

State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
September 20, 2023
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Thomas Burr, Sharon Castelli, Angela Duhaime, Jordan Fairchild, Kathy Flaherty, Allison Fulton, Pamela Mautte, Denise Paley, Manuel Paris, Larry Pittinger

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Nancy Navarretta, Deputy Commr. Colleen Harrington, Jose Crego, Cheryl Arora, Marilyn Duran, Chris McClure, Arthur Mongillo, Kelly Ramsey-Fuhlbrigge, Kelly Sinko

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 June 21st meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

Budget – Tabled

Other - Commr. Navarretta provided some updates. DMHAS, DCF, DPH, and DSS all went before the legislature this week. They had their hearings for the block grant and all allocations were approved. DMHAS administers both the substance use and the mental health block grants. Commr. Navarretta sends a special shout out to the RBHAOs because they really are key in doing their priority setting process which is very much then incorporated into the DMHAS allocation plan.

DMHAS launched their first Episode Psychosis Initiative across the state. Both IOL and CMHC are funded to do this first Episode Psychosis program. The goal of that is to identify individuals and families who have a younger person experiencing the first episode and then hopefully to change the trajectory of that illness with early intervention, both with the individual and the family. DMHAS is increasing education across the state and training and access to services through consultation with subject matter experts in this space.

DMHAS has been working with PERCH, which is a part of Yale, to do a very exciting art project with clients or person served. DMHAS will bring all the artwork that clients have done to the freshly painted walls at OOC. They have over 100 submissions. They will also work with some students that will work with the clients to do a booklet.

Recovery month events continue and thanks again to all the RBHAOs for working with Elsa Ward, DMHAS Director of the Office of Recovery and Community Affairs to do this video project on however you define recovery for yourself with the goal of decreasing stigma.

The Harm Reduction Conference is at the Omni in New Haven on Friday and Commr. Navarretta will be doing opening remarks there. The Recovery Walk through CCAR is on Saturday. On Friday night and Saturday Rebecca Atkins and her group are putting on a production in Waterford, CT. Rebecca has been able to get actors from LA and New York to participate in the production. It's called The Waiting Room and there is no cost, but you do have to make reservations.

In terms of DMHAS state operated services, RVS, Southwest and CMHC have all recently gone through reaccreditation of the Joint Commission successfully.

Agenda Item 4: Whiting Forensic Hospital Quarterly Report – Jose Crego, CEO

So far, WFH has had multiple staff members over the last couple of months that have been positive for COVID. There have been four patients with COVID and all their symptoms have been very mild. They had three units that have been on quarantine because of positive patients. They currently have one unit that's on quarantine for COVID and they are managing the patients on the unit. They are really trying to balance the freedom that the pa-

tients have and enjoy especially now in the fall. It's so nice to go outside and enjoy the outdoors with the constraints that are placed around patients to keep the rest of the building safe because of COVID. So they are working through that along with all the medical requirements that are needed.

In the last quarter, the last month or so has been a little bit better, but they had quite a surge in admissions. They went for about a five- or six-month period of time where their admissions surged up to about 20 per month. Whiting typically gets around 20 admissions per month, and those admissions are typically around individuals that are coming in for competency restoration. So it really puts a strain on that process, so much so that they had to go to the DPH and ask for a 60 day and they did it in a two 30 day periods of permission to have the ability to add 10 beds to their census should they need it. Fortunately, they were able to manage so that they only needed to add one additional bed in that entire 60-day period.

There was also a lot of conversation with the Judiciary and the Public Defender's office about the ability, now that COVID has passed, to be able to do a lot more of the competency restoration out in the community, and they have all started working on that.

With regard to the to the administrative team back in December and January they were able to hire a Chief Medical Officer and a Chief Operating Officer. Recently, they brought on an Acting Chief Nursing Officer which has been very instrumental and as they work towards the Joint Commission accreditation. Their administrative team is in a really good place right now. There's a lot of exciting things happening at Whiting right now. So for the Joint Commission a few months back, they told the Commission that they would be ready for Joint Commission accreditation as of October 16th. This is the first time that Whiting is a standalone facility and will be Joint Commission accredited. They already are licensed by DPH, but this will be their first time as Joint Commission accredited and they are very excited to get there. In preparation to get there, everyone in the hospital has been thoroughly involved. They have been doing mock surveys on the units every week. They have been picking a unit and the administrative staff and some of the other leadership members have been going on the unit and doing a full-on mock survey of the units and they are really getting a lot out of that. It has become a very inclusive process. They are learning from it and extrapolating some of the things that they are learning on the units and taking them across the hospital, so they are getting better as a system, not just the one unit. So that's really exciting, so much so that after they planned on and will continue to do after the Joint Commission Accreditation Survey itself, they are going to continue that process on a monthly basis for a couple of things ongoing education to ensure that the processes that they have got established will continue to move forward as they continue to grow as a system.

As a result of the task force meetings, they received permission to have a building study done and they are currently in the midst of that study. It started yesterday and today is a full day of meetings regarding what a new WFH would look like, and they have got a team of architects there and folks from throughout the hospital involved. So it's really exciting and they are trying to involve everyone in the hospital, including patients, we understand that everyone at every level has something to contribute to this design and study process.

Agenda Item 5: RBHAO Report – Pamela Mautte

Region 1: The HUB

Recovery Celebration is tomorrow at Bijou in Bridgeport from 6-8pm.

Continue to host QPR, Naloxone Trainings, Gambling Awareness Teams, promotion of recovery month. Information can be found on our website as well as upcoming events.

Region 2: Alliance for Prevention & Wellness

- Held Recovery Luncheon on 9/11 which was well attended and we received amazing feedback from attendees who said they felt so safe and valued and enjoyed being in the company of others in recovery.
- Hired Problem Gambling Prevention Specialist
- Promoting Suicide Prevention Week / month with trainings and tabling events throughout the region and held postvention training
- Continue to host Naloxone trainings
- Holding fundamentals of the Strategic Prevention Framework and coalition building for new Local Prevention Councils and interested community partners.
- Participated in 2 Overdose Awareness Day events

- Attended the National Drug Endangered Children's Conference

Region 3: SERAC

SERAC Prevention Activities in Sept: tabling at several college events, an armed forces road race, and the local Out of the Darkness Walk as well as providing a QPR training for a local first responders, presenting 988 resources. Offering training on the connecting between eating disorders and suicide. The September Regional Suicide Advisory Board featured presentations on the new Urgent Crisis Centers as well as the work of the Regional Trauma Coordinators.

Two Narcan trainings were held in September, one at Willimantic Police Department, providing and one at Salem Public Schools. Upcoming training with Windham Public Schools and the Town of Mansfield.

CACs: CAC Meetings with NE and SE CAC members will resume next month.

Gambling Highlights:

- Two of the senior centers have scheduled CAP trainings
- SERAC will publish their first gambling awareness newsletter this month with subsequent updates bi-monthly.
- SERAC will participate in the Norwich Rose City Block party by providing a gambling awareness table.
- Local Prevention Council Applications: almost 20 received
- State Opioid Grants: almost 10 received
- Recovery Friendly breakfast in Willimantic this past Saturday. Well attended by individuals in recovery, partner with CCAR and highlighted Town of Windham as RWF site.

Region 4: Amplify

- **Regional Gambling Awareness Team** - RGAT Region 4 Meetings for 2023-24 are scheduled for the FY with the first meeting to take place in person at Amplify on Friday, October 13th. Please join us! Details can be found on our website amplifyct.org.
- **Local Prevention Councils** - We have received 24 LPC 23-24 applications to date with extensions granted to four, mostly needing town official signatures. Program manager to process and/or follow up on those received over the past couple weeks. Those complete will go to the accountant for payment. Ongoing support continues with towns who need enhanced technical assistance.
- **State Opioid Response** - Region 4 has awarded 13 of the 14 available SOR mini grant commitments with funds disbursed to all 13. Two (2) communities are participating in the mini grant funding for the first time. New partnerships include the Hartford faith community.
- **Recovery Month Luncheon** – Huge success! With the support of DMHAS, **Amplify** hosted a Regional Recovery Month Luncheon on 09/12/23 at Chrysalis Center in Hartford. The event featured 4 panelists including young adults and adults in recovery (representing mental health and substance use). Deputy Commissioner Harrington attended with 75 attendees.
- **Suicide Prevention Month** – Hosting QPR Train the Trainer and SafeTALK Train the Train as no cost to attendees. Details can be found on our website or call (860) Amp-lify to inquire.
- All 6 Regional **Catchment Area Council** Meetings resume meetings in September. Please join us! Details can be found on our website amplifyct.org.

Region 5: Western CT Coalition

- Annual meeting held in September at the Danbury Police Dept.
- All communities started up their meetings again
- Attended National Drug Endangered Children's Conference
- Holding Recovery Month celebration on 9/28
- Continue to conduct trainings for suicide and naloxone
- Updating presentations with new data and resources

Agenda Item 6: Other Workgroup Updates/General Updates/Announcements

- *Homeless Taskforce:* Sharon Castelli gave an update. They have had a couple meetings since the last State Board meeting and they have been focusing on the cold weather planning. As a reminder, the group is dealing with the increasing numbers of homelessness over the last two years with folks specifically with mental health and substance use. They have been also working with the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. All the coordinated access network throughout the state, the shelters and the rapid re-housing programs went out to rebid. And the concern that they have is the date that goes live, where that rebid is January 1st and they are in the middle of this cold weather planning and trying to figure out what's going to happen. That's probably not the best date with regards to switching shelter providers or CAN operators, so they did pass that information along to the Department of Housing.
- The last thing that the committee is working on is getting a list of PNP LMHA contacts for folks having a hard time getting verification of disability. They have been trying to peddle that list out to everybody and anybody that will really help expedite the 211 system. When people first enter into homelessness or when they contact the 211 system, they need to have homeless verification as well as disability verification. John wants to commend DMHAS representative Molly Machado for being so responsive in pulling this together.
- John and Sharon also participated in the Opioid Awareness Day.
- Thomas Burr, from NAMI CT, shared a save-the-date for October 20th for the NAMI Connecticut Annual Conference.
- Allison Fulton mentioned that they have had traditionally over the past several years three different locations for their office and region 5; because region 5 is kind of spread out and their office in Waterbury was kind of a cubicle with no windows and no elevator to the second floor, which wasn't really helpful when their Catchment Area Council wanted to meet there. So they have located a new building where they will be in October. They can take possession of the office and will have an open house later on in the fall. They will be in Watertown now. Danbury, Watertown and Goshen will be the three locations for their office. So when people come to pick up Narcan after a training, they'll go to Watertown office instead of all the way to the Waterbury office or the Danbury Office. She hopes that some of you can come visit them there once we get settled in.

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

- *DMHAS Facilities LMHAs Services*
- *Status of grassroots review/evaluation of DMHAS Services*

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 beginning at 2:30 PM.