The Buncombe County Health and Human Services Board met on March 22, 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, Jacquelyn Hallum, Elizabeth Lima, David Thompson, Dan Frayne and Steve Valeika were in attendance.
* Health and Human Services staff: Stoney Blevins, Phillip Hardin, Ellis Matheson, Kelli Bickner, Leigh Anderson, Mick McGuire and Christa Lance were in attendance.
* DK Wesley, Assistant County Manager was in attendance.
* Johanna Cano with CAPE was in attendance.
* Curt Euler, County Attorney 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 March 22, 2024 agenda.  Board member Martha Salyers motioned that the agenda be approved as presented.  Board member Dan Frayne 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 February 24, 2024 minutes.  Board member Dan Frayne motioned that the minutes be approved as presented.  Board member Steve Valeika 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**

* Dick Needleman explained about Dr. Shukla’s proposal for “Smoking Supply Distribution for Harm Reduction.” He would like to begin a 3-month pilot project in Buncombe County with monies that have already been appropriated. The program will complement the county’s syringe services harm reduction program by offering smoking paraphernalia to drug users. Dr. Shukla was not in attendance.

* The discussion focused on a review of his slides from his February presentation and a recent US HHS Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report entitled “Routes of drug use among overdose deaths – United States, 2020-2022” from February 15, 2024.

* Points for further discussion about smoking harms reduction:
* Value to community vs directing resources towards other programs
* Lessen the use of intravenous (IV) drugs, and as a consequence:
* Reduce the risk of transmission of communicable disease
* Reduce the number of overdoses
* Whether the risk of addiction that is greater in IV drug use than drug use by smoking, see MMWR
* Harms reduction should operate through an equity lens to include vulnerable communities

* The Subcommittee has discussed our next steps:
* Discussion and feedback at next subcommittee meeting (in May), Dr. Shukla will be able to attend. Mitch Albers, the Harm Reduction coordinator, will be asked to attend as well.
* When consensus is reached, then presentation of subcommittee findings to the Board at a future meeting.
* 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 applications; 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.

**SOCIAL WORK RETENTION/RECRUITMENT UPDATE**

* Mick McGuire presented the social work retention/recruitment update.  Investigations for the first time in several years has people slotted for all 29 positions.  Not all have started, and some are in training, but the position numbers are all filled.  This is likely to change soon as 2 vacancies in supervisor positions and many applicants are internal.  Currently 18 out of the 29 positions are taking cases and 5 staff on Performance Improvement Plans and multiple new staff at the caseload maximum.  In meeting with Strategy and Innovation the INV allowance will likely Sunset in May.  Stoney indicated that the reclass from Social Worker III to Social Worker IV is still on the table for July 1 in the new fiscal year, which would then increase wages for most Investigative staff as their work is typically the most variable and unpredictable.

**OLD BUSINESS**

* HHS Director, Stoney Blevins presented a PowerPoint to the Board to discuss the Board taking an Oath of Office. If the Board chooses to take an Oath of Office, then the by-laws would need to be amended as well.  Stoney then asked the Board for a motion to either approve or not approve taking an oath.  This discussion will be tabled until a future meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

* Board Chair Lucy Lawrence discussed with the Board a nomination of Elizabeth (Betsie) Stockslager to join the Board as a Community Advocate.  She is the Buncombe County Schools Preschool Director.  She was interviewed by the Executive Committee last week.  The Executive Committee made the motion that Betsie Stockslager be recommended to the Commissioners as a member on our Board.  Board member David Thompson seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous in approval.

**DIRECTORS REPORT**

* The Board will do annual Board training in the in-person July meeting.

**CHAIRPERSONS REPORT**

* Board Chair Lucy Lawrence informed the Board that we have received interest for the Dentist and Engineer position on Board.

**ADJOURNMENT**

* Board Chair Lucy Lawrence adjourned the Board meeting at 1:45 pm. .

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