

MINUTES
PARTNERSHIP FOR ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE (PATH)
September 20, 2022
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Fireside Room
NRV Carilion Clinic

PATH overview and Healthy Roots connection/update: Pam and Vicky started the meeting off sharing the history of PATH from the inception of the group in 1994 to the successes the group has been involved in. Pam spoke about goals for PATH, key partners that make up the committee, and what the future will look like moving forward. Pam presented information on Healthy Roots and explained how PATH is a subnetwork of the larger, overarching Healthy Roots network. The group agreed that PATH should be involved with Healthy Roots and stay focused on healthcare access, community health assessments and improvement plans, and community health which includes physical and mental wellbeing. It was also discussed that we should continue to advocate and educate our constituents on important medical issues and health policies that impact the citizens of the NRV.

Speakers: Impact of COVID on our region and moving forward

Kevin Byrd, Executive Director, New River Valley Regional Commission:

- Kevin spoke about the conception of the Business Continuity Team at the start of the COVID pandemic and the different way in which the team supported the 600+ NRV businesses and 21 schools within the district. He compared metrics between post and pre pandemic on topics including unemployment/labor participation rates, manufacturing and IT industries, household, and tourism. He share the different factors that have led to the current labor shortage and offered a glimpse into future projects including broadband access and a regional housing trust fund.

Marty Holliday, Executive Director, New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board

- Marty began her talk explaining how the overall outcome for the data she was going to share is still unknown; it takes 2-5 years before trend data to really become fully realized. She shared the increase in unemployment claims at the start of the pandemic and the labor force participation rates. She spoke about the different factors that have led to the current labor shortage (natural attrition/early retirees, increase in entrepreneurship, health issues, child/family care, etc.) and the changes that came about as a response to COVID ranging from mask policies to an increase in remote/hybrid positions.

Robert Graham, Superintendent, Radford City Public Schools

- Robert shared observations and impacts COVID has made to the students and teachers in the Radford City School system including:
 - negatively impacted academic growth
 - lack of access and opportunity facing many students of color, including technological and other barriers that make it harder to stay engaged in virtual classrooms

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- disrupted education and related aids and services needed to support academic progress and prevent regression
- LGBTQ+ have faced particularly heightened risks for anxiety and stress and have lost regular access to affirming student organizations and supportive peers and teachers
- nearly all students have experienced some challenges to their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic and many have lost access to school based services and supports
- heightened risks of sexual harassment, abuse, and violence during the pandemic,
- recruitment and retention of teachers has decreased dramatically causing a shortage of teachers and subs

Audience response and sharing of COVID's impact on agencies/clients

- Dr. Sophie Wenzel led a discussion on the positive and negative impacts our community partners have experienced during and post pandemic. Some of the topics discussed included:
 - virtual programs success (telehealth, programing) and failures (lack of medical care, telehealth vs. telemedicine)
 - managing home vs. in person workforce
 - need for after action review
 - access to care in schools (CHCNRV),
 - exacerbated disparities
 - pros and cons of communication between organizations
 - preexisting relationships led to good teamwork
 - ongoing ambiguity and uncertainty
 - allowed creativity/newness to force change
 - politicization/role of social media

PATH future steps

- An email will be sent out requesting feedback on how PATH should move forward and what action items we should focus on.
- Invitations will be made to those who have indicated an interest in serving on the PATH Steering Committee.
- With the help of the Steering Committee, a timeline will be set for regular meeting dates/times/locations.

Thank you to everyone who attended in person and participated in the discussion portion of the meeting. A special thank you to our guest speakers for sharing insights into our community from different perspectives as well as to Carilion for hosting and providing lunch.

Next PATH Meeting: TBD

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