

December 10, 2025 Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council (BHPOC) Zoom Meeting

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The meeting began with introductions and administrative matters, including coverage by CT-N and discussion of the CFAC council seat vacancies. The group reviewed upcoming presentations and plans for 2026, while addressing concerns about federal policy changes and their impact on mental health services. The conversation ended with discussions about behavioral health rate adjustments, challenges in service delivery, and various operational updates including quality monitoring and professional development activities.

Next steps

- [Howard Sovronsky: Share contact information in the chat and ensure it is included in the meeting summary for follow-up regarding CFAC council seat advocacy.](#)
- [Howard Sovronsky: Review letters and details from CFAC members regarding council seat advocacy and use LLB contacts to help move the issue forward.](#)
- [Co-Chair Terri DiPietro/Executive Team: Schedule Commissioner Barton-Reeves to present in January and Commissioner Jordan Scheff in February.](#)
- [Terri/Executive Team: Schedule DMHAS to present on peer recovery programs and data in March.](#)
- [Terri/Executive Team: Consider adding a presentation on the Medicaid data and women's behavioral health panel to future council meetings.](#)
- [Terri/Executive Team: Re-invite Dr. Springer to present on urgent care centers at a future date.](#)
- [Alice Forrester/DEI Group: Consider inviting CHWs \(Community Health Workers\) to present, possibly alongside peer support specialists, at a future meeting.](#)
- [Alexis Mohammed/Fatmata Williams: Bring a detailed proposal for the new BH rate increases, including specific codes and fiscal analysis, to next month's meeting.](#)
- [Brian Klimkiewicz \(SDE\): Post the application for local and regional school districts for the \\$500,000 trauma funding before the holidays and provide updates after applications are received.](#)
- [Brian DeLude \(Judicial\): Look into the implications of the announced Medicaid rate increases for ABHS contracts and ensure affected providers are informed of any changes.](#)
- [Neva Caldwell \(CFAC\): Email information about CFAC chair elections and seat criteria to interested parties and provide contact information for further details.](#)

Summary

Meeting Openings and Public Comment

The meeting began with introductions. David Kaplan announced that the meeting was being covered live on CT-N and provided instructions for Spanish translation services. Co-Chair Terri DiPietro called the meeting to order and mentioned that public comment rules are posted on the BHPOC Website. The meeting was then turned over to Neva Caldwell, who represents CFAC.

CFAC Council Seat Frustration

Neva Caldwell, representing the CFAC Consumer Family Advisory Council, expressed frustration over the lack of response to their efforts to fill vacant council seats, despite written communications and calls to legislators. Terri acknowledged the issue and mentioned that the executive team is equally frustrated, with Representative Mike Demicco having made personal efforts to advance their cause. Howard Sovronsky offered to assist by leveraging his contacts to move the process forward. howard.sovronsky@ct.gov, Office of the Behavioral Health Advocate The meeting also discussed plans for future presentations, including one by DMHAS in March to provide an overview of peer recovery programs and their effectiveness, with a focus on obtaining recognition and payment for these services.

Council Updates and Leadership Changes

The council discussed potential future presentations, including a previous successful panel on women's behavioral health and plans to follow up on urgent care centers. Terri announced that Howard Drescher, a long-serving council member, would be stepping down as Co-Chair in January due to focusing on family and other commitments, and he expressed hope that NAMI might find a replacement. The conversation ended with plans to gather members' major concerns for 2026.

Federal Policy Impact on Mental Health

The meeting focused on concerns about federal policy changes and their impact on people with serious mental illness. Janine Sullivan-Wiley expressed worry about changes to housing and homelessness services, while Howard Drescher shared his personal experience with providing housing for his daughter and highlighted the increasing complexity of benefit applications, which could burden individuals with serious mental illness. The group discussed the importance of considering these issues in future planning and presentations.

Impact of Paperwork on Public Services

The meeting focused on discussing the impact of new paperwork requirements on public services, with Howard Drescher noting these changes would likely drive people away from benefits systems. Representative Mike Demicco agreed, expressing concern about the potential reduction in benefits access, while he provided context about a \$500 million contingency fund created by the legislature

to address funding losses from the federal government. Alice Forrester suggested bringing in Community Health Workers (CHWs) to discuss their behavioral health work, as they are currently seeking SPA certification.

Addressing Systemic Service Challenges

The group discussed a recent exercise conducted by Melissa Green and Hector Glynn with the Child/Adolescent Quality, Access & Policy Committee, which highlighted system-wide issues such as workforce shortages, insufficient service capacity, and a lack of cohesive planning and coordination. Terri encouraged participants to email the executive team with suggestions for future presenters and emphasized the ongoing effort to identify relevant material for future discussions. The conversation ended with a reminder that DDS did not have a representative present, with Fatmata Williams or Alexis Mohammed (DSS) potentially taking on the role of presenter.

Behavioral Health Rate Parity Plan

The meeting focused on Behavioral Health (BH) rate adjustments, where Alexis Mohammed and Fatmata Williams explained that adult BH rates will be brought to parity with children's rates, effective January 1, 2026, using \$2 million of the \$7 million allocated for children's Behavioral Health. They clarified that while children's rates will also increase, the main focus is on eliminating rate differences between adult and children's services, particularly for specific therapy codes (90837, 90843, and 90847). The discussion revealed concerns from Alice Forrester and Heather Gates about the limited rate increases, with Heather noting that these changes won't address the significant gap identified in the rate study, and both expressing disappointment that the increases fall far below their five-state comparison.

Behavioral Health Reimbursement Rate Challenges

The meeting focused on addressing the challenges in behavioral health services, particularly the need for adequate reimbursement rates for both children and adults. Participants discussed the systemic issues with rate setting in Connecticut and the impact on nonprofit providers, emphasizing that inadequate rates lead to insufficient resources and capacity. Legislators expressed support for addressing these issues, and there was a call for community engagement to advocate for rate increases. Operational updates included the implementation of interim quality monitoring for residential substance use treatment programs and ongoing ACM training sessions. The meeting also highlighted the military support program for National Guard members and their families accessing behavioral health services.

Connecticut Mental Health Services Update

The meeting focused on discussions about mental health services and resources in Connecticut. Howard Drescher raised concerns about social isolation among individuals with serious mental health diagnoses, prompting Robert to discuss the Behavioral Health Home initiative's focus on

addressing social isolation and loneliness. Heather highlighted the need for increased investment in adult behavioral health services, while Brian DeLude mentioned upcoming bid opportunities and potential changes to Medicaid rates. Brian Klimkiewicz provided updates on professional development activities and a new funding opportunity for school districts to address trauma in students. The conversation ended with updates from various committees and a reminder of upcoming chair elections for the Consumer and Family Advisory Council in February 2026.

From BRYAN KLIMKIEWICZ-SDE

Please find below the list of current events scheduled from October to December. It is important to note that some of these events are part of a series; therefore, included is the month of October for comprehensive reference.

**To register for these and other CSDE/SERC events, please go to
<https://ctserc.org/events>**

Understanding Disproportionality in School Discipline Series

In this three-day series of professional learning opportunities, educators will come to better understand their role in creating inclusive classroom environments for all learners that will ensure consistent and compassionate responses. Tuesday, 12/16/25, Wednesday, 01/07/26, and Thursday, 03/12/26.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Behavior

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a framework for implementing a continuum of academic and social-emotional and behavioral supports meeting students' needs and enhancing opportunities for achievement while reducing exclusionary school discipline practices that have a disproportionately adverse effect on students with disabilities, students of color and low-income students. During this multi-day training, participants will explore the core tier 1 features necessary to establish an effective, efficient system for school-wide behavior support. Target audience: School-wide team required to check with presenters for more information.

Day 1 Thursday, December 18, 2025

Day 2 Wednesday, January 14, 2026

Day 3 Wednesday, February 4, 2026 – Virtual (Zoom Link will be sent after Day 2)

Day 4 Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Day 5 Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Day 6 Wednesday, May 20, 2026

9am to 3pm

COACHES SESSIONS – 1pm to 2:30pm - Virtual

Day 1 – Thursday, March 12, 2026

Day 2 – Wednesday, May 6, 2026

Using Data and Protocols to Determine Effective Behavior

In these sessions, participants will use Initial Line of Inquiry and Prevent-Teach-Respond Protocols in targeting effective behavior supports to reduce exclusionary school discipline practices that have a disproportionately adverse effect on students with disabilities, students of color, and low-income students. Friday, 11/07/25 and Friday, 12/19/25.

Introduction to Restorative Practices

This overview session will offer participants the opportunity to understand Restorative Practices as key components of building a class-wide and school-wide sense of community. This is a series on Friday, 10/10/25 and Friday, 12/12/25

Understanding Drivers of Chronic Stress and Burnout and What Can Be Done

Chronic stress among educators is a primary factor underlying absences, burnout and turnover. Participants will delve into the complexities of stress, chronic stress and burnout, deepen their understanding of stress responses, and explore how chronic stress manifests in the body and mind (this event has already occurred).

Deepening Collaboration: The Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) to Support Students with Mental Health Needs

The Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) may be utilized to expand PBIS/MTSS frameworks to integrate mental health, community, school and families into a larger system of support. This session recognizes the challenges schools face in providing holistic support for students with mental health needs including siloed approaches. ISF is introduced as a comprehensive way to connect schools, families, mental health professionals, and community resources (this event has already occurred).