

Connecticut Children's Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Date: April 6, 2026

Location: Virtual & In-Person

Attendance: Elisabeth Cannata, Ann Smith, Thomas Anderson, Tara Viens, Gretchen Shugarts (Rep for Muna Abbas), Amy Marracino, Andrea Goetz, Ann Gionet, Benita Toussaint, Brenetta Henry, Gerard O'Sullivan, Laine Taylor, Lorna Thomas-Farquharson, Melvette Hill, Nicole Taylor, Sabra Mayo, Tammy Venenga, Tanya Barrett, Kate Dormont, Emily Bohmbach, Kate Bohannan (CSDE), Kendall Fenton (DDS), Stephanie Bozak, Sanno Srivastava, Felicia Annan-Mills, Aleece Kelly

Opening & Welcome

- Meeting opened with welcome and housekeeping items, including interpretation services and stipend information for participating family members.
- Agenda overview provided; meeting began with Systems Dashboard update.

Systems Dashboard Update (CHDI – Felicia Annan-Mills)

Felicia Annan-Mills demonstrated recent dashboard changes, notably a new homepage/landing page, clearer navigation instructions, descriptions of data sources, intended users, and a direct "View the Dashboard" pathway to the interactive visualizations. The dashboard now opens to a new landing page that explains purpose, users, and data sources before linking to the interactive dashboard.

Annan-Mills outlined plans for a data brief that will identify trends across depression/suicidality, substance use, system needs, workforce, and social drivers of health and will examine disparities by race, ethnicity, age, geography, gender, and consistency of trend movement to surface areas needing attention. The project team will produce a data brief synthesizing dashboard trends across behavioral health topics and equity disaggregators.

Annan-Mills proposed a community data walk (data cafe) format to gather multi-stakeholder perspectives, described station-based small-group rotations with structured questions, and provided a tentative timeline to finish trend analysis by May, hold the data walk in June, and finalize the brief by September with review in July. The team plans a community data walk in June to collect community and youth input to inform the data brief.

Advisory Board Discussion & Feedback

Board members emphasized aligning the data brief with the children's behavioral health plan themes, raised questions about Spanish access and comprehensive regional recruitment, and received responses that the dashboard is English-only for now while the data walk will include Spanish interpretation and partner-based recruitment via advisory bodies, providers, family advocacy groups, and libraries.

The dashboard is currently available only in English, but the data walk will include Spanish interpretation, and the team will consider translating the dashboard later.

Recruitment for the data walk will leverage advisory bodies, family advocacy groups, providers, libraries, and regional collaboratives.

Participants asked whether children with special healthcare needs are included in the behavioral health dashboard and whether families are being reached. Presenters explained current data limitations, the dashboard's public-source orientation, and the intent to expand data and consider disaggregation and qualitative context.

Children with special healthcare needs are not currently represented in the dashboard data, but the team will include them in distribution and outreach efforts.

Most dashboard sources are publicly available and can be disaggregated where the original data allow.

The project team will produce a data brief or infographic for policymakers in the fall and is running a data walk to add qualitative context to quantitative trends.

Resources and Data Sharing Offers

AFCAMP was identified as a dissemination resource, and Ann Gionet offered to share the maternal and child health block grant needs assessment, which includes a children and youth with special healthcare needs section and survey data to support the dashboard work.

Gionet will distribute the maternal and child health block grant needs assessment, which contains a section on children and youth with special healthcare needs.

IDD (Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities) Workgroup Update

The Implementation Advisory Board reviewed the IDD project scope, six guiding questions, coordination with other bodies (TCB), and the plan to avoid duplicating existing work while mapping services, ages, and gaps across Connecticut.

The IDD project centers on six questions, including service availability, exclusionary criteria, workforce needs, and best practices from other states.

Methods include a literature review, interviews, focus groups, data analysis, and a draft brief in the fall.

A multi-stakeholder workgroup (parents, providers, state agencies, family advocates) will meet starting late April to guide the IDD project.

The team outlined methods (literature review, interviews, focus groups, data analysis), a draft brief due in the fall, and a steering workgroup composed of parents, providers, state agencies, and family advocates with initial meetings planned for late April, June, and August. Timeline:

- Workgroup launch: Late April
- Meetings: April, June, August
- Final outputs: Fall

The facilitators requested higher education representatives to support workforce development planning, invited advisory members to provide collaborator names, and moved the meeting to the member updates agenda item.

Member Updates

The co-chairs opened by asking members for updates and described active coordination with other advisory bodies, including joint meetings with CBAC and outreach to RACs to surface regional needs and feedback. They emphasized consolidating voices so plan work can continue to progress.

Gionet presented the needs assessment findings showing behavioral health as a frequent gap for families and explained that the assessment will inform a five-year action plan for children, adolescents, and children with special health care needs. Staff offered to share the assessment and the forthcoming action plan with the group for further collaboration.

Co-chair discussed the importance of recognizing children with behavioral health needs across program labels and urged members to review where their agency work serves this population even if not explicitly labeled as behavioral health. The legislative intent to include diverse agency perspectives on the advisory board was noted. Members were urged to consider that services for children with behavioral health needs may exist outside programs explicitly labeled “behavioral health.”

Discussion highlighted workforce development connections through OPM’s support of the Autism Spectrum Advisory Council and announced funding under Money Follows the Person for a statewide autism needs assessment, noting overlap with behavioral health and that the contract phase is pending. The board confirmed a joint CBAC meeting on May

1 and a full advisory board meeting on July 13 and communicated plans to start drafting the annual report due in October while potentially reaching out to members over the summer for input. The agenda and a flyer for outreach will be circulated after the meeting.

- A joint meeting with CBAC is scheduled for May 1, and the next board meeting is scheduled for July 13.
- The board will begin drafting its annual report to the Committee of Cognizance, due in October, and will reach out to members for contributions over the summer.

Public Comment

Benita Toussaint delivered an extended public comment expressing concern about labeling children, disproportionate long-term harms for children of color and those with less-educated parents, and the need for parental education and systemic reform across courts and social services. Board leaders acknowledged the comments, referenced ongoing organizational efforts to support families, and invited review of the data dashboard to identify gaps that reflect those concerns.

Upcoming Meetings

- Joint meeting with CBAC: May 1, 2026
- Next advisory board meeting: July 13, 2026
- Annual report due: October 2026

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned with invitation for continued feedback and resource sharing.