

July 14, 2025 Women & Children's Health Committee Zoom Meeting

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The meeting began with legislative updates and introductions, followed by a presentation on postpartum mental health readmissions using hospital discharge data in Connecticut. Discussions covered potential impacts of federal budget changes on state Medicaid programs and other health and social services, highlighting concerns about funding cuts and eligibility changes. The conversation ended with a focus on mental health readmissions among postpartum women, emphasizing the need for universal screening and improved access to mental health support.

Next steps

- Co-Chair Representative Keitt to continue advocating for preserving funding and programs for vulnerable Connecticut residents, especially related to Medicaid and mental health services.
- Shelly Nolan (DMHAS) to reach out to Co-Chair Amy Gagliardi regarding data from the first iteration of the Access Mental Health for Moms program.
- [PROUD Trainings | Connecticut Hospital Association | CHA](#)

[Home - ACCESS Mental Health for Moms](#)

- Lisa Budris to follow up on the evaluation being conducted on the Family Bridge programs in Bridgeport and Norwich hospitals.
- Mary Beth Begley to consider conducting a follow-up analysis on substance use disorder readmissions, as it was not included in the current study.
- Shelly Nolan to connect with Amy about a potential presentation from DMHAS at a future meeting.
- Committee members to submit any legislative priorities to Representative Keitt for consideration in the next legislative session.

Summary

Postpartum Mental Health Data Presentation

The meeting began with introductions and a legislative update from Representative Sarah Keitt, who highlighted key issues including the "big, not-so-beautiful bill." The main focus was on an upcoming

presentation about postpartum mental health readmissions using hospital discharge data, to be delivered by Mary Beth Begley and Lisa Budris from the Department of Public Health.

HR1's Impact on Medicaid Programs

Sarah Keitt discussed the potential impacts of HR1 on Connecticut's Medicaid programs, highlighting significant budget shortfalls and new work requirements for SNAP beneficiaries. She outlined changes to Medicaid eligibility, including more frequent renewals and reduced retroactive coverage, predicting these measures could lead to thousands losing coverage. Rep. Keitt also highlighted legislative achievements, including increased funding for Medicaid providers and a new childcare program offering free or low-cost care to families earning under \$100,000.

Connecticut Budget Challenges Update

The meeting focused on updates and challenges related to state and federal budgets, particularly concerning health and social services in Connecticut. Rep. Sarah Keitt discussed legislative efforts to support vulnerable residents, including mental health parity and harm reduction centers, while noting that many federal budget changes would not take effect until after the midterms. Shelly Nolan highlighted uncertainties in funding for mental health and substance use programs, emphasizing the need for contingency planning. Updates from various state agencies, including the Department of Social Services, Department of Children and Families, and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, revealed potential impacts of federal cuts on services and eligibility. The conversation ended with Lisa Budris introducing a presentation on hospital readmissions for mental health purposes by Mary Beth Begley, a CSTE fellow working with the Department of Public Health.

Postpartum Mental Health Readmission Analysis

Mary Beth presented an analysis of postpartum mental health readmissions using hospital discharge data from 2016 to 2023 in Connecticut. She found that 2.4% of women who gave birth had at least one mental health readmission, with anxiety and depression being the most common conditions. The readmission rate was highest among younger individuals, those using public insurance, and certain racial and ethnic groups. She concluded that universal screening and improved access to mental health support are needed to prevent severe postpartum mental health issues.

Postpartum Mental Health Readmission Rates

The meeting focused on a presentation by Mary Beth Begley about hospital readmissions related to mental health, particularly among postpartum women. She reported that 12% of delivery records had a mental health diagnosis, with 9% of those resulting in readmissions. The group discussed potential data analysis from the Family Bridge program and resources available through the Connecticut

Hospital Association and Connecticut Access Mental Health for Moms program. Marilyn Lonczak shared information about WIC program screening practices and training for staff.

From the National WIC Association: On Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee is scheduled to [mark up](#) their draft agriculture spending bill for fiscal year 2026 (FY26), which will include their proposal for WIC funding for the year ahead. Last month, House Appropriators advanced a bill that would flat-fund WIC for FY26, providing \$7.6 billion in funding, which would put the program at risk of turning away eligible individuals for the first time in nearly three decades. The House proposal also includes a 10% cut to the Cash Value Benefit (CVB) for fruits and vegetables with the intent in resetting benefits to pre-2021 levels. You can tell your Congress members to support full funding for WIC and reject cuts to the CVB [here](#).

PSI National has asked PSI Chapters to disseminate free prenatal educational group offered twice monthly in the evening.

<https://postpartum.net/postpartum-planning-for-expectant-parents/>

The next meeting will be in September, and Representative Sarah Keitt encouraged attendees to share legislative priorities for the upcoming session.