



BHPOC Work Group on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Behavioral Health

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www.cga.ct.gov/ph/BHPOC

Co-Chairs: Alice Forrester and Selma Ward

Agenda

March 7, 2023 11:00 AM via ZOOM

The BHPOC is committed to creating to an environment that provides equal access to behavioral healthcare in a culturally competent capacity, with particular attention to social and racial justice.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://beaconhealthoptions.zoom.us/j/92035438730?pwd=cGluU1lIbU2UkhRY3ZWdFBXZVpFdz09>

Meeting ID: 920 3543 8730

Passcode: 557201

+19292056099,,95844380526#,,, *971141# US (New York)

+13017158592,,95844380526#,,, *971141# US (Washington DC)

Dial by your location +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 958 4438 0526

Passcode: 971141

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Join by SIP

92035438730@zoomcrc.com

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162.255.37.11 (US West)

162.255.36.11 (US East)

Meeting ID: 918 1345 4786

Passcode: 834245

David Kaplan, Robert Haswell, Kelly Phenix, Tanya Larsen, Amy Soto, Heather Gates, Sam Haun, Lois Berkowitz, Donyale Pines, Alice Forrester, Yohanna Cifuentes, Sean King, Yvonne Jones, Loida Reyes, Valentin Rosario, Noel Casiano, Teresa Rosario

Scribe: Christine Maziuk

I. Various Topics

- Robert Haswell, DMHAS, reported on current activities. Samia Hussein, Director of Equity and Inclusion at DMHAS, will be presenting in June will be reporting on initiatives and the work that she and her division does in this area to give this group an idea of the work that's been done is ongoing.

- Amy Soto reported on the interest in learning more about how state agencies were doing work as it related to DEI. Amy met with Dr. Garcia of DPH over a policy and planning analysis. Dr. Garcia stated that the State Health Improvement Plan has areas that may be related to what we're looking for. Amy will be attending a meeting next month to find out more information on how the action items may be related to the work. We have the Office of Health Equity that used to be called the Office of Minority/Multicultural Health. It was established by Connecticut Law in 2014 and in 2021 the Office of Health Equity, through DPH, funded Connecticut's first ever state-run comprehensive analysis of our LGBTQ+ community. They have a needs assessment report that was conducted with the Consultation Center at Yale, and it highlights concerns, safety, and findings, and in terms of if the LGBTQ+ community, is receiving adequate health care, mental health services, obtaining safe and affordable housing, among other topics.
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- Alice Forrester suggested perhaps Dr. Garcia would be willing to join one of the meeting and present on what DPH is doing.
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- Alice congratulated Dr. Reyes on the Health Horizon grant. Dr. Reyes reported that Southern has been allocated the Connecticut Health Horizon Grant, which afforded them an opportunity to provide aid by way of a \$10,000 scholarship/year to students that either live in certain towns or they meet the financial aid requirement. The hope is that they can diversify the student population and assist those students that need the most help by getting them into social work quickly. Southern also participated in a partnership with this funding with Clifford Beers and Cornell Scott, where they will be supporting six students this Fall and, in each placement, providing supervisors in the facilities with a stipend and time to provide supervision for them. Additionally, it would provide those students with a stipend and pathway to work. The hope is that the students would be offered job openings at the facilities. It is a two and a half year funding source and Southern will continue to try and allocated other funds to continue this. Southern was able to take on 58 advanced standing students where in the past it was ten. These students will be available for the workforce in 2025. Southern is also graduating without funding 100 students in the master's program.
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- Qualifications were discussed. Students applied early to FAFSA. A report is generated informing who meets the income requirement. Because even master's students are using their parent's income, they then must meet the requirement to live in certain towns in Connecticut. If a student is no longer living with the parents but live in one of the qualifying towns where there is more affordable housing, they may be considered for the grant in that way. Acceptance into an MSW program to apply for grant and you need to have a BSW. Southern has set up a bootcamp for students and a book fund to provide them with.
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- The NCTSN Guidelines for a trauma informed racial organization were reviewed in summary. Bill 6837, an act concerning the licensure, and renewal fees. Clinical Social Workers and licensed MSW's, and the examination requirement for licensure of master's social work went for a hearing yesterday through the Public Health Committee. Alice and Steven Karp testified. A few more legislators support the bill. There was some push back on whether the test has shown to be racially biased and wanted to see the questions. As the bill reads the test would be postponed until April 26, 2026.
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- Alice reported that the Behavioral Health Oversight Council unanimously voted to support our recommendation.

- What it means to be an anti-racist, trauma informed organization, the work of the NCTSN and the work at Clifford Beers was discussed. Yohanna Cifuentes explained the work in faith-based organizations specifically that of Reverend Cooper who delivers training in faith-based communities, she delivers her “Let’s Talk” to aid churches in the New Haven/Hamden area. Rev. Cooper has written a book and curriculum that utilizes her own experience of losing her son to gun violence to educate about what trauma, grief, mental health issues, depression and substance use are utilizing cultural and religious background to identify stigma within the black community. Rev. Cooper helps to identify triggers and has changed some language to be more acceptable in the communities.
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- Kelly Phenix spoke of the Coordination of Care meeting on the 22nd of the month, Sabrina’s team from Wheeler is going to present on the MAP program and outreach in the communities and the services they provide.
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- The handout page, “Principles of an Anti-Racist, Trauma Informed Organization” was discussed.

New Business, Announcements, Adjournment

None discussed

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 2, 2023 at 11:00 AM via ZOOM