



NC Minority Health Advisory Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday, December 11, 2024 @ 10:00 am

The quarterly scheduled meeting of the North Carolina Minority Health Advisory Council (MHAC) was called to order on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 10:03 AM virtually on Microsoft Teams with Dr. Portia Pope, Acting Director, NCDHHS (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services) Office of Health Equity (OHE), presiding. The following persons were in attendance for the meeting:

Attendee	Present on December 11, 2024, Meeting
MHAC Members	
Dr. Gary R. Gunderson	
Dr. Gabriela Marie Plascencia	
Dr. Cherry Maynor Beasley	
Dr. Ronny A. Bell	X
Dr. Natasha Adams-Denny	
Dr. Lawrence R. Wu	X
State Representative Donna M. White	
State Representative Carla D. Cunningham	
Dr. Chere M. Gregory	
State Representative Donyel Barber	X
Dr. Catherine Evans	
State Senator Gladys A. Robinson	X
Ms. Brenda J. Smith	
Dr. Olugbemiga E. Jegede	
Vacant	
Guests	
Paige Wyrick supporting Dr. Chere Gregory	X
Zuri Komegay supporting the Honorable Gladys A. Robinson	X
NCDHHS Meeting Speakers and Facilitators	
Dr. Portia Pope, Acting Director, NCDHHS Office of Health Equity (OHE)	X
Carolina Siliceo Perez, Acting Director, Latinx / Hispanic Policy	X



Attendee	Present on December 11, 2024, Meeting
and Strategy Program, NCDHHS Office of Health Equity (OHE)	
Tatiana Moore, Program Manager, NC Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP), OHE	X
Technical Assistance Staff	
Anissa Abboud, Consultant, Guidehouse, LLC	X
Aidan Lovely, Consultant, Guidehouse, LLC	X
Sydney Pedraza, Consultant, Guidehouse, LLC	X

Meeting Notes

I. Preliminary Matters

- 1) OHE Acting Director Portia Pope introduced herself and welcomed the assembled virtual audience.
- 2) Sydney Pedraza, Consultant, Guidehouse, LLC, conducted a roll call for MHAC members and asked any guests or other partners to put their names and affiliations in the chat.
- 3) Acting Director Pope spotlighted 2 individuals and introduced them to the assembled council:
 - a) The Honorable Donyel B. Barber, appointed member of the Minority Health Advisory Council and Director of Health Equity Initiatives at Kintegra Health, introduced herself, sharing details about her background and passion for health equity.
 - b) Carolina Siliceo Perez, the newly appointed (as of July 2024) Acting Director of the OHE Latinx / Hispanic Policy and Strategy Program, introduced herself, sharing details about her background and passion for health equity and community and partner engagement with a focus on Latinx communities.
- 4) Acting Director Pope presented on meeting objectives, communication equity considerations for the meeting and shared the meeting agenda.



II. Presentation Content

- 1) **Office of Health Equity Updates:** Acting Director Pope introduced Office of Health Equity updates and facilitated staff reports on ongoing key initiatives to the assembled council:
 - a) **Health Disparities Data Reports:** Acting Director Pope started by presenting on the two disparity reports that NCDHHS has available. The two data reports stratify data to look at new and emerging populations in North Carolina communities and to highlight disparities.
 - i) The [2024 NCDHHS Health Disparities Analysis Report](#) is the first of its kind since the previous version published in 2018. In developing the 2024 report, the Office of Health Equity and its contributors followed the NCDHHS community and partner engagement framework, the Equitable Engagement and Outreach Continuum and reached out to many organizations, partners, data experts and community groups to collect and incorporate feedback.
 - ii) The *2022 Medicaid Annual Health Disparities Report* will be published in January 2025 and will focus specifically on the subset of the NC population which receives Medicaid benefits. The report is based on quality measures that Medicaid has to follow and contains specific data on how one government program / agency (Medicaid) is impacting the health of North Carolinians.
 - b) **NCDHHS Language Access Plan:** Acting Director Pope introduced the Language Access Plan project, sharing that the Office of Health Equity has been charged by the Governor's Office with developing a Language Access Plan for the Department to provide both policy and a guide for driving language accessibility policies and practices across all Divisions. The Language Access Plan is a recent example of OHE leading more Departmental level health equity and community and partner engagement focused initiatives as subject matter experts, a role that the Office expects to continue expanding. Carolina Siliceo Perez, Acting Director of the OHE Latinx Program, shared more details on the Language Access Plan project:
 - i) The Language Access Plan has been in development for over a year, starting with surveying divisions and assessing current language access policies from September 2023 to May 2024. OHE partnered with LEAP to conduct data analysis on language needs and create a template for the language access plan. OHE assembled a team and identified key resource and support needs and began drafting the plan in June 2024. OHE is targeting completion in mid-December 2024.
 - c) **NCDHHS Hurricane Helene Relief Efforts:** Carolina Siliceo Perez, Acting Director of the OHE Latinx Program, shared details on the Health Equity Portfolio's Hurricane Helene relief project:
 - (1) OHE mobilized quickly after Hurricane Helene devastated many parts of Western NC. OHE efforts to listen and engage partners on the ground in Western NC resulted in three community convening calls, which OHE now hosts on a semi-permanent basis. The next call is on 12/11 @ 12PM. MHAC members were invited to join.



The Office of Health Equity

- (2) First, OHE established a Monthly Statewide Hurricane Helene Relief call, that convenes community-based organizations and emergency relief organizations such as FEMA, to share resources, discuss opportunities for collaboration, streamline resource sharing and answer questions around relief efforts.
 - (3) Second, OHE established a Weekly Latinx/Hispanic Relief Call which convenes Latinx/Hispanic partners and community members to discuss timely updates and resources. The impact of this call is continuous communication, easy resource distribution and the ability to address in real-time, emerging community-specific needs.
 - ii) The attendees for the three Monthly Statewide Hurricane Relief calls hosted by OHE follow:
 - (1) 10/22 – 288 attendees. Topics include D-SNAP, Impact Health and Healthy Opportunities Pilot.
 - (2) 10/30 – 802 attendees. Panelists answered over 60 questions.
 - (3) 11/20 – 580 attendees. Panelists answered over 60 questions.
- 2) **Office of Health Equity Upcoming Priorities:** Acting Director Pope introduced Office of Health Equity upcoming priorities and facilitated staff reports of upcoming key initiatives to the assembled council:
- a) 2024 NCDHHS Health Disparities Analysis Report Roll Out: The 2024 Health Disparities Analysis Report was published in September 2024. Since publication, OHE has been working to develop a variety of more digestible population-based supplemental materials including 1-pagers and slide decks for community as well as planning for and executing presentations on the report to various internal and external audiences.
 - i) OHE developed an American Indian population-based slide deck and fact sheet.
 - ii) OHE developed a Latinx/Hispanic population slide deck and fact sheets focused on immigrants, refugees and Hispanic farmworkers.
 - iii) OHE is continuing to develop additional fact sheets and slide decks on the following identified populations / categories (not all inclusive): African Americans, Maternal Health, Children with Complex Health Needs, Asians and Pacific Islanders, LGBTQ+, People with disabilities, Adults 65 +, Rural Health and Environmental Health.
 - iv) OHE is conducting a Presentation and Listening Tour where OHE staff will travel across NC communities facilitating tailored presentations on the Health Disparities Analysis Report across NC organizations and communities and sharing resources and flyers with partners. OHE currently has presentations scheduled through May 2025 and is adding new events to the list. MHAC members can request OHE to deliver a presentation to a specific audience through the post-session survey or by emailing Acting Director Pope portia.d.pope@dhhs.nc.gov or the OHE Office healthequityoffice@dhhs.nc.gov.



- v) OHE is scheduled to present at some MHAC member involved events:
 - (1) American Indian Unity Conference – March 2025: Dr. Bell and Dr. Gregory expressed their interest in helping OHE strategize efforts regarding the health of American Indian populations.
 - (2) Cone Health Conference in May of 2025: Dr. Jegede arranged this presentation.
 - (3) Presentation to Blue Cross Blue Shield in January 2025: Dr. Wu set up the opportunity for this presentation.
- b) Diabetes Medicaid Codes: Tatiana Moore, Program Manager, NC Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP), presented OHE's application to develop Medicaid codes for the NC MDPP program. OHE applied for coverage for the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) through North Carolina Medicaid on October 23, 2024. This request will have potential cost savings to the Medicaid program as well as reductions to providers' workload and an increase in beneficiaries' quality of care. She also shared:
 - i) Justification for the application, explaining the cost-savings to the council
 - (1) Program Cost - The cost to cover their participation in a diabetes prevention program would be around \$345.6 million. Billing codes are the same as Medicare DPP.
 - (2) Medical Expenditures In contrast, medical expenditures related to diabetes totaled \$5.54 billion.
 - ii) The anticipated time horizon for hearing back and implementing Medicaid codes
 - (1) Initial Review – 9 Weeks, anticipated December 25, 2025.
 - (2) Detailed Review – 16 Weeks, anticipated February 12, 2025.
 - (3) Policy Consideration – 14 Months, anticipated December 23, 2025.
- c) OHE What's Next – Sustainability and Impact: Acting Director Pope concluded the session by sharing more about the steps OHE is taking to ensure sustainable programming and impact from OHE initiatives.
 - i) CDC Grant NC Counts Coalition Contract: OHE is renewing a partnership with NC Counts Coalition, who we worked with on several COVID-19 projects in a formal contract. They will be assisting to oversee and manage the Hurricane Helene Relief efforts in Western NC on behalf of the Office.
 - ii) New Staff Hiring / Onboarding: OHE has hired two new staff recently, Victoria Zampieri, the new Latinx/Hispanic project manager and a CPE program manager DeNita Nash who worked with the Office when it was called the Office of Minority Health. We are still working to hire a new Data and Evaluation Program manager to assist with the Office's health equity data



programming and continuous evaluation.

- iii) **Health Equity Accreditation:** In 2025, OHE will be pursuing departmental health equity accreditation. We conducted a thorough research process with three accrediting bodies and ultimately selected URAC who is willing to work with us to co-create a unique health equity accreditation for state government entities. We plan to collaborate with URAC to establish an Advisory Group, set standards and eventually apply for NCDHHS health equity accreditation.
 - iv) **Medicaid MOA:** OHE will be conducting approximately 50% of the Office's work focused on improving accessibility and quality of Medicaid programs in partnership with the Division of Health Benefits (Medicaid). OHE currently has a contract with Medicaid through the end of the year outlining various health equity and community and partner engagement activities.
- 3) **MHAC Member Contributions:** Acting Director Pope expressed thanks and gratitude to various MHAC members for their contributions to equity projects in 2024. Members contributed to work across the Department, Portfolio and OHE, providing advisory recommendations, partner linkages and directly working on initiatives alongside staff.
- a) "Thank you to all MHAC members for your hard work and dedication! We deeply appreciate your commitment to reducing disparities across the State. Your efforts have made a significant impact on Health Equity Portfolio operations, developing partnerships and uplifting North Carolina's communities." - Dr. Portia Pope, Acting Director, OHE
- 4) **NCDHHS and Health Equity Portfolio Updates:** Acting Director Pope shared overall NCDHHS and Health Equity Portfolio updates on behalf of CHEO Debra Farrington:
- a) 1-Year Medicaid Anniversary - On the 1-year Anniversary since Medicaid Expansion took effect, the Department is celebrating meeting the 2-Year enrollment goal of 600,000 new enrollees in half the time.
 - b) Behavioral Health Investments - HEP is wrapping up some consultation and technical assistance with the \$80 million funding in child behavioral health.
 - c) ServiceNow - HEP is launching a new service request tool for partners built into ServiceNow, intended to streamline partner requests for the Portfolio's consultation, technical assistance and training services.
 - d) Partnership with EEO - The Office of People, Culture and Belonging is absorbing Equal Employment Opportunity programming from the Department.
 - e) Medicaid MOA - HEP has contracted with the Division of Health Benefits (Medicaid) in an executed contract to provide advisory and technical assistance on community and partner engagement, workforce belonging, data disaggregation and health equity.



III. Discussion / Closing Remarks

(1) Discussion:

- 1) Dr. Wu asked whether the number of people helped through Hurricane Helene relief was documented / tracked.
 - i. Acting Director Pope responded that OHE tracks the number of participants engaged through monthly calls and the distribution of resources and materials. OHE is working to assess additional metrics / impact data that can be obtained from partnerships. Once NC Counts is onboarded, they will assist with some of this tracking and monitoring work.
- 2) Dr. Wu asked what kind of ethnic and racial information MHAC members have access to regarding Medicaid beneficiaries.
 - i. Acting Director Pope responded that OHE could send MHAC members the data dashboard breakdown that presents Medicaid beneficiaries by race, ethnicity, location and other details. Acting Latinx Director Siliceo Perez responded that Medicaid is also working to expand on the details displayed on the Medicaid dashboard.
 - ii. Dashboards were shared in the chat:
 1. [Medicaid Expansion Dashboard | NC Medicaid](#)
 2. [Enrollment Dashboard | NC Medicaid](#)
- 3) Dr. Bell asked if a set of speaker's slides will be made available from the 2024 Health Disparities Analysis Report.
 - i. Acting Director Pope responded that a deck does exist and followed up by sharing the slide deck from the website post-session which is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). Acting Director Pope shared that customization is available if Dr. Bell or any MHAC members need a tailored Disparities Report slide deck for a particular audience.
- 4) Acting Director Pope asked Representative Barber if there was any work she's working on that could use OHE support.
 - i. Representative Barber responded that she would think about what OHE can partner with her on, but she did mention that she would be interested in hearing more about OHE's 1115 waiver work.
- 5) Acting Director Pope asked Dr. Bell about the Unity Conference regarding sending information on sponsorship to Acting Director Pope.
 - i. Dr. Bell recommended Acting Director Pope looks at the United Tribes website for more information The link is at: <https://www.unitedtribesnc.org/2025-updates>.
 - ii. Dr. Bell shared that he would be happy to collaborate further on the Unity Conference.



IV. Next Steps and Action Items

- (1) Acting Director Pope shared OHE contact information, resources and the post session survey.
- (2) The next MHAC meeting is planned for March 2025.

V. Next Steps and Action Items

- (1) Acting Director Pope to follow up with Representative Barber re: 1115 waiver work.
- (2) Acting Director Pope, OHE to follow up with Dr. Bell and Dr. Beasley re: American Indian Unity Conference.