

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES: Our Commitments to Action



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We must take bold action on the health, safety and early learning of young children to accomplish the goals outlined in the NC Early Childhood Action Plan. As the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), I believe in the importance of investing our state’s resources in our youngest North Carolinians. Supporting our young children and their families is a critical part of our job at NCDHHS.



At the direction of Governor Roy Cooper, members of my staff played a key role in developing the NC Early Childhood Action Plan, along with the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Our team coordinated the input and participation of nearly 1,500 stakeholders across the state. Now we must take action to see it through.

At NCDHHS we have prioritized actions my department can take now that align to the goals of the statewide Early Childhood Action Plan. After reading through the plan, I hope all North Carolinians will also commit to taking action for our children. With all of us working together, we can change outcomes for children in North Carolina.

Mandy Cohen, M.D. • Secretary, NCDHHS

NCCARE360

By end of 2020, the NCCARE360 team will create and launch the first statewide coordinated care network with a shared technology to connect those with identified needs to community resources and allow for a feedback loop on the outcome of that connection. The NCCARE360 team is a public-private partnership made up of the NCDHHS, the Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation, Unite Us, United Way of North Carolina, NC 2-1-1, and Expound.

NCCARE360 will include a robust data repository of shared community resources and will connect healthcare and human services providers to collectively provide the opportunity for health for all North Carolinians. NCCARE360 priorities will be food, housing, transportation, interpersonal safety and employment. Federal grant funding will allow increased focus on resources to support children and families in kinship care and children birth to five.

Healthy Opportunities Pilots

In 2018, the NCDHHS secured federal approval for Healthy Opportunities Pilots in two to four geographic areas of the State. The Pilots are an unprecedented opportunity to test and evaluate the impact of providing select evidence-based, non-medical interventions that can save costs and improve health. Approved as part of North Carolina’s 1115 demonstration waiver, the federal government authorized up to \$650 million in state and federal Medicaid funding for the Pilots over the five-year life of the waiver. This will cover the cost of approved services in the state’s four priority Healthy Opportunities areas: housing, food, transportation, interpersonal safety, and toxic stress (adverse childhood experiences).

Perinatal/Maternal Residential Substance Use Treatment Sites

In 2019, with support from the Governor’s Crime Commission, NCDHHS is expanding access to family-centered, residential substance use treatment for mothers and pregnant women to allow families to stay together as they heal. Over 20 years of research shows that women are motivated to engage with treatment and recovery out of concern for their children or pregnancy but are often unwilling to seek treatment if it means leaving their children. These new residential slots- part of the North Carolina Perinatal and Maternal Substance Abuse Initiative- will provide family-centered treatment services and supports and will specifically serve women who are survivors of intimate partner violence. As the opioid crisis continues to devastate communities across North Carolina, it is critical that we focus on getting individuals the right type of treatment they need for themselves and their families.

Perinatal System of Care Task Force

In 2019, NCDHHS and the NC Institute of Medicine began convening the Perinatal System of Care Task Force to develop recommendations to improve maternal and infant birth outcomes and decrease disparities. The task force is focusing broadly on the perinatal system of care including; improving the quality of maternal care; ensuring that pregnant women and infants have access to the appropriate level of care through a well-established regional perinatal system; and addressing service gaps. Health equity is further addressed by ensuring the voices of families impacted by these services are part of the conversation.

Pediatric Emergency Care

In early 2019, the Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) will begin work to increase the percentage of EMS agencies in North Carolina that have a designated individual to ensure adequate pediatric emergency care is provided within their response area. This will support children served by NC EMS professionals in all types of emergency responses, including during disasters. The office has set a statewide goal that by 2026, 90 percent of EMS agencies in the state will have a designated individual who coordinates pediatric emergency care.

Increasing Access to Benefit Programs

Reevaluating how our beneficiaries access programs – our team is undertaking work to utilize existing data from several DHHS different programs to increase enrollment in other benefit programs. We are at the beginning stages of the project to look at data across our many program areas and plan to include Medicaid, WIC, and Food and Nutrition Services.

Alternative Cost Modeling for Child Care Subsidy Rates

Beginning in January 2019, the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), in partnership with the Pritzker Children’s Initiative, is convening stakeholders in order to define alternative cost modeling for child care subsidy rates. The goal of this modeling is to reimburse at a rate that better reflects the true cost of child care, in the hopes of better allocating public funding to serve more children across the state.

Pediatric Mental Healthcare Access Line

Beginning in February 2019, the Division of Public Health (DPH) will launch a pediatric mental healthcare access phone line. After receiving a federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, DPH is working in partnership with Duke University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) and others in order to better educate primary care providers to support the mental health needs of young children. The mental healthcare access line will provide direct access to child psychiatrists and will better support the mental health needs of pregnant women and new mothers.

Community Involvement Meetings for Child Welfare Prevention Efforts

Beginning in April 2019, the Division of Social Services (DSS) will convene community involvement meetings across the state in support of the Families First legislation. These meetings will bring together county partners, private agencies and representatives from the court system in order to better allocate resources that will prevent children’s entry into the child welfare system.

Medicaid Coverage for Home Visiting

Begun in July 2018 and ending in June 2019, NC Medicaid and DPH are implementing pilot projects in Cleveland and Johnston counties for Medicaid coverage of nurse home visiting services. Home visiting programs offer support within the context of families' lives to improve the health and well-being of both children and parents. The Cleveland County pilot uses the Nurse-Family Partnership model, which supports first-time, low-income mothers, and Johnston County is using a hybrid model focused on high-risk pregnancies.

Support Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Through September 2019, DPH is using a federal grant from the Centers for Disease Control to support physical activity and nutrition in the following partnerships:

- The North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition will implement breastfeeding interventions in New Hanover, Pender and Brunswick counties.
- Smart Start of New Hanover County will implement Farm to Early Care and Education sites to connect local farms with local childcare centers. They will also increase the number of sites that have the NC Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Designation (NC BFCCD).
- The Wilkes Community Partnership for Children and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians will address healthy eating and physical activity interventions in child care centers in Wilkes, Jackson and Swain Counties.
- At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Healthy UNCG will promote and implement connections to community-based physical activity, food service guidelines and breastfeeding-friendly worksites at North Carolina colleges and universities.

Coordinate Early Intervention Services for Children with Hearing Loss

By 2020, the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH) will partner with DPH's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program to conduct activities designed to enhance coordination among all NC agencies and organizations providing early intervention services to children with hearing loss and their families. The partnership will facilitate understanding and alignment between approaches to early intervention services and deaf education, and will improve data collection, sharing, analysis and reporting for effective tracking and intervention supporting children.

Support Children with Complex Healthcare Needs

Begun in 2017 and continuing through 2019, NCDHHS and the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities are providing funding to support a pilot program through UNC-CH to increase access to autism spectrum disorder care in primary care practices in rural North Carolina. The pilot incorporates the ECHO model, which uses a hub team of specialists who serve as teachers and mentors in a virtual learning community, supporting the primary care provider for the ongoing care of their patient. NCDHHS is exploring a Family Support ECHO training model to develop a statewide approach to family support training, mentoring, supervision, education and service delivery.