

## **Minutes of the January 12, 2022, meeting of the Upstate COVID-19 Regional Community Assessment Review and Equity (CARE) Panel**

The Upstate COVID-19 Regional Community Assessment Review and Equity (CARE) Panel met on Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 9:00 am via Microsoft Teams.

The following were in attendance:

Sue Veer, Carolina Health Centers, Inc.  
Kandi Fredere, SCDHEC  
David Church, Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System  
Dana Tate, New Horizon Family Health Services, Inc.  
Tim Womack, Appalachian Area Agency on Aging  
Sarah Key, Access Health Upstate Networks

Sue Veer, CARE Panel Chairperson, called the meeting to order.

### **General Updates:**

- Had the thought to transition out of emergency mode and have discussion on how this group could work more broadly regarding health equity issues. We are not at that point due to increased numbers of COVID.

### **Kandi Fredere:**

- Shared two-week cumulative incidence rate information provided from SCDHEC.gov.
- There is a significant increase, statewide, in the disease rates and in the number of confirmed cases. Huge spike in number of positive cases across the state.
- Upstate tends to peak a little higher than counterparts.
- Vaccination – not moving needle too much. The 12-year-old and older – 65.7% has one dose. Completed 56% across the state, doesn't include booster. Small percentage for 5–11-year-old range. Those numbers haven't changed over the last few months.
- Concern/issue – testing and moving back into a testing response. The demand is unreal for testing now. We are seeing record numbers of people waiting in line and we are receiving calls from outside entities regarding testing. We are trying to communicate out to the public to not go to ER just to be tested. We are doing much better in testing, but the delay is lab resulting. Have staff to do testing but the outside lab companies are having issues. Resulting out is taking longer based on the demand and staff of the lab companies.
- Staff is focusing on the vulnerable population, places we need to get people back to work (detention centers, EMS, paramedics, nursing homes, schools). A lot of conversations with those groups to come up with plans to really support those efforts and get through the peak.
- Shifted from vaccine mode to full testing mode.

### **David Church:**

- Seeing influx of in-patients. On 12/31 there were 41 patients; today there is 190. Testing those showing symptoms. Have 29 long haulers over 20 days. Holding 210 – 220 on top of general winter sickness.
- There are also a lot of sick staff. Hopefully we can keep staff well enough to maintain things.
- Compared to delta its not near as acute, not as many patients on ventilators. Seeing an increase in numbers but the acuity isn't as bad.
- Testing –people showing up to ER and medical centers for testing.
- Have ordered 100,000 rapid test to be distributed to area facilities. Will also be used for employees to get back to work. The test kits and free agents are on back order. Seeing shortage of supplies.

- Overwhelmed with the monoclonal antibody therapy. Have good supply of it. Not seeing the results as we did with Delta.

**Sue Veer:**

- Provider groups are having to deal with staffing issues. Increased demand but losing staff. Only have resources to test symptomatic patients.

**Tim Womack:**

- Renewed advertising – disheartening to hear that vaccination rate isn't improving. Not sure how much advertising will help since people have already made their mind up. Misinformation or they just don't know the information. Going back to education piece of vaccine. Some people are just not going to take it. The one thing seeing is those vaccinated with 2 vaccines but won't take the booster.

**Next Steps:**

- Should we regroup? The initial mission was related to vaccinations. There are benefits to have conversations. Think it's helpful to see what is happening across the region. Are there additional people we need to bring in the discussion (ReGenesis, Self-Regional, Behavioral Health)? Sue and Kandi will meet to discuss next steps and get back to the group.

**Tasks:**

- Minutes will be sent out and posted on the SCDHEC website.
- Sue and Kandi will meet regarding next steps.

Meeting adjourned.