



RICHMOND COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

127 Caroline Street
Rockingham, North Carolina 28379
Phone: 1-910-997-8300
Facsimile: 1-910-997-8336 Health Dept



North Carolina
Public Health

Cheryl Speight, Health Director
Holly Haire, Deputy Health Director

Robby Hall, Social Services Director
Theresa Smith, Deputy Social Services Director

RICHMOND COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: May 16, 2023
TIME: 7:00pm
LOCATION: Large Classroom and Webinar

BOARD ATTENDANCE:

Paul Smart, Chairperson
Jon Marks, Pharmacist
Aletha Lanier, Nurse
Dr. Don Covington, Optometrist
Dr. William Cleveland, Dentist
Dennis Holloway, Public Member
Evonne Moore, Social Worker
Cassandra Byers, Daymark Center Director
Thad Ussery, Public Member
Dr. John Stevenson, retired Physician

NON-BOARD ATTENDANCE:

Cheryl Speight, Health Director
Robby Hall, Director of Social Services
Theresa Smith, Deputy Director of Social Services
Sheila Brosier, Administrative Assistant

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Paul Smart called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
2. **INVOCATION:** Mr. Smart delivered the invocation for the meeting.
3. **CONSENT AGENDA:** Mr. Smart asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda.
 - **Motion Offered By:** Dr. Stevenson
 - **Motion Seconded By:** Thad Ussery
 - **Motion Carried:** Yes

MEETING MINUTES: Mr. Smart asked for a motion to approve the March 21, 2023, meeting minutes with the following corrections: Attendance should include Dennis Holloway and Dr. Don Covington.

- **Motion Offered By:** Dennis Holloway
- **Motion Seconded By:** Jon Marks
- **Motion Carried:** Yes

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

5. **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. Cheryl Speight, Health Director, discussed the **Public Health Administrative Report**. The U.S. public health emergency that was declared in response to COVID-19 has ended on May 11th. COVID-19 vaccines, testing and treatment will remain free in North Carolina, to individuals who are uninsured while supplies last. When supplies of federally purchased vaccines run out, they will be available like flu shots and other routine vaccinations, covered by Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance or out-of-pocket costs for the uninsured. COVID vaccines are offered five days a week by appointment. Several contract staff who were hired using COVID funds to supplement the health department clinic by providing vaccines and testing are no longer contracted.

Director Speight explained the mask wearing requirement has been lifted. Wearing masks is not required but is optional in the health department clinic unless a person has symptoms. If so, they will be tested in the front lobby prior to entering the clinic. The NCDHHS recommends wearing a mask if:

- You are at high risk for severe illness.
- You are unvaccinated or not up to date on your vaccines.
- You have COVID-19 or were exposed to the virus.
- You want an added layer of protection.
- You are in a high-risk setting (example: health and long-term care; correctional facility; homeless shelter).
- You are in an area where COVID-19 levels are high.

The Office of Rural Health has renewed the grant funding for our Community Care Clinic for the new fiscal year. Representatives toured the health department in May and were impressed with their visit. They have allotted \$50,000.00 which will be used to hire a nurse provider.

The Community Health Assessment 2022 has been completed and will be presented to the County Commissioners at their July meeting.

Goshen Medical Center will continue to provide EKG and tobacco screenings free to the public from their mobile unit which is onsite at the health department parking lot every Tuesday from 9:00am-2:00pm, until further notice.

- B. Robby Hall, Social Services Director, discussed the Social Services Administrative Report. With the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ending on May 11, many federal policies that expanded eligibility and benefits for citizens during the pandemic for nutrition programs will end and clients' Medicaid, WIC and Food and Nutrition Services benefits could change. On April 1st, North Carolina began the recertification process to check the status of all Medicaid recipients and work to minimize health care coverage gaps for families. Medicaid recertifications will happen on a rolling basis into 2024. The first beneficiaries will see changes July 1st.

There are 115 children in Foster Care of which 19 are under 3 years old. The availability of placement and services is limited. There has been a huge loss of foster care homes and relatives of foster children are less likely to become caregivers, largely due to the parents and children addiction to drugs and their unpredictable behaviors. It has been a recurring scene for children to reside in the DSS building with staff coverage. Sandhills pays for staff overtime and the night and weekend security coverage.

- C. Jacqueline Welch, Aging Services Director, provided the Aging Services Administrative Report. Director Hall reviewed several highlights from the report. Aging Services staff, seniors, and volunteers participated in the Spring 2023 Litter Sweep throughout Richmond County to clean and pick up trash in the local community.

Each year in May, Older Americans Month is recognized as a time to acknowledge the contributions and achievements of older Americans, highlight important trends, and strengthen our commitment to honoring our older citizens. Aging Services is celebrating Older Americans Month with a program on May 23rd at 11:00am at the East Rockingham Senior Center. All activities, programs and events for seniors can be found in the monthly newsletter.

Applications are available for the Housing Repair and Home Improvement Program that assists adults 60 years or older with needed minor home repairs to improve living conditions and functional accessibility of the home. Repair services are performed by local volunteers. Seniors can submit an application and priority will be given to low income disabled adults in greatest need. Lirosia Wall is the point of contact and has received 80+ applications.

6. **OLD BUSINESS:** None.

7. **NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. Community Health Assessment – Cheryl Speight

The Community Health Assessment (CHA) is required to be completed every 4 years by the health department and every 3 years by the local hospital. The health department collaborates and completes the assessment every 3 years in line with the hospital. Kendra Faries, Public Health Educator, worked with the CHA team to collect data from the year 2022 and prepared the CHA in accordance with state guidelines. The final report is available on the Richmond County website and hard copies are maintained in the public libraries, city hall, and other government buildings. The CHA will be presented at the County Commissioners meeting in July and a copy will be provided to the board members at the next meeting.

Director Speight provided a snapshot of the data covered in the CHA report as it pertains to Richmond County.

Population (as of December 2022) was 42,778. The U.S. Census indicates the population in Richmond County has declined over the past ten years by an estimated 3,900 people. The County has an ever-increasing elderly population which has outpaced the growth in the working-age population. The average age of seniors is 75. The percentage of population by race is as follows: 56% White; 30% Black American; 5% other; 2% Native American; and 1% Asian. Six percent of the population are of two or more races and 6.64% of the population are Hispanic.

Poverty – Richmond County’s poverty rates are similar to our bordering neighbors and are trending downward. In 2021, 45.6% of the population fell below 200% of the federal poverty level. Annual unemployment rates continue to decline and were reported at 5.9% at the end of 2022.

Schools - Richmond County schools have 6,510 students. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reported only 36.6% of children are proficient in reading at the end of third grade. This rate is higher than our surrounding communities, but lower than the state (45.2%). Partnership for Children Smart Start, Head Start and Early Start programs are vital in our community by providing early childhood education and developmental services for young children.

Incarceration – The incarceration rate for Richmond County was 181 per 100,000 in year 2020. This rate is considerably lower than the state rate and trending downward; however, the violent crime rate in Richmond County (558.4) is slightly higher than the state rate (407.7).

Substance Use – In 2021, the overdose death rate in Richmond County was 84.8, which is more than double than the state rate of 38.5. COVID-19 restrictions and stress may have contributed to the sharp increase and continued substance use in these past years, as well as the number of infants born positive for substances. Almost every state has reported an increase in overdose deaths and other drug related problems during and after the pandemic.

Much more data can be found in the complete CHA 2022 report. The CHA highlights social issues, such as poverty, substance use, addiction, mental health, chronic medical conditions, and more that can contribute to poor health. The data is used to develop and implement health and wellness strategies to improve well-being, promote healthy equity and improve overall health outcomes for Richmond County.

B. Employment & Training Program for Food & Nutrition Benefits – Robby Hall

Director Hall provided a brief overview of the Food & Nutrition Services Employment and Training Program (FNS E&T) which begins October 1, 2023. The program is committed to strengthening families by providing job-driven, skills-based training that leads to meaningful employment for FNS recipients. The program is funded by the USDA and has partnered with NC Department of Health & Human Services, NC Community College Systems, local county Department of Social Services, and community based

organizations. Each county DSS is required to develop a plan of action to include an employment and training program, operations and policy overview, operating budget, and narrative. To be eligible to receive FNS E&T, residents must be current active FNS recipients, between the ages of 16-60, and be physically and mentally able to work at least 20 hours per week upon program completion.

8. INFORMAL DISCUSSION:

Mr. Ussery suggested the board members resume meeting in person. The U.S. public health emergency that was declared to respond to COVID-19 ended on May 11, 2023. Additionally, the restriction regarding conducting meetings in person has been lifted. After further discussion among the board members, Mr. Smart asked for a motion to resume all future meetings in-person, beginning at the next meeting in July.

- **Motion Offered By:** Thad Ussery
- **Motion Seconded By:** Dennis Holloway
- **Vote:** 9 yes; 1 no
- **Motion Carried:** Yes

9. ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Smart asked for a motion to adjourn and the meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.


- **Motion Offered By:** Dennis Holloway
- **Motion Seconded By:** Jon Marks
- **Motion Carried:** Yes

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held in person in the large classroom at the Health Department.

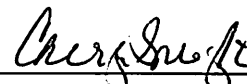
DATE: July 18, 2023

TIME: 7:00pm

LOCATION: Richmond County Health Department Large Classroom



Paul Smart, Chairperson
Health & Human Services Advisory Board



Cheryl Speight, Health Director
Richmond County Health Department