State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
September 17, 2025
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Rebecca Allen, Jennifer Buckley, Thomas Burr, Sharon Castelli, Mark Irons, Pamela Mautte, Giovanna Mozzo, Allyson Nadeau, Denise Paley

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Navarretta, Deputy Commr. Harrington, Jose Crego, Cheryl Arora, Marilyn Duran, Christopher McClure, Chandra Persaud, Sarju Shah, Kelly Sinko

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 June 18, 2025, were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

DMHAS continues to track on federal actions and continues to meet with the AG and the office of the Governor regarding executive orders and multi-state lawsuits. As of today, DMHAS has not experienced any significant reductions. There was one small reduction in a grant that was being reauthorized. The federal budget will be telling, and we don't know what's going to be in there yet.

OSAC has met twice since our last meeting, once in July and again yesterday. The committee voted to move to a quarterly schedule. Most of the money has gone out the door to providers in the community, once recommendations were approved. This week, OSAC passed a two-year recommendation around training on MDFT for opiate use disorder in youth and will continue to accept recommendations.

As many of you may know Doctor Charles Dike, who has been our longtime medical director and before that, he was deputy medical director, has been promoted and he will now move to into the role of CEO of CMHC. Dr. Vinneth Carvalho will be our interim medical director for DMHAS statewide. She has been working under Doctor Dike and is doing a great job; before that she was at CVH.

Several weeks ago, Commr. Navarretta testified on the DMHAS block grants, which is a total of $30 million and the legislature approved the plan on how it will be spent.

Community events:

- Commr. Navarretta attended the graduation of the Recovery Workforce Learning Collaborative hosted by Perch in New Haven.
- She and her team reported out to the Alliance on mostly the end of the session legislative and budget issues.
- She and Celeste attended a celebration of Western's successful client outcomes in their BHH - Behavioral Health Home project, which connects physical health and mental health.
- She visited the Alliance for Living Harm Reduction Center and the Homeless Hospitality Center down in the southeastern part of the state.
- She also attended Connecticut Harm Reductions Day of Remembrance for Overdose Awareness Day at the end of August in Hartford.

- And then last week DMHAS had a fabulous prevention summit pulled together by Sarju and her team, and that was very well attended with Commr. Navarretta and Deputy Commr. Harrington.

Agenda Item 4: WFH Quarterly Report

Patient safety quality data:
Adverse events - 3 (Q4) up from 2 (Q3)
Safety Event Reports - (IRs) 556 (Q4) up from 356 (Q3)
Aggressive Acts – Self-aggression 44 (Q4) up from 4 (Q3); Aggression towards others – 157 (Q4) up from 84 (Q3)
Restraint and Seclusion – rate equals hours of restraint per 1,000 hours of patient care

- Restraints rate = .88 (Q4), up from .24 (Q3), remained below the NRI average both quarters.
- Restraint chair = 90% of restraints (Q4) up from 62% (Q3), remained below the NRI average both quarters

Operations – average of 32 unique patients on special observation (Q4) down from 36.6 (Q3)

- Medical Emergencies – 6(Q4) up from 4 (Q3)
- Security Breaches/Elopements – 3 (Q4) no change from 3 (Q3)

Regulatory and accrediting body news:

- Our joint commission reaccreditation survey is next year as such we will have Barrens here today for a mock survey.
- We continue with several monthly internal audits for continuous improvements, ultimately improving patient care.

Recruitment updates:
WFH has 44 positions that are somewhere in between having been posted and in for interviews. A total of 8 offers that are currently out waiting to hear back from individuals and 12 positions that are starting. That doesn't include about 21 positions that have gotten authorization to move forward with their part time positions to shore up our weekend coverage of staffing.

Patient treatment area updates:

- Increasing the capacity of both buildings in their respective treatment malls.
- Several rooms in the Whiting Building treatment mall will receive a facelift with fresh paint, floors, and ceilings. Some additions to the new area will serve as a salon, an occupational therapy suite, a sensory immersion suite, a life skills area, an art therapy room, and a vocational suite
- These additional activities allow our patients to explore and learn in many areas, which leads to a more meaningful stay in the hospital and successful discharges

Treatment activities:

- Continue to expand the staff knowledge base, as many of our staff recently finished DBT training.
- Increased the number of Co-Occurring disorder groups offered both on and off unit.
- Patients continue working at Valley View Café and the boutique located in Page Hall.
- Started a coffee cart that provides various job sites for vocational training.
- Serenity Panel will be installed on October 1.

Patient activities:

- Whiting Field Day last week
- Dutcher Field Day today shared with CVH

- Family Night has restarted

Community participation at the hospitals involved:

- Rotary Mental Health Committee involvement
- Middletown Community involvement with Mayor's office and chamber
- Continued opportunities to expand WFH community ties to expand community opportunities for our patients as well as provide awareness of the work of WFH and address misconceptions.

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

This month is suicide Prevention Month and all of us took part in promoting 988 days. All of us have been doing a lot of forward-facing events in the community for suicide prevention as well as social media posting and QPR trainings. All of us usually participate in the regional and statewide walks for suicide prevention.

Some highlights include Restaurant Week promotion. They had coffee sleeves and coasters go out to different restaurants during Restaurant Week and coffee shops using the sleeves promoting 988 and suicide prevention.

Region 4 had a whole playlist put together on Spotify that if you go on their website Amplify, you could download the calendar and scan it and there's like six hours of music that's uplifting music.

Under cannabis, one of our regions had someone certified with a CRM certification to increase resilience. They have the T break booklet/guides going out, which was developed by the University of Vermont, and it teaches people how to take a break from cannabis for responsible use.

Another region is doing some college education work on school substance use policy revision guidelines for SOR RFW RFC, Narcan trainings and distribution continue. *Do You Think You Know* campaign has been going on throughout the state with lots of views and interactions, especially with the back to school and sending college kids with naloxone.

Many of the RBHAOs have agencies in the process of becoming a Recovery Friendly Workplace.

Gambling 101 sessions continue. Some of the coordinators were selected to do a workshop at the Connecticut Youth Service Association upcoming conference on integrating gambling with other issues. They have consulted with Doctor Kilmer, who did a nice online meeting to talk about how they work with gambling and the science of the positive, giving some Technical Support. And most of the coordinators are integrating gambling in with all the RBHAOs other work. The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling has their annual conference coming up on October 15th.

For alcohol, Region 5 participated in Restaurant Week to really get information out about responsible use and they're also tying it into the Recovery Friendly Workplace as well as throughout the region. Much has been going on with responsible adult use and promotion of that.

For the Regional Suicide Advisory Boards, they are very busy and many of the coordinators have been unfortunately working on some postvention responses. There seems to be a lot of recent suicides throughout the state.

For the partnership for Hope and Healing, all the RBHAOs have been working on training school districts with well over 1000 educators trained in those selected communities in QPR and many of them are doing community events this month as well.

Juul vaping - there's an upcoming workshop at the Legislative Office building with CCRA about properly disposing vapes. So that's on September 30th from 9:00 to 1:00.

The PDO (Prescription Drug Opioid Overdose) trainings for the first responders continue. RBHAOs are all working with that and getting the overdose response kits out into the communities and to first responders. All the LPC applications are going well coming in and communities are getting funded. All of the RBHAOs continue to work on substance exposed children with workshops that will be happening this fall throughout the communities.

Agenda Item 6: General Updates/Announcements

- CCAR is doing the Recovery Walk on Saturday, September 27th from 11:00 to 3:00 at Bushnell Park. They are also doing an event in October with their young person and family program, they're calling it Nourish and Flourish, and it's a community resource fair where they're doing sound healing. They're doing a whole bunch of different things, but they're asking for donations like canned good, diapers, and personal care items and they are going to be donating this to some of the area nonprofits. There will be therapy dogs and things like that.

- NAMI is having their annual education conference next month on the 24th. And the theme this year is Building Hope Together. It's always a good conference and has lot of dynamic speakers and lots of great new information for members as well as the public. And as a bonus this year Commr. Navarretta will give opening remarks.

- Liberations held an Overdose Prevention Overdose Awareness Day on the 31st and had some events in Fairfield County. They hosted one in Bridgeport and John moderates one every year in New Canaan. Paul Reinhardt has been doing it for the last nine years. He lost his son to a drug overdose 10 years ago. And this year the small community of New Canaan had 630 participants that showed up, including every faith community that participated in the vigil and the candle lighting. Chrysalis is a supporter of the conference.

Agenda Item 7: Potential Future Topics

- Snapshop on federal political landscape (October)

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