

# North Carolina Healthy Opportunities Pilots

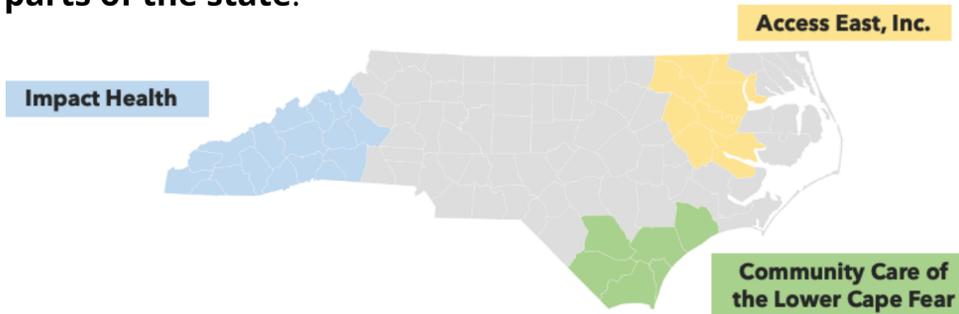
## Focus Group Findings

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### What is Healthy Opportunities?

The Healthy Opportunities Pilots is the nation's **first program** that **requires** your **health care providers** to work with **community organizations** to **provide services** related to housing, food, transportation, and personal & household stress to people with Medicaid insurance. It is available in **3 parts of the state**.



### Our Research

We conducted 2 focus groups on Zoom with folks from all 3 regions receiving social support services. These focus groups brought people from diverse backgrounds.



**NOTE:** These focus groups happened in early May, so the experiences shared were limited to food services. However, we still asked about people's thoughts on housing, transportation, and stress services available through the Healthy Opportunities Pilots.

### Our Findings

#### Awareness



- People have a **positive view** of the program.
- **Medicaid Care Managers** were the most frequent **entry point** into the program, but doctors and word of mouth were also sources of information.
- The program **filled** an important **gap** since **access** to food services and social services programs is **often limited**, especially for those who don't already qualify for social programs like SNAP, WIC, etc.

#### Getting Into the Program

- **Relied** on a **positive and strong relationship** with the doctor/nurse.
  - Otherwise, screening placed a **burden** on the **patient**.
- Started with **informal discussions**.
- Enrollment process was seen as **difficult** and could be **smoother** and **simpler** for multiple household members.
- Nurse Care Managers & other clinicians are **learning** how to facilitate these **new interactions**.



### Feedback on Food Services



#### High Consumer Satisfaction



#### Unclear Communication Led to Less Knowledge of the Range of Food & Nutrition Services

*For example, all participants knew of and received healthy food boxes, but no one knew they could also access healthy, prepared meals.*



#### Range of Opinions on Choice & Variety

*For example, some folks wanted the ability to customize their food boxes.*

**NOTE:** Only food boxes were evaluated because people hadn't received other services.

### Other Social Need Areas

**NOTE:** Not all of the ideas below would necessarily be covered under the Pilots.

#### Housing

- Housing services could be **beneficial** because housing is **complex**.
- In addition to currently covered services, focus groups also highlighted potential additional areas of need:
  - **Accessibility** supports/repairs
    - For example, a stair lift in the house.
  - **AC/Heating** installation & repairs
  - **Safety modifications** (roof/hurricane damage, etc.)
  - **Support services for both renters and homeowners**, since some resources are geared towards renters.



#### Transportation



- Transportation services are helpful but focus group participants noted:
  - There is a large **gap in public transportation** in the 3 geographical regions of the Pilot.
  - Uber and Lyft (and other **private transportation** options) may not be options in rural areas.
  - **Resolving personal vehicle issues** and questions is important.
    - People's personal vehicles are not always owned by them, but rather by a relative.

### Personal & Household Stress Services

- Focus group participants were particularly interested in stress services for parents, people who faced intimate partner violence, and adolescents / young adults.
- Some key **non-crisis** services (which may be covered under Medicaid) people expressed a desire for:
  - **anxiety & depression** services
  - **empowerment** services & skills training
  - **financial stress** services.

