

WNCSource CEO Report

March 14, 2024

Henderson County Comprehensive Pre-K Plan Subcommittee

On February 23rd the Henderson County Comprehensive Pre-K Subcommittee (HCCPKS) met at the Children and Family Resource Center. We were joined virtually by other Pre-K providers in the region. The McDowell County Schools, Polk County Schools and Buncombe County Smart Start all made presentations.

McDowell County is the only county in this part of North Carolina to have free universal Pre-K for four-year-old children. About seventy percent of the county's four-year-old children attended last year. McDowell County Public Schools has been the Head Start grant recipient since the 1960s. By combining Head Start, NC Pre-K, Title I and county tax revenues they are making it work. Mark Garrett, Henderson County Superintendent, helped put the McDowell County universal pre-K in place.

Polk County Public Schools has Pre-K that is mostly covered without parents paying. There are fifteen families in Polk County that are paying \$400 per month for pre-K. They are also using Head Start, NC Pre-K and county tax dollars to support their efforts.

Buncombe County Smart Start has received money from the county commissioners to increase NC Pre-K payments to private childcare providers to expand NC Pre-K in Buncombe County. Some of this funding came from federal covid funds, so I am not sure it will continue.

Linda Carter, WNCSource Children's Services Director and I are members of the subcommittee. We will continue to participate and share the good work that WNCSource is doing to prepare children for success in school and beyond. As I have said before, WNCSource has been a high quality provider of Head Start and NC Pre-K services for decades, and we plan to continue for decades to come.

Adult Daycare Transportation

Over the last few months I have been working with Elizabeth Williams who is the Executive Director of MountainCare that provides adult daycare in Henderson County. Elizabeth invited me to join the Henderson County Aging Coalition (HCAC). HCAC is preparing an action plan for aging in place in Henderson County. Through my work with them, and a report from the Henderson County Home and Community Care Block Grant Committee, we discovered that we were not coordinating on transportation services for the MountainCare Adult Daycare center on U.S. 64 West.

We have recently had very productive meetings and shared information on how we can work together. WNCSource staff are preparing a draft contract for us to provide adult daycare transportation starting July 1, 2024. By combining routes we have for Vocational Solutions and older adults transportation with adult daycare, we can design routes that are more efficient. We are looking forward to working with MountainCare to provide safe and cost effective transportation for their clients.