

Minutes of North Carolina Coalition on Aging Meeting

Friday, June 26, 2020 (10:00 a.m.)

(Zoom Conference Call due to cancellation of in-person meetings because of COVID-19)

Records Indicated at Least 59 People Were On the Call Including:

Tracy Colvard – Board Chair, Association for Home and Hospice Care of NC
Allison Costanzo – Executive Director
Charmaine Fuller Cooper – Chair Elect, AARP
Chad Walker – Treasurer, Transitions LifeCare
Mary Bethel – Secretary, Board Member
Harold Barnette – Board Member, Institute for Family Caregiving
Martha Fowler – Board Member, State Employees Association of North Carolina
Ray Riordan – Board Member, NC Rural Health Leadership Alliance
Janice Tyler – Board Member, Orange County Dept. on Aging/NC Association on Aging
Bill Lamb – Friends of Residents in Long Term Care
Brittany Hughes
Chris Brandenburg
Cornell Wright – NC Office of Minority Health (Presenter)
Corye Dunn – Disability Rights NC
David Rhew – NC Public Transportation Association
Dick Chady – NC Continuing Care Residents Association/Carol Woods
Elaine Whitford – Center for Volunteer Caregiving
Emma Hoffman – Transitions LifeCare Intern
Frances Messer – NC Assisted Living Association
Gina Upchurch – Senior PharmAssist
Heather Burkhardt – Resources for Seniors (Wake County)
Heather Hooper – Dementia Alliance of North Carolina
Jeff Horton – NC Senior Living Association
Jillian Hardin – Brunswick Senior Resources
Jo Paul – NC SHIP
Joanne Otuonye
Karen Appert – Southern Gerontological Society
Kathryn Lanier – NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (Presenter)
Kay Castillo – NASW-NC
Kristen Brannock – Resources for Seniors (Wake County)
Lauren Zingraff – Friends of Residents
Les Geller – SAGE Central NC/Resources for Seniors
Leslie Jones – NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
Lisa Tyndall
Lizzie Jordan, Center for Volunteer Caregiving
Mary Marlin – Upper Coastal Plain Area Agency on Aging

Meike Wiest – LifeLink/Nurse Care of North Carolina
Melinda Munden – NC SHIP
Morgan Whitman Gramann – NC Alliance for Health
Nancy Ruffner – Navigate NC
Neal Davis – Community and Senior Services of Johnston County
Nicolle Miller – NC Center for Health and Wellness, UNC Asheville
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
Pat Martin - Community and Senior Services of Johnston County
Preston Craddock – Greene County Department of Social Services
Randolph Cloud – Randolph Cloud and Associates (Presenter)
Rosalyn Pettyford – NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse/AARP NC
Sandy Doach – Wake County Community Advisory Committee
Stevie John – High County Area Agency on Aging
Tony Davis – NC Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Willetha Barnette – Institute for Family Caregiving
Two Interpreters

Opening Remarks and Introductions – Charmaine Fuller Cooper, Board Chair Elect

- The meeting started at 10:04 a.m.
- Charmaine welcomed everyone and shared that Tracy Colvard, Board Chair, could not attend the entire meeting so she was chairing.
- The agenda was reviewed.

Approval of Minutes from May 29, 2020, Coaliton Meeting

- A motion was made by Martha Fowler and seconded by Pam Palmer to approve the minutes as sent out prior to the meeting by e-mail. They were approved by all voting.

Treasurer’s Report - Chad Walker, Treasurer

- There is a balance of \$49,693.57 in the bank.
- There were no unusual expenses.
- Several membership renewals have been received.
- The Financial Sustainability Committee will meet with the Board to discuss how to close out the year financially strong.
- A motion was made by Janice Tyler to approve the report and seconded by Ray Riordan. The motion was approved by all voting.

Activities and Updates Since May Meeting – Allison Costanzo, Executive Director

- Coalition meetings are being recorded and the recordings are accessible on the Coalition’s website.

- The Board is still considering whether to hold the annual meeting on September 25 in-person or virtually. Allison asked that anyone who has had experience with developing virtual meeting sponsorship packages to let her know.
- The NC Serious Illness Coalition is moving forward with efforts to advocate for a Caregiver Task Force in the NC Dept. of Health and Human Services.
- The Board is interested in forming Committees on Family Caregiving and Health Disparities. If interested in being involved in either of these Committees, reach out to Allison or Board member Harold Barnette.
- Everyone was thanked for their advocacy pertaining to [House Bill 77](#) (Dept. of Transportation Funding and Governance) and the funding for the Rural Operating Assistance Program (ROAP). The Coalition sent communications to the House Transportation leaders regarding the importance of this funding. Unfortunately, the funding for ROAP was not included in the bill that passed.

Presentation on Health Disparities in Minority Communities – Cornell Wright, Executive Director, NC Office of Minority Health

- The Office for Minority Health was established in 1992.
- The goal of the Office is to help minorities have better health outcomes. It wants to achieve health equity (fairness in what is being done through policy).
- The Office reports to Ben Money, Deputy Secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services.
- Drivers/determinants of health were noted.
- Points which Cornell made in his remarks included the following: trust is a major issue for individuals of minority populations, we have systems of unshared power, addressing racism is important, and problems do not exist in a vacuum
- Data shows that historically marginalized populations have the worst health outcomes.
- African Americans are 21% to 22% of the state population but account for about 30% of positive COVID-19 tests and 30% to 40% of deaths from COVID.
- The rates of positive cases and deaths for Hispanics are even higher in proportion to their population.
- Mary Bethel asked how the Office of Minority Health relates to the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force that was recently announced by Gov. Cooper. Mr. Wright noted that he will be on the Task Force.
- Corye Dunn expressed concern that not enough attention is being paid to the needs of residents and staff in institutional care/facilities such as nursing homes which have had outbreaks and large death rates. She asked how we can push for additional attention to this issue. Mr. Wright responded that there are many variables that have to be taken into consideration in order to address. Bill Lamb added that problems are layered on the institutional side, and he thanked Corye for raising the issue.
- Gina Upchurch inquired as to whether the Office of Minority Health is thinking of changing its name. Mr. Wright said that system and structures need to change but not the programs.

Two thirds of who they see are African American. He added that one in five people in our state live in poverty and 63% of jobs now require post-secondary education.

- Harold Barnette commented that there are problems both inside and outside the medical community. For example, data can be manipulated to skew how outcomes are viewed.
- Charmaine thanked Cornell and offered summarizing comments. She noted that a rebalancing focus is needed.
- Cornell was asked to send any data his Office has relative to the health of older adults in minority population groups to Allison.

Update from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) – Kathryn Lanier, Elder Rights and Special Initiatives Section Chief, NC Division of Aging and Adult Services

- Joyce Massey-Smith, DASS's Director, is doing well and is tentatively expected back to work on July 7.
- The latest COVID-19 statistics for the state were shared. 4,316 COVID cases have been reported in nursing homes and 647 residents have died to date.
- Nutrition programs in the state have served 1,015,522 meals since the pandemic started.
- DHHS has finalized return to work plans.
- DHHS is planning for the upcoming hurricane season. Departmental employees have volunteered to serve in shelters.
- June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Regional ombudsmen and adult services staff at the Division have been involved in raising awareness about this. The Division's website has good information about the observance and elder abuse. The Governor has signed a proclamation which covers from Mother's Day to Father's Day to draw awareness to elder abuse awareness. A video was produced by the Division's adult services staff and sent to county departments of social services thanking the workers for their service. A YouTube video has been created by seniors in the Albemarle Commission area to raise awareness.
- House Bill 77, as noted earlier, cuts Rural Operating Assistance Program funding through the Department of Transportation.
- Ombudsmen are not able to visit with residents in long term care facilities. There is increased attention being raised about the restrictions on visitation to residents in facilities.

Update on Developments at the NC General Assembly – Randolph Cloud with Randolph Cloud and Associates

- Randolph shared that this is his 35th legislative session not counting mini sessions and special sessions, and he has never seen a session like this. COVID-19 has influenced everything.

- He noted that [House Bill 1023](#) (Coronavirus Relief Fund/Additions and Revisions) was passed by the General Assembly yesterday.
- He commented on the push and pull between the Governor and the legislature about reopening the economy. This fight will continue and the Lt. Governor, who is also running for Governor, will continue to challenge the Governor on his executive orders.
- [Senate Bill 808](#) (Medicaid Funding Act) which has passed, among other things appropriates funding for the operation of the NC Medicaid program and the implementation of Medicaid transformation and makes Medicaid transformation related changes including delaying transformation until July 1, 2021. The bill also removes the requirement that DHHS move to Granville County and stipulates that the Department can move forward with finding a location in Wake County.
- [Senate Bill 730](#) (No Patient Left Alone Act) did not pass in the closing days of the legislative session. This bill would have required hospitals to allow a support person of a hospital patient's choice to be present during the patient's stay unless the individual's presence infringes on others' rights or safety or is medically contraindicated.
- [House Bill 1169](#) (Bi-Partisan Election Act of 2020) was passed in early June. This law makes various changes to the laws related to elections and appropriates funds to the State Board of Elections in response to COVID-19. Only one witness is now required to witness an absentee ballot and absentee ballots can now be requested by e-mail or fax. Also absentee ballots can now be tracked once submitted. In addition, the bill stipulates that the Department of Health and Human Services and the State Board of Elections shall develop guidance to safely allow multipartisan teams to assist registered voters within hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, assisted living or other congregate living situations in the 2020 elections.
- The legislature will be back on July 11 and again on September 2 to further address budget matters and issues arising from COVID-19. There is a hope that additional federal funds will be coming to the state for COVID-19 relief.
- Gina Upchurch and Corey Dunn had questions and comments about absentee voting. Corey noted that there will likely be an absentee ballot campaign in the months to come.
- Janice Tyler had a question about House Bill 77. Although the bill passed, the "fix" for the ROAP funding was not included. Randolph stressed that advocates need to keep pushing for this fix. Mary suggested that the various advocacy group need to coordinate their efforts.
- Gina Upchurch asked about Medicaid going forward. Randolph responded that Medicaid transformation is going forward, but he does not think Medicaid expansion will be approved.
- Mary Bethel noted that it was just announced that Sen. Jerry Tillman from Randolph County has resigned from the General Assembly. Randolph added that Sen. Tillman's wife had died this year and that may have contributed to his resignation. It was also noted that several current and former legislators have died recently – Rep. MaryAnn Black, Rep. Linda Johnson, former Sen. Tony Rand, and former Rep. Sidney Locks who had been an advocate for aging issues in the 1980's.

Sharing by Coalition Members

- Jeff Horton commented that his Association was a bit taken back by the Governor’s Executive Order 147 which required masks and restricted visitation in skilled nursing facilities (SNF) and combination homes (combined skilled nursing and assisted living facilities). NC DHHS issued guidance yesterday with strict criteria for smaller residential settings regarding visitation, communal dining, and group outside activities.
- Mary Bethel noted that Jeff Horton had made a presentation to the House Health Committee about how adult care homes are responding during COVID-19.
- Jo Paul announced that Viadent Medical Center will be in-network for the state Medicare Advantage plan with Humana effective January 1. This is a first for that part of the state.
- Gina Upchurch noted that since January consumers (Medicare recipients) cannot get information on the SHIP website about Medicare plans and their cost. Harold Barnette commented that 30% of seniors do not use the Internet. Jo said that SHIP made this change due to the fact that Medicare supplement plans are based on zip code, and it would have been expensive for SHIP to maintain the information. In addition, SHIP found that most of the people who used the site were SHIP staff and volunteers. The federal site with plan information is maintained.
- David Rhew thanked everyone for their advocacy around House Bill 77. He shared that he had been reassured by key legislators that the issue of funding for ROAP will be taken up again.

Other Business -

- Allison announced that she has accepted a new job and her last day with the Coalition will be July 31. She expressed appreciation to Coalition members for their support.
- Charmaine thanked Allison for her good work on behalf of the Coalition and for what she has done to prepare the Coalition for the future.
- Chad Walker noted that the job announcement for the Executive Director position will be sent to Coalition members and will be posted on several sites.

Adjourn - There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Bethel, Secretary

Additional Coalition Meeting Dates for 2020 are as follows and will remain virtual until further notice.

No Meeting in July	August 28	October 23
	September 25 (annual meeting)	December 4