

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING HARTFORD,
CT 06106-1591

Healthcare Workforce Safety Working Group

Meeting Summary

Thursday, January 23, 2024

2:30 PM on Zoom and YouTube Live

I. Opening

- The meeting was convened by Tracy Wodatch at 2:33 PM.
- Members present: Sasa Harriott, Tracy Wodatch, Teri Henning, John Brady, Julianne Giard, Barbara Cass, Anna Karabin, Sarah Gadsby, Kim Sandor, Stephen Magro, Lauren Nadeau, Barbara Pearce, David Bothwell, Chris Pankratz, Karen Buckley, Rhianna Gingras, Ronald Cotta.
- Guests: Nicole Hernandez

II. Housekeeping

III. Co-Chair Remarks

- Tracy Wodatch stated the charge of the Working Group and appreciates any comments on the draft of the final report. She commented that she came up with her draft by reviewing the discussions they've had and putting forward something with top goals in mind. She doesn't believe that there is one single solution for workplace violence.
- Sasa Harriott stated that she has concerns about removing certain sections of the Public Act that has passed and acknowledges the perceived burden

that the Public Act can impose. She commented that they have no data to state that the Public Act is an onerous burden. She mentioned that returning the regulatory landscape to before the passage of the Public Act will result in a similar tragedy. She mentioned the struggles that the home health sector face as they lack data, funding and training. She has concerns with voting on the recommendations and cautioned the Working Group with removing parts of the report.

- Tracy Wodatch believes that the Working Group has a large majority voice of providers.

IV. Report Recommendations: Overview and Feedback

- Stephen Magro asked Sasa Harriott if her changes to the report are an addition instead of a replacement.
- Sasa Harriott answered that her changes are an addition.
- Stephen Magro asked Kim Sandor if her changes are an addition instead of a replacement.
- Kim Sandor responded affirmatively and believes that they need better information. She views these strategies as workforce retention strategies.
- Stephen Magro asked Tracy Wodatch if her recommendations remove anything from section two.
- Tracy Wodatch responded that nothing of substance was changed.
- Stephen Magro asked Tracy Wodatch if changes of substance were made to section one.
- Tracy Wodatch responded affirmatively.
- Stephen Magro stated that he is fine with voting and cautioned logistics of what voting could look like.
- Tracy Wodatch responded that she believes that they will be voting today, and that they will have to discuss what members would like to change to the report.
- Barbara Pearce summarized the legislative process of the passage of the Public Act and explained the burdens that the Public Act poses to agencies. She stated that Hospice was not included in the Public Act, and it was done deliberately done by the Connecticut General Assembly. She stated that she will not support a report that will impose mandates.

- Sasa Harriott clarified that her changes don't impact Hospice.
- Kim Sandor suggested Barbara Cass for information regarding the formation and logistics of the final report.
- Eric Smullen seconded Barbara Pearce's comments.
- Lauren Nadeau believes that the Hospice community should be included in these recommendations and stated that she currently does not see patients have delay in care.
- Sasa Harriott seconded that she doesn't see patients have delay in care and believes that they haven't heard every voice. She believes removing the mandates is too soon and that they should err towards safety. She added that every members perspective should be included in the report.
- Karen Buckley added that every member of the Working Group is focused on safety for their workers. She suggested the report include recommendations that they have reached a consensus on and detail recommendations that warrant further discussion by the Working Group. She suggested that they change recommendations to allow state agencies to support them.
- Barbara Cass seconds Karen Buckley's comments as there are recommendations they have a consensus on and recommendations that warrant further discussion. She noted that they should vote on consensus issues as the Department of Public Health's (DPH) position is to abstain from voting.
- Tracy Wodatch asked Barbara Cass for any additional comment on the report.
- Barbara Cass stated that they built the portal and that they are able to expand the portal if that is a recommendation. She added that she is in contact with DPH's Facility Licensing and Investigations Section (FLIS) about licensing.
- Karen Buckley asked if the suggested changes for the portal are for hospitals also.
- Tracy Wodatch responded that they are for home health and Hospice.
- Barbara Cass clarified that it was a different independent portal.
- Julianne Giard echoed Barbara Cass's remarks regarding consensus voting.
- Teri Henning asked if they could include language regarding the issue of

information from referral sources.

- Tracy Wodatch went to recommendation two of the final report and summarized the recommendations.
- Teri Henning asked if the change removes the language of monthly staff meetings.
- Tracy Wodatch responded affirmatively.
- Kim Sandor asked if the recommendation still includes the requirement of reviewing incidences and improving best practices.
- Tracy Wodatch responded affirmatively and that it only includes the language regarding monthly staff meetings. She asked members if they support this recommendation.
- Karen Buckley asked if the Hospice members can handle this recommendation.
- Barbara Pearce doesn't like how it is written and wouldn't disagree with the report with this was included in it.
- Karen Buckley believes that the final report is to do with the safety of healthcare workers and not with any particular incident. She asked if that is the charge of the Working Group.
- Kim Sandor seconded Karen Buckley's comments.
- Tracy Wodatch added that agencies don't have to model their training curriculum to anything outlined. She asked members about removing language regarding monthly staff meetings.
- Stephen Magro is reluctant to change the recommendation and suggested the change of adding and.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that they had discussions regarding what would count as a monthly staff meeting.
- Stephen Magro appreciated the context and believes that they should make it additive not subtractive.
- Sasa Harriott agrees with Stephen Magro's suggestion.
- Stephen Magro believes that losing the monthly staff meeting language is detrimental.

- John Brady agreed with Stephen Magro as they should have both monthly staff meetings and a system to report incidents.
- Kim Sandor wouldn't like to remove the monthly staff meeting language if it is not included in other sections of the report.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that they are speaking of two different things as they are speaking about safety committees versus having an avenue for staff to report incidents.
- Teri Henning added that the discussion of monthly staff meetings was of the term being too narrow and not the concept of checking in with your staff.
- Tracy Wodatch clarified that the language is not about the root cause analysis piece of safety committees, and it is about avenues for staff to report incidents.
- Sasa Harriott believes that a minimum makes sense and agrees with the monthly staff meeting language.
- Stephen Magro believes that the monthly staff meeting language is a benefit.
- Chris Pankratz clarified that the monthly staff meeting language was specifically for safety assessments and not what colloquially would be thought of as a monthly staff meeting. He highlighted the legislative intent of the monthly staff meeting being that it was a check in with a healthcare worker. He doesn't believe that the monthly staff meeting language is necessary.
- Barbara Cass asked if a recommendation could be defining what a safety risk assessment looks like.
- Karen Buckley suggested that a future Working Group can explore that topic and believes there are different issues.
- Barbara Cass agreed with Karen Buckley.
- Tracy Wodatch added that the original wording was very broad and that they needed further clarification through the legislature. She stated that the change would mandate agencies establishing systems for workers to report incidents.
- Stephen Magro believes that members want to change the recommendation based on it being too specific or vague. He believes that a regular meeting can accomplish things that other things cannot. He is unclear on how removing this language would benefit anyone.

- Tracy Wodatch suggested a potential recommendation that a future Working Group can look at this language.
- Karen Buckley asked if recommendation 2b is not being implemented.
- Tracy Wodatch responded affirmatively.
- Stephen Magro believes that the recommendation of establishing a system of reporting should be added in addition to monthly staff meetings.
- Tracy Wodatch commented that they are keeping the monthly staff meeting language the same and adding language regarding establishing a system of reporting. She moved onto suggestions to various recommendations regarding funding and reporting.
- Karen Buckley suggested making changes to the recommendations where they allow the legislature to consider changes to section 2(c) of the Public Act instead of mandating state agencies.
- Tracy Wodatch added that they will change the action verbs to consider.
- Anna Karabin stated that the Department of Social Services (DSS) can't support the language regarding Medicaid.
- Karen Buckley reiterated her suggestion of changing the verbs to consider.
- Anna Karabin stated that DSS would like for the language to stay the commissioner may provide a rate enhancement instead of shall.
- Karen Buckley suggested they include language regarding within available appropriations.
- Tracy Wodatch agrees with adding the language of within available appropriations.
- Karen Buckley stated that they would need funding.
- Tracy Wodatch believes that they need to include Hospice in timely reporting and stated that the Hospice members of the Working Group support this. She clarified that the reporting process only includes the agency client and would like to expand that to include community members.
- Karen Buckley asked if they should link it to work that the staff are doing.
- Tracy Wodatch added that any incident should be reported as it is part of worker safety.

- Karen Buckley agrees with Tracy Wodatch and asked if the language could be too broad. She suggested linking the expansion of the category to the work of the staff.
- Sasa Harriott believes that community violence is part of the workplace hazard, but it is different. She added that they need to collect information differently from those who receive home care separate from community violence.
- Chris Pankratz believes that they should be more comprehensive in the inclusion of workplace violence incidents.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that they are trying to fix the language to encompass the whole workplace environment.
- Kim Sandor believes that they should have some sort of ongoing community safety assessment.
- Tracy Wodatch believes that they could change the portal to include the different violence categories.
- Sasa Harriott asked how they should move forward with this section.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that she has heard from agencies that they have concerns with not being able to report events that they were able to.
- Karen Buckley believes that they can make the recommendation and make a recommendation to study it further down the road if the Working Group wishes.
- Stephen Magro believes that they should include information about agency clients and others in the household. He believes that violence experienced in the community is in a different category.
- Chris Pankratz believes that the intent of the language is clear.
- Sasa Harriott hopes that they look at incidents in a more comprehensive way rather than aggregating quantity.
- Tracy Wodatch suggested citing the issue instead of changing the language.
- Sasa Harriott suggested putting it in the obstacles section.
- Tracy Wodatch believes that it is already in that section, and it is to just adjust the language to include those in the home and community.

- Sasa Harriott stated that she would like to keep the different categories of violence separate.
- Tracy Wodatch suggested adding an option to the DPH portal where they can differentiate. She asked members if they agree.
- Chris Pankratz agrees with the change and with keeping the categories separate.
- Sasa Harriott went over the recommendation regarding Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams.
- Julianne Giard stated that the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) cannot support this recommendation due to its fiscal impact.
- Sasa Harriott suggested moving towards Kim Sandor's changes to ensure access to personal that have higher training.
- Chris Pankratz believes that they must move this recommendation down in priority due to the constrained fiscal status of the State.
- Sasa Harriott agreed with Chris Pankratz as she didn't assign a fiscal note, but state agencies can. She believes that they have to figure out the place of behavioral health nurses.
- Tracy Wodatch suggested exploring the value of collaborating between ACT teams and agencies.
- Sasa Harriott would like to explore the curriculum at DMHAS for behavioral health care workers.
- Tracy Wodatch suggested exploring different training avenues. She went over recommendation four regarding the continuation of the Working Group.
- Sasa Harriott suggested having agencies that deal with behavioral health needs or supportive housing.
- Chris Pankratz believes that they can look to the legislature for guidance for the makeup of the group.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that any bill that comes from the Working Group will need a public hearing and they can encourage providers to testify.
- Chris Pankratz believes that the group is diverse and encompasses the industry. He stated that he isn't against expanding the Working Group.

- John Brady believes that adding direct care staff to the Working Group would be helpful.
- Julianne Giard added that DMHAS is happy to cooperate regarding ACT teams.
- Sasa Harriott asked for clarification.
- Julianne Giard clarified that DMHAS is happy to help craft language regarding the section.
- Sasa Harriott shared her concerns around the section regarding best practices.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that she took the best practices from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- Sasa Harriott asked about the liability issues regarding the pepper spray best practice.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that the liability issue is why many agencies don't have pepper spray and that the liability would follow the practice set by the agency.
- Teri Henning asked how this section will be referred too as there isn't a consensus and commented that they can refer to broader practices instead of citing specifics.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that she wrote it that way to highlight that they are OSHA best practices. She asked how this section will be implemented within the report.
- Sasa Harriott doesn't agree with having some of the specifics in the report.
- Tracy Wodatch suggested referring to OSHA best practices instead of citing specifics.
- Sasa Harriott believes that they need a minimum and added that she wouldn't recommend some of the best practices set by OSHA as they haven't listed any concrete mechanism.
- Teri Henning asked if they plan to talk about referral sources or transparency.
- Tracy Wodatch responded that they will not talk about that.

- Teri Henning suggested a recommendation of exploring that topic in a future Working Group.
- Sasa Harriott believes that they need some uniformity and to not burden just home care agencies.
- Tracy Wodatch asked about the language of this section and highlighted member's concerns about delaying referrals.
- Sasa Harriott stated that she would not like the mandate requiring agencies to fill in the boxes to be removed.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that they will not repeal section one as they don't have consensus and asked about language that could share the burden more.
- Sasa Harriott agrees that they need to share the burden and wouldn't like to rely on just referral sources.
- Tracy Wodatch clarified that it wouldn't take away that and the intake responsibility would still be on home health agencies.
- Sasa Harriott added that home health agencies need to share that burden when handing off patients.
- Chris Pankratz believes that they are fine with collecting the information, but they are having issues with referral sources. He would like for the burden to be shared with other providers.
- Tracy Wodatch suggested a recommendation to explore ways to provide more timely and accurate information to home health agencies.
- Sasa Harriott suggested a recommendation being exploring the referral loop.
- Tracy Wodatch stated that they can do both.
- Teri Henning suggested a recommendation that if a referral source has pertinent information, then they should share it as permitted by law.
- Tracy Wodatch asked if the Working Group is ok with this recommendation.
- Sasa Harriott stated that she would like that recommendation explored in the future.
- Barbara Pearce stated that the problem is what is the responsibility that people have and how would that be enforced.

- Teri Henning stated that she hears no consensus on these recommendations and that these are the same challenges when the law was being passed.
- Tracy Wodatch asked Teri Henning to propose some form of language.
- Sasa Harriott highlighted the time constraints and thanked the Working Group.
- Tracy Wodatch asked if they should schedule another meeting.
- Sasa Harriott stated that she is fine with another meeting or a communication with the final draft shared to members.

V. Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 4:39 PM.