

# North Carolina's Healthy Opportunities Pilots: What is it and what have we learned so far?

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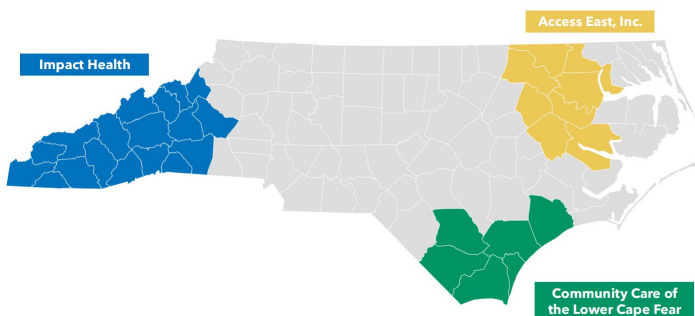
## The Healthy Opportunities Pilots: Helping to Connect You with Health-related Social Services in Your Community

If you are on **Medicaid** and have trouble paying for food, housing, or transportation, you may qualify for services through the North Carolina **Healthy Opportunities Pilots** program. The Healthy Opportunities Pilots program connects you with non-medical services that can improve the quality of your life, your nutrition, your ability to get from here to there, and more. It is advancing innovative solutions that foster independence, improve health, and promote well-being for all North Carolinians.

In March of 2022, North Carolina began offering services to address these needs through the Pilots program. The program can use up to **\$650 million** to fund this non-medical assistance to people on Medicaid. It is the **largest program of its kind** in the United States.

The Healthy Opportunities Pilots offers **29 services** in the areas of food, housing, transportation, interpersonal violence and toxic stress. It is available in **33** North Carolina through three main organizations: Access East, Inc., Community Care of the Lower Cape Fear, and Impact Health.

If you're a member of any of the **five NC Medicaid health plans** (AmeriHealth Caritas, Healthy Blue, UnitedHealthcare, WellCare, and Carolina Complete) and live in one of these counties, you could qualify if you have specific health conditions and social needs. Please check this map to see which one serves your area. If you're interested, ask your doctor, care manager, or a local social service group about the Healthy Opportunities Pilots.



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Here are two examples of how services offered by the Healthy Opportunities Pilots program can help support you and family:

- Example 1: Lisa is a 30 year-old pregnant mother with high blood pressure on Medicaid. Her daughter is due in three months, and her family is having trouble paying for food.
- Example 2: Juan is a 35 year-old essential worker who lacks legal documentation. He lives with his 6 year-old son who was born in the US and suffers from asthma. After he experienced difficulty breathing one day, Juan found mold in his house.

Through the Pilots, both Lisa and Juan can receive a free healthy food box delivered weekly by a trusted community organization. Medicaid can also pay for a local contractor to remove the mold in Juan's house. In both cases, the whole family benefits.

## About Duke-Margolis:

We are an Institute at Duke University that studies and evaluates state and federal policies and develops strategies and solutions to make health care better, more equitable, and more affordable. We worked to help the NC Department of Health and Human Services understand challenges and opportunities in running the Health Opportunities Pilots program.

## What We Did:

We spoke with 63 North Carolinians to learn more about their experiences with the Healthy Opportunities Pilots program. This includes those who run the Healthy Opportunities Pilots or similar programs, community organizations, health care providers, policy experts, and Medicaid members. We are using what we learned to help improve this program's ability to address non-medical needs through Medicaid. We also hope to guide other states in creating their own programs addressing social needs.

### What we recommended:

- **Invest** in the local workforce so they can address social needs in the communities they serve. **Local growth** in community resources comes first. Your Medicaid plan helps to **coordinate** these new benefits.
- Use funding from **government, philanthropy, and the private sector**. This support will help the program to grow and continue in the **long-term**.
- Talk to people in communities about **what they want** from a program. Use their **feedback** to guide the design of the program. Once the program starts, **invite and compensate community members** to help advise it.
- Establish simple ways for local community organizations to receive **timely payment** for services. Ensure service payments account for the **historic funding challenges** for community organizations.
- **Customize** trainings for the different service providers within the program to better meet people's needs.
- **Design technology** that supports a program that work across the health care and social service sectors. Successful technology uses **data** to make sure people **quickly** get the non-medical services they need.

*The Healthy Opportunities Pilots are approved through October 2024. North Carolina is requesting to extend and expand the program.*

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*\*Huber KM, Bleser WK, Whitaker RG, et al. Addressing Social Needs through Medicaid: Lessons from Planning and Early Implementation of North Carolina's Healthy Opportunities Pilots. Milbank Memorial Fund; 2023. <https://www.milbank.org/publications/addressing-social-needs-through-medicaid-lessons-from-planning-and-early-implementation-of-north-carolinas-healthy-opportunities-pilots/>*