

Minutes of North Carolina Coalition on Aging Meeting

Friday, October 23, 2020 (10:00 a.m.)

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

Records Indicated at Least 77 People Were On the Call Including:

Tracy Colvard – Board Chair, Maxim Healthcare Group
Charmaine Fuller Cooper – AARP South Region
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 – NC Rural Health Leadership Alliance
Janice Tyler – Board Member, Orange County Dept. on Aging/NC Association on Aging
Heather Burkhardt – Coalition on Aging Executive Director
Aimee Kepler – Triangle J Area Agency on Aging
Althea Taylor Jones – Individual Member/Senior Tar Heel Legislature
Audrey Edmisten – NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
Autumn Cox – Triangle J Area Agency on Aging
Ben Popkin – Popkin Strategies/Friends of Residents
Bill Lamb – Friends of Residents
Bob Konrad – Friends of Residents
Cameron Larson - Interpreter
Carol Kelly – NC Guardianship Association
Carolyn Pennington – Triangle J Area Agency on Aging
Catherine Sevier – AARP-NC/NC Serious Illness Coalition
Cayce Kominski, Disability Rights NC
Chanelle (C.C.) Croxton – National Domestic Workers Alliance
Corye Dunn – Disability Rights NC
David Rhew – NC Public Transportation Association
David Sevier – NC Serious Illness Coalition
Dick Chady – NC Third Age/Individual Member
Elaine Whitford – Center for Volunteer Caregiving
Ellen Schneider – UNC Center for Aging and Health
Erin Bevier, NC State MSW Intern at LifeLinks
Gina Upchurch – Senior PHARMAssist
Glenda Reed – Wake County Human Services
Greg Tanner – Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services
Jamie Philyaw – UnitedHealthcare
Jenn Weeks – All Good Things Daily Money Management Services
Jeff Horton – NC Senior Living Association
Jillian Hardin – Brunswick Senior Resources (Supply Center)
Joanne Otuonye – Wake County Human Services

Joe Wheeler – SAGE Central NC of the LGBT Center of Raleigh
Joyce Massey-Smith – NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
Karen Appert – Southern Gerontological Society
Kathie Smith – NC Association for Home and Hospice Care
Kim Johnson – Piedmont Triad Area Agency on Aging
Laura Schlabach – Individual Member (Medicaid Investigations Division, NC DOJ)
Les Geller - SAGE Central NC of the LGBT Center of Raleigh
Lynette Tolson – NC PACE Association
Margaret Toman – Friends of Residents
Marisette Hanan – The Carolinas Center
Marty Lamb – Friends of Residents/Individual Member
Mary Lucas – Transitions LifeCare
Mary Marlin – Upper Coastal Plains Area Agency on Aging
Meike Wiest – LifeLinks/Arosa Care Management and Guardianship
Nadia Mazza - NC Center for Health and Wellness, UNC Asheville
Nancy Ruffner – Navigate NC
Nancy Warren – NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse
Natasha Vos – NC Center for Health and Wellness, UNC Asheville
Nicole Fox - Interpreter
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
Peter McCann – Transitions LifeCare
Preston Craddock – Greene County Department of Social Services
Randolph Cloud – Randolph Cloud and Associates
Rebecca Freeman – NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
Roger Manus – Campbell Senior Law Clinic/Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging
Sandy Deutsch – Wake County Nursing Home Community Advisory Committee
Sean Campbell - ProPublica
Stevie John, High Country Area Agency on Aging
Dr. Susan Kanasgra – Chronic Disease/Injury Section, NC Div. of Public Health/Meeting Speaker
Tara Muller, Disability Rights NC
Tara Stewart
Tommy Goldsmith – NC Health News
Tony Davis – NC Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Valerie Arendt – NASW – NC
Willetha Barnette – Institute for Family Caregiving

Opening Remarks and Introductions – Heather Burkhardt, Executive Director, and Tracy Colvard, Board Chair

- Heather reviewed the schedule for today which included the Coalition hosting a NC DHHS listening session on Olmstead. She noted that the Coalition meeting would adjourn by 11:30 and the listening session would follow the meeting. A different link is being used for that.
- Tracy welcomed everyone and thanked Heather for all that she has done in her short tenure.

Minutes from August 28 and September 25, 2020 Coalition Meetings

- Minutes were sent to members prior to the meeting.
- No changes to the minutes were suggested.

Treasurer's Report

- Chad Walker, the Treasurer, was absent so there was no report other than a comment that the finances were in good order

Activities and Updates Since June Meeting – Heather Burkhardt, Executive Director

- She continues to get settled into the job and to learn all the ins and outs of everything the position does. She has spent considerable time getting to know members.
- She and Mary Bethel conducted training for AARP NC staff and advocacy volunteers on October 14 on “Beyond the Basics of Being an Effective Advocate for Issues Important to Older North Carolinians” and prepared a resource directory of key agencies and organizations in aging and health care advocacy in North Carolina as a part of this training.
- The Coalition signed on to a letter with 24 other organizations about the importance of the flu immunization.
- The Coalition’s direct care workforce advocacy project with PHI has begun. A brochure and a blog on the project have been completed. A session with direct care workforce stakeholders in the state is being planned for February.
- A 30 minute session with the NC Alliance for Health on Health Aging has been scheduled for December 1. In addition to Heather, presenters will be Brad Allen with NC Senior Games, and Nicolle Miller with the NC Center for Health and Wellness at UNC Asheville.
- The Coalition’s Board is beginning to do strategic planning for next year.
- The Coalition will begin the process of determining legislative priorities for 2021-2022. The process for selecting priorities will be the same as was utilized for 2019-2020. Each Coalition member can submit up to two issues for consideration. A form has been developed for submitting issues. Completed forms are due back to Heather by November 16. Tracy will appoint an ad hoc committee of the membership to develop a recommended list of legislative priorities. These will be presented to the membership at the December 3 membership meeting.
- She will be working to develop partnership agreements for 2021.

NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Response to COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Settings – Dr. Susan Kansagra, Section Chief, Chronic Disease and Injury Section, NC Division of Public Health

- The number of COVID-19 positive cases is creeping up in the state. We are currently paused in Phase 3.
- North Carolina has had 13,737 COVID positive cases in nursing homes in the state and 1,613 deaths in homes. There have been outbreaks in 213 facilities reported. There have been 5,017 positive cases in residential care facilities and 413 deaths in these facilities. Outbreaks have been reported in 100 residential care facilities. According to CMS data, North Carolina is in the middle of the pack with deaths per 1,000 residents with 52.6.
- NC DHHS has formed a long-term care response team that is focused on five things: reducing the introduction of disease through prevention; increasing long-term care capacity through PPE, staffing, and funding to manage and mitigate outbreaks; testing for early detection; supporting facilities in managing outbreaks; and providing oversight. She went into detail on measures undertaken in each of these areas.
- New CMS guidance for nursing homes was released the end of September. Facilities are encouraged to hold outdoor visitation when possible. Indoor visitation is permitted if the county positivity rate is less than 10% and the facility has not had a case in the last 14 days. Visits must follow infection prevention practices including social distancing, masks, etc. Compassionate care visits are allowed for residents experiencing distress due to lack of family support. DHHS has posted guidelines for visitation for other facility types on its website.
- North Carolina has submitted an interim vaccine prioritization plan to the CDC that includes the approach to prioritized populations for vaccination. Phase 1 prioritized groups include healthcare workers at high risk of exposure, long-term care staff and residents, and adults with 2+ chronic conditions.
- Dr. Kansagra concluded her remarks by noting that additional information is available on the NC DHHS website: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/information/health-care/long-term-care-facilities>.
- Several questions and comments were raised by those in attendance relative to staffing levels in facilities; voting assistance of residents in facilities since staff, by state law, cannot help residents with voting matters; outbreaks in facilities, and occupancy rates in facilities. Bill Lamb with Friends of Residents noted that his organization is getting feedback that families are still not able to get in to visit with their relatives in facilities and that requests for compassionate care visits are being challenged.

Update from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) – Joyce Massey-Smith, Director, NC Division of Aging and Adult Services

- Rebecca Freeman has been hired to fill the Consumer Affairs/Legislative Liaison position at DAAS. She will be the official liaison to the Coalition, the Senior Tar Heel Legislature, and the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging.
- DAAS is beginning to see some opening of adult day care services. DAAS is continuing to fund these services during COVID-19.
- The federal Administration for Community Living is providing states with PPE to distribute where they see a priority.
- COVID relief funds approved by the General Assembly need to be spent by the end of the year. DAAS tried to get approval to use some of this funding to "think outside the box" but it was not approved. The Special Assistance funding for assisted living facilities should be spent at 98%. It has been a challenge to spend the funding approved for adult protective services (APS) so quickly. There is a focus on ensuring that APS staff have the equipment they need to work from home.
- Ombudsmen are making plans to re-enter long-term care facilities for face to face visits with residents. Visits had been restricted due to COVID-19.
- DAAS continues to work of several additional grants.
- COVID-19 has shone a light on the older adult population and their needs.
- A question was asked about adult protective service complaints during the pandemic. DAAS is working on education and training efforts to get information out about adult protective services and reporting requirements for this. A survey of county departments of social services on adult protective services is being done now.

Update on State and Federal Legislation

- Heather noted that approval for additional federal stimulus funding is still on hold.
- A list of the Coalition's legislative priorities for 2019-2020 will be sent to Coalition members.
- David Sevier shared that the NC Serious Illness Coalition is working on efforts pertaining to advanced care planning, including making the documents electronic.

Sharing by Coalition Members

- Bill Lamb with Friends of Residents reported they have received a contribution of 100 tablets that will be distributed to adult care homes to help residents communicate virtually with their families.
- Bill Lamb also announced that the Fall Gala for Friends of Residents will be held virtually this evening.
- Gina Upchurch with Senior PHARMAssist noted that Medicare open enrollment is in full swing and goes until December 7. The plan finder tool is better this year. She shared that several companies had to be taken off the plan finder due to some glitches. She also shared that there have been some changes to Medicare including coverage for telehealth and acupuncture. Persons suffering from renal disease can also now get into Medicare Advantage plans.

- Mary Bethel shared on behalf of Alan Winstead with Meals on Wheels of Wake County who was absent from the meeting, that Meals on Wheels of Wake County will have a virtual #LetsDoLunch event on November 18. Guest speaker will be Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of NC DHHS.
- Corey Dunn with Disability Rights NC announced that they are doing a day of action for curb side voting on October 29. They have been doing curb side voting monitoring across the state.
- Mary Bethel reported that NC Senior Games State Finals are being held virtually this year.
- Lynette Tolson with the NC PACE Association announced that they are moving their annual conference for 2021 from March to May. She asked that people let her know if they are planning events in May so they can try to steer clear of conflicts with dates.
- It was also shared the NC Association on Aging is considering moving their spring conference to May.

Other Business

- None

Adjourn - There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:24 p.m. so participants could join the NC DHHS Olmstead listening session

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Bethel, Secretary

The last Coalition Meeting Date for 2020 is **December 4**. It will be held virtually.

Note: Approximately 35 people participated in the Olmstead listening session following the Coalition meeting. Listening sessions are part of Phase 1 of the new Olmstead plan development process. This includes doing a system assessment.