

**UPDATED NOTICE OF COMMENTS RECEIVED REGARDING
COLUMBUS COUNTY'S REQUEST TO LEAVE EASTPOINTE, JOIN TRILLIUM
HEALTH SERVICES**

October 12, 2017

A press release was issued on July 18, 2017, asking that comments on the County's request to leave Eastpointe and join Trillium Health Resources be made in writing, in person, or via telephone to Columbus County Manager William S. Clark. The comment period ended at 5:00 P.M. on September 15, 2017.

The following are all of the comments received during the comment period:

- I read that Columbus County may be leaving Eastpointe and I am happy about that. Eastpointe gives me a hard time about bogus complaints. Eastpointe spends a lot of tax payer funds on unnecessary audits.
- Eastpointe does not pay on time. I have dealt with Eastpointe for years and hated every bit of it. They like to micro manage and they are not user friendly. I have not had any good experiences with Eastpointe. I feel comfortable with Trillium Health Resources. I do not believe that Eastpointe or Trillium needs an office here; providers are here for that.
- I would like to take the time to express on behalf of Columbus Regional Emergency Department our gratitude for Eastpointe and the valuable assistance they have provided to our community by supporting the needs of our mental health population. East point is a very respected and needed resource in our community. The Mental health populations has grown and it requires a lot of resources and care to adequately stabilize such a high risk group of patients. Eastpointe has over the years supported our Emergency department as well as the community to aid in placement and as a steady source of outpatient care options. The mental health group of patients can be challenging and takes many resources in and out of our hospital setting to get each and every one the individual care that they deserve and cannot receive elsewhere. I would like to see that they remain a partner in care for our county. They are very dedicated to the needs of the patients as well as the families who are supporting their mental health loved one. Behavioral Health in the future will continue to increase. We at Columbus Regional Emergency Department would like to continue this valuable partnership we have with Eastpointe.
- Several issues could be addressed with better services to the citizens of Columbus County based on research comparisons of LME/MCO's. The reform of Mental Health Services in North Carolina has devastated the various populations served, especially the ones that need immediate service. Families/friends of loved ones need an office that is staffed and accessible to give guidance and provide solutions. Every mental health issue is extremely different, posing different needs. Trillium provides Mobile Crisis Services that Columbus County needs desperately! The out of control substance abuse issues could be addressed with better education, prevention and intervention services to families and victims of substance abuse. Trillium partners with service areas to provide healthier communities whether it is suicide prevention, inclusive playgrounds or treatment for substance use disorders! For more information on services provided check out Trilliums' Facebook page, Trillium Health Resources.

- Letter from Rob Boyette: On behalf of Eastpointe, I am writing to express our opposition to Columbus County's proposed disengagement. Our responsibility under the law is to ensure that every eligible citizen receives requested, medically appropriate behavioral health services. Through the 331 in-network providers available to serve our Columbus County members, we do just that. In FY2016, Eastpointe paid \$15.1 million in Medicaid and State funds for services in Columbus County. In FY2017 that amount increased to \$16.6 million. The County represents seven percent of Eastpointe's member population and it received seven percent of the claims we paid. Eastpointe invested the state-mandated, yearly behavioral health contributions from the County based solely on the Commissioners' judgement of what would be best for its citizens. The Commissioners review these contributions and services annually. Despite their stated claim of looking for a better deal for their eligible citizens, they cut these contributions by 50 percent last year, from \$80,000 to \$40,000. Because County funds are spent specifically for County requests, the funding to Southeastern Regional Medical Center designated for Columbus County behavioral health needs was cut. Eastpointe was not afforded the opportunity for discussion, or provided with detail supporting the Commissioners' behavioral health concerns, prior to this decision. The Commissioners are making a hasty judgement without all of the facts and with a disregard for those who will be most impacted by it—those in need of behavioral health services in Columbus County. Doing right by our members requires Eastpointe and the Commissioners to work through our differences before making decisions that affect the continuity of their care. We need to make sure these decisions help those in need, rather than just hoping to do no harm. We urge the commissioners to reconsider this decision to disengage.
- Comments received from Columbus County Board of Commissioners Chairman James Prevatte: Columbus County has been a member of Eastpointe since July 1, 2012, when Southeastern Regional Mental Health merged with The Beacon Center and Eastpointe to form a 12 county LME/MCO. The Board of Commissioners do not believe that Columbus County residents have had access to the high quality services they deserve under Eastpointe management and that a change is necessary to better serve the county. The Board of Commissioners has chosen Trillium Health Resources, a twenty four county program that borders Columbus County, as the new manager. Trillium Health Resources has a proven track record of providing high quality services in rural counties. Trillium Health Resources has promised to contract with all providers currently serving Columbus County residents and to recruit new providers to fill in gaps in services.
- As a provider of services within the Eastpointe network for over 18 years, we have found Eastpointe to be responsive, reliable and efficient. I have worked with LME's and MCO's throughout North Carolina, and have always found Eastpointe to be the easiest with which to work, and the most responsive to any concerns our agency may have. While other MCO's may do a better job of marketing themselves with billboards and newsletters, they do not provide the service that Eastpointe does. Their willingness to work with providers and consumers is unparalleled. Are they always right? No. But on the rare occasion Eastpointe may be in the wrong, they are quick to recognize it, admit it, and make the needed adjustments. It is easy to complain about any MCO. They are tasked with a difficult job and sometimes must make difficult decisions about services and authorizations. No one likes to be told “no”....especially when it comes to their physical or mental health. That, however, is the job of the MCO. In the case of Eastpointe, appeals are conducted and resolved quickly. Eastpointe spends tax money wisely and efficiently. The staff at Eastpointe are as good, or better, than those of any MCO in North Carolina. To disengage would be a decision that the citizens of both Nash and Columbus counties may come to regret.
- My name is Paul Russ and I am a Columbus County resident. I am writing in my capacity as the Chairman of Eastpointe's Consumer and Family Advisory

Committee (CFAC) to oppose the County's plan to disengage from Eastpointe and join Trillium. This is a political decision-not one based on the needs of families like ours. Have you taken the time to ask any local families that deal with developmental disabilities or behavioral health challenges if this is a good idea? Why weren't we consulted before a disengagement vote was taken? Transparency is clearly not your priority. Our feelings seem like nothing more than a formality in your rush to judgement. This proposed disengagement is a bad idea for many reasons. Members may need to change providers. That means doctors and therapists with whom our loved ones have built trusting relationships get replaced. For caregivers, giving care becomes secondary to learning yet another set of policies and procedures. Furthermore, this decision won't increase our access to care at all. Eastpointe is an excellent partner. We CFAC members see that firsthand almost every day. We've been working closely with the Eastpointe staff since the organization was created in 2013. They consistently ask for our feedback and work hard to implement it. Making life better for the most vulnerable has always been a team effort. Member services are top-notch. Calls are answered quickly. Complaints are addressed promptly. Claims are paid on time, every time. We never have issues. Eastpointe makes members their priority-here in Columbus County and across its catchment area. Eastpointe has worked to build strong ties to our Columbus County communities. They reached out to support families after Hurricane Matthew. They've worked to reduce the impact of the opioid crisis. They're always at community events-almost two every single week on average-educating people on available services. As Eastpointe invests more in our communities, Columbus County has eliminated 50 percent of its behavioral health funding in the past year-another terrible policy decision on which families like mine were never consulted. Your reckless proposal to disengage would take away what Eastpointe has worked so hard to provide us-peace of mind. We, the members and families of CFAC, urge you to reconsider this proposal. Do not change a system that is working for so many families.

- I began my career in publicly funded behavioral health care in September 1977, joining Southeastern Regional Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services in 1985. I managed programs located in Columbus County for 19 years and continued in other capacities with Southeastern Regional MH/DD/SAS, merging to become a part of Eastpointe on July 1, 2012 until the present. I am a veteran of years of service in the behavioral health field. I have been actively involved as the State of North Carolina has changed our public system. I have seen first hand that Eastpointe provides excellent service, exceeding the State's performance standards. Annually, the State of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services surveys people receiving behavioral health services, to determine their perception of the care they receive. Eastpointe's positive scores speak for themselves. Pages 52-55 are particularly impressive. The link to the full report is <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/2016%20Consumer%20Preception%20of%20Care%20Report>

This is a list of all of the comments received. Comments will be posted on the County's Facebook page and website for 30 days until 5:00 P.M. on November 13, 2017.