

The Cleveland County Consolidated Human Services Board met on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Board members present: Sara Karner, Kale Meade, Robert Miller, Christina Alexander, Henry Gilmore, Nancy Cline, Allison Gragg, Danny Blanton, Mary Accor, Maggie Hohne, Rick Dixon

Staff present: DeShay Oliver, Tiffany Hansen, Andrea Power, Rebecca Johnson, Sherry Vess, Leslie McSwain, Anne Short, Heather Voyles, Nikki Littlejohn, Contisha Sherard

County Attorney present: Logan Roberts

**CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME:**

Chair Sara Karner called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm and welcomed everyone.

**CITIZEN RECOGNITION:**

Dr. Freida Mitchell, Mary Elliott, Debra Lee, Lisa Borders, and Monica Browner

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR MARCH 10, 2026, CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING:**

Chair Karner presented the proposed agenda for the March 10, 2026, Consolidated Human Services Board meeting for consideration of adoption.

**Motion: A motion was made by Mary Accor with a second by Robert Miller to adopt the agenda for March 10, 2026, Consolidated Human Services Board meeting as prepared. The motion carried unanimously.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 10, 2026, CONSOLIDATED HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING:**

Chair Karner presented the February 10, 2026, Consolidated Human Services Board Meeting Minutes for consideration of approval.

**Motion: A motion was made by Robert Miller with a second by Henry Gilmore to approve the February 10, 2026, Consolidated Human Services Board Meeting Minutes. The motion carried unanimously.**

**FOSTER CARE SPECIAL RECOGNITION:**

Chair Karner introduced Rebecca Johnson with Foster Care Special Recognition. Rebecca began the presentation by highlighting support efforts for children entering foster care. As part of this

presentation, members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority generously donated duffel bags to be provided to children at the time of placement. It was shared that these duffel bags will offer children a safe, personal, and dignified way to carry their belongings during what is often a difficult and uncertain transition. The donation reflects a commitment to ensuring that children entering foster care are treated with care, respect, and compassion. Board member Mary Accor, also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, assisted in presenting the donation. She was joined by fellow sorority members President Dr. Freida Mitchell, Mary Elliott, Debra Lee, Lisa Borders, and Monica Browner, who were present in support of this initiative. Rebecca Johnson and Contisha Sherard received the duffel bags on behalf of the Department of Social Services and the foster care program. Rebecca expressed appreciation for the generosity and community partnership demonstrated by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and recognized the positive impact this contribution will have on children and families serviced by the foster care program.

### **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM PRESENTATION:**

Chair Karner introduced Nikki Littlejohn with the Behavioral Health Program Presentation. Nikki explained that she is a Social Work Clinical Specialist for the Cleveland County Health Department and why someone should choose therapy. Therapy is important for mental health because it provides a safe space to explore and address thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that may cause distress, allowing individuals to develop coping mechanisms, improve communication skills, build self-esteem, and ultimately manage mental health challenges more effectively. Therapy can help with stress, relationship issues, and life transitions as well. A person may seek therapy for feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. People may also seek therapy when they are experiencing life changes, both expected and unexpected, negative thought patterns, traumatic experiences, grief, overwhelming feelings, and loss of control. Nikki explained that sessions are confidential, however, there are several limitations to confidentiality required by law. These include:

1. If a client is being harmed or if there is harm suspected. The treating clinician is required to report suspected and/or confirmed child abuse or elder abuse to the appropriate authorities immediately.
2. If a client wants to harm another person. The treating clinician is required to notify law enforcement if a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another person.
3. If a client intends to harm themselves. The clinician will first work with the client to ensure their safety. If a client is not willing to cooperate or cannot guarantee their safety, additional measures to do so may be taken.

At the first session the client signs a consent for treatment, which details the limitations to confidentiality required by law. Our Behavioral Health clinic offers appointments for ages 10 and up with no referral required. For clients under 18, a parent or guardian must attend the first appointment. We have flexible visit options that include virtual sessions (after the initial appointment), and if they are not experiencing suicidal thoughts, and a customizable schedule where clients can be seen weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or on an as-needed basis depending on their treatment goals. We offer employee support services that includes counseling for employees that begins with the Employees Assistance Program that includes six free sessions. Staff may also meet with Dr. Eric Davis for additional support. The Behavioral Health Clinic also helps our community by providing a one-stop shop to receive the services needed, and

where patient privacy is our top priority. It helps patients who do not have Medicaid, Medicare, or private insurance to be able to get the mental health services needed by offering a sliding fee scale which most mental health providers do not offer. We also do not refuse services if a patient cannot pay upfront for services. Nikki ended her presentation by offering 5 ways to become a better person mentally. These include:

1. Practice Mindful Journaling by writing down your thoughts and emotions daily. This helps you process your feelings, gain self-awareness and reduces stress.
2. Challenge negative thoughts by paying attention to your inner dialogue. When negative self-talk creeps in, reframe it with positive affirmations and realistic perspectives.
3. Set Healthy Boundaries. Protect your mental space by saying no to draining situations and people. Prioritize relationships that uplift and support you.
4. Prioritize Self-Care by engaging in activities that nourish your mind, body, and soul. Whether it is meditation, exercise, or simply taking breaks when needed.
5. Learn and Grow Daily by reading books, listening to podcasts, or taking a course that expands your mindset. Growth comes from new perspectives and continuous learning.

Nikki asked if there were any questions. Sara asked if she could send a referral for a patient that needed help if they were visiting her practice. Nikki said that Sara could refer patients from her clinic to our Behavioral Health Clinic.

#### **NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK RESOLUTION:**

Chair Karner introduced Anne Short to present the National Public Health Week Resolution. Ms. Short spoke about National Public Health Week, which will be observed April 6–12, 2026, and the resolution being presented to the Board that evening. She explained that the purpose of the resolution was to seek the Board’s approval to move forward with presenting it to the County Commissioners for consideration and adoption. This year’s theme, “Ready. Set. Action!”, calls on communities to move beyond awareness and recognize that good health does not happen by chance. Instead, it requires intentional investment, evidence-based practices, strong leadership, and collaborative efforts across public, private, and community sectors. National Public Health Week is observed in recognition of the importance of public health in protecting and improving the health, safety, and well-being of communities across the nation. Anne also shared information about activities planned at the Health Department to recognize staff who work in public health each day. All staff members will receive a National Public Health Week t-shirt featuring this year’s theme. Additional appreciation activities planned during the week include a coffee bar, popcorn bar, and a staff lunch.

**Motion: A motion to approve the proposed National Public Health Week Resolutions to the Board of Commissioners was made by Mary Accor and a second was made by Allison Gragg. The motion carried unanimously.**

#### **CCHD STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES UPDATE:**

Chair Karner introduced DeShay Oliver with the CCHD Strategic Plan Goals & Objectives Update for 2024-2027. The presentation provided an overview of the department’s key priorities and

strategic direction moving forward. The strategic plan includes the following goals, strategies and accomplishments:

- Goal 1: Expand outreach into the community through mobile services and by meeting individuals where they are.
  - Strategies include:
    - Expanding the work of the mobile screening unit.
    - Grow WIC enrollment and outreach through use of the mobile van.
    - Launch the mobile dental care unit.
    - Design and implement a comprehensive community awareness campaign about Cleveland County Health Department's services.
    - Research and pilot innovative transportation solutions for patients and clients.
    - Expand community health education, particularly for adults.
  - Accomplishments include:
    - launched the mobile dental unit.
    - Published Behavioral Health, BCCCP, and Recovery Connect ads.
    - Hosted Like & Share contests.
    - Executed a contract with CTS of Cleveland County to provide free transportation to Recovery Connect.
    - Trained 211 people in QPR
    - Taught 149 participants in the MedSouth Program in a variety of community settings.
- Goal 2: Increase access to mental and behavioral health services through the department and its community partnerships.
  - Strategies include:
    - Expand partnerships, screenings and referrals for mental and behavioral health services.
    - Expand access to behavioral health information and resources, including Medication Assisted Treatment and mental health prescriptions.
    - Research and pilot telehealth services for mental health patients.
  - Accomplishments include:
    - Launched the Recovery Connect and Recovery Court programs.
    - Developed a marketing plan for Recovery Connect.
    - Identified two virtual options for Medication Assisted Treatment for Substance Use Disorder to be used as a resource for our PORT program.
    - Contracted with local marketing company to develop an anti-stigma community education campaign.
    - Implemented a Red Dot program for patients experiencing domestic violence or intimate partner violence.
- Goal 3: Elevate the overall patient and client experience through improved efficiency and customer service.
  - Strategies include:
    - Leverage technology to improve the check-in experience and enhance communication about appointments and prescriptions.
    - Redesign the patient experience to be more welcoming and hospitable.

- Provide an array of Department-wide training courses that support improved patient experience.
  - Expand the availability of translation services, especially during the patient check-in process.
  - Develop a Health Department Hero mascot to create positive, family-friendly associations with the Department.
- Accomplishments include:
  - Installed sound-absorbing colored ceiling tiles for each main clinical hallway including lab and waiting room to allow patients to more easily identify each area. Clerical staff provide color-coded maps and direct patients to the appropriately colored area. Installed new additional painted ceiling tiles in Child Health and Dental areas.
  - Added an additional tablet and cart for WIC area, increasing CCHD's total to 3 carts.
- Goal 4: Cultivate professional growth, satisfaction, and retention of staff.
  - Strategies include:
    - Advocate for competitiveness and livability of staff pay and benefits.
    - Expand access to, and funding for, training, conferences, and certifications.
    - Increase opportunities for staff appreciation.
    - Redesign and strengthen the onboarding process for new staff, with a focus on getting to know colleagues and telling the Department's story.
    - Expand opportunities for non-traditional work environments.
  - Accomplishments include:
    - Implemented pay and class study salary adjustments.
    - Instituted a 1-week and 6-month new employee survey to solicit feedback from new employees on what we are doing well as part of the hiring and onboarding process.
    - Maternity and CMHRP participated in Gravidas Perinatal Conference. EH participated in regional meetings together. Clinical Staff participated in CD conference. Primary Care staff participated in CCPN training. WIC National Conference. Dental staff participated in Rural Dental Health conference.
    - Committed to hosting annual All-Staff retreat off site with training for staff.
    - Established a new break room in Adult Health.
    - Expanded breakroom in WIC/Dental area.
    - Began showing faces of new employees in All-Staff meetings.
    - Offered job shadowing opportunities for job applicants.
- Goal 5: Utilize the Healthy NC 2030 Scorecard for Cleveland County to monitor progress in addressing health priorities identified in the 2023 Community Health Assessment, with a focus on objectives and strategies outlined in the Community Health Improvement Plans related to teen births and opioid overdoses.
  - Strategies for teen births include:
    - Maintain and enhance medically accurate, culturally appropriate comprehensive reproductive health and safety educational programming

- delivered through health and physical education classes in Cleveland County Schools.
- Develop and implement a Strong Teens Youth Council to serve as the student advisory body for delivery of the Strong Teens curriculum.
  - Identify and engage in opportunities to deliver reproductive health and safety education to youth and young adults in traditional and non-traditional settings in Cleveland County.
  - Maintain and enhance the work of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition to address multiple issues associated with teen pregnancy and teen births.
  - Design and deliver community messaging campaigns regarding issues around teen pregnancy and teen births.
- Strategies for Drug Overdose Deaths include:
    - Maintain and enhance the delivery of the Too Good for Drugs campaign.
    - Maintain and enhance the delivery of the Student Options and Redirection Program delivered to students in violation of Cleveland County Schools substance abuse policy.
    - Maintain and enhance the Lock Your Meds program to support options for appropriate store and/or disposal of prescription medications.
    - Maintain and enhance the work of the Drug Free Cleveland County Coalition to address and educate the community about substance use issues.
    - Provide recovery support to Cleveland County residents using a community Navigator to link individuals to recovery support services.
    - Maintain and enhance Naloxone distribution in Cleveland County.
    - Maintain and enhance the work of the PORT Team, staffed by community paramedics to serve residents of Cleveland County.

DeShay ended her presentation by emphasizing the department's commitment to improving community health outcomes through strategic planning, collaboration, and continuous evaluation of progress. DeShay opened the floor for any questions from the Board. Maggie asked if the Red Dot Program is in both Men and Women's restrooms. DeShay answered that the restrooms are not gender specific. Sara asked if we develop goals yearly. DeShay answered that we develop a new strategic plan every 4 years.

### **CCHD BUDGET AMENDMENTS:**

#### **ITEM NUMBER ONE:**

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Local and Community Support Section, has allocated an additional \$45,789 to support local public health infrastructure and strengthen the capacity of local health departments to respond to community health needs and emerging health threats. We request permission to budget this amount in the General Administration (530) Department to support short-term critical infrastructure needs and strategic investments in local public health services.

#### **ITEM NUMBER TWO:**

The FY 2026 budget originally included \$731,610 based on the Memorandum of Agreement with the Cleveland County Schools Board of Education to reimburse 40% of school Health program expenses. FY 2025 actual expenses totaled \$786,563.71, resulting in an additional \$54,954 in reimbursement. We request permission to budget this amount in the School Health (534) department to offset salary and fringe benefit expenses.

**ITEM NUMBER THREE:**

Kintegra Health has provided \$45,000 in RCORP-NAS (Rural Communities Opioid Response Program—Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome) grant funds to support services that improve systems of care, increase family supports, and address social determinants of health for pregnant and postpartum women with substance use disorders (SUD/OD) and their families, including increasing access to behavioral health and prenatal/postnatal care. We request permission to budget this amount in the Substance Abuse (551) Department to support related program expenses.

**Motion: A motion to recommend the proposed CCHD budget amendments to the Board of Commissioners was made by Robert Miller and a second was made by Kale Meade. The motion carried unanimously.**

**DSS BUDGET AMENDMENTS:**

**ITEM NUMBER ONE:**

Kintegra Health has allocated an additional \$25,000 for Opioid awareness and prevention specifically targeting families presently involved with Department of Social Services Child Protective Services. We request permission to budget this amount in Social Work (504) Department.

**Motion: A motion to recommend the proposed DSS budget amendments to the Board of Commissioners was made by Robert Miller and a second was made by Mary Accor. The motion carried unanimously.**

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

Chair Karner asked if there was any additional business to discuss. Tiffany Hansen shared that April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and noted that two activities are planned in recognition of the observance. The first activity, Plant the Pinwheel, will take place on April 2 at 1:30 PM, and the second activity, Sound the Alarm, will be held on April 17 at 1:00 PM. Tiffany encouraged board members and attendees to participate if they are available.

**ADJOURN: 7:15 PM**

There being no further business, Chair Karner called for a motion to adjourn.

**Motion: Robert Miller moved, with a second by Rick Dixon, that the Cleveland County Consolidated Human Services Board meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously.**

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Tiffany Hansen, Secretary  
Cleveland County Consolidated Human Services Agency