

BUDGET REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the 2026 Interim

June 3, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The first meeting of the Budget Review Subcommittee on Health and Family Services was held on June 3, 2026, at 10:30 AM (ET)/9:30 AM (CT) in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Craig Richardson, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Craig Richardson, Co-Chair; Representative Wade Williams, Co-Chair; Senators Stephen Meredith and Lindsey Tichenor; and Representatives Samara Heavrin, Kimberly Poore Moser, Lisa Willner, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Ryan Bramble, Chief Operating Officer, CRISP Shared Services; Secretary Steven Stack and Rural Health Transformation Plan Director Tom Walton, Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

LRC Staff: Savannah Fritsch, Sara Rome, and Jennifer Luttrell.

CRISP Shared Services

Ryan Bramble, Chief Operating Officer, CRISP Shared Services, gave an overview of the program.

In response to Senator Meredith's questions, Mr. Bramble stated that CRISP includes key subject-matter experts at every meeting and that multiple stakeholders set the priorities.

Senator Meredith added that he thought a health care czar would be beneficial because of the large Medicaid population.

Rural Health Transformation Plan (RHTP)

Secretary Steven Stack and Rural Health Transformation Plan Director Tom Walton of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services gave an overview of the plan.

In response to a question from Representative Willner, Director Walton noted there is currently no certification program for dental assistants. However, the University of Kentucky has established an extended-duty dental assistant program that serves as a model.

In response to Senator Meredith's questions, Secretary Stack confirmed the program would remain stable despite administrative changes. Challenges like 102 "ambulance deserts" and high workforce turnover call for a comprehensive strategy. Transitioning to a regional Medicaid model requires balancing local healthcare needs with emergency services, enhancing telehealth networks, and investing in Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Improving the skills of EMS and hospital staff can also help reduce turnover. Programs like Mountain Health Comprehensive Care offer pay raises for participation in wellness activities, boosting health and retention. The belief that "healthy communities precede healthy economies" is central to organizations like Shaping Our Appalachian Region

(SOAR). By managing healthcare costs and lowering hospital readmissions, regions can attract more employers and industries. The RHTP is managed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and aims to develop infrastructure and provide education more cost-effectively to expand the workforce. The required annual report will outline the achievement of objectives and results, which will influence CMS's decision to increase or cut funding. The funds are exclusive to RHTP and cannot be used for existing programs.

In response to Senator Tichenor's question, Director Walton confirmed that incorporating licensed midwives is part of the plan to maintain local care whenever possible.

In response to Representative Moser's inquiries, Director Walton assured the data results would be shared with the General Assembly and made available on the website for the public. The RHTP collaborates with the Kentucky Board of Emergency Medical Services and other providers to assess whether programs will be cut or will receive additional funding.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:48 AM (ET)/10:48 AM (CT).