

# Quarterly Newsletter



September 2025



## Welcome to our Women's Services Quarterly Newsletter!

### Supporting Women and Families on the Journey to Recovery

At Women's Services (WS), helping women and their families heal and thrive is at the heart of everything we do. The Women's & Children's Services programs are thoughtfully designed to meet the unique needs of women facing substance use challenges, offering compassionate, trauma-informed, and gender-responsive care across the state.

Whether someone needs residential treatment, outpatient support, or help transitioning back into the community, these programs are flexible and accessible, meeting women where they are both geographically and emotionally.

WS also offers a wide range of helpful tools and resources for both providers and families, such as the ACCESS Mental Health and Substance Use for Moms consultation line for perinatal care providers, and SEPI-CT, a statewide initiative focused on supporting families impacted by substance-exposed pregnancies.

There's even more happening behind the scenes, like professional training, support for LGBTQIA+ individuals, and webinars that help providers talk about a range of addiction topics in a supportive, open, and informed way.

***We hope that this quarterly newsletter not only helps to uplift and celebrate the work but also supports our colleagues and peers in learning more about the services that are available to their own service populations and network of care.***

visit [portal.ct.gov/womensservices](https://portal.ct.gov/womensservices) to learn more!

In this newsletter you can expect:

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# Meet the Staff



**Shelly Nolan, MS, LPC (she/her)**  
Behavioral Health Clinical Director -  
Women's Services & Problem Gambling  
Services

Shelly has been with DMHAS since 2014. In her current role, she oversees the development, implementation and sustainability of the Women's Services & Problem Gambling Services continuums. She leads the state's Trauma & Gender initiative and supports ongoing expansive training efforts to enhance our collective response to impacted individuals. Fall is her favorite season and she's looking forward to all the fall activities, especially Thanksgiving.



**Bridget Aliaga, MPH (she/her)**  
Behavioral Health Program Manager -  
Women's Services

Bridget has been with the department for almost 3 years and oversees various programs including Women's REACH, the Women's Community Transitional Support Program, SEPI-CT, and the Parental Support and Parental Rights Initiative. Bridget also leads the Women's Services creative and promotional efforts including video development, infographics, brochures, and website enhancements. Her favorite fall activity is eating copious amounts of fresh apple cider donuts.



**Rebecca Petersen, LCSW (she/her)**  
Behavioral Health Program Manager -  
Women's Services

Rebecca oversees the Women and Children's residential programs and is the Project Director for the PROUD program. Rebecca also manages a variety of grants targeted at expanding services and professional development throughout the DMHAS system of care, including LGBTQIA+ training and consultation. Rebecca has worked at DMHAS for 6 years. Rebecca looks forward to walking her dogs and cheering for her kids on the soccer field this Fall.



**Deidre Methe (she/her)**  
Secretary - Women's Services and  
Problem Gambling

Dee has been with DMHAS for 3 years. She provides administrative support to the Women's Services & Problem Gambling Services teams. She loves decorating our office space to reflect the season.



**Jennifer M. Lombardi, LCSW (she/her)**  
Behavioral Health Program Manager -  
Women's Services

Jenn is the contract manager for the women's specific residential and outpatient programs. She also manages the contracts for ACCESS Mental Health and Substance Use for Moms and the collaborative services with CCADV. Jenn has worked for DMHAS for 3 years. She likes all things pumpkin spice and can't wait for Fall weather.



**Have a question about  
one of our programs or  
initiatives?**

**Email us!**

- [Shelly.Nolan@ct.gov](mailto:Shelly.Nolan@ct.gov)
- [Rebecca.Petersen@ct.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Petersen@ct.gov)
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- [Bridget.Aliaga@ct.gov](mailto:Bridget.Aliaga@ct.gov)
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*CHR REACH at National Night Out in Willimantic*



*Liberation REACH at their First Annual Community Celebration and Memorial in Bridgeport*



*Connection REACH at International Overdose Awareness in Guilford*



*Wheeler REACH at International Overdose Awareness Day in Manchester*

## Women's REACH: Representation & Hope at Regional Overdose Awareness Events Statewide

**International Overdose Awareness Day is recognized annually on August 31<sup>st</sup> and highlights the principles:**

- Overdose can and must be prevented
- Overdose prevention solutions exist – let's use them.
- Criminalizing drug use hasn't worked. Compassionate alternatives must be pursued.
- Policy and legislation must exist to protect individuals and communities, and ensure basic human rights and needs are met.
- Everyone has a right to respectful and comprehensive health care.

These events not only bring awareness to overdose related deaths, but also help to reduce the associated stigma, remember those who have passed, and connect individuals and families to much needed supports. Each year, our Women's REACH teams across the state attend Overdose Awareness events in their regions to spread awareness about treatment and recovery resources available to pregnant and parenting individuals, including harm reduction practices to help reduce individual and environmental risks.



### About Women's REACH

The Women's REACH (Recovery, Engagement, Access, Coaching & Healing) program provides statewide integration of 15 Recovery Navigators positioned throughout each of the five DMHAS regions. The Recovery Navigators are women who are in a position to use their own personal recovery journey to help others. Guided by the goals of the individual, these women use recovery coaching techniques and case management services to support women and individuals in their community by connecting them to the resources they need to support their recovery.

Services are prioritized for:

- Pregnant or parenting women with substance use and/or co-occurring disorders
- Parenting/expecting fathers, grandparents, LGBTQIA+ individuals, partners of REACH clients, and other immediate parenting family or natural support who have been impacted by substance use, either personally or by the use of the child's parent.
- To contact your regional REACH agency, [click here](#).



# Parents Recovering from Opioid and Other Use Disorders (PROUD): Wheeler & MCCA Community Wellness Events

Wheeler and MCCA's PROUD programs hosted Community Wellness Events at Wheeler's Family Health and Wellness Center in New Britain on August 6th, and at MCCA in New Haven on September 12th. The events aimed to celebrate and honor recovery and wellness and provide CT residents with information about the PROUD program, DMHAS services, and other community and parenting resources. The events were a great success and included participation from a variety of collaborative partners. Participants enjoyed a guided yoga session, music, pizza, ice cream, face painting, giveaways, and family activities.



Since 2020, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) and DMHAS have worked collaboratively to offer extensive training opportunities funded through the PROUD program, for healthcare professionals, educators, social service providers and behavioral health providers on creating systems to support pregnant and parenting women and families impacted by substance use and trauma.

***On Thursday 9/25/25 CHA and DMHAS hosted a conference, From Knowing To Doing: Building Trauma-Responsive Systems of Care to wrap up our 2025 PROUD summer webinar series. Individuals can also participate in enduring web-based sessions from our 2025 PROUD Summer Series (CEC's provided).***

For additional information including registration, please visit:  
<https://cthosp.org/education/proud/>



The PROUD program serves pregnant and postpartum women with substance use disorders and/or co-occurring disorders in three catchment areas in CT. PROUD teams provide holistic, trauma-informed and gender sensitive services to pregnant and parenting women as they navigate their recovery journey. PROUD teams will work to complete a family needs assessment with eligible women and their household members to create a plan to address individual and family needs around: substance use and mental health treatment, connections to medical providers (including prenatal care), MOUD/MAT, employment, housing, and recovery support. PROUD services are individualized, person-centered, and strength-based, and can be offered in-office, in-home, or via telehealth. To get more information on PROUD, or to submit a referral to PROUD program, please visit: <https://portal.ct.gov/proud>.



## NEW PROGRAM: Welcome Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center!

**We are excited to share with you the addition of a women's specific recovery house to the Women's Services continuum of care. Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center will open the 12-bed Women's Recovery House on September 8<sup>th</sup>.**

They are looking forward to serving clients in their newly renovated space at 149 Minor Street in New Haven. In this setting, women with substance use disorders will be able to receive temporary housing and support services for up to 90 days while they participate in onsite outpatient treatment or await a bed in a higher level of care. Individuals will have access to fully integrated substance, mental health, and primary medical care including onsite PHP, IOP, medication evaluation and management, primary care services, dental, infectious medicine, and psychoeducational and recovery meetings.

To make a referral, please call 203-503-3350.

Interested in learning about our entire continuum of services? [Click here.](#)



# Our Commitment to Trauma Enhancement in FY25

Since May 1, 2024, we have dedicated ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding to increasing our system of care's trauma informed knowledge and response. This has included several trainings, conferences, and other boots on the ground initiatives.



## OBJECTIVES

- Enhance our system of care's trauma informed understanding and response
- Enhance our system of care's gender responsive care and services
- Increase access to and understanding of harm reduction and overdose prevention resources



## TRAININGS & CONFERENCES SUPPORTED

### Trainings

- Beyond Trauma
- Seeking Safety (2)
- Motivational Interviewing Overview (3)
- TREM (3)
- Motivational Interviewing Consultation: Increasing Proficiency
- Helping Women Recover
- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
- LGBTQ+ TREM
- DBT Theory and Skills
- DBT: Core Mindfulness Skills & Distress Tolerance skills
- DBT: Emotional Regulation, Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Belonging

### Conferences

- Trauma Trends Conference
- Trauma Conference: Helping the Helpers
- Celebrating Families in Recovery



## OTHER INITIATIVES SUPPORTED

- Birthing Hospital Lockbox Distribution
- Development Animation Informational Videos
- Purchase of Lock Bags for DMHAS program distribution



## BY THE NUMBERS

- 500+ lockboxes disseminated to hospitals
- 9,000+ lock bags readily available for distribution
- 703 attendees across all trainings and conferences hosted as of 9/3/25 with at least 250 more anticipated by the end of September 2025
- Development of 10 videos:
  - REACH
  - PROUD
  - PPW/WRSP
  - ACCESS Mental Health for Moms
  - Maternal Mental Health (English & Spanish)
  - What is Stigma?
  - Provider Stigma Awareness
  - Safe Sleep
  - About SEPI-CT

[Watch these and other DMHAS videos here \(click or scan\):](#)





# FY25 Conferences: Highlights & Photos



On March 12<sup>th</sup>, DMHAS sponsored the Helping the Helpers Trauma conference. DMHAS Women's Services, in collaboration with the CT Women's Consortium, welcomed over 100 staff from DMHAS, DMHAS-funded programs, DCF & CSSD to learn together how to build resiliency in response to increased levels of trauma in the workforce.



On June 13<sup>th</sup>, DMHAS Women's Services hosted the 4th Annual LGBTQIA+ Conference at the DoubleTree Hotel in Bristol, in collaboration with the CT Women's Consortium. CT's Lieutenant Governor, Susan Bysiewicz, opened the day with welcoming remarks, followed by dynamic presentations from a diverse group of content experts speaking from lived experiences and professional perspectives on timely topics that impact the LGBTQIA+ communities we serve. 113 individuals participated in the event, including DMHAS staff, providers, and other state and community partners.



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# Upcoming Trainings & Conferences

Women's Services is committed to supporting routine, high quality, and pertinent professional development opportunities for our DMHAS system of care.

Please note that unless otherwise specified, these educational opportunities **are typically only open to DMHAS staff and DMHAS contracted providers.**

Please click each link for respective event details and registration information.

CEC's available for most!

***To view an updated training flyer click here or scan below***

