



For Release Time
January 3, 2018

Rutherford County Mental Health LME/MCO Change

NC DHHS Secretary Approves Realignment Request

Rutherford County— January 3, 2018 — On December 28, 2018, Rutherford County government was notified by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) Secretary Mandy Cohen, MD, MHP, that, in accordance with NCGS § 122C-115(a3) and the county disengagement rules, NC DHHS is approving Rutherford County's realignment with Partners Behavioral Health Management (Partners) with an effective date of July 1, 2019.

On April 9, 2018, the Rutherford County Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously to disengage from its current Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO), Vaya Health, to realign with Partners. LME/MCOs are governmental entities that manage county, state and Medicaid funds for mental health, intellectual/developmental disability and substance use services.

Rutherford County is dedicated to improving the quality of life of the residents who have chosen our county as their home. It is in consideration of this strategic goal that the Board of County Commissioners chose to pursue a relationship with Partners to manage Rutherford County's behavioral health services funded by federal, state and county dollars. Rutherford County Board of Commissioners Chairman Bryan King states, "On behalf of the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners, I appreciate North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Cohen's December 28, 2018 approval of the Rutherford County's request for the LME/MCO Realignment to Partners Behavioral Health Management. I would like to thank everyone that participated in the due diligence period and for those that will serve on the Realignment Committee during the transition period from now to the realignment effective date of July 1, 2019."

Partners CEO Rhett Melton added, "We are honored by the trust and confidence in Partners that the County's leadership has shown through their decision to align with us for the care of citizens in this community. We look forward to partnering with individuals receiving care and their families, providers and stakeholders in Rutherford County to live out Partners' motto of 'Improving Lives and Strengthening Communities.'"

County Commissioners

Bryan A. King, *Chairman*
Alan Toney, *Vice Chairman*
Michael Benfield

Eddie Holland
Greg Lovelace

Steve Garrison, *County Manager*
Hazel S. Haynes, *Clerk to the Board*
Richard Williams, *County Attorney*

Since April, the County Commissioners and staff performed their due diligence to determine whether such a decision was in the best interest of its residents, including soliciting public, consumer and service provider comments and reviewing all the factors set out in statute and rule. Rutherford County Commissioners then passed a resolution on September 4, 2018 affirming their decision on behalf of their constituents to disengage from Vaya and realign with Partners.

In her December 28, 2018 letter, Secretary Cohen stated, “Based on our review of this information, I have determined that Rutherford met the requirements of the statute and the eleven factors set out in the rule. The disengagement and realignment will not adversely affect the quality, variety, and amount of services for the clients of Rutherford County.” The Secretary advised Rutherford County that the Realignment Committee created by the county was a good first step toward a seamless transition to Partners, which she will require the county to expand to include representatives from the executive leadership of Vaya and Partners, as well as members of both LME/MCO’s Consumer and Family Advisory Committees and provider networks. County leaders will review all requirements set forth from the Secretary in the coming weeks to develop a collaborative strategy and a joint work plan to ensure that there are no gaps in service coverage for recipients and to ensure a smooth transition to Partners on July 1, 2019.

For more information, press only:

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