

Agenda

Partnership for Access To Healthcare (PATH)

July 22, 2026

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

LewisGale Hospital Pulaski

Education Building

Present

Robin Lemaire

Jess Wirgau

Therese Root

Ryan Marin

Amanda Hudgins

Vicky Collins

Marilyn Ortega

Noelle Ruesch

Noelle Bissell

Rebecca Lord

Molly Roberts

Sarah Frazier

Ashley Hash

Harvey Barker

Dee Frith

Trina Porterfield

Anna Champion

Mikhala Senne

Jim Werth

Rhonda Seltz

(virtual access provided)

PATH Meeting

Robin Lemaire, Associate Professor, Louisiana State University—Results of the network analysis specific to PATH

Robin shared her and Donna Sedgwick's preliminary findings of the 2026 PATH Network Study. She found that PATH remains a highly respected regional collaborative with strong support for its mission of improving healthcare access. While organizational engagement in the survey was modest (36% response rate), respondents overwhelmingly believe healthcare access and collective action are essential. The network has an established foundation of trust and information sharing, but there are opportunities to strengthen participation, resource sharing, coordinated service delivery, and collaborative planning.

Key findings include:

- Healthcare access remains a top priority.
 - 86% of respondents rated healthcare access as very or extremely important.
 - 100% agreed that collective action is very or extremely important.
- PATH is a trusted regional leader.
 - 66% of respondents strongly identify with the PATH Network.
 - Organizations continue to view PATH as a valuable connector and trusted collaborative.
- Participation is valued but could be stronger.
 - Only 28 of 78 organizations completed the organizational survey (36% response rate).
 - Half of respondents rated PATH meetings as very valuable, while another 35% rated them moderately valuable, suggesting room to increase engagement and meeting impact.
- Information sharing is the network's greatest strength.
 - Organizations exchange information frequently across the region.
 - Resource sharing occurs less often than information exchange, indicating opportunities to expand tangible collaboration.
- A few organizations serve as the collaborative backbone.
 - The network relies heavily on key regional organizations such as NRVCS, NRHD, the Regional Commission, and Community Health Center to maintain connections.

The mission of PATH is to maximize access to healthcare across the New River Valley for all.

- Organizations already collaborate in multiple ways.
 - Many partnerships extend beyond referrals to include information sharing, resource sharing, service coordination, and collaborative planning, providing a strong platform for future initiatives.

The study concludes that PATH continues to serve as an important connector across organizations working to improve healthcare access in the New River Valley. Existing trust and collaborative relationships provide a strong foundation for renewed collective action. By focusing organizations around shared priorities, PATH is well-positioned to strengthen regional collaboration and improve access to care.

The study's central message is that **PATH does not need to reinvent itself**. Instead, it should:

- Reestablish a reliable coordinating function—organizations value PATH, but need a more consistent coordinating presence to keep members engaged and collaborative efforts moving forward.
- Leverage distributed leadership—rather than relying on a small handful of organizations, PATH should capitalize on the leadership already spread across its member organizations.
- Build early momentum around existing strengths—PATH should begin with initiatives where organizations already have both capacity and a willingness to work together such as:
 - Improving access for underserved and high-risk populations
 - Mental health
 - Building on existing organizational partnerships and initiatives

Keri Jackson, Practice Consultant for Medicaid, Department of Social Services—Medicaid overview and updates

Keri provided an overview of several upcoming federal Medicaid policy changes that will affect Virginia's CardinalCare Medicaid program beginning in late 2026 and 2027. The changes include six-month eligibility renewals for Medicaid Expansion members (instead of annual renewals), new work and community engagement requirements requiring certain adults to complete at least 80 hours per month of work, education, training, or community service (unless exempt), and revised Medicaid eligibility rules for some noncitizen adults. Children, pregnant individuals, many people with disabilities, older adults, and other traditional Medicaid populations are generally not affected by these changes.

She and Rhonda emphasize the importance of helping Medicaid members prepare for these changes by keeping their contact information current, responding promptly to renewal requests, understanding any applicable work requirement exemptions, and recognizing changes to immigration-related eligibility. The overall goal is to minimize unnecessary loss of coverage by ensuring members are informed, complete required paperwork on time, and seek assistance when needed.

There were questions regarding medical frailty qualifications (exemption status shielding vulnerable enrollees from upcoming work requirements) to which Keri did not have an answer for and will be following up.

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Molly Robert, Community Benefit Manager/Community Health and Development, Carilion—Upcoming Community Health Assessment cycle

Molly introduced the kickoff process for the 2027 New River Valley Community Health Assessment (CHA) and emphasizes the importance of addressing the social determinants of health through collaboration, data, and community engagement. Rather than focusing solely on treating illness, the CHA process seeks to identify root causes of poor health and develop strategies that improve the conditions in which people live, work, and learn. The presentation also highlighted the Vital Conditions Framework, which encourages investing in long-term community well-being while maintaining the capacity to respond to immediate health needs.

The presentation outlined the role of the Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT), which will meet four times between October 2026 and June 2027 to guide community engagement, review data, prioritize health needs, and develop the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The timeline includes community surveys, data review, prioritization activities, strategic planning, and production of the final CHA report. Lessons learned from the previous assessment emphasized the need for broader stakeholder participation, stronger qualitative data collection, increased involvement from sectors outside of traditional public health (such as business, faith communities, and economic development), and greater use of local data and community listening sessions. The presentation concluded by encouraging continued collaboration among PATH members and community partners throughout the assessment process.

PATHways Sharing

Marilyn Ortega introduced herself as the new Executive Director of NRV CARES.

Jim Werth announced Tri Area's upcoming involvement in the Floyd County Schools offering services and support within the schools.

Noelle Ruesch introduced herself as the new Population Health Community Coordinator for New River Health District and shared some updates with the group: there will be a back-to-School event at McHarg Elementary School (*event passed*) providing free school and sports physicals and immunizations; NRHD is gathering feedback from the community on where its mobile clinic should travel to; and shared a survey looking into healthcare access for women's health from a VT Masters of Sociology student.

Rhonda Seltz shared her contact information and asked members to have clients get in touch with her with any questions or assistance requests regarding Medicaid.

Anna Champion shared the ONEbox campaign: Painting the New River Valley Purple. ONEboxes are a portable emergency response kit designed to reverse opioid overdoses, featuring built-in instructions and naloxone nasal spray. Anyone interested in a free ONEbox should reach out.

Next PATH Meeting: TBD

Any questions, comments, or suggestions for future meetings should be directed to:
rebecca.lord@vdh.virginia.gov

THANK YOU

LewisGale Hospital Pulaski for hosting us and providing lunch!

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