

**Council on Women and Girls  
Health and Safety Subcommittee**

**Monday, June 3, 2024  
10:30 – 11:30 a.m.**

**Link to view recording:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/YBDfvGvBTWt-Nv03GUFJlfMyIb5gBPHWCwVf4nr\\_wh0GMsmSnkNNiHmpB9fsa2Lk.0TkPMJojaEezRZr9](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/YBDfvGvBTWt-Nv03GUFJlfMyIb5gBPHWCwVf4nr_wh0GMsmSnkNNiHmpB9fsa2Lk.0TkPMJojaEezRZr9)

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**I. Opening Remarks – Deidre S. Gifford, Commissioner, Health Strategy**

Commissioner Gifford introduced herself as one of the tri-chairs, new to the role and delineated the agenda for the meeting; Commissioner Bye remarked on the launch of the Universal Nurse Home visiting program and the DPH legislative session update. Dr. Gifford introduced Elisa Neira-Hamada, Senior Director, Health Equity Office for the Office of Health Strategy.

**II. Social Determinants of Health Summit 2024 Update – Elisa Neira, Office of Health Strategy**

The recent statewide summit on social determinants of health in Connecticut marks a significant milestone in collaborative public health efforts. This pioneering event, led by the Health and Human Services state agencies, brought together a diverse group of leaders from community-based social services, healthcare organizations, and state agencies. The focus on improving access to essential services such as nutritious food, economic security, and supportive housing underscores the commitment to addressing the root causes of health disparities. The participation of esteemed keynote speaker Dr. Wisdom Powell highlights the importance of this initiative in shaping a healthier future for all residents.

Dr. Wisdom Powell and Tiffany Donaldson led discussions on innovative programs like Family Bridge, which focuses on maternal and infant health

through a unique integration of nurses and community health workers. Additionally, the summit shed light on economic security pilots providing direct cash assistance, demonstrating the potential benefits for vulnerable populations. These efforts underscore the state's commitment to advancing health equity and well-being through collaborative and forward-thinking approaches.

### **III. Family Bridge, Universal Home Nurse Visiting Program Pilot Update – Deborah Poerio, Office of Early Childhood**

Family Bridge, a rebranding of the Universal Nurse Home Visiting Community Health Worker program, exemplifies a comprehensive statewide initiative to enhance postnatal care. This collaborative project unites five state agencies, aiming to provide seamless support for families during the critical peri- and postnatal periods. With a focus on preventive care, Family Bridge leverages the expertise of Community Health Workers to connect families with essential resources, addressing healthcare disparities and promoting equitable access to care. The program underscores Connecticut's commitment to maternal and newborn health, offering universal services to foster a robust community support system.

The Family Bridge program exemplifies a community-centric approach to healthcare, providing culturally sensitive support through local health workers. It's structured to meet families right at the hospital, offering a universal support system with only two qualifiers for participation. The program ensures early engagement through bedside introductions and home visits by nurses, focusing on critical postpartum periods to aid in areas like depression. By linking families to community resources, the program strengthens the support network, reflecting a commitment to accessible healthcare for all residents within the Greater Bridgeport region.

Bridgeport Hospital in Connecticut has made significant strides by integrating their Electronic Health Record (EHR) system with the SI system, enhancing communication across family healthcare providers. This recent implementation promises more comprehensive data analytics moving

forward. To date, the hospital has seen over 15,000 births, with a high percentage of families receiving bedside contact from Family Bridge staff, indicating a strong start towards the certification of their program. The hospital's approach to family engagement, which differs from practices in Ohio, New Jersey, and Oregon, is showing promising results, with a substantial portion of eligible families already served.

In Connecticut, the community health workers (CHWs) play a pivotal role in supporting families, as evidenced by their involvement in the top six referral categories. The state has shown a unique commitment to aiding new parents by providing essential supplies like diapers and formula, which has been a significant help in the transition from hospital to home. This support is further enhanced by the expertise of certified lactation consultants and the assistance provided through WIC and SNAP applications. The Office of Health Strategy is taking steps to ensure the program's longevity and effectiveness by partnering with esteemed institutions like Vanderbilt University and the University of Massachusetts School of Medicine to evaluate and create a sustainable plan that includes identifying diversified revenue streams and establishing connections with commercial insurers for reimbursement.

#### **IV. Legislative Session Update – Miriam Miller, Department of Public Health**

The recent legislative session has brought significant advancements in the regulation and oversight of nursing homes, with a focus on enhancing safety and patient rights. Public Act 24-141, also known as House Bill 5046, aims to improve nursing home resident quality of life by setting standards for bed positioning and room occupancy. Senate Bill 1, now Public Act 24-19, addresses the health and safety of Connecticut residents, particularly concerning home health care agencies and their intake processes. Lastly, House Bill 5001, which has become Public Act 24-39, supports Connecticut seniors by improving nursing and home-based care, including the development of a home care provider registry. These acts represent a comprehensive effort to ensure that state agencies have the necessary

tools to enforce regulations effectively and protect the well-being of nursing home residents.

The ongoing reforms in nursing home management and care are a testament to the lessons learned from past challenges, particularly those highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift towards eliminating overcrowded rooms aligns with a broader commitment to patient dignity and infection control. Additionally, the implementation of violence tracking by the Department of Public Health (DPH) aims to enhance safety for home health agency staff. The proposed Center of Excellence program represents an innovative step forward, setting a benchmark for quality and patient-centered care in the industry. These changes reflect a significant evolution in healthcare policy and practice, prioritizing the well-being and comfort of residents and staff alike.

Connecticut's recent legislative developments have significantly impacted healthcare regulation and workforce mobility. The resolution of the birth center licensure program allows for the application process to commence, enhancing maternal health services. The Department of Public Health's new civil penalty authority ensures compliance with state and federal regulations, reinforcing the commitment to quality healthcare. Furthermore, the adoption of the Nurse Compact and Social Workers Compact facilitates interstate practice, bolstering Connecticut's healthcare workforce. Lastly, the telehealth act's provision for out-of-state behavioral health providers to register and practice in Connecticut promises to expand access to essential health services.

**V. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**VI. Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned. Next meeting scheduled for September 9, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.