

State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
April 21, 2021
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Craig Allen, Daniella Arias, Haley Brown, Sharon Castelli, Marcia DuFore, Kathy Flaherty, Allison Fulton, Anna Gasinski, Ingrid Gillespie, Jennifer Henry, Pamela Mautte, Brian Reigner, Phil Valentine

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Delphin-Rittmon, Deputy Commr. Nancy Navarretta, Jose Crego, Steve DiPietro, Marilyn Duran, Ana Florence, Marlene Jacques, Mary Kate Mason, Art Mongillo

Excused: Kevin Sevarino

Agenda Item 1: Call to order and introductions

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

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of previous meeting review and action

The minutes from the March 17, 2021 meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

- COVID-19 – Deputy Commr. Navarretta mentioned that DMHAS continues to update COVID protocols and if anyone is interested in finding out more information to go to DMHAS COVID response website for information related to travel, quarantine and following DPH and CDC guidelines. Staff COVID testing is continuing at DMHAS facilities. Telework continues for DMHAS administrative staff primarily at OOC. In terms of the vaccination, about 68% or possibly more of DMHAS staff has been vaccinated. As for vaccination of DMHAS clients, there has been ongoing communication with conservators about getting consent before clients are vaccinated. Everyone (staff and clients) has been offered the COVID-19 vaccine. To date, about 66% of DMHAS clients have been vaccinated.
- **Legislative Session** – Deputy Commr. Navarretta provided an update. SB888 – legalization of cannabis passed out of Judiciary and now is on the Senate calendar. This requires ADPC to make recommendations on legalized cannabis including mitigating youth use and access; reducing public health risks and suggesting data surveillance. The bill provides for 15% of excised taxes related to legal cannabis to go to substance use prevention and recovery. DMHAS, DPH, DCF and DSS continue to have conversations related to the language of the bill.

Some telehealth bills DMHAS is tracking is the telehealth bill SB1022 which modifies requirements for the delivery of telehealth services and insurance coverage of the services, so it expands the type of providers and it allows for audio only telehealth and prohibits some providers who are reimbursed through insurance asking for any money from clients or patients; HB5596 requires DPH to study the benefits of telehealth services; and HB6470 an act concerning home health, telehealth and utilization review.

Bill HB5550 would have established a task force to study peer support methods for billing died in committee but the language may be included in an amendment or on another bill. In terms of the bills that DMHAS submitted HB6839 adds people with lived experience to the WFH Task Force and allows individuals in WFH to be present during search of their belongings and allows DMHAS facilities to share healthcare information with appropriate permission within our service system. SB960 an act concerning pretrial alcohol and drug education programs died in committee. Bill HB5586 expands the state police crisis program providing support to people with addictions and was amended to include language that allows a person who has overdosed to be taken into custody and taken to the emergency department.

- **Budget** – Steve DiPietro announced that the committee’s budget came out this morning and \$2.5 million was added to each biennium for mobile crisis enhancement; \$1.6 million for young adult services caseload growth for 2022 and \$4.9 million in 2023; \$522 thousand for contract increase on the CMHC account for 2022 and one million for 2023. The cannabis allocation was removed from the general fund account and it looks like it will be funded by a non-appropriated account called recreational cannabis account. It looks like the PNP accounts were not funded in the DMHAS budget but might be in OPM’s budget for potential increases. Mary Kate Mason added that the appropriations committee amended the deficiency bill to include \$15 million for PNPs. This is not a final budget yet.

Agenda Item 4: Presentation Topic: Hidden in Plain Sight (HIPS); Presenters: Anna Gasinski and Haley Brown

The presentation is essentially an interactive and educational workshop that showcases various items that can be purchased on Amazon for under \$25 and used especially by teens in order to stash or hide alcohol and other drugs. HIPS also provides education around various drug trends and how to talk to your teens about drug use and provide resources as well. Over the last year the presentations have been done virtual. Parents have a significant influence in their teen’s decision to experiment with alcohol and other drugs. One of the most influential factors during a child’s adolescence is maintaining a strong, open relationship with a parent. Teens who learn about the risks from their parents are up to 50% less likely to try alcohol or marijuana. For more information go to www.drugfree.org

Agenda Item 5: Workgroup Updates and solicitation for a new workgroup on Best Practices for Warming Centers / General updates / Announcements

- Dr. Allen said the Marijuana workgroup plans to do a Zoom meeting with the committee. The marijuana bill SB888 is going to go before the Senate. Some of the items to be discussed is the marketing of cannabis; holding cannabis establishments and producers to the same level that we hold tobacco products in terms of the ability of marketing to youths and limiting the age of access to 25; looking at potency limits; and looking to push the money set aside for prevention and recovery to 50%.
- John Hamilton said the Social Justice workgroup has not met since the last meeting.
- Brian Reigner talked about having a workgroup on the best practices approach and standardization for warming centers. Brian hopes CT can up its level of support and intervention in this area. The subcommittee can provide recommendations to the housing department.
- Ingrid Gillespie gave an update on CPN. CPN will have a forum coming up next Thursday and on the 29th covering a couple of topics and a presenter who will show how drug testing can determine drug trends and insights. Pam Mautte announced CPN along with a few other community partners are working on a statewide campaign - “Do You Know” to address the fake pills and are hoping to have it launched late summer or early fall.
- Jennifer Henry announced that she has been working on a project since the pandemic collecting money for care packages for the residents at two nursing homes in CT and it was a success. 300 care packages were given out. She is hoping to do it again this year.

Agenda Item 6: Potential Future Topics (need for Presenters):

- Impacts of Recreational Marijuana legislation – Dr. Kevin Sevarino
- What’s Happening at SAMHSA – SAMHSA Region 1
- Update on Sober Housing
- HealthCare: Access to Specialty Services
- Alcohol Awareness

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 19th beginning at 2:30 PM.