

**State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
April 16, 2025
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Janice Anderson, Thomas Burr, Sharon Castelli, Angela Duhaime, Kathy Flaherty, Allison Fulton, Mark Irons, Pamela Maute, Manuel Paris

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Navarretta, Deputy Commr. Harrington, Richard Callahan, Cheryl Arora, Marilyn Duran, Chandra Persaud, Kelly Sinko, Elsa Ward

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Call to Order

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

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of previous meeting review and action

The meeting minutes from March 19, 2025, were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

Budget: We are still in a holding pattern waiting for the Appropriations Committee budget. At the federal level, we are tracking it closely for any changes and communications coming through from the federal government about changes to our funding. We just received notification about ARPA Block grant monies and that is still under review, and we are waiting for final guidance. Some of you may have received letters from us and if you did receive one of these stop-work orders, essentially the spigot was turned off March 24th. So we just wanted to make sure we had the correct invoices because we want to be able to invoice for the services that we did provide. These were grants that were supposed to run through September, and they were unexpectedly just discontinued. So we had a little bit of a reprieve with a temporary restraining order, and that meant the spigot was turned back on. And there is a court date tomorrow and we are hoping to have some final resolution. The reason behind this has been that COVID is over, and these were COVID related dollars. The AG's office and other states AG's have done a great job in challenging some of these efforts to. We appreciate everyone's patience, and we appreciate working with all of you to understand.

In terms of community events Commr. Navarretta and Amy Marracino from Young Adult Services (YAS) department, participated in a press event with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and State Department of Education around services for young people. We had two graduates of our YAS attend and they were awesome, and they were stars of the show. They got write-up in the paper and were able to express how services helped them get their lives on track and develop careers. One person is actually an RSS and the other one would like to go into healthcare and is taking courses.

Commr. Navarretta met last week with our public psychiatry fellows in New Haven. It is always good to meet with a new generation of folks that will be going into this field. And they had lots of questions about the federal landscape as well.

Yesterday we had the ADPC meeting with two great presentations learning more about DCP's liquor control and cannabis regulation. The presentations were well done and very informative.

Tomorrow night is CCAR's event honoring volunteers. They have a large volunteer team that is all about giving back.

Legislative: We are in a bit of a lull right now and that is because a lot of committees have reached their joint favorable deadline. So since that is wrapping up all the caucuses are now doing something called screening; in which they review every single bill that has been voted out of committee to determine which ones are easy to get over the finish line versus which ones they need a little bit more work and which ones may have a fiscal note. They use a document called a file copy, which is basically a printed version of the bill that was reported out of committee. That includes the bill analysis and a fiscal analysis that is prepared by the nonpartisan offices to look over the bills and see what the next steps are. Session will start essentially later in May when it starts to have an uptick, so we'll be there tracking bills that potentially may have an impact to DMHAS.

Next week is the Appropriations Committee JF deadline so we'll see what the legislature is proposing as a budget. And then instead of DMHAS specifically, there is just a lot of bills that impact state agencies that we are looking out for. Like what the legislature is doing, we are screening every bill that's come out of committee, making sure we didn't miss anything, making sure that substitute language that may have come out doesn't impact DMHAS and just keeping a real close eye on everything.

Agenda Item 4: Southeastern Mental Health Authority (SMHA) Update – Rick Callahan, CEO

SMHA is in Norwich and has about 150 employees. This is our 30th anniversary year. We probably enroll about 600 or so people here that we see from our community. We have an array of services which include mobile outreach, assertive community treatment, young adult services, community support programming; and a kind of unique 15 bed residential program that runs 24/7 and can accommodate some higher need individuals so we can step down from higher levels and step up from the community as needed. We have a traditional outpatient program, forensic services, employment services, and a robust housing office. We run from almost the Rhode Island border down to Colchester.

Some of the initiatives that we have targeted over the last year:

- We had a major hiring initiative and done very well and feeling well staffed right now.
- There has been a lot of training across DMHAS, and we've been a part of that.
- We had a large supervision initiative where we implemented with a trainer out of Yale a supervision process for all our staff. So they're getting now two hours per month of supervision and it's documented and formalized. It has policy to back it up.
- We also had a large DBT initiative. We trained a team of eight and we have two full DBT groups up and operationalize.
- We interviewed a psychiatrist yesterday.
- We are really driving here and for all of us across our system, a continued focus on integrated care.
- We've also been very active with Yale and their specialized treatment early in psychosis (STEP) program.
- We had an interview with NBC News and sent one of our clinical directors along with the director of Young Adult Services statewide.
- We had an event down here at the New London Library where two of our clinical directors and a supervisor of our mobile outreach team went out to speak along with the Yale representative and it was well attended.
- Staff safety has really popped its head down here. So we've really collaborated with our line staff from a management perspective to ensure everybody's got a smartphone that's going out in the community and we also introduced a GPS alert system where direct care that are going out into the community actually have a button on them that they can push and it will alert security right away.
- We've been partnering with NAMI Southeast, and I recently had a meeting with their president and out of that he said that a couple of local churches have approached them about getting some understanding about mental health. A few people in their congregations have come to them asking about that, and so

we're in the process right now of trying to strategize how we'll do that and try to hit a large mass if we can.

- We have an annual event here at SMHA that will be scheduled for next month with NAMI. It's an essay event with Ledyard High School, and it really allows kids at the Ledyard High School to write their feelings around mental health. And what does that mean to them and what can we do to break down barriers? It's called *Breaking the Silence*. And it's a really an exciting celebration event and there are three judges.
- We had a joint commission review and did very well on it and we got through it and we're good for another three years and I just want to say that the team down here really did an amazing job with it.

Agenda Item 6: RBHAO Report – Highlights for this month:

- We are all wrapping up our priority reports in the next two weeks.
- We had a very successful Alcohol Use Disorder conference as part of our initiative across the state. It was very well received.
- The Regional Suicide Advisory Board coordinators statewide were partaking in the conference on Suicide Awareness for May 8th, and it's already sold out in full.
- Problem Gambling Month was very successful with all of the events across the regions, a lot of the communities accepting the proclamation to build awareness as well, and they wrapped it up with our coordinators, and were able to go on the casino tour at Foxwoods and Mohegan and learn about the preventative initiatives that they're on board with and how they could be a good community partner to us.
- Our jewel and cannabis work are moving along very well as well all the mini grantees for cannabis have been awarded, so they're working on cannabis prevention in their local communities. *To Be in The No* campaign is going to be doing a big push this week with a lot of social media going out.
- The Partnership for Hope and Healing for suicide prevention has been going well. All our communities have selected their communities and they've gone through the school team trainings as well as the community trainings in those meetings.
- And lastly, we are all working on events with our local prevention councils and events that we're offering as part of National Prevention Week and May is Mental Health Month.

Agenda Item 7: General Updates/Announcements

Thomas Burr - NAMI CT: As we turn the corner here into May shortly, being Mental Health Awareness Month, we're going to do as we do every year our NAMI walk, we've changed it up a bit this year though instead of being at Bushnell Park in Hartford on the 3rd Saturday, we're actually going to be in New Britain this year at Walnut Hill Park and that's going to be on May the 3rd.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, **May 21, 2025**, beginning at 2:30 PM.