

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

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Amanda Adams, Dr. J. Craig Allen, Thomas Burr, Krystin DeLucia, Kathy Flaherty, Allison Fulton, Holly Hackett, Mark Irons, Pamela Maute, Giovanna Mozzo, Allyson Nadeau, Manuel Paris

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Navarretta, Deborah Lawrence, Janet Andrews, Cheryl Arora, Chris McClure, Melanie Richard, Sarju Shah

Excused: Sharon Castelli

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 minutes from the October 16th meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

OSAC – We just approved another recommendation for over \$600,000 over the course of 2.5 years that will expand what was started under the Healthy Campus initiative, which winds up in December, and so this initiative will give the opportunity to 15 or 20 college campuses to get more education around recovery, recovery efforts, prevention, how to reach their students, and really focus on a more in depth implementation plan. TA assistance also given to college campuses across the state and campuses can request individualized TA as well through this initiative. Our spend at this point is just over \$21 million.

Agency Update – We've had an election and there's going to be a change in administration, so we can't predict what things are going to look like in six months or a year even, but we will hold steady and work with the Governor here in Connecticut to continue to do the work and serve the individuals living with behavioral health concerns.

The state budget is tight and there is a lot of competing priorities across the state for a challenging budget. We will continue to advocate for prevention, treatment and recovery supports services that some of you provide and folks receive across our state.

Some activities over the past month were:

- The Prevention Summit that was hosted by our Prevention department, led by Sarju. It was a great sold-out event. DMHAS prevention partners are front and center, both Assistant Secretary Miram Delphin-Rittmon and Commr. Navarretta made opening remarks and then visited the New Britain Peer Respite with the SAMHSA team.
- Bridges in Milford had an open house for their young adult drop in, both Elsa and Commr. Navarretta attended.
- NAMI had their annual conference that was held in Southbury and Commr. Navarretta attended as well as the All-Commissioners meeting with the Governor's office and OPM. Commr. Navarretta was able to highlight some of our cross-agency work addressing outreach and engagement of unstably housed individuals.

- The Governor's Prevention partnership had a 35-year anniversary celebration in West Hartford, which was very well attended. Commr. Navarretta gave some opening remarks along with AG Tong, Comptroller Scanlon and many others.

Commr. Navarretta is pleased to report that our naloxone distribution continues to be impressive. Thanks for our partners at the RBHAOs as we see a decline in both fatal and non-fatal overdoses. Lastly, Alice Minervino did a presentation on housing initiatives across the state to educate folks about the type of recommendations that are in the pipeline and so we do have prevention and recommendations that are floating around in the harm reduction space. Stephen Murray gave a presentation on his hotline for not losing using a loan. Chris did a presentation on harm reduction centers.

Budget – There was \$50 million in OPM's budget this year in ARPA money for private providers. DMHAS is receiving about 8.3 million of those dollars, which will go to direct service providers and works out to be between 2 and 2 1/2 percent.

Agenda Item 4: Presentation – Western Connecticut Mental Health Network (WCMHN), Deborah Lawrence, CEO

Some highlights of what's been going on since we last met WCMHN has three sites, the Danbury, Torrington and Waterbury sites, and cover the 44 towns in Northwestern Connecticut. We provide array of services from outpatient to case management, residential, jail diversion, mobile crisis, community support, assertive community treatment, etc.

- We had a network wide recovery conference for our clients, this past May at Naugatuck Valley Community College and it was focused for the clients on self-care. We offered breakout rooms for mindfulness chair yoga, meditative drawing, sound healing, and drumming. We had our guest speaker, a person in recovery Lee Stano. The clients loved it, so we're working on what we're going to be doing for next year.
- We've been working on hiring and filling our vacancies. Our human resource department has really done a fabulous job within the past year. We have filled most of our vacancies. We worked collaboratively with human resources last fall, and we had our first ever behavioral health hiring event here at Western. We probably had 40 people show up for it; and HR and managers from Western together interviewed staff for the whole day and we ended up hiring, probably about eight people. Some of the vacancies that WCMHN had turned into recovery support specialist. And it's really focused on increasing the number of recovery support specialists within Western. We have them within one of our access centers, our assertive community treatment team, and our outpatient program within mobile crisis.
- Because of the COVID pandemic a lot of our groups had not been occurring, so we've started implementing more of our in-person groups, and our family nights. We have families and their loved ones that are clients coming to the sites. For example, one of the sites had an evening on self-care and offered acupuncture, meditative drawing, and chair yoga. We've had CCAR come and present information. We've had some of our staff go and talk about housing and the options in the area and how to go about applying for housing.
- One of our behavioral health home managers has expertise and background training in art therapy and so although she manages the behavioral health home program she was interested in bringing in art therapy students, so for the past year and a half we've been having art therapy students working with our clients. One of the things that one of the art therapists did was to have an art show, a creative expression show with the Young Adult Services program in Waterbury. The clients did drawings, paintings, singing and dancing, and wrote poetry. They really loved it.
- We had a DMHAS wide art show and from the different sites of clients that wanted to participate we brought their artworks up to Capitol Avenue and it was just a great open house of an art show. And the clients were there. They brought their families, their friends, and our staff went up.
- The flood of August 18th this year affected the Western area, and the Danbury site was flooded. The staff could not be there for probably three or four weeks until the new carpeting had to go in and we had

pulled down some of the walls and put up new walls. The following weekend, the Red Cross reached out to DMHAS and asked for volunteers to help provide resources to the victims of the flood. So the mobile crisis had volunteers immediately and our outpatient clinicians volunteered. So the following weekends they were in Newtown and in Salisbury with the Red Cross reaching out to families that were victims of the flood.

- Our behavioral health home program manager and our medical director Doctor Cooperman have been busy providing trainings not only for our staff but also for community providers. And so just an example of some of the trainings are in harm reduction, psychostimulants, gambling, obesity, alcohol and opioid abuse. We have an aging population so because of that we have an APRN in the behavioral health program who was providing on training on how to care for our clients who have diabetes, hypertension, and ones that are fall risks. We have trainings on entitlements.
- The Commissioner had asked all the CEOs at one point about year and a half ago, what are our needs? One of the things that we had strongly said is in terms of training the kind of trainings that we needed for our staff and so as a result we just went through a fabulous training put on by Yale around supervision and teaching our supervisors how to supervise. We also have the opportunity now for our clinicians to go through DBT training, which is Dialectical Behavior Therapy treatment; EMDR which is for folks with history of trauma; and IDDT which is dual disorder training. Our mobile crisis team went through training.
- The Young Adult program up in Torrington accepted 22 high risk clients and with the capacity to take a total of 28 on top of the clients that they're already serving.
- Our behavioral health program also provides health and wellness tables at all three sites, and so it's right when you walk into our agencies where there's information for our clients on eating right, exercise, dieting, etc.
- In the spring Deb worked with the Connecticut Women's Consortium to do a review of how trauma and gender informed Western was meeting the needs of the clients as best we could. So we look not only at the kinds of programs and services and groups that we provide but how do we respond to our clients and what is our language like. How are they greeted at the door? What does our building look like? So we went through a very intensive 3 day review of looking at our policies and talking with leadership, direct care staff, our clients, and looking at our building very carefully. And we have come up with a plan to roll out now that includes areas that we've identified that we want to work on. Two of our staff developed a language matters training to be rolled out to our staff in terms of the words that we use and looking at our policies and the documentation that that we're required to use and the forms that we fill out; are they really trauma sensitive? What kind of signage we have? What does it look like in the reception area when people walk in? How does security greet people? So we've just been rolling that out recently and it's really quite exciting. And because of that we have some lease renewals with a couple of the sites that were able to even choose some more trauma informed colors to paint the buildings.

Agenda Item 5: RBHAO Report – Pamela Mautte

The RBHAOs have been working in training the Department of Children and Families throughout the state in naloxone training. It's been well received and continuing through December. All of us are using the same curriculum that was developed by Allison Fulton's region and approved by the state and DCF. The feedback's been great that we, the trainers, have been getting and the employees really appreciate it. So that initiative has been going great statewide. We're continuing to work on our different initiatives with getting messaging out through the Department of Motor Vehicle TV screens that everyone has to stare at while they're waiting. Every month we have a new message that's related to the work that we do. We also have those going out on some radio network messaging.

All our teams across the state have been working together collaboratively through our priority report their goals for equity, capacity and behavior change.

Collectively, we hosted Jessica Leahy, the Speaker of the Addiction Inoculation and the Gift of Failure in Wallingford for statewide events November 6th and it was very well attended. We have some additional communities and schools who are working to bring her back for their districts, and we also had an evening event for parents to attend. We continue to do our naloxone trainings and working on our prescription drug awareness initiatives as well as our jewel cannabis, adult use of alcohol and all of our mental health promotion.

Agenda Item 6: General Updates/Announcements

The Liberation program with McCall is excited to hear we've received a three-year extended renewal for the COSAP grant at BHA Grant that DMHAS is involved in and we're very excited to continue that project and work towards expanding it to scale police departments all around the state are looking for this very innovative program to be put into their community.

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

- Access to Beds or Lack of for Mental Health and Substance Use – Denise Paley
- Update on Cannabis – Sarju Shah
- Importance of Mental Health in the elderly – Statewide Services

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, **January 15, 2025**, beginning at 2:30 PM.