provide education and financial support to veterans in NC who want to improve their oral health and need assistance with their dental care. Most veterans do not qualify for free dental care through the VA healthcare system as they must be screened for a dental condition or have a 100% rating. The foundation is partnering with the East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine to provide low-cost dental care to veterans who need financial assistance. The next VET SMILES event will take place on Friday, September 24, 2021. Any veteran who needs assistance with their dental care, must pre-register and complete a means test to see if they qualify. This is done through NC Serves by calling 1-844-435-1838, or emailing info@vetsmiles.org. **(Info)**

2. **CHILD FATALITY PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY CHILD PROTECTION TEAMS:** Ms. Browning reported the next meeting will be held on October 12th. **(Info)**

3. **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:** Mr. Thornton reported 93% of active files met the four week turnaround goal. He added that staff completed 79 site evaluations, issued 43 improvement permits and 51 construction authorizations. Staff also inspected 21 new wells and sampled 21 wells. Food & Lodging staff continue to find cold-holding issues, some related to managers having to adjust hours of operation due to staff shortages. They are seeing a decrease in food safety scores. Staff responded to 14 COVID complaints. They visited 230 establishments, reviewed four new plans, and issued 10 new permits. **(Info)**

4. **HEALTH SERVICES:** Mr. Harrelson reported that the American Rescue Plan Act is expected to provide additional funding to support the COVID-19 public health workforce, pending passage of the General Assembly's budget. This funding is intended to establish, expand, train, and sustain the public health workforce to support jurisdictional COVID-19 prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery initiatives, including school-based health programs. The funding is expected to support an operational period beginning in October 2021 through June 2023. NC DHHS is expected to divide these funds into two agreement addenda. The first will include $15 million that will go to all 85 local health departments for supporting school nurses and/or school-based health services personnel. The second will include $20 million and will be allocated to 10 local health departments to serve as fiscal and administrative leads for the region. More information will be coming in the near future.

5. **HHS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT:** Mr. Harrelson reported that Patient Satisfaction Surveys were done in May for the STD Clinic. Seven responses were received. Most were between the ages of 18-24 and most appointments were on the same day or next day. Most patients waited only 1-5 minutes to be seen. Some recommendations received through the surveys included a request for 24-hour service and for staff to make it easier to receive a walk-in appointment. Staff is now offering STD clinic five days a week. **(Info)**

6. **NC LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:** Mr. Harrelson reviewed House Bill 61 titled, "A Bill to Be Entitled an Act Appropriating funds to the DHHS, DPH, for Distribution to Local Health Departments for Expansion of Local Infrastructure Activities Associated with the Surveillance, Detection, Control and Prevention of Communicable Diseases". The bill is to address increased demands associated with communicable and emerging infectious diseases. **(Info)**

7. **PUBLIC HOUSING SERVICES:** Mrs. Lytch has been informed of Garnet Place, a recently awarded tax credit property that will be built in Shallotte. It will be family housing which is good news as staff struggles to find housing for the participants. Mrs. Lytch reported that HUD has published the 2022 Fair Market Rents (FMR). The rents have increased, however Mrs. Lytch will be completing a market analysis to share at a later Board meeting. HUD allows Public Housing authorities to pay 90-110% of the FMR. Staff will be assessing if there is a need to pay 100% of the FMR for three or four bedrooms, currently at 90%. There is still quite a gap with what the local rates are and what Public Housing is able to pay. A summary on the CARES funding will be available next month for this Board to review. A list of all payments from March 2020 through June 2021 has been pulled. Mr. Reaves asked about the qualifications for Section 8. Mrs. Lytch noted that it is income based. Mr. Stanley offered a walk-through scenario at the next meeting. **(Info)**

8. **SOCIAL SERVICES:** Mrs. Lytch reported that staff had resumed normal operations, but, due to the rise of COVID cases and to protect customers and staff, DSS Economic Service staff stopped seeing clients face to face last week. This will be evaluated weekly to determine when it will be safe to bring the public back to offices. Staff continues to provide all services. At the August 16th Commissioner's meeting, the Board approved four new Social Worker III positions as well as the reclassification of a Social Worker II to a III due to the increase in the number of child welfare cases from FY2020-2021. In FY2019-2020 Brunswick County DSS investigated 960 cases of child abuse, neglect, dependency and in FY2020-2021 that number jumped to 1256 cases, a 31% increase. Mrs. Lytch added that according to the 2020 census report, Brunswick County is the second fastest growing county, growing 27% in the past 10 years. Staff are carrying caseloads much greater than the State mandate and the complexity of the cases only continues to increase as well. Staff are appreciative and thankful of the support of the county. Mrs. Lytch reported that the State has submitted the plan for the Low-Income Water Assistance Program and is working on details for the summer cooling program. Staff is currently waiting on approval. **(Info)**

9. **HHS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:** Mr. Stanley reported open positions as Social Worker III, Social Worker I, Income Maintenance Nutritionist, and Income Maintenance Caseworker. **(Info)**

III. OLD BUSINESS:

A. **COVID-19:** Mr. Harrelson reported beginning Tuesday, August 24th, staff will begin to administer additional third doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines at Building A and outreach clinics. The 3rd dose is offered for moderately to severely immunocompromised people who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. They should be administered at least 28 days after their 2nd dose. Individuals are required to self-attest to being immunocompromised when they arrive for the 3rd dose. The White House announced last week that planning is underway to support booster shots for the general population. Boosters will be available after September 20th pending full review by the FDA and CDC. Once authorized, people who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines will be eligible for a booster starting eight months after their second dose. All of North Carolina continues to experience a significant increase in COVID cases, most likely due to the highly contagious Delta variant. COVID modeling by the UNC School of Medicine forecasts that Delta will peak in late October/early November. CDC modeling forecasts a 70% rise in cases in North Carolina by late September. The Delta variant is nearly twice as contagious as previous variants and may cause more severe illness in unvaccinated people. As of today, Brunswick County has a total of 12,147 positive cases, 175 deaths, 1348 active cases, and 10,624 resolved cases. The county has added 2,483 cases since Independence Day weekend, averaging 52 cases/day. There have been 2,283 cases in the last month, an average of 70 cases/day. Over just the last two weeks, there have been 1,439 cases averaging 103 cases/day. The Brunswick County positivity rate is clearly rising and this is the highest the case rate has been since February. Also increasing are the number of hospitalizations, deaths, and COVID outbreaks. **(Open)**

B. **COVID-19 RESPONSE PLANNING STATUS:** Mr. Stanley thanked our partners assisting in the process of getting more people vaccinated. There is still a good bit of the younger population eligible for vaccine. About 1/3 of the positive cases are in the 25-49 year age group. Staff has done a really good job in making things easier to obtain vaccines, including no scheduled appointment needed at the outreach sites. This may need to change based on 3rd dose demands. Staffing plans are still being looked at. Mr. Norton asked about Monoclonal antibody treatment, are there increased risks with infusions or do they help? Mr. Stanley explained there have been some remarkable improvements with COVID therapy. Therapeutics are making a huge difference when provided early on. Dr. Asbury added that Novant is looking at having a mobile unit site. Presently those age 12 and older and people with obesity, diabetes, mild to moderate issues are approved for it. It doesn't take much to qualify. It is all done as an outpatient and free, provided by the State. You pay for a visit, not the drug. Commissioner Sykes asked about the Johnson and Johnson booster, if it was available. Mr. Stanley explained that, at this point, Johnson and Johnson is in the process of submitting their vaccine data to the FDA. Dr. Smith said, "I commend Mr. Harrelson in his admirable performance at the recent school board meeting." Dr. Smith asked if we pulled recommendations to the school. Mr. Stanley explained staff have always provided information, numbers, recommendations according to policy. Almost daily there are conversations between school staff and health staff. Brunswick County Health Services has never changed its procedures in how it responds to the identification of clusters or cases involving a school. Brunswick County's Health and Human Services team has not received nor acted on any directive from any commissioner or official regarding Brunswick County Schools. If positive cases and/or clusters are identified in a school setting, Health Services works with the school and/or district to identify close contacts among students or staff at a school and discuss mitigation and containment strategies. While the health department provides this guidance and addresses questions concerning COVID-19, it is the school district and its board that make final decisions about operations or potential closures at an affected school. Their decisions might factor in the health department's guidance along with other needs such as staffing levels, resources, and any concerns among their staff, students, and parents. The school district is the best entity to address questions about specific operational decisions and any factors that contributed to those decisions. Brunswick County Health Services continues to provide information and serve as a resource to any school based on the latest guidance at the time in the NCDHHS' Safe Schools Toolkit and from the CDC. Commissioner Sykes stated she did not give direct orders to anyone. **(Open)**

C. **MEDICAID TRANFORMATION UPATE:** Mrs. Lytch said there are sometimes daily updates regarding Medicaid Transformation. The Ombudsman is available to assist Medicaid beneficiaries with the following: They are not getting care they need; have questions about a notice or bill they received; have already talked with their healthcare provider or health plan and have not been able to solve the problem; or, have questions about their appeal decision. In an effort to ensure optimal access to care for Medicaid beneficiaries, to support providers during the recent COVID-19 surge, and to alleviate potential provider payment concerns NC DHHS and the prepaid health plans (PHP) have agreed to extend the policy for out-of-network flexibilities to providers who have not yet contracted with a PHP through November 20, 2021. These flexibilities were originally expected to expire on August 30, 2021. The PHPs have agreed to reimburse out-of-network providers at the in-network rate of 100% of the Medicaid fee schedule. It would have been 80-90%. **(Open)**

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. VETERANS ADMINISTRATION PRESENTATION: Mrs. Hartsell introduced Schimona McBryde, Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the Wilmington Health Care Center who covers Brunswick County. She gave an overview of her duties and what the VA has available to assist veterans with suicide prevention. Ms. McBryde stressed the importance of veterans who have had two years of service to be registered with VA Healthcare Services. Many may qualify for medical or mental assistance. She added that in 2017 there was an average of 17 veteran suicides a day. **(Closed)**

B. WIC NATIONAL AWARD RECOGNITION: Mr. Stanley reported that the Brunswick County WIC department was recently in the news for national recognition of the USDA 2021 Breastfeeding Award of Excellence. He added that WECT had a great interview highlighting WIC programs. Mr. Stanley thanked Mrs. Hubbard and her team for a great job done in spite of COVID. Mr. Harrelson thanked her for being here and for her leadership. Brunswick County is one of 14 in the State to receive this award and one of only three counties to achieve the award twice. Mrs. Hubbard noted she had worked in Pender County for eight years and was glad to be back home serving the Brunswick County community. **(Closed)**

V. BOARD INPUTS:

Dr. King asked if there were any additional Board inputs. Mr. Norton asked about the status of the Board Optometrist vacancy, questioning if it may be helpful to change the requirement to only practicing in Brunswick County, not practicing and residing here. Mr. Stanley noted that he had received a pretty good lead from Dr. Howard and has reached out with no response. He will reach out again. **(Info)**

VI: ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, **the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m. with a motion by Mrs. Sykes. Mr. Reaves seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

The next BCHHS Advisory Board meeting will be held on **September 27, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in the Health Services lobby.**

_____ Chairperson

_____ Secretary

Brunswick County Health and Human Services

Advisory Board
Attendance Roster 2021-2022

NAME	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
King	X	X				*					*	
Asbury	X	X				*					*	
Carver	X											
Narron	X	X				*					*	
Norton	X	X				*					*	
Reaves	X	X				*					*	
Smith	X	X				*					*	
Sykes		X				*					*	
Ward	X	X				*					*	
Williams		X				*					*	
Optometrist	V	V				*					*	

A = Month Appointed/Installed

C = Conflict with CC's Meeting

O = Off Board

X = In Attendance

V = Vacancy

AA = Approved Absence

Blank Space = Absent

Quorum equals six members present.

^ = Specially Called Meeting

* = No Meeting