

Durham Joins Together Taskforce Meeting Report

Committee	Treatment and Harm Reduction Committee
Committee Chair or Co-Chairs	Tremaine Sawyer, Durham County Justice Services Department Lacie Scofield, Durham County Department of Public Health
Date	August 6, 2026

Committee members:

Carlyle Johnson, Alliance Health; Sheriff Clarence Birkhead, DCSO; Rodney Jenkins; Donna Rosser, DCoDPH; Helen Tripp, DCo EMS; Carolyn Crowder, Lincoln CHC; Arthur Payne, Morse Clinics; Eric Morse, Morse Clinics; Marc Strange, DCo JSD; Roshanna Parker, DCo JSD; Renée Shaw, DCo JSD; Zandra Joiner, Milestone Healthcare Services; Kim Chansen, RI; Michele Easter, Duke Psychiatry; LA Cuttler, Hope Centre for Advancement; Meredith Niess, Duke Outpatient Clinic; Chenelle McInnis, Duke University Hospital; Sarah Sterling, Duke University Hospital; Noel Ivey, Duke University Hospital; Anjni Joiner, DCo EMS; Jesse Battle, TROSA; Lisa Finley, TROSA; Kristen Patterson, DCoDPH; Lindsey Bickers-Bock, DCoDPH; Jaeson Smith, DCoDPH; Loftin Wilson, NCHRC; Quanesha Archer, DCoDPH; Anna Gaddy, BAART; Paula Harrington, Oxford Houses; Irving Hewett, Oxford Houses; David Crispell, Jubilee Home; Timeka Harper-Purcell, Freedom House; Micheal Edge, New Season Treatment Center; Nichole Shackelford, Hayti Reborn Justice Movement; Page Carter, DCo Detention Center; Lucius Wilson, SouthLight; Jackie Hodges, Duke University; Vera Reinstein, Alliance Health; Shahonda Pittman, RREPS; Von Chreiman, Fishing Point; and others.

Current Activities:

April 2026 Meeting

Jaeson Smith updated the committee on Durham County's opioid settlement strategic planning process, current funding realities, and FY27 planning efforts. Long-term sustainability is a key concern amid FY27 requests that far exceed available resources. Current priorities focus on evidence-based strategies such as treatment access, recovery supports, prevention, naloxone distribution, post-overdose response, syringe services, and criminal justice diversion. The county uses a structured strategic planning process and an advisory committee to guide funding decisions, while encouraging community engagement through RFPs, newsletters, and public meetings.

Helen Tripp presented updated FY26 opioid overdose response data and EMS community paramedic data through March 2026. Helen also reviewed positive trends from Durham EMS' field-based MOUD induction program and highlighted ongoing collaboration with Durham County Justice Services Department. EMS data demonstrated significant disparities with approximately 60% of opioid-related EMS calls involving Black/African American individuals. Committee members discussed ideas for culturally responsive outreach, targeted prevention efforts, and equity-focused intervention strategies. Committee members also discussed the spike in overdoses that occurred in March, possibly due to the arrest of a local drug dealer that month. The committee proposed ways to reduce future harm from drug busts including increased communication between Durham law enforcement and harm reduction staff following major drug enforcement activity.

Carlyle Johnson talked about changes to Medicaid that will occur in FY27, including new work requirements and the impact on SUD treatment continuity. Discussion focused on the need for navigation assistance, low-barrier medication access, community education, and collaboration between providers and harm reduction organizations.

May 2026 Meeting

Dr. Morse presented on the implementation and success of North Carolina's first Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) Mobile Medication Unit (MMU). The mobile medication unit operates through Morse Clinic in partnership with Healing Transitions in Raleigh and delivers a full range of opioid treatment program services. The unit offers medications for opioid use disorder, counseling, evaluations, telehealth, and secure dosing operations. Since its launch, treatment engagement has grown from roughly 50 individuals to about 147, improving retention, reducing transportation barriers, and strengthening coordination between treatment and housing systems. The model supports continuity of care across multiple OTP locations and is expanding through planned units in Vance, Granville, Franklin, and potentially Durham, though growth is challenged by funding, regulatory approvals, and inspection capacity. Committee members discussed reducing treatment access barriers, scaling low-barrier MOUD services, and telemedicine opportunities. The possibility of telehealth-facilitated methadone intake services for Durham County Detention Facility was discussed as a future opportunity.

Nichole Shackelford presented an overview of resources and services offered by Hayti Reborn - Justice Movement (HRJM), including reentry support, employment assistance, housing navigation, mentorship, education support, entrepreneurship, life skills development, and care coordination. Nicole also reviewed the "BRIDGE" workforce program developed as a partnership between HRJM and Durham Tech.

Arthur Payne announced the launch of a new free naloxone vending machine in partnership with Durham County Department of Public Health. It is located outside of the Morse Clinic of Durham at 4119 Capitol St.

June 2026 Meeting

Reid Getty and Dr. Jennifer Carroll provided an overview of Durham's mobile drug checking program and discussed how drug checking can support harm reduction efforts. The program uses FTIR technology and supplemental test strips to quickly identify substances in drug samples, with optional confirmatory testing through UNC's Street Drug Analysis Lab. The process includes calibration, sample collection, analysis, interpretation, and counseling, helping detect adulterants like medetomidine, explain unexpected side effects, and support safer-use decisions. Service users seek clear information on safety, adulterants, accuracy of drug contents, and typical potency. The most trusted sources of this information are local harm reduction organizations, friends who use drugs, and local healthcare providers.

The mobile drug checking program currently operates every Friday at the NCHRC drop-in location, with planned expansion through Wake County, a new Durham mobile outreach van, and potential additional services such as hepatitis C testing and wound care. Committee members were encouraged to share information about the drug checking program, invite presenters for demonstrations and educational sessions, and refer community members who may benefit from services.

On-going Activities:

- Foster collaboration and communication among substance use treatment and harm reduction providers in Durham.
- Discuss community resources and ways to increase access to treatment, peer support, and harm reduction for people with SUD.
- Develop ideas and actions to address barriers to treatment and housing for people with SUD and justice-involved populations.
- Updates from committee members on all programs and agencies as available.

Metrics/Measures:

- CLC Program – Program numbers and survey data reports
- Detention Center - MAT program numbers
- EMS - Opioid-related calls and buprenorphine induction numbers

Next Steps:

Committee members will:

- Tour the women's campus of Healing Transitions and the Morse Clinics OTP mobile medication unit on Tuesday, September 8th at 11:00am-1:00pm.
- Continue to promote the Community Supply Inventory and facilitate exchanges of needed supplies among member organizations.
- Provide status updates on Durham County Detention Center's MAT program, Durham County's Opioid Settlement funding process, FY27 Medicaid changes and work requirements, the Stepping Up Initiative's Sequential Intercept Map for Durham County, and Duke provider efforts to develop the emPath platform and improve care for patients with OUD.

Next Meetings:

Tuesday, August 11th and September 8th from 3:00-4:30 PM via Zoom