

Item Title: Accept and Appropriate Additional Funds and Establish One Full-Time Position for the Wake County Refugee Health Clinic

Specific Action Requested:
That the Board of Commissioners:

- 1. Accepts and appropriates \$108,834 of revenue and expenditures into the General Fund from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), and**
- 2. Establishes one additional full-time nurse to provide immunization and refugee health services.**

Item Summary:

Purpose: In accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve all amendments that increase the budget for a fund.

Background: As one of the State's top refugee host counties, Wake County anticipates screening about 1,000 new refugee arrivals this fiscal year. This is accomplished through the County's Refugee Health Clinic. The clinic provides Hepatitis C testing, immigration immunizations, and refugee and asylee screening. The clinic also provides an array of services to adults and children and people traveling to other countries.

The clinic currently employs one nurse that focuses on refugee services. Along with doing initial health screenings and follow-up visits, the nurse also completes vaccination records. These additional State funds will support a new, second full-time nurse. The additional staffing will help the clinic keep up with the expected workload

Board Goal: This action supports Community Health and Vitality Goal 2: Improve access to affordable, high-quality care for all residents experiencing medical and/or behavioral health challenges.

Fiscal Impact: This Agreement Addendum provides an additional ongoing \$108,834 revenue and expense in the Health and Human Services General Fund budget toward the FY 2023 State allocation of \$114,365 already included in the HHS Adopted Budget. This brings the total State allocation for FY 2023 to \$223,199. The additional funding will support one additional position to provide immunization and refugee health services. The position is funded with State revenues, requiring no County funding. There is no matching funds requirement.

Additional Information:

Refugees are individuals who are unable to return to their home countries due to well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. They are a high-risk and vulnerable population that face special health challenges due to their exposure to deteriorating conditions usually attributed to circumstances such as war, trauma, and forced migration.

In many refugee camps, sanitation, food supplies, and health care services are limited, which can have implications for malnutrition, infectious diseases, and chronic conditions. Therefore, refugees are at an increased risk for many diseases, both communicable and noncommunicable, not commonly seen in the native US-born population.

The primary goal of the Wake County HHS Refugee Program is to ensure that health problems of newly arrived refugees that could pose a threat to public health or interfere with the effective resettlement of the refugees are promptly identified and treated. A complete communicable disease screening is done by staff along with administration of multiple vaccines. From January 2022 to August 2022, there have been 636 refugee visits (338 new and 298 continuation visits). New visits can take from one to two hours per person; follow ups can take from 45 minutes to an hour. The below table shows the numbers of refugees seen since 2018 to date.

Refugees	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
New	227	251	118	169	338
Continuation	262	228	80	93	298

The additional funding from NCDHHS will enable Wake County HHS to hire a second full time Refugee Nurse so that refugee patients can be more effectively assessed, screened, and vaccinated. The additional staff will also help to improve communication among Local Health Department Staff, other clinics/physicians, and refugee resettlement staff.

Refugees receive initial health screenings that facilitate linkage to medical and other services. This effort has significant challenges for many refugees due to cultural differences, lack of transportation, language interpretation issues, and limited understanding of the US healthcare system. The process is intensive and involves a general refugee health assessment to identify health issues, promote well-being, orient new arrivals to the US healthcare system and connect them with routine and specialty care to provide that continuum of care from overseas to arrival in the US.

Over the next few years the Clinic anticipates that the program will grow and be a Center of Excellence in regard to provision of services to incoming refugees in Wake County.

This Agreement Addendum provides funds to local health departments to assist with administrative cost and assist with the expenses related to providing this service to eligible clients that may not be covered by any medical program or insurance. HHS intends to utilize the funding as follows. The total program budget expense is \$315,779, which uses County funds to cover the remaining costs of the program:

Budget Category	FY 2023 State Allocation	FY 2023 County Budget	FY 2023 State Adjustments	Revised Program Budget
Salary and Fringe	114,365	136,037	106,792	357,194
Interpreter Contractual Services	-	64,265	0	64,265
Supplies/Equipment	-	1,112	\$2,042	3,154
Total	\$114,365	\$201,414	\$108,834	\$424,613

The table below displays the funding amounts the HHS Public Health Division has been awarded from NC DHHS to deliver refugee health services over the last five fiscal years.

Budget Category	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
Refugee Health State Allocation	\$6,959	\$19,872	\$29,253	\$29,253	\$114,365

Attachments:

1. Refugee Health Assessments Public Health Agreement Addendum
2. Budget Memo FY23 – Human Services
3. Budget Memo FY23 – Personnel Ordinance Memo