

September 8, 2026 BHP Adult Quality, Access & Policy Committee Zoom Meeting

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The Adult Quality Access and Policy Committee held a meeting to review calendar year 2025 behavioral health ED utilization data and present provider spotlights. Lauren Sgro from Carelon Behavioral Health presented data showing that while adult membership declined by 12%, behavioral health ED volume remained stable, with members diagnosed with serious mental illness having particularly high utilization rates and connection challenges post-discharge. Katie Nugent from Wellmore Behavioral Health presented on the Promoting Integrated Care in Connecticut (PIC) program, which provides comprehensive integrated care for individuals with substance use, mental health, or co-occurring disorders through a partnership with Stay Well and DMHAS, showing success in reducing ED visits and improving health outcomes. The meeting also included discussion of a significant finding from the PIC program that 70% of participants with serious mental illness and physical conditions reported significant pain, highlighting an unexplored area in pain management for this population.

Next steps

Lauren Sgro

- [Share the presentation slides with attendees after the meeting concludes.](#)

Sabrina Trocchi

- [Look at the schedule for upcoming meetings to accommodate Bree Sanca's presentation, which she was unable to give due to technical issues.](#)

Collaboration

- [Co-Chairs Sabrina and Kelly Phenix: Meet with state agency partners before the November 10th meeting to solidify the agenda based on feedback from this meeting.](#)
- [Sabrina and Kelly: Consider agenda items for the November 10th meeting, including topics suggested: eating disorders \(contacting Representative McCarthy-Vahey\), assistance for homeless individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues \(possibly with Rob Haswell's help\), and preparations for HR-1 and HUSKY D \(hearing from DMHAS DSA providers\).](#)

Summary

Meeting Setup and Agenda Planning

The Co-Chairs Sabrina Trocchi and Kelly Phenix welcomed attendees and noted they had a presentation from Carelon and a provider panel discussion planned for the agenda. The meeting officially started at 10:31 after allowing additional time for participants to join.

2025 Behavioral Health ED Utilization

Lauren Sgro presented an analysis of calendar year 2025 behavioral health ED utilization data for Adult HUSKY Health members, focusing on serious mental illness (SMI) populations. The presentation highlighted that approximately 83,000 members had SMI, representing 16.8% of the overall adult population, with over half having at least one ED visit and a high rate of housing instability at 12.3%. The data showed significant substance use indicators among various mental health populations, with particular concern about high rates of unhoused individuals across different diagnostic categories including schizophrenia spectrum disorders, depressive disorders, and bipolar-related conditions.

Mental Health Care Connection Data

Lauren presented data on mental health diagnoses showing that outpatient behavioral services were the most common connection across diagnosis groups, with connection to care improving when expanding the window to 30 days. She noted that over 22% of schizophrenia and psychotic disorder cases connect to home health services, leading to a discussion about upcoming presentations on home health services. The key takeaways included stable behavioral health ED volume despite membership decline, the high ED utilization by members with serious mental illness, and the opportunity for earlier intervention in the first week post-discharge.

Mental Health ER Follow-up Care

Lauren and Bonni Hopkins discussed follow-up care for emergency room visits related to mental illness, clarifying that the 7-day follow-up metric tracks whether patients receive subsequent services rather than direct ER follow-up calls. Ms. Neva raised concerns about patients being discharged without proper post-ER care, and Lauren acknowledged these challenges while offering to provide additional information on connecting to providers. The conversation ended with plans to move to provider spotlights, though Bree Sanca's Alera Caring presentation was delayed due to technical difficulties.

PIC Program Integrated Care Presentation

Kathleen Nugent from Wellmore Behavioral Health presented the Promoting Integrated Care in Connecticut (PIC) program, which provides comprehensive integrated care for individuals with substance use, mental health, or co-occurring disorders. The program offers medical services,

behavioral health care, case management, and medication-assisted treatment under one umbrella, resulting in improved communication among providers, decreased stigma for clients, and better coordination of care. Rob Haswell thanked Kathleen for sharing the program's success in avoiding emergency room utilization and creating connected care spaces, noting that TMIS has partnered with Wellmore and other organizations for about eight years to achieve these goals.

Promoting Integrated Care Project Update

The meeting focused on a presentation about the Promoting Integrated Care project, which is a five-year grant study ending in 2028. Kathleen explained how Stay Well providers are embedded within the Wellmore building, with weekly clinical and behavioral rounds to discuss patient care. Kate Parr shared that the evaluation found 70% of people with serious mental illness and physical conditions report significant pain, leading to discussions about pain management approaches and stigma in this population. The group discussed potential topics for the next meeting on November 10th, including Representative McCarthy-Vahey's work on eating disorders, assistance for homeless individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues, and preparations for HUSKY D and HR-1 changes coming January 1, 2027.

Attendees: David Kaplan, Brenetta Henry, Jaya Daptardar, Kate Parr, Regan Moriarty, Marie Mormile, Sean King - OHA, Regan Moriarty, Rob Haswell, DMHAS, burtonm, Kate Parr, Neva Caldwell, Ece Tek, Lois Berkowitz State of CT DCF, Yvonne Gamelin, Melanie Mitchell, LPC, Lyn Yosua, Brian Keyes, MD, Bonni Hopkins, Mark Vanacore, Sabrina Trocchi, Kelly Phenix, Lauren Sqro, Kathleen Nugent and Jaya Daptardar.

Key Outcomes

The meeting reviewed 2025 behavioral health emergency department (ED) utilization data, highlighting a critical need for improved connection to care within the first seven days post-discharge. The group also evaluated the **Promoting Integrated Care (PIC)** project, which demonstrates success in diverting ED visits through co-located medical and behavioral health services.

Metrics & Findings: 2025 ED Utilization

- **Population Trends:** Adult Husky Health membership decreased by 11.7% in 2025, yet behavioral health ED volume remained stable.
- **Serious Mental Illness (SMI):** Members with SMI represent 16.8% of the adult population but exhibit disproportionately high ED utilization.
- **Housing Instability:** There is a strong correlation between homelessness and ED visits; over 41% of members with schizophrenia or psychotic disorders were identified as unhoused.
- **Connection to Care:** While connection to outpatient services improves by the 30-day mark, the first seven days post-discharge are a critical gap for intervention.

- **Pain Prevalence:** An anonymous survey within the PIC program revealed that approximately 70% of individuals with SMI and a physical condition report significant pain.

Promoting Integrated Care (PIC) Project

- **Model:** A 5-year project (ending 2028) partnering Wellmore Behavioral Health and Stay Well to provide co-located primary care and behavioral health services.
- **Benefits:** Integration reduces stigma, eliminates barriers to information sharing, and prevents duplicated tests.
- **ED Diversion:** The program enables providers to request ED records immediately and conduct post-ER follow-up visits to prevent readmission.
- **Clinical Approach:** The team uses weekly clinical and behavioral rounds to coordinate care for new and established patients.

Open Questions & Feedback

- **Pain Management:** Discussion occurred regarding the high stigma and complexity of treating chronic pain for those with substance use disorders.
- **Care Gaps:** A participant noted the "revolving door" experience for family members who receive no follow-up after psychiatric ED visits.

Action Items

- **Sabrina/Kelly:** Contact Representative Christine Vahey regarding a potential working group on eating disorder care in Connecticut.
- **Sabrina/Kelly:** Coordinate with state agency partners to finalize the November agenda.
- **Rob/Kate:** Return to a future meeting to present more robust evaluation data on the PIC project.

Next Steps

- **Next Meeting:** Scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2026.
- **Proposed Agenda Topics:**
 - Integration of programs for unhoused individuals with mental health and substance use disorders.
 - Preparations for HR-1 and HUSKY D changes effective January 1, 2027.
 - Eating disorder care access in Connecticut.

Lauren Sgro (Carelton)

Members and their families can access the CT Behavioral Partnership Website to learn and identify services here: <https://www.ctbhp.com/ctbhp/en/home>

Or call directly from our toll-free number for all service needs: 877-552-8247

Language assistance services:

Get support in the language you prefer, or for hearing impaired, please dial: 711