

# From Cherokee to Currituck: North Carolina Communities Speak



# Calling North Carolina Home



# Communities Speak – We Listen



At Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC), improving the health and well-being of our customers and communities is at the heart of all we do.

**And we won't stop until  
health care is better for all.**

Our vision is to build relationships with key state agencies, organizations and leaders.

Why? To connect, convene and leverage these relationships to serve our members and our state.

# How We're Listening



- County Engagement Team
- Retail and Corporate Centers
- Healthy Blue Community Relations
- Extra Miles Tour

# County Engagement Team



Making a positive impact in counties across North Carolina

Members of the Blue Cross NC County Engagement team work across the state in pursuit of better community health – connecting local leaders with like-minded people and organizations to further local efforts.

## Advancing Local Efforts

- Listening to local voices who are the experts on their community
- Advocating for areas that have been historically underserved
- Supporting change in communities that are working to improve overall health and well-being
- Creating ways to connect, align and promote initiatives already underway



# County Engagement Team



Making a positive impact in counties across North Carolina

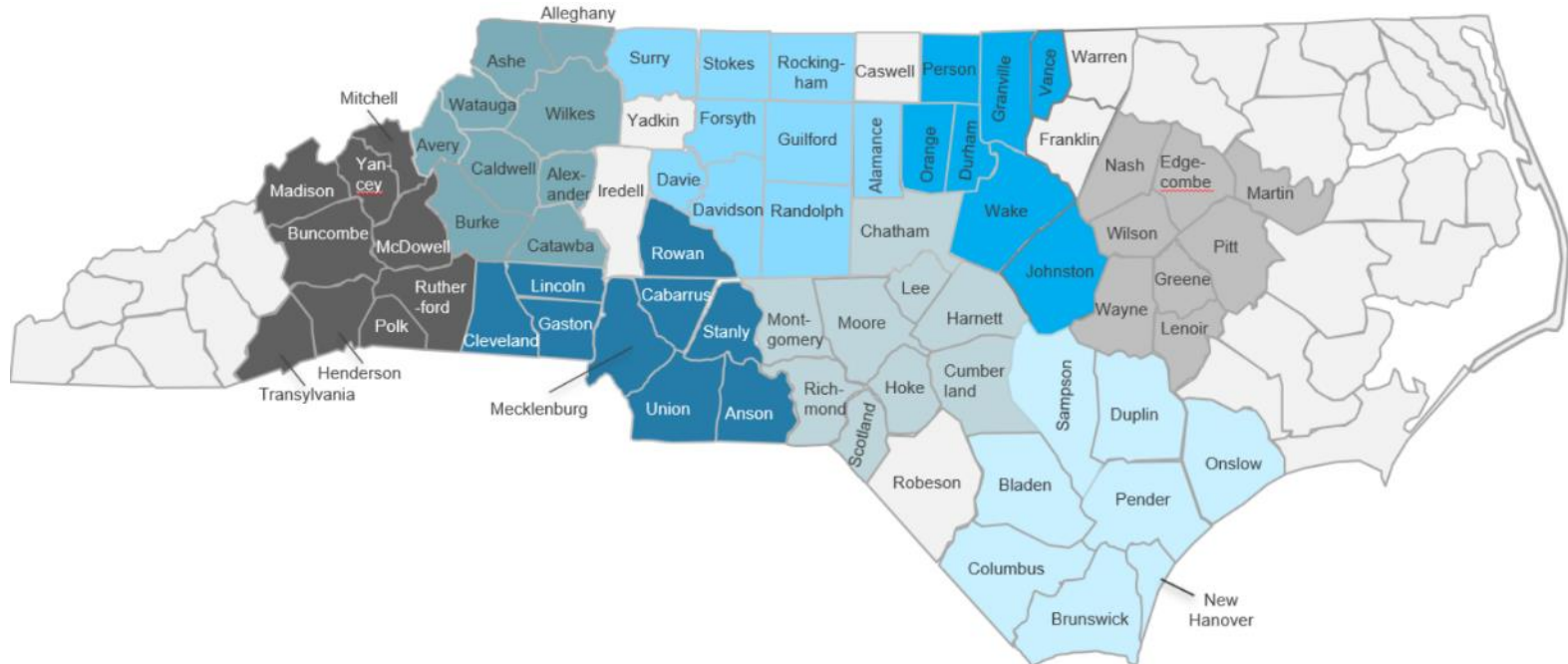


## Our Approach

- Connecting with local leaders and community members to develop a unique understanding of the community dynamics
- Thinking in terms of whole-person health with a focus on the drivers of health that lead to healthy individuals and healthy communities
- Offering solutions tailored to help meet the community health needs of each county – whether it's food security, access to care, affordable housing or another challenge

# Counties Covered by Territory Managers

We plan to be in all 100 counties by the end of 2023.



# Corporate and Retail Centers

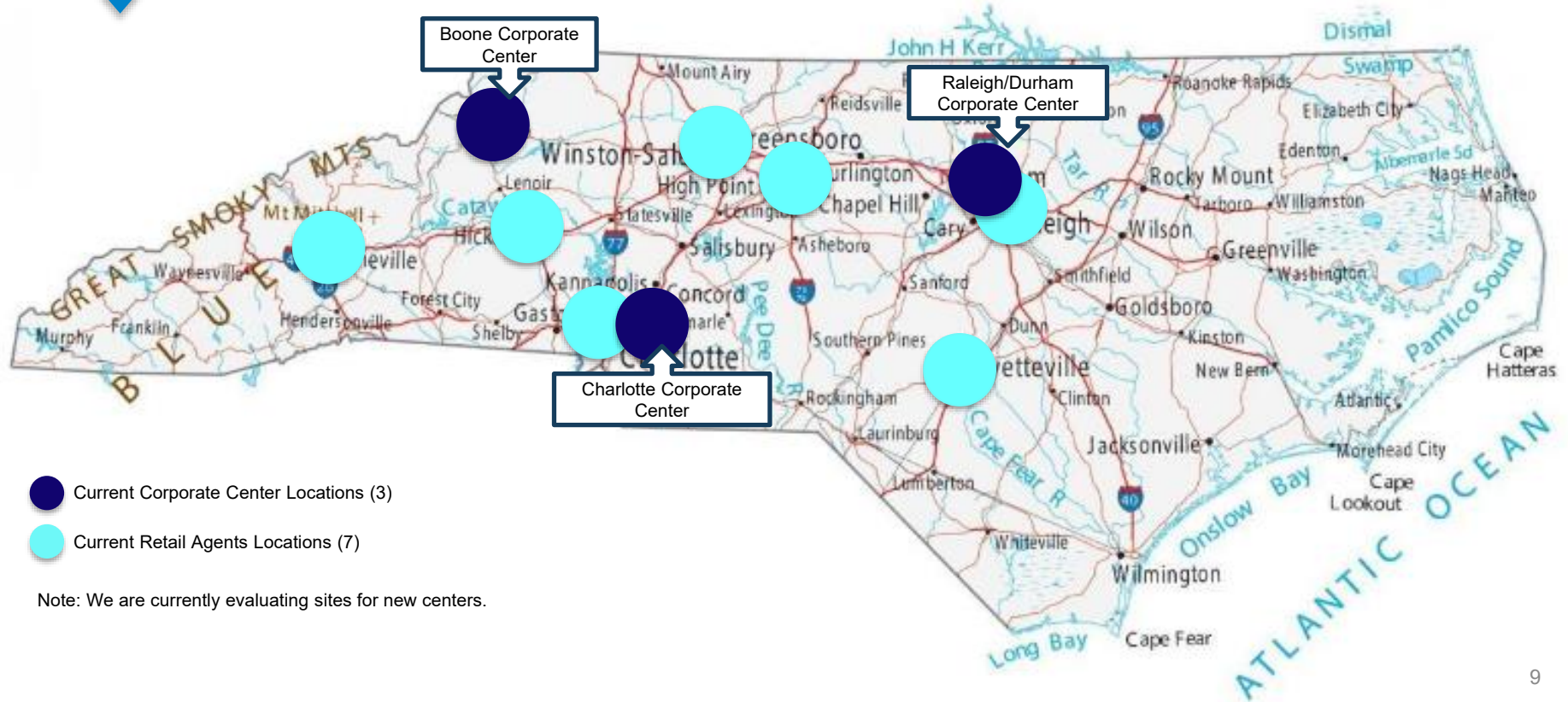
**Focusing on giving back and helping our communities make well-informed health care decisions is the easiest way to ensure the health of all North Carolinians.**

- **Corporate centers** – Staffed by Blue Cross NC, these are hubs for sales and customer service, but they also provide a space for health and wellness and other community activities, including flu shots, cooking classes, exercise classes and more.
- **Retail centers** – Staffed by independent agents in partnership with Blue Cross NC, these centers also serve the community.





# Corporate and Retail Center Hubs



# Healthy Blue Community Relations



- Healthy Blue is Blue Cross NC's Medicaid managed care plan.
- One or two Healthy Blue community relations representatives serve in each of the six Medicaid regions, covering all 100 counties.
- These reps work with local community and faith-based organizations, DSS offices, providers and community leaders to:
  - Host community events
  - Provide health education
  - Serve Medicaid members

# Extra Miles Tour

## 100-County Listening Tour

- Projected to visit all 100 counties by 2023

## Understanding NC's complex diversity

- Collaborating on solutions to our toughest common challenges

## Who at Blue?

- Executive Leadership
- Government Markets / County Engagement
- Community and Diversity Engagement
- Blue Cross NC Foundation
- Local agents

Learn more at [www.extramilestour.com](http://www.extramilestour.com)



**LISTENING, LEARNING & LEADING  
ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA**

# What We're Hearing



# Key Learnings from Extra Miles Tour

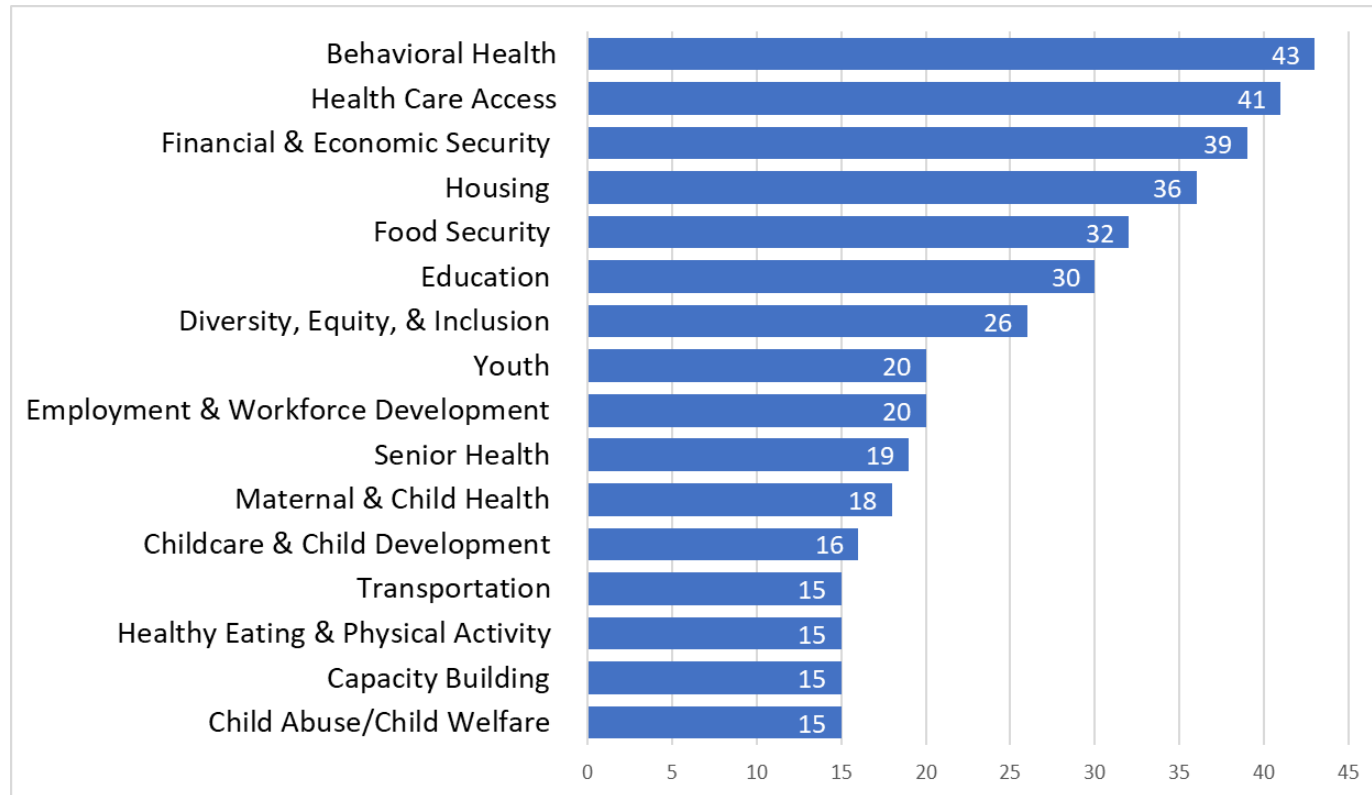
- Access to healthcare varies across the state and is especially lacking in our rural communities.
- Social determinants of health are key indicators of overall health outcomes.
- Community colleges play a critical role in the economic development and social mobility within our communities.



# Key Learnings from the County Engagement Team

The team had 226 local conversations in Q2.

Out of 31 themes that emerged, these 16 were discussed the most.



# Key Learnings from County Engagement Team



## Behavioral Health

A priority issue, especially for youth, and many rural communities lack resources to treat residents with substance use disorder.

## Health Care Access

A common issue across the state, especially in marginalized communities, where many lack coverage.

## Financial & Economic Security

Cost-of-living increases are causes of great concern, especially impacting the cost of housing and driving more residents to homelessness.

## Child Abuse/Child Welfare

Workforce/foster parent shortages and complex behavioral health needs of children being served in the child welfare system means youth are staying in the ER or in DSS offices because a safe placement cannot be located.

# Key Learnings from County Engagement Team and Corporate/Retail Centers



## Childcare

Many groups continue to study the decreased availability of childcare across the state. The main factors driving the shortage are excessive regulation, low wages, and difficulty finding employees. After-school and summer care options are also limited.

## Collaboration

Communities are working together to finding creative ways to address organizational and community capacity.

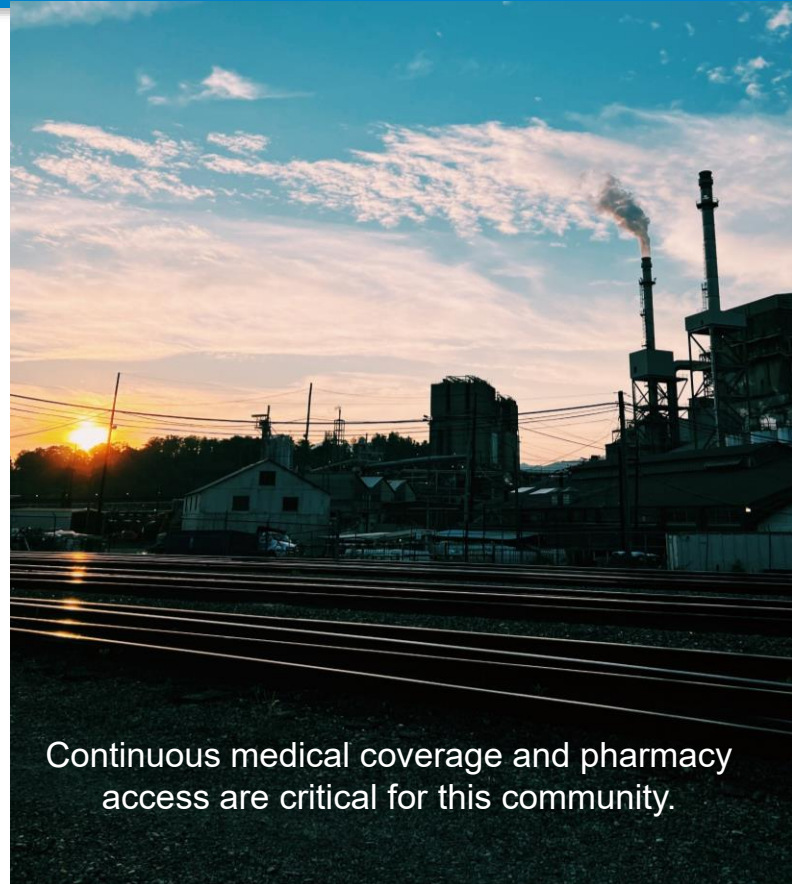
## Social Isolation

Our corporate retail centers are addressing the loneliness/social isolation epidemic, particularly among seniors, by offering social events for seniors.



# Results for the Community

- On March 6, Pactiv Evergreen announced plans to shut down the paper mill in Canton, NC.
- The mill was the largest employer in Haywood County, with 83% of the population working there. Unemployment is expected to rise from 2.7% to 9.5%.
- 1,100 employees (2,400 individuals) are impacted:
  - 50% did not have a spouse's health plan to join
  - Many earned too much in the first half of 2023 to qualify for more than minimal ACA subsidies.
  - At \$900 per month for individual coverage, COBRA is too expensive.



Continuous medical coverage and pharmacy access are critical for this community.

# Results for the Community



- Blue Cross NC worked with various partners to put together an option for affordable coverage.
- We sent teams to work 1:1 with impacted community members, helping review all possible health options, plus wrap-around services and resources.
- We partnered with Haywood Community College, Haywood County DSS and the local ACA navigator group to provide education and support around the employees' insurance and healthcare options.
- The Extra Miles Tour stopped in Haywood County on May 23, and our leadership met with the Haywood County Mayor, Town Manager, Community College President, EdNC and others to discuss a path for the Town.



- Organizations that work closely with communities are skilled at establishing trust, a key component in supporting patients in navigating complex community systems, such as local health care.
  - Working with these local partners can enhance opportunities for increased health care utilization and appropriate navigation.
  - Building trust within communities can help engage people in healthcare and address challenges with navigation, ease transportation barriers, etc.

# Opportunities

- Working across multiple sectors (business, faith, government, etc.) is an effective way to align efforts and stack hands on designing and implementing community-wide solutions.
- Medicaid Expansion will be a long-awaited opportunity to close gaps in health care access.



# Let's Talk About It

## Where public policy and public health intersect in surprising ways

- Convening health workers, law enforcement, educators, business leaders, tourism
- Meetings resemble the agenda for the Association conference!
- Conversations illuminate how these various fields aren't distinct from public health. They all intersect and influence public health.
- Blue Cross NC's work/research in “drivers of health”



# Keeping the Conversations Going

- Key takeaway: The importance of keeping these conversations going:
  - Breaking down silos
  - Building coalitions to help bring plans to action
  - Communicating outside our usual spheres to share what's working



# Keeping the Conversations Going



- Blue Cross NC will continue leading dialogue across and throughout NC communities.
  - County Engagement Team, Corporate and Retail Centers, plus Community Relations reps, Healthy Blue Medicaid team reps, etc.
  - Extra Miles Tour - Final stop in November is just the end of stage one. We're rolling out a plan to keep momentum going!

# Discussion

## How can those of us in the room carry the conversation forward and outward?

- Do you see challenges that aren't getting enough attention?
- Are there untapped opportunities in your county that would benefit from brainstorming?
- What's happening in your county to bring representatives from different sectors together?
- How can the conversation in this room extend beyond this conference?





Let's Talk!

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