

State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
June 16, 2021
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Ahmad Abdel-Aziz, J. Craig Allen, Rebecca Allen, Taylor Bryan Turner, Sharon Castelli, Marcia DuFore, Michele Devine, Michael Doyle, Allison Fulton, Anna Gasinski, Ingrid Gillespie, Nicole Hampton, Michaela Hedberg, Jennifer Henry, Heather Howard, Timothy Jean, Matthew Ludwig, Pamela Mautte, Allyson Nadeau, Manuel Paris, Larry Pittinger, Kevin Sevarino, Nathalie Telfort, Phil Valentine

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Delphin-Rittmon, Deputy Commr. Nancy Navarretta, Yvonne Addo, Carol Meredith, Marilyn Duran, Marlene Jacques, Art Mongillo

Agenda Item 1: Call to order and introductions

The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:30 PM by John Hamilton.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of previous meeting review and action

The minutes from the May 19, 2021 meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

- **COVID-19** – Commr. Delphin-Rittmon stated we are starting to turn the corner on things with Covid-19. We are still continuing with the weekly staff testing and daily screenings at congregate care sites. We are working with OLR what that's going to look like and for how long this will continue. Dr. Charles Dike will be meeting with medical directors across all the LMHAS. Vaccination rates continue to creep up a little bit. Staff vaccination rate is up to 70% now and among our clients over 65% are vaccinated.
- **Legislative Session** – Commr. Delphin-Rittmon stated that the electronic health records bill passed. DMHAS is now recognized as a single health care entity. The WFH bill passed as well and will now allow for patients to be present during search of their personal items. WFH will now have recovery-oriented folks on the advisory board. The cannabis bill is still in process.
- **Budget** – Commr. Delphin-Rittmon informed Board members that the budget was finalized and approved. The budget is very similar to last year, with one change a \$3.6 million reduction in the overall budget. That reduction is largely due to DMHAS HR staff moving to HR consolidation at DAS. The implementer bill has been put forward and still needs to be voted on. There are some items in the bill that are promising for DMHAS. \$25 million per year for PNPs for 2 years, about \$15 million for wages and \$10 million for facility costs. There is also language on the implementer bill about expanding crisis programs to Troop D and a task-force will study crisis programming as well. There was language about social media awareness week and alerting folks about mental health related programming and supports, and also for 2 years connecting health and mental health providers and centers; \$13.5 million for provider COLAs; rate increase for methadone providers to 88.52; rate increase for home and community based waiver. There was also language about banning flavors for vaping devices and DMHAS will still be doing compliance related work related to this. Overall we received from SAMHSA grants \$13.8 million over four years for mental health and \$14.7 for substance abuse.

Agenda Item 4: Presentation Topic: SAMHSA – Update: Taylor Bryan Turner, Assistant Regional Administrator, New England U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Taylor and Tim Jean presented on SAMHSA's role and national priorities to COVID response, health equity and hope. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance use and mental illness on America's communities. Optimal health is defined by 8 dimensions for SAMHSA and these are emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, environmental, financial and occupational. The building blocks of recovery, through these 8 dimension, are health, home, purpose and community. There are 10 regional SAMHSA offices throughout the country complete

with one regional administrator (RA). The RA's take surveillance of what is going on locally; what's working and making an impact in the regions and what is not; create and promote initiatives; support our stakeholders, engage vulnerable populations to ensure that they are accessing adequate care; and bring barriers back to Washington.

Tom Coderre is New England's own SAMHSA RA and Acting Assistant Secretary for MH and SU at SAMHSA. The new SAMHSA nominee for Assistant Secretary is Dr. Miriam Delphin Rittmon.

Some of the challenges were discussed, for example increased opioid overdoses and increase in alcohol consumption, and suicide rates increased in almost every state, etc. Taylor talked about SAMHSA's strategic plan for 2019-2023 and the high prevalence rates and huge treatment gaps on mental and substance use disorders for minorities. A high priority for SAMHSA this year is certified community behavioral health clinics. The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act provided SAMHSA with \$4.25 billion to provide increased MH and SUD services and support. Connecticut received \$15.6M from Cares Act, of which \$11.3M was allotted to nonprofit providers and \$4.3 was allotted to State Operations. SAMHSA FY 2022 budget request is for \$9.7B. On the horizon for SAMHSA is the new guidebook; CCBHCs; the nationwide MH crisis and suicide prevention number 9-8-8; "Communities Talk!"; national guidelines for behavioral health crisis care: a best practices toolkit; and the HEART collective – applications will open this August.

Agenda Item 5: Workgroup Updates/General Updates/Announcements

- Dr. Sevarino gave an update on the marijuana workgroup. He stated that the bill on legalization of recreational marijuana passed the Senate 19 to 12 with 2 amendments. The workgroup's concern is to make sure our youth is protected and to have better warning labels put on packaging as well as more money for prevention and recovery.
- Michele Devine of SERAC announced the region is working on some statewide campaigns such as 21 For A Reason – drinking, vaping & smoking and gambling. This campaign is for the prevention of substance abuse among youth in CT. <https://www.seracct.org/21-for-a-reason/drinking/>
- Phil Valentine announced that CCAR has been doing a lot with recovery story telling for more information go to <https://ccar.us/events/p-e-a-r-l-s-story-slams/>

Agenda Item 6: Special Announcement – Marcia DuFore's Retirement

The Board and Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon gave a special thanks to Marcia for her leadership, wisdom, passion, presence, creativity and fierce advocacy for prevention and recovery.

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

- A Best Practice Approach for Meeting People Where They Are - Liberation Programs, Inc. [Tia Reid & Joanne Montgomery - September]
- Update on Housing Gaps and Challenges [Alice Minervino/Steve DiLella]
- Peer Bridger Program – AU staff [Dana Smith, Program Manager & Jennifer Henry, Advocacy Engagement Specialist]
- Olmstead Initiative – AU Staff
- Alcohol Awareness

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