

State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
March 15, 2023
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Craig Allen, Rebecca Allen, Thomas Burr, Angela Rae Duhaime, Jordan Fairchild, Allison Fulton, Ingrid Gillespie, Holly Hackett-KTP, Jennifer Henry, Giovanna Mozzo, Allyson Nadeau, Larry Pittinger, Brian Reignier, Kevin Sevarino

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Nancy Navarretta, Deputy Commr. Colleen Harrington, Cheryl Arora, Marilyn Duran, Alicia Feller, Mary Mason, Chris McClure, Arthur Mongillo, Kelly Ramsey-Fuhlbrigge, Sarju Shah

Excused: Manuel Paris

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 15th meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

- **Legislation** – Kelly Ramsey-Fuhlbrigge announced that she is tracking over 100 bills that if passed may affect DMHAS services. A few of the bills are regarding the Opioid Settlement Funds and most of those bills will die. There are a few proposals with regard to police officers being more involved in mental health and addiction services.
- **Budget** – Tabled
- **Other** – Commr. Navarretta mentioned that since we last met the DMHAS team testified before the Appropriations Committee and everything went well. On Monday DMHAS testified on the bill for adding persons with lived experience to boards and councils at the state and local level. She wants to thank everyone who testified at the public hearing on behalf of DMHAS services. There is an RFP posted on the DMHAS website on the Peer Navigator Program. The first meeting of the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee was held yesterday with over 80 people in attendance. The meeting consisted of level setting information explaining legislation and Attorney General Tong attended and gave a little background information. Katie Ramos the administrator of the committee was in attendance and explained her role. Commr. Navarretta is the co-chair of the committee along with the Waterbury Mayor Neil O'Leary. The meeting will be held bi-monthly.

Agenda Item 4: Presentation – Southwest CT Mental Health System (SWCMHS) Alicia Feller, CEO

SWCMHS covers region 1, from Stratford down to Greenwich and includes 14 cities and towns; there are 3 locations and 2 are in Bridgeport. There are 3 inpatient units in the main building for a total of 62 beds. SWCMHS is joint commission accredited under hospital standards. There are a number of outpatient services which include YAS, intake unit, with clinical service levels in between and a mobile crisis team which they are looking to expand to provide 24/7 coverage. They are having a difficult time hiring staff for the off-shift positions. So now they have changed the job specifications to include LPC and LMFT. The mobile crisis team does operate 7 days a week from 8am to 4:30pm and then have on-call coverage after that. Across town they have an assertive community treatment team with a higher level of care and they also have a community support program and a homeless outreach team as well as a small housing unit that oversees 32 private non-profit providers. Down in Stamford there are more of the same services minus the in-patient, homeless outreach team and assertive treatment team.

Right now there are a couple of projects going on such as the parking garage renovation and also there is a 4th location that has been vacant for a while and they are looking at plans to refurbish it and move some of the programs located in downtown to it. Some of the initiatives being looked at are the Integrated Care Committee addressing co-occurring disorders and medication assisted treatment. They have a really strong focus on people with lived experience and try to have a person with lived experience on all of the out-patient teams and are actively recruiting

for some of those positions. Also through this they operate a program called Peers Utilizing Skills for Healing and part of that project is a warm-line that is operated 7 days a week. During Covid they were able to expand the hours of it and pulled back once programs started opening up again.

They are also doing a lot of work with local police departments in Stamford, Stratford and Fairfield. They are all very interested in and have been looking for guidance from SWCMHS around embedding social workers who can respond to behavioral health calls in the community. They also have an embedded CIT clinician with the Bridgeport police department.

SWCMHS is excited to be opening an 8 bed transitional residential program in Bridgeport hopefully in mid-May and June. Some of the challenges are around staffing and hiring nurses and social workers so roles have been switched again to include LPC and LMFT. Another big challenge is around housing since inventory is almost non-existent; housing prices are very expensive and the cost of living is also very expensive. SWCMHS has around 380 staff and serve around 1700 unduplicated clients throughout the year.

Agenda Item 5: Presentation – YouThinkYouKnowCT.org, Giovanna Mozzo, Director, The Hub

Giovanna provided an overview of You Think You Know. It's a public awareness campaign that was developed in CT in response to the increase in access to fake pills and favorable attitudes of taking them, that have claimed lives of young people in the state and around the country. It was launched on 9/1/21 in collaboration with the 5 RBHAOs and other stake holders in our state. The goal is to raise awareness and save lives by educating teens, young adults, caregivers and the general public about the dangers of fake pills. The concept is fake prescription pills are produced to look almost identical to the real thing. Often, you can't tell the difference without lab tests. That is where the campaign name came from. You Think You Know what you're taking, but unless it comes from a licensed pharmacy, you can't be sure it's safe. Since the launch the committee members have presented to several organizations and due to these connections they have reached 48 states that use the campaign. In 2022 they did a lot of promotion and through social media avenues and website they had more visits and likes due to the increase in awareness. Some of the strategies used were newspapers and magazines. They also had billboards and bus ads in our state. Region 1 ran a 3-month campaign collaborating with State Opioid Response mini grant-ees. The Hub has a toolkit on their website and it is available to anyone looking to download the information. The toolkit includes fact sheets and postcards, bus and billboard banners, poster and flyers, website banner ads and social media ready posts. One of the Hub's partner created the fact sheet in Spanish. To access the toolkit, go to youthinkyouknowct.org/toolkit. In the next year, You Think You Know will be presenting at our Rx and Illicit Drug Summit. Coming up is the 2nd annual Fentanyl Awareness Day on May 9th, during National Prevention week. They are coordinating with DMHAS to create a social media campaign to be used the week leading up to the 9th.

Agenda Item 6: RBHAO Report

The 5 RBHAO's are continuing to complete the Regional Priority Reports. In addition, they continue to implement the following activities:

- Narcan Training and distribution
- Regional Suicide Advisory Board activities including various suicide awareness events, trainings and post-vention planning.
- Planning for National Prevention Week which is May
- Planning for May is Mental Health Month activities
- March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month - we have been promoting and hosting Problem Gambling Awareness events.

Specific information on trainings and meetings can be found on or websites or through contacting them:

Region 1: The Hub: Behavioral Health Action Organization for Southwestern CT, A Program of RYASAP, Janice Anderson

Region 2: Alliance for Prevention Wellness – BHCare, Pamela Mautte

Region 3: SERAC, Angela Duhaime

Region 4: Amplify, Inc., Allyson Nadeau

Region 5: Western CT Coalition, Allison Fulton

Agenda Item 7: Other Workgroup Updates/General Updates/Announcements

- Chmn. John announced there is a homeless taskforce that has been meeting up every other week and will have a conference coming up in May. There are resources being put into homelessness and gaps and training opportunities to be identified with treating people with dignity and respect and increasing access for eligibility status and low barrier care. A report will be provided at the next meeting.
- Ingrid Gillespie talked about the bills that correlate to the Tobacco Health Trust Fund. A number of folks testified at a public hearing because in the upcoming budget with the \$12 million received it was proposed down to \$6 million but the Public Health committee is really supporting the CDC's recommendations and how it affects everyone and prevention. One of the challenges when we have that funding is to support smoking cessation for those living with substance use disorders and mental illness. We hope that we will get \$22.7 million which is the CDC's recommendation for CT.

Agenda Item 8: Potential Future Topics (need for Presenters):

- *DMHAS Facilities LMHAs Services*
- *Peer Support Certification*

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 19th, 2023 beginning at 2:30 PM.