



Transforming Lives. Building Community Well-Being.

**Southern Regional Advisory Board (SRAB)  
Meeting Minutes from May 22, 2025  
Meeting: In-Person/WebEx  
Trillium Office (1100 Seven Lakes Dr, West End)**

**Members Present**

**In Person:** Chair Commissioner Rob Zapple, Commissioner Nick Picerno, Commissioner Kirk Smith

**Virtual:** Marie Britt, Commissioner Marty Cooke, Walter Ferguson, Mary Ann Furniss, Steven Later, Carol McCall, Jackie McLean, Commissioner Wixie Stephens, Julie Varnam, Commissioner Duke Williams

**Members Absent:** Commissioner Lavern Coleman, Commissioner Ray Britt, Dr. Mollie Glenn, Commissioner James Leach, Jerome McMillian, David Stanley

**Trillium Staff:** Cecelia Peers-Regional Vice President (Southern), Terrell Alston-Associate Regional Vice President, Sandra Dunlap-Administrative Coordinator/Recorder (Southern)

**NCDHHS Staff:** None present.

**Guests:** Autumn Smith-Director Community Supports (Lee County)

**I. Call to Order:** Vice Chair Commissioner Cooke called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and welcomed members to the Southern Regional Advisory Board meeting and asked Sandra Dunlap to administer the roll call.

**II. Adoption of the Agenda:** Vice Chair Commissioner Cooke asked for a motion to approve the May agenda. Walter Ferguson motioned to accept the agenda; Commissioner Picerno seconded the motion, the motion carried.

**III. Approval of March Minutes:** Vice Chair Commissioner Cooke asked for a motion to approve the March minutes. Mary Ann Furniss motioned to accept minutes as written; Jackie McLean seconded the motion, the motion carried.

#### **IV. Public Comment:** None

**V. Lee County R.E.N.E.W.:** Autumn Smith shared a presentation on R.E.N.E.W. (Resources for Eliminating barriers, creating New Beginnings, and providing Education for an enhanced Well-being)

- An overview of behavioral health reimbursement, initiative goals (health, opioid use disorder reduction, and re-entry), and the program's progress was shared with advisory board members.
- Presentation attached to the minutes.

👤 Marie Britt asked when someone is released from incarceration is there a certain amount of time which Medicaid pays for medical needs.

- Ms. Smith answered there are in house services and case management to assist those re-entering with preparing paperwork for Medicaid and given referrals for mental health counseling and support groups prior to release.
- Commissioner Smith added Lee County received a grant for micro transit from the State to assist with transportation. The jail chaplain works with inmates who are veterans to release them on the 29th day and re-admit the next day to keep their VA healthcare benefits.

👤 Commissioner Cooke asked if the counties know about the release and re-admit?

- Ms. Smith replied other counties allow the VA to come in and work through issues with inmates.

Commissioner Smith thanked Cecelia Peers for reaching out to have the R.E.N.E.W. presentation brought the advisory board.

**VI. Bylaws Update and Vote:** Cecelia Peers provided bylaws update to the advisory board.

Ms. Peers stated that the bylaws were shared at the last meeting and that feedback exchange was since discussed. One change was made to the bylaws to include a CFAC chair or designee to serve on the advisory board. No additional changes and a vote is in order.

Chair Zapple asked for a motion to vote on the revised bylaws. Commissioner Marty Cooke motioned to vote for approval of the bylaws; Jackie McLean seconded; the motion carried.

A vote was taken of board members present. None opposed. The bylaws were officially adopted.

Board Member Name	Aye/Yes	Nay/No
Chair Commissioner Zapple	X	
Marie Britt	X	
Commissioner Marty Cooke	X	
Walter Ferguson	X	
Mary Ann Furniss	X	
Carol McCall	X	
Jackie McLean	X	
Commissioner Nick Picerno	X	
Commissioner Smith	X	
Commissioner Wixie Stephens	X	
Julie Varnam	X	
Commissioner Duke Williams	X	

**VII. Governing Board Report:** Walter Ferguson gave the latest report.

- Budget review and vote upcoming.
- The board received training from DHHS.
- Financials and compliance are in good standing.

**VIII. Southern Region CFAC Report:** Mary Ann Furniss reported on the April and May SR-CFAC meetings.


- The Southern Regional CFAC now consists of 14 members (1 Bladen, 3 Brunswick, 1 Hoke, 1 Lee, 3 Moore, 1 New Hanover, 4 Robeson). Columbus and Scotland counties are not yet represented.

- Monica Graham was voted in as a member in April. She is a parent of an adult child with Autism and is actively involved in support for Autism and founded the Robeson County Autism Society which she chaired. She also serves as a chairperson of the ARC of Robeson County.
- At the April meeting the committee had a presentation on Accessible Playgrounds.
- Committee members have attended Re-Entry Simulations.
- At the May meeting Frank Messina of the South Central CFAC encouraged committee members to join the Trillium Global Quality Improvement Committee.
- Megan Nelligan presented the TULA (Trillium Ultimate Living Assistant).
- Terrell Alston-Associate Regional Vice President worked with all five CFACs to adopt bylaws and develop a relational agreement with the Governing Board.

**IX. Trillium Regional Vice President Report:** Cecelia Peers reported on organizational and regional efforts.

- The Member and Recipient Service Line has seen call volume increase from February 12,527 to March 13,428. The call center time to answer has dropped to 9 seconds, meeting state expectations. The goal is to have a percentage of calls answered in 30 seconds to reach 95% and this is the first month since TP launch that we have reached that goal.
- Governing Board will have a budget workshop June 10 during the i2i conference with a WebEx option; a link is available to those who want to attend.
- Road Map to Ready is a disaster preparedness plan for members and providers. Providers are required to have a disaster plan submitted to Trillium. Internal and external Care management staff are responsible for checking in with members and discussing their unique needs.
- DHHS has a health information exchange for providers to submit required health data for tracking outcomes. Realtime data engagement that can be used to better coordinate care.
- DHHS is launching the Child and Health Specialty Plan for those in Foster Care at the beginning of December. They have partnered with Blue Cross and Blue Shield for basic behavioral health, enhanced, and residential services that Tailored Plans are covering.
- Cecelia has completed 7 of 9 annual presentations to county commissioners. These include annual initiatives, catchment wide and local data, budget information. Scotland County is scheduled for 6/2 and New Hanover scheduled for June 16.

- May is mental health awareness month. The State has funded a SOMETHINGS app connecting teens to mental health peer support. State and local level of the National Alliance for Mental Illness include advocacy and information sharing across the state and local chapters with offer support groups and programs around mental health recovery for adults and youth.
- The State has launched additional support using Telehealth as a model to support schools who do not have a robust school-based therapy.
- i2i Spring Conference is scheduled for June 10-11 in Raleigh.
- Benchmarks "Destination 2025" Conference will be held 10/14-10/17 in Cherokee NC.
- Trillium continues its work around mental health parity in compliance with the Mental Health and the Addiction Equity Act. Trillium must be fully compliant by January 2026. Under this act prior authorization requirements have gone away or changed. The network is partially open to providers to offer those services.
- Attend app is being offered to families for behavioral support for children with Autism, ADHD, and IDD.
- A brief provider survey is being conducted in May to assure we are meeting the needs of our providers. Monthly provider forums are being held with a Q & A session that is posted online for provider reference.
- City of Raeford received a big check for the inclusive playground. Scotland will receive their big check June 2.
- Suicide Prevention and PTSD Awareness on June 26 in Wilmington at the Government Center and the event is free to the public.
- The DHHS Department of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities has launched a benefits 101 webpage and toolkit to help people who receive SSI and SSDI to understand the amount of work they can do and continue receiving benefits. The webpage has earnings benefit information and other informative materials to better understand the employment concept. The 1915i waiver services IPSSE also comes with benefits navigation.

 Chair Commissioner Zapple referred to the Tailored Plan Operations Report and asked about the quality management number of complaints received.

- Ms. Peers answered that complaints can be against providers regarding services, expectations, and all are related to members that have Medicaid versus members who are in our State funded plan.

Chair Commissioner Zapple reminded board members that if they hear of members who are having concerns to utilize the complaint process. Ms. Peers shared the website and Member and Recipient Service Line are ways to access the process.

Members often hesitate to file a complaint out of fear the provider will be reprimanded and/or the service may cease, however, Trillium's goal is to provide supports to providers so they can improve their service for members.

🌱 Chair Commissioner Zapple asked if veterans are being included in the Suicide Prevention and PTSD on June 26?

- Ms. Peers answered, yes veterans are being included, and flyers are being sent to the entire network that includes veterans.

Chair Commissioner Zapple offered his assistance in reaching out to veterans if board members have difficulty with contact.

#### **X. Board Comments/Concerns:**

- Mary Ann Furniss expressed concern over funding cuts.
  - Commissioner Picerno asked how providers are held accountable for contracted services and recovery outcomes.
  - Julie Varnam offered gratitude to Trillium for providing sponsorship for Sold Out Youth Program. The program is centered around prevention of fentanyl poisoning by increasing awareness. A reduction in poisoning of students is notable.
  - Commissioner Williams mentioned that it is budget season and Scotland County in collaboration with Trillium is addressing emotional and behavioral issues within the community and school system.
  - Chair Commissioner Zapple shared that budget season is well underway in New Hanover County and to avoid dramatic cuts to school system, libraries, Sheriff's department, and museums the board is considering ways to offset property revaluation with tax cuts.
  - Carol McCall stated she is looking forward to the accessible playground coming to Scotland County.
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- Cecelia Peers answered Commissioner Picerno that Trillium has Contract Vendor Managers to oversee provider contracted services and Trillium's contractual deliverables are to the State and how the vendors are responsible for doing that. Internal processes for tracking concerns, resolutions, and timelines.

Trillium has quality measures to follow up with those hospitalized to see if they are receiving follow-ups within 7 or 30 days, or a return to the hospital. HEDIS (Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set) measures are used to track preventive testing and visiting their physicians.

- Terrell Alston added that Trillium has a provider monitoring team that assures providers are providing services according to their contracts and their documentation is accurate.

**XI. Regional VP Annual Evaluation (closed session):**

Trillium staff excused themselves from the meeting and the advisory board commenced with the evaluation process.

**XII. Adjournment:** Commissioner Smith motioned to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Cooke seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed. The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandra Dunlap, Administrative Coordinator



Commissioner Rob Zapple, Chair

