

## June 2, 2026 CLAS Committee Zoom Meeting

### Meeting summary

#### Quick recap

This meeting was a Behavioral Health Committee Oversight Council committee meeting focused on discussing follow-up items from previous conversations and planning future agenda topics. Co-Chair Alice Forrester led the discussion about the police conversation held two months prior and noted that Captain Fumiani would be participating in the iCAN conference in September. The group extensively discussed the failed social work licensing bill, with Tanja Larsen reporting that the legislation to delay or eliminate the master's level exam for clinical practice did not pass, meaning graduates after January 1, 2026 must still take the exam before working in clinical settings. The committee also addressed upcoming Medicaid changes under the HR-1 bill," with Kelly Phenix providing details about work requirements affecting able-bodied adults aged 19-64 who must work 80 hours monthly, though exemptions exist for disabled individuals and recently released inmates. Other topics included rural health transformation work receiving \$156 million annually, cultural and language standards development, and organizational transformation initiatives. Alice announced her retirement and indicated she would open to step down from her chair position, prompting discussion about the process of appointing new committee chairs who must be members of the main Oversight Council.

#### Next steps

##### Alice Forrester

- [Reach out to the Office of Healthcare Strategy to request a presentation on the healthcare benchmarks quality initiative and Medicaid vs private insurance outcomes for a future meeting.](#)
- [Bring up the topic of future committee chair selection to the executive committee and invite expressions of interest from Oversight Council members.](#)

##### Kim Haugabook

- [Share the faith-based toolkit and dissemination strategy with the group once available and provide the link to the toolkit when ready.](#)
- [Once Carelon's information briefs on health disparities and community data are ready, share with the group after internal and CFAC review.](#)

##### Stephney Springer

- [Check internally at DCF/DPH to see if MSW graduates are being prohibited from being hired due to licensing exam requirements and report back to the group.](#)

Tanja Larsen

- [Check with the DEI class group to see if they are willing to share the handouts and bulletin board materials developed for clients and staff and share with the group if approved.](#)

Yohanna Cifuentes

- [Present findings and data from the six-year organizational transformation project, including the organizational assessment tool, to the group at an upcoming meeting.](#)

Collaboration

- [Co-Chair Alice Forrester and Bernetta Henry: Develop and distribute a suggested agenda with topics for the next few months before the July 7th meeting.](#)

## Summary

### Administrative Updates and Planning Discussion

The meeting began with participants sharing updates and discussing administrative matters, including email exchanges and upcoming retirements. Co-Chairs Alice Forrester and Brenetta Henry reviewed the agenda, which included follow-up on a previous police-related discussion and planning potential topics for future class work. No major concerns or updates were raised regarding the police conversation, and Brenetta mentioned Captain Fumiani's involvement in the iCAN conference in September. The group briefly discussed the status of the social work licensing exam, with Noel Casiano and others noting uncertainty about recent changes, and Tanja Larsen was identified as a potential source for legislative updates.

### Social Work Licensing Exam Barriers

The group discussed the failure of a bill to delay or eliminate the social work licensing master level exam, which means graduates after January 1, 2026 must take the test to practice clinically. Tanja Larsen explained that while pre-graduation testing was allowed, the exam creates barriers for new graduates, particularly for multilingual workers who face challenges with the test's language barriers. Crystal Williams from DCF noted that while some agencies require licensing, state agencies like DCF are also requiring it, though she wasn't certain about the current waiver process status. The conversation ended with a brief discussion about upcoming Medicaid changes that will result in millions of children losing Medicaid coverage starting July 1, 2026, with Connecticut building guardrails to help maintain coverage for certain populations.

### MAPOC Medical and Medicaid Updates

Kelly Phenix discussed the recent MAPOC meeting where SNAP and medical presentations were given, with Peter Hadler and Bill Halsey among the presenters. The medical changes are scheduled to take effect January 1, 2027 though the federal requirements are still being finalized. The

discussion covered Medicaid work requirements, with Kelly explaining that able-bodied adults 19-64 must work 80 hours monthly, and exemptions exist for disabled individuals and others meeting specific criteria. The conversation concluded with a discussion about how peer counseling positions could provide work opportunities for individuals subject to the new requirements.

### Medicaid Employment Requirements Discussion

The group discussed work requirements for Medicaid recipients, with Kim Haugabook suggesting people check the website for open positions and Alice highlighting the opportunity to increase the lived experience workforce. Stephney Springer noted that DSS is examining documentation requirements for people who cannot work, while Brenetta raised concerns about re-entering incarcerated individuals facing employment challenges. Kelly confirmed there is a grace period for recently released individuals, though the exact duration was unclear. The discussion concluded with Alice mentioning a \$156 million rural health transformation initiative aimed at improving access to services in Connecticut's rural communities.

### Rural Health and Cultural Competency

The committee discussed several key topics related to rural health and cultural competency. Tanja highlighted transportation challenges in rural areas, while Stephney mentioned a Rural Health Transformation Grant being led by DSS. <https://portal.ct.gov/dss/rural-health-transformation-program> The group explored updates on cultural standards work, with Yohanna reporting that the focus is now shifting to a statewide approach after losing regional funding. Kim Haugabook offered to have someone from the Child and Family Division present on community-level cultural work, and the committee discussed a new faith-based toolkit being developed. Alice announced her retirement and mentioned she would remain on the Behavioral Health Committee Oversight Council, leading to a discussion about the process of selecting a new committee chair.