

# Health Equity Portfolio Year in Review 2024-2025



***North Carolina Department of  
Health and Human Services***



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## **REFLECTING ON OUR MISSION**

**From Debra C. Farrington**  
**Deputy Secretary**



As we look back on the past year, we are reminded of the resilience, dedication, and unwavering commitment that define our work in health and human services. The strategic priority goals we set forth were ambitious, but through collaboration, innovation, and sheer determination, we made tangible improvements in advancing health care access through meaningful partnerships & engagements, efficiency, and sustainability.

**Access to Care for All** remained at the heart of our mission, ensuring that no individual was left behind in the pursuit of health and wellness. We expanded services, reached underserved populations, and dismantled barriers to healthcare access, proving that fairness in health is not just a vision—it is a tangible reality we continue to build.

**Operational Excellence** guided us to refine processes, enhance accountability, and foster a culture of precision. Whether in administrative efficiency or program delivery, our focus on operational integrity ensured that every initiative was executed with accuracy and purpose.

Through **Consultation & Technical Assistance**, we empowered partners and constituents with expert guidance, equipping them with the tools needed to address disparities and cultivate sustainable health outcomes. Health challenges and improving access to needed supports and services demand informed, strategic responses, and this year, we delivered just that.

The power of **Engagement** became undeniable as we invested our efforts in strategic collaborations, strengthened partnerships, and brought communities closer together in pursuit of better health. From grassroots initiatives to statewide collaborations, the bonds we forged amplified our impact far beyond expectations.

Lastly, **Sustainability** remained our long-term commitment—ensuring that the programs we built today are equipped to thrive tomorrow. By fortifying professional workforce development, fostering innovation, and embedding resilience into every service, we laid the groundwork for enduring success.

This past year was defined by progress, but it was also shaped by challenges that tested our resolve. Yet, through every obstacle, we remain steadfast, driven by our belief that health care access is not just an aspiration but an imperative! We step into the future with renewed passion, ready to deepen our impact and continue our mission to empower communities and transform lives.

*Debra Farrington*

# OUR STRATEGIC VISION

## One Goal:

*We are committed to building a healthier and robust health-care system for ALL North Carolinians - To advance equitable health and wellness by addressing health disparities, prioritizing accessible health care for all, expanding services in underserved areas and providing inclusive support for people with disabilities & vulnerable populations, we strive towards fostering a just & efficient health ecosystem.*

## One Mission:

Embedding equity through trust, collaboration, innovation, and quality service delivery

## Myriad Services



### ACCESS FOR CARE TO ALL

- Facilitate equitable access to healthcare services and opportunities to attain optimal health, ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of health and wellness.



### OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- Foster a culture of accountability and precision to ensure the Portfolio's programs and services operate efficiently.



### CONSULTATION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Strengthen public health systems and initiatives by delivering expert guidance and technical support.



### ENGAGEMENT

- Active collaboration & engagement with internal & external partners to advance community well-being & improve health outcomes for all individuals served by NCDHHS.

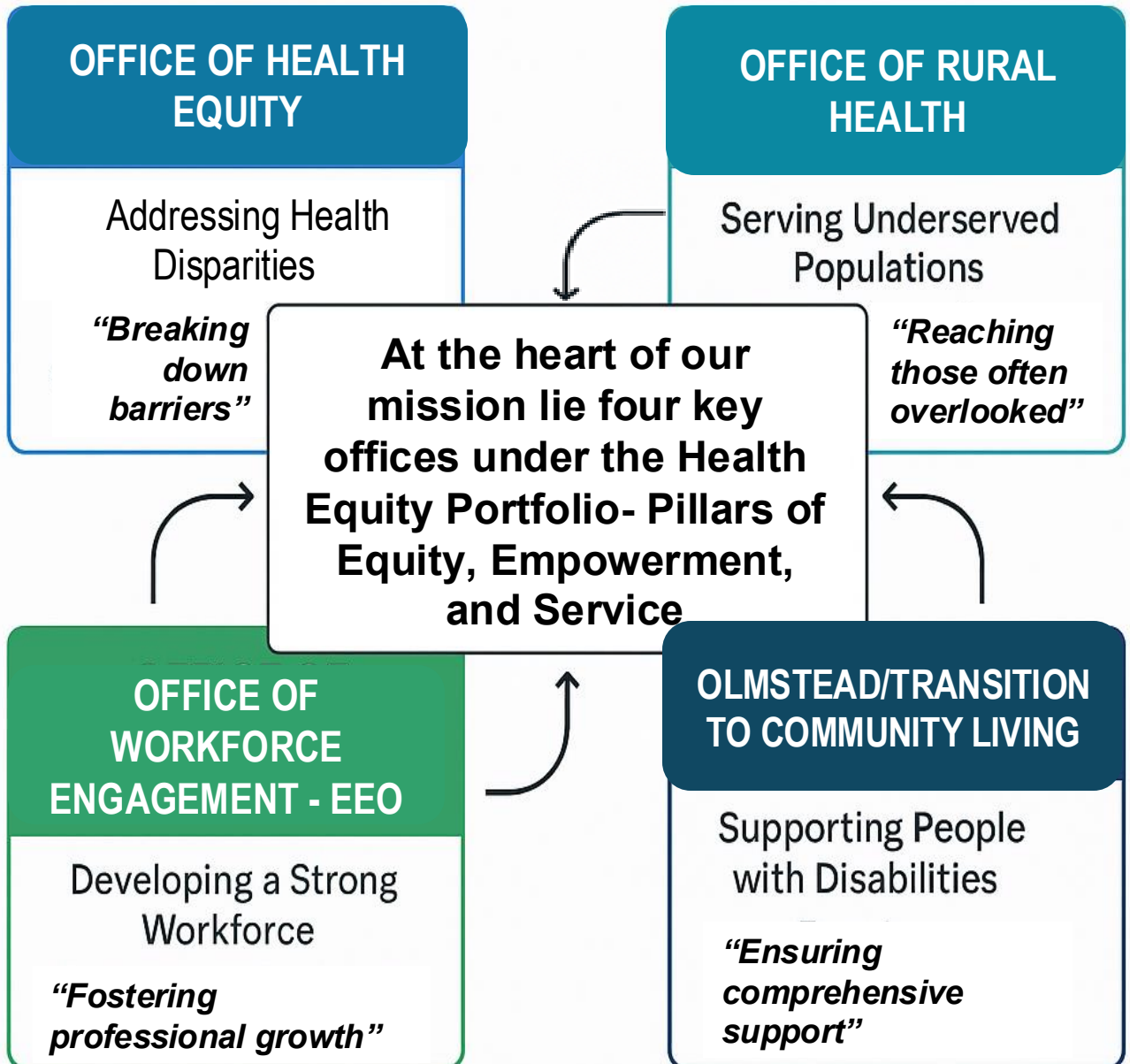


### SUSTAINABILITY

- Ensure the long-term sustainability of HEP programs & services for lasting & meaningful impact.

***“Our services champion equitable health care access for all North Carolinians through targeted interventions, outreach, emergency response, community partnerships, and sustainable solutions—ensuring every individual and community thrives.”***

# The 4 Cornerstones of Impact





# The 4 Cornerstones of Impact

## Office of Health Equity

### ***Addressing Health Disparities***

The Office of Health Equity has worked tirelessly to bridge gaps in healthcare access, breaking down barriers that have long marginalized communities. From expanding preventive care initiatives to addressing non-medical drivers of health, this office has advanced efforts to improve health outcomes, ensuring that individuals' circumstances do not restrict their ability to achieve optimal health and well-being. [!\[\]\(666e09182d4cd268646ea700ea60dcdf\_img.jpg\) Click to learn more about the Office of Health Equity](#)

## Office of Rural Health

### ***Serving Rural/Underserved Populations***

The North Carolina Office of Rural Health (ORH) supports access to health in rural and underserved communities. To achieve its mission, ORH works collaboratively with communities and healthcare organizations to provide: **\* Funding \* Training and \* Technical assistance**

To achieve high quality, innovative, accessible, cost-effective services that support the maintenance and growth of the State's safety net and rural communities. [!\[\]\(003082e50e3009141f59bd5df831749f\_img.jpg\) Click to learn more about the Office of Rural Health](#)

## Office of Workforce Engagement/ EEO

### ***Developing a Strong Workforce***

Recognizing that a strong workforce is the backbone of sustainable health initiatives, the Office of Workforce Engagement has fostered professional growth, training, and capacity-building. By equipping public health professionals with the tools, knowledge, and resources they need, OWE has strengthened the system from within - creating a skilled and resilient workforce ready to meet evolving healthcare challenges.

## Olmstead/Transition to Community Living

### ***Supporting People with Disabilities***

Olmstead has upheld the promise of accessibility, advocacy, and individualized care for people with disabilities. Through targeted programs, policy improvements, and direct service enhancements, this office has ensured that those with disabilities receive the comprehensive support they need to lead fulfilling lives with dignity and independence.

[!\[\]\(b4eeff342f60cc7bcd67d869b4fedca2\_img.jpg\) Click to learn more about the Office of Olmstead /TCL](#)

# Office of Health Equity (OHE)

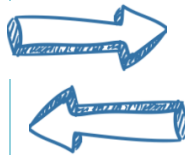
## Addressing Health Disparities



### Advancing Equitable Access to Health and Wellness for All

#### Enhancing Language Access

In FY24–25, the Office of Health Equity co-led the creation of the **Language Access Plan** to advance language access in healthcare, with implementation underway.

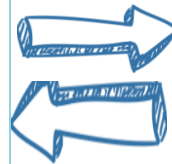


#### Expanding NC Minority Diabetes Prevention Services

The Office has accelerated its Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP) initiatives, focusing on quality improvement, expanding service reach, and streamlining application processes in collaboration with the Division of Public Health.

As of March 2025, the OHE has screened 2663 people, enrolled 352, held 39 class series, and reached almost 700K with their marketing efforts.

Health departments across the state participating in the Minority Diabetes Prevention Program have achieved varying levels of CDC recognition, including the Full Plus level, demonstrating the quality and effectiveness of their evidence-based diabetes prevention services for communities at higher risk.



### Key Milestones

- **Language Access Plan** published across official platforms (December 2024).
- **Impact:** Improved accessibility to health services for non-English speakers through consultations, training, and technical assistance.
- **Tracking Data:** Increased engagement in consultation requests and presentation attendance, ensuring wider adoption across divisions.
- **Developed the NC Health Disparities Analysis Report:** OHE developed the 2024 NC Health Disparities Analysis Report, which identifies six key categories of health disparities across the state and strategies to address and improve these disparities over time, embodying HEP's commitment to the HE Framework. [Click here to learn more!](#)

- County grants executed to reduce disparities, increasing program participation and community awareness.
- Notable growth in screenings, participant enrollment, and outreach campaigns.

**Driving Health Equity Forward: Expanded language access and strengthened Minority Diabetes Prevention efforts through targeted planning, Medicaid-supported services, and impactful community outreach.**

# Office of Health Equity (OHE)

## Addressing Health Disparities (Cont'd)



### Advancing Equitable Access to Health and Wellness for All

#### Performance Tracking Across Programs

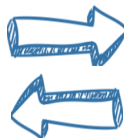
To ensure the delivery of high-impact healthcare initiatives, the Office of Health Equity executed an **OHE Evaluation Plan for FY24-25**, measuring program effectiveness, stakeholder relationships, and service impact.

Structured data tracking has been embedded in grant-funded primary care programs, focusing on hypertension management, diabetes-related health metrics, BMI screenings, and tobacco cessation counseling. The **Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP)** remains a key area of assessment within the annual **JLOC Report**, capturing essential progress metrics.



#### Facilitating Hurricane Helene Relief Efforts

In response to Hurricane Helene's impact on Western North Carolina, the OHE coordinated relief efforts through contracts with NC Counts and partnerships with disaster response organizations. Weekly and monthly community touchpoints ensured efficient resource dissemination.



*Over 15 meetings held,  
with 40 partners engaged  
and 30 organizations  
actively participating  
totaling an approximate  
reach of 136,000!*

### Key Milestones

- Completion of **FY23-24 Evaluation Report**, informing actionable improvements.
- Enhancement of **OHE Evaluation Action Plan**, refining survey methodologies.
- Launch of data collection efforts to ensure comprehensive insights.
- Compilation of final evaluation findings for strategic alignment.
- Integration of performance tracking into MDPP initiatives, reinforcing grant impact.

✓ Weekly recovery calls in Spanish facilitated alongside Governor's Office and Volunteer NC (October 2024-May 2025)

🌐 6 intergovernmental partners, and 22 nonprofit and community-based organizations.

💬 Engagement included 291 questions asked and 232 answered live, reflecting active participation.

📅 Each meeting offered an opportunity for strategizing, resource exchange and dissemination to dialogue, collaborating across the region to continue to provide case management support to the counties impacted by Hurricane Helene.

🇺🇸 Tracking Data : Increased engagement, compliance adherence, and access to relief support.



# Office of Health Equity (OHE)

## Addressing Health Disparities (Cont'd)



### Strengthening Public Initiatives

In alignment with the **Medicaid-Memorandum of Agreement**, the Office of Health Equity provides consultation and technical assistance to the **Division of Health Benefits (Medicaid)** to support the successful execution of health policies and programs. This ongoing collaboration strengthens Medicaid implementation and service accessibility, reinforcing system-wide accountability and operational excellence.

**\$80M**

*Expanding behavioral health services remains a priority, particularly through the distribution of Child Behavioral Health's \$80 million grant funds.*

- The OHE has facilitated strategic data profiling

- Documented sources

- Analyzed gaps

- Provided advisory insights to evaluate funded initiatives

➔ **Sharing impact reports with partner networks ensures transparency and informed decision-making, enhancing service delivery and resource allocation for behavioral health programs.**

### Ensuring Long-term Viability of Health Programs

Committed to strengthening the **sustainability of Health Portfolio programs and services**, and ensuring they remain **effective, adaptable, and well-resourced** over time.

The OHE engaged **UNC Chapel Hill Master of Public Health Capstone Interns**, leveraging **academic expertise and emerging professionals** to support ongoing health initiatives.



*The OHE engaged UNC Chapel Hill Master of Public Health Capstone Interns, leveraging academic expertise and emerging professionals to support ongoing health initiatives.*



*The successful development and pilot of a health assessment tool has enhanced technical assistance and evaluation methodologies.*



*Plans for future intern recruitment to solidify knowledge-building and workforce preparedness aid in continuous growth and innovation in health equity programs.*



*By embedding long-term resilience, accreditation, workforce engagement, and strategic planning into operations, the OHE strengthens the sustainability of public health services.*

**These initiatives advance capacity-building, ensuring lasting impact and efficiency in healthcare delivery.**

# OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

*Serving Rural and Underserved Communities*



## *Improving Access to Health Care and Workforce Recruitment and Retention*

The programs at the Office of Rural Health are intended to support the safety net in NC and the communities they serve. Our team works closely with our partners to listen to them share their opportunities and barriers- Partnerships create opportunities to leverage community resources and funding provided by our office create pathways to access care for everyone — regardless of location, socioeconomic status, or circumstance.

ORH is committed to supporting rural/underserved communities and to measuring their impact. Supporting access to care includes quality and efficiencies - measuring program outcomes helps quantify the work and demonstrate effectiveness.

Using data increases ORH's ability to provide effective technical assistance, strengthening community access to critical care.

This includes:

- Coordinated efforts to build support systems and access resources to increase care for vulnerable & underserved populations.
- Improving the Reach and Quality of Medicaid Programs.
- Supporting Communities During Crisis: **Hurricane Helene Relief Efforts.**
- Investing in the Rural Health Workforce

## *Key Milestones*

### ✦ **Program Visibility & Accountability**

- The Office of Rural Health diligently tracks the performance of its programs using updated one-pagers with clear, concise summaries for the office and its programs.
- Maintains visibility in legislative reports across HEP's priority areas to ensure transparency in service delivery.
- ORH provides in-depth technical assistance (TA) to North Carolina's health care safety net system logging over 2,671 TA activities with 710 Orgs & individuals.

### Program's focus to:

- ✓ Develop telehealth capabilities
- ✓ Provide loan repayment for providers in rural and underserved communities
- ✓ Working with communities to develop new state funded rural health centers expanding access points.
- ✓ Supporting Community Health Worker (CHW) initiatives to improve health outcomes because of the CHW expertise connecting to resources that support health as trusted entities in their community.
- ✓ Working in partnership with Community Health Centers, Local Health Departments, Rural Health Clinics, School-Based Clinics, Rural Hospitals and free and charitable clinics to review and design community health grant programs for the safety net.

# OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

*Strengthening Systems & Support for Vulnerable Populations*



## Building Healthier Populations Through Data & Grants

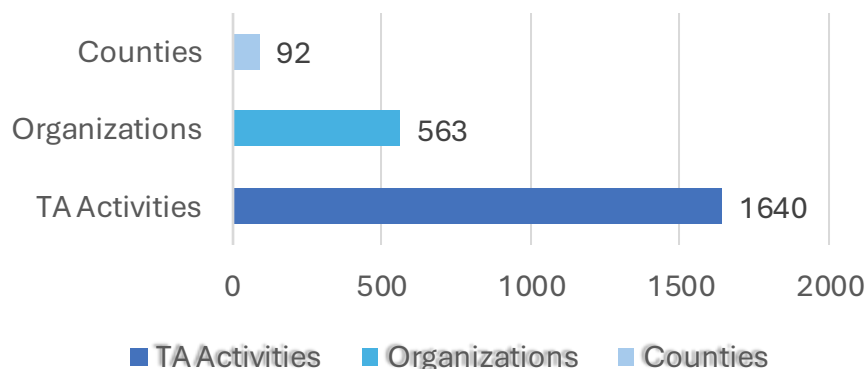
- Develops performance measures focused on access to care and improved health outcomes.
- Supports safety net sites through targeted grant programs.
- Annual Contracts are tracked via the Contracts Tracking tool.

## Enhancing Support for Vulnerable Populations

- ORH reinforces services through technical assistance, funding, contract monitoring, and program evaluation.
- Committed to timely, relevant support—responding to inquiries within 2 business days.
- Provides ongoing orientation, education, and training for internal & external partners.

Tracks all TA encounters via TruServ dashboard.

## ORH Reach in SFY 24-25 Technical Assistance Activities

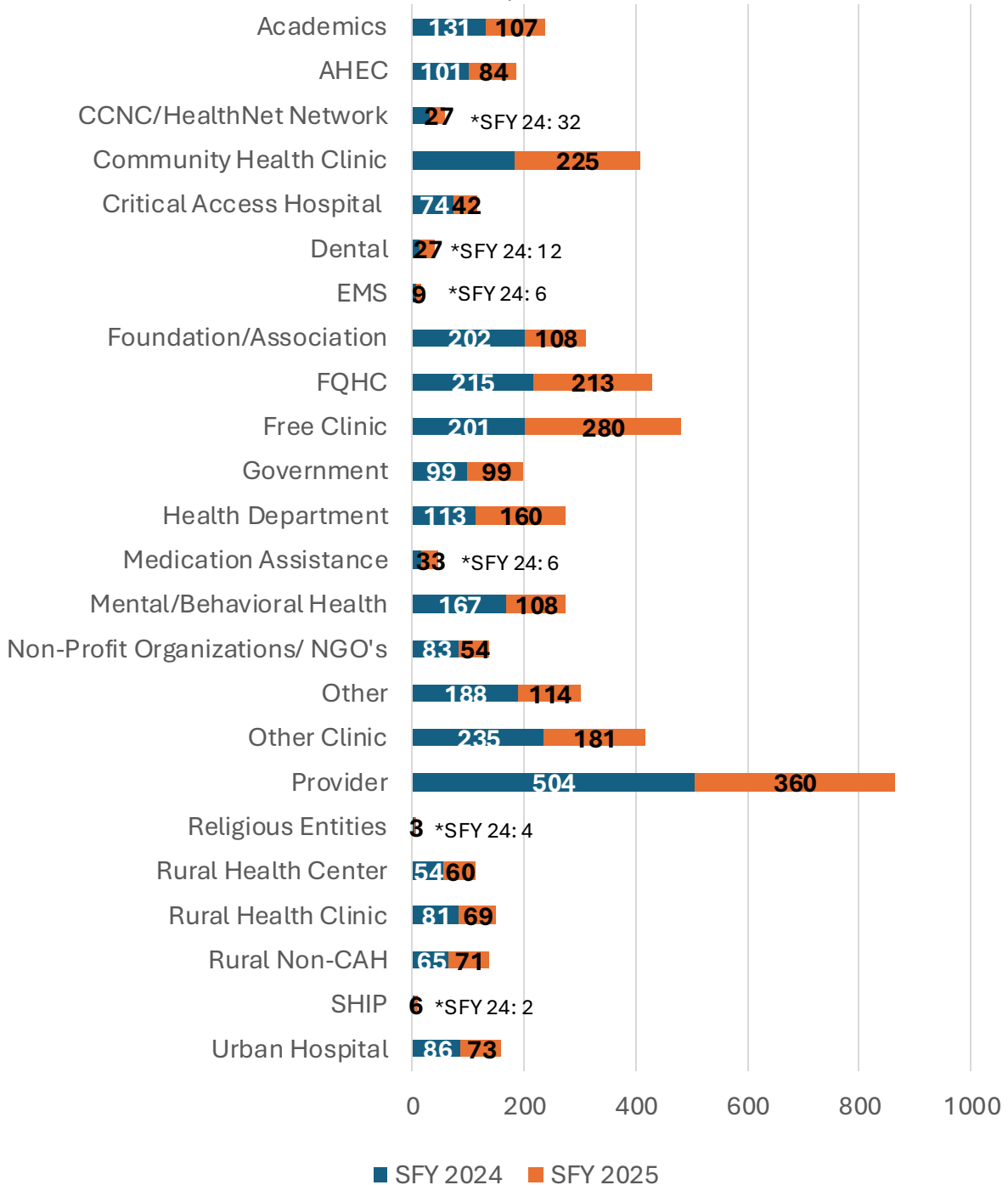


ORH provided 1640 technical assistance to 92 of 100 NC counties to over 500 organizations.





## Technical Assistance by Organization Type SFY 2024, SFY 2025



# OFFICE OF OLMSTEAD/TRANSITION TO COMMUNITY LIVING

*Creating Change Through  
Community Integration & Support  
for People with Disabilities*



## ***Advancing Access and Independence: FY24-25 Strategic Impact***

Supporting individuals to live and work in communities of their choosing. A key focus is achieving substantial compliance with the Transition to Community Living Settlement. Quality assurance measures include a robust QAPI monitoring system and data analysis ensuring continuous quality improvement and upholding service standards per the Settlement Agreement.

Focused review to identify individuals in Adult Care Homes (ACHs) that are most likely to transition into community living. Independent Reviewer [IR] reviewed a sample of individuals residing in ACHs to determine who wanted to/could move, could not move or needed more in-reach. This structured approach helped the State to better understand the current population that is transitioning from ACH to the community.

- Revised Strategy – Adjusted NC CORE milestones that are reimbursed by Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) (milestones #3-5) to help make them more achievable for providers and drive quality for serving members!
- Releasing Employment First-focused AHEC training for Tailored Care Managers (TCM)

## ***Key Milestones***

- [TCL](#) met compliance for two key Settlement Agreement areas – Pre-admission Screening & Diversion and Quality Assurance & Performance Improvement in December 2025 – demonstrating the State's efforts to divert TCL individuals from institutionalized settings and build a foundation for data-driven performance and improvement.

### 👉 [Read more about the Settlement](#)

- Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) launched on May 5, 2025, to help users understand how work and public benefits can coexist—and to dispel myths around employment and benefits loss.

### 👉 [Explore Disability Benefits 101 \(DB101\)](#)

- Convened a cross-division Quality Assurance Committee in SFY 2023 Q3 to reinforce oversight and collaboration.
- Launched the TCL performance measure dashboard in SFY 2023 Q4, with Tailored Plans gaining access by June 2024 to monitor population-level insights.
- Finalized the DHHS TCL QAPI Plan in SFY 2025 Q1, reinforcing the state's commitment to continuous quality improvement.
- **Community of Practice (CoP)** Olmstead/TCL launched a monthly virtual peer-led CoP in SFY25 Q1 to extend the In Reach Conference experience year-round. The CoP supports CPSS and peer extenders in staying current on community-based services and housing supports. It fosters collective learning, mentorship, and knowledge-sharing.

*The NCDHHS Strategic Housing  
Plan, with a primary  
objective of creating 3,400  
Permanent Supportive Housing  
opportunities statewide over five  
years!*

👉 [Learn more!](#)





# Transitions to Community Living (TCL): Milestone Progress



## ✓ Court-Approved Progress

- As of Dec. 12, 2024, the DOJ approved the 6th modification to the TCL court order.
- For the first time since 2021, parts of the TCL settlement were officially discharged.
- Reflects years of improvements addressing past deficiencies from the 2012 agreement.

## 🔍 Quality & Sustainability Highlights

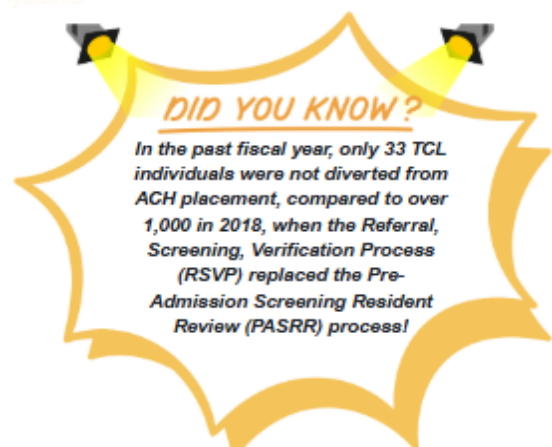
- TCL Quality Assurance Committee launched in SFY23 Q3.
- TCL Performance Dashboard released in SFY23 Q4; Tailored Plans have access as of June 2024.
- TCL QAPI Plan finalized in SFY25 Q1 to ensure ongoing quality & improvement.



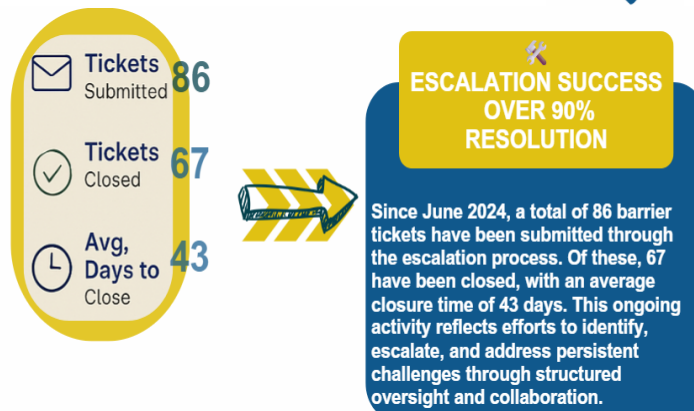
## Additional Highlights

- **5th Annual In Reach Conference** In Spring 2025, Olmstead/TCL held its 5th Annual In Reach Professional Development Conference, hosted by Partners Health Management in Gastonia, NC. The theme, "Breaking Barriers with Hope," featured guest speakers Marti Knisley, Independent Reviewer for TCL, and a TCL peer who became a CPSS. Eighty-eight staff from all four TPs attended the 1.5-day event. CPSSs use their lived experience to support others, provide hope, and serve as role models. DHHS remains committed to sustaining the In Reach learning collaborative.
- **Team Expansion** In the Fall of 2024, Olmstead/TCL expanded their team with the addition of two new Discharge & Transition Specialists. These Specialists support LME/MCO/TP Transition Coordinators (TCs) by attending and monitoring members' transition team meetings. They guide TCs in transitioning individuals from institutional to community-integrated settings and provide technical assistance in developing strong community integration plans to ensure individuals can remain in their communities with the appropriate services and supports.

## 📈 Impact by the Numbers



## 🔧 Streamlining Resolution of Barriers





## ***Fostering Professional Growth***

- The Office of Workforce Engagement stands at the forefront of a transformative era-where achieving promising health outcomes is not simply a mission, but a mandate. Through its bold and strategic priorities, the OWE is building a foundation where operational excellence, fostering a robust & engaged workforce, and empowered partnerships converge to create sustainable, community-centered care systems.

### **Laying the Groundwork for Health Care Access**

- By championing collaboration with the Division of Health Benefits and strengthening Medicaid delivery through the Medicaid MOA contract, OWE are creating systems that ensure every person-regardless of background-has a fair opportunity to live their healthiest life. From launching a Staff Resource Hub to evaluating organizational culture, each step centers on professional workforce development, satisfaction, and streamlined service for all.

### **Driving Precision and Accountability**

- OWE's commitment to excellence is reflected in a culture where clarity meets accountability. Through continuous performance monitoring, strategic reporting, and dynamic workforce training, OWE is enhancing not only the effectiveness of our programs, but also the confidence of those we serve. Together with the Human Resources Department, OWE is building professional pathways and a workforce ready to meet tomorrow's challenges-today.

## ***Key Milestones***

- ✦ Launch of a **Staff Resource Hub** – consisting of Trainings with updated & re-aligned objectives, examples & core competencies.

- ✦ Formalized **OWE presentations** and developed new Training Curriculum, Material & topical content relevant to Workforce Development and **Trainings delivered every quarter!**

- ✦ **Participation in professional development activities & optimization projects aligned with Workforce Development:**

The **ER/EEO Optimization Project** streamlines the grievance and complaint submissions process by providing NCDHHS staff with a centralized program, **SmartSheet**, to submit required information. SmartSheet reduces the burden of routine processing and allows EEO/ER Teams to focus on the more critical and dynamic aspects of cases.

- ✦ 100% **OWE One-Pagers** available on HIVE site:

- ***Inclusive Language Guide***

- ***Land Acknowledgement Guidance***

- To identify the tribal communities for Land Acknowledgment, visit this link.  [Click here!](#)

- Click below for examples of Land Acknowledgements:

-  [UNC Asheville](#)

-  [Dorothea Dix Park](#)

- ✦ Undertaking of the **DHB Employee Data Disaggregation Project** – Conducted an in-depth analysis of employee demographic data to identify information about representation, hiring, vacancies, and turnover that inform effective workforce development strategies!

# OFFICE OF WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT- EEO

*Developing a Strong Workforce*

*Cont'd*



## Fostering Professional Growth

### Cultivating Belonging Through Partnerships

➤ Authentic engagement took place through the formation of Employee Resource Groups [ERGs], equipping our workforce with resources & tools and uplifting diverse voices to drive innovation. These spaces serve as incubators for innovation, cultural competency, and connections, thus proving that when employees feel seen and supported, healthier systems follow.

### Building the Future Health Workforce

➤ Long-term impact begins with visionary investment. By expanding internship pipelines and reinforcing University partnerships, OWE-EEO is creating pathways for future public health leaders to ensure long-term program sustainability and workforce readiness.

### Guiding the Path Forward

➤ Establishing clear guidelines to develop a strong workforce doesn't happen in isolation, it requires expert stewardship. By delivering technical assistance aligned with Medicaid MOA and strong workforce development, OWE has equipped their partners, the Division of Health Benefits to implement sustainable, data-informed strategies. Demographic analyses and outcome-driven training ensure their consultations aren't just responsive but transformative.



**Development of  
Staff Resources &  
Training  
Opportunities – 30+  
Resources  
submitted to the  
DHB/OSE Resource  
Hub!**

## Key Milestones

✦ **Sustainability and Monitoring** – Supported the Planning and Implementation of an Evaluation of the Office of Staff Engagement and Organizational Impact (OSE)

✦ Assisted with the facilitation of the Pilot launch of the DHB Resource Hub with BEC, MEC, and Money follows the Person.

✦ Development of Staff Resources & Training Opportunities:

✦ Implementation of Department-wide Educational Activity – Delivered **3 Lunch & Learn Training sessions!**

➤ Strengthening Workforce Engagement to **~125 attendees.**

➤ Mental Health Awareness to **~130 attendees.**

➤ **ERG Spotlight: “The Launch”**

OWE-EEO launched and socialized ERGs at NCDHHS, which are voluntary, employee-led groups whose aim is to foster an inclusive workplace aligned with the organizations they serve; ERGs provide safe spaces and create a greater sense of community in work environments.



# OFFICE OF WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT- EEO

## *Developing a Strong Workforce Cont'd*



### **Key Milestones**

#### **Launching of 3 Diverse ERGs across NCDHHS!**

##### **1) Wellness**

Financial Wellness (budgeting and credit)

##### **2) HBCU, MSI, Fraternity & Sorority**

Hosted a **Wellness Walk** with dynamic speakers within the agency to reaffirm the agency's and OWE's commitment to workforce engagement by championing wellness.

The **two-day volunteer opportunity at Raleigh Foodbank** was hosted by the HBCU, MSI, Fraternity, and Sorority ERG. This event was an opportunity for ERG members to reaffirm the core values of NCDHHS through serving the greater NC community and foster working relationships across the agency.

Provided the members of 2 ERGs' an opportunity to actively engage with speakers that provided valuable insight on topics chosen by ERG leadership. ERG members were able to invest in themselves and each other through empowerment and sharing of knowledge that allowed for their personal and professional growth within the workplace.

##### **3) Women's Network:**

Women's History (Women's suffrage)

Holistic Health (Understanding what holistic health is)



*Onboarded 2 graduate NC A&T Interns to provide a hands-on learning opportunity for workforce engagement. The interns were provided with roles to assist ERG members with ideas to champion values of teamwork, belonging, and Joy through launching ERG specific initiatives (ex, HBCU Pride Day).*



*2024 Immersion Event Provided interns with 3-day interactive professional development opportunities. This event offered a series of trainings, speaking engagements, and networking opportunities. Notably interns were able to visit the governor's mansion, general assembly, and a professional luncheon with their supervisors.*



*Medicaid expansion provided healthcare access to many women of color within NC. The 100 Black Women Medicaid Townhall was hosted to empower Black women within Charlotte-Mecklenburg to prioritize their health and wellbeing by signing up for Medicaid and advocating for others within their community.*



**Launched ELOIP – Experiential Learning Opportunity  
Internship Program for the Summer 2025 Cohort.  
Recruited 34 summer interns!**

**34**



# PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

*Driving Equity Through  
Cross-Sector  
Collaboration*



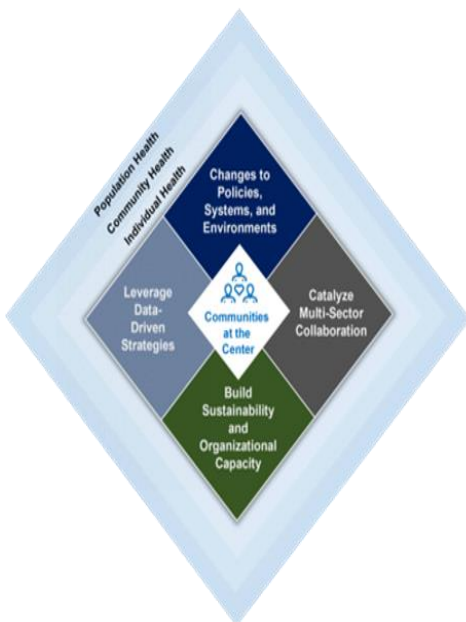
## Strengthening Connections for Improved Health Outcomes

The OHE continues to advance engagement strategies that foster **collaboration, representation, and resource-sharing** across key partners and communities. Deepening connections with both internal and external stakeholders has enhanced **public health initiatives to address disparities and ensure effective service delivery** to those in need.



Through strategic planning and cross-sector collaboration, the Office of Health Equity has successfully advanced its mission to improve healthcare accessibility and equity. Measured progress across the four priority areas reflects tangible improvements in language accessibility, chronic disease prevention, Medicaid efficiency, and disaster relief efforts. Continued evaluation and stakeholder engagement further refine these initiatives, ensuring long-term sustainability and impact.

A primary focus has been the **Community and Partner Engagement (CPE) Initiative**, which has undergone a strategic **re-imagining** to improve accessibility and impact. Through a **structured action plan**, the OHE has evaluated existing resources, implemented necessary enhancements, and developed new tools to assist partners in **adopting the Health Equity (HE) framework shown below:**



### Communities at the Center

- Build and sustain trust through authentic community relationships
- Give back power to communities that have been marginalized
- Embed, provide support for, and partner with communities for strategy development and execution

### Changes to Policies, Systems, and Environments

- Address and eliminate upstream structural drivers
- Focus on downstream health disparities as they manifest

### Leverage Data-Driven Strategies

- Assure decision making is informed by data and community voices
- Use data to illuminate existing disparities
- Develop compelling data-driven storytelling

### Catalyze Multi-Sector Collaboration

- Develop robust cross-sector and state agency partnerships
- Improve health eco-system alignment, collaboration, and co-creation

### Build Sustainability and Organizational Capacity

- Embed commitment with dedicated funding and equity-centered training
- Expand community capacity for health equity impact



### 12 Planned Health Framework Presentations



*"Ensuring Key populations receive tailored knowledge-sharing and capacity-building opportunities."*



**12**

### New Meaningful Partnerships Recruited"

*"Strengthening relationships with historically marginalized communities."*



## PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

*Driving Equity Through  
Cross-Sector  
Collaboration (Cont'd)*



The dissemination of **health data insights** through a **Listening Tour and Communications Campaign** has reinforced the Office's commitment to evidence-based action. Engaging diverse audiences via **presentations, listening sessions, and multimedia content** has ensured **broad community participation**, resulting in increased partnerships and amplified awareness. Simultaneously, the optimization of **listserv networks** and newsletters, including the **Healthier Together HP Newsletter**, has strengthened **ongoing engagement through timely, targeted communications**.

**Launched a new Community and Partner Engagement (CPE) Initiative:** HEP launched the CPE initiative to strengthen community connections and elevate voices of those who have experienced health issues or lived experiences in making policy decisions. HEP developed and published a CPE Guide, NCDHHS' Services and Partnerships Roster and other resources to help connect communities to resources and services across the Department and state.

Long-term **relationship-building** with organizations like the **American Diabetes Association, Faith Action International, National Kidney Association, Amexcan, and Latin-19** further solidifies **sustainable collaborations**, ensuring ongoing impact. Additionally, efforts to **develop and distribute accessible health information resources** have reinforced **culturally competent messaging**, ensuring health literacy among diverse populations.

On-the-ground outreach continues to be **instrumental** in fostering deeper connections. By attending **major events, conferences, and health fairs**, the Office has expanded engagement opportunities, distributing culturally competent materials to **broaden its reach**. Specific efforts, such as **Cafecitos, Townhalls, and health interviews for Latinx/Hispanic communities**, ensure that underserved populations receive **direct access to information and resources**.

### Olmstead Plan in Action *i2i Pre-Conference Highlights – 2024-25*

*At the i2i Center for Integrative Health Conference, NCDHHS leaders shared Olmstead Plan progress to a full room of community partners.*

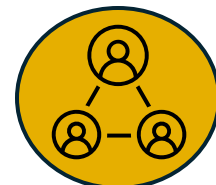
#### Olmstead Plan Focus Areas:

- 🏠 Expand access to community services & supports
- 👥 Strengthen the direct care workforce
- ♿ Support independent and inclusive living
- 🚗 Improve transportation and fair service access
- 👪 Promote alternatives to guardianship and elevate lived experience

#### Key Outcomes:

- 📈 Olmstead Progress: Equity-Driven Decline in Institutionalization.
- 📈 Simplified process for restoring legal competency.

**In 2024, only 33 individuals with SMI entered ACH care — down from 1,000 in 2018. A 97% reduction in ACH placements.**



## PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

*Driving Equity Through  
Cross-Sector  
Collaboration (Cont'd)*



Meeting to discuss the Rural Veterans Health Initiative, featuring:

**Denis McDonough, 11th United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs**  
**Kody Kinsley, Former Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**  
**Dr. Carrie Brown, Director, Division of Mental Health**  
**Maggie Sauer, Director, Office of Rural Health**



**National Rural Health Day: Panel Discussion on Growing the Healthcare Workforce Pipeline**  
Facilitated by **Stephanie Nantz, Assistant Director, Office of Rural Health**

Panelists include:

**Dr. Cherry Beasley, PhD, Acting Deputy Provost, UNC at Pembroke**  
**Christi Meggs, Vice President of Human Resources, Scotland Health**  
**Maya Sanders, MSW, MPH, Placement Specialist, Office of Rural Health**



On May 2nd, Dr. Portia Pope participated in a panel discussion titled “Building the Business Case for Health Equity,” alongside Dr. Yele Aluko, Americas Chief Medical Officer and Director of the EY Center for Health Equity at Ernst & Young (EY), and Dr. Olu Jegede, Vice President of Clinical Care-Health Equity for Cone Health.



**Juan Ortiz, MSW, Program Manager-Cultural Competency and Language Access** from Team OHE, leading the National CLAS Standards in Service for OMHHD's internal and external partners.

The focus is to help health providers build the capacity around health equity and cultural competency and share a health equity approach to service provision.

# Leveraging Technology

*Fostering a Culture of Accuracy,  
Accountability & Efficiency*



The Health Portfolio remains dedicated to fostering a culture of accuracy, accountability, and efficiency in service delivery and administrative operations. This report highlights key initiatives aimed at optimizing workflow processes, supporting performance tracking, and ensuring high-quality service execution across all programs.

**HELP US SERVE YOU BETTER –  
CRM IMPLEMENTATION!**

## Optimizing Workflow and Partner Engagement

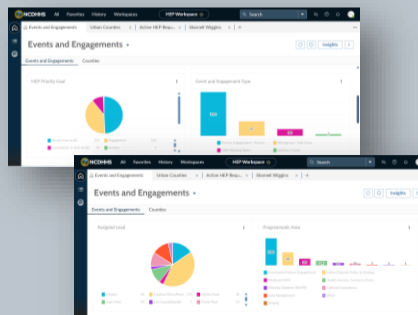
Over the past year, significant efforts have been made to **optimize individual focus and workflow processes**, ensuring that operations align with the broader goal of efficient service delivery. A key advancement was the launch of the **HP Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Tool**, ServiceNow, designed to streamline the process for internal and external partners seeking support.

By defining clear topic areas within the tool, users now experience a more structured and intuitive system for submitting requests, significantly improving engagement and service responsiveness.

Using the new [electronic request form](#) will ensure requests are handled more efficiently and accurately allowing us to provide timely support across our teams.

### Impact:

By leveraging technology-driven solutions, the Health Portfolio has improved stakeholder engagement and operational transparency, reinforcing a responsive and adaptable service model.



ServiceNow's data dashboards



**ServiceNow**

## Types of Service Requests

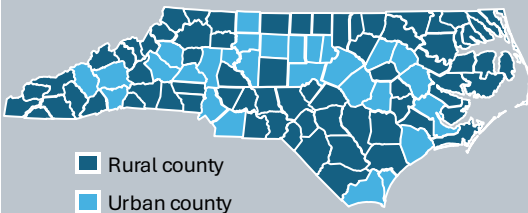
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Technical Assistance
- ✓ Coaching & Consultation
- ✓ Presentation Requests
- ✓ Panel Discussions
- ✓ Support for advisory groups & facilitation
- ✓ Media, Communications, and Language Access Support

# Leveraging Technology

Fostering a Culture of Accuracy,  
Accountability. & Efficiency  
(Cont'd)

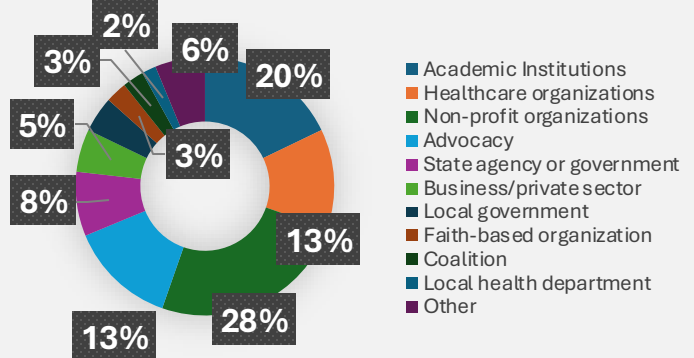


The ServiceNow **CRM** tool also facilitates more detailed transparency into the health portfolio's reach and impact. During the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year, the OHE held more than 300 engagements from facilitating partner meetings, to serving on advisory boards and task forces. These partnerships included 168 engagements within NCDHHS (internal collaborations) as well as external collaborators.

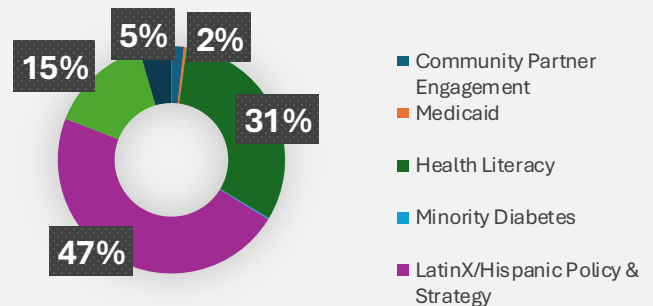


**300+** partner engagements in all counties (30 urban, 70 rural) reaching **>20,000** people via in person and virtual formats

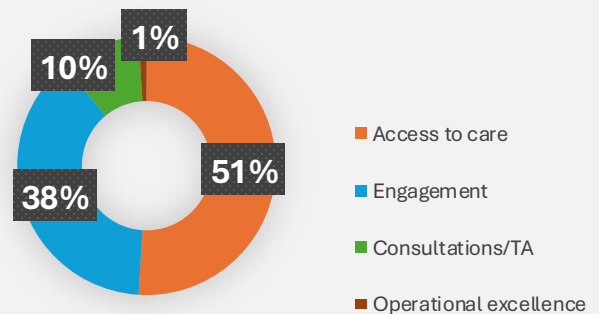
Partnerships with external organizations



Outreach across OHE's Programmatic Areas (n=300)



OHE Efforts Across Priority Goals (n=300)



# Leveraging Technology

*Fostering a Culture of Accuracy,  
Accountability & Efficiency  
(Cont'd)*



## Zengine Implementation: Modernizing Grant Management at ORH

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) is currently implementing a new cloud-based management software called Zengine. The software is being launched one program at a time to integrate the grant application lifecycle with the back-end database administrative tracking into one streamlined system. The initiative has allowed ORH to move away from older, unstable, and siloed data systems (such as Microsoft Access, SharePoint spreadsheets) and other 3<sup>rd</sup> party data tracking systems (such as 3RNet) into one integrated system.



*"The benefits of improved efficiency and productivity, enhanced data management, tailored workflows, and streamlined collaboration are already being recognized by users who have been fully onboarded."*



The grantee applicants will experience an easier application process and the ORH monitors, managers, and business teams will benefit from the data being aggregated and connected.






# Health Equity Portfolio

## The HEP Program Highlights & Strategic Initiatives



 **\$50M Loan Repayment Program – Outreach Strategy in Motion**  
*Office of Rural Health Contracts & Placement Team met to strategize outreach for the new statewide \$50M Loan Repayment Program aimed at supporting healthcare providers across North Carolina.*



 **Advancing Access Through Framework Innovation**

*The Mary Ann Symposium Award was awarded to the Health Equity Portfolio for the team's development & presentation of the Health Equity Framework.*



 **Farmworker Health in Action**

*Office of Rural Health Farmworker Health Program outreach workers on-site delivering care and support services to farmworkers.*

# Health Equity Portfolio

## The HEP Program Highlights & Strategic Initiatives

The Experiential Learning & Opportunity Internship Program (EL&OIP) is a ten-week summer cohort established by NCDHHS to support the goal of building a strong and equitable workforce.



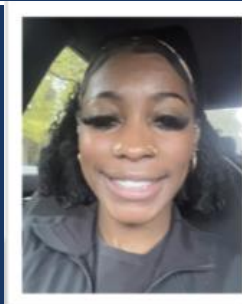
**Cameron Bradley**  
Visual Arts Major,  
Fayetteville  
State University



**McKenzie Gilchrist**  
Chemistry Major  
Minor in Biology  
North Carolina A & T State  
University



**Gabriela Weidman**  
-Public Health Major  
Appalachian State  
University



**Na'Kiah Smith**  
Kinesiology and Exercise  
Science Major  
Catawba College

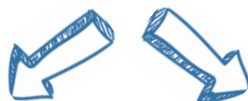
**Learn More:** Discover how the EL&OIP internship program offers hands-on experience, professional development, and opportunities to make a meaningful impact in health equity.

 [Click here!](#)

### Real Voices. Real Impact.

*"This was a great experience being in a newly created role. I'm grateful for the opportunity and hope to return,"*

**Cameron Bradley**



*"Contributing to projects like the Radon Toolkit, Weekly Calendar, and Access to Care events made my time with the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities rewarding,"*

**McKenzie Gilchrist**

# Health Equity Portfolio

## The HEP Program Highlights & Strategic Initiatives

The Office of Health Equity participated in the Community Health & Wellness Symposium, a one-day event hosted by UNCP's College of Health Sciences to promote dialogue & collaboration around reducing health disparities & advancing community well-being.

### Real Voices. Real Impact.



"Listening to experts at the symposium was a revelation. I discovered resources I plan to share with clients at the treatment center where I intern."

**Chyna Hammonds**  
MSW Student, *UNC Pembroke*



#### Purpose

Sparked open dialogue around pressing health equity issues.



#### 130+ Attendees

Students, professionals, & community members



"We wanted to create a space where people could learn, share experiences, and collaborate,"

**Dr. Eva Skuka**  
Dean of the College of Health Sciences  
*UNC Pembroke*



#### 20 Presenters

Topics included indigenous health disparities to collaborative solutions for health equity



#### Disciplines

Social Work, Nursing, Counseling, Public Health

#### Experiential Learning Program Webinar

The 2025 NCDHHS Experiential Learning Program webinar offered a valuable overview of internship opportunities. Graduate students appreciated the insight into DHHS career paths and the department's commitment to developing future public health leaders.



#### Graduate Student Insight

"Thank you for the informative NCDHHS Experiential Learning Program webinar. I especially appreciated learning about the Office of Health Equity and hope to join the team soon,"

**Emma Bowie**  
MPH Student, *UNC Chapel Hill*



# Success Story & Testimonial

## Meet Asa Yost

*"A Story of Resilience and Advocacy"*



Asa Yost was born into human trafficking but courageously escaped as an adult.

She moved to North Carolina seeking a fresh start but still faced challenges like homelessness and hospitalizations.

In 2020, Yost became eligible for Transitions to Community Living and was able to secure and maintain permanent supportive housing for the first time in her life.

Today, she is an advocate for those experiencing homelessness as well as survivors of human trafficking.



*"Relying on resilience and community support, like Partners [Health Management], I was able to build a life from the ground up," – Asa Yost*



To learn more about Transitions to Community Living and the support available, [!\[\]\(cf531ed27e91483460120fcc057b3901\_img.jpg\) Click here!](#)

# Health Equity Portfolio

## Awards & Achievements| 2024–2025



**Debra C. Farrington – Deputy Secretary**  
 🏆 **Exemplary Community Health Leadership Award**  
 Recognized on December 6, 2024, for outstanding leadership in advancing community health initiatives and working with partners across communities throughout North Carolina.



**Dr. Portia Pope – Acting Director, Office of Minority Health & Community Engagement**  
 🏆 **Cheryl Boyce Leadership Award**  
 Awarded by National Association of State Offices of Minority Health (NASOMH)  
 Honored for her visionary leadership and transformative systems work through her groundbreaking implementation of the Health Equity Framework across NCDHHS.



**Victoria Zampieri – Latinx/Hispanic Policy & Strategy Project Manager**  
 🏆 **Distinguished Volunteer Service Award**  
 Awarded by the Duke Cancer Institute Office of Community Outreach, Engagement, and Equity.  
 Recognized for her dedicated cancer prevention work and impactful community engagement efforts in collaboration with the Duke Cancer Institute.



# Health Equity Portfolio

## Certifications & Achievements| 2024–2025



**DeNita Nash - Community & Partner Engagement Program Manager**  
 🏆 *Certificate of Appreciation for Community Engagement*  
 Recognized by Shaw University and North Carolina Central University for her leadership in the COVID-19 Impact Study.



**Luis Garcia Abundis- Data & Evaluation Program Manager**  
 🏆 *2025 LatinxED Fellow*  
 Selected for the LatinxED Fellowship, a statewide program designed to develop and strengthen leadership skills among emerging education leaders in North Carolina.

### Additional Certifications

**Vickie Callair**

🏆 *NC Contract Management Certification*  
 Serves as Budget & Contract Manager for Olmstead/TCL at NCDHHS

**Josh Walker**

🏆 *NC Contract Management Certification*  
 Serves as Olmstead Housing Director for NCDHHS

**Janie Shiver**

🏆 *NC Contract Management Certification*  
 Serves as Program Manager for Olmstead/TCL at NCDHHS

**Dr. Tamara Smith**

🏆 *Trauma-Informed Professional Practice (TIPP) Certification*  
 Serves as Associate Director for Olmstead/TCL at NCDHHS



## LOOKING AHEAD

As we close the chapter on this year, our focus shifts toward leveraging lessons learned, building greater resilience, and embracing innovation to meet future challenges head-on. The coming year presents new opportunities to re-think our strategies and ways to enhance healthcare services, strengthen operations, and deepen our engagement with communities across the state.

Moving forward, the Health Portfolio remains grounded in the spirit of the Great North State, resilient, resourceful, and dedicated to the health and well-being of every community we serve. The Health Portfolio within the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is composed of five divisions: the Division of Public Health, the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services, the Office of Rural Health, the Office for Olmstead and Transitions to Community Living, and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities. Together, these divisions support the statewide delivery of public health and human services through integrated efforts that promote whole-person care and improve population health and will continue this work in alignment with the broader mission of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to improve the health, safety, and well-being of all North Carolinians.

This includes maintaining essential services, strengthening access to care, and responding to the evolving needs of communities across the state. This work will continue to be informed by North Carolina's Healthy People 2030 goals, the state's Health Disparities Report, and other relevant data sources that identify population needs and guide programmatic investment. Building on recent accomplishments, including expanded Medicaid coverage, increased access to rural care through telehealth, mobile health units, and provider recruitment, as well as strengthened behavioral health services through mobile crisis teams, school-based mental health supports, and integrated care models, the portfolio remains focused on workforce development, system coordination, and cross-division alignment. Addressing ongoing challenges such as provider shortages and increased service demands will require targeted strategies, including rural recruitment efforts, expanded training in trauma-informed and culturally responsive care, and investments in community-based partnerships.

In the year ahead, the department will strengthen its use of real-time data and stakeholder input to ensure that services remain responsive, accessible, and effective across all regions. Enhancements in telehealth, improvements in Medicaid tailored plan coordination, and continued support for local agencies will remain central to achieving measurable progress. Guided by the state's motto, ***Esse Quam Videri***, to be rather than to seem, this work reflects North Carolina's commitment to action, integrity, and lasting impact.