

Meeting Summary for BHPOC Zoom Meeting

Sep 10, 2025 01:55 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) ID: 931 2589 1986

Quick recap

The meeting began with introductions and preparations for a live recording on CT-N, with Spanish translation services available, followed by a presentation on HR1's impact on Medicaid and SNAP benefits. The group discussed upcoming changes to Medicaid eligibility and work requirements, including system upgrades needed for verification and concerns about the impact on vulnerable populations. The meeting covered legislative updates, budget highlights from various agencies, and concluded with information about upcoming conferences and adjournment.

Next steps

- DSS: Develop IT and system upgrades to track work requirements and eligibility verification for Medicaid recipients.
- DSS: Create a public education campaign to inform Medicaid recipients about new requirements and obligations.
- DSS: Assess staffing needs for handling increased eligibility verification checks.
- DSS: Prepare resources for providers to help Medicaid members maintain eligibility.
- DSS: Develop strategies for community-based providers to assist with keeping people on Medicaid.
- DSS: Refine estimates of how many HUSKY D members will be affected by work requirements.
- DSS: Provide Senator Lesser with data on how many non-citizens will lose coverage due to the changes.
- DSS: Follow up with Co-Chair Howard Drescher regarding disability status exemptions for SNAP requirements.
- Bill Halsey: Send the presentation slides to David Kaplan for distribution.

Summary

CT-N Live Recording Preparation Meeting

The meeting began with introductions and preparations for a live recording on CT-N, with Spanish translation services available. Howard Drescher, chairing in Terry DiPietro's absence, outlined the agenda, which included budget reports and updates from major agency representatives. Bill Halsey was confirmed to present on HR1, also known as the "one big beautiful bill," and he prepared to walk through a public presentation given the previous week.

HR1 Impact on Medicaid and SNAP

Bill Halsey (DSS) presented on the impacts of HR1 on Medicaid and SNAP benefits, focusing on the changes to work requirements and eligibility criteria. He explained that the current SNAP requirements for adults 19-54 include 80+ hours of work or community engagement per month, with exemptions for certain groups, while the future state will expand the age cohort to 64, narrow the exemption criteria, and limit waivers to areas with unemployment rates over 10%. For Medicaid, Bill noted that starting January 1, 2027, beneficiaries will need to meet work or community engagement requirements, with exemptions for various groups including foster youth, veterans, and those with serious mental illness or substance use disorders. Bill clarified

that while guidance is still needed on some aspects, it is unlikely CMS will issue waivers, meaning the 2027 implementation date is likely to stand.

Medicaid Work Requirements Implementation Plan

The meeting focused on upcoming changes to Medicaid eligibility and work requirements. Bill explained that starting January 1, 2027, individuals applying for Medicaid will need to meet both income eligibility and work requirements, with eligibility renewals occurring every six months instead of annually. The group discussed system upgrades needed to track and verify work requirements, with Bill noting that failure to meet requirements would result in loss of Medicaid eligibility. The Department of Social Services will need additional staffing to handle the increased verification checks, though specific staffing plans and system upgrades are still under review.

Medicaid Changes and Non-Citizen Impact

The meeting focused on the impact of Medicaid changes on non-citizens and the broader Medicaid population in Connecticut. Bill presented on upcoming changes to Medicaid eligibility, including restrictions on coverage for certain non-citizens and the implementation of cost-sharing for Husky D enrollees in 2028. The group discussed strategies to keep people on Medicaid, including system upgrades, education, and outreach efforts. Co-Chair Howard Drescher raised concerns about the arbitrary nature of work requirements and their impact on vulnerable populations. Kelly Phenix highlighted the potential challenges for people in the process of filing for SSDI. Heather Gates emphasized the importance of community-based strategies to help people stay on Medicaid, noting that providers and places of worship are often the first point of contact for many individuals.

Legislative Session Overview and Updates

The meeting covered several key topics, including a discussion on connecting dots systematically to reduce member burden, with Bill expressing interest in brainstorming community-based provider involvement in Medicaid eligibility. Alexis Mohammed mentioned she would provide a budget update at the next council meeting, while Bill clarified he did not have the information readily available. Rob Haswell introduced the DMHAS legislative team, who provided an overview of the 2025 legislative session, noting that 4,064 bills were introduced, with 918 reported out of committee and 205 passing both chambers.

Substance Use and Mental Health Laws

Chandra Persaud and Kelly Sinko discussed several key legislative provisions related to substance use and mental health. They highlighted changes to the pretrial intervention program, telehealth authority for MAT, and technical updates to opioid-related laws. Kelly detailed new regulations for tobacco and e-cigarette products, including increased penalties for underage sales and the creation of a new cannabis and hemp enforcement board. They also mentioned the establishment of a cannabis control division at DCP and updates to naloxone distribution laws. Finally, Chandra covered driver-related provisions, including DUI penalty reciprocity for boating licenses and expanded authority for police to stop drivers consuming cannabis.

Budget and Mental Health Updates

The meeting covered budget highlights from various agencies, including restored funding for prevention services and support for the 988 Suicide Hotline. Kelly Sinko presented on the budget, noting that ARPA funding expired but was replaced by legislative funding for housing supports and mobile crisis programs. Howard Drescher mentioned a ProPublica investigation on insurance companies' "delay and deny" tactics for mental health coverage. Stephney Springer (DCF) provided updates on the new interim Commissioner, Susan Hamilton, and the launch of

the CT Kids Information Network Database. Tammy Venenga reported on DDS funding for age-outs and grads, while Brian DeLude confirmed that the judicial branch is operating with full funding. The Adult Quality, Access & Policy Committee, led by Kelly Phenix, discussed treatment utilization and best practices for Medicaid adults, highlighting a 42% homelessness rate among certain demographics. Heather Gates reported on the postponement of the operations committee meeting to October, hoping to address Medicaid rate increases and the CC BH Planning grant implementation.

iCAN Mental Health Conference Update

The meeting covered updates on several topics. Howard Drescher noted that Brian Klimkiewicz had apologized for a delay and would join at 3:30, though the meeting's duration was uncertain. David mentioned that Alice Forrester, representing the DEI group, was unable to attend but shared that the group was exploring the role of community health workers and peer-to-peer support for mental health services. Neva Caldwell presented information about the upcoming iCAN Conference on September 25, themed "Partnering for the Improvement of Mental Health and Substance Use," and provided details on registration. The conversation ended with a motion to adjourn, seconded by Neva, and Howard Drescher confirmed the adjournment.