

Thursday, September 4th, 2025, 11:00 am
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)
Location (in-person): 20 W Broad Street, Hazelton, PA 18201
Location (virtual): [zoom info](#)

Chair: Fiorella Salas Toledo
Co-Chair: Carrie Wilcox
Scribe: Kathleen Shiomos

1. Call to Order

Fiorella Salas Toledo, Community Relations Representative for AmeriHealth Caritas Pennsylvania (ACP) Community HealthChoices (CHC) called the third quarter Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting for the Northeast Zone to order at 11:03am.

2. Welcome, Introductions, and Updates

Fiorella introduced the Community Outreach team as well as Tracy Brekke, Manager of Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) for ACP CHC'S Northeast Zone.

Nguyen Nguyen, Manager of Community Outreach introduced herself as the new manager.

Meeting attendees introduced themselves either in-person, virtually, or in the Zoom chat. Fiorella also introduced a satellite meeting that was taking place at Edenbrook North Skilled Nursing Facility (Williamsport, PA).

Allison Hindman, Community Relations Representative, completed the level setting for the meeting and reviewed the meeting agenda.

**Note: this presentation was translated into Spanish for in-person attendees by Fiorella Salas Toledo (Community Relations Representative).*

3. Health Education & Outreach Activities

Fiorella, Community Relations Representative reviewed the health education and outreach updates for the Northeast, including:

- Last quarter's Community Outreach team activities
- Partners in the Community
- Upcoming Community Outreach team activities
- Activities in your Community
- Wellness and Opportunity Center information and calendar of events
- Participant Communications
- Participant Handbook



Resources:

- <https://www.amerihealthcaritaspa.com/community/wellness-center-hazleton.aspx>
- <https://www.amerihealthcaritaspa.com/community/mobile-wellness-center.aspx>
- <https://www.amerihealthcaritaschc.com/participants/eng/health-wellness/newsletter.aspx>
- <https://www.amerihealthcaritaschc.com/participants/eng/participant-handbook.aspx>

Feedback: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

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4. HCBS Waiver Services Spotlight- Employment Services

Jennifer Ford-Bey, Manager of Collaborative Services presented information on the benefits of Employment Services as well as an overview of how these supports help participants pursue meaningful work while maintaining independence and coverage. The presentation also addressed Frequently Asked Questions.

- Frequently Asked Questions – Participants were reminded that answers to these questions vary by individual situation and should be reviewed with a Benefits Counselor.
 - Can I work and get benefits through Community HealthChoices?
 - How many hours a week can I work before I lose eligibility?
 - How much can I make before I lose eligibility?
 - I want to work, but I am afraid I may get less or lose Personal Assistance Services hours. What should I do?
 - I want to work, but I am afraid the job site won't be able to accommodate my disability. What should I do?
- Overview of Employment Services
 - Benefits counseling
 - Provides information on how paid employment may affect benefits such as Social Security, SSI, or food stamps to help make decisions about finding a job that is right for you.
 - Career assessment
 - Helps identify career options based on interests, skills, and strengths.
 - Employment skills development
 - Provides skills and tools to be successful in a job such as meeting expectations of your supervisor, interacting appropriately with co-workers, and responding appropriately to direction from your manager in order to be successful in any job.
 - Job finding
 - Helps you find the right job for you by finding job opportunities, completing applications, and preparing for job interviews.
 - Job Coaching
 - Provides ongoing support to learn a new job and maintain a job
- How to make a Referral:
 - Let your Service Coordinator know that you are interested in working.
 - Sign the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Release of Information form.



- The Service Coordinator will send the information the internal Employment mailbox.
- Once received, the Employment Coordinator will make the referral to Office of Vacation Rehabilitation.
- If you are currently working
 - Let your Service Coordinator know.
 - Contact your Service Coordinator if you need help with reporting your income to the state or if you need information regarding work incentive programs.
 - Your Service Coordinator will connect you to an Employment Coordinator.

Feedback: A PAC member asked if a person could work 40 hours a week and still receive CHC benefits? Jennifer answered yes, but it depends on each individual situation.

Next Steps: Fiorella will provide the AmeriHealth Caritas Pennsylvania Community HealthChoices flyer with Employment Services information to those in the room and will be sent to the virtual group as well.

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5. CHC Programs and Updates- Fall Prevention

Marci, Director of Quality Management provided an overview of fall prevention strategies to help reduce the risk of injuries for adults 56 and older. The presentation emphasized creating a safe home environment, making healthy lifestyle choices, and being prepared in case of an emergency.

- Home Safety:
 - Remove or secure rugs with non-slip backing.
 - Clear walkways and move furniture out of pathways.
 - Keep stairs well-lit and free of objects.
- Kitchen:
 - Use grabbers or a sturdy stool with handles to reach items on high shelves.
- Bathroom:
 - Keep floors and shower areas dry to prevent slipping.
 - Install grab bars for added stability.
- Health & Wellness:
 - Exercise regularly to improve strength, balance, and coordination (with doctor approval).
 - Get annual vision checks.
 - Have a doctor review medication for side effects that may increase fall risk.
- Emergency Preparedness:
 - Keep emergency numbers in large print near the phone.
 - Carry a phone in your pocket for quick access in case of emergency.

Resources:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/about/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/data-research/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/data-research/facts-stats/>
- STEADI initiative - www.cdc.gov/steady
- National Council on Aging Falls Prevention (NCOA) - www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/

Feedback: N/A

Next Steps: Fiorella will send the fall prevention booklet and list of exercises via email and mail.



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6. Resources from our Community Partners- Asthma

Rebecca Bobersky from the Pennsylvania Department of Health presented information on Asthma, its impact, and ways to manage the condition. The presentation highlighted symptoms, risk factors, statistics in Pennsylvania, and strategies for management and prevention.

- About Asthma:
 - Asthma is a chronic inflammatory lung condition that makes breathing difficult and can be worsened by environmental and medical triggers.
 - An asthma attack is a sudden worsening of asthma symptoms typically triggered by an activity, pollutant, or medical condition.
 - Typical symptoms include shortness of breath, chest pain, coughing and wheezing.
- Triggers include:
 - Weather changes, humidity, pollen, air pollution medications, medical conditions, smoke, physical activity, stress, and others.
- Effects of asthma:
 - Short term: limited recreation activities, Emergency Room/Urgent Care visits, missed days of school/work.
 - Long term – permanent narrowing of lung airways, lung disease, and heart complications.
- Asthma in Pennsylvania:
 - In 2022 over 10, 000 PA residents went to the Emergency Room for asthma related reasons.
 - Air quality worsened in 2025 (ozone and particulate matter) compared to 2024.
 - Since 2021, five Pennsylvania cities ranked among the top 100 most challenging places to live with asthma and allergies: Scranton, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Allentown, and Philadelphia.
- Risk factors:
 - Environment: Pollution, weather, allergens, dust, mold.
 - Health and lifestyle: genetics, existing medical conditions, stress, physical activity.
- Managing Asthma:
 - Follow medical treatment as directed by a doctor.
 - Avoid known triggers.
 - Have an Asthma Action plan for emergencies.
 - Protect yourself at work.
 - Check outdoor air quality.

Resources:

- [AirNow](#)
- [American Lung Association: Asthma](#)
- [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: Asthma Facts](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Asthma Data](#)
- [Global Initiative for Asthma: 2023 GINA Main Report](#)
- [Mayo Clinic: Asthma Attack](#)
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: Asthma Care](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Administration: Occupational Asthma](#)
- [PA Department of Health Asthma Control Program](#)



Feedback: N/A

Next Steps: Nguyen commented AmeriHealth Caritas CHC has an asthma program for our Participants.

<https://www.amerihealthcaritaschc.com/participants/programs/care-coordination/asthma> This information will be sent out to the group.

7. Open Forum

Fiorella encouraged any meeting attendees with specific questions related to the presented topics or any concerns they may have, to bring them up at this time.

Nguyen extended a thank you to everyone who participated in today's meeting and encouraged attendees to join the next meeting.

Feedback: N/A

Next Steps: N/A

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8. Next Meeting

The fourth quarter PAC meeting for the Northeast zone will be held on December 4th, 2025. Fiorella will follow up with mail, phone calls, and email reminders.

Today's attendees will receive a post-PAC follow-up email with the resources from today's meeting as well as a feedback survey. Attendees are encouraged to complete the survey and return it to the Community Outreach team.

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9. Meeting Adjourned

Fiorella adjourned the meeting at 12:50 pm after all inquiries from the member were answered.