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# Long-Term and Behavioral Health Committee

Recommendations to the North Carolina State Health Coordinating Council

October 4, 2023

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The Long-Term and Behavioral Health Committee (the “Committee”) held its final meeting of the year on September 14, 2023. The following is an overview of the Committee’s recommendations for Long-term Care Facilities and Services, Chapters 10-14, of the *2024 SMFP*.

## **Chapter 10: Nursing Homes**

The Agency received no petitions relating to Nursing Homes.

### ***Data Updates***

There were no significant updates to the tables in this chapter. Application of the methodology currently results in no need determinations.

## **Chapter 11: Adult Care Homes**

The Agency received no petitions relating to Adult Care Homes.

### ***Data Updates***

Application of the adult care home methodology currently results in 150 adult care bed need determinations: 130 beds in Hoke County, and 20 beds in Swain County.

## **Chapter 12: Home Health Services**

The Agency received one petition related to this chapter.

**Coastal Billing and Home Care Services** petitioned for an adjusted need determination for a Medicare-certified home health agency or office in Columbus County. The Agency received one comment in opposition to this petition. The basis of this petition is a concern that there is an unmet need for home health services in Columbus County, especially for those under the age of 17. Coastal Billing and Home Care is not Medicare-certified. Therefore, it cannot provide medical services, and it states it has had to deny both professional and self-referrals for home health services. According to the most recent home health data received by the Agency, Columbus County has a surplus of over 65 patients. The existing home health agencies in the county would need to have served an additional 391 patients during 2022 before the standard methodology generates a need determination for this county. The most recent patient origin data also shows

that agencies serving residents of Columbus County did not serve any patients in the 0-17 age group. Also, there is no data indicating that there are Columbus County residents in this age group who need and are not receiving home health services. Further, statewide, individuals under the age of 17 who utilize Medicare-certified home health services account for less than one percent of all home health patients. The Committee concurred with the Agency's recommendation to deny the petition.

### ***Data Updates***

The application of the methodology results in a need determination for one new Medicare-certified home health agency or office in Cleveland County.

### **Chapter 13: Hospice Services**

The Agency received one petition related to this chapter.

**Heart and Soul Hospice of the Carolinas** requested an adjusted need determination for one hospice home care office in Mecklenburg County, focused on serving historically underserved racial and ethnic minority populations. The Agency received 21 comments by the August 9<sup>th</sup> deadline for comments. Ten comments were in support of the petition and 11 were in opposition. According to the Petition, Heart and Soul operates two hospice home care agencies outside of North Carolina that provide culturally appropriate hospice care for underserved racial and ethnic minority populations. The Petitioner believes the culturally competent type of care they provide is needed in Mecklenburg County. There are nine licensed hospice agencies in Mecklenburg County, and during the 2022 data year, there were a total of 28 facilities consisting of 26 licensed hospice agencies and 2 hospitals that provided hospice services to the residents of the county. All hospice home care offices, inpatient facilities, and hospitals that provide hospice services are eligible to provide hospice home care services. According to the Petitioner, the hospice home care methodology does not account for the unique circumstances in Mecklenburg County, particularly population growth and aging among the minority population. The Agency thoroughly reviewed population demographics for both the County and State. The methodology for the 2024 SMFP projects for the year 2025. According to 2025 population estimates, the proportion Mecklenburg's population that identifies as Black will be 9% greater than the analogous segment of the State's population. Other minority populations combined also represent a greater share of the County's total population as compared to similar groups for the State overall. Statewide, the 65 and older population accesses hospice services more frequently than any other age group. Unlike the general population, this age group is projected to have a smaller representation of minority populations in Mecklenburg as compared to the State. In fact, Mecklenburg County's median population age is more than four years younger than that of the State's overall. The Agency Report indicates that Mecklenburg County's admissions rate for hospice care for all minorities was slightly higher at 64% as compared to the State's admission rate of 63%. These figures conflated ethnicity and race. When ethnicity alone is considered, non-Hispanic minorities

were admitted to hospice care at a rate of 97% in Mecklenburg as compared to the State's rate of 98%. When race is examined separately, the admissions rate to hospice care in Mecklenburg for all racial minorities was slightly higher at 28% as compared to the State's rate of 25%. The Agency's analysis also demonstrates that the age group that most frequently accesses hospice services is projected to be less dominant in the Mecklenburg service area and that existing hospice facilities in Mecklenburg County serve a percentage of minority individuals similar to the percentages served statewide. The Agency recommended denial of the Petition, and the Committee denied the Petition by a vote four to two. Two Committee members abstained from voting.

### ***Data Updates***

Application of the methodologies currently results in no need determinations for hospice home care agencies and hospice inpatient beds.

### **Chapter 14: Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities**

The Agency received one data update to this chapter: two new group homes will be added in Forsyth County by transferring beds from an existing facility. There is no need determination methodology for these beds.

### **Recommendations Related to All Chapters**

The Committee recommends approval of Chapters 10 through 14: Long-term Care Facilities and Services to the State Health Coordinating Council, with the understanding that staff is authorized to continue making necessary updates to the narratives, tables, and need determinations.