

**State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
October 15, 2025
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Thomas Burr, Sharon Castelli, Kathy Flaherty, Mark Irons, Pamela Mautte, Allyson Nadeau, Manuel Paris

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Navarretta, Deputy Commr. Harrington, Cheryl Arora, Marilyn Duran, Christopher McClure, 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 September 17, 2025, were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

- The federal government is shut down and so far we can continue our business operations for the quarter. This will affect our ability to get in touch with our project directors at the federal level. But we have been able to draw down funds and will monitor the situation closely with OTG, the Attorney General, and our sister state agencies. You all should not feel any effects in that way this quarter.
- On September 19th under Elsa's leadership, we wrapped up a series of peer trainings concluded with a retreat for participants across the state.
- The CCAR Recovery Walk was a great success. It was a great day and many of our partners in recovery treatment and prevention were present.
- Doctor Dike has transitioned to his new CEO role at CMHC and Dr. Carvalho is doing a great job as interim medical director for DMHAS.
- Commr. Navarretta met with the northeast regional state mental health commissioners this week. We were able to touch base on some of the federal issues and some of the local approaches. As you know, Connecticut is in pretty good shape fiscally. So that has also added some comfort from the governor's office going into the government shut down.
- We're making progress internally on securing an EHR and moving forward with electronic time keeping and scheduling.
- Commr. Navarretta met with the DCF interim commissioner Susan Hamilton. She is transitioning and will be co-chairing the ADPC. At our next meeting, Michael Giralmo will be presenting on the triennial report, which is one of the bigger reports that we do collecting all the work that's going on in the state departments around substance use disorders and our interventions across prevention, treatment, recovery supports, and harm reduction.

Agenda Item 4: Federal Landscape – Chris McClure, DMHAS Chief of Staff

The federal landscape is changing very quickly. The administration and congressional partners have been moving expeditiously to make widespread profound changes to the way the healthcare system operates. And that's created a sort of volatility in the environment that has caused a lot of concern. The public law 119-21, also referred to as the one big beautiful bill, has certainly garnered a lot of attention and we do anticipate there will be significant impact on Connecticut, but the country as a whole, because of some of these changes. A few of them don't take effect until 2027. What we're going to potentially anticipate for the State of Connecticut is the Medicare and Medicaid changes will create some churn in the system, and some people will drop off eligibility. Both because of changes to eligibility, but also because of the changes to how you apply for eligibility will be a little more difficult to maintain. At this point the Department of Social Services is anticipating somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 individuals will fall off enrollment. They could have gaps in coverage and for DMHAS that has a revenue impact, but we don't know the volumes. Therefore, we can't really anticipate the revenue change, but that will absolutely impact the state. There are certain adjustments being anticipated.

The federal changes fall into different buckets and the five buckets that we anticipate are going to be eligibility redeterminations, Medicaid retroactive coverage, Medicaid eligible populations, community engagement requirements, and cost sharing requirements. There are some exemptions for mental health and substance use such as the work requirements.

The federal government, particularly in the first few months of this administration, was incredibly active. In March of this year the Department of Government Efficiency, DOGE, the Elon Musk LED effort to cut federal spending did not hit our programs and federal grants too much. But one of them was the American Rescue Plan Act dollars. They sent out a notice that the program was ending and so there was not a lot of advance notice, and it created severe disruption. The State of Connecticut did an exceptional job filing a lawsuit with a consortium of other 22 other States and we were very quick. And by the following week we had received a preliminary injunction, and then the federal court ruled against the administration on this and all those funds are restored. and to this point they had they never appealed to the finding. So by September 30, all our funds were out the door, which was the plan all along. That was a that was an obvious success for us.

We had another one in mid-July. The administration changed the way they interpreted the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Act benefit eligibility to exclude persons with uncertain immigration status. That was not in the legislation from mid 1990s; they just read it into it, and so it took quite a while for that one to have legal determination. We filed suit right away, but we just received a preliminary injunction a few weeks ago to prevent enforcement of that. This will be one that the federal government continues to appeal, but that would take quite some time to work its way through the Court system.

Next in July, the president issued an executive order about ending crime and disorder in America's streets, and this resulted in sort of the awareness of the homeless encampments. The commissioner has done a series of events with the governor and providers to talk about the potential impacts that this could and will have on people. There's not a legal effort quite yet but if it does come to it there will be some level of the deployment of National Guard troops to some of the major cities around the country.

In early August the president issued an executive order about federal grant making and those included a few changes that we anticipate will impact states but also providers which can't offer gender affirming

care, and individuals with unclear immigration status cannot be beneficiaries. The sort of the discretionary manner that is applied is that the individual reviewing the grant application should be reviewing it for alignment with the President's policies. So it's going to take away a little bit of our academic type of grant applications. We have not had a grant denied yet, but we have certainly received a lot of questions. If you use the word harm reduction it gets flagged. There are subsequent questions, but we thus far have not had any denials.

The last one was in mid-September the president issued another executive order the Gold card, which requires a \$100,000 application fee for an H1B visa. This will absolutely impact the medical community with the number of doctors and research scientists we bring in on these H1B visas.

DMHAS is in full compliance with federal laws and directives. Legal action is taken when guidance is unclear or harmful. No federal funding has been lost to date. We are monitoring developments with state and federal partners. We are prepared to act quickly to maintain services and stability. We are two weeks into the federal shutdown.

Agenda Item 5: RBHAO Report – Highlights for this month:

Most of us have almost all our local prevention consults funded. We might have a couple stragglers who asked for extensions, so that work is being done, and it's nice that they don't have to only focus on vaping this year. We have a broad blend of different topics for substance misuse that they are working on. For general funds, all the coordinators across the state are working on launching a whole adult alcohol use campaign. So that's going to be exciting coming out in the next few months.

The Connecticut Problem Gambling conference is happening today. A lot of our coordinators are there. They're working with regional gambling teams preparing for March. They've been doing a lot of community outreach and training. Our partnership for success grantees are doing well. They're just rolling into the new year working with their local coalition.

We just wrapped up suicide prevention month. It was an extremely busy month for our Regional Suicide Advisory Board coordinators as well as them responding to some postvention losses in our communities, and a lot of good trainings happened on signs of suicide for youth in the schools. We did a lot of QPR trainings on Talk Saves Lives, and postvention training and media trainings as well as a lot of community awareness events and Out of The Darkness walks.

There is another QPR training of the trainer coming up and Amplify is hosting coming up this month. Our partnership for Hope and Healing Communities are doing well on huge successes in training entire school districts in a short amount of time. There's more training coming up.

Jule and Vaping is going well. A lot of them have completed environmental scans in their community. They are presenting and building a toolkit on how to conduct environmental scans. They'll be presenting it at the Connecticut Youth Service Association Conference.

Our state opioid response grants are going well. We are continuing to do our community naloxone trainings as well as recovery, friendly workplaces and recovery friendly communities. Our teams are actively recruiting for both of those. The prescription drug opioid work all our coordinators there have been working with fire, EMS, and some police departments on a leave behind kits. The leave behind kits are

getting out and trainings have been happening. And today they were filming the video series for first responders up at New Britain EMS on different segments that talk about stigma, harm reduction, first responder compassion fatigue and partnership.

Cannabis is going well. Our mini grantees are doing well with the cannabis, a lot of effort based on the data of what areas we need to do more focus. A lot of education has been happening as well as promoting the states media campaign The Be in The Know.

Agenda Item 6: General Updates/Announcements

NAMI: We are a little more than a week away from the NAMI Annual Education Conference, and Commissioner Navarretta is going to be giving some opening remarks. It's always a lot of great information, shared and a lot of new updates of what's happening in the wonderful world of mental health. So if you can make it out, that would be great.

Potential Future Topics

- Postvention – Suicide Response

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, **November 19, 2025**, beginning at 2:30 PM.