

Tarheel Footprints in Health Care

Recognizing unusual and often unsung contributions of individual citizens who have made health care for North Carolinians more accessible and of higher quality

Paula Nobles, RN, BSN Pediatric Case Manager, Washington Pediatrics – AccessCare



AccessCare is a network of primary care physicians committed to providing the highest quality medical care for North Carolina's Medicaid population. AccessCare is the largest of 14 local networks of primary care providers that contract with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to develop disease management and case management initiatives and coordinate prevention, treatment, and other services. This system of networks, coordinated by Community Care of North Carolina, enhances the Carolina ACCESS Medicaid program by developing physician-led community partnerships to improve care and reduce costs by connecting Medicaid enrollees with a medical home.

Within AccessCare, patient educators and case managers play a special role in helping patients understand their conditions and options along with managing their often complicated diseases. Paula Nobles, RN, BSN, is definitely an invisible hero in the world of case management for the enrollees of Beaufort County. A 1997 Magna Cum Laude graduate of the East Carolina University School of Nursing, Ms Nobles formerly worked as a staff nurse in obstetrics, pediatrics, and the newborn nurseries at Beaufort County Hospital and Pitt County Memorial Hospital. She joined AccessCare in June 2004 as a pediatric case manager with Washington Pediatrics. Her supervisors say that Ms Nobles has used her solid nursing education to cohesively mesh the worlds of hospital nursing and community case management.

Ms Nobles' current areas of specialty include asthma and pediatric obesity. She coordinates the monthly asthma and weight reduction clinics and has received further training in childhood hearing, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and smoking cessation. She is a referral resource for the provider staff of Washington Pediatrics, Beaufort County Health Department, Beaufort County Department of Social Services, and Children's Developmental Services Agencies. In addition she assists school nurses and other community health care providers and always graciously accepts assignments to orient new staff at AccessCare as well as staff from other North Carolina Medicaid networks. Ms Nobles also has volunteered to assist staff in other counties assess high-risk patients that may be in need of case management services.

Ms Nobles, who once described herself as being quiet and meticulously organized, has quietly yet dramatically evolved into one of the best community case manager leaders in her county. A typical work week for Ms Nobles may consist of conducting patient-practitioner education, coordinating and directing the Asthma and Weight Reduction Clinics, planning and implementing patient care plans for various disease processes, electronically documenting all case management duties in the NC Medicaid Case Management Information System, attending local and statewide meetings, and effectively serving the providers and case managing the enrollees of Washington Pediatrics. Her work helps to improve quality of care while implementing cost savings. At the 2005 North Carolina Pediatric Society meeting, one eastern North Carolina pediatrician was quoted saying, "I heard about the case manager at Washington Pediatrics, and I want a case manager in our office that mirrors exactly what Dr Ainsworth's case manager does for their office. I hear she is excellent!"

In addition to serving as an advocate for the Carolina ACCESS enrollees of Beaufort County, Ms Nobles is involved in other health-related community activities. She serves as a preceptor for ECU School of Nursing bachelor of science in nursing students, provides asthma education to students at Beaufort Community College, and has written articles on pediatric obesity for the *Washington Daily News*. She serves on the Beaufort County Task Force on sudden infant death syndrome and codirects the Weight Reduction Summer Camp in Beaufort County with pediatrician Dr Debbie Ainsworth.

For her efforts and accomplishments in case management and support services for the pediatric Access patients in Beaufort County, the editors of the *North Carolina Medical Journal* are pleased to recognize Paula Nobles, RN, BSN, and all case managers and patient educators across the state for their contribution to the health and well-being of all North Carolinians.