



**NC Collaborative for Children, Youth and Families**  
**DATE: January 30, 2021**

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**Legislature Begins the Long Session:**

The NC General Assembly reconvened on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Bills are slowly being introduced. No committee meetings have yet been scheduled. The deadlines have been set for crossover action and filing.

The crossover deadline is Thursday, May 13<sup>th</sup> for bills originated in both the House and the Senate. Certain bills, like bills with appropriations/funding included, do not have to follow the crossover requirements. A bill meets the crossover deadline if it passes from one chamber to the other by the deadline (May 13<sup>th</sup>). If a bill meets crossover deadline, it remains eligible for consideration for the remainder of the long and short sessions. If the bill does not meet crossover deadline, the bill itself can no longer progress in the legislature. Sometimes bills that do not meet crossover are later added as provisions of budget bills or other amendments to other bills.

Other important deadlines in the legislature are the filing deadlines for bills. The House has several deadlines including bills recommended by State Agencies filed by 2/25/21, bills without appropriations or funding filed by 4/20/21 and bills with appropriations or funding filed by 4/27/21. Most Senate bills are required to be filed by April 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Bills Filed:**

[H. 32](#), Equity in Opportunity Act

**Legislative Breakfast Shines a Light on Mental Health:**

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Breakfast on Mental Health was held on January 30<sup>th</sup>. Much of the discussion was centered on the "uptick" of mental health needs because of the pandemic and the critical need to address the gap in health insurance coverage. In addition, there were several deeper conversations related to addressing the mental health needs of children. Deputy Secretary Kody Kinsley pointed out that North Carolina was 42<sup>nd</sup> in youth access to behavioral health services prior to the pandemic. He noted that children with behavioral health needs move through at least three systems very quickly in their lives. They begin with much of their interaction being with health care providers and then, as they are in school, educators become the

professionals who work most closely with these children and later, as their needs become clearer, they interact most closely with the behavioral health system. Kinsley stated, "This doesn't feel like a recipe for success." Legislators followed up on this point by giving some legislative action that could strengthen the children's behavioral health system. Those points include: increasing the workforce trained to serve children, focus on early childhood services and supports, focus on early intervention and prevention, addressing the insurance coverage gap and increasing parity between coverage for health care and behavioral health care coverage.

Secretary Cohen emphasized the importance of moving forward on a whole person care approach to health and human services. "Covid has shown that we need to keep focusing on whole person well-being," Cohen stated. She acknowledged that the mental system was challenged prior to the pandemic and noted that we now need to focus on the core structure of the system.

#### **More Federal Appointments:**

- The US Health and Human Services Secretary nomination of Xavier Becerra has not yet been confirmed by the Senate.
- Tom Coderre has been appointed as Acting Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse. He will oversee SAMHSA until a permanent appointment is made. Coderre is a person with lived experience and the first person in recovery to lead SAMHSA. He has been working at SAMHSA as the Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to the Administrator.
- Elizabeth Reichter has been named as Acting Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) until a permanent appointment has been made. Ms. Reichter has been with CMS since 1990.

#### **Resources:**

- NC DHHS has been awarded [a grant](#) to prepare for the national 988 suicide hotline implementation that will occur in July 2022.
- A Medicaid Transformation update was offered via webinar by NC DHHS. To access the recording and presentation follow this [link](#).