

NC DHHS Details 2019 Successes; Gears Up For 2020

By Administrator

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As the NC Department of Health and Human Services gears up for 2020, we are reflecting on the many ways DHHS and its partners have improved the health, safety and well-being of communities across the state during 2019. Highlights include: **Fighting the opioid crisis:** In conjunction with partners, DHHS released the NC Opioid Action Plan 2.0. The plan builds on the progress in addressing this crisis, including a drop in unintentional opioid-related overdose deaths among NC residents for the first time in five years. Since the Opioid Action Plan was launched in 2017, opioid dispensing has decreased by 24 percent. NC Medicaid also increased outpatient therapy treatment visits for beneficiaries and streamlined the prior authorization process.

Strengthening Medicaid: Although managed care implementation was suspended, DHHS has received national recognition for its work to integrate physical and behavioral health, invest in primary care, and promote value-based care. NC Medicaid accomplishments include:

Under budget for the sixth consecutive state fiscal year, even while serving more North Carolinians.

Approval of the Traumatic Brain Injury Model waiver, which will support individuals recovering from these injuries to live in their communities.

Saving the state over \$25.5 million through NC Medicaid's Office of Compliance and Program Integrity.

For the first time in several years, the Department increased rates for primary care providers. Reimbursement rates were also increased for personal care services, which led to pay increases for caregivers and improved recruitment, and for dental services, which led to an increase in services provided.

Investing in non-medical drivers of health: DHHS, in collaboration with partners, launched NCCARE360, the nation's first statewide coordinated care network that knits together health care, human services and community-based organizations to deliver person-centered care. It's now live in 50 counties and will be statewide by the end of 2020. More than 1,500 referrals have been made connecting people to resources they need, such as housing, employment, food, interpersonal safety, and transportation, among others.

Decreasing infant and maternal mortality: North Carolina's infant deaths in 2018 reached their lowest rate in the 31 years they have been tracked.

Renewing the state's commitment to young children: DHHS launched the NC Early Childhood Action Plan with input from more than 1,000 stakeholders. The goals of the plan build on the significant progress made in recent years on behalf of children.

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Supporting hurricane recovery and relief: Back@Home North Carolina, a disaster rapid rehousing program administered by DHHS, has housed over 1,000 people displaced by Hurricane Florence as of October 2019. And Hope 4 NC, a crisis counseling and resiliency program, has provided door-to-door community counseling to over 230,000 individuals.

Opening Broughton Hospital: The new 477,000-square-foot hospital serves residents in 37 western counties with acute mental health needs and features a state-of-the-art laboratory, pharmacy, dental and radiology departments, courtyards and a treatment mall. Patients were transferred to the new facility beginning in November.

Increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities: Through Governor Roy Cooper's Employment First Executive Order, DHHS and the Office of State Human Resources are collaborating to enhance recruitment and outreach efforts to attract qualified individuals with disabilities for state employment.

Helping people with mental illness find housing and services: Through the Transition to Community Living Initiative (TCLI), there was a 27 percent increase in individuals with mental illness who were housed over the prior year.

Supporting our aging and adult population: Black Mountain Neuro-Medical Treatment Center, operated by DHHS, was named the best nursing home in North Carolina by a new, national ranking recently compiled by Newsweek. Out of thousands of senior care organizations in the United States, 406 locations earned this distinction.

Working to end the HIV epidemic: DHHS' Division of Public Health launched efforts to create a "Ending the HIV Epidemic Plan" for North Carolina in partnership with the NC AIDS Action Network.

In the year to come, the Department will continue to focus on responding to the opioid epidemic, advancing young children's healthy development, and keeping Medicaid strong.