

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of Rural Health

NC Office of Rural Health Quarterly Newsletter

March 2025

Welcome to the Service Area Team's Quarterly Newsletter from the North Carolina Office of Rural Health (ORH)

The ORH uses Service Area Teams (SATs) to facilitate collaboration across programs and provide strategic support to grantees and partners across the state.

SATs are comprised of members from all programs within ORH including Community Health, Medication Assistance, Rural Hospital Assistance, Rural Health Operations, Farmworker Health, Placement Services, Health Information Technology and Telehealth, Analytics & Innovations, and Business and Contracts. We would love to hear from you! If you have a news story, comments, or questions for the upcoming Summer newsletter contact [Leslie Wolcott](#) or [Justin Kearley](#).

Welcome New ORH Staff!

Meet new staff members at the Office of Rural Health!

Kaiyah Smith

Kaiyah Smith is a proud native of Winston-Salem, NC. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications with a Minor in Marketing from North Carolina A&T State University and a Master of Public Administration from North Carolina Central University.

She is thrilled to be a part of the DHSS family, where she is committed to professional growth, expanding her expertise, and contributing to initiatives that drive both organizational success and community well-being. As a collaborative leader, her passion lies in driving positive change that benefits both organizations and the communities they serve.

Outside of her professional journey, she is dedicated to lifelong learning, professional excellence, and public service. Kaiyah cherishes spending quality time with her family—especially her little sister and best friends—and embracing every moment with her daughter, Haarlem Reign. Kaiyah also enjoys drawing, painting, and traveling, which allow her to explore her creative side and broaden her horizons. Kaiyah looks forward to connecting with fellow employees and building meaningful relationships!

ORH News and Deadlines

2026 Community Health Grants Awarded

Congratulations to the organizations below who have been awarded Community Health Grants!

Mountain Community Health Partnership, Incorporated
Mountain Area Health Education Center, Inc. (MAHEC)
Vecinos, Inc.
Community Care Clinic of Franklin, Inc.
The Center for Rural Health Innovation
Clay County Health Department
UNC Rockingham Health Care, Inc d/b/a/
Rockingham County Student Health Centers
Free Clinic of Rockingham County, Inc
Wilkes County Health Department
Surry Medical Ministries Foundation, Inc.
Community Care Center of Forsyth County, Inc
Community Care Clinic
Iredell Health System (Iredell Memorial Hospital)
The Mental Health Fund, Inc. dba Catawba Valley Healthcare
Matthews Free Medical Clinic
Shelter Health Services, Inc.
Care Ring
Community Health Services of Union County
Project 658 dba Hope Community Clinic
Alliance Medical Ministry
Person Family Medical Center, Inc.
Tri-County Community Health Council, Inc. dba CommWell Health



Rachel Lane (new position)

ORH is glad to welcome Rachel Lane, this time into a new role on our Placement Services Team. Rachel previously served as Executive Assistant to Senior Leadership at ORH. In this new role, she will continue support the growth and sustainability of the safety net community.



Thomas Maynor (returning)

Thomas first started at ORH as an intern in his last year of undergraduate at East Carolina University back in 2019. Once he graduated with his Bachelor's degree in Public Health, he stayed with the team for the fall and then parted ways to grow as a professional and return as a more capable and effective part of the team we call family here. After a short time away Trey is glad to say he's back and with the Contracts Team doing great work supporting our providers from mountains to coast in our home state of North Carolina.

Trey's hobbies include:

1. Reading books on Native American history
2. Competitive Bodybuilding
3. Hiking/walking trails

Samaritan Health Center
Shepherd's Care Medical Clinic
NeighborHealth Center
Moore Free and Charitable Clinic
Cape Fear Clinic, Inc.
Campbell University Community Care Clinic (CUCCC)
Robeson County Health Department
Scotland Memorial Hospital, Inc.

Grant Opportunities

Telehealth Infrastructure Grant Wave 3

The NC Office of Rural Health has extended the current Wave 3 event for the Telehealth Infrastructure Grants funding opportunity! Applicants have until **April 4th, 2025**, to apply.

Grants resulting from this Request for Applications (RFA) will enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of telehealth services throughout the state. This RFA aims to support the development and improvement of the technological infrastructure required for delivering remote healthcare services, such as broadband connectivity, video conferencing systems, electronic medical records, and secure communication tools with a priority on independent primary care practices and OB-GYN practices.

[Link to the RFA Notice: Telehealth Infrastructure Grant Program \(Wave 3\) | NCDHHS](#)

Medication Assistance Program

DHHS Division/Office issuing this notice: Office of Rural Health

Date of this notice: March 17, 2025

Grant Applications will be accepted beginning March 17, 2025

Deadline to Receive Applications: April 17, 2025

Working title of the funding program: Medication Assistance Program

Purpose: Description of the function of the program and reason why it was created:

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) announces the availability of grant funding to identify and fund community organizations in North Carolina that will help uninsured, low-income citizens of all ages evaluate their optimal prescription drug choices and apply for free, discounted, and low-cost drugs through public and private medication assistance programs.

These grant funds, supported through the North Carolina General Assembly, are for helping uninsured, low-income North Carolinians gain access to free and low-cost medications. Safety net organizations who care for underserved and



Regional News and Highlights

South Central News and Highlights

The **Community Free Clinic of Cabarrus County** is a free and charitable clinic in Cabarrus County (Medicaid Region 3), currently a Community Health Grantee and Medication Assistance Program Grantee.

During this grant year and alongside leadership changes, ORH partnered with the grantee to:

- Set up a partnership with the Community Care Clinic of Rowan County to begin sharing resources and helpful tips
- Significantly improve performance metrics enhancing their capacity to serve the community.

With the ORH Placement Services team, CFCCC received its National Health Services Core Site Certification and their Physician Assistant took advantage of Loan Repayment through our program.

The organization was also awarded Non-Profit of the Year for Cabarrus County (the only free charitable in Cabarrus County) – 6 organizations were nominated for award – CFCCC is only 1 of 2 who've been awarded Non-Profit of the year twice.

A Story from Community Care Clinic of Rowan County

When our patient satisfaction surveys came back that one of the most frustrating things for our patients was "not fully understanding their medical/dental provider" we knew we had to do something. We contacted the Literacy Council of Rowan and they jumped at the chance of training 6 staff (including our MD!) and one board member to be tutors. They tested 24 of our patients who were interested and got a grade level. The patients were broken up into groups based on levels and classes started last week. I can't tell you how amazing it feels to tutor a person that desperately wants to learn. To learn for their younger kids. To learn so they can get a better job. To learn to understand their doctor. As I said on the phone, after the first classes, there were hugs all around. At the end of

medically indigent patients including community health centers, free and charitable clinics, state designated rural health centers, and health departments offering medication assistance to the uninsured in their community are eligible to apply for this funding.

Link to the RFA Notice: SFY 2026-2027 Medication Assistance Program RFA

Collaborative Care Management Capacity Building Fund

Collaborative Care Management Capacity (CoCM) Building Funds Announcement
Starting April 1, 2025, applications open for Phase 1 and Phase 2 Practices

The NC General Assembly has earmarked \$5 million for capacity building for Medicaid-enrolled primary care practices across the state to adopt Collaborative Care Management (CoCM). The NCDHHS Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services/ (DMHDDSUS) is contracting with CCNC to manage the program in partnership with NC AHEC's Practice Support coaching.

CoCM is an evidence-based behavioral health integration model designed to support primary care clinicians in assessing and treating patients with mild to moderate behavioral health conditions. An evidence-based model shown to be more effective than usual care, CoCM improves patient outcomes, increases satisfaction for both patients and providers, and reduces healthcare costs and the stigma related to mental health and substance use disorders.

The capacity building fund has a maximum award of \$50,000 per practice. A primary care practice entity applying on behalf of multiple primary care practice sites may receive a maximum of three awards per entity. Each clinic site may be eligible to receive awards of \$50,000 to begin a CoCM model in-house. Additionally, \$30,000 is available for practices to expand an existing in-house CoCM model and \$20,000 is available to practice sites meeting Phase 1 eligibility, but planning to outsource staffing to a third-party, turn-key company.

For more information about the funding opportunity, please see CCNC's website: <https://www.communitycarenc.org/newsroom/cocm-capacity-building-fund-application>

CCNC's partners in this effort are: NCDHHS Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services (DMHDDSUS), NC AHEC

Learning Opportunities

Farmworker Awareness Week is Here (March 25–31)!

the day, we are building relationships and trust which will only help with anxiety and fear. Krista Woolly Executive Director

Health fair to be held in Lumberton

April 5, 2025. 12-3 pm. Biggs Park Mall 2800 N Elm St, Lumberton, NC



Eastern SAT News and Highlights

ACA Celebration: ORH's Kim McNeil and ORH alumna Beth Blaise attended the 15 year celebration for the ACA. You can read about the event here:

<https://ncnewsline.com/2025/03/24/a-celebration-of-affordable-care-act-at-an-uncertain-time-for-medicaid/>



This week is dedicated to honoring the essential contributions of agricultural workers who power our food systems, often while facing unsafe working conditions, limited healthcare access, and digital exclusion. Every fruit, vegetable, and crop we enjoy is made possible by the hands of farmworker. Throughout the week we will be sending more emails to highlight Farmworker Awareness Week!

☐ Did you know?

- ☐ There are over **2.5 million farmworkers** in the U.S.!
- ☐ Many farmworkers don't have health insurance or reliable access to the internet.
- ☐ **Farmwork is one of the most dangerous jobs**—but it's also one of the most essential.

Learn more about NC's Farmworker Health Program here:

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/office-rural-health/office-rural-health-programs/north-carolina-farmworker-health-program>

Events

Together for Tomorrow: CHW's Leading Sustainable Change North Carolina Community Health Worker Summit 2025

Register Here

Join CHWs and allies to:

- Connect with other CHWs, health leaders, and policymakers to strengthen our impact.
- Advocate for change and shape the future for North Carolina CHWs.
- Learn from one another and share your own vital knowledge.

Join for an unforgettable experience of growth and connection to advance the CHW profession—together.

Collaborative Care Model Learning Collaboratives



NC AHEC are pleased to offer six (6) Collaborative Care Model (CoCM) Learning Collaboratives for primary care providers, behavioral health professionals, and others who have implemented or are implementing CoCM for integrating



Community In Action--Belhaven

Attend this special event on April 11 in Belhaven hosted by the Behavioral Health Taskforce of Beaufort County!

Community In Action IS BACK!

April 11th
2:00pm - 5:00pm

- Free Drawings
- Free Health Screenings
- Free Food
- Free Clothes
- Free Cleaning Supplies

Sponsored by:

The market
133 E Main St,
Belhaven, NC 27810

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TASKFORCE
BEAUFORT COUNTY

Western SAT News and Highlights:



Teresa Strom wins award at Rural Summit

On March 26, Teresa Strom, Executive Director of Hot Springs Health Program, received the Community Advocate of the Year Award. Teresa has led recovery efforts in her community of Madison County, which was hard-hit by Hurricane Helene. The Office of Rural Health would like to extend their congratulations and gratitude to Teresa and the Hot Springs team for their dedication to their community and their efforts to

behavioral health in a primary care setting. Independent primary care practices, FQHCs, and rural health clinics may find CoCM especially helpful for meeting some of the behavioral health needs of their patients.

CoCM Learning Collaboratives will highlight collaborative care team integration and the role of the CoCM Behavioral Health Care Manager for practices new to the model and those established with implementing CoCM. Sessions will run once a month from noon-1 p.m. Remaining classes follow:

- April 17, 2025 • Supportive Language and Engagement Strategies for CoCM Patients
- May 29, 2025 • Effective Tools to Enhance CoCM
- June 19, 2025 • Best Practices Psychopharmacology for BHCMS

View the flyer [here](#) and, for additional information about the model, visit www.ncahec.net/practice-support/collaborative-care-2/.

NCCHCA Hurricane Helene Fundraiser

NCCHCA and the North Carolina Medical Society presents

The Courage to Rebuild:
A Fundraiser to Honor the Resilience of WNC Health Centers

Wednesday, April 23rd, 2025
The Umstead Hotel and Spa
100 Woodland Pond Dr., Cary, NC 27513
Doors Open at 6:00 PM

North Carolina Medical Society
NCCHCA

Register Here:

<https://web.cvent.com/event/8c65119a-91e2-4e26-aefd-fbdfd00461a1/regProcessStep1:6d9349cb-d4e5-4fc8-a460-6ebb75fc99c5?rp=2ce9a17c-580a-4421-8287-25f01bc88a7c>

NC AHEC Quality Improvement Course Open for Registration

The organization has a Quality Improvement course they are offering as part of the NC AHEC Practice Manager Bootcamp. It is scheduled for April 3-28. Please see the link or attached file for more information and to register:

<https://www.southernregionalahec.org/wp-content/uploads/PMA250109-Q.pdf>

improve access to healthcare every day, especially when folks are in greatest need.

Grace Clinic of Yadkin Valley to Hold Groundbreaking Ceremony

On April 11, Grace Clinic of Yadkin Valley will be hosting a Groundbreaking Ceremony at their new location in Elkin, NC. The new location will provide much needed space and capacity as the organization continues to grow and serve the community. Rep. Sarah Stevens will attend and speak at the event and the State Employees Credit Union will present a check. The Office of Rural Health will also be in attendance and will provide remarks speaking to the strong partnership between the two organizations.



Resources

We are excited we have completed the third edition of the NC Guide to Prevention and Management of Diabetes. Now it's time for dissemination. We rely on our members to send the guide to your network and beyond! Please send the link to the Guide to all the diabetes physicians/ providers, health system leadership, diabetes care and education specialists, registered dietitians, and members of county health departments with whom you are acquainted. Ask them to forward it to people in their institutions and beyond who might find it useful.

ORH's Justin Kearley is a Rising Star!

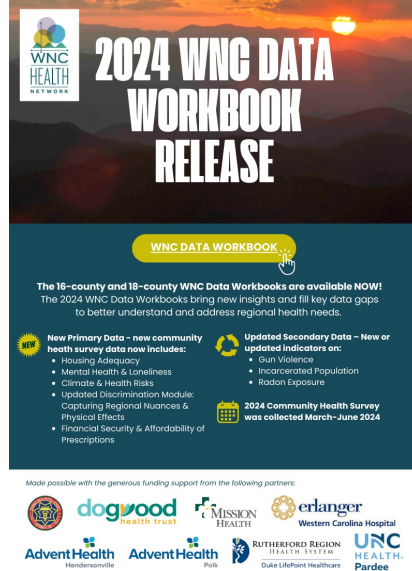


The Office of Rural Health's own Justin Kearley was nominated for the 4 under 40 Rising Star award from the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce! You can listen to Justin's radio interview about it here.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-324091400/justin-kearley-4-under-40>

Get the NC Guide on Prevention and Management of Diabetes:

<https://www.diabetesnc.com/guide>



Access the data: [WNC Data Workbook Release](#)

About ORH

We would love to hear from you! If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for specific programs within our office, please feel free to contact the Operations Specialist facilitating your region's SAT below!

ORH Programs

Provider Recruitment and Placement Program provides recruitment efforts for medical, dental and psychiatric health professionals to North Carolina's rural and underserved areas and offers incentives to eligible providers.

Provider Recruitment and Placement Program Profile

Rural Health Operations Program create access to health care for vulnerable populations by supporting state designated rural health centers.

Rural Health Operations Program Profile

Community Health Program supports the primary care Safety Net system to increase access for vulnerable populations.

Community Health Program Profile

NC Farmworker Health Program provides medical, dental and enabling services to members of the North Carolina agricultural labor force and their families.

NC Farmworker Health Program Profile

NC Rural Hospital Assistance Program funds projects for the benefit of all critical access hospitals and eligible small rural hospitals in NC.

NC Rural Hospital Program Profile

Medication Assistance Program provides free and low-cost medications donated by pharmaceutical manufacturers to patients who cannot afford them.

Medication Assistance Program Profile

Statewide Telepsychiatry Program supports the psychiatric evaluation of patients through videoconferencing technology in emergency departments.

Statewide Telepsychiatry Program Profile

Analytics and Innovations Program assists ORH programs and grantees with using data and leveraging technologies in ways that help improve monitoring, evaluation efforts, and innovative strategies.

Health Professional Shortage Area Program Profile

Community Health Worker Program Profile

Rural Health Information Technology and Telehealth Program works directly with the North Carolina Safety Net to assess needs and provide technical assistance throughout the state to improve the use of Electronic Health Record (EHR) Systems and the use of NC HealthConnex, the state designated health information exchange

Rural Health Information Program Profile

SAT Facilitator Contact Information

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