

**Adult Behavioral Health Planning Council
Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Day/Date:	Thursday, August 14th, 2025 2:00 – 4:00 PM	
Location:	Teams	
Members Present:	Peter Tolisano, Laura Watson, Jennifer Abbatemarco, Rita Natale, Will Erdman, Katherine Gallo, Giovanna Mozzo,	
Staff Present:	Kyle Barrette, Dana Begin, Liz Feder, Elsa Ward	
AGENDA ITEM:		ACTION
Overview of the Social Prescribing Initiative: Chris Appleton, Lucy Rabinowitz-Bailey, Art Pharmacy	Representatives from the organization Art Pharmacy presented on the concept, process, and outcomes of social prescribing, a non-clinical approach that connects individuals with arts and cultural experiences to improve their health and well-being. Chris and Lucy also discussed Art Pharmacy’s current work in Connecticut, in partnership with the CT Office of the Arts, to establish a roster of arts and culture partners that will be able to provide arts and culture experiences as part of future social prescribing efforts in the state. Chris discussed efforts to raise awareness of social prescribing in Connecticut and how members can advocate to employers and health insurers, to include social prescribing as part of their benefit plans.	Chris and Lucy to share presentation slides and materials that can be used to advocate for the inclusion of social prescribing within health and workplace benefit plans.
Planning Council Survey Results: Christine Guerrette, Jennifer Sussman, UCONN Center for Prevention and Evaluation Statistics (CPES)	Representatives from the UCONN Center for Prevention and Evaluation Statistics (CPES) presented an analysis of the Planning Council survey results. The survey was distributed to Planning Council members in May, to assess members’ understanding of the gap, needs and priorities within Connecticut’s behavioral health system. Christine and Jenn provided a summary of findings from the survey results and highlighted the major gaps and priorities identified by Planning Council members.	CPES to share presentation slides
Block Grant updates: Kyle Barrette, DMHAS	Kyle provided an overview of how the Planning Council survey results were incorporated with other statewide needs assessments, to identify priorities for the mental health and substance use block grants. Kyle provided an overview of changes that were made to the block grant spending plans to reflect these priorities. Kyle provided an overview of the combined block grant application for FFY26-27 and identified that the application will be posted for public comment during the next two weeks. Kyle provided updates on the FFY 2026 projected budget for the Mental Health and Substance Use Block Grants. The FFY26 federal budget has yet to be enacted but there is currently a proposal to consolidate the Mental Health and Substance Use Block Grants into a single grant, and to cut overall funding for the block grants. However, SAMHSA has directed states to apply for the block grants as they normally would and DMHAS is proceeding with completion of the FFY26-27 block grant application. As noted above, the block grant application is	Kyle to share presentation slides Kyle to send out link to DMHAS webpage where members can review the draft block grant application and provide feedback/comments

	currently posted for public comment and will remain on the DMHAS website.	
DMHAS Updates: Elsa Ward, Director, Office of Recovery Community Affairs Dana Begin, Director, Evidence Based Practices	Elsa provided an overview of the state's new Peer Support credential which is currently being implemented. Elsa discussed the grandparenting process that will allow current peer professionals to obtain the credential at no cost. Elsa also discussed the timeline for implementation of the credentialing process. Elsa noted that all information about the credentialing process can be found on the Office of Recovery Community Affairs webpage: https://portal.ct.gov/dmhas/divisions/divisions/recovery-community-affairs Elsa provided an update on this year's Recovery Month event. Elsa noted that this year's event will be hosted by Sound Community Services who is planning a multi-day event that will include an array of wellness activities and that will be open to everyone. Elsa noted that some activities will be held at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford and transportation (bussing) will be available. Dana provided an update regarding the state's 988 crisis hotline. Dana noted that United Way is currently responding to chat/text during first shift hours but will be expanding to respond to chat/text 24/7. Chat/text services during second and third shift hours are currently provided to CT residents by the national 988 backup centers, but this change will provide a local response via chat/text to Connecticut residents during all hours of the day.	Elsa will share flyer for the 2025 Recovery Month event when it is finalized
Planning Council business: Kyle Barrette, DMHAS	Kyle discussed a proposal to meet in person for the next Planning Council meeting on November 13 th . Members discussed possible meeting spaces that were in a central location within the state. Members identified Page Hall at Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH) in Middeltown and Carelon Behavioral Health's public meeting space in Rocky Hill.	Will and Kyle will follow-up with members to identify best meeting location. Kyle will book meeting space for November 13 th .
Next Meeting:	November 13th, 2025, 2:00-4:00pm location TBD	