

# NCPHA E-Newsletter

December 2017

Newsletter from the NC Public Health Association and the NCPHA Public Awareness Committee

## Message from the President

— Brittan Williams



As we approach the busy holiday season, I am reminded of how thankful I am for those NCPHA leaders who have come before me. They are the ones who have set the stage for me to step in as your President, and they are the ones who have helped to grow and strengthen our association into one the largest and strongest APHA affiliates in the Nation. I want to extend a special THANK YOU to my predecessor, Josh Swift, for his leadership over the last year.

If you were able to attend the Fall Educational Conference in Asheville, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. The 2018 Fall Conference is sure to be a hit as well as we celebrate 100 years of oral health in NC! Stay tuned for more information about the Fall Conference in the coming months.

As we move into a new year, I plan to continue to keep NCPHA's Healthy Babies Initiative at the forefront of what we do as an association. Another priority for the Executive Committee will be to take a closer look at our current awards and the awards process in order to revamp and encourage more nominations from members.

I would love to see more members get involved this year, particularly new members who have not been involved previously. If you've found value in NCPHA membership, I challenge and encourage you to get more involved. On one end of the spectrum, if you have an idea, comment, improvement or criticism, please contact me, any member of the Governing Council or NCPHA staff. We will listen and respond—that I promise. On the other end of the spectrum, if you want to do more, join one of the many committees that need volunteers. Such committees include Membership & Outreach, Organizational Structure, Advocacy, Awards & Scholarships and Audit. If you want to make a difference, reach out to me or the Chair of the Committee and let them know you are answering my call.

Happy Holidays!

*Brittan Williams*

Brittan Williams, MPH, CHES  
2017-2018 NCPHA President

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# Infant Mortality Rates Remain Stable in North Carolina

– Stephanie Watkins PhD, MSPH, MSPT



In 2016, according to the North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, for every 1,000 live births, 7.2 infants died in the first year of life.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of 20 years, North Carolina has seen a steady decline in the mortality rate of infants during the first year of life, yet for the past six years, the infant mortality rate has remained relatively unchanged. Between 2010 and 2016, the infant mortality rate in North Carolina stabilized around 7.2 per 1,000 live births.<sup>1</sup>

Based on the most recent 2015 national estimates, North Carolina's infant mortality rate remained well above the national average (5.90 per 1,000 live births), ranking seventh in the nation for the highest infant mortality rate.<sup>2</sup> In 2008, the state established Healthy North Carolina 2020 target goals to reduce the infant mortality rate to 6.3 deaths per 1,000 live births. Currently, only the northeastern and western perinatal care regions in the state are meeting this goal.<sup>1</sup>

The leading causes of infant death varied depending on when in the first year of life the infant death occurred. In 2016, 68 percent of infant deaths occurred during the neonatal period, yet the cause of death varied substantially if the infant survived the first 28 days of life. For example, 51 percent of infant deaths in the first 28 days of life were attributed to prematurity, low birth weight and birth defects. Yet, if the infant survived past 28 days, 32 percent of deaths were attributed to unknown causes.<sup>1</sup>

North Carolina continues to experience rates in infant deaths that differ by racial and ethnic groups. Although there has been a continued decline in infant mortality rates among both white non-Hispanic, African-American

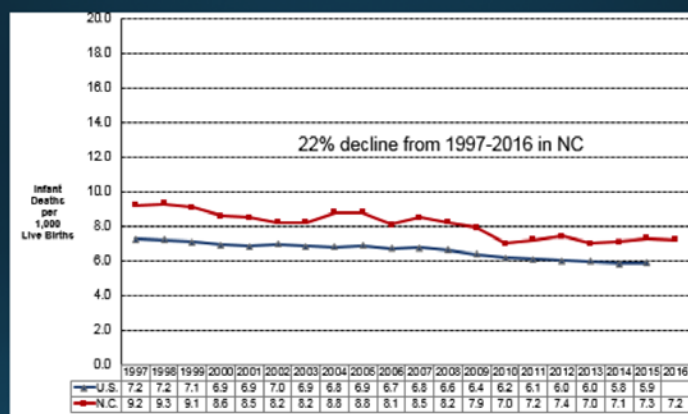
Hispanic and Hispanic infants over the past four years, the infant mortality rate of African-Americans in 2016 was more than twice that of white non-Hispanics in 2007.

The Healthy North Carolina 2020 goals also aim to reduce the racial disparity between white non-Hispanic infants and African-American infants by 28 percent. However, based on the 2016 data, the disparity gap is widening. In 2016, African-American infants were 2.7 times as likely to die in the first year of life compared to white non-Hispanic infants.<sup>1</sup>

Moving forward, based on the most recent data, the state will need to reduce the infant mortality rate by 12.5 percent and narrow the disparity gap by 39.6 percent to meet Healthy North Carolina 2020 goals. In 2016, the state introduced the Perinatal Health Strategic Plan created by subject matter experts from across the state and designed to address infant mortality, maternal health, maternal morbidity and the health of men and women of childbearing age.

Several actions in this 12-point plan include increasing preconception care, improving the quality of prenatal care and expanding health care access over the life course, but also expanding the focus on social determinants of health and the root causes of infant and maternal mortality. Leaders in perinatal health continually meet to discuss strategies to implement this plan.

## Infant Mortality Rates:1997-2016 United States vs North Carolina



1. North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, 2016 Infant Mortality Report
2. National Center for Health Statistics, CDC Wonder, [www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/infant\\_mortality\\_rates/infant\\_mortality.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/infant_mortality_rates/infant_mortality.htm)



# NCPHA *New* Section Chair



**Shahnee Haire**  
Family Planning Program Manager  
NC Division of Public Health  
Department of Health and Human Services

## **How long have you been a member?**

I have been an active member for four years. I have been the Wellness and Prevention Section Chair for four months.

## **What is a typical day like for you?**

A typical work day consists of me waking up around 6:00 AM to meditate and pack my lunch. Once I arrive at work, I take few walking laps around campus. My day can be filled with checking emails, meetings, several phone conferences, designing workshop materials and activities or presenting at local health departments, DSS locations and community health agencies. My favorite part of my day is being able to create innovative ideas for my programs. I always make sure to take a few minutes to recharge and then continue to focus on my tasks at hand.

## **What do you enjoy most or find most valuable about being a member of NCPHA?**

I enjoy being a member of NCPHA because it provides me with the opportunity to meet other passionate public health personnel. Being able to communicate and share ideas with others across the state is a wonderful way to create partnerships that can eventually help promote positive change.

## **What is your favorite tip for someone in public health?**

Never be afraid to ask questions and surround yourself with people that appreciate what you have to offer in the public health arena.





# Emerging Leaders Inaugural Class Off to an Exciting Start

*"To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart."*

- Eleanor Roosevelt



Inaugural Emerging Leaders Program participants being introduced at 2017 NCPHA annual conference

The members of first class of the NCPHA Leadership Development Program are off to an exciting start for their year-long focus on professional and personal growth as emerging public health leaders.

The NCPHA Leadership Development Program, aimed at public health professionals who have a passion for their work and want to grow and enhance their leadership and supervisory skills, was rolled out at the NCPHA Annual meeting in September and held its first in-person class in October at NCPHA offices in Raleigh. The course work is a combination of in-person and distance learning.

"Prior to the first session, each participant completed an online self-assessment called Insights Discovery," said NCPHA President Brittan Williams. "The results of the questionnaire were used to help us (the participants) better understand ourselves, understand others and understand how to make the most of relationships. This self-awareness

of personality and leadership styles is going to be key in learning to grow to be effective leaders," she said.

Williams also indicated that the Insights portion of the program was eye opening, "I learned a lot about myself and feel it would be beneficial to anyone."

"This program was created by NCPHA members for NCPHA members," said Lynette Tolson. "We regularly survey our members and this is something our members have been asking us for. Until we created this program, there really was not a program focused on developing new leaders for public health. This program will help people learn and develop basic leadership skills, so that they can lead teams, work collaboratively and take the next step in their careers," she said.

This new initiative was developed in collaboration with the North Carolina Medical Society. "The NC Medical Society has a fabulous leadership (continued on page 5)



## Continued... Emerging Leaders Inaugural Class Off to an Exciting Start

training program for their own members and we wanted something of that same high caliber. Also, in 1909 a group of doctors from the NCMS met to form North Carolina's early public health organization, so we have a long and collaborative history with our Medical Society. And of course, we share office space with NCMS so when program participants come to the in-person classes, it is as if they are coming home to NCPHA," said Tolson.

Class participants are also required to work on a year-long project. During the first class, participants broke into teams and chose a "bucket" as the broad category of their project. The buckets they could choose from included housing, mental health, oral health and environmental health.

"I landed on oral health which excites me since NCPHA's 2018 Fall Conference theme is to celebrate 100 years of oral health in NC," said Brittan Williams. "It seemed very fitting for me as NCPHA's President for my project to center on oral health. As a Team we were then tasked with coming up with our project idea. It's still very early but my

team, "Root Cause", is planning to look at availability, gaps, and barriers of dental services for those with Medicaid for pregnant women. This fits nicely with NCPHA's Healthy Babies Initiative as well," she said.

The first class of NCPHA's Leadership Development Program has 17 students from across the state and a variety of public health disciplines. "We had hoped for 15 participants and we actually got 17. I think this is a very good indication that our membership wants and supports this initiative," said Tolson.

Brittan Williams also recommends the program. "This program is a bit unique as it is not necessarily intended for those currently in a supervisory position but is more focused on grooming future, emerging leaders in NC. I hope to see some of these participants become part of NCPHA leadership moving forward; in fact, some already have!" said Williams.

To learn more about The NCPHA Leadership Development Program, contact Kim Dittmann at [kdittmann@ncapha.org](mailto:kdittmann@ncapha.org).

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## Joining the Public Health Team: New State Breastfeeding Coordinator

– *Grisel M. Rivera, MPH, RD, LDN, IBCLC*

On December 1, 2017, Chiara Phillips will be joining the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Women's and Children's Health Section, Nutrition Services Branch as the State Breastfeeding Coordinator. Chiara's acceptance of the position has been the culmination of a personal dream that began during her Dietetic Internship during her supervised practice in DPH/NSB. Chiara's passion for breastfeeding promotion and support moved her to breastfeed her firstborn while working as a local nutritionist.

Chiara worked almost three years in Wake County Human Services as a WIC clinic nutritionist. As part of the local staff she provided nutrition education and breastfeeding support to pregnant and breastfeeding women and their families. Her additional credential as an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) provided her with the skills necessary to enhance the effectiveness of her support for women who wanted to breastfeed their infants.

Chiara's background in WIC providing one to one service to women and their families has increased her knowledge of program policies and local agency efforts to support breastfeeding as the standard in infant feeding. She will maintain interagency and external partnerships to coordinate breastfeeding promotion efforts. In addition, she will lead efforts of the North Carolina Maternity Center Breastfeeding Designation Program. Chiara will provide current, up-to-date breastfeeding information to state and local agency staff.

As the State Breastfeeding Coordinator, Chiara will ensure that women participating in WIC receive breastfeeding promotion, education and support from adequately trained staff. In addition, as a subject matter expert, she will provide leadership and guidance in the development of breastfeeding initiatives managed through the Division of Public Health that will help improve breastfeeding initiation and duration, resulting in positive health outcomes for all North Carolinians.



# NCPHA Member Spotlight



**Bill Smith**  
Health Director  
Robeson County  
Health Department

## **How long have you been a member?**

Actually, I started work with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control in 1976 and joined South Carolina's PHA in 1977. I began employment in Robeson County in August 1988 and went to NCPHA's Annual Meeting in the fall of that year. I have been a member since (30 years).

## **What is a typical day like for you?**

Fortunately, there are few typical days, but using yesterday as an example, I had a county department managers meeting in the morning, had a luncheon board meeting with a non-profit substance abuse organization that I chair, had a telephone conference with the regional staff and the state staff of ODHDSP over the dashboard results for Region 8 and attended a meeting with Lumberton City officials regarding flood effects and rebuilding efforts. Sprinkle in some personnel and financial matters, as well as discussing progress on our Infant Mortality Grant submission, and I believe you get the flavor.

## **What do you enjoy most or find most valuable about being a member of NCPHA?**

While NCPHA is a chapter, so to speak, of APHA, it is a better mix of what is actually occurring on the ground locally. So while APHA can be very theoretical and abstract, NCPHA has been able to provide glimpses of delivering public health in a manner that is more conducive and will work within the NC political environment. Typically, there is a wide range of subjects with speakers who are locally and nationally well thought of. By rotating sites, members can avail themselves without extensive travel, unless you are like the crowd here, who go wherever it is.

## **What is your favorite tip for someone in public health?**

I would say be flexible. We don't live in a rigid world so one has to be able to shift. That is not to say that some principles should be violated. Too often, well-intended people deed over things that should stay in public health and it has hurt our system overall. Oftentimes, I find myself on the less popular side of issues when questioning actions that are deleterious to public health and are being proposed because its simpler or less work for an individual.





## 2017 Fall Educational Conference Highlights and Winners



The 2017 Fall Educational Conference in Asheville was the most successful FEC conference to date in terms of net income earned and a close second to the 2013 conference (also held in Asheville) as far as attendance. Here are the numbers:

**518** conference attendees

**\$85,000** net conference income

**\$58,000** given to awards, mini-grants and scholarships winners (excluding scholarships given by sections)

**4 large barrels** of diapers, wipes, baby food and infant formula collected for the Healthy Baby Supplies Drive sponsored by the [Young Professionals of NCPHA](#)

**75** workshops and presentations

Congratulations to the following award, scholarship and mini-grant winners. Thank you for the great work you are doing in your health department or division. We are proud to have you as a member of NCPHA!





# 2017 Fall Educational Conference Highlights and Winners

## 2017 All-Star Award Winners

**Brittan Kenney**, Gaston County Health and Human Services  
**Carl Carroll**, Alamance County Health Department  
**Diana Blue**, Cumberland County Health Department  
**Diane Keener**, Macon County Health Department  
**Edie Alfano-Sobsey**, Wake Human Services  
**Jennifer Blackmon**, Craven County Health Department  
**Mariaeugenia Sierra-Donovan**, Cumberland County Health Department  
**Vickie Cowan**, Franklin County Health Department

## 2017 Major Award Winners

**Norton Group Award**  
Cumberland County Department of Public Health Environmental Health Division

**Partners in Public Health Distinguished Group Award**  
Partners Behavioral Health Management

## 2017 Ann Wolfe Mini-Grant Winners (\$8000/each)

Cabarrus County Health Alliance  
Orange County Health Department  
Robeson County Health Department  
Scotland County Health Department

## 2017 NC GSK Child Health Recognition Award Winners

**Lifetime Achievement Award** Elizabeth Krzysztoforska

**Individual Recognition Award** Sarcanda Green

**Public Health Staff** Debbie Biggerstaff

## Local Health Department Recognition Awards

Madison County Health Department  
Gaston County Health and Human Services  
Guilford County Health and Human Services





# 2017 Fall Educational Conference Highlights and Winners

## 2016 NCPHA Scholarship Award Winners

Elizabeth Stephens	Child of a Member	\$1,000
William Cleve	Child of a Member	\$1,000
Amber Ward	Child of a Member	\$1,000
Laura Davis	Associate/Certificate	\$500
Melissa Lombardi	Graduate/Undergraduate	\$1,000
Laura Hermenegildo	Graduate/Undergraduate	\$1,000
Michelle Presnell	Graduate/Undergraduate	\$1,000
Lindsay Novacek	Graduate/Undergraduate	\$1,000
Billie Walker	Graduate/Undergraduate	\$1,000
Stephen Eaton	Robert Parker Leadership	\$1,500

## Upcoming Public Health Conferences

### Community Health Assessment Winter Institute

January 11-12, 2018, NCSU McKimmon Center, Raleigh, NC

\$150/person. Registration link:

[ncpha.memberclicks.net/cha-winter-institute](http://ncpha.memberclicks.net/cha-winter-institute)

### Public Health Leaders' Conference

January 18-19, 2018, Crabtree Marriott, Raleigh, NC

\$125/person. Registration link:

[ncpha.memberclicks.net/public-health-leader-s-conference](http://ncpha.memberclicks.net/public-health-leader-s-conference)

### Public Health Social Work Conference

April 25, 2018, Colfax, NC

Registration fee and registration link coming in late January.

### Cancer Survivorship Summit

April 27-28, 2018, Charlotte, NC

Registration fee and registration forthcoming.



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