



NC Collaborative for Children, Youth and Families
DATE: December 11, 2020

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Upcoming Legislative Meetings:

Committee	Date and Time	Location, Video and Audio
Joint Legislative Committee on Health and Human Services	January 12, 2021, 12:00 p.m.	643 LOB, audio , video stream
2021-22 Long Session Begins	January 13, 2021, noon	

How Federal and State Cabinets are Shaping Up:

Here is what we know about the Education and Health and Human Services cabinet positions for President-Elect Biden. Keep in mind that cabinet-level positions must be confirmed by the Senate.

US Education: Not yet nominated an individual. President-Elect Biden has stated it will be someone with public education experience. The outstanding question is whether it will be someone with K-12 experience or higher education experience.

US Health and Human Services: He has nominated a secretary and named the team below:

Secretary nomination: Mr. Xavier Becerra, California Attorney General. Becerra has been a vocal advocate of the Affordable Care Act and is a former US Representative.

US Surgeon General: Dr. Vivek Murthy

Director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Dr. Rochelle Walensky

Two positions within US HHS to watch for: Director of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Director of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Here is what we know about the North Carolina Education, Public Safety and Health and Human services cabinet for Governor Cooper. Because the Secretary positions are

appointed by the Governor and Cooper is in his second term, there is a good possibility that there will be continuity and small changes. This has a ripple effect because the Secretary usually brings along several other political appointees who are in key leadership positions.

Health and Human Services: Although Secretary Mandy Cohen was on the short list to head US HHS, so far she appears to be remaining in North Carolina to continue as Secretary of NC DHHS. Several of her key leaders are also politically appointed positions. This does give some indication of continuity—an important factor in Medicaid Transformation.

Education: Catherine Truitt is not considered a secretary and was elected to be the NC Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Public Safety: There has been no indication that Secretary Erik Hooks will leave his position.

Medicaid Transformation Update:

NC DHHS Secretary for Medicaid Dave Richard talked to the [Medical Care Advisory Committee](#) on Friday, December 11th about the commitment of the Department to move forward with Medicaid Transformation. Richard characterized the move to managed care in Medicaid as the means to meet the larger priorities of the State, i.e. value-based care and integrated care behavioral health and physical health care services.

Medicaid Expansion Discussed at Governor's Council:

Governor Cooper established the [NC Council for Health Care Coverage](#). The first meeting of this bipartisan group was held on December 4th. Governor Cooper has designated the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy as the staff for the Council. The Council members heard [presentations](#) from leaders who discussed Medicaid expansion, COVID-19, uninsured and health inequities. [An article](#) in the NC Political News included a quote from Senator Krawiec, a member of the Council, "To be honest, I was a little disappointed to see that we're starting with Medicaid expansion, because it has been such a controversial topic. So I am glad that we're moving on to other things. We know that in order to increase access, we need to find ways to reduce costs." Her comment is not unlike her insights at the central regional Advocacy Institute this past fall. The formation of the Council is likely a strategic move on the part of the Governor to have a venue where issues around the insurance coverage gap can be discussed and to get that discussion started prior to the beginning of the legislative long session. The membership includes key House and Senate leaders as well as other high profile professional stakeholders. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 18th. **Members of the public are welcome to attend.** More information can be found at their website (linked above).

Rapid COVID-19 Testing in Schools:

Over the course of a year, North Carolina will receive 3.1 million rapid antigen tests to be used in high priority settings that include schools. This is a [pilot program](#) and schools will have to meet requirements to be eligible. The first requirement is that the school is currently under Plan A or Plan B, which means that children are coming into the school for some segment of their instruction. Pilot applications were due on December 8th and distribution can begin as early as December 14th. NC DHHS has expanded their [resources and guidances](#) for school-age children, families and the school systems.

Opportunities for Feedback:

- [Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force](#) is seeking feedback in 5 core areas:
 1. Access to Healthcare
 2. Economic Opportunity and Business Development
 3. Educational Opportunity
 4. Patient Engagement
 5. Environmental Justice and Inclusion

This Task Force was established by Governor Cooper over the summer and they just completed two listening sessions that can be heard via the above link. There is a [feedback form](#) that can be used to submit your comments on one or more of the five areas. The Task Force subcommittees have already developed initial focal points for each of the core areas with the goal to improve disparities in communities of color disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.