

## Chief Executive Officer's Report

September 9, 2021

### **Covid 19, the Delta Variant and Changes to WCCA's Policies**

WCCA will be contracting with MAKO Medical Laboratories in Raleigh, NC to provide Covid testing for WCCA employees that do not provide proof of vaccination. MAKO employees or contractors will be administering the tests. Currently, it looks like we will have the test administered by drive through. The proof of vaccination, Covid testing is guidance from the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education for all childcare providers. We want to be consistent with all WCCA employees. It also is consistent with our goal of keeping our clients, employees and community safe.

Approximately sixty percent of WCCA employees have been vaccinated. The PTO incentive for getting vaccinated is available through October 1. Any employee that receives their first vaccine shot before October 1, 2021 can receive their Vaccine PTO upon showing proof of full vaccination. If WCCA's funding sources change their Covid guidance, we will discuss and adjust our policies accordingly.

### **Program Enrollment, Participation and Staffing Update**

With the latest surge in covid cases and hospitalizations, I wanted to give the Board an update on how this is affecting WCCA programming, revenues and staffing.

#### ***Children's Services***

Children's Services are under enrolled and under staffed. Nationwide, Head Start and Early Head Start were under enrolled by approximately one third for the 2020-2021 school year. WCCA was under enrolled by thirty-five percent, so we were close to the national average. We are under enrolled again this year. The current surge in covid, with more children testing positive and being hospitalized, is making recruitment difficult.

Staffing is also a struggle. We are down over fifty positions between grants we have been operating before this year, and the Early Head Start expansion grant. We have hosted two job fairs and attended more than a dozen. Constant advertising, computer apps and streamlined onboarding are still struggling to bring us the staff we need.

The NC Division of Early Education and Child Development (NCDEE) has extended full payment for NC Pre-K through November 2021. This means we will continue to be reimbursed at 2018-2019 enrollment. The Office of Head Start is not going to start tracking full enrollment until January 2022. The dates could be pushed back further if the pandemic continues at this pace.

## ***Housing***

The Rental Assistance program is fully leased and the wait list is growing. The creation of affordable housing units continues to fall behind demand. The lease up success rate\* was up the last twelve months due to the addition of Oklawaha Village, a tax credit project built by our community partner Housing Assistance Corporation. With no new tax credit apartment buildings for the next couple of years, we can expect the lease up success rate to drop.

WCCA's Housing Department is fully staffed. Sheryl Fortune, WCCA Housing Director is retiring at the end of 2021. A successful transition to a new Housing Director is important if WCCA is to continue to positively impact the regional issue of affordable housing.

Section 8 Rental Assistance funding has been steady for many years. The latest infrastructure package, and the \$3.5 Trillion proposed federal budget, could mean additional opportunities for WCCA's housing programs.

\*The lease up success rate is the percentage of people that receive a rental assistance voucher from WCCA, that are able to lease a place to live in the 120 day limit they have from the date they receive the voucher.

## ***Transportation***

Ridership and transportation services provided by WCCA are back to above pre-pandemic levels. Henderson County Vocational Solutions, The Sammy Williams Senior Center, Hope Academy and other human service transportation contracts and grants are back to capacity.

The Transportation Department is fully staffed. The new Medicaid contracts are increasing trips. This, and other increases, will soon lead to the need for more drivers and support staff.

There are big question marks on the horizon for transportation funding. The public transit system contract for Henderson County will have to be sent out to bid this fiscal year. We expect the Request for Proposal to be released in November 2021. If WCCA is successful in retaining the contract, then funding should at a minimum be steady. As with housing, the infrastructure package and proposed federal budget could have opportunities for expansion of WCCA's transportation services.

## ***Older Adults Services***

Participation in our older adults services is holding steady during the latest covid surge. The meal sites at Quebec and Silvermont are seeing attendees. The new Serve Our Seniors program in Quebec and Rosman is also seeing participants.

The department has all paying positions filled, but more volunteers would be welcome. Funding is steady. Thrift shop revenues, that set records in July, have been down in August due to covid and torrential rains.

### **Jeff Roper Promoted to Transportation Department Director**

Jeff Roper has been running WCCA's Transportation Department for the last twelve months as Transportation Operations Manager. Jeff and his team have returned the department to profitability, upgraded many systems and implemented WCCA's Medicaid transportation contracts. He has begun the process of making the Transportation Advisory Board a much higher functioning entity. He has also maintained WCCA's key transportation services and retained staff through the pandemic. Please join me in congratulating Jeff on his promotion to Transportation Director.