**NC Minority Health Advisory Council**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, September 18, 2024 @ 10:00 am**

The quarterly scheduled meeting of the North Carolina Minority Health Advisory Council (MHAC) was called to order on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at 10:00 AM virtually on Microsoft Teams with Portia Pope, Deputy Director, NCDHHS (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services) Office of Health Equity, presiding. The following persons were in attendance for the meeting:

| Attendee | Present on September 18, 2024, Meeting |
| --- | --- |
| MHAC Members | |
| Dr. Gary R. Gunderson |  |
| Dr. Gabriela Marie Plascencia |  |
| Dr. Cherry Maynor Beasley | X |
| Dr. Ronny A. Bell |  |
| Dr. Natasha Adams-Denny |  |
| Dr. Lawrence R. Wu |  |
| The Honorable Donna M. White |  |
| The Honorable Carla D. Cunningham |  |
| Dr. Chere M. Gregory | X |
| The Honorable Donyel Barber |  |
| Dr. Catherine Evans |  |
| The Honorable Gladys A. Robinson | X |
| Ms. Brenda J. Smith |  |
| Dr. Olugbemiga E. Jegede | X |
| Vacant |  |
| Guests | |
| Paige Wyrick supporting Dr. Chere Gregory | X |
| Brittany Woods-Holmes supporting Dr. Chere Gregory | X |
| Zuri Kornegay supporting the Honorable Gladys A. Robinson | X |
| NCDHHS Meeting Speakers and Facilitators | |
| Debra Farrington, Deputy Secretary/Chief Health Equity Officer, NCDHHS Health Equity Portfolio (HEP) | X |
| Dr. Portia Pope, Deputy Director, NCDHHS Office of Health Equity (OHE) | X |
| Janssen White, Assistant Secretary for Government Affairs, NCDHHS | X |
| Suzy Khachaturyan, Legislative Liaison, NCDHHS | X |
| Lauren Benson, Program Manager for Engagement, NCDHHS OHE | X |
| Tatiana Moore, Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP) Program Manager, 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) Deputy Director Portia Pope introduced herself and welcomed the assembled virtual audience.

(2) Sydney Pedraza conducted a roll call for MHAC members and asked any guests or other partners to put their names and affiliations in the chat.

(3) Deputy Director Pope presented on communication equity considerations for the meeting, meeting objectives, and introduced the NC Health Equity Portfolio and Office of Health Equity mission and values to the council.

**II. Presentation Content**

1. Deputy Director Pope provided an overview of NCDHHS’ approach to addressing disparities across the state of North Carolina, highlighting the collective and cross-divisional work that drives their efforts. Deputy Director Pope spoke to the Office of Health Equity’s leadership and expertise within the department, specifically driving initiatives that uplift historically marginalized communities and those who may have contentious relationships with the State. The Office of Health Equity acts as the Department’s disparity mitigation arm, ensuring action to address disparities are taking place across NCDHHS. Finally, Deputy Director Pope emphasized the importance of partnering with communities to make systemic change throughout North Carolina.
2. Assistant Secretary Janssen White provided several legislative updates to the council members, beginning with an update on Medicaid Expansion enrollment. The Department’s two-year goal was to have 600,000 new enrollees and less than a year later, NCDHHS has almost reached this goal. Further, Tailored Plans started on July 1, 2024, due to the hard work of NCDHHS staff and partners at Tailored Plan Operators. Assistant Secretary White expressed that continuity and access to care are continued priorities of the Department through its Medicaid Expansion efforts. Next, Assistant Secretary White discussed the release of NCDHHS’ latest behavioral health report, [*Transforming North Carolina’s Behavioral Health System: Investing in a System That Delivers Whole-Person Care When and Where People Need It*](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/transforming-north-carolinas-behavioral-health-system/download?attachment), which discusses the work the Department and communities have been doing over the last several years in the behavioral health space. Assistant Secretary White also provided brief updates on the Governor’s release of the 2024 Short Session Budget. Finally, Assistant Secretary White ended her time with a reminder that the NCDHHS Office of Government Affairs has many great resources, and urged council members to reach out at any time, providing the below contact information:
   * 1. Janssen White, Director of Government Affairs, [Janssen.White@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Janssen.White@dhhs.nc.gov)
     2. Suzy Khachaturyan, Legislative Liaison, [Suzy.Khachaturyan@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Suzy.Khachaturyan@dhhs.nc.gov)
     3. Kelly Kulinski, Constituent Relations Director, [Kelly.Kulinski@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Kelly.Kulinski@dhhs.nc.gov)
     4. Patricia Glasgow, Constituent Relations, [Patricia.Glasgow@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Patricia.Glasgow@dhhs.nc.gov)
3. Deputy Director Pope announced the release of the Health Disparities Report on September 18, 2024, sharing that OHE will share the report with all council members following the meeting. Deputy Director Pope provided a detailed overview of the goals of the report, the six categories of health disparities outlined throughout the report, an overview of identified disparities, and the report development through engagement and partnership. Deputy Director Pope emphasized that this report is for everyone and urged council members to share the report with their communities. Additionally, some council members have agreed to make public videos about the importance of the Health Disparities Report. Deputy Director Pope reminded council members to reach out to the Office of Health Equity if they would like any consultation and/or training around the use and dissemination of the report.
4. Tatiana Moore, MDPP Program Manager, OHE, provided an overview of the MDPP, FY 2024 highlights, and MDPP goals for FY 2025. The FY 2024 highlights included key partnerships from the past fiscal year, upcoming presentation opportunities, and the total programmatic reach in FY 2024. MDPP Program Manager Moore connected with council member Dr. Chere Gregory via email regarding a community-based peer educator program at Novant Health and sharing key learnings and discoveries from her work with MDPP.
5. Lauren Benson, Program Manager for Engagement, OHE, provided an overview of the NCDHHS Community and Partner Engagement (CPE) Initiative, highlighting the release of the CPE Guide and subsequent resources that have been disseminated, which focus on cultural humility, competency, and key engagement principles. Benson also reviewed the CPE Website traffic metrics over the last 25 weeks and shared the Office’s plans to create additional resources for both Department and community members.
6. Deputy Secretary Debra Farrington provided updates on behalf of the Health Equity Portfolio (HEP) regarding transition planning, departmental updates, and key upcoming priorities. Deputy Secretary Farrington emphasized HEP’s focus on sustainability throughout the upcoming leadership transitions, and the importance of maintaining a dedicated staff. The Portfolio is currently working on its Transition Plan to ensure new administration is aware of HEP’s key priorities. Deputy Secretary Farrington also discussed priorities for the Office of Rural Health (ORH), including expanding its Loan Repayment and Telehealth Programs, as well as priorities for the Office of People, Culture, and Belonging (OPCB), which includes launching Employee Resource Groups and continuing to engage with community partners.

**III. Discussion / Open Floor**

1. Dr. Cherry Beasley encouraged all council members to review the Health Disparities Report as it is very comprehensive. Dr. Beasley expressed appreciation for the report’s use of both data and stories, and encouraged council members to connect their communities, faith-based groups, and nonprofits to this report.
2. Dr. Chere Gregory mentioned she had already emailed MDPP Program Manager, Tatiana Moore, but would love to connect Moore with the community-based peer educator program at Novant Health so they can learn from MDPP’s key learnings and discoveries.
3. Dr. Cherry Beasley noted her office has been overwhelmed with small requests from Robeson County and asked if OHE can help to take this on. Dr. Beasley expressed there are many different groups working to reduce disparities, but without collaboration, they are unable to make significant impact. Dr. Beasley appreciates the work Deputy Secretary Farrington is doing to get these groups to talk to each other at the state level.

**IV. Closing Matters**

1. Closing remarks from Deputy Director Pope on OHE contact information, resources, and the next MHAC meeting, which is scheduled for December 11, 2024, and will be held in-person.

**V. Next Steps and Action Items**

1. Deputy Director Pope will share the Health Disparities Report with council members and encourage them to share with their communities and networks.
2. Tatiana Moore, MDPP Program Manager, will connect with Dr. Chere Gregory, on sharing key learnings and discoveries with Dr. Gregory’s community-based peer educator program at Novant Health.
3. Deputy Director Pope will connect with Dr. Cherry Beasley on fielding requests from Robeson County and ensuring more targeted collaboration among groups addressing health disparities in North Carolina.