

Minutes of North Carolina Coalition on Aging Meeting
Friday, March 27, 2020 (10:00 a.m.)
(Conference call due to cancellation of in-person meetings because of COVID-19)

On the Call:

Tracy Colvard – Board Chair, Association for Home and Hospice Care of NC
Allison Costanzo – Executive Director
Charmaine Fuller-Cooper – Chair Elect of Board, AARP
Chad Walker – Treasurer, Transition LifeCare
Mary Bethel – Secretary, Board Member
Harold Barnette - Board Member, Institute for Family Caregiving
Martha Fowler – Board Member, State Employees Association of NC
Ray Riordan – Board Member
Janice Tyler – Board Member, Orange County Dept. on Aging/NC Association on Aging
Alan Winstead – Meals on Wheels NC/Wake Meals on Wheels
Ames Simmons – Equality NC
Ana Pardo – NC Justice Center
Angela Ellis – Greene County Dept. of Social Services
Ben Popkin – Friends of Residents in Long Term Care (Lobbyist)
Betsy White – Access Dental Care
Bill Lamb – Friends of Residents in Long Term Care
Brooke Blanton – Wake County Senior and Adult Services
Carol Kelly – Rethinking Guardianship/NC Guardianship Association
Catherine Goldman – Wake County Senior and Adult Services
Cris Henage – UNC Center for Aging and Health
David Rhew – NC Public Transportation Association
Dick Chady – NC Continuing Care Residents Association/Carol Woods
Elaine Whitford – Center for Volunteer Caregiving
Gina Upchurch – Senior PharmAssist
Haley Williford – Community and Senior Services of Johnston Co./NC Senior Center Alliance
Hank Bowers – NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
Heather Burkhardt – Resources for Seniors (Wake County)
Jillian Hardin – Brunswick Senior Resources (Supply Center)
Jo Paul – NC SHIP
Joyce Massey-Smith – NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (Presenter)
Karen Appert – Southern Gerontological Society
Kay Castillo – NASW-NC
Ken Burgess – Poyner Spruill
Laura Schlabach - Medicaid Investigation Division, NC Dept. of Justice

Lauren Zingraff – Friends of Residents
Lee Campbell – NC Senior Living Association
Les Geller – SAGE Central NC/Resources for Seniors
Leslie Jones – NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
Lisa Riegel – AARP NC
Mark Hensley – AARP NC
Marty Lamb – Individual Member/Cameron Commons/Friends or Residents in LTC
Meike Weist – LifeLinks/Nurse Care of North Carolina
Melinda Munden – NC SHIIP
Melissa Church – UnitedHealthcare
Nancy Ruffner – Navigate NC
Pam Palmer – NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse/Triangle J COG Area Agency on Aging
Paola Learoyd – Randolph Cloud and Associates/We Work for Health
Preston Craddock – Greene County Dept. of Social Services
Quanisha Collins – NC Housing Finance Agency
Rachel Miller – Day Stay Adult Day Services
Robin Iten Porter – NC PACE Association
Roger Manus – Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging/Campbell Senior Law Clinic
Teresa Evans-Hunter – NC Retired School Personnel
Tommy Goldsmith – NC Health News
Tony Davis – NC Division of Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Willetha Barnette – Institute for Family Caregiving

The meeting was **called to order** at 10:05 a.m. and **opening remarks** were provided by Chad Walker, Treasurer, who presided. He thanked everyone for being accommodating in the wake of the meeting being moved to a conference call only due to COVID-19 concerns and shared ground rules for how the call would be handled. He also thanked everyone for all they are doing at this time. Mary Bethel, Secretary, attempted to **collect names for all those participating in the meeting** as they signed on to the call. She also asked that everyone on the call send her an e-mail (mmbethel72@gmail.com) to confirm their participation. Chad **noted that Rep. MaryAnn Black died** on March 26. Kay Castillo with NASW NC shared several reflections about Rep. Black and her work as a social worker, and Mary Bethel noted that Rep. Black was very supportive of aging issues and she was a sponsor of the Coalition’s annual meeting in September. There was a moment of silence in her memory.

Presentation by Joyce Massey-Smith, Director of the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) – The agenda was modified to recognize Joyce at this time for her presentation on what is going on relative to COVID-19 in the state and its impact on older adults as she needed to leave the meeting early due to a scheduling challenge. She began by saying that this is a time of

change for the state. The Governor will be speaking this afternoon to lay out more plans for how to move forward. He is working on various executive orders. North Carolina is waiting for a federal disaster declaration which will allow more flexibility in how funds can be used to address issues posed by the virus. She provided a brief overview of some of the anticipated federal funding that has been passed by Congress that is directed to assist older adults including money for supportive services, home delivered and congregate meals, family caregiver programs, and elder justice activities. There is also some increased funding for nursing home certification visits and for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program. Food stamp benefits are also being raised to the maximum allotment per month for the family size. Many programs will have no match requirement. She reported that many aging programs have closed their physical locations but continue to provide services remotely or by other means as needed. Some of the nutrition programs are finding a back order on shelf-stable and frozen meals so they are looking at other options for meals. Medicaid is allowing some home and community based services to be provided in hospital settings. The Title V Senior Community Services Employment Program is allowing the older workers in the program to take emergency sick leave effective March 10. Bill Lamb with Friends of Residents remarked that there needs to be flexibility and a mindfulness of grace periods. She stated that the efforts are being completed on the state budget request that the Governor will put forward to the General Assembly for responding to the virus. There is a focus on looking at how to best leverage all the funding that will be available.

Ms. Massy-Smith also noted the housing assistance program for low income older adults and discussed the need to look at a way to increase funding for adult care homes who receive state/county special assistance. In addition, she said they are looking at ways the state in-home rate can be increased to the maximum allowed. The Division has also granted a lot of waivers to allow senior centers to close their doors as long as staff continue to work. DAAS is working with the NC Secretary of State's Office to get information to the public about scams and they are working on information targeted to caregivers. Many waivers have been granted to allow congregate nutrition site participants the flexibility to not have to come to the nutrition site to pick up the meals. A big concern is around the issue of in-home services and the requirement pertaining to hands-on care. They have been looking at how to address this. There is a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and they are working to ensure that in-home care providers have access to this. The importance of adult protective services was also noted. She concluded her remarks by stating how proud she is of the aging network and how the providers have stepped up to the plate to ensure the older adults in their communities are served. She encouraged everyone to check on their neighbors. She said DAAS is having weekly calls with and receiving daily reports from the Area Agencies on Aging to keep up with what is going on across the state and to share information with them, There are also regular calls with the federal Administration for Community Living.

Mary Bethel shared with Joyce that the Coalition developing recommendations based on input

from members and informed sources to present to the House COVID-19 Health Care Workgroup pertaining to addressing the needs of older adults and the providers who serve them. These will be shared with DAAS and the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

Several people in attendance inquired about getting the information for the Governor's afternoon press conference. This will be made available to everyone after the meeting. Ms. Massey-Smith was thanked for her informative report.

Approval of Minutes from February 28, 2020 Meeting – A motion was made by Martha Fowler to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Kay Castillo. The minutes were approved by all.

Treasurer's Report – Chad Walker, Treasurer, reported a balance in the bank of \$48,264.74. Memberships in the amount of \$387 have been received since the last meeting.

Activities and Updates Since January Meeting and Update on Federal and State

Developments – Allison Costanzo, Executive Director, announced the following:

- As expected COVID-19 has dominated the conversation and what everyone is doing.
- The Coalition signed on to a letter distributed by Care4Carolina in support of Medicaid expansion in light of the pandemic.
- As noted earlier, the NC House of Representatives is seeking feedback on actions the state should take to address the challenges imposed by the COVID-19.
- Congress passed a reauthorization of the Older Americans Act earlier in March with strong bipartisan support. More information will be shared on this with members.

Mary Bethel, Board member, also provided several updates:

- A town-hall on caring for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic will be held this afternoon at 2:00 p.m. by the National Council on Aging (NCOA). Allison will forward information on this to everyone after the meeting.
- Congress has passed the third COVID-19 response bill. The presentation by Joyce Massey-Smith covered a bit on this. More information will be forthcoming.
- Medicare Part B now covers COVID-19 testing for test conducted on or after February 4.
- The NC Medicaid program has increased the reimbursement to nursing homes in the state to cover the additional costs they are incurring due to the virus.
- In light of the focus in the General Assembly on COVID-19, the Coalition will likely reexamine its plans for any type of advocacy day efforts when the General Assembly returns on April 28.

Several Coalition members also provided several updates. Kay Castillo with NASW NC shared

that they are advocating for a change in the CMS policy which prohibits telephone only (audio) telehealth visits from being covered by Medicare. Due to the virus, testing sites are down for certification. Bill Lamb with Friends of Residents raised questions about HIPPA compliance with using ZOOM and other platforms like that. Lisa Riegel with AARP NC reported that she has talked with Blue Cross/Blue Shield and they are paying parity if someone only has phone access for telehealth. AARP nationally sent a letter to members of the U.S. House and Senate relative to the three federal COVID-19 bills outlining the items it supported and where they are still advocating for more action. They are holding a Telephone Town Hall on March 31 with Governor Cooper and Sec. of HHS Mandy Cohen on COVID-19.

Sharing by Coalition Members on COVID-19 Updates – Information shared was as follows:

- Lisa Reigel, AARP NC – AARP has concerns about scams perpetrated against older adults during this stressful time.
- Haley Williford, Community and Senior Services of Johnston Co. – They closed their senior centers on March 17. They are open for staff and to do wellness checks.
- Elaine Whitford, Center for Volunteer Caregiving – Their volunteers are now focused on grocery shopping. They are seeing an increase in volunteer interest.
- Tony Davis, NC Division of Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing – The Division can provide assistance in helping to work with persons who have hearing loss. Personal amplifiers are available to use with people experiencing hearing loss. Be aware that people with hearing loss may need to lip read.
- Bill Lamb, Friends of Residents – They are sending out a lot of information about families connecting with relatives in facilities. They are working with the nursing home and adult care home industries to get devices into facilities that residents can use to communicate with their family who can not visit. There are web based services that facilities can use if they are wired for service.
- Lauren Zingraff, Friends of Residents – They are receiving calls from members of the public who want to give PPE to long term care facilities. They have to communicate with long term care facilities about this.
- Roger Manus, Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging – He talked about the need for people to deliver home delivered meals and that with the reluctance of some older volunteers to continue in this role, younger people should be encouraged to help with this. The Advisory Council had planned an Elder Abuse Summit and a program on the Integration of Health and Social Services. They will need to be postponed or done in another manner due to the virus.
- Gina Upchurch, Senior PHASMAssist – They are virtually open for business. Their meals on wheels programs needs masks and hand sanitizer. Check-in calls with seniors are critical. They have a grant from Rural Health that allows them to pay for phone visits.

- Angela Ellis, Greene County Department of Social Services – Many Departments of Social Services are still physically open. They are encouraging people to make application for services by phone. Some counties have closed their offices to the public or are limiting their hours but they are still responsible for providing the services. Adult protective services is still being done. She needs PPE for her social workers that are going into homes.
- Carol Kelly, Rethinking Guardianship and NC Guardianship Association – The NC Guardianship Association’s spring conference has been moved to the fall (Labor Day weekend). The Rethinking Guardianship advocates are mounting an effort to seek an update to the 35A statute. They are working on supportive decision making.
- Alan Winstead, Meals on Wheels NC/Wake Meals on Wheels – The nutrition network across the state is working to ensure meals are available to older adults. Having enough volunteers to deliver the meals is an issue in some parts of the state. Frozen meals and shelf-stable meals are being distributed. He shared that Lilly Pharmaceuticals is still making drugs and they have a toll free number for people to call if they have trouble paying for insulin.
- Chad Walker on behalf of NAMI North Carolina – They are sending out information on virtual support groups.
- Nancy Ruffner, Navigate NC – They are open virtually. They are continuing to serve relatives of those who live out of town or out of state with education and health care navigation. She is concerned about elder orphans. April 16 is National Health Care Decision Day. Social isolation is a problem faced by many seniors.
- Lee Campbell, NC Senior Living Association – Staff shortages is a challenge for a lot of facilities. Incentive programs for staff are being implemented. They are busy keeping members updated.
- Janice Tyler, NC Association – The local aging network is adapting.
- Mary Bethel announced for NC BAM – They have a Help Line for Seniors and they have had to increase it from one to three workers taking calls in the last month.
- Jo Paul, NC SHIIP – Their staff are working from home but they are fully operational. They are doing a lot of work relative to scams. The Attorney General’s website has a place to sign up to receive scam alerts.
- Mary Bethel noted that nursing homes are reporting PPE shortages.
- Carol Kelly shared that Nursing Home Community Advisory Committees have suspended visits to facilities.
- Mary Bethel shared for the NC Justice Center – They are working on paid family leave efforts.
- Ben Popkin on behalf of the NC Oral Health Collaborative – They have a map on their website of locations in the state where people can get oral health care services.
- Mary Bethel on behalf of the NC PACE Association – She announced that Lynette Tolson

has been hired as their new Executive Director.

- Pam Palmer, the NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse – They have cancelled their May 20 conference. They are sharing information on scams on their Facebook page.
- Laura Schlabach - Medicaid Investigation Division, NC Dept. of Justice – DHHS is looking for health care worker volunteers as the virus progresses.
- Mary Bethel on behalf of the NC Retired Governmental Employees Association – The Treasurer’s office has announced that state retirement checks are not impacted by the stock market downturn. Humana has been named as the new Medicare Advantage provider for retired state employees.
- Chad Walker on behalf of SAGE – The April 4 LGBT conference and senior showcase has been postponed until 2021.
- Roger Manus, Campbell University Senior Law Clinic – Because of the virus, the students have dispersed. They are not doing new intake but are finishing cases in progress.
- Karen Appert, Southern Gerontological Society – The April 14-18 Southern Gerontological Society Conference scheduled in Norfolk, Va. has been cancelled. They are looking at the possibility of possible virtual offerings from this. Check the website for details.
- Martha Fowler, State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC) – The state Treasurer’s office and the SEANC office are closed to the public but staff are working remotely. Artis Watkins, long-time SEANC employee, has been named the Association’s new Executive Director.
- Pam Palmer, Triangle J Council of Government’s Area Agency on Aging – Offices are physically closed but staff are working remotely. The regional ombudsmen are not allowed in facilities except for end-of-life of residents.
- Chad Walker, Transitions LifeCare – CMS policies are changing quickly. There is a lot of advocacy work going on.
- Melissa Church, UnitedHealthcare (UHC) – UHC is providing \$50 million to support COVID-19 efforts in states to address urgent needs (ex. meal delivery or homelessness).
- Chad Walker relative to 2-1-1 service – There is a lot of promotion as to the critical resource this is and people are being asked to call 2-1-1 for information on services instead of 9-1-1.
- Paola Learoyd, Randolph Cloud and Associates and We Work for Health– If groups that We Work for Health has pledged support to have to cancel conferences, etc., they can still help.

As the meeting came to a close, a few additional comments were offered. Mary Bethel noted that Joyce Massey-Smith can help with communication from the Coalition to the Department of Health and Human Services. Alan Winstead noted the importance of communicating about the need for emergency funding for nutrition programs ASAP. Tracy Colvard announced that he was on a conference call this morning and the Governor will declare a state-wide shelter in place order

effective Monday, March 30. There will be debates on this between the health care industry and the business community. The Department of Labor and IRS will provide guidance on personnel issues. Allison Costanzo asked those in attendance to send her items for the *Update* newsletter.

Chad Walker closed the meeting by sharing a quote from Mr. Rogers “Look for the helpers in time of need.” He ask those in attendance to take care of themselves in this time of need and thanked them again for all the are doing.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Bethel, Secretary

Other Business – Additional Coalition Meeting Dates for 2020 are as follows:

April 24	September 25 (annual meeting)
May 29	October 23
June 26	December 4
August 28	

Meeting Location, Time, and Call-In Number: Unless displaced by COVID-19, all meetings except for the September annual meeting will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in room 104 of the Brown Building on the Dix Campus (801 Biggs Drive) in Raleigh. The location of the September meeting is the NC State University Club.