

PATH Meeting

Minutes—2/26/19, 11:30AM-2:00PM

Location: LewisGale Hospital Montgomery

Present:

Harvey Barker, co-convenor	Wendy Welch	Erin Cruise
Deena Flinchum	Meghan Pfliederer	Trina Porterfield-Pifer
Pam Ray	Nycole deLeeuw	Rebecca Lord
Mary Lou Legg	Pam Philips	Robin Lemairc
Sophie Wenzel	Margo Walter	Dyana Williams
Marsha Myers	Carissa South	Liz Kirchner
Rebecca LeBlanc	Ashley Hash	Rhonda Seltz
Beth O'Connor	Kristie Quesinberry	

Effects of Opioid Crisis on the Foster Care System: Wendy Welch, author of *Fall or Fly: The Strangely Hopeful Story of Foster Care and Adoption in Appalachia*, spoke about the changes the foster care system has seen over the past several years and how these changes have affected the children as well as the communities involved. Some of the information she shared included:

- Social workers are now riding along with police on drug busts
- 100% of 500 kids in the area Wendy was researching in had living parents; they were either incapacitated or incarcerated
- Parents do not stop loving their children; they stop being able to physically care for them
- There is no requirement to report stats in the foster care system, so there are no conclusive numbers on children's ages when entering foster care
- Kin Care (when a child is removed from their home and placed with a relative) receives on average a third of financial assistance compared to foster care assistance

She stated that the system needs serious reform; federal government needs to follow the 24-month benchmark without breaking for parents' termination of rights and states need to fully fund Kin Care. Wendy suggested that if anyone knows a foster family, to simply offer help in any way, even if it's to share a meal.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Nycole deLeeuw is with New River Valley Community Services and she spoke about the steps NRVCS is taking to better serve the community and announced a new support group for grandparents raising grandchildren. NRVCS is incorporating a OneHealth approach and looking at Public Health as a whole (social determinants of health, practicing prevention, etc.) and will be conducting their own annual needs assessment in order to establish metrics to better track progress. They have found roughly 600 grandparents in Pulaski county raising grandchildren and have decided to offer a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren support group, which will be held every other week for 2 hours in the morning at the local libraries. For those unable to attend, NRVCS will be curating a monthly newsletter to send out.

General Assembly Update: Beth O'Connor shared that the GA passed a budget that includes funds for critical access hospitals, which will allow hospitals to be paid for Medicaid the same way they are paid for Medicare. This is a huge step statewide to ensure rural hospitals remain open.

Healthy New River Valley Update: Pam Ray has been working with prevention partners who are actively seeking grant funding. She stated that the obesity prevention program in Pulaski has ended and garden work will start again in the warmer months. She's been working with the THRIVE network to identify food distribution agencies and working with the YMCAs and Rec Centers to improve active living (walking and biking options).

PATHways Sharing:

Margo Walter: The Mental Health Justice Ministry is offering a free event at the Lyric where they will be showing I Am Maris on March 23 at 2PM; a panel discussion will follow. NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is looking to increase membership in it's two support groups: one for persons living with mental illness and one for friends and families of persons living with mental illness. The groups meet the 3rd Monday of every month. Please help get the word out.

Pam Ray: In-school nicotine use is up with a large concentration being from Juuls. More and more middle and high schoolers are becoming addicted to nicotine, which typically lead to other addictive usage and risky behavior. Pam has been making the rounds and discussing with faculty and staff at local public school the severity of this issue. She states that kids are not going to quit usage from pure education; they need treatment.

She also announced that she will be speaking at a regional tobacco use event in Abingdon (at the Higher Education Center) on March 20. It is a free event and lunch will be provided. If you are interested in registering, please email her at pam.ray@vdh.virginia.gov. She also shared that April 1-8 is National Public Health Week, so the New River Health District will be using their mobile clinic as a moving health fair and offering free screenings, take-home radon testing kits, and more.

Beth O'Connor: The Virginia Rural Health Association is creating a special interest group (statewide) to look at and address health issue in the LGTB community. Attendees will have access to specialist in suicide, depression, housing, and others. They welcome anyone who wants to contribute. Contact Beth for more info.

Rebecca LeBlanc: The CHCNRV was recently awarded nearly \$2million to continue providing services and prevention outreach. They opened a new dental center in Dublin that is currently open two days a week; they will hold an Open House on April 24. They also have a new dentist starting at the Giles location in April.

Trina Porterfield-Pifer: New River Community Action is currently recruiting for Head Start; information can be found on their [web page](#).

Rhonda Seltz: The federal poverty/income level has recently changed. Promotional materials are being worked on and should be available to order in the next few weeks. Rhonda stated that an estimate of about 50% of eligible people have signed up for Medicare so far.

Ashley Hash: The retreat for the Community Health Assessment is still in the works; information will be forthcoming once details are established.

**The Next PATH meeting is TBD.
If you would like be added to the PATH listserv for PATH updates,
please email rebecca.lord@vdh.virginia.gov.**