Burke County Opioid Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
July 15, 2025 | 3:30 PM
Burke County Commissioners Chambers | 110 N. Green Street, Morganton, NC
Livestream Link: https://www.youtube.com/live/oRMbf6kDnpA?si=i48foBIxV3WrAdNk

Committee Members Present: Dr. Anthony Frank; Sheriff Banks Hinceman; Katie Olsen; Karen Russell; Dr. Joel Welch; Jeff Brittain; Jerry Duckworth; Johnnie Carswell, Hannah Houston

Committee Members Not Present: Dr. Rivers Woodward; Dr. Paul Holden

Staff Present: Brian Epley; Dr. Katie V. Samuels, Brandi Greer

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 PM by Chair Commissioner Jeff Brittain.

II. Invocation

The invocation was delivered by Brandi Greer.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Johnnie Carswell.

IV. Approval of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Katie Olsen, seconded by Sheriff Banks Hinceman, and approved unanimously.

V. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the June 17, 2025, meeting minutes was made by Johnnie Carswell, seconded by Karen Russell, and approved unanimously.

VI. Presentations

Dr. Katie V. Samuels provided a comprehensive presentation on current initiatives and updates relevant to opioid settlement efforts. She reported that Burke County had officially received its first community health vending machine, secured through a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield. This machine, located at Catawba Valley Healthcare, is stocked with naloxone provided by both Partners and the state and will also distribute hygiene items, school supplies, and other basic necessities. The launch is anticipated within the next few weeks. Additionally, Dr. Samuels shared that the County's annual opioid settlement report, which includes financial and impact components, is due to the state in September. The report will include expenditures such as Recovery Court and staff salaries that occurred in the prior fiscal year.

Updates were also provided on two currently funded programs. Recovery Court reported 15 active participants, three individuals on the waitlist, and three recent graduations. The Peers Partnering for Excellence (PPE) initiative, composed of certified peer support specialists who live and work in Burke County, continues to play a critical role in community engagement and advocacy. PPE recently assumed the Advisory Board role for the Hope Center, now serving as

the county's Recovery Community Center. They are planning a National Overdose Awareness Day event in August that will include a memorial tree dedication. The PPE group is also working toward broader systems change, including peer workforce development, post-certification support, peer supervision models, and policy advocacy.

VII. Informal Public Comment

No public comments were received.

VIII. Items for Decision

a) Budget Recommendations – Dr. Katie V. Samuels

Dr. Samuels presented three county-led strategies for advancement: the Post-Overdose Response Team (PORT), naloxone distribution, and a Peer Community Navigator position. The PORT team would include four community paramedics and four peer co-responders working around the clock in joint field operations to respond to overdoses, reduce repeat incidents, and connect individuals to care. SMART performance indicators for the PORT program include a 60% engagement rate with peer services, a 15% reduction in repeat 911 calls, a 10% increase in EMS availability for high-priority calls, 150 referrals to services, and a 72-hour follow-up rate of 60% for non-fatal overdose cases.

The naloxone distribution strategy proposes distributing at least 650 kits annually through a multi-channel approach including EMS, leave-behind programs, vending machines, partner agencies, the justice system, and school system. The Peer Community Navigator, a new field-based role, would complement the PORT team by offering longer-term case management and service coordination. This navigator would support individuals transitioning from emergency departments, jail, or field response, aiming to improve system connectivity and provider collaboration. Metrics for this role include a 70% engagement rate among referred individuals, 60% retention among active clients, 100% linkage to at least one key service, and ongoing cross-sector case reviews.

A motion was made by Dr. Anthony Frank and the Committee voted unanimously to approve and advance these three strategies for further development and presentation to the Board of Commissioners.

b) RFP Submissions Review – Dr. Katie V. Samuels

The results of the internal pre-screening process for provider-submitted proposals in response to the county's recent RFP were presented to the Committee. Out of 11 proposals, four were recommended for advancement: A Caring Alternative (SAIOP/SACOT expansion), Good Samaritan Clinic (bilingual LCSW for SBIRT screening), High Country Community Health (low-barrier MOUD expansion), and SPARC (family-centered recovery support to prevent child welfare involvement). Three proposals were recommended for revision and potential resubmission, including those from Catawba Valley Healthcare, Christ Centered Recovery Program, and Burke Recovery. Four proposals were not recommended to proceed at this time due to misalignment with MOA criteria or duplication of services: BUCM, the Centre for Collaboration, Motivation and Innovation, Granite Falls Comprehensive Treatment Center, and The Cognitive Connection.

The Committee engaged in a robust discussion about the importance of sustainability, performance measurement, community-level outcomes, and the appropriate role of public dollars in funding private providers. Several members raised concerns about the need for more detailed plans from applicants before making final decisions.

A motion was made by Dr. Anthony Frank and unanimously approved to hold a special meeting on August 12, 2025, to allow the four recommended providers to present their proposals directly to the Committee and respond to questions regarding sustainability, measurable outcomes, and community impact. The Committee requested that providers submit supporting documentation in advance, including proposed performance metrics and budget refinements.

IX. Reports & Comments

Members reiterated the importance of evaluating services by real impact on the community and ensuring transparent reporting. The committee discussed logistics and timing for the August 12 special meeting, requesting a possible earlier start time and data packet distribution in advance.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:47pm by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Katie V. Samuels
Secretary, Burke County Opioid Advisory Committee