The Buncombe County Health and Human Services Board met on February 23, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. The meeting was virtual.

* Health and Human Services Board Members: Lucy Lawrence, Chair; Linda Weldon, Vice Chair; Amy Lenell, Dick Needleman, Savannah Lamb, LeeAnne Tucker, Jacquelyn Hallum, Elizabeth Lima, Dan Frayne and Steve Valeika were in attendance.
* Health and Human Services staff: Stoney Blevins, Rebecca Smith, Phillip Hardin, Ellis Matheson, Kelli Bickner, Leigh Anderson and Christa Lance were in attendance.
* Johanna Cano with CAPE was in attendance.
* Senior undergraduate from UNCCH Claire Hollowell was in attendance.

**CALL TO ORDER**

* Board Chair, Lucy Lawrence called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

**REVIEW AND ACTION OF BOARD AGENDA**

* The Board reviewed the February 23, 2024 agenda. One change to move 7a. from under Directors Report to under New Business. Board member LeeAnne Tucker motioned that the agenda be approved with the change. Board member Linda Weldon seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous in approval. The agenda is attached and made a part of these minutes.
* The Chair asked if any Board member had any known conflict of interest or appearance of conflict with respect to any matter coming before the Board and none were stated.

**REVIEW AND ACTION OF BOARD MINUTES**

* The Board reviewed the January 26, 2024 minutes.  Board member Jacquelyn Hallum motioned that the minutes be approved as presented. Board member Elizabeth Lima seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous in approval. The minutes are attached and made a part of these minutes.

**PRESENTATION/UPDATES**

**PROGRAM COMMIITTEE UPDATES**

* Dr. Richard Needleman presented the Health Committee update. The Department has recently added a consultant in addiction medicine, Dr. Shuchin Shukla who is a family practice physician and addiction medicine specialist. He spoke to us about “Smoking Supply Distribution for Harm Reduction.” He would like to begin a 3-month pilot project in Buncombe County. The program will complement the county’s syringe services harm reduction program by offering smoking paraphernalia to drug users. Dr. Shukla feels that the program is evidenced-based, will reduce the transmission risk of communicable disease, lessen the use of intravenous (IV) drugs, and reduce the number of overdoses and the risk of addiction that is greater in IV drug use than drug use by smoking. He cites evidence that harms reduction should consider operating through an equity lens.

The Subcommittee and Dr. Shukla have discussed our next steps:

* Discussion and feedback at our March subcommittee meeting
* If favorable, then presentation of subcommittee findings to the Board at a future meeting (March or April) for their consideration.
* Dr. Dan Frayne presented the Safety Committee update. The group looked at racial equity data. This data is comprised of outcomes, intakes and dispositions of children coming into care. Next steps are looking at what is driving the data and understand the data. Debrief and start asking questions on how improvements can be made.
* Phillip Hardin, Economic Services Director gave the Opportunity Committee update. They talked about Medicaid expansion and where we are right now. In December 2022 we took 2500 applications, whereas in December 2023 we took 6800 applications; January 2023 we took 1800 applications and January 2024 we took 3700 application; February 2023 we took 1400 applications and in February 2024 we took 1900 applications. We also talked about the Energy Program. We talked about our Call Center struggles; we received 130,000 calls last year and are projected to receive over 200,000 calls in SFY 24. We are currently dropping 1 in 4 calls (25%) where this used to be only 3%. This could be a long-term problem, as we just don’t have enough staff for this call volume. We are exploring an AI solution.
* Kelli Buckner gave an update on the Energy Programs Update.  Previously this program had been worked by a contractor for almost 20 years.  The contractor decided that they were unable to meet the timeframes of the program due to increased volume and as of December 1, 2024, HHS took the program back completely.   We quickly found out that the volume of the program was larger than we had been able to anticipate or understand.  So far, we have been able to assist more clients than our contractor but that is because we have been able to work overtime and access to some of the state systems that are not a barrier for our staff as it was for a contractor.  CIP is a year-round crisis program that will provide a payment up to $600 in the FY and LIEAP opens in December for a special population (aged/disabled) and then opens to anyone eligible from January – March.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

* Stoney Blevins, HHS Director presented on the HHS Budget. He explained how the process for the budget works. Stoney will be asking the Board to approve the recommendation of the budget to be presented to the Commissioners. Board member Amy Lenell motioned the budget be approved as presented. Board member Steve Valeika seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous in approval. The PowerPoint is attached and made a part of these minutes.
* Stoney Blevins, HHS Director shared with the Board on the Oath of Office. He gave information on consolidated boards and consolidated directors taking an oath of office. The School of Governments recommendation is for all consolidated board members take an oath of office. He will send information out for the Board to review and will ask the Board to decide on this matter at the March meeting.

**DIRECTORS REPORT**

**CHAIRPERSONS REPORT**

* Amy Lenell, Stephanie Bostic and Martha Salyers have agreed to be on the Land and Labor Acknowledgement Ad Hoc committee. That group will be meeting next week and will determine if they will invite community members to participate in that work.
* Please reach out to your friends and neighbors about the vacancies on our Board. Currently the Dentist and Engineer positions are vacant.

**ADJOURNMENT**

* Board Chair Lucy Lawrence informed the Board that she would take a motion to adjourn. Board member Linda Weldon motioned the board to adjourn the meeting at 1:45 pm. Board member LeeAnne Tucker seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous in approval.

Minutes read and approved this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

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Lucy Lawrence, Chairperson                                                               Stoney Blevins, HHS Director

Health and Human Services Board                                                    Executive Secretary to the Board