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NC Collaborative for Children, Youth and Families

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Legislative Long Session Provides Fresh Start

January 11th marks the beginning of the 2023 Long Session of the NC General Assembly. No committee meetings are on the agenda as of yet and committee meetings likely won't begin for another few weeks. The member lists on the [NCGA website](#) are updated with the new legislature.

The Long Session brings a new budget biennium for the next two fiscal years July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025. Not only is there a new budget, but all bills will be newly introduced in this session regardless of whether they have been introduced in past legislative sessions. Legislators will have deadlines to meet on filing the bills and getting them through the House or Senate (crossover) in order for the bills to remain in action through the 2024 Short Session. Of course, legislation that includes funding will have to meet filing deadlines but does not have to meet the crossover requirements.

Governor's Budget on Its Way

Expect to see the budget recommendations of Governor Cooper in the next few weeks. Governors generally try to get their recommendations to the legislature prior to the NCGA members filing their own budget bills. The Governor's recommendations are not required to be a part of the final State budget but they do provide legislators with his priorities for the State. The Governor has been working with his administration since last year to develop his budget recommendations.

When it is published (it was not published at the time this update was written), the Governor's budget recommendations can be found at this [link](#). You will be looking for the budget recommendations for State Fiscal Year 2023-2024 and State Fiscal Year 2024-2025. You will also receive a synopsis of provisions impacting children, youth and families in the next update (assuming it is published at that time).

Potential Topics of Legislation

Below are topics that have been raised in various meetings as potential legislative and budget items. There is no guarantee that any of these topics will be considered or included in legislative discussions:

- Medicaid Expansion: Although there were comments made that the NC General Assembly may consider Medicaid Expansion last December, no action was taken. The

two bills that were introduced last spring by House and Senate leadership will have to be re-introduced to be active in the 2023 Long Session.

- Crisis Services: expand the 988-line services and crisis services
- Behavioral health: expand community-based service options, including justice-involved populations-
- Workforce: pay rates for Director Support Professionals and other MH/IDD/SUD staff, early childhood staff, peer specialists and individuals with lived experience.
- Child welfare: focus on school-based services and more foster care treatment options.
- Olmstead Plan: increase Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), community-based living options and supported employment.

Advocacy Toolkits

Below are several advocacy toolkits, designed as resources for your interaction with decisionmakers, that have been developed by national and state organizations that advocate for children, youth and families:

[National PTA](#) advocacy toolkit designed to help child advocates speak up for the health and wellbeing of all children.

[American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#) advocacy toolkit jointly developed to help educate state lawmakers about children's mental health in America.

[Children's Hospital Association](#) advocacy toolkit developed for specific legislation to host in-district roundtable events and can be used as an example.

[Orygen-World Economic Forum](#) global youth mental health advocacy toolkit developed by and for youth.

Resources

- NC DPI was awarded \$17 million through a federal grant to increase mental health support for public school students. [Link to news release](#). The funding is being used through two grant initiatives. While LME/MCOs are not formally a part of the grants, the funding does address system capacity and workforce issues.
- 1) "Project Adding Direct Support": will increase the number of licensed school-based mental health providers by a minimum of 60 within five years by providing incentives for certain mental health professionals to become licensed to provide services in schools. Counties receiving grant include: Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Scotland, Wayne, Catawba, Harnett, Pender, Pitt, Alamance-Burlington.
 - 2) "Project Fast": will increase the number of school-based mental health providers to 30 over the project's five-year period with an emphasis on recruitment, re-specialization and retention. Counties receiving grant include: Scotland, Cabarrus, Stanly, Davidson, Guilford, Randolph
- Biden Plan to Reduce Homelessness 25% by 2025: The Biden Administration released *All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. This strategic plan builds on existing policies on homelessness. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) will be hosting webinars this year to education and

inform community stakeholders about the plan. To access the plan, information about upcoming webinars, and a clearinghouse of information, use this [link](#).