



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

Legislative Office Building Room 3000, Hartford CT 06106  
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**[www.cga.ct.gov/ph/BHPOC](http://www.cga.ct.gov/ph/BHPOC)**

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**Co-Chairs: Alice Forrester and Selma Ward**

### **Agenda**

**September 5, 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

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Meeting ID: 980 3203 0015

Passcode: 660830

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Passcode: 336456

David Kaplan, Alice Forrester, Donaicis Alers, Howard Drescher, Jaya Daptarder, Brenetta Henry, Sarah Berenson, Kelly Phenix, Lois Berkowitz, Heather Gates, Robert Haswell, Noel Casiano, Sean King, Bonni Hopkins, Yohanna Cifuentes, Yvonne Jones, Mark Vanacore, Teresa Rosario, Donyale Pina

Scribe: Christine Maziuk

### **I. Open forum to gather ideas on what the focus should be for the committee. What does the practice and implementation of DEI look like organizationally?**

The committee was able to move the enhanced care clinics thanks to Lois Berkowitz and Donyale Pina.

Additionally, the committee had some movement on LMSW license and the last legislative session they postponed the requirement of the exam until 2026. The committee will continue to work on the elimination of that exam, or if they find an exam that is not

as racially biased as we have found from the research done on the one that's currently used. So, the LMSW is still in place, but the exam is on hold. There was a reduction in the fee for licensure.

There was an effort released from the Governor where Southern, Quinnipiac and maybe UConn are partnering with community providers of social work give internships to students of color who are studying to get their MSW where the internships turn into jobs. There is also a scholarship involved.

In looking to the year ahead, what changes would this committee like to see from a trauma informed lens relating to service delivery services, behavioral health and anti-racism?

- The committee needs to start looking on the inside. MPOC has had the same guidelines for years. There is no equitable person sitting on that board. The committee has been trying to get someone in on that board that can show equity and that can have a voice to make changes and make systems change. This individual can be a community person or family member that is dealing with situations with Medicaid that can give impact to the Medicaid population and can have a voice that can speak to those issues. MPOC has no distinction on their seat appointments whereas BHPOC does, i.e., providers, consumers, community members. MPOC is strait appointments. MPOC's chairs are all legislators. Additionally, there is a challenge around getting anyone on that committee to come to coordination of care. Perhaps develop a leadership pipeline of people who are available for these positions.

With regard to equitable access to healthcare, there are a number of groups across the state that do not have equitable access due to parts of Connecticut being quite rural as well as other demographic and social factors. The LGBTQ+ community should also be a focus as well as equity in maternal healthcare.

- High school and college students who were so deeply affected by Covid and accessing services. The lack of social activity has left them socially stunted and there are more reports of depression. Social connectedness has been impacted. The students in human services we are looking to hire have had their social interaction skills stunted. How do they develop the interpersonal people skills to do the job? There students may go to regular therapy, but should there be a niche therapy or services for this group of young adults?
- We should work on ways to diversify our staff to match the community they are serving. Having staff members look like, speak like and have lived experience in the communities that they serve should be prioritized.
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- Look within our own organizations at the distribution of power. Evaluate who has the power, who is making the decisions and redistributing that to the people that are actually impacted by those decisions.
- Set realistic goals and expectations. Funders also need to set realistic expectations. Consider the "what you want" and what is ideal, versus what you can be accomplishing in a year, 2-year, 3-year period of time. Funders are setting salaries are at a level you can't hire under, when you know these applicants offered higher salaries elsewhere.
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- Improve access to affordable translation services.
- PISAB, the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond offers a three-day training on anti-racist practices. The training addresses white supremacy from a systemic and historical perspective. Clifford Beers has required all staff to go through this training.  
[www.PISAB.org](http://www.PISAB.org).
- Highlight some of the wins to help motivate some of the other work that needs to be done.
- Create a group to train some community members in and around advocacy.
- Look into "Food as a Prescription".

## **II. New Business, Announcements, Adjournment**

None discussed.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 3, 2023 at 11:00 AM via ZOOM**