

Meeting Summary for Women & Children's Health Committee

Zoom Meeting

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The Family Bridge program was the presentation and is a universal nurse home visiting model for new moms and infants in Connecticut, aimed at improving physical and mental health outcomes and reducing health disparities. Vicki Luca also gave a presentation to improve breastfeeding support through telehealth, highlighting the benefits of their preventative care model and the challenges of not being networked with Connecticut's Medicaid program. The conversation ended with plans to reconvene in September to discuss their work and share ideas.

Rachel Rusnak and Debbie Poerio to follow up on whether community health workers in the Family Bridge program are trained in human trafficking.

Vicki Lucas to compile data comparing Nest Collaborative's breastfeeding rates by race/ethnicity to CDC national data.

Nest Collaborative to continue efforts to become in-network with Connecticut Medicaid.

Amy to consider scheduling a future presentation on the health benefits and importance of breastfeeding as a quality measure.

Committee members interested in presenting to reach out to David Kaplan or Amy Gagliardi to schedule future presentations.

Summary

Community Health Workers Presentation

Dr. Deb Poerio (Office of Early Childhood) and Rachel Rusnak (Office of Health Strategy) presented on community health workers in maternal child health. They provided an overview of their collaborative Family Bridge project.

Introducing Family Bridge Program Strategy

Rachel and Deb from a multi-agency collaborative introduced the Family Bridge program, an innovative, universal nurse home visiting community health worker program designed to strengthen Connecticut's public health infrastructure. The program, which was developed with input from five state agency commissioners, aims to improve physical and mental health outcomes for infants and their mothers, prevent and address health disparities by race and ethnicity, and facilitate direct access to prevention-oriented community-based public health resources. Rachel emphasized the program's goal to build a population-level solution, reduce stigma for services by using a universal model, and develop an enhanced referral system through community health workers.

Family Bridge Program and Community Health Workers

Rachel and Deb discussed the Family Bridge program, a universal nurse home visiting model for new moms and infants, and a unique community health worker component for Connecticut. The program aims to address maternal anxiety and postpartum depression, reducing healthcare costs and improving family outcomes. The program, launched in October 2023, is expected to provide even greater outcomes due to the addition of community health workers.

The program offers support to new moms, including assessments, referrals, and interim supplies, all provided at no cost.

Family Connects Pilot Program Progress & Expansion

The pilot program for Family Connects in Bridgeport has made significant progress. It has reached over 700 families with home visits by nurses and community health workers. The program aims to connect families to resources like diapers, formula, food assistance, primary care providers, and lactation consultations. In Norwich, planning is underway to implement Family Connects with a target launch by early 2024. An evaluation is being conducted to assess program outcomes like reducing parental anxiety and emergency department visits. Efforts are also being made to ensure long-term sustainability of the program.

Family Bridge Program Sustainability and Reimbursement Research

Rachel explained that the Family Bridge program is currently funded by federal COVID-19 grants, but they are seeking a sustainability plan to continue the program long-term. They have hired a contractor to research reimbursement models, including from private insurers and Medicaid, and develop a roadmap for implementation. Deb emphasized positioning Family Bridge as a health benefit rather than a social service program to facilitate reimbursement. The program aims for universal reach by approaching all new families at the hospital bedside, though some families are missed. It provides nurse home visits and community health worker services focused on the mother's health, parenting education, referrals, and screenings including reproductive health needs.

Telehealth Model Boosts Breastfeeding Rates

Vicki Lucas presented a presentation to improve breastfeeding support through telehealth, utilizing a preventative care model and a collaborative approach. She differentiated their clinical lactation specialists from peer support groups and highlighted the return on investment in breastfeeding promotion. Vicki detailed the services provided by Nest, a telehealth company focusing on breastfeeding and preventative care for new mothers. She also presented the outcomes and benefits of their innovative telehealth model for lactation consultations, confirming that it has significantly improved breastfeeding rates across all demographics, including underserved communities, without a drop in rates at six months for any ethnic group.

Telehealth Challenges and Expanding Medicaid

Vicki revealed that their telehealth company isn't networked with Connecticut's Medicaid program, which is a significant challenge due to their headquarters and clinical partners being based in the state. They've been denied provider privileges despite being an IBCLC, unlike in other states. Amy clarified this isn't the case in other states. Vicki also confirmed their company's growth and their plans to expand Medicaid, with a focus on licensing in all states and territories. Amy emphasized the importance of breastfeeding as a quality measure in healthcare, while Vicki stressed the significance of clinical assessments by IBCLCs. The Nest collaborative, founded in 2017, saw significant growth during the pandemic and expressed openness to collaboration to improve maternal-child outcomes in Connecticut. Amy decided to reconvene on September 9th to discuss their work and share ideas.