

State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
March 20, 2024
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Janice Andersen, Jennifer Buckley, Thomas Burr, Angela Duhaime, Evan, Allison Fulton, Holly Hackett, Pamela Mautte, Allyson Nadeau, Manuel Paris

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Nancy Navarretta, Deputy Commr. Colleen Harrington, Francis Giannini, Cheryl Arora, Marilyn Duran, Chris McClure, Lady Mendoza, Kelly Sinko, Elsa Ward

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:30 PM by Chmn. John Hamilton.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of previous meeting review and action

The minutes from the February 21st meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

Legislation – We are about halfway through the session and basically what you do at the beginning of session is different. Bills get proposed and they go through the committee process. Kelly and Lady identify bills that may be of concern, of interest, and basically deciding whether DMHAS needs to weigh in on testimony or not, or whether they work with the proponents or what kind of strategy they want to take to make sure that anything that gets passed really reflects our values and the people we serve. The next step in the process is, as we're testifying, public hearings are starting to slow down, and every committee has a different joint favorable deadline. What that means is the committee has by that time to vote bills out of their committee. If they don't vote the bill out of committee, it doesn't move forward. However, that doesn't necessarily mean you won't see it again. There are always amendments, there's always another path, but at least that bill in its current form will no longer move forward. Public Health and Judiciary are some of the biggest committees that we see bills in, and they have the latest JF deadline. Public Health is in the beginning of April. After there will be a slight lull, but then they'll probably start doing session and that's where the House and Senate can take up bills and vote them through. There will be chances for DMHAS to weigh in and have amendments. A bill must go through both chambers and then be signed by the Governor to become law. There's a lot of places besides testimony that we can impact the bills. So even if we didn't testify or go in person, rest assured that there is a lot of ways that we can work with proponents and work with other people about, how to get bills amended.

Some of the bills that DMHAS provided testimony on are SB 1 which is the Senate Democratic caucuses priority. That bill has over 30 sections and DMHAS only focused on three areas within the bill. One of them was around *worker safety*. This bill included the same language as another bill that was also on worker safety, where essentially would require home health care agencies to not only provide extensive information for prospective clients, but also for the folks that are going to be in or expected to be close to where services were going to be rendered. Also in SB 1 is the *drug deactivation and disposal system* and this language is the exact same language as another bill that DMHAS provided testimony on and that's HB 5249. The last section that DMHAS focused on was regarding *first episode psychosis*. These sections would codify most of DMHAS current practice. Some other bills that testimony was provided on include SB 243, which would require ACT teams to be embedded in home health agencies. The bill already got voted out of committee, but it was sent to judiciary because it had a fiscal note. Doctor Kapoor provided testimony on HB 5509. This bill basically reverses a lot of legislation that was passed two years ago regarding the PSRB. SB 370 is regarding pure respite centers and testimony was submitted on this because it would have a significant unbudgeted fiscal impact on the agency.

Other – Commr. Navarretta presented at Eastern State University on the opioid epidemic. She and Kim Karanda also represented DMHAS for the second meeting of the Interagency Council on Homelessness. There's a couple of working subgroups that the commissioner of DOH has put together and that information will be cycled back to this

Interagency Council for action steps. Commr. Navarretta also visited Toivo this week in their beautiful space in Hartford. She also went out to see Intercommunity's updated space and Bridge House along with Fran Giannini.

In terms of general numbers for who DMHAS is serving and coming out of COVID, the numbers overall both state operated and private nonprofit are going back up. They are not quite to pre-pandemic levels but are just under 100,000 served. They had dipped down to like 89,000 during the height of the pandemic, so those numbers are creeping back up again, which is a good thing.

Agenda Item 4: Presentation – Southwest CT Mental Health Services – Francis Giannini, CEO

- The Southwest Connecticut Mental Health System (SWCMHS) is a DMHAS state-operated, Joint Commission Accredited, Lead Mental Health Agency (LMHA) that serves lower Fairfield County via three sites, two in Bridgeport and one in Stamford.
- Greater Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center has been in operation since 1973.
- The name SWCMHS came about in the mid-1990s when the Franklin S. Dubois Center in Stamford became part of the GBCMHC system.

Services Offered:

The array of services provided includes:

- Inpatient Services (62 beds) CTU 20 Beds, PICU1 21 beds, PICU2 21 beds.
- Community-Based Outpatient Services that provide a continuum of care designed to meet the specific needs of those we serve. Census = +/- 3000
- Manage and oversee 32 private-not-for-profit agency contracts that provide residential, employment and clinical services (mostly SUD treatment related).
- The agency employs more than 375 employees and serves approximately 4,000 consumers annually.

Happenings in Region 1

- Changes in Policing – Pros and Cons
- SWCMHS Mobile Crisis Services
- Housing Costs and the Unhoused
- Continue to contend with COVID-19 outbreaks and quarantine affected inpatient units and state operated YAS TLP when needed.

Recent Accomplishments

- In July received our 3-year Joint Commission Accreditation
- Since July 2023 filled 58 position vacancies
- Implemented group programming on all 3 inpatient units
- Implemented the use of Restraint Chairs (less traumatic) on the inpatient units that have reduced the need for full body restraints from 4 per month to 1 per month
- Reduced mandated overtime from an average of 130 hours per month to an average of 10 hours per month
- Decreased emergency clinical codes to an average of 1-2 per week
- Increased BHH Enrollments from 490 in Oct to 706 in Jan – Goal = 765
- Outpatient Rehab Department – Recovery Education Center: Citizenship Test Preparation Program.

New Developments

- Hired a new Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinical Director – CSU & YAS
- Hired a new Site Director for the 100 Fairfield Ave Site.
- Hired a new Director of Nursing for the PICU 1 unit.
- Several facility improvement projects moving forward:
 - The completion of our Parking Garage construction project is expected December of 2024
 - Main entrance Lobby redesign and upgrade project is underway
 - Zen Garden
 - Reopening of a Transitional Residential Program
 - Sprinkler Installation Project – 1st planning meeting scheduled

- Developing outpatient level of care expectations for SWCMHS clinical services
- Receiving funding for 8 Forensic Residential Beds (Recovery Network of Programs)
- Inpatient Rehab Dept starting their Horticulture Program Fresh Vegetable “Farm to Table” initiative.

Agenda Item 5: RBHAO Report – Pam Mautte:

Hub Updates Feb-March

- We welcomed a Prevention Corps member, Alexa and two new Hub team members, Jacqueline (who will focus on our SOR RFW efforts) and Thamarlande (who will focus on our additional state funding efforts)
- Many Hub team members attended CADCA and the SAM conference
- The Hub is co-chairing the Greater Bridgeport CHIP Behavioral Health task force and we began our Mental Health First Aid grant that will fund four adult trainers and two Spanish-speaking trainers with a goal of training 130 community members in by June.
- The Hub team submitted written testimony to the Appropriations Committee to show our gratitude for the inclusion of RBHAO funding in the state budget. One team member testified online. Some members also visited the LOB.

Gambling Updates:

- Event with Guest Speaker Saul Malek: March 25th, 2024, 6:30pm to 8:00pm, Via zoom, all are welcome, “Why Risk Your Life? Live it!” Saul Malek will talk about his past gambling addiction and his road to recovery. <https://www.thehubct.org/event-info/why-risk-your-life-live-it-with-saul-malek/form>
- Community Conversations: March 8th, 2024, 12pm to 1:30pm, Burroughs Community Center, all are welcome, A Community Conversation About Gambling. <https://www.thehubct.org/event-info/a-community-conversation-about-gambling-lunch-learn/form>
- Gambling Awareness Campaign was rolled out in March.
- Community conversations scheduled in the community.

RSAB Updates:

- Talk Saves Lives Series Professional Development for DOMUS Staff (Stamford) - 4 sessions over 3 days
- RSAB Subcommittee met for the first time and discussed region-specific at-risk populations. Currently conducting inventory assessments across all 14 towns.
- Training totals for February (QPR and Narcan) = 8
- Trained CT School Psychologist on 2/22 (during their communities of practice meeting) = 97 training over 4 concurrent trainings
- Met multiple times with statewide RSAB leads (discussed partnership with Postvention TOT, Mobile Crisis, Trauma teams etc.)

RFW Updates:

- Prospective RFWs (approached or in-process):
 - Progressive Institute (Trumbull)
 - Positive Directions (Westport)
 - Kids in Crisis (Cos Cob)
 - Daydream Communications (Norwalk)
 - Turnbridge (Westport)
 - High Focus (Norwalk)
 - Silver Hill (New Canaan)
- Began to compile list of treatment centers and non-profit organizations focused on behavioral health to approach re: RFW certification
- Developed RFW informational one-pager/flyer and streamlined RFW guide to help prospective RFWs navigate the certification process and document completed steps
- Attended in-person RFW All-Regions Monthly Meeting at TriCircle (Meriden)

- Virtual meeting with Region 5 RFW Coordinator and CT Clearinghouse to discuss proactive and intentional collaboration opportunities with regards to RFW initiative, including resource library, website updates, etc.
- Launched two-month regional RFW awareness campaign - includes bus tail ads; social media posts; website banner ads, geofencing, streaming audio and email through Hearst media; and Fairfield County Business Journal Sponsored Story.

APW

- We welcomed a new Prevention Specialist to work on cannabis prevention.
- We are 1 of 100 pilot sites through the Drug Policy Alliance who are participating in their anti-stigma initiative. The goal of the stigma survey is to provide a better understanding of levels and drivers of stigma and determine a baseline level of stigma in our community.
 - Results will help identify differences in stigma, addiction knowledge, and endorsement of various policies and responses across demographics, geographic areas, and professional occupations.
 - A greater understanding of the attitudes and knowledge people have of addiction will help communities identify where addiction education and targeted interventions need to be implemented.
- Naloxone Trainings – We held 8 Narcan trainings in the past month with 89 kits distributed.
- Held 2 Mental Health First Aid trainings

Gambling Updates:

- Held a “Discussion on Sports Gambling” with 2 national speakers Saul Malek and Daniel Trolaro. The workshop was well received and participants engaged in dialogue.
- As part of Gambling Awareness month we rolled out our awareness campaign.

RSAB Updates:

- Held several QPR in person and virtual trainings
- Hosting March Mental Health Roundtable for New Haven Public Schools
- Hosting L.E.T.S. Save Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for Black and African American Communities on 3/27 5 pm - 6:30 pm via Zoom register here: [Home - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention \(at-tendeease.com\)](https://www.americanfoundationforsuicideprevention.org/)

RFW Updates

Prospective RFWs (approached or in-process):

- Rushford
- Portland Youth & Family
- Multiple businesses within Local 478 Union
- Project Courage
- Barnum Financial Group
- The Diaper Bank of CT
- American Poly Film
- Penn Globe (Pennsylvania Globe Gaslight Co.)
- Ulbrich Steels & Special Metals

WCTC

PGS-Gas Station ads- Cheshire, Prospect, Waterbury

March Madness Campaign- 65 posters, social media, and 4 print ads (NewsTimes, Litchfield County Times, New Milford Spectrum, The Register Citizen)

Co-sponsorship with Region 4 for a webinar about Veterans and Gambling Risk

Community Conversation on Gambling- 2 scheduled in March

Prepping for spring college and senior center tabling events- ordering swag and resources to share

Impacts of Legalized Gambling in CT report was released-

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DMHAS/Publications/2023-CT-FINAL-REPORT-Jan312024.pdf>

SOR/RFW- WOWG's next meeting is March 20 where we'll have a presentation on RFW and Ability Beyond's employment services. An in-person meeting is being planned for May at Wheeler in Waterbury with a presentation on the history of harm reduction. My LPCs with SOR dollars are chugging along nicely.

RSAB-We had a successful postvention 101 training in New Milford in February and are planning another for April in the Litchfield area. Next R5SAB meeting is March 27 at 10:00AM on Zoom where we'll be hearing about older adult mental health, isolation and risk and protective factors, as well as a LGBTQIA+ suicide prevention presentation. We continue with QPR trainings and completed a teen MHFA with Waterbury Youth Services and Bridge to Success in Jan-Feb.

DFS-Educator on vaping for school staff was published

Presentation by Amada Pickett from the Statewide Dept of Education on restorative practices and data collection

Working on expanding membership beyond greater Danbury- outreach through our various community partnerships

Prevention Committee-

LPC Leadership: January meeting topic was on conducting a youth survey.

Community Conversation on Gambling at 3/19 meeting, and a showcase of FY2024 LPC successes to date.

WCTC will be holding *Connecting-Right Here, Right Now*, on 4/24/24 at WCSU to present the Regional BH Priority Report and share resources.

Amplify

- Hosted “2024 Amplify our Advocacy” event w/ Advocacy Unlimited – over 70 participants in person and hybrid with 4 clubhouses and consumers. The annual training and discussion focuses on Advocacy, the history of de-institutionalization in Connecticut, the Peer Recovery Movement, and community resources.
- Participated in the Teen day of Prevention at CREC Academy of Computer Science and Engineering with over 200 students
- RSAB meeting focused on problem gambling and its relationship with suicide
- Partnering with VA suicide prevention coordinator on military focused breakout for May 2nd State Suicide Prevention Conference
- A problem gambling and suicide presentation was presented to the Regional Suicide Advisory Board, participants in attendance walked away with an increased awareness of the connection between veteran problem gambling and suicide numbers. A flyer from Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling was shared and distributed with the group. The presentation lead to an increased number in registrations to Amplify's PGAM event.
- A gambling and gaming presentation was given at the Bristol B.E.S.T LPC meeting. In attendance were parents, educators and medical professionals. Participants in the audience did not fully understand the idea of youth gambling due to the fact their general idea of gambling was on card games, lottery, and sports betting. The slides were shared with audience. The presentation included a segment on how to start the conversation of gambling with children.
- Problem gambling information was shared with students at the Day of Prevention event. Students interacted with Amplify's spinning wheel to answer questions about gambling and suicide prevention. Students were given a prize if they answered a question or scenario about what number to call, or how to spot the signs that someone may be experiencing a problem with gambling. 50 flyers of gambling youth data were distributed to faculty and students.
- Problem gambling coordinator collaborated with MCAA to help at a tabling event at Lewis Mills High School. Parents were able to have a conversation with the problem gambling coordinator in understanding how and

why gambling should be discussed with the youth. 50 flyers were distributed to parents along with packets on how gambling and gaming are interconnected. A majority of parents did not understand the idea of loot boxes or skins and how they could be considered gambling. Parents were given tools to start the conversation of gambling with their children.

- Save the Date – Amplify our Mental Health – May 16th!

SERAC

- On March 26th hosting a virtual lunch and learn on the topic of Caring Connections, a support approach utilized after a mental health crisis.
- Problem Gambling Awareness Month's (PGAM) "Every Story Matters," campaign is being featured on social media platforms for March.
- National Prevention Week (NPW) Planning Meeting and subcommittee meeting to discuss NPW 24 event at Camp Net in Niantic.
- Distributed approximately 80 kits in Feb and March.
- Total of 15 business have been certified as Recovery Friendly Workplaces as of March 2024.
- Providing presentations to local prevention councils on the DMHAS biennial priority report.
- First draft of the new regional needs assessment for co-occurring issues of alcohol, depression, and trauma has been completed and under review.
- Provided Public Health Safety Mental Health First Aid.
- Planning dates set with SMHA and Martin House in April for re-establishing CAC membership and structuring more meaningful ways for lived experience participation in advisory council meetings.
- PTTC will hold 2 workshops for Region 3 in April –The two sessions will be Fentanyl and Xylazine 101 and Stimulant Use: An Overview of Cocaine, Meth, and Ketamine and its Prevalence in Eastern CT.

Agenda Item 7: Potential Future Topics (need for Presenters):

- Access to Beds or Lack of for Mental Health and Substance Use – Denise Paley
- Cannabis recommendations – Allison Fulton

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, beginning at 2:30 PM.