

Health Director's Report
September/October 2021

- September 10, 2021 – Attended the final Practice Advisory Council (PAC) meeting for this calendar year. Dean Rimer announced her plans to step down as Dean of the Gillings School of Global Public Health effective June 30, 2022. Dean Rimer served as Dean for the past 16 years. Our Medical Director, Dr. Erica Pettigrew, and I have been invited by the University's Search Committee to a listening session on October 28th to provide input on the search for the next dean. Dr. Bill Roper serves as Chair of the Search Committee. Others joining us on the virtual listening session call include Dr. Mandy Cohen (Secretary of NC DHHS) and Dr. Betsy Tilson (State Health Director).
- September 29, 2021 – OC Partnership for Young Children Meeting
- September 29, 2021 – State Health Coordinating Council Meeting
- October 1, 2021 – Health Department Orientation for County Commissioner Richards
- October 5, 2021 – NC Accreditation Dashboard Training with NC Public Health Institute
- October 7, 2021 – Meeting with County Finance Director and staff to work on current processes and monthly due dates for Health fiscal activities
- October 11, 2021 – Meeting with NC DHHS & OC Detention Center to address outbreak mitigation strategies. Staff have assisted with mass testing and administration of Monoclonal Antibodies for eligible inmates.
- October 12, 2021 - Child Fatality Team Meeting
- October 13, 2021 – Meeting with AMS and OC Transit to discuss Mobile Dental Van maintenance needs
- October 14, 2021- Co-presenter for service learning series, Gillings on the Ground: Emergencies in Public Health
- October 21, 2021 – NC Association of Local Health Directors Meeting (Virtual)
- Human Service Agencies (intended for Local Health Departments) all across the State received a public records request from NC Citizens for Constitutional Rights. The request was very robust and complex. Information requested for the time period January 2020 thru September 2021 and all COVID-19 related. As a result, the NC Association of Local Health Directors retained an attorney to work with their counsel to figure out what they truly wanted to see with regard to public records. The discussions were productive and we were able to share several public websites that contain most of the information they were seeking. There are a few items that will need to be gathered in response to the public record request. This includes my communication with local school superintendents as well as some documentation about our Regional Infection Prevention Team hosted here in Orange County.
- LME/MCO Transition Date - Alliance is making a formal request to the State Department of Health and Human Services to accelerate Orange County's transition from Cardinal Innovations to Alliance Health from December 15 to December 1. Overall, the transition is going well. Alliance continues to meet with County staff to ensure a smooth transition. Alliance CEO assured County Manager's Office that all providers would be

paid even if there is a small disruption to the contract process that is not completed by December 1st due to the transition.

- The team and I continue to work with UNC and both school districts on COVID mitigation activities
- Currently interviewing for several vacant positions in the department, to include the Nursing Director position. We have approximately 23 vacant positions in the department.

Legislative Updates

- Legislature and Governor in continued budget negotiations. No news of any parties leaving the table; strong hope for Medicaid Expansion.
- Recent action by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) makes changes to the Title X family planning program. The 2021 Title X final rule “Ensuring Access to Equitable, Affordable, Client-Centered, Quality Family Planning Services” was published in October 2021. The 2021 final rule revokes the 2019 Title X regulations and readopts the 2000 regulations with several revisions to ensure access to equitable, affordable, client-centered, quality family planning services for all clients, especially for low-income clients.

The updated rules go into effect November 8, 2021.

Link to rules in Federal Register:

<https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2021-21542.pdf>

What is included in the updated rules?

- Family Planning clinics **can offer** pregnant patients the opportunity to be provided nondirective pregnancy counseling regarding all options (prenatal care/delivery; infant care/foster care/adoption; and pregnancy termination). **Nurses can provide** the nondirective counseling.
- Staff **can provide a referral**, upon request, for any pregnancy option the patient requests as well as a list of resources that can designate what services are available at each facility.
- Title X clinics not offering a broad range of methods on-site **must provide a prescription** to the patient for their method of choice **or referrals**, as requested.
- Verifying patient’s income should not burden patients with low incomes or impede access to care. If a patient’s income cannot be verified through access to enrollment in another program within your agency, and after reasonable attempts to verify, then you must **charge the patient based on the patient’s self-reported income**.
- All family planning services must be **client-centered, culturally and linguistically appropriate, inclusive, and trauma-informed**.
- Services must be provided in a manner that does not discriminate against any individual based on religion, race, color, national origin, **disability**, age, sex, **sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics**, number of pregnancies, or **marital** status (bold is updated language).

Upcoming Events

- October 29, 2021 – Department Staff Meeting at Fairview Park, 3pm – 4:30pm; Halloween Costume Contest!
- November 12, 2021, 1PM-3PM - *Annual UNC PField Trip (Virtual)* – a way of introducing incoming public health students from UNC to local governmental public health; Krishnaveni Balakrishnan, Healthy Homes Coordinator, is coordinating this with UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health.

COVID-19 Updates

Orange County Status as of October 21, 2021:

NC Cases –1,460,801 Deaths – 17,696

OC Cases –11,716 Deaths – 110

Over the past 7 days, we've had 114 new cases. We've had 8 additional deaths since mid-August 2021.

- % positive cases – 2.3% (NC rate is 5.1%);
- Per CDC our transmission rate is currently HIGH; this is determined by total # of new cases per 100,000 persons in past 7 days (≥ 100) AND % positive during last 7 days ($\geq 10\%$); if the two indicators suggest different transmission levels, the higher level is selected.
- The Delta Variant continues to be the most commonly circulating variant since the week ending June 26, 2021.
- Post-vaccination cases made up 22% of COVID-19 cases in North Carolina the week ending October 9, 2021. The percent of post-vaccination cases INCREASED the week ending October 9, 2021 compared to the previous week.
- We have 2 outbreaks in the County; 1 Nursing Home (Parkview) and OC Detention Center.
- NC DHHS Vaccinations dashboard found at <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard/vaccinations> :
- Orange County (Total Population)
 - 107,344 first dose – 72%
 - 103,601 full vaccine series – 70%
- The number of people admitted to hospitals in the PHE network for COVID-19 DECREASED the week ending October 16, 2021.
- The percentage of patients with COVID-19 requiring ICU level of care INCREASED the week ending October 16, 2021
- The most hospital admissions were among those 65+ years old the week ending October 16, 2021.

COVID-19 vaccines for kids 5-11:

- **Oct. 26, 2021** - The FDA is reviewing the safety and effectiveness data on vaccines for children ages 5-11. Using scientific evidence, they will make a recommendation about Pfizer's application for an Emergency Use Authorization.
- **Nov. 3, 2021** – The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will do another independent and thorough review of the safety and effectiveness data. They will then make a recommendation to the CDC on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in younger children. The FDA must issue an Emergency Use Authorization and the ACIP must issue guidance before any vaccines are given in the state.
- **Nov. 5, 2021** – This is the earliest date the state of North Carolina would begin to administer the COVID-19 vaccines with the appropriate dosage for children.

DHHS will not make any recommendations on child vaccination until this process is completed.