

DMHAS Update

Summer 2024 - Volume 2



A Message from Commissioner Nancy Navarretta

Welcome to the second volume of our summer newsletter! I want to take a moment to thank everyone for the positive feedback and engagement with the first volume. It's been exciting to see our refreshed communication efforts come to life, and I'm eager to continue sharing updates that highlight the inspiring work happening across DMHAS.

As we near the end of September, Suicide Prevention Month and Recovery Month continue to be central to our efforts. These campaigns have been vital in raising awareness, challenging stigma, and reinforcing the message that hope and help are always within reach. The work we've done throughout this month has strengthened the foundation of behavioral health care and recovery, empowering individuals and families across Connecticut. While these awareness campaigns may come to a close soon, our commitment to these causes remains, as we strive to make lasting impacts in the lives of those we serve.

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

A Celebration of the 988 Lifeline

Division Updates

DMHAS in the Community



It's important that we continue our focus on these vital awareness campaigns, and I encourage everyone to remain engaged and proactive. Whether you're attending events, sharing valuable resources, or having meaningful conversations, your contributions are key to building a supportive and inclusive community. Together, we're making a real difference – let's keep up the momentum as we work toward a future where every individual feels valued, heard, and supported.

Spotlight on Connecticut's 988 Lifeline: A Model of Crisis Response

In July, DMHAS co-hosted an event with the United Way of Connecticut (UWCT) and SAMHSA to celebrate the success of Connecticut's 988 Crisis and Suicide Lifeline, which has quickly become a vital part of the state's mental health crisis services. At this event, UWCT was awarded a citation from the federal government for their efforts.

Connecticut's early preparedness and comprehensive approach to crisis services have positioned the state as a national leader in mental health crisis intervention. The implementation of the 988 Crisis and Suicide Lifeline has been a resounding success, thanks to the state's pre-existing infrastructure and commitment to continuous improvement.

The Lifeline has already proven its value, with over 44,000 calls received between July 2023 and May 2024 alone. Most of these calls are resolved telephonically, with an impressive average response time of less than five seconds. This efficiency highlights the Lifeline's effectiveness in providing immediate support, with only about 1.5% of calls requiring referral to a mobile crisis team.

The success of the 988 Lifeline is a testament to our dedication to improving mental health crisis services.

With continued collaboration with agencies like DCF and DESPP, we are ensuring that every call is met with a compassionate and effective response. The recent launch of the 988 text and chat function is yet another step in making crisis support accessible to all.



Women's Services & Problem Gambling

Women's Services

The Women's REACH Program Request for Proposals wrapped up in July, bringing in four new providers and one returning provider to our network. We're excited to have them on board to support women and families across the state. To promote the REACH program, Women's Services has created an informational video to raise awareness among those affected and the professionals who assist them.



After nearly two years of development, DMHAS is set to launch a significant enhancement to the SEPI-CT website: the virtual Family Care Plan Tool. This web-based app allows users to create digital Family Care Plans that incorporate local resources via the 211 system. The tool, which will be promoted through various channels, is expected to go live in mid to late September.

DMHAS remains committed to addressing the needs of women, especially those who are pregnant or parenting, as well as the LGBTQIA+ community. Recent initiatives include a trauma enhancement series, the 3rd Annual LGBTQIA+ Conference, and the upcoming 6th Annual Women's Conference. We also partnered with the CT Hospital Association to offer the PROUD webinar series, aimed at reducing stigma and bias in healthcare.

Problem Gambling



Connecticut is advancing problem gambling prevention with the College Campus Gambling Prevention Initiative, partnering with the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) to fund ten college campuses. This initiative educates students on gambling risks, making it the only program of its kind in the state.

The "Know the Risks" campaign, launched in June 2024 with ThinkArgus, targets special populations like BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities at higher risk for gambling issues. The campaign includes billboards, social media, and outreach materials in English and Spanish, promoted through the Multicultural Problem Gambling Prevention Initiative.

The Problem Gambling Awareness Through the Arts Initiative, in partnership with The Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition, uses arts-based approaches to raise awareness. Projects like the Bet on Black Event and the Artreach Theatrical Program engage diverse communities in Eastern CT, blending creativity with prevention efforts.

Harm Reduction: Building Trust and Increasing Access to Health Care

The Connecticut Harm Reduction Alliance (CTHRA), in partnership with DMHAS Community Services Division (CSD), purchased Harm Reduction Rovers for the state's community-based Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs). Harm Reduction Rovers are multi-compartmental units on wheels, which are easy to navigate in and out of private and public spaces. Harm Reduction Rovers are equipped with supplies including, but not limited to, the following: safe consumption kits, safe smoking kits, safer sex items, overdose prevention items, sharps containers and fentanyl test strips (as permitted).

Overall, over 40 individuals participated in the CT-HRA Harm Reduction Training during the months of May and June 2024. Thirty (30) Harm Reduction Rovers were distributed to their respective OTPs. DMHAS CSD is excited to announce that Harm Reduction Rovers and trainings have been extended to CT's Private Non-Profit Lead Mental Health Authorities (LMHA) Mobile Crisis and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams as well as Withdrawal Management providers. The trainings and subsequent distribution of Harm Reduction Rovers to these teams will take place in October of 2024.



CONNECTICUT
Mental Health & Addiction Services

Celebrating Community and Connection: Highlights from the Social Rehabilitation Field Day in New London

Recovery doesn't happen in isolation, but it certainly thrives in supportive engaged communities! Community, camaraderie, and a whole lot of fun were certainly taking place on August 16th as Social Rehabilitation programs from across the state gathered for an epic community field-day in New London. There were lively softball games, competitive corn-hole, beautiful arts and craft activities, giant Jenga, music, food, and an amazing amount of community connection taking place.

The Evidence Based Practices and Grants Unit of the Community Services Division would like to thank Sound Community Services Social Rehabilitation Programs, Oasis and AXS, for all of their work organizing this beautiful event for all who wished to connect and enjoy an afternoon outside together (a special thank you to Tim Strong for spearheading these efforts)! Twelve different Social Rehabilitation programs from across Connecticut joined in the fun, with over 100 people gathering to enjoy an afternoon focused on activity, socializing, and community connection.

Living our best lives is what recovery is all about, and what better way to do that than with good company, sunshine, and enjoyable activities, together. Thank you to each of the Social Rehabilitation programs who joined in the fun! We look forward to seeing you at the next community gathering (which is already in the works!).



DMHAS in the Community

In July, the Rotary Club of Middletown welcomed its new President, CVH CEO Lakisha Hyatt. In June, Lakisha was named by the Connecticut NAACP as one of the 100 Most Influential Blacks in Connecticut.



Pictured (above right) with fellow Rotary Club member, RVS CEO Sarah Gadsby.

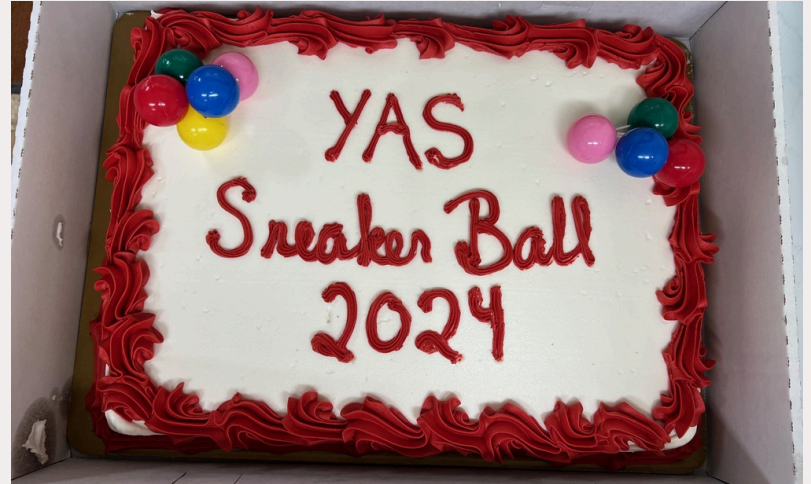


For the fifth year, Juneteenth was celebrated by patients and staff at Whiting Forensic Hospital. For the first time, employees from RVS joined Whiting for this celebration and as such participated in the Dutcher Juneteenth Program. An annual poster competition was held and all the units in Whiting participated. The theme was "I am my ancestors wildest dream". The beautiful and informative posters were displayed in the lobby of each building.



Young Adult Services

This summer, Young Adult Services (YAS) provided a range of engaging activities and valuable training opportunities to support young adults across the state. The season kicked off with the annual Summer Funfest at Camp Ingersoll, where young adults and staff enjoyed a day filled with social, therapeutic, and recreational activities, fostering a sense of



community and connection. Another highlight was the Sneaker Ball in Torrington, a semi-formal event that brought together participants from various YAS programs to dress up, socialize, and celebrate in a festive atmosphere. Additionally, a day spent at Lake Compounce offered young adults and staff a chance to bond over shared experiences, with one participant expressing gratitude for the opportunity to socialize in ways that wouldn't be possible without YAS's support.

Beyond these social events, YAS emphasized the importance of professional development through targeted training programs. A comprehensive Substance Use Treatment training was offered to DMHAS staff, PNP contracted agencies, and DCF, focusing on trauma, harm reduction, motivational interviewing, and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) in the context of young adult development. Human Trafficking Trainings, facilitated in collaboration with the EBP Division and WCMHN – Waterbury, were presented at conferences and community gatherings, enhancing awareness and skills in addressing this critical issue. Trauma Trainings also played a significant role, with sessions supporting YAS clinicians in implementing advanced therapeutic models, such as Cognitive Restructuring for PTSD (CR for PTSD).

Through these initiatives, YAS continues to demonstrate its commitment to fostering growth, recovery, and community integration for young adults throughout Connecticut, ensuring they have the resources and support needed to thrive.

The Office of Multicultural Health Equity

The DMHAS Office of Multicultural Health Equity (OMHE) was quite active this summer with the recent completion of the 10-month Champions for Diversity & Health Equity Cohort 1 graduation that occurred in June. Soon after, we were marketing, receiving applications and conducting interviews for Cohort 2 slated to begin on September 13th. This cohort has expanded to 32 participants inclusive of not only DMHAS staff and non-profit providers, but also inviting sister state agency representation. We are grateful for a recent partnership with the Connecticut Alliance for Foster and Adoptive Families for allowing us to use their facilities as our program site. OMHE is gearing up for its annual Multicultural Advisory Council (MCAC) retreat on October 4th. Last year's retreat focused on the MCAC finalizing its three-year strategic plan and this year we will focus our efforts on strategies to implement our goals and objectives across our four committees. We recently hosted a DMHAS-wide webinar on "The State of Suicide Prevention Among Diverse Populations in CT".

This webinar was planned in collaboration with Yale PRCH, the Mental Health Technology Transfer Center, and the DMHAS Research Division and Prevention & Health Promotion Division, with over 250 people in attendance. Stay tuned for the announcement of our new training catalogue and brochure to learn more about our office and what we offer! For questions, contact us at OMHE@ct.gov.



dmhas

The State of Suicide Among Diverse Populations in Connecticut
"Why We Didn't Tell You..."

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Join us for an open dialogue about why people in diverse communities might hesitate to disclose suicidal thoughts.

August 29, 2024
1:00PM - 3:00PM

Scan the QR or Click Here to Register

This virtual event will highlight the facts, research, personal stories of survivors, and insights from individuals with lived experience and offer key strategies, including therapeutic interventions, to enhance the likelihood of help-seeking and honesty.

Our Speakers:

 <p>Nancy Navarretta DMHAS Commissioner</p>	 <p>Cheryl Bellamy, MSW, PhD Director Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health</p>
 <p>Rachel Brase SAMHSA Regional Behavioral Health Advisor Region 1</p>	 <p>Andrea Duarte, MSW, MPH, LCSW DMHAS Prevention & Health Promotion Division</p>
 <p>Wendy Ulaszek DMHAS Research Division</p>	 <p>Vital Connections Team NAMI CT Why We Didn't Tell You?</p>

New England (MHS Region 1)
MHTTC
Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Promoting Evidence-Based and Personalized Services

DMHAS
State program for
recovery and
community
health

This event is a technical assistance activity of DMHAS Office of Multicultural Health Equity (OMHE) supported by the New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center. For more information or to request accommodations, contact OMHE Director Samia Hussein, MPH.