



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Merger Approved for Durham and Wake Local Management Entities**

*(Durham, NC)* – A planned merger of the agencies that manage public behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability services for Durham and Wake counties has been approved. The Durham Board of County Commissioners signed off at its February 13 session and Wake Commissioners did the same on February 6.

The merger will combine The Durham Center, which serves as the Local Management Entity, or LME, for Durham County with the Wake County LME, which currently operates as part of Wake County Human Services. The merged entity, which will have a new name yet to be announced, will separate from Durham and Wake county governments and begin operations on July 1 as a multi-county LME. It plans to house its administrative staff in corporate office space at Imperial Center but to maintain satellite offices near downtown Durham and Raleigh. It will be governed by a Board of Directors made up primarily by Durham and Wake county citizens appointed by their respective County Commissioners.

LMEs are the quasi-governmental agencies that manage, coordinate and monitor the public behavioral health and disability services system across North Carolina, with oversight from the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services.

“This merger marks a significant achievement for Durham and Wake counties and for the state as we move toward a system to more effectively manage services for people with mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse needs,” said Beth Melcher, PhD, Assistant Secretary for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services at the NC Department of Health and Human Services. “Both counties have shown great leadership in recognizing the opportunity to combine their considerable strengths to achieve higher-quality services for their citizens in the most cost-effective manner.”

On January 1, 2013 the new entity will make another shift in its operating structure when it becomes a behavioral health managed care organization, or MCO, under Medicaid 1915 (b)/(c) Waivers. It will be the largest of its kind in North Carolina when it adds the responsibility for

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the authorization of services for citizens of Cumberland and Johnston counties in addition to those in Durham and Wake, totaling over 186,000 Medicaid-eligible individuals and a population of 1.7 million. The MCO will employ more than 400 people, many moving over from the pre-merger LMEs in Durham and Wake as well as the LMEs in Johnston and Cumberland.

The merger reflects the desire of the NC General Assembly to consolidate the number of LMEs in North Carolina and to have them all operate under Medicaid waivers, designed to provide greater local flexibility in how services are managed while controlling the growth of Medicaid costs.

“In a public system exhausted by change over the past decade, we have great hope that the strong, innovative organization created by this merger, working within a managed care waiver environment, will result in the stability, accountability, cost-efficiency and clinical excellence that the people of our region deserve,” said Lascel Webley, Jr., Area Board Chair of The Durham Center. “We are excited about the opportunity the future holds.”