

Meeting Summary for Women & Children's Health Committee

Zoom Meeting

Sep 08, 2025 09:25 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada) ID: 917 3245 8702

Quick recap

The meeting began with introductions and preparations for a live broadcast on CTN Network TV, featuring presentations from Dr. Mark DeFrancesco on racial disparities in hospital readmissions after delivery and Kira Phillips on the Husky Family Planning program. The group discussed maternal health disparities, postpartum care improvements, and potential collaborations between various organizations including the Department of Public Health and Medicaid data networks. The conversation ended with updates on the Husky Family Planning program's transition to the Access Connecticut system, including discussions about enrollment rates and integration with other health services, with the next meeting scheduled for November 10th.

Next steps

- Medicaid Council: Investigate root causes of disparities in readmission rates between racial and ethnic groups.
- Team: Consider further analysis of why Black and Hispanic patients have higher readmission rates even when controlling for socioeconomic status, insurance, and comorbidities.
- Department of Social Services: Consider conducting a follow-up study on readmission rates for Medicaid clients using the original study's methodology.
- Connecticut State Medical Society: Explore possibilities for revisiting the 2015 study on racial and ethnic disparities in hospital readmissions after delivery.
- Women and Children's Health Subcommittee: Develop new studies that dig deeper into factors contributing to maternal morbidity and mortality disparities.
- Team: Investigate interventions that could address the disparities in readmission rates between racial/ethnic groups.
- Team: Examine current data to determine if disparities in readmission rates have changed since the original 2005-2012 study period.
- Mark: Reach out to Lane Gaikos to explore their support for a follow-up study on racial and ethnic disparities in hospital readmissions after delivery.
- Lisa Budris: Explore using hospital discharge data to recreate/update the original study.
- Steven Colangelo: Work with Department of Social Services to analyze Medicaid client data for readmission disparities using the original study's methodology.
- Amy Gagliardi: Consider adding Janice to the December agenda to present Connecticut 359 Network data on maternal and child health.
- Amy: Reach out to Dr. DeFrancesco to coordinate next steps for a follow-up study.
- Amy: Consider organizing a presentation on the effects of periodontal disease during pregnancy on pregnancy outcomes.

Summary

CTN Live Broadcast Preparation

The meeting began with introductions and preparations for a live broadcast on CTN Network TV at 9:30 AM. Co-Chair Amy Gagliardi expressed admiration for Mark's accomplishments and mentioned his support for the birthing center bill.

Connecticut Women's Health Study Presentation

The meeting began with introductions and a brief overview of the agenda, which included two presentations. Dr. Mark DeFrancesco, an obstetrician and gynecologist with extensive experience, was introduced to present a study on women's health in Connecticut. Dr. DeFrancesco's presentation focused on a study that had previously been discussed in a prior meeting.

Racial Disparities in Postpartum Readmissions

Mark presented a 10-year-old study on racial and ethnic disparities in hospital readmissions after delivery, highlighting significant differences in readmission rates between Black, Hispanic, and White women, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors. The study, conducted in Connecticut from 2005 to 2012, found that Black and Hispanic women were more likely to be readmitted within 30 days of delivery, with the most common reasons being hypertension, infection, and postpartum bleeding. Mark suggested that revisiting the study and developing new research could help uncover the root causes of these disparities, while Steven proposed using Medicaid data to further investigate the issue.

Maternal Health Data Collaboration Initiative

The group discussed replicating a previous study on postpartum readmissions and maternal mortality, with Lisa Budris from the Department of Public Health offering to collaborate using available hospital discharge data. Janice Gruendel presented information about the Connecticut 3-5-9 network, which works with Medicaid data on child development and would like to join the maternal-child health discussion. The group explored ways to improve postpartum care, including involving pediatricians in maternal health surveillance, and discussed disparities in maternal mortality rates across different racial and insurance groups.

Connecticut Family Planning Medicaid Overview

Kira Phillips (ICAN) provided an overview of Contraceptive Access Now, a national organization that assists state agencies in implementing Medicaid family planning programs to increase reproductive care access. She explained the Husky Family Planning program in Connecticut, which offers partial Medicaid benefits for family planning and related care to residents with incomes up to 263% of the federal poverty level. Kira detailed the covered services, including annual check-ups, birth control, STI testing, and vaccines, and noted that the program serves as a default option for individuals who do not qualify for full Medicaid or other insurance coverage.

Husky Family Planning Program Updates

Kira explained that Medicaid family planning programs, including Husky, are exempt from certain HR1 restrictions, such as work requirements and frequent eligibility redeterminations. She outlined changes to immigration and retroactive coverage eligibility starting in 2026 and 2027. Abigail discussed ICANN's work in implementing the Husky family planning program in Connecticut, including training sessions, site visits, and ongoing technical assistance to health

centers. She highlighted opportunities for continued education, outreach, and program improvements, including potential integration of the Husky family planning application with the Access Health site to streamline enrollment processes.

Husky Family Planning Program Updates

Abbigail Shirk (ICAN) presented updates and recommendations for the Husky Family Planning program, highlighting the need to streamline enrollment processes, improve data tracking, and modernize diagnosis codes. She emphasized the importance of auto-enrollment for members who lose full Husky coverage and discussed plans to migrate the Connect Site to the Access Health site by 2027. Abbigail also encouraged state and local systems to include the program in public information efforts and offered ICANN's resources and training at no cost. Amy expressed interest in learning more about the program's details.

Family Planning Program Implementation Challenges

The group discussed barriers to implementing a family planning program, including outdated codes since 2015 and the lack of coverage for PrEP under pharmacy benefits. They explored the differences between the Connect CT and Access Health CT application systems, noting that Access Health provides faster determinations while Connect CT takes up to 45 days. Abbigail explained that auto-enrollment and presumptive eligibility could help streamline the process, and the group expressed hope for updates on these workarounds.

Husky Family Planning System Transition

The meeting focused on the Husky Family Planning program's transition to the Access Connecticut system, which will provide real-time determinations for eligibility, potentially reducing the need for presumptive eligibility. Kira noted that Connecticut has a low enrollment rate of 1.7% for the program, and Shelly from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services expressed interest in integrating reproductive health education into their services for pregnant and parenting populations. The group discussed the importance of publicizing the program and its benefits, and David announced that the next meeting would be held on November 10th.