

**State Health Commissioner's Advisory Council on Health Disparity and Health Equity
(ACHDHE)**

October 10, 2023, Meeting Minutes

**James Madison Building
109 Governor Street, Richmond, VA 23219
Main Conference Room (In-person and Televised Meeting) – 11:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.**

In person attendance: **Karen Shelton, MD; Sandra Serna, MPH; David C. Rose, MD, MBA, FAAP; Nia Harrison, MPP; Patti Kiger, M. Ed; Linda Lee Redmond, PhD; El Hadji Djibril Niang; Maceo E. Freeman, D.MIN; Carolyn C. Turner, MS; JohnJason Cecil, BA. Antonio Villa, MD, MPH; Karen O'Brien, BSc; Karen O'Brien, BSc; Amy Christine Hodge, M. Div.**

Virtual Attendees: **Eleanor Woodson, BSN, RN; Barbara Board, PhD.**

Did Not Attend:

George Worthington, MS; Elvira De La Cruz, BS; Zakia McKensey; Melody Armstrong, MPA, BSN; Olugbenga O. Obasanjo, MBBS, Ph.D., MPH, MBA; Gordon Walker, MS; Kate S. K. Bradshaw, Ph.D., FACHE, CPHQ; Linnaya Graf, PhD, MCHES, CPH;

VDH Staff: **Augustine Doe, MS, MPA;**

WELCOME

Dr. Rose, ACHDHE Chair, welcomed the attendees and called for introductions prior to calling the meeting to order.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Dr. Rose provided an overview of the meeting agenda and requested for amendments if members had any suggested changes. The agenda was adopted.

Meeting Agenda:

[Agenda](#)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The July 11, 2023, meeting minutes were approved as presented.

[Minutes](#)

ACHDHE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSIONER

Dr. Rose presented the ACHDHE recommendation document from the July 11, 2023, meeting presentations to the State Health Commissioner, Dr. Karen Shelton.

[Recommendations](#)

STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER UPDATES:

Dr. Karen Shelton, State Health Commissioner, expressed her gratitude to the members of the ACHDHE for their support and commitment to the council's objectives. During her address, she provided updates on her specific areas of focus, which include workforce development, initiatives aimed at addressing Virginia's opioid overdose crisis, and programs related to maternal and child health. These areas align with her efforts to lead Virginia towards the realization of its overarching mission and vision.

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Additionally, Dr. Shelton offered her insights and remarks on the recommendations from the council's previous meeting presentations.

July 2023 Presentations recommendations:

Virginia's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program:

- Dr. Karen Shelton, the State Health Commissioner, emphasized the significance of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) program within the Virginia Department of Health, particularly considering its pivotal role during the COVID-19 pandemic. She highlighted that some MRC volunteers had seamlessly integrated into the VDH workforce, becoming essential team members. While FEMA and other governmental organizations joined the COVID-19 response efforts, VDH promptly incorporated Community Health Workers (CHWs) into the response, recognizing their unique ability to connect with and assist largely underserved, minority communities. CHWs excelled in bridging language and cultural barriers, making them invaluable assets in this context.
- Dr. Shelton acknowledged that although COVID-19 funding is diminishing, VDH is actively exploring alternative avenues to secure funding for CHWs, given their vital role in the workforce. Additionally, in response to a previous inquiry about the training needs of the MRC, Dr. Shelton informed the ACHDHE that local Community Service Boards (CSB) have established local teams to address behavioral health crises, and VDH is collaborating with them at the grassroots level.
- In reflection, Dr. Shelton reiterated the value of the MRC program and expressed the intention to ensure its diversity. She mentioned that the recommendations would be communicated to Mike Magner, the State Volunteer Coordinator, for further consideration and action.

Overdose Management:

- In Virginia, there is a mandatory two-credit requirement for individuals holding a license to prescribe medications, including opioids, Dr. Shelton shared with the ACHDHE. This training is essential to ensure that healthcare professionals provide high-quality services while preventing issues like overprescribing and enhancing pain management practices. Notably, the scope of the Addiction Recovery and Treatment program, which was initially limited to the behavioral health sector, has been expanded. It now encompasses internal medicine programs, family practice, and nurse practitioners, enabling a broader range of healthcare providers to gain awareness and competence in prescribing medications.
- Furthermore, this year, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) introduced a federal program mandating that all prescribers holding a DEA license must accumulate eight hours of credits specifically related to opioid and substance use as part of their licensing requirements and for subsequent renewals.
- Dr. Shelton underscored the importance of actively engaging with the patient community, particularly during the patient-provider interaction. This engagement approach involves meeting patients where they are, especially when addressing issues related to substance use. She also emphasized the necessity of considering alternative engagement strategies for individuals who heavily use substances and may not have regular interactions with healthcare providers.

<https://www.saara.org/browse-resources/addiction-and-recovery-treatment-services-arts>

Violence Prevention:

- Dr. Shelton has expressed strong support for the Governor's "[Right Help, Right Now](#)" initiative, which has been a significant focus for some time. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has been actively collaborating with various organizations, including the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services and Community Services Boards (CSBs), as well as engaging with other community partners. This collaborative effort extends to the realm of injury and violence prevention, taking a multi-sector approach. It involves various state agencies, public safety

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organizations, and homeland security in collectively seeking solutions to address issues related to injury and violence within communities.

[https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/get-](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/get-help/index.asp#:~:text=The%20Veterans%20Crisis%20Line%20connects,Text%20to%20838255)

[help/index.asp#:~:text=The%20Veterans%20Crisis%20Line%20connects,Text%20to%20838255](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/get-help/index.asp#:~:text=The%20Veterans%20Crisis%20Line%20connects,Text%20to%20838255) .

- In conclusion, Dr. Shelton expressed her gratitude to the ACHDHE for the recommendations provided. She affirmed her commitment and intention to move forward with them.

PRESENTATIONS:

- Presentation: "[Virginia's Maternal Mortality Programs, Funding and Data Overview](#)" by Dr. Melanie Rouse, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, VDH
- Presentation: "[Maternal Mortality Health Initiatives to Address Maternal Mortality](#)" Cindy deSa & Lauren Kozlowski, Office of Family Health Services, VDH

New Business:

Dr. David Rose, ACHDHE Chair, will engage with few members of the council for their participation on a committee to review potential new members' applications. After the completion of the reviews, the committee will put forth recommendations to the State Health Commissioner for her consideration for new members to join the ACHDHE.

UPDATES:

Office of Health Equity (OHE) Updates

Ms. Sandra Serna, Director Office of Health Equity, shared the following updates:

- The Health Workforce Unit within the Division of Primary Care and Rural Health received additional funds in the recently signed FY24 budget, including \$5 million to distribute for the "Earn to Learn" initiative. Earn to Learn is essentially an apprenticeship model allowing nursing students to work in a health care setting while going to school to apply their academic studies in real time. The Workforce Unit currently oversees fifteen loan repayment and scholarship programs aimed at increasing Virginians access to essential medical services, particularly in areas and communities facing a shortage of medical professionals. Furthermore, an additional \$1.5 million has been allocated by the General Assembly to enhance the Behavioral Health Loan Repayment Program. Another \$3 million has been provided to expand the nurse preceptor program; the program can also now offer up to \$5,000 for 250 supervised hours.
- The Office of Health Equity is currently providing financial support to four Hispanic-serving organizations for COVID-19 recovery efforts. These funds are set to last until the end of May 2024, and Ms. Veronica Cosby was acknowledged for her leadership in driving these initiatives forward.
- As of October 10, 2023, the Office of Rural Health opened applications for the Innovative Rural Programming Award, which spans a six-month project period with funds to be disbursed starting January 1, 2024. A range of organizations, including public agencies, tribal organizations, or 501Cc3s designated as rural service providers, and those operating in medically shortage areas

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and health professional shortage areas, stand to benefit. These organizations may receive grants of up to \$20,000, with a focus on topics that align with the 2022- 2026 Virginia Rural Health Plan such as maternal and child health, food access and nutrition, workforce development, behavioral health, and telehealth services. Applications are due by 5PM EDT on October 31, 2023.

ACHDHE Members' Updates:

- Nia Harrison highlighted that the National Institute of Health (NIH) has officially designated people with disabilities as a population experiencing health disparities. Her organization has advocated for this recognition over the years and welcomes this significant development. More information can be found here: [Link to NIH announcement](#).
The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities is in the final stages of a research project focusing on oral health access for individuals with disabilities. The report stemming from this research is expected to be published in December 2023.
- Mr. Cecil reminded all in attendance to encourage Medicaid recipients to update their information to retain coverage.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- No public comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

The ACHDHE meeting was adjourned at 1:56 PM.

Weblinks to resources:

- Right Help Right Now: <https://www.hhr.virginia.gov/12-14-2022-Two-Page-BH-Plan-Summary.pdf>
- Virginia Community Health Workers Association: <https://chwofva.com/>
- NIH Announcement: <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-designates-people-disabilities-population-health-disparities>

Next ACHDHE meeting: January 9, 2024.

Time: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Host Site: James Madison Building, 109 Governor Street, 23219.

Kindly send your questions to augustine.doe@vdh.virginia.gov.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Augustine Doe, Division of Multicultural Health and Community Engagement (DMHCE)

Minutes Reviewed By:

David C. Rose, MD, FAAP, ACHDHE Chair

Kate Bradshaw, Ph.D., FACHE, CPHQ, ACHDHE Vice Chair