

May 12, 2026 BHP Adult Quality, Access & Policy Committee Zoom Meeting

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council's Adult Quality Access and Public Policy Committee met to discuss Behavioral Health Homes (BHH) services. Fred Morton from DMHAS provided an overview of BHH services, explaining that they focus on integrating physical and behavioral health care for individuals with Severe Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI) who have high medical costs. Nicole Connelly from Advanced Behavioral Health discussed the program's impact on providers and clients, highlighting improvements in preventive care access and health outcomes. Darcey Cunningham and Ali LaBarca from provider agencies shared insights about implementing integrated care across their organizations and the challenges they face, including access to specialists, transportation, and housing issues. The discussion covered BHH's six core services, outcomes data showing improvements in areas like diabetes control and hospital follow-up rates, and the role of recovery support specialists in helping clients access healthcare. Participants also discussed potential program enhancements, with a particular focus on expanding eligibility criteria to better target those who could benefit most from the services.

Next steps

Summary

Behavioral Health Homes Committee Meeting

The Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council's Adult Quality Access and Public Policy Committee met to discuss behavioral health homes (BHH). Fred Morton from DMHAS provided an overview of BHH services, noting it had been almost a year and a half since their last discussion on the topic. The meeting included presentations from BHH providers, with Nicole Connelly from Advanced Behavioral Health, Darcey Cunningham from Intercommunity, and Ali LaBarca from Western Connecticut Mental Health Network scheduled to participate.

Behavioral Health Homes Overview

Co-Chair Sabrina Trocchi explained what behavioral health homes (BHH) are, describing them as a service integration model that coordinates physical and behavioral health care for people with serious mental illness (SPMI). She outlined the eligibility criteria, including SPMI diagnosis, active Medicaid coverage, and medical claims exceeding \$10,000 in the previous 12 months, and mentioned common diagnoses among participants like anxiety disorders, PTSD, and depression. The goals of BHH include improving client health and well-being, enhancing the client experience, coordinating healthcare transitions, and reducing healthcare costs and emergency department use.

Behavioral Health Home Services Overview

Fred Morton discussed Behavioral Health Home (BHH) services, confirming that dental services and reintegration support are included for eligible clients. He explained the BHH staffing structure and outlined six core services: comprehensive care management, care coordination, transitional care, referral to community support services, health promotion, and child and family support. Fred presented outcome measures showing improvements in diabetes care, mental health follow-up rates, and hypertension control over the past several years.

Hospital Discharge and Follow-Up Process

Brenetta Henry praised the hospital's discharge process and mental health follow-up services, particularly the 7-day follow-up care. Fred explained that while there's no hard cap on participants, BHH providers have estimated capacities based on eligible individuals at program inception. He described the quarterly roster system where eligible participants are matched and sent to providers, with additional eligibility checks handled by Nicole's staff when new cases arise between roster updates.

Community Health Support Services Overview

Nicole Connelly presented on community support services, focusing on connecting individuals with resources for health management, including food support for conditions like thyroid disease and assistance with insurance verification. The discussion highlighted the importance of social connection in improving health outcomes, with data showing increased depression screening rates reaching around 70% in 2021 and forward. Health promotion efforts were discussed, including nutrition education, cooking classes, walking groups, and supporting physical activity through community resources, with health assessment completion rates reaching 82% in 2025.

Autism Depression Services Discussion

Brenetta Henry raised concerns about depression in adults with autism and asked about services for this population. Fred Morton explained that while BH doesn't specifically cover individuals with autism alone, providers are encouraged to consider the whole person and address multiple health issues. The discussion then shifted to introducing Nicole Connelly, who was described as the Provider Relations Manager at Advanced Behavioral Health, with a role that includes supporting providers through data, eligibility, training opportunities, and health literacy initiatives.

BHH Integrated Care Impact Review

Nicole discussed the significant impacts of BHH on both clients and providers, highlighting improvements in quality of life, access to preventive care, and health promotion activities. She noted that BHH providers have embraced whole person care and integrated care across their agencies, leading to increased collaboration and a shift in provider attitudes toward seeking ways to better

support clients. Nicole also shared insights on important lessons learned in providing integrated care, emphasizing the need for understanding trauma-informed approaches and meeting clients where they are, while acknowledging challenges in ensuring all agency staff fully adopt integrated care practices.

Integrated Care Access Challenges

The meeting focused on challenges in integrated care, particularly around access to care and provider coordination. Nicole highlighted that clients with complex mental and physical health concerns face barriers such as long wait times, transportation issues, and limited resources, which can impact the client-provider relationship. Co-Chair Kelly Phenix raised concerns about low rate reimbursements affecting the ability to find specialists, especially for higher levels of care, particularly in certain geographic areas of the state. The group acknowledged that while these systemic barriers exist, providers and staff work tirelessly to overcome them and support clients in accessing necessary care.

BHH Mental Health Impact Discussion

The discussion focused on the impact of BHH on mental health agencies, with Ali LaBarca and Darcey Cunningham sharing their experiences. Ali highlighted how BHH helped Western's staff adopt a whole-person approach, providing education and resources on complex health issues. Darcey emphasized the benefits of having primary care consultants on-site, making it easier to navigate referrals and provide client care. Both speakers discussed the role of recovery support specialists and nurses in improving client engagement and staff retention. The integration of primary care services and collaboration with community organizations were noted as significant contributions to creating a supportive and accessible healthcare environment for clients.

Integrated Care Challenges and Insights

The discussion focused on insights and challenges in integrated care, with Ali and Darcey sharing experiences from their agencies. Ali highlighted a successful case of a client with complex needs who received comprehensive support, including medical, mental health, and housing assistance, leading to improved outcomes. Darcey emphasized the importance of addressing non-medical needs like employment and housing to support client recovery. Key challenges discussed included access to care, particularly due to transportation and housing issues, navigation of insurance systems, provider turnover affecting trust, and recent federal changes impacting eligibility requirements. The participants noted the importance of collaboration with other service providers, including federally qualified health centers, to overcome these barriers.

BHH Program Status and Improvements

The meeting focused on thanking Behavioral Health Home (BHH) providers for their contributions and discussing the program's current status and potential improvements. Fred Morton expressed

interest in expanding eligibility criteria to allow for more strategic person-centered support, particularly for those with emerging health conditions. The next committee meeting was announced for July 14th, which will focus on the Medicaid 1115 Substance Abuse Waiver.