

Division of Health Service Regulation

STATEMENT OF DEFICIENCIES AND PLAN OF CORRECTION	(X1) PROVIDER/SUPPLIER/CLIA IDENTIFICATION NUMBER:  <b>MHL095-046</b>	(X2) MULTIPLE CONSTRUCTION A. BUILDING: _____  B. WING _____	(X3) DATE SURVEY COMPLETED  <b>06/17/2021</b>
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NAME OF PROVIDER OR SUPPLIER  <b>STEPPING STONE OF BOONE</b>	STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE <b>643 L GREENWAY ROAD BOONE, NC 28607</b>
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(X4) ID PREFIX TAG	SUMMARY STATEMENT OF DEFICIENCIES (EACH DEFICIENCY MUST BE PRECEDED BY FULL REGULATORY OR LSC IDENTIFYING INFORMATION)	ID PREFIX TAG	PROVIDER'S PLAN OF CORRECTION (EACH CORRECTIVE ACTION SHOULD BE CROSS-REFERENCED TO THE APPROPRIATE DEFICIENCY)	(X5) COMPLETE DATE
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V 000	<p><b>INITIAL COMMENTS</b></p> <p>A Complaint Survey was completed on June 17, 2021. The complaint was substantiated (Intake #NC00170140). A deficiency was cited. The census at the facility as of June 16, 2021 was 322 clients.</p> <p>This facility is licensed for the following service category:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10A NCAC 27G .3600: Outpatient Opioid Treatment</li> </ul>	V 000	<p><b>DHSR - Mental Health</b></p> <p><b>JUL 9 2021</b></p> <p><b>Lic. &amp; Cert. Section</b></p>	
V 235	<p><b>27G .3603 (A-C) Outpt. Opiod Tx. - Staff</b></p> <p><b>10A NCAC 27G .3603 STAFF</b></p> <p>(a) A minimum of one certified drug abuse counselor or certified substance abuse counselor to each 50 clients and increment thereof shall be on the staff of the facility. If the facility falls below this prescribed ratio, and is unable to employ an individual who is certified because of the unavailability of certified persons in the facility's hiring area, then it may employ an uncertified person, provided that this employee meets the certification requirements within a maximum of 26 months from the date of employment.</p> <p>(b) Each facility shall have at least one staff member on duty trained in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) drug abuse withdrawal symptoms; and</li> <li>(2) symptoms of secondary complications to drug addiction.</li> </ol> <p>(c) Each direct care staff member shall receive continuing education to include understanding of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) nature of addiction;</li> <li>(2) the withdrawal syndrome;</li> <li>(3) group and family therapy; and</li> <li>(4) infectious diseases including HIV,</li> </ol>	V 235		

Division of Health Service Regulation  
LABORATORY DIRECTOR'S OR PROVIDER/SUPPLIER REPRESENTATIVE'S SIGNATURE *Diana M...* TITLE *Program Director* (X6) DATE *7/1/21*

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V 235	<p>Continued From page 1</p> <p>sexually transmitted diseases and TB.</p> <p>This Rule is not met as evidenced by: Based on interview and record review, the facility failed to maintain the required number of staff, which was a minimum of one drug abuse counselor to each 50 clients. The findings are:</p> <p>Review on 6-16-21 of the client and staff census list provided by the facility revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 active substance abuse counselors</li> <li>- 322 current clients</li> <li>- a ratio of 64 clients for each substance abuse counselor</li> </ul> <p>Interview on 6-16-21 with former staff #1 revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the only time his caseload was below 50 clients was when he first began his employment there and was "ramping up"</li> <li>- after that, his caseload size was usually between 60 and 90 clients</li> <li>- the average number he carried on his caseload was approximately 65</li> </ul> <p>Interview on 6-16-21 with another former employee who requested to remain anonymous revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When they left employment with the facility, within the last 12 months, their caseload averaged 100 clients</li> <li>- "we were all burned out"</li> </ul>	V 235	<p>Stepping Stone acknowledges being out of compliance with the rule requiring a 1:50 counselor to patient ratio. What is not evidenced in this report are the documented efforts to adhere to this rule or steps taken to hire qualified staff in a rural area.</p> <p>Stepping Stone has multiple adds out for employment of counselors and has spent close to \$10,000 this year in an attempt to hire qualified candidates. Stepping Stone has utilized hiring bonuses to attract candidates and assists with moving expenses to relocate.</p> <p>Stepping Stone is also researching measures to increase staff retention including benefit increases, retention bonuses, and workforce development.</p> <p>Stepping Stone will continue to hire and fill vacant counselor positions as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Stepping Stone needs guidance from the State Opioid Treatment Authority and DHSR in reference to maintaining compliance of a 1:50 counselor to patient ratio in the face of increased demand for treatment in addition to Medicaid/State requirements which stipulate quick access to care, ie. not turning people away from treatment.</p>	<p>7/1/21</p> <p>6/14/21</p> <p>8/16/21</p> <p>8/1/21</p>

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V 235	<p>Continued From page 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- potential clients were never turned away due to not having enough counselors on staff</li> <li>- "If there was money to be made, they (new clients) were allowed to come into the program"</li> </ul> <p>Interview on 6-16-21 with staff #3 revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- she was aware it was supposed to be no more than 50 clients for each counselor</li> <li>- she had not had 50 or less clients in, "at least a year and a half ago"</li> <li>- her current caseload size was 62 clients</li> <li>- "It ' s been that way, up and down for about a year now."</li> <li>- "I ' m hoping it ' ll go down soon."</li> </ul> <p>Interview on 6-17-21 with the Program Director/Chief Executive Officer revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- he understood the facility was out of ratio for counselors to the number of clients</li> <li>- he only identified 5 substance abuse counselors who worked with clients</li> <li>- he was aware there was supposed to be no more than 50 clients on each counselor's caseload</li> <li>- it was difficult to find and hire staff to fill vacant counselor positions</li> </ul>	V 235		