



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

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

Testimony by Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, PhD, Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Before the Appropriations, Human Services and
Public Health Committees
September 21, 2020
2021 CMHS Block Grant Allocation Plan Hearing

Good afternoon Senators Osten, Moore, and Abrams; Representatives Walker, Abercrombie and Steinberg; and other distinguished members of the Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees. I am Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). I am here before you today to present the Allocation Plan for the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) Block Grant for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2021.

The CMHS Block Grant is intended to fund mental health services for children and adults. As a result, DMHAS has historically shared 30% of the CMHS Block Grant with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The CMHS allocation plan for FFY21 is based on the funding level proposed by the President of \$6,972,575 which is \$211,483 more than last year's actual amount. Last year's allocation plan was based on the President's proposed amount of \$6,760,070 which was only \$1,022 less than the final actual CMHSBG amount. These amounts are subject to change when the final appropriation is authorized. I will speak to the DMHAS portion of the funds.

DMHAS has typically utilized block grant funds to supplement state funds allocated to the various levels of care, including emergency/crisis services, outpatient clinical services, residential services, employment opportunities, case management, and social rehabilitation. DMHAS continues to align with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's expressed preference to fund non-reimbursable services with block grant dollars. However, given that attaining and maintaining insurance coverage is a challenge for many behavioral health clients, DMHAS recognizes that a certain percentage of the population it serves will either never be insured or will be inconsistently insured. In consequence, DMHAS will continue to utilize a small amount of block grant funds for services for these individuals.

FFY 21 CMHSBG allocations reflect a change in the Emergency Crisis category. The additional \$211,483 in proposed CMHSBG funding, combined with a portion of available carry forward funds, will support a new, centralized crisis call center. While the emergence of COVID 19 has undoubtedly triggered increased calls for help, enhancement of this system was planned prior to the pandemic. The \$688,000 proposed allocation for this service will support and enhance the existing Suicide Prevention Line. The funding will also support the Adult Crisis Telephone Interventions and Options Network (ACTION Line), a statewide crisis line for adults who are in the community and in the midst of a psychiatric, behavioral or emotional crisis for which an immediate response may be required. This statewide crisis call center line will be operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and will be the provider of after-hours telephonic coverage for the 14 DMHAS funded and operated Mobile Crisis Teams (MCT). Services will include, telephonic support, referral to the MCT of the area, information about resources/services and if needed, direct connection to 911. The MCTs will be accessible to callers in crisis via the ACTION Line, or for those who choose, through their direct phone line during their hours of operation.

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State funding for mental health services is not reflected in the allocation plan. While funding from the CMHS block grant represents less than 1% of DMHAS' total budget, it nevertheless provides an opportunity to incorporate priorities based on data from local, state and federal sources, input from advisory organizations, and DMHAS' own initiatives. These federal funds supplement the state general fund dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to take any questions you may have at this time or I could do so following DCF, if that would be preferable.