New Alliance name reflects changing NC healthcare landscape

Alliance Behavioral Healthcare is now Alliance Health! The new name will be incorporated gradually into Alliance’s informational materials and media over the next few weeks.

“Alliance Health better reflects our future in North Carolina’s public healthcare landscape,” said Alliance CEO Rob Robinson. “It speaks to the integrated whole-person care – physical, behavioral and pharmacy – that we will be providing for the individuals we serve.”

As part of Medicaid transformation, over the next few years North Carolina will create two new kinds of health plans that will serve most Medicaid and NC Health Choice beneficiaries, including individuals currently served by the state’s LME/MCOs. These plans will be referred to as Standard Plans and Tailored Plans.

Standard Plans will provide physical and behavioral healthcare, along with pharmacy services, to people with lower-intensity behavioral health needs. The current timeline calls for Standard Plans to take effect in late 2019 through early 2020.

Tailored Plans will serve people with more severe mental illnesses, substance use disorders, and long-term needs including intellectual/developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury. The Tailored Plans will provide integrated physical health, behavioral health, and pharmacy services to their members. Alliance Health anticipates being chosen to operate a Tailored Plan. The current timeline calls for Tailored Plans to take effect in mid-2021.

According to Robinson, there will be no changes in the Alliance provider network associated with the name change, and people’s contacts at Alliance are not changing. “It’s important that our members and other stakeholders understand that for now, all that is changing is our name. We just don’t want folks to be confused if they see or hear both names for a little while.”

Individuals will receive full information about future changes regarding their health plan well in advance of those changes. More information about Medicaid transformation is available on the NC Department of Health and Human Services website at ncdhhs.gov/assistance/medicaid-transformation.
Alliance Community Relations becomes Community Health and Well-Being

The Community Relations Department at Alliance has a new name – Community Health and Well-Being.

We’re making this change to better reflect the future of healthcare delivery in our region and across the country. We’ll be combining an emphasis on community outreach and clinical interventions to tell the whole story of the people we serve and their families in a more complete way.

“We hope the realignment of this department helps create pathways for people to have the life they want and deserve, which is the essence of what Medicaid transformation is trying to do,” said Alliance Senior Vice president--Community Relations Ann Oshel.

We are paying special attention to the critical role that the “social determinants of health” play in the lives of our members. When we refer to social determinants of health we are talking about all the factors – social, environmental, cultural and physical – that people are born into and influenced by throughout their lifetimes, which can have a measurable impact on their health.

The Community Health and Well-Being Department at Alliance is focused on more fully integrating physical and behavioral health, which is squarely aligned with our state’s vision for public healthcare in the coming years. We’re also placing an increased emphasis on population health – a concept that moves from focusing on people at an individual level to achieve greater impact by addressing a range of factors shown to impact the health of whole population groups.

The primary focus areas of Community Health and Well-Being are:

• Promoting quality partnerships and collaborative change
• Re-designing systems of care to improve health outcomes and promote healthy communities
• Improving quality of life for all the people we serve, helping them understand their health care better, and giving them tools and resources to actively engage in their care
• Connecting people to social and community supports that enhance recovery and well-being.

Alliance staff move into new home office in Morrisville

Alliance has moved into a new home office located at 5200 West Paramount Parkway, Suite 200, in Perimeter Park in Morrisville. Staff from the Emperor Boulevard facility, along with those previously housed in our Durham community office, made the move in December and January, and staff at the Wake community office will move to the new location late in the first half of 2019.

This consolidation will result in significant cost savings for Alliance, and will substantially enhance staff ability to collaborate with each other – an Alliance core value – anticipated to result in increased organizational efficiency and productivity. The new Paramount Parkway facility provides the additional work space and expanded training and meeting rooms made necessary by Alliance’s growth over the past few years.

Over the coming months Alliance plans to establish space in Durham and Wake counties for care reviews and partner meetings in strategic locations chosen to be convenient and accessible to the people we serve and collaborate with.

“Alliance is built on a foundation of relationships with our community partners, and we are committed with this staff move to both retain our community presence in Wake and Durham and to deliver even more value to all of our stakeholders,” said Alliance CEO Rob Robinson.

Alliance will continue to operate its Cumberland community office on Executive Place in Fayetteville and its Smithfield office on N. Brightleaf Boulevard.
Alliance TBI Care Coordinator Beth Callahan provided us with this story of an individual with traumatic brain injury who has successfully entered the TBI Waiver program.

TD sustained a traumatic brain injury and was hospitalized for several months, after which it was recommended he receive 24-hour care going forward. His medical team consulted with psychiatry, and social workers consulted with Alliance in regards to obtaining services through the TBI Waiver.

TD’s sister, who stepped up as his legally responsible person, faced many obstacles in arranging for his ongoing care, but she and TD’s daughter left no stone unturned. TD was approved for Medicaid in Wake County and placed on the TBI Waiver Interest Registry. As his physical recovery progressed, the effects from the TBI became more and more prominent. His sister rose to the challenge by educating herself, and through her advocacy and timing, TD was able to receive one-time funding for individuals with TBI through the DMH/DD/SAS and was admitted to a group home in December. TD has been approved for the first round of the TBI Waiver and has been allocated a slot.

In an email to Callahan, TD’s sister wrote:

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you did to get my brother placed at [the group home]. I will always remember and be grateful for your compassion, expertise and commitment to help my brother (and I’m sure so many others) and I appreciate y’all more than words can express. Although at first I questioned the wisdom of my rather impulsive decision to bring him home from [the hospital] (one of the more challenging seasons of my life), I later came to see his time with us as an important ‘next step’ in his recovery as he made significant gains socially, physically and cognitively in the three weeks he spent with my family, which ultimately helped prepare him for group home living.

“I now understand that recovery from TBI is a marathon (not a sprint); is more dynamic than linear; and involves a village of caring, committed people such as yourselves. Though you folks may not always be recognized for the important work you do, never underestimate the power you possess to positively influence the lives of those you serve. You guys rock!”

The team that assisted TD and his family included complex care social work, care coordination, DSS adult Medicaid, the TBI state director with the NCDHHS Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services Division, the provider and Alliance Provider Networks department staff.

Care Coordination Makes Successful Connection

Two friends, helped by an Alliance Care Coordinator, found a successful connection for living independently on their own terms. Read more at the Monarch website.
Hank Debnam, who has served as Alliance’s Cumberland site director since 2013, retired in December after a 44-year career working to improve healthcare access for the people of Cumberland County. “His outgoing personality and his obvious empathy for the vulnerable population that many of us here today serve, have made Hank a much beloved fixture here in Cumberland County and beyond,” said Alliance CEO Rob Robinson. “I’ll always appreciate the very significant role that Hank played in developing the working relationship between Cumberland County Mental Health and a new company called Alliance Behavioral Healthcare back in 2012,” Robinson said. “His support and positive attitude back then were extremely important in helping this community embrace the prospect of a new company managing their public behavioral health services, and I can’t say enough about his leadership role here among our Cumberland staff and partner organizations in the years since.”

Hank is a native of Raleigh and a graduate of Broughton High School. He received his undergraduate degree from St. Augustine’s College, where he was on the dean’s list, president of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, captain of the track and field team and most outstanding athlete from Hank obtained his master’s degree in public health in 1974 from the University of North Carolina School of Public Health. Since then, he has spent his 44-year career in the field of public healthcare with an emphasis on providing equal and affordable access to quality physical and mental healthcare for all citizens.

From 1980 to 1993 he was the executive director and CEO for Stedman-Wade Health Services, a community medical and dental center serving southeastern North Carolina still in operation today. From 1994 to 1996 he was assistant administrator for Cape Fear Valley Medical Center, with responsibility for the management and oversight of seven hospital-owned physician’s offices. Hank first became involved with Cumberland County Mental Health as a board member in 1989. He served on the board for six years, including two years as chairman.

In 1996, Cumberland County Mental Health Director Tom Miriello convinced Hank serve as his deputy area director. Hank worked under Tom for the next six years and upon Tom’s retirement in 2002, Hank was named area director and CEO of Cumberland County Mental Health, where he directed a staff of 400 mental health and substance abuse professionals providing services to the fifth largest metropolitan area in the state.

Hank remained in this position until Cumberland County Mental Health was divested to Alliance Behavioral Healthcare as part of mental health reform in 2013, when Hank became Alliance’s Cumberland site director.

In addition to his healthcare career, Hank also had a parallel career with the North Carolina Army National Guard, where he served with distinction as a soldier and musician until his retirement after more than 30 years of service.

Hank also served in many community positions in the community, including bank boards, the airport commission and Partnership for Children to Methodist University.
First responder partnerships build community bridges

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training teaches police and other first responders how to recognize and respond appropriately to individuals in behavioral health crisis so that they may de-escalate dangerous situations and refer individuals, when appropriate, to treatment instead of emergency departments or jail. Along with Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for first responders and other community members, CIT is a foundation for Alliance’s longstanding commitment to improving safety and health in our communities.

Data analysis shows reduced recidivism

Along with the goals of reducing arrests for non-violent individuals with behavioral health concerns and increasing their engagement with behavioral health treatment, one of the desired outcomes of CIT training is to reduce recidivism, or rearrests.

Nicole Schramm-Sapyta, PhD, Chief Operating Officer for the Duke Institute for Brain Sciences and Assistant Professor of the Practice as well as recipient of the 2018 Durham CIT Volunteer of the Year award, decided to see if it was working. She worked with teams from Duke Bass Connections brain & Society and Duke Data+ to analyze county jail data from 2002, five years before CIT began in Durham, to 2017.

“What we see is that in the five years before CIT was instituted in Durham, recidivism was on the rise slightly,” Dr. Schramm-Sapyta said. “During the first five years after CIT came into existence recidivism, started to level off. And then in the most recent five years when CIT was really growing stronger, recidivism has fallen sharply.”

While the data can only show the correlation of dropping recidivism with the growth of CIT and does not prove causation, Dr. Schramm-Sapyta said the results are exciting.

She said one surprising finding is that the decrease in recidivism included all citizens, not just those with mental health or substance use issues.

“Because of these partnerships and their progress over the years, we are doing things we could never have done on our own by using first responders as our allies to help people get services when they need them and keeping them out of emergency departments and jails.” --Ann Oshel, Alliance Senior VP-Community Health and Well-Being

Honored at the Durham CIT banquet were, top row, from left: Leonard White, PhD, Bass Connections Brain & Society; Paul Bendich, PhD, Duke Data Plus; Durham Tech Community College Security Officer Leslie Scott; Durham County Sheriff Office Deputy Raheem A. Aleem; and Durham Police Department Officer John Wagstaff. Bottom row, from left: Durham County Telecommunicator Stefanie Appel; Beverly Carter, accepting the Heart of CIT award for her late husband, NCCU Police Department Captain Alvin “AJ” Carter; Nicole Schramm-Sapyta, PhD, Duke Institute for Brain Sciences; Emergency Medical Services Medic David R. Chatfield; and Durham County Sheriff Office Detention Officer Alishia S. Harris-Moore.

17th Johnston Co. CIT class graduates

Is Alliance Health a whole new company?
No, it is the same company you’ve known for years as Alliance Behavioral Healthcare. This is just a name change.

Why the name change in the first place?
As Alliance approaches its future operating a Tailored Plan in North Carolina (see information below), we recognize the importance of having our name more accurately reflect the integrated whole-person care – physical, behavioral and pharmacy – we will be providing to our members.

Does Alliance Health have the same provider network as Alliance Behavioral Healthcare?
Yes, there are no provider network changes associated with this name change.

Do I have a different care coordinator or other contact person at Alliance Health?
No, your contacts at Alliance Health do not change due to the name change.

Will anything happen to any services that have been authorized for me?
No, nothing.

What will change down the road as part of Medicaid Transformation in North Carolina?
As part of Medicaid Transformation, over the next few years our state will create two new kinds of health plans that will serve most Medicaid and NC Health Choice beneficiaries, including individuals currently served by our state’s LME/MCOs. These plans will be referred to as Standard Plans and Tailored Plans.

What is a Standard Plan and who will it serve?
Standard Plans will serve the majority of Medicaid and NC Health Choice beneficiaries, providing physical and behavioral healthcare, along with pharmacy services, to people with lower intensity behavioral health needs. The current timeline calls for Standard Plans to take effect in late 2019 through early 2020.

What is a Tailored Plan and who will it serve?
Tailored Plans will serve people with more severe mental illnesses, substance use disorders, and long-term needs including intellectual/developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injury. The Tailored Plans will provide integrated physical health, behavioral health, and pharmacy services to their members. Alliance Health anticipates being chosen to operate a Tailored Plan. The current timeline calls for Tailored Plans to take effect in mid-2021.

How will people be notified of these Medicaid Transformation changes?
Individuals will receive full information about future changes regarding their health plan well in advance of those changes.

More information about Medicaid transformation is available on the NC Department of Health and Human Services website at www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/medicaid-transformation.

We invite you to explore A Vision to Lead: Thought Leadership at Alliance: alliancebhc.org/thought-leadership.
In the last quarter, the Alliance CARES initiative focused staff awareness on people experiencing homelessness.

An estimated 27,800 people experienced homelessness in North Carolina in 2018, which is up 3.4% from 2017, according to the NC Coalition to End Homelessness.

People experiencing homelessness often face worse health outcomes because of poor living conditions, food insecurity and limited resources for self-care.

CARES organizers planned volunteer opportunities and other events to educate Alliance staff about this important issue and involve them in our communities.

Activities included a winter wear drive at the home office, volunteering with holiday meal events in Cumberland County, and preparing and delivering bag lunches for people experiencing homelessness in Johnston County.

Next quarter’s CARES topic will be poverty.
Alliance Transitions to Community Living In-Reach Program Supervisor Anna Mulhollem spoke about her journey with mental illness and recovery at the NC Providers Council Conference. “Had TCL been an option for me, maybe my life would not have had to take an almost fatal turn,” Mulhollem said. “I was lucky to have a provider ignite, encourage and feed that spark of hope. And now I carry that flame fueled by my own experience to those we serve.”

Alliance housing team connects with community at PIT Count and Bull City Connect

In January, Alliance participated in the National HUD Point-In-Time Count and the Bull City Connect event in Durham. The Connect event invited our neighbors experiencing homelessness to come into the suites at Durham Bulls Athletic Park for breakfast, shower, dentist, service connections, human connections, resources and lunch.

Alliance Health led the housing committee this year and staffed two suites inside the DBAP where we could meet our neighbors, determine any service needs and schedule future service connections.

Alliance Resources

Discover Recovery University, the online training gateway that allows users to register for all Alliance trainings (online and in-person), including Mental Health First Aid.

The It’s Time to Re-Think campaign aims to debunk the common myths and misconceptions about people with mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual/developmental disabilities that create stigma and keep them from getting the help they need.

Alliance InTouch is a newsletter for the employees and community of Alliance Behavioral Healthcare. Please send comments and suggestions about this publication and its contents to Lisa Brockmeier: lbrockmeier@alliancebhc.org.

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