

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2020

BUNCOMBE COUNTY  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Fiscal Year 2020 (July 2019 to June 2020) has been one marked by extreme victories and challenges. In terms of victories, to name just a few:

- We fully launched our opioid action “Safer Together” initiative.
- We doubled our Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Team efforts.
- We had 9 Public Health Nurses honored among the 100 most influential Public Health Nurses in the past 100 years in NC.
- Our HHS Board, in conjunction with County Commissioners, was at the forefront of the national movement to declare racism as a public health crisis.
- Under the leadership of the County Commission, Buncombe County Government launched a future oriented strategic planning process to be implemented in 2021.

In terms of challenges, we began the year with a regional Legionnaire’s Disease outbreak that made national news, and then of course COVID-19 arrived in North Carolina on March 6, 2020, which has proven to arguably be the biggest health, social, and economic challenge of the last century.

In light of all these victories and challenges, we continue to learn, grow, and serve. It is said that “you cannot fully determine the strength of a tree until a big storm hits.” COVID-19 has been a storm, one that changes rapidly and has been difficult to predict. I cannot, however, be prouder of the dedicated HHS staff who have tirelessly served our community this year. Our team has been at the forefront of the COVID-19 response, managing disease control, keeping the public well informed, participating in planning, logistics and incident command. We accomplished this while still maintaining all of our core safety, health and economic support services to residents of the county in the midst of our own personal adjustments to the pandemic.

It has also been said that “difficult times will reveal your true allies,” and we did not serve alone. Our partners in Buncombe County municipalities and the non-profit sector have been by our side and unwavering in their dedication to serve our community well. Citizens have been responsive to keep themselves and others safe as well as generous to those who have suffered financially due to unforeseeable impacts of the virus.

So we continue to stand firm as One Buncombe; weary yet determined. We are saddened by the unexpected loss of lives and economic security, yet remain resilient and hopeful for rebuilding the strength of our communities. Our purpose remains true to advancing health, safety and opportunity in Buncombe County.

Together we serve; together we thrive,

Stoney Blevins  
Buncombe County Health & Human Services Director



## Social Work Services Continues Strong Focus on Clients

Adult and Child Protective Services partners with individuals, families, and communities to strengthen their efforts toward independence, permanence, and safety. We aim to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable children and adults in our community. Our services are mandated by State and Federal laws and include 24/7 intake, 24/7 investigations, ongoing intervention services, foster care and adoption services for children, foster care licensing, adult care home monitoring, special assistance in-home services, in-home aid services, adult day care and adult placement services.

### Adult Services

Buncombe County Health & Human Services offers social work resources to assist adults with issues we all face as we age. From the licensing and monitoring of adult care homes to guardianship and adult foster care services, BCHHS offers a source of stability and safety for adults in Buncombe County.

In FY20, our agency received 1,880 Adult Protective Services (APS) reports. Of these reports, 1,212 APS reports were investigated along with 153 facility complaints. Adult services also filed 23 guardianship petitions with an average of 145 wards on the guardianship contract. In other words, Adult Services was able to assist 145 adults with important decisions about their care and provide periodic visitation to ensure their wellbeing.

Aging Services was able to expand their team to add a full time Program Manager for Aging and Adult Services in December of 2019. This much needed capacity provides coordination of the adult protective services program, case management services for adults and the adult home specialist staff and serves as the lead agency coordinator for the Home and Community Care Block Grant funding.

Adult Services provides a placement program that assists adults in moving to Adult Care homes/family care homes and skilled care. Adults and families can make a request and ask for assistance with this process. In FY20, Adult Services was able to support the placement of 92 adults.

The Special Assistance In-home program assisted 36 clients who are on Medicaid and need in-home care and assistance with paying for health and safety supports.

Staff within the Adult and Aging Services section are extremely active in adult welfare advocacy work. Adult Services participates in the Buncombe Aging Services Alliance committee, an interagency collaborative group that works to meet the needs of older adults across Buncombe County.

COVID-19 brought a whole new level of intensity to the work of Adult Services and increased the need to partner more strongly across our community. As we have seen the impacts of COVID-19 on those who are medically fragile, this population has been a major focus of our work in Adult Services. Due to an increase in reports during the beginning of COVID-19 that didn't meet the definition of "screen in" for Adult Protective Services, the Social Work department made the decision to begin offering outreach services to at-risk adults in the community. Supports and assistance provided during this time included: grocery delivery, clothing assistance, and placement support. The Adult Home Specialists joined county workgroups and participated on the Congregate Care Ready Team to serve as a conduit for the most up to date guidance and communications about COVID-19.

As the County transitioned into FY20 - 21, Aging and Adult Services took on the contract management for behavioral health contracts and homelessness services contracts. Staff participated in and facilitated conversations with the Homelessness Workgroup developed out of the COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center. This work continues to be an important step in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 within this population.

### Children Services

In FY20, our division received 4,569 Child Protective Services (CPS) intake reports. Of these reports, 2,713 CPS reports met criteria and were investigated. There was a finding related to child maltreatment in 497 of those cases. Family in Home Services worked to prevent an average of 356 children per month from entering foster care and successfully did so in 95.49% of the cases.

An average of 300 children per month were in the custody of BCHHS in FY20. BCHHS works toward permanency for these youth, prioritizing reunification with their parents, but also recognizing their need for timely permanence through a safe and stable placement.

Thanks to the efforts of the families, children, and our community and staff, 72 children achieved permanency with their forever families through adoption in FY20. Ten of these adoptions were finalized after the onset of COVID-19. This is a testament to the hard work of the Social Work Staff, children, and families and illustrates how a strong focus on finding permanency from day one and centering the needs of children leads to better outcomes.

### Enhanced Supports for Teens in Foster Care

The new specialized Teen Unit in Extended Foster Care was launched in March 2020 to support efforts to increase adherence with state and federal mandates. The specialized Teen Unit includes five social workers, a Goodwill contract for our LINKs program, and a program supervisor. The team will focus on independent living skills and building community supports for older teens to prepare to transition into adulthood. The team will work with community partners such as Planned Parenthood to assist with preconception health and communicable diseases, and Habitat for Humanity to assist with housing need and furniture as they achieve independent housing.



Jennifer Teague, Aging Services Program Manager

**In Fiscal  
Year 2020**

**144**  
children and youth  
entered foster care

**185**  
children exited care

## Proven Success of START in Buncombe

Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START) continue to meet the unique needs of families struggling with substance use disorder. In FY20, the START program received a grant through the Governor's Crime Commission to expand to two full START teams. Working with our community partner, Family Preservation Services, START hired and trained 8 new employees and contract employees. Six social workers paired with six family mentors (peer support specialists) work with families experiencing co-occurring child protective services issues and substance use disorder to address child safety and family well-being needs through appropriate assessment, referral and case management services. The family mentors have lived child welfare and substance use disorder experience, but are in recovery and able to connect with and support families in a way traditional child welfare models cannot.

In FY20, 31 families accepted START services and 100% of the 31 START families had a Comprehensive Clinical Assessment (CCA). It took an average of 3.71 days for a parent to receive a CCA after accepting START services. We are also happy to report that 100% of START cases that were closed ended with a parent achieving sobriety and the child(ren) remained with at least one of the parents for all cases that opened and then closed. Family Mentors were able to transport 26 out of 31 families to all four of the parents' first treatment sessions and maintained weekly contact with 100% of the 31 families engaged with START Services during this time period.

## Doing Good Social Work

In order to support a range of children, families and vulnerable adults, BCHHS social workers connect them to an array of services including substance use, mental health, domestic violence, parenting education, medical and independent living services with a focus on trauma responsive and evidence based services to optimize effective results.

The Social Work Staff also went above and beyond to assist children and families over the holidays. Through "Tammy and Kipper's Christmas is for Kids", a partnership with Asheville Radio Group and Radio Host, Tammy Jones, over 300 children in foster care in Buncombe County received an abundance of holiday presents from our generous community members. The foster care team also partnered with the owner of GB Shoes to collect nearly 300 pairs of new shoes for holiday gifts for children in foster care.

While our mandates have not changed, COVID-19 has required that we shift to the safest methods possible for completing this important work with families. For example, we have conducted visits virtually and have creatively "seen" families in their yards or through windows. We have increased our phone and virtual contacts to ensure we are gathering all needed information and supporting adults and families through this challenging time. As part of the COVID-19 response in Child Welfare, the Prevention Social Workers have been available to respond in an outreach capacity which helps to intervene early to address the basic needs of families in their time of crisis. Even something as simple as dropping off food boxes to families and linking families to something as simple as diapers can be a relief for families who are stressed.

This fiscal year, Social Work Services focused on internal staff development related to racial bias and whiteness or white fragility in the workplace. Our staff-led efforts include racial equity dialogue, education, and support groups for people of color, debriefing of critical community and nationwide events and planning for improved community engagement.



2019 Foster Child Wish List

## Public Health Services

Public Health works to protect the public's health by preventing health hazards and promoting health opportunities in Buncombe County. We work to eliminate health disparities, achieve health equity, build partnerships for health, and advocate for environments that support healthy growth and the ability to thrive throughout all stages of life.

## Opioid and Substance Use Disorder: Safer Together Goes Big

Fiscal Year 2020 began with the opening of the Syringe Services Program at 40 Coxe Avenue. A program expected to serve a small slice of current clinic patients mushroomed to serve over 300 unique individuals in its first year, receiving 82 Naloxone reversal reports and connecting 75 individuals to substance use treatment and 71 individuals to STD Testing.

The narrative around opioids and substance use disorder is slowly shifting from despair to hope. Opioids and substance use have devastated our families and our communities, but they have compelled a unique movement that has encouraged community and agency collaboration.

On October 28, 2019, BCHHS, the City of Asheville, VAYA, and MAHEC hosted Asheville's first "Let's Talk Opioids", a town hall style event focused on educating the public on the state of the opioid epidemic in our community and the programs that exist to address it. Nearly 250 residents showed up to hear the panel of experts answer questions about opioids in Buncombe County. The result of this collaboration has been a community-wide decrease in overdose deaths and an increase in treatment programs to support recovery and promote health across the lifespan.

BCHHS was awarded two major grants in the fall of 2019; the first was to establish a Re-entry program for those with Opioid Use Disorder, and the second was to establish a Post-Overdose Response Team. Despite COVID, Re-entry Services began in April, and in its first quarter the program served 31 individuals, housing 12, and linking 10 with telehealth. The Re-entry program also helped organize Naloxone upon release through the Buncombe County Detention Facility, which handed out 155 Naloxone kits in FY20.

In the Spring of 2020, Syringe Services added mobile services to distribute life-saving Naloxone, fentanyl test strips and hygiene supplies (including hand sanitizer and disposable thermometers) weekly to individuals at AHope and Kairos West. Sub-awards were finalized for Post-Overdose Response, including 75 free slots for Suboxone medication through FY21. BCHHS worked with the Dogwood Health Trust to fund the doctor time as well, making this intervention completely free for individuals in HHS opioid response programs. Access to Medication Assisted Treatment is critical in eliminating overdose deaths, as it has a 50% efficacy rate for Opioid Use Disorder compared with only 10% for detox.



Let's Talk Opioids Town Hall Panel

Lastly, in FY20, Buncombe County became the first county in North Carolina to establish a Community-Based Disposal Program, in collaboration with the City of Asheville. A plan for installation and collection received final Commission and City Council approval in the Spring of 2020. This intervention will help clean up needle litter within 200 yards of each unit.

### Major Legionnaires Outbreak in Buncombe County

A major event illustrating the importance of a strong public health response occurred in September 2019. A total of 136 cases of Legionnaires' disease or Pontiac Fever were identified in residents of multiple states and North Carolina counties who attended the NC Mountain State Fair at the Western North Carolina Agricultural Center in Fletcher, NC. Legionnaires' disease is a form of pneumonia caused by infection with the Legionella bacteria. People can get Legionnaires' disease when they breathe in aerosolized water (small droplets of water in the air) that contain the bacteria. Sadly, 49 Buncombe County residents were infected with Legionnaires Disease and one Buncombe County resident passed away due to infection.

On September 23, 2019, BCHHS confirmed the first case of Legionnaires' disease in a Buncombe County resident and additional cases reported by medical providers and laboratories were confirmed throughout the day as Communicable Disease (CD) Nurses interviewed ill patients and their families. The information gathered through those interviews was crucial to confirming the diagnosis and determining possible exposures. Due to the abrupt increase in cases of Legionnaires' disease, CD Nurses immediately notified NC Division of Public Health (NCDPH). The investigation into the source of the bacteria included NCDPH, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WNC Agriculture Center, and Buncombe County Environmental Health. The quick action and partnership between the public health infrastructure and medical providers likely helped to save lives through accurate diagnosis of cases and mitigation of the source of the bacteria.

### HIV Prevention Program at BCHHS

HIV infections in the United States continue to be a major public health concern. In 2018, nearly 38,000 people in the US received a new diagnosis of HIV, and North Carolina ranks as the 12th highest state for new HIV cases. BCHHS Health Clinic provides free HIV screenings and offers a pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) program to help prevent the spread of HIV in our community. PrEP is a daily medication regimen that is effective at preventing HIV transmission in people who are at high risk of acquiring HIV from sex or injection drug use.

Clients who are enrolled in the PrEP program also receive routine STD screening and prevention counseling throughout the year. BCHHS Health Clinic maintains a current PrEP clinic enrollment of approximately 45 clients and expects this enrollment to double by the end of 2020.

The CDC estimates that only one-quarter of people who are eligible for PrEP services are enrolled in a PrEP program. BCHHS also recognizes that people of color continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV. In 2018, Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 69% of new HIV diagnoses but comprise only 31% of the US population.

BCHHS supports efforts to educate the community and promote awareness about HIV prevention. In September of 2019, BCHHS participated in the Blue Ridge Pride Festival, administering free Hepatitis A vaccines and promoting HIV and other STD prevention strategies. The communicable disease team has also partnered with several local agencies to provide free HIV and STD screenings and remains committed in 2020 and beyond to developing partnerships that promote awareness to those in our community who are most at risk.

### Improving Infant and Maternal Health and Addressing Health Inequities

#### Business Case for Breastfeeding Award

Ample scientific and economic evidence confirms that mothers are more likely to breastfeed if their friends, families, health care providers, colleagues, and communities support them. Data shows that breastfeeding-friendly employers benefit from lower health care costs, lower turnover and absenteeism rates, higher productivity and morale. Further, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recognizes breastfeeding as the optimal nutritional source for babies and helps to prevent a range of infant illnesses and infant deaths.

The North Carolina Breastfeeding Coalition (NCBC) awarded Buncombe County Health and Human Services (BCHHS) the Business Case for Breastfeeding Award in FY20. This designation means that there is broad coordination throughout the agency to ensure that breastfeeding employees in BCHHS have the opportunity to breastfeed in a supportive environment. Through an ongoing partnership with Buncombe Partnership for Children, resources and training are available to community partners wishing to achieve this important designation. The Business Case for Breastfeeding Award builds on the Breastfeeding Family Friendly Community County and City proclamations announced in July, 2019.

While the designation creates a positive image as a "family friendly" business, it is a key strategy of the Buncombe County Community Health Improvement Process to improve birth outcomes and reduce the rate of infant mortality in Buncombe County, especially for African American babies. Breastfeeding trends in our community indicate that, in 2017, 74% of black mothers were breastfeeding at discharge after birth in Buncombe County, compared with 89.5% of white mothers and 96.3% of Hispanic or Latinx mothers. Presently, African American babies in Buncombe County are nearly 4 times as likely to die in the first year of life as white babies in Buncombe County.



Breast Feeding Family Friendly Community Proclamation

### **Access to Breastfeeding Assistance, Nutrition Education, and Healthy Food: Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**

WIC provides access to healthy food, breastfeeding support and encouragement for moms-to-be, new moms and families with young children. From April 2019 through March 2020, approximately \$2.7 million (\$2,698,753.67) in WIC dollars were spent at local grocery stores and pharmacies, putting revenue back into our community.

Buncombe County WIC program logged a breastfeeding initiation rate of 82.51%. Buncombe County WIC also reported a breastfeeding duration rate (6 weeks – 6 month postpartum) of 37.08%. For perspective, the NC WIC initiation rate is 72.47% and the NC duration rate is 27.20%. Even through a global pandemic, the Buncombe WIC program continued to deliver outstanding customer service through individualized and comprehensive care, serving a monthly average of 4,113 clients in FY20.

### **Addressing Health Inequities in Birth Outcomes**

The most recent 2018 Buncombe County Community Health Assessment showed that black babies are nearly 4 times more likely to die in the first year of life than white babies. In response to this persistent and increasing inequity, Buncombe County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) partners have committed to advancing equity in birth outcomes and infant mortality over the next 10 years.

Closing out FY20, the Buncombe County Health and Human Services (BCHHS) Board unanimously passed a proclamation declaring racism as a public health crisis and outlined action steps that the board will take to advance racial equity and justice in our county. This action by our local health leadership comes after consideration of persistent and pervasive inequities in health outcomes in Buncombe County and advocacy from many community partners including those represented on Buncombe County's Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP) Advisory Council.

Frank Castelblanco, Chair of the HHS Board, reflects on this action by saying, "Structural racism is one of the most pressing public health issues here in Buncombe County and across the nation, and it exacerbates every other public health issue. This widespread system of oppression is built through policies and practices that have created inequities in health, education, housing, employment, criminal justice and our other public institutions. In order to create a truly equitable community,

we must dismantle these racist systems as intentionally as they were built and even more so. The Board of the Buncombe County Department of Health and Human Services, through a unanimous vote, is committed to doing the intentional and sustained work to address these unacceptable health gaps in our community."

Stoney Blevins, BCHHS Director says, "We appreciate the leadership of the Buncombe County Health and Human Services Board in recognizing the need to address systemic racism to improve health and wellbeing in Buncombe County. Naming this as a public health crisis helps our agency and community develop meaningful actions to repair the damage that racism causes and will be an important step towards improving health outcomes for people of color."

### **Buncombe County Selected for CityMatCH**

To further organize efforts to address this public health crisis, Buncombe County was selected as one of six communities nationwide to participate in the fourth cohort of the CityMatCH Institute for Equity in Birth Outcomes. The other five communities in this cohort are Knoxville, Tennessee; Fort Worth, Texas; Akron, Ohio; and Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. CityMatCH is a national learning collaborative of city and county health departments' maternal and child health programs and leaders working to promote equity and improve the health of urban women, families, and communities. Buncombe County will join this nationwide collaborative of local public health departments and multi-sector partners to implement data-informed, community-driven strategies to reduce inequities in birth outcomes in Buncombe County, especially for African American babies.

### **Ten Years of Nurse Family Partnership in Buncombe County**

Since 2009, Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) has been filling gaps for vulnerable first time mothers in Buncombe County. The goals of the NFP program are to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes, improve child health and development, and improve economic self-sufficiency for families. NFP families experience fewer preterm births, higher immunization rates, and higher levels of breastfeeding when compared to national and state averages.

NFP services sidestep barriers by hiring nurses that drive to clients' homes and offer practical guidance, information, and partnership from pregnancy to the child's second birthday. In October of 2019, Nurse Family Partnership celebrated 10 years of outstanding service in Buncombe County.

As of this major milestone, NFP completed nearly 25,000 home visits, supported 660 births, and served over 915 families. According to National NFP headquarters, it is estimated that for every \$1.00 invested in NFP, \$5.70 in tax payer money is saved in potential future costs like Medicaid and other public benefit programs.

### **9 Buncombe County Nurses Achieve NC Distinguished Public Health Nurse Designation**

As part of the 100 Years of the Office of Public Health Nursing in NC, 100 Distinguished Public Health Nurses in North Carolina were announced, and Buncombe County is proud to share that 9 of those 100 recipients are Public Health Nurses in Buncombe County! Selected by a review committee of eight professional peers from across the state, they were chosen from a competitive field of public health nurses whose nominations demonstrate noteworthy evidence of Innovation, Collaboration, Community-Centered Care, or Professionalism in their work setting.

Wendy Young, Sharon Raines, Mary Backlund, Hayley McPeters, Michelle Lee, Cheryl Ramey, Denise Clubb, Susan Creede, and Cindy Runion, all of Buncombe County HHS, were selected as Distinguished Public Health Nurses in North Carolina.



10 Years of Nurse Family Partnership

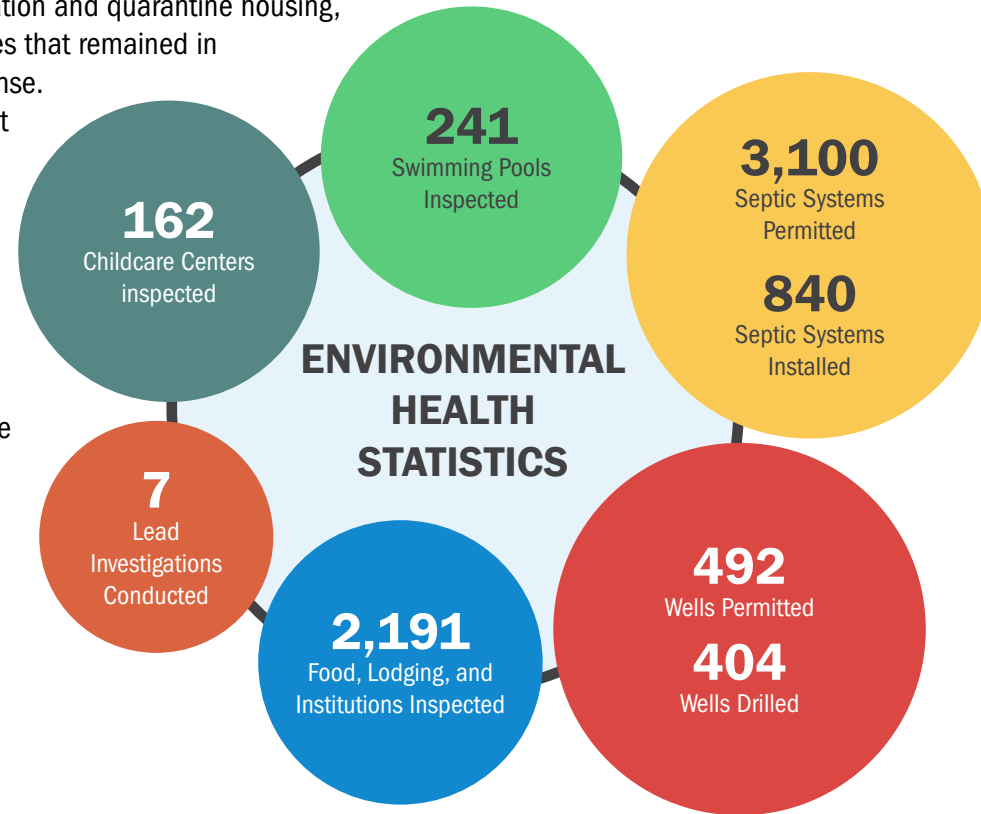


Excellence In Public Health award recipients

## Environmental Health Remains Crucial for Our Community

FY20 was another big year for Environmental Health. Environmental Health's mission is to protect and promote the health of the environment and public through various regulatory and educational activities. Environmental Health staff have played a huge role in the COVID-19 response. The Food & Lodging section of EH participated in visits to long term care facilities, staffing of isolation and quarantine housing, and completed virtual visits of food service facilities that remained in operation at the peak of our county's COVID response.

Environmental Health Staff also jumped in to assist with town hall meetings and community childcare briefings to educate and address those we serve on how to operate according to CDC/NCDHHS guidance during the pandemic and also supported the community through training videos and documents specifically for food service establishments and lodging facilities. An unforeseeable occurrence of increased water usage due to the stay at home orders increased the amount of septic system repair applications.



## Economic Services

The Economic Services division provides essential programs and resources to the residents of Buncombe County. These are federal and state programs that help people with medical care, putting food on the table, and by providing child care assistance so that the parents may work or helping provide those needed child support payments. Most of the programs offered through our division have strict federal and state policies, timelines and quality requirements. The Division consistently meets and exceeds these requirements with exceptional care, compassion and outstanding customer service for the people we serve. As the COVID pandemic reached Buncombe County, we saw a 1,000% increase in Food Assistance applications during March, April and May of 2020. Staff processed these applications on an 9 day average basis.

### Food and Nutrition Services (formerly Food Stamps)

Processed 15,900 applications  
30,875 recipients of assistance as of 6/30/20  
Issued \$42,327,686 in benefits for the year

### Medicaid

Processed 20,979 applications  
50,020 recipients of assistance as of 6/30/20  
\$302,652,631 worth of benefits were processed

### Energy Program

Processed 8,641 applications  
Issued \$1,803,655 in benefits  
Child Care Assistance Vouchers  
Served 17,716 children  
Issued \$10,467,690 worth of assistance

### Child Support

Helped gain support for 6533 children  
Collected \$11,743,385 worth of child support  
Collected an average of \$1950 per order per month

### Front Desk/Call Center

During July 2019 – June 2020 the Call Center took 154,984 calls  
Windows at 40 Coxe saw 38,340 customers

## Delivering Financial Assistance During a Global Pandemic: One Buncombe

To assist families in Buncombe County who lost employment due to COVID-19, the county mobilized very quickly to help families in crisis due to the stay-in-place orders. The Buncombe County Service Foundation raised \$1.375 million from Buncombe County and Asheville City Governments and the community to help individuals and businesses during the early stages of COVID. Economic Services was tasked with distributing the individual assistance portion of these funds. The Economic Services staff pivoted from their already full caseloads to serve almost 4,000 individuals and families during the first two months of COVID with about \$650,000 in assistance. Staff from Income Maintenance, Social Work, and Public Health worked together to provide housing and utility assistance for many families in Buncombe County, helping to offset major life stressors such as avoiding eviction, keeping their kids in virtual learning, and paying their bills when they were not allowed to work.



## Veterans Services

### Serving Our Community in the Veterans Services Program

The Veterans Service Office (VSO) serves veterans and their dependents in Buncombe County by assisting in all aspects of obtaining federal, state and local benefits. This includes monetary benefits, assistance with housing, education, home loan certification, and access to healthcare. Through the efforts and assistance of our office, millions of federal dollars come into Buncombe County on a yearly basis.

In FY20, the Veterans Service Office went through a yearlong transition process to implement a new customer management software that not only provides our office with many more technological capabilities, it has the added benefit of saving the County around \$30,000 yearly.

COVID-19 has presented particular challenges for this client base. The need to ensure the safety of clients required that in-person visits be scaled back. The Veterans Service Office had 15,023 total Veteran contacts in FY20.

## Administration

### The Communications Team

The HHS Communications Team continues to provide an array of important and visible supports to our agency and community. The Communications Team processed hundreds of public information and media requests, assisted with dozens of outreach events from immunization promotion to foster parent recruitment and worked with a range of subject matter experts to convey important health and safety information. This team led the COVID-19 communications response and has been a crucial part of the Emergency Operations Center response by convening community partners through the Joint Information Center to coordinate information sharing and prioritizing language access in all of our important health and safety communications. Many beneficial partnerships have been solidified through this global pandemic, ensuring that language access will remain a priority.

## The Finance Team

The HHS Finance Team authorizes and approves all expenditures out of BCHHS. The HHS Business office monitors the collection of revenues by auditing accounts and clarifying coding of deposits. The team also oversees contract formulation and compliance of approximately 140 HHS contracts and manages payroll for all 570 BCHHS employees.

The HHS Finance Team has served in a variety of roles throughout COVID-19. Not only did they work at testing sites, they have also managed the payments for the additional funding for housing assistance to Citizens. The Operations arm of the Finance Team has also been key in managing HHS infrastructure, tangible workforce resources, logistics, and workforce safety and security throughout COVID-19.

## The Quality and Performance Team

The HHS Quality and Performance Team includes Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement across Social Work, Economic Services and Public Health. A variety of automated tools are used to perform case and program reviews that assess our compliance with state and federal requirements and mandates. Quality Assurance provides a review of work already completed, while Quality Improvement is focused on identifying solutions and implementing changes that improve effective and responsive business operations. Unlike many counties who combine Quality duties with program staff job descriptions, Buncombe HHS has designated subject matter experts who conduct Quality reviews in their respective divisions. This strategy allows a greater depth of review to quickly identify areas in need of increased attention and solutions. The team works closely with their Divisional partners to strengthen our capacity for excellence in service delivery.

During COVID-19, many of the Quality and Performance Team managers and staff quickly pivoted to respond to community needs. The development of a congregate care “ready team”, a community child care workgroup, supportive community partnerships to assure access to food, and assistance to the Communicable Disease team are some examples of how the Quality and Performance team have been integral partners to bolster community resilience during COVID-19.



COVID-19 Testing Site

## Conclusion

FY20 has shown us that we can steer the ship through tumultuous times while being in the moment with our community. The incredible momentum with which we started FY20 has continued to take shape into a multi-faceted response that is responsive and forward leaning. The pandemic has highlighted the fragile balance of health, safety, and opportunity across our communities and has revealed even greater community resilience. FY20 has continued to expose the systemic racism that has perpetuated these health inequities and has given us a framework by which we can apply a laser focus to this issue that causes harm in our community. While this has been a challenging year, BCHHS is moving into FY21 in a dynamic and bold position with stronger relationships, bigger vision, better data, and county-wide strategic priorities as a playbook for action. We look forward to seeing what unfolds in the coming year and fully anticipate being a part of something bigger and better than ever. The strength and dedication of our staff, community partners, and the people of Buncombe County continue to amaze and inspire us in our service and in our commitment to the future of this community.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We appreciate the guidance and support of the County Commissioners, County Manager, and Governing Boards.

### County Commissioners

Brownie Newman (Chairman)

Joe Belcher

Amanda Edwards

Jasmine Beach-Ferrara

Mike Fryar (Deceased)

Anthony Penland

Robert Pressley

Al Whitesides

### Buncombe County Manager

Avril Pinder

### Health and Human Services Board

Frank Castelblanco, Chair

Stephanie Kiser RPh, Vice-Chair

Amanda Edwards

Lucy Lawrence

Steve Valeika

Ken Putnam, PE

Greg Narron

Carol Coulson

Johnnie Grant

Jacquelyn Hallum

Yvette Jives

Rachel Keener

Jim Pitts, PhD

David Thompson

Sonya Greck

Rick Elingburg

Terry VanDuyn

Dan Frayne

## HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES SENIOR LEADERSHIP

### ADMINISTRATION

Stoney Blevins, HHS Director

### PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

Stacie Saunders, Public Health Services Director

### SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

Rebecca Smith, Social Work Services Director

### ECONOMIC SERVICES

Phillip Hardin, Economic Services Director

### BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Lisa White, Business Operations Director

### COMMUNICATIONS

Stacey Wood, Communications Director

### QUALITY PERFORMANCE

Becky Kessel, Quality Performance Director



# 3 EASY WAYS TO CONNECT TO SERVICES

## Visit Our Offices:

40 Coxe Avenue

(Economic Services, Public Health Services, Veterans Services, WIC Services)

339 New Leicester Highway

(WIC Services)

35 Woodfin Street

(Social Work Services)

## Call Us:

Economic Services

(828) 250-5500

Social Work Services

(828) 250-5500

Public Health Services

(828) 250-5000

## Visit Our Webpage:

[www.buncombecounty.org/hhs](http://www.buncombecounty.org/hhs)

