

State of Connecticut
State Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services
May 19, 2021
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present online: Chmn. John Hamilton, Craig Allen, Janice Andersen, Michael Doyle, Marcia DuFore, Kathy Flaherty, Allison Fulton, Anna Gasinski, Ingrid Gillespie, Jennifer Henry, Pamela Mautte, Manuel Paris, Larry Pittinger, Brian Reigner, Kevin Sevarino

DMHAS Staff: Commr. Delphin-Rittmon, Deputy Commr. Nancy Navarretta, Jose Crego, Steve DiPietro, Marilyn Duran, Ana Florence, Marlene Jacques, Mary Kate Mason, Carol Meredith, Art Mongillo

Excused: Sharon Castelli

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 April 21, 2021 meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Agenda Item 3: Commissioner's Update

- **COVID-19** – Commr. Delphin-Rittmon stated that weekly testing continues at DMHAS and the Governor is extending his executive order for mandatory testing for direct care workers so DMHAS will also extend testing until June 20th and possibly beyond that. Wearing masks indoors is still required. DMHAS continues to focus on vaccinations and over 68% of staff have been vaccinated. Some facilities have about 75% to 80% staff vaccinated and just over 65% for clients.
- **Legislative Session** – Mary Kate Mason provided an update. The House and Senate are in full swing. SB 001 - an act equalizing comprehensive access to mental, behavioral and physical health care in response to the pandemic was passed yesterday by the Senate. SB001 also had a taskforce looking at peer services. HB 6588 - an act concerning mental health care and substance abuse services, also has a taskforce looking at insurance issues as it relates to peers being able to bill. The DMHAS bill is in a holding pattern in the House. Budget negotiations are going to start soon.
- **Budget** – Commr. Delphin –Rittmon announced that the American Rescue Plan Resources is a \$20 million investment over two years for some substance use services but mostly for adult mental health. DMHAS is looking to expand mobile crisis to 24/7 and also create hybrid crisis stabilization centers/interest in exploring stabilization pure respite-like center; looking at increasing behavioral health, mental health and substance use services support within primary care settings as well as consultation and collaboration with primary care providers. There will be flexible resources related to discharge to community settings; resources for telehealth and virtual; and recovery supports. DMHAS is also looking to do a pilot using recovery support specialist at 12 of the high use mental health related emergency departments.

SAMHSA made an announcement for \$13.8 million resources over four years for mental health related services; \$14.7 million for substance abuse related services and supports over four years; \$17 million for the substance abuse block grant with 20% set aside for prevention over two years and mental health is \$8 million with some set aside for DCF.

- **Other** – There has been discussion with IT regarding having a hybrid model for our next meetings so that we can have a virtual as well as in person meeting. DPH will provide guidance for in person meetings.

A couple of communications have been sent out and one was on the emergency broadband service, which is

a benefit that is available for individuals who qualify to get up to \$50 off their internet bill for six months or until the benefits run out. The second email that went out was regarding a DMHAS COVID survey, from the DMHAS Office of Recovery Affairs, and is looking to get as much responses as possible from state-operated facilities and PNP's.

Agenda Item 4: Quarterly Report – Whiting Forensic Hospital

Acting CEO Jose Crego provided an update. In response to COVID, mandatory staff testing continues on all three shifts throughout the hospital. Staff vaccinations were completed on premises and for those that have not been vaccinated we continue to encourage them as much as possible to reach out into the community to be vaccinated. About 63% of the staff were vaccinated. The number of COVID positive staff throughout the pandemic was 73 which have now recovered and are back to work. The number of COVID positive patients throughout the pandemic was 18 which have now recovered. The patient vaccination program is on-going and on-site. WFH has collaboration with the Middletown Department of Health for on-going vaccinations for newly admitted patients or for patients that have changed their mind and want to be vaccinated.

There has been an increase of one allegation since the last quarter and restraints have trended downward there were eleven. There has been a downward trend for seclusions and a decrease for aggressive acts to self and no elopements for this quarter. There was a total of 23 emergency room visits for a variety of reasons.

The Safe Word Initiative was launched on May 17th with two interventions; the first intervention is clear and mutual expectations and the second is knowing each other. The Culture and Diversity Committee continues to do great work. The committee holds the Bridges Conversations which allows staff to discuss topics that our currently ongoing in the community that will inevitably impacts us all. WFH is looking to partner with Middlesex Community College in September and offer the patients the opportunity to take courses and possibly get an associate's degree. Six computers have been added in each building so patients can access for educational purposes. A patient at WFH has graduated recently from the Recovery Support Specialist training program and the hospital has been granted four more scholarships.

Agenda Item 5: Presentation Topic: Impacts of Recreational Legislation – Dr. Kevin Sevarino

Kevin started the conversation by talking about SB888 - an act responsibly and equitably regulating adult-use cannabis and substitute HB6377 – an act concerning labor peace agreements and a modern and equitable cannabis workforce. Over 3000 scientific publications are found on PubMed for the year 2020, and there is much conflicting literature. SB888 seeks to 1) increase Connecticut's tax revenues, and 2) redress social inequities in past cannabis proscription law enforcement. The revised bill SB888 allows home growing of up to 6 plants, and seems to take away medical dispensaries from advantage. Kevin also talked about whether SB888 meets its goal of equity and goal for state income. He stated the higher the potency of a reinforcing substance, the greater is addictive potential. He also talked about the public health framework.

Agenda Item 6: Workgroup / General updates / Announcements

- Marcia DuFore announced she will retire in June.

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

- Liberations Program collaborations with Mobile MAT (John Hamilton)
- Peer Bridger Program & Olmstead Initiative – AU staff [Dana Smith, Program Manager & Jennifer Henry, Advocacy Engagement Specialist]
- Update on Sober Housing
- HealthCare: Access to Specialty Services
- Alcohol Awareness

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 16th beginning at 2:30 PM.