

Meeting Summary for BHPOC Zoom Meeting

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Quick recap

The meeting focused on the upcoming live session on CT-N and the availability of Spanish translation services. The Governor's proposed budget for the Department of Social Services and the judicial branch was discussed, with concerns raised about the potential shortfall for fiscal years 2026 and 2027. The team also discussed challenges in mental health funding and service provision, emphasizing the need to blend funding sources for Urgent Care Centers and addressing issues such as staffing shortages, financial constraints, and the lack of affordable housing.

Next steps

Urgent Care Center providers to continue working with DSS on developing a billable model and accessing opened billing codes.

Urgent Care Center providers to work with commercial payers to establish sustainable reimbursement rates.

State agencies to explore ways to collect and analyze data on all children accessing behavioral health services, not just those on Medicaid.

Providers to continue advocating for blended funding (Medicaid and grant funds) to support Urgent Care Center services for all payer types.

Summary

Oversight Council Meeting Recap and Translation

Governor's Budget Proposal Overview

Co-Chair Terri DiPietro welcomed new attendees and introduced the Governor's budget proposal, which is not yet law. There were no action items for the meeting. Fatmata Williams (DSS) presented the Department of Social Services' budget proposal, which includes updates to the hospital provider tax, reductions in State Health Plan charges, and removal of inflation-based rate increases for nursing homes and intermediate care facilities. The proposal also includes expansions such as increasing certain rates pursuant to the provider rate study and providing additional support to waiver and home health providers. Fatmata also mentioned a reallocation to centralize information technology functions under the Department of Administration Services. She agreed to answer any questions raised during the presentation.

Behavioral Health Rate Proposal Discussion

Terri, Fatmata, Alice Forrester, Janine Sullivan-Wiley, Heather Gates, Howard Drescher, and Neva Caldwell discussed the budget proposal and its impact on behavioral health rates. Fatmata clarified that the rate increases were based on the provider rate study, which included both phases. Alice and Heather emphasized that the proposed rate was still below the required amount, and legislators were considering this. Howard asked about the impact on housing provided by the Department of Social Services, but Fatmata did not see anything specific in the budget.

Judicial Branch Budget Shortfall Concerns

The Governor's proposed budget for the judicial branch is expected to result in a significant shortfall for fiscal years 2026 and 2027, particularly for contracted provider networks. Brian Delude from CSSD acknowledges the challenges providers are facing and emphasizes that

they are actively advocating with OPM and judicial branch leadership for additional funds to address the anticipated shortfall. While specific details are not yet available, CSSD recognizes the critical importance of a strong contracted provider network for serving clients and communities effectively. They continue to push for more funding to strengthen these partnerships and improve services.

State Partners' Reports and Updates

Terri thanked Brian for providing information and expressed concerns about the Department of Education's current situation. Janine appreciated the state partners' reports, emphasizing the importance of staying informed. Steve Girelli discussed the upcoming meeting's focus on school-based services and thanked the presenters. Kelly Phenix and Sabrina Trocchi discussed the behavioral health outpatient access, utilization, and gaps presentation. Heather shared updates on the planning grant implementation and Medicaid rate increases. Alice discussed the term of DEI and the work being done, and the potential collaboration with the Connecticut Health Foundation. Neva Caldwell announced the statewide tour of the Consumer and Family Advisory Council (CFAC) and the 2025 schedule of HUSKY health program benefits and services.

UCCs Impact on Healthcare Utilization

The team discussed the utilization of higher-end services for both children and adults. Steve Girelli expressed caution about the trend, suggesting it might be part of the noise rather than a clear trajectory. He also mentioned the potential impact of the UCCs on the trend line but was unsure if it would be immediately discernible. Stephanie Springer (DCF) added that the UCCs were still new and they needed to look at all children, not just Medicaid ones, to understand their impact. Alice pointed out that 41% of those using the UCCs were privately insured. Jeff Vanderploeg (CHDI) confirmed that they were collecting and analyzing data on behalf of the UCCs and that utilization had been increasing, with 90% not using the emergency department.

Mental Health Funding and Service Challenges

The group discusses challenges in mental health funding and service provision. Jeff emphasizes the need to blend funding sources for Urgent Care Centers to maintain their current payer mix. Providers report increasing demand for services, especially among adults, coupled with staffing shortages and financial constraints. The lack of affordable housing is identified as a major issue impacting mental health care. Participants stress the importance of raising Medicaid rates and implementing care coordination to address these challenges. State Representative Mike DeMicco expresses support for increasing Medicaid rates and requests concrete examples of service gaps to help advocate for improvements.