

Consumer Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes June 8th, 2021

Meeting Date	Meeting Time	Location
June 8th, 2021	3:00 – 5:00 p.m.	Zoom Meeting

Participant Name and Attendance

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Jeffrey G. Beadle		Robert Krzys	X	Christiane Pimentel	X
Adrienne Benjamin	X	Terry Nowakowski	X	Peggy Lampkin	X
Alan Coker		Velandy Manohar	X	Andre L. McGuire	
SB Chatterjee	X	Soneprasith Phrommavanh	X	Daniel C. Ogbonna	
Taylor Edelmann	X	Ann R. Smith		Michele Scott	
Others Present					
Terry Gerratana (OHS)		Vicki Veltri (OHS)			
Ormand Clarke (OHS)		Dashni Sathasivam (HES)			
Leslie Greer (OHS)		Sarah Leathers (Healing Meals)			
Krista Moore (OHS)		Kim Martone (OHS)			

Meeting Information is located at: <https://portal.ct.gov/OHS/SIM-Work-Groups/Consumer-Advisory-Board>

	Agenda	Responsible Person(s)
1.	Welcome	Terry Nowakowski
	Call to Order. The scheduled Annual meeting of the Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) was held on Tuesday, June 8th via zoom. The meeting convened at 3:04 p.m. Terry Nowakowski chaired the meeting.	
2.	Public Comment	Terry Nowakowski
	No public comment was raised	
3.	Approval of the April 13th Meeting Summary	Terry Nowakowski
	The motion was made by Velandy Manohar and seconded Adrienne Benjamin by to approve of the minutes of the Consumer Advisory Council meetings of April 13 th , 2021. Motion carried.	
4.	Keynote Speaker	Vicki Veltri, Executive Director, OHS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terry Nowakowski introduced Vicki Veltri, Executive Director of OHS. Vicki Veltri stated that consumer engagement is one of the goals that OHS has set and they are committed to get deep down into communities, to get information out into communities, and to get input and feedback. They are focused on turning this work and partnership into action. Vicki Veltri spoke about the various ongoing projects under OHS. One workstream includes the projects under Executive Order #5, which includes the health care cost benchmark work. They are in their first implementation year that hospitals, health systems provider entities, the health plans and commercial carriers are being monitored for their compliance with the rate of growth of health care costs in their systems. They are seeing about 7% a year price growth among our hospitals on the inpatient and outpatient. Inpatient care is decreasing overall. 	

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- OHS is also continuing to mine the All-Payer Claims database. They are also discussing how insurance costs are going up for consumers as plan designs are shifting more costs on consumers.
- OHS has a Stakeholder Advisory Board for the benchmark which features consumers and consumer advocates. Through this group's feedback, OHS has developed a potential adverse consequence monitoring plan.
- OHS has also been developing recommendations on the Connie consent policies that will be presented to the Connie Board of Directors. OHS is in the process of digesting the public comments that they received from the open comment period and from other engagements including feedback from the State IT Health Plan consumer sessions. Vicki Veltri also acknowledged that Jenn Searles has met with the CAC, and they have provided feedback.
- OHS is also working on enhancing the delivery of primary care services given that better resourcing of primary care improves outcomes and can help to bring down costs. OHS is in the process of coming up with a potential roadmap that will be open for public comment.
- SB 1 also passed the legislation create race, ethnicity, primary language data collection and reporting standards. They will be working with the CT Health Foundation to determine how to best operationalize this for the state.
- OHS has also supported the passing of legislation that updates facility fees associated with primary practices that have been bought up by hospitals. They have been able to ban some additional facility fees on some kinds of services and they have expanded that. They also negotiated a bill to convene a work group via the Health Care Cabinet to discuss and provide recommendations about the acquiring and merging of group practices as this is one way that health care prices increase.
- She also summarized some of the work of the OHS Health Innovation team including the Health Enhancement Communities project.
- OHS will also be preparing a summary regarding all of the legislation that passed related to health care this session. OHS will come back to the CAC to see how they can partner on certain areas that have passed during this session.
- Vicki Veltri stated that the ideal situation is to get consumer input before rather than after an initiative has been developed. She acknowledged that is not always possible, in which case OHS looks to take input during or after an initiative is being actioned. The overall goal is really getting down into communities and asking for input, asking what do consumers want to see OHS work on? What should OHS be focusing on based on the bills that have been passed? The CAC is an important body and an important part of the work of OHS and the agency is wanting to capitalize on their partnership to help people in Connecticut.
- Terry Gerratana suggested that it maybe be valuable to have someone from the CAC communicate with Vicki Veltri through a staff person and potentially attend one of the aforementioned committee meetings to discuss how to turn these ideas into action.
- Velandy Manohar felt that the cost growth benchmark and primary care work go beyond theoretical. The Commission formed in SB 1 and the collection of REL data and SDOH and a functional health information exchange will be important and can have tangible benefits on data points and standards that could increase satisfaction with patients.
- Vicki Veltri added that OHS will be getting to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) at some point.

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5.	Membership Standing Committee Report	Robert Krzys
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bob Krzys presented on the process taken by the Membership Committee. For each applicant, committee members assessed candidate’s applications. Each candidate was assigned to a member of the committee and interviewed using a rubric of six questions. At the most recent committee meeting, members shared their thoughts on each candidate, went into executive session and ranked applicants. He thanked everybody that participated in this process. • Bob Krzys presented the slate of 5 candidates recommended by the Membership Committee to join the CAC: Stephanye Clark, Sarah Darer, Marlyn Cariano, TJ Michalski, and Greg Frani, • The Membership Committee identified two alternate members for the CAC in the event that seats open up on the council: Denise Perez, Rich Albrecht • They will be new members as of July 1 this year. • Bob Krzys provided a report on the activities of the 3-person Nominating Committee of the CAC, which was comprised of members of the Membership Committee. He presented the Nominating Committee’s recommendation of Adrienne Benjamin to Vice chair of the CAC. • Adrienne Benjamin expressed her appreciation for the CAC’s confidence in her to serve as vicechair and is looking forward to serving in the role of vice chair. • Terry Nowakowski moved to approve Adrienne Benjamin as the new vice chair of the CAC. Velandy Manohar seconded. Motion passed. • Terry Nowakowski moved to approve the slate of 5 candidates presented by Bob Krzys to become members of the CAC. Velandy Manohar seconded. Motion passed. • Terry Nowakowski moved that the 2 remaining applicants identified by the CAC that were not joining the CAC this calendar year would be approved as alternates. Seconded by Velandy Manohar. Motion passed. • Velandy Manohar thanked Bob Krzys for his leadership on the Council, particularly during the transition from the Consumer Advisory Board and Consumer Advisory Council. • Terry Nowakowski honored departing members and provided parting remarks to the following members: Robert Krsyz, Jeffrey Beadle, Jason Prignoli, and Alan Coker • Terry Gerratana stated that each parting member will receive a certificate of appreciation from OHS in recognition for their service. 	
5.	Consumer Engagement and Outreach Standing Committee Report	Velandy Manohar
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Velandy Manohar summarized the work of the CE&O committee over the past year. He provided an overview of the landmark LGBTQ panel event that was spearheaded by Taylor Edelmann. The Committee also provided public comment to the report by Mathematica on COVID-19 and Long-Term Care in Connecticut and some to the changes that instituted in the state. He expressed his gratitude to Bob Krzys and Alan Coker for their work related to COVID-19 and Long-term care and to Taylor Edelmann, Adrienne Benjamin and Terry Nowakowski and Terry Gerratana for their work and support of the LGBTQ event. • Velandy Manohar referenced a list of topics discussed at previous CE&O committee meetings that would be considered at future meetings for engagement. • Vicki Veltri expressed her appreciation for SB Chatterjee’s submission of his comments. 	

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- SB Chatterjee thanked Vicki. He stated that though there were 35 sections in SB 1, that he and Velandy Manohar were only able to comment on two sections. He is also glad that a couple of school-based related bills passed this session.
- Velandy Manohar stated that he was disappointed that very few school systems have school-based health centers.
- Taylor Edelman expressed his thanks to Dashni Sathasivam for putting together a comprehensive report. He provided an overview of the LGBTQ event and audience engagement. He also recognized the co-sponsorship with the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity. He briefly described the breadth of the recommendations, which spanned insurance restrictions on services to suicidality among LGBTQ youth (ages 12 – 25), housing, DCF and the foster care system.
- Taylor Edelman mentioned that he had followed up with Dr. Phulwani about trying to contact a state senator to forward a recommendation on mandating provider training on LGBTQ affirming care but noted some of the challenges he encountered.
- He described the great momentum generated by the event and provided some highlights from the CE&O's committee's persistent discussion on how to continue forward to advance the issues raised and the breadth of recommendations contained in the report.
- At the most recent committee meeting, the CE&O members suggested convening an ad-hoc committee to review the recommendations and breakdown tangible actions to advance health and wellbeing of LGBTQ youth. Some recommendations are focused on legislation while others are focused on funding and programming. He is excited to continue the conversation through the ad-hoc committee, which will provide a structure to strategize what is realistic and who needs to be contacted to try to push these issues forward.
- Vicki Veltri expressed her support and appreciation of the event.
- Velandy Manohar noted that Dashni Sathasivam did a great deal of work on the report. He reported on his highlights and comments about the report:
 - He would like to see an LGBTQ education module added for every physician and certified health Care provider should take (page 4).
 - He felt that 211 must have a comprehensive, up-to-date resource directory for LGBTQ youth and they need to be trained to deal with challenges facing LGBTQ youth including and suicidality (page 5).
 - Relating to housing and medical care, there is an intersection of vulnerability and marginalization. There has to be greater support from agencies regarding diverse facilities. We need more granular data about LGBTQ youth populations by using social determinants of health and race, ethnicity and language data.
 - He agreed that the recommendation to introduce legislation to allow age 16 and above to receive hormone blockers without parental consent is significant to help transgender youth in their journey (page 10).
- Terry Nowakowski thanked everyone involved in this event and noted that Taylor Edelman would receive a certificate for his work in organizing this event.
- Terry Gerratana presented the certificate to Taylor Edelman.
- Taylor Edelman asked if there was a way for this report to be tailored for a consumer audience to make it more accessible?

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- Vicki Veltri asked now that the event is done, what happens next. It could be summarized and put out on social media. She agrees that OHS will put this out. But also OHS could help to set up a meeting with Jeff Curry and people at the legislature to discuss how does this report and recommendation inform the policy agenda of OHS, other agencies, and the legislature.
- Taylor Edelman agreed. He also mentioned the LGBTQ adult survey being conducted by the LGBTQ+ Network. He believes that the data being collected will be limited, but it is important. Coordinating the efforts in the state is critical for having a collective push forward on these issues.
- Adrienne Benjamin commented that the recommendation on puberty blockers being available for youth age 16 and above without parental consent is a complex issue. She feels that this the discussion of puberty blockers is a great way to enter the dialogue, and also can increase the wedge between youth and parents. Clinically she is concerned about pushing this recommendation forward.
- Taylor Edelman agreed it is a complex issue. He is coming from a harm reduction perspective. He appreciates the discourse and is interested in hearing what other folks have to say and that this will be a vital discussion to be tabled for a future work group. He does not have the answers, but from his personal experience he is on the side of allowing youth to have that access, but he also sees how it can be harmful for the family.
- Terry Nowakowski moved to approve the LGBTQ event summary report. Velandy Manohar seconded. Motion passed.

7. **Presentation, Healing Meals** **Sarah Leathers**

- Terry Nowakowski introduced Sarah Leathers, the Executive Director of Healing Meals.
- Sarah Leathers described the organization. Their mission is to provide healthy, organic meals and support for families who are facing a health crisis. Healing Meals is a CERES affiliate partner and a part of a national program. The organization became a nonprofit in 2016. Healing Meals provides their clients and up to 4 family members per client, 3 months of meals. This includes 4 complete dinners and soup or salad, which are delivered once per week. Each delivery includes a note written by a youth volunteer.
- They are also a part of the Food is Medicine Coalition. A recent study conducted by one of the coalition members evaluated the impact of health providers in California prescribing food to sick, low-income individuals. Findings showed that there was a 63% reduction in hospitalizations, 50% increase in medication adherence and a 58% decrease in client emergency room visits. She also presented findings on peer reviewed research.
- Other coalition partners have been advocating for medically tailored home delivered meals to be classified as an essential health benefit. Healing Meals is also looking to support this in Connecticut.
- Healing Meals partnered with Mental Health CT and Community Health and Wellness clinic in Torrington to conduct a small study looking at how a meal intervention impact a person’s overall wellbeing. They found that all participants reported an increase in overall wellbeing. Some clients also chose to pursue the nutrition and education program.
- Healing Meals has a youth development program. They serve as volunteers and are asked to make a 3-month commitment for 2 – 3 hours a week. Youth volunteers serve as primary chefs working with adult mentors and receive education on nutrition, Food Service and values. Healing Meals also began a Youth Garden Program in 2021.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021, 145 youth were engaged; 3 youth currently serve on the Board of Directors, and 20 youth serve on the Youth Development Committees (volunteer orientation, outreach, diversity and inclusion). Healing Meals is looking into creating a prenatal program serving meals to women during pregnancy and postpartum. They are also working with a pulmonary rehabilitation program at Bristol and St. Francis hospital and how their meal intervention can help to increase health outcomes. Terry Gerratana asked how individuals are selected or find about the services provided by the organization. Taylor Edelman asked if they are working with the CT Health and Food Policy Council. Sarah Leathers responded that they are not. Peggy Lampkin suggested the organization: Center for Science and the Public Interest. They are focused on universal meal program for all students. Sarah Leathers thanked Peggy Lampkin for her suggestion. She noted that they are looking at how to get their youth to educate younger youth. Christiane Pimentel asked if the program is primarily tailored to folks suffering from cancer and their families? Sarah Leathers responded that the program was originally focused on cancer patients, but has since grown to include families going through a health crisis. The organization is moving to a larger kitchen to continue to expand the number of people that they serve on a regular basis. Sarah Leathers stated that she is happy to speak further with any members of the CAC and that they should feel free to reach out. 	
8.	Announcements/New Business	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terry Nowakowski thanked Dashni Sathasivam for her outstanding assistance and work with the CAC over the past year. HES's contract ends on June 30th. Terry Nowakowski announced that Terry Gerratana is retiring as of July 1, 2021, from state service. She thanked her for her guidance and all that she has done for the CAC. Terry Gerratana thanked everyone and stated that she will be available for the new member orientation. The date of the orientation will be determined. The next meeting will be held on CAC July 13, 2021 	
9.	Adjournment	5:07pm
	Terry Nowakowski moved to adjourn the meeting. Velandy Manohar seconded. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:07 PM.	