



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM E. DELPHIN-RITTMON, Ph.D.
COMMISSIONER

To: Human Services Committee
From: Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon Ph.D., Commissioner
Date: January 30, 2020
Re: Benefits Cliff Informational Hearing

Good Morning Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to participate in discussions related to the “benefits cliff”.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) is a health care agency that provides prevention, treatment and recovery services to individuals with behavioral health conditions. DMHAS serves about 110,000 individuals yearly. The people served by the agency have complex medical needs and most rely on some form of public benefits. It is not uncommon for DMHAS clients to receive benefits in the form of rental assistance, child care subsidies, food stamps and Medicaid. These entitlements are part of the safety net that assists clients on their recovery journey in the community of their choice.

Employment is an important avenue for DMHAS consumers. Many individuals consistently express their desire for employment. From the recovery perspective, meaningful employment has been shown to promote recovery from psychiatric and substance use disorders and facilitate improvements in diverse domains from symptom relief to successful community integration. Employment provides an opportunity to become involved in meaningful activities of the individual’s choice, and to contribute to the broader community.

Individuals served by DMHAS often also express the concern that they may lose vital public benefits because of earned income. DMHAS staff work closely with these individuals regarding their concerns by providing information on spending caps, exploring budgetary options and accessing community supports in order to avoid losses in public benefits due to small increases in income. DMHAS partners with sister agencies, including the Department of Aging and Disability Services, to access benefit counselors to help educate DMHAS staff and clients on the impact of earned income on benefits.

The Department will continue to work with stakeholder partners on the Governor’s workforce development initiative, including members of the Governor's Office and the Lieutenant Governor's Office, legislators, key state agencies, researchers, nonprofit providers, advocates, and people with lived experience related to the “benefits cliff” over the coming year.