

# **BHP Adult Quality, Access & Policy Committee**

## **November 18, 2025 Zoom Meeting**

### **Meeting summary**

#### **Quick recap**

The meeting focused on women's behavioral health and substance use disorder services, with presentations on Medicaid data, HUSKY Health statistics, and programs offered by the Women's Services Division. Presenters shared insights on substance use trends among pregnant and postpartum populations, including racial disparities and geographic distribution patterns. A panel of providers discussed their experiences supporting pregnant and parenting individuals with substance use disorders, emphasizing the importance of trust-building, comprehensive care coordination, and ongoing advocacy for these services.

#### **Next steps**

- [Shelly Nolan: pull last year's data on overall populations served annually through various programs for Sabrina](#)
- [Co-Chairs Sabrina Trocchi and Kelly Phenix: bring presentation information back to Executive Board and the larger Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council](#)
- [Kim Haugabook: follow up with Maggie Young to get names for the Faith Leaders Toolkit](#)
- [Kim: provide Faith Leaders Toolkit to Shelly and team once confirmed and ready for distribution to communities](#)

### **Summary**

#### **Women's Behavioral Health Policy Discussion**

The meeting began with Co-Chair Sabrina Trocchi, President and CEO of Wheeler, and Kelly Phenix, Co-Chair of the Adult Quality Access and Policy Committee, welcoming attendees and introducing the agenda. The session included presentations on Medicaid data related to women's behavioral health by Carelon, followed by a presentation from DHMAS Women's Services Division, and concluded with a panel of providers discussing women's services programs. The meeting was being broadcast live on CT-N, and participants were encouraged to ask questions during the discussion.

#### **SUD Trends in Pregnant Populations**

Kim Haugabook presented HUSKY Health data on substance use disorder (SUD) prevalence, utilization, and medication for pregnant and postpartum populations. Denise Perez and Cynthia

Petronio-Vazquez analyzed trends in SUD diagnosis rates and substance-exposed infant prevalence from 2020 to 2024. They noted a downward trend in SUD rates for pregnant and postpartum populations, with rates falling below the overall HUSKY Health population by 2024. The team attributed the 2023 spike in substance-exposed infants to increased cannabis exposure following legalization in Connecticut.

### **Substance Use Among Pregnant Women**

Cynthia and Denise presented data on substance use among pregnant and postpartum members in HUSKY Health, noting that cannabis use was the highest at 45.3%. They highlighted racial disparities in the use of medications for opioid use disorder, with white individuals having the highest rate at 84.0%. The team also discussed maps showing the geographic distribution of substance-exposed infants and pregnant/postpartum members with SUD diagnoses, noting that the northeastern and southeastern regions had the highest prevalence rates. Finally, they reported an increase in SBIRT screenings for pregnant and postpartum women over the 2020-2024 period, with a 60.3% increase in assessments.

### **Gender-Responsive Behavioral Health Services**

Shelly Nolan, Behavioral Health Clinical Director at DMHAS, presented on Women's Services Division, highlighting their collaborative approach and focus on gender-responsive, trauma-informed care. She discussed the importance of screening versus testing for substance use, emphasizing the need for providers to feel equipped with tools for screening and referring individuals who test positive. Shelly also introduced the Access Mental Health and Substance Use for MOMS program, administered by Carelon, which provides resources and training for validated screening tools. The presentation concluded with a discussion of the continuum of care for pregnant and parenting women, including the highest level of care, the pregnant and parenting A 3.5 treatment program.

### **Connecticut's Pregnancy Support Programs Overview**

Shelly presented an overview of various programs in Connecticut designed to support pregnant and parenting women, including 5 statewide programs with 48 beds, Women's Recovery Support Programs, and the Women's Community Transition Support Program. She highlighted the PROUD program, a 3-year SAMHSA grant that has served 500 families since 2020 and discussed the continuum of care available to pregnant and parenting individuals, including recovery houses and outpatient services. Shelly also introduced the panel of experts who would be discussing these programs further, including Dr. Maggie Young, Allison Fryer, and Brianna Cox.

### **Supporting Pregnant Individuals in Recovery**

The panelists discussed their experiences supporting pregnant and parenting individuals with substance use disorders. Maggie shared her 33 years of experience with the Families in Recovery Program, highlighting the importance of building trust and maintaining relationships with women.

Brianna from PROUD emphasized the strength and vulnerability of birthing parents seeking treatment, while Alison, newer to the field, spoke about the unique challenges of serving both women and their children. The discussion then shifted to care coordination post-treatment, with panelists noting the vulnerable postpartum phase and the challenges of continuing medication and follow-up care.

### **Postpartum Care and Substance Use**

The meeting focused on postpartum care coordination and substance use disorder services for women. Maggie discussed barriers to care, including lack of provider diversity and transportation challenges, and described strategies to support women, such as the Plan of Safe Care and having a care coordinator accompany them to appointments. Brianna and Alison highlighted the importance of engaging women in treatment and providing comprehensive support, including medication management and connections to community resources. Shelly explained the outreach and engagement strategies used by programs to reach women in need. The panelists emphasized the need for continued advocacy for these services, addressing workforce challenges, and improving access to housing, childcare, and transportation.