

State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
April 15, 2026
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Jennifer Buckley, Thomas Burr, Sharon Castelli, Sam DeCarlo, Kathy Flaherty, Alison Fulton, Mark Irons, Pamela Mautte, Dena Miccinello-Barbarula, Manuel Paris

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Navarretta, Deputy Commr. Harrington, Dana Begin, Cheryl Arora, Marilyn Duran, Christopher McClure, Felicsha Osbourne, Chandra Persaud, Kelly Sinko, Stephanie Welch

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 18th were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

- Participated in a press conference with DCP following the scheduling of Kratom. And will continue to partner on education of merchants and consumers. The RBHAOs will be involved in that with DMHAS Prevention Department.
- Intercommunity, which is one of DMHAS's LMHAs and is also a FQHC lookalike, had a change in leadership. Kim Beauregard retired, and Tyler Booth will step up to CEO.
- RNP in Bridgeport has officially opened their renovated facility that houses men's transitional housing, men's recovery house, withdrawal management, and DMHAS's enhanced forensic respite beds. That's a unique program for diversion and restoration to competency in the community, so folks don't have to go to the hospital.
- The DMHAS team presented at a virtual regional NASADAD meeting on stabilization centers and SUD media campaigns that included the campaign on OUD, AUD and cannabis.
- And on April 10th, CABLE ran a very successful CIT conference in Hartford, it was well attended by law enforcement, mental health professionals, and people and families with lived experience.

Budget:

Recap Governor's Mid-Term Adjustments:

- Provides funding for:
 - Wage increases for HCBS waivers for low-wage workers.
 - Continued competency restoration services and supports.
 - Community supports to facilitate state hospital discharges.
- Transfers Substance Use Disorder (SUD) demonstration waiver reinvestment funds to DMHAS.
- Reduces various legislatively directed funds by 20 percent.

Appropriations Committee Budget

- Provides funding of \$775,000 in FY27 for RBHAOs (\$155,000 per RBHAO) to expand suicide prevention and postvention services via the Regional Suicide Advisory Boards (RSABs).
- Provides funding of \$350,000 in FY27 to the Connecticut Alliance of Recovery Residences (CTARR) to support operations including recovery residences, inspections and certification, training for operators and data collection.
- Restores \$150,000 to maintain funding for legislative grants.

Legislative Update:

Overview of Proposal Journey:

- Fall of 2025 Agency submits to OPM

- January 2026, final proposals approved to share with stakeholders
- February 4, 2026, 1st day of Session (short session)
- February 20, 2026, need bill concept to be raised by appropriate committee
- February – March 2026, Public Hearings are held
- End of March 2026, deadline to pass out of committee
- May 6, 2026, last day of session, needs to pass both chambers

DMHAS agency bill update on two agency proposals: HB 5515, an act expanding access to opioid overdose reversal medications. It removes barriers to access for opioid antagonists by updating some education statutes to conform with changes in FDA designations and allows the distribution of over-the-counter opioid antagonists by state agencies and other organizations and exempting the free distribution from the nonlegend drug permit requirement. The bill right now is pending to come out on the House floor because it's a House bill. It will start in the House, and then once it's voted out, it will go to the Senate. House Bill 5517 is a recovery friendly language bill. It has over 100 sections in it and some other technical and conforming changes. It is still being worked on. Although the policy is not being changed, it's just simply updating substance abuse to substance use. Some stakeholders have reached out with some questions and general concerns about some of the changes that are being proposed in that bill. If the bills haven't gotten out of committee, they won't be moving forward, but there are a lot of amendments.

Some overall themes discussed were reaction to change in federal leadership, fiscal guardrails, homeschooling regulations, artificial intelligence/online safety, government oversight, worker protections, DOC healthcare, and healthcare affordability.

Some highlighted bills discussed: House Bill 5480, Medicaid coverage for peer support services. HB 5556 and HB 5447, addressing young adult complex care. HB 5490, regulation of sober living homes. SB195, reduction of overdose deaths. SB 365, emergency department Bridge Program.

Agenda Item 4: Presentation – The Crisis Continuum – Dana Begin, DMHAS Director of Evidence-Based Practices and Grants Division

Dana provided an overview of our DMHAS crisis care system. They talk about three key components. to an effective crisis care system.

- **Someone to talk to**
 - 24/7 statewide crisis call center
 - Connecticut's crisis call center all operated by the United Way of CT:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline/988
 - 1-800-273-TALK(8255) has become 988
 - ACTION Line
 - Adult Crisis Telephone Intervention and Options Network
 - 1-800-HOPE-135
 - DCF Crisis Hotline
 - Accessed by calling 211
 - 1-800-273-TALK (8255) has become 988
- **Someone to respond**
 - Mobile crisis team
 - Department of Children and Families (DCF)
 - Mobile crisis response for individuals under age 18
 - 6 contracted providers, 14 locations
 - Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
 - Mobile crisis response for individuals age 18 and over
 - 18 mobile crisis teams statewide

- Emergency Certificates
- **Somewhere safe to go for help**
 - Emergency departments, crisis respite and crisis stabilization
 - 23 Hour Crisis Stabilization Center
 - R.E.S.T. Center (Rapid Evaluation, Stabilization and Treatment)
 - In New Haven
 - Run by Continuum of Care
 - Multi-disciplinary team
 - LOS less than 24 hours
 - Welcomes up to 10 individuals
 - Very similar but an alternative to the ED
 - Police drop-offs
 - Open to anyone in the state.
 - Peer Respite: The Gloria House
 - In New Britain
 - Run by New Life II
 - Staffed by individuals with lived experience
 - LOS 1-7 days
 - Welcomes up to 4 individuals
 - Less acute crisis
 - Open to anyone anywhere in the state.

How crisis calls work in CT:

- United Way is the statewide crisis call center in CT
- Handles crisis calls that come in via multiple crisis lines including 211, 988, and ACTION Line provides crisis support for all ages;
- Designated contact center specialists, specially trained in taking crisis calls;
- Contact center specialist respond to calls in one of the three ways:
 - Telephonic support and resolution – 94% of calls
 - “Warm handoff” (telephonic transfer) to the mobile crisis team in the area – 5% of calls
 - “Active rescue” – 1% or less of calls

Messaging to share:

- “There is no wrong door” in CT. To reach the CT crisis contact center for telephonic support or mobile crisis services, people can call 211 and press 1 for crisis and then 1 for children or 2 for adults, or they can call 988 to be routed to the CT contact center. They will not have to press any other numbers when they call 988 to get services, and call, text and chat services are all functioning. Veterans are still guided to press 1 for Veterans Crisis Line when they call 988, just as the 800 NSPL line did.
- Youth in crisis? In CT, call 211 (press 1 for crisis, 1 for youth), call/text – 988 or chat www.988lifeline.org
- Adults in crisis? In CT, call 800-HOPE-135 or 211 (press 1 for crisis, 2 for adults), call/text – 988 or chat www.988lifeline.org

Agenda Item 5: RBHAO Report – Highlights for this month

- Cannabis prevention and education continues. There's been some resilient focused parent training. They have some new survey data coming in on school-based presentations. They have been doing a strong emphasis on safe storage through lock bag distribution, as well as environmental scans and community awareness activities are continuing.
- Nicotine and vaping: environmental scans, community outreach coordination through their different the sub-regional work groups. They have been distributing quick kits and educator resource bundles. They will be having mini grants go out. They are all in that process right now. And they have been at a lot of community enabling events.
- Overdose prevention, SOAR, PDO, RFW: multiple trainings continue for naloxone, PDO, as well as substance exposed children across community groups, schools, fire, EMS, and police. They have been working on the expansion of the naloxone cabinets, installed and planned ones going on throughout their regions and working on recovery-oriented partnerships and outreach through recovery friendly workplace, progress coordination, recovery friendly communities, etc.
- Suicide prevention, mental health promotion, postvention: this is like the RSAB, the PH2/GLS work, a lot of QPR related trainings, presentations delivered. There's a lot of planning going on for Mental Health Awareness Month and National Prevention Week. Community and school initiatives are doing great. The school and the multidisciplinary school teams and community lead suicide prevention teams in those five different communities throughout the state have a lot going on with events, school policy work, school programming, and things like the Gizmo has been implemented and Signs of Suicide and a lot of resource dissemination. So, there's been a lot on prevention, postvention, grief support. 988 and signage going out in the various communities throughout the regions.
- Problem Gambling Prevention Month concluded last month in March. There were community conversations, screenings, presentations for a variety of folks, youth, parents, clinicians, a lot of outreach. They're continuing planning activities again for May's Mental Health Month and National Prevention Week and looking for future speakers and resources, and they've been integrating problem gambling with a lot of our other topics as a two-fold.
- Alcohol prevention and positive norming campaign. They had a nice workshop on April tenth. A small work group roundtable discussion on adult use of alcohol. They've been promoting statewide style messaging, encouraging reducing drinking or knowing your numbers, and outreach in school and community settings plus coalition support and geofencing has been going on.
- For local prevention council stuff, they all continue to have regional LPC meetings. They have been working with SEPIS to do some focus groups with their local prevention councils. So those have almost all have taken place in every region.
- For policy legislative they continue to monitor, just like they have heard different topic areas and submit testimony for specific bills and can continue to engage with all of our legislative leaders, whether it's local or state level.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, **May 20, 2026**, beginning at 2:30 PM.