

CT Suicide Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: March 12, 2026

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Present: Megan Avery (DMHAS), Jeanette Baker (United Way of CT), Scott Barton (SPRC), Rebekah Behan (CHDI), Nicole Bengston (Amplify), Amery Bernhardt (CT Ctr for School Safety), Kevin Borrup (CT Children’s), Stephanie Bozak (DCF), Bill Brassard (NSSF), Haley Brown (DMHAS), Brendan Burke (OCA), Connie Capacchione (Uncas Health District), Kathleen Chapman (CT Psychological Assn.), Heather Clinger (Wheeler), Natalie Crino (AHEC), Ann Irr Dagle (Brian Dagle Foundation), Andrea Duarte (DMHAS), Cara During (CT Children’s), Kelley Edwards (DMHAS), Amy Evison (CHR), Taylor Ford (Second Chance Education/Reflections Psychotherapy Svcs), Joanna Fornwalt (Town of Enfield), Kristin French (Catalyst CT), Grace Grinnell (NAMI Farmington Valley), Eve Hein (Alliance for Prevention & Wellness), Brianna Herrera (Norwalk Health Dept.), Russ Iger (Coventry PD), Kevin Iglesias (Catalyst CT/Western CT Coalition), Mark Irons (SERAC), Aaron Jackson (Join Rise Be), Angela Jimenez (DPH), Caitlyn Korispky (Catalyst CT), Amanda Kriz (Carelon Behavioral Health), Michelle Leibovitz (Rich Wright Productions), Valerie Lepoutre (NAMI CT), Elisha Logan (HAS Wellness Consultant), Susan Logan (DPH), Gabriel Lomas (CT Ctr for School Safety), Susan Lorenzo, Cathy Ludlum (Second Thoughts CT), Steve MacHattie (Charter Oak Family Ctr), Mike Makowski (DPH), Abby Wood Maldonado (Western CT Coalition) Lesley Mara (CSCU), Stacey Mayer (CAGV), Erin McBride, Krystal Medley (New Haven Health Dept.), Dena Miccinello-Barbarula, Amanda Mihaly (UConn SSW/DMHAS), Mike Monterosso (DPH), Sara Moriarty (DPH), Giovanna Mozzo (Catalyst CT/The Hub), Allyson Nadeau (Amplify), Lucinda Orellano (OCA), Jenna Pellegrino, Skyler Pruneau (UConn SSW/DMHAS), Natasha Randolph (VA CT), Steve Rogers (Ct Children’s), Stephanie Schillat (ESDHD), Kara Sepulveda-Fonseca (Alliance for Prevention & Wellness), Marissa Sicley-Rogers (Hartford Healthcare), Richard Siddall (SMART Recovery), Rebecca Sorornejad, Maureen Sullivan (Fairfield Public Schools), Jennifer Sussman (UConn Health), Tamara Tarrant (Renew Counseling Associates), Nadine Tulloch (DPH), Wendy Ulaszek (DMHAS), Jen Vinci (DPH), Kristen Volz-Spessard (CT Children’s), Sara Wakai (UConn Health), Jennifer Waldo (Windsor Health Dept.), Marissa White (CHQIS), and LoriBeth Williams DSS).

AGENDA ITEM/TOPIC	SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION	OUTCOME/ACTION /RESPONSIBLE
I. Welcome and Introductions	CTSAB Chairs, Andrea Duarte and Stephanie Bozak, welcomed attendees at 9:02 am. Ann Irr Dagle announced stepping down as tri-chair as of March 1 st . View Ann’s letter here: https://www.ctclearinghouse.org/Content/www/files/PDFs/Letter_to_CTSAB.pdf	
II. Presentation : Dena Miccinello-Barbarula, <i>The Intersectionality of Suicide Prevention and Problem Gambling</i> dmiccinellobarbarula@catalystct.org	Gambling: A leading risk factor for suicide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - March is problem gambling awareness month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Used as a grassroots initiative to distribute prevention information What is gambling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risking something of individual value on an activity that has an uncertain outcome. - Want people to know the risks of the potential problems and be able to responsibly gamble in a responsible way, lowering risks of gambling harm - Problem gambling – pattern of gambling that causes substantial problems to their lives 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gambling disorder – clinical term from the DSM-V, clinically diagnosed from a professional <p>Legalized gambling CT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lottery tickets (18+) - Casino (21+, except for bingo) - Off track betting (OTB) – in-person races/horse races (18+) - Sport betting/fantasy sports (18+) - Charitable games (any age based on value) - Online gambling (sites 21+, eSports any age) - Stock market and cryptocurrency (18+) - Skins and loot boxes (gamification) - clothing in video games or in-game currency (all ages) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Ages change for each type of gambling, but we want to delay the first onset of use so the first dopamine hit doesn't happen before the brain is developed <p>Prevalence in CT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1.8% of population meet criteria of gambling disorder (approx. 53,863 individuals, enough to fill Yankee stadium) - Youth and athletes have a much higher risk (2x and 4x respectively) of developing a gambling disorder <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On average 1 individual working through the disorder impacts 7-20 people in their families and communities <p>Warning signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chasing losses with more gambling – “Fix” – is often going back for more to get money back - Diversion of funds – if you only have \$100 per month for groceries but start at buying lottery tickets, there is no longer money for groceries - Withdrawal from things you typically love to do - Boasting about winning, but not talking about how much they are losing <p>Who is at risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The more factors that apply, the more likely a person is to develop a gambling problem, but it can depend on the person <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o There are a lot of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) relations, such as abuse or trauma o Someone in their circle that has or had problems with gambling o Financial problems 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Those who feel bored, lonely, or history of risk-taking activities <p>Direct relation to problem gambling and suicide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem gambling has the highest suicide rate of any addictive disorders - It is important to screen for both, if someone comes in for risk of suicide, you should test for gambling and vice versa - CCPG gambling helpline – 1-888-789-7777 (acts similarly to 988 as a resource for someone with gambling emergency) <p>Similar risk factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial loss - Substance use - History of depression or other mental illness - Relationship issues - Age/identity - Mistaken beliefs of odds of winning - Attributing self-esteem to a big win or loss - Not monitoring wins and losses <p>Similar warning signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hopelessness - Mood changes - Withdraw - Change in risk activity - Anxiety - A big loss - Increase in substance use - Giving up hope of controlling or stopping gambling <p>Suicide and Individuals with gambling disorder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 31% of suicidal ideations and 16% of suicide attempts is associated with debt, depression, etc. <p>Impacts on mental health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher rates of mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and personality disorders of those with a gambling disorder <p>Co-occurring use disorders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher rates of alcohol use disorder - Higher rates of another substance use - Substance use 10x higher in gamblers - Higher reported nicotine dependence 	

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	<p>Call to action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any screening for suicide, should screen for gambling and vice versa - During intake for substance use or mental health, should add gambling intake questions <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CT Council on Problem Gambling - call, text, or live chat, 24 hours support, with individuals with clinical experience or lived experience to support the person calling in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Can call as a concerned person or the gambler themselves - CCAR, CCPG, NCPG, DMHAS PGS, Gam-anon, GA, CT Gaming & Gambling, and Know the Risks (can book the van for a resource table and promote) - Better Choice Treatment Programs – 14 CT locations funded by the state for little to no cost for treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Individual, peer, and group recovery support o Budget and financial counseling - Voluntary Self Exclusion – allows someone to exclude themselves from legalized gambling activities in CT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o This prohibits collecting winnings, recovering any losses, or accepting complimentary gifts or services or anything of value from licensee or operator o You can't exclude a loved one, the individual has to do it themselves - Regional Teams – Regional Gambling Awareness Team & RSABS - Can contact Kristin French kfrench@catalystct.org or Caitlyn Koripsky <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Extended version of presentation on March 18th 12:00 -1:30pm - Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Any treatment programs for youth? Most are 18+, but there are counselors that have experience of working with youth, so if there is space, they can join <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Usually for youth, finding a specific specialized counselor is a better option <p>To view the presentation, visit: https://www.ctclearinghouse.org/Customer-Content/www/files/PDFs/Gambling_a_leading_risk_factor_for_suicide_pptx.pdf</p>	
III. Review of Activities since last report out	<u>Committees</u>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education and Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Actively meeting, in the midst of a short legislative session o Advocacy day scheduled at LOB to be rescheduled o One-pagers and talking points available for legislative interactions; contact Allyson Nadeau o Actively booking speakers for 2027 CTSAB monthly meetings, all speakers have been booked for 2026 - Lethal Means <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No updates - Committee is looking for co-chair with Cathy Sisco; if interested, contact Cathy at csisco@wheelerhealth.org - Zero Suicide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Have an engaged group who are energized for ideas o Great meeting in January discussing building blocks and suicide initiative programs o Reviewed potential trainings to explore for this calendar year for the committee and for the larger community o Creating a high priority plan of what the best avenues of trainings to pursue o Next meeting is March 25, 2026, 9:00am-10:30am – CALM curricula overview and discussion lead by 2 RSABs (Amplify and SERAC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will have a shifted agenda to include time for recognition of successes, challenges and how to support one another <u>RSABs</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SERAC (Region 3-Eastern) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Meets monthly on the first Tuesday of each month o Meetings featured presentations specific to community suicide prevention initiatives in veteran community, discussions around regional loss data, new peer-to-peer support for first responders (Quiet Corner Peer Support Group), CT’s Pregnant and Parenting programs and role of trauma informed substance use treatment, and family preservation in suicide prevention o Prior to holiday season disseminated over 200 “988” potholders in holiday food baskets across region by partnering with food pantries, agencies, and municipalities 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provided Talk Save Lives, QPR, and CALM Conversations with groups across region – Quiet Corner Peer Support, High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center, Empower INC, and community open events ○ Continuing to promote and schedule trainings across regions ○ Will attend and support wellness fairs and Fresh Check Days <p><u>Awareness Campaign / Website / Outreach efforts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Last month there were over 4500 pages visited on preventsuicidect.org - Campaign at malls is ending - In-store audio campaign for veterans and their families is newest campaign - If looking for a partnership or artwork for promotion in your local area, reach out to Jeanette Baker at jeanette.baker@ctunitedway.org, or through the resources page on preventsuicidect.org 	
<p>IV. Statewide Announcements of Upcoming Events / Trainings to highlight / promote – Open to anyone in attendance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 988 Lifeline Survey with UConn School of Social work and CT DMHAS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Survey to learn about CT residents’ awareness, perception, and experience with 988 Lifeline to better understand the current landscape of mental health crisis and suicide response in CT and to inform future service delivery ○ Need participants to complete 988 survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previously had many bots respond, so need to be more careful with recruitment ▪ Trying to get statewide representation of CT citizen responses of those who may or may not have used 988 ○ Participants 18+, will be compensated with \$10 gift card ○ Welcome ideas for offering others the survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Events, places for flyers, etc. ▪ Other provider or caregiver groups to reach out to? ○ Invitation for CTSAB members to complete the survey ○ Send e-mail to dmhasresearch@uconn.edu to take survey and Wendy.Ulaszek@uconn.edu for sending recruitment ideas ○ If completing the survey, please have your e-mail match the survey you would use to receive payment ○ Participation takes about 10 minutes to complete ○ Participants can only be 18+, no minors due to IRB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can include teachers, parents, first responders, etc. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nicole Bengston – Amplify – hosting a CALM conversations for community on Monday, March 16, 2026, 6:00pm-7:30pm - Events - Amplify - Ann Irr Dagle - Caring for the Caregivers event to reconnect with own path of service https://brianshealinghearts.org/ - Jennifer Waldo – Windsor Health Department is hosting The Sober Truth with Hunter Flores on April 1, 6:30pm, Mental Health Windsor, CT - Tamara Tarrant – Monthly support group with Renew Counseling Associates in Fairfield for survivors of suicide loss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Free registration o Second Monday of every single month, In-Person - hope_after_loss.jpeg (1728×1871) - Events for Problem Gambling Awareness month - https://ccpg.org/pgam/ - Peer support groups for those experiencing suicidal thoughts - https://namict.org/support-and-education/support-groups/oota/ 	
<p>V. CTSAB Business Reports</p>	<p>Leslie Mara moved to approve the January 8, 2026 minutes, seconded by Allyson Nadeau. Minutes approved.</p> <p>Statewide News/Updates from Tri-Chairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State plan is in the formatting stage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Decided on three primary documents: Primary goals and objectives, Epi profile, and Special Populations section o Working with Daydream Communications with formatting o Once formatting is complete, DCF and DMHAS Commissioners will review - Board is looking at and revising by-laws - Board decided to announce the opportunity to fill tri-chair position to the whole coalition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Replacement would be someone representing lived experience, loss or attempt survivor – can be an individual or representing an organization o Process would be the person would show interest to Stephanie Bozak and Andrea Duarte who would bring the recommendation to the Board to become a member o Once nominated and approved to the board, the person could become tri-chair o Contact Stephanie and Andrea with questions o Ann encouraged people who want to share their voice to inquire 	

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	<p>Suicide-related Grant Initiative Updates – 988 Implementation Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DMHAS and DCF working with United Way of CT as the central contact center and UConn School of Social Work for evaluation - Grant is ending at end of September and waiting for a notice of funding opportunity to apply again - Service is free and confidential, 24/hrs, 7 days per week for call, text, and chat through United Way of CT. Service for anyone with mental health distress, substance use, or gambling to prevent suicide upstream - Contact center is United Way of CT, centralized for the state, they respond to 211, 988 and 800 crisis lines and ACTION line <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Training for each contact specialist is the same regardless of line answering, although requirements for answering the line for 988 is very strict - Why? Engage individuals upstream when in distress and not in an emergency, respond with least restrictive and least costly services to find resolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 96% resolved telephonically, 3% resolved by mobile and 1% active rescue with 911 o When referrals are made, there is a follow-up to find the outcome of contact - Calendar year 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Total of 60,370 988 contacts – not individuals but number of contacts made o October-December had a large increase in text and chat as that is when those services became available 24/7/365 - Now have geo-routing for primary cell carriers, AT&T, T-Mobile and Verizon, to be connected with the local call center where caller is located - Data includes “familiar voices” – individuals who reach out on a regular basis to the contact center - Youth Mobile Crises- support where clinicians can go out to where the youth is located <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Arrives within 45 minutes or less, 24/7/365 o Call 211, then press 1 and press 1 again for youth - There are three community-based Urgent Crisis Centers for youth, The Village, Wellmore, and Child & Family Agency of Southeastern CT; Yale New Haven Health Children’s Hospital is hospital-based - UCC team has medical and behavioral health personnel - interdisciplinary and comprehensive staff - DMHAS Adult mobile crisis teams – 18+ at no cost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 18 mobile crisis teams with statewide coverage 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 24/7 have services of crisis evaluation, risk assessment, safety planning, consultation, outreach etc. - Collaboration between youth and adult mobile crisis teams especially when there is a loss to suicide for those 24 and younger - 23-hour crisis stabilization center in New Haven (R.E.S.T Center) - Peer respite in New Britain (The Gloria House) - Share no wrong door message by co-promoting 211 and 988 - Veterans can call 988 and press 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Separate text number 838255 - Spanish Speakers – call 211 and follow prompts or call 988 and press 2 or text AYUDA to 988 - State website has links to 988 materials order page - Suicide Prevention Materials CT Suicide Advisory Board - CT 988 Fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Donations accepted through the CT 988 Fund ○ Checks can be made out to “Treasurer State of Connecticut” and include CT 988 Fund in the note field <p>To view the presentation, visit: https://www.ctclearinghouse.org/Content/www/files/PDFs/CTSAB_988_031226.pdf</p>																												
VI. Close of Coalition Meeting	Coalition meeting ended at 10:31 am																												
VII. Board Meeting	<p>Board meeting began at 10:31 am with the following voting members in attendance:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Scott</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Barton</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Suicide Prevention Resource Center & Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rebekah</td> <td>Behan</td> <td>Child Health and Development Institute</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Amery</td> <td>Bernhardt</td> <td>CT Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kate</td> <td>Bohannan</td> <td>CT State Dept. of Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kevin</td> <td>Borrupt</td> <td>Connecticut Children’s</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dana</td> <td>Bossio</td> <td>Cooperative Educational Services</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stephanie</td> <td>Bozak</td> <td>CT Dept. of Children and Families</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bill</td> <td>Brassard</td> <td>National Shooting Sports Foundation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kathleen</td> <td>Chapman</td> <td>CT Psychological Association</td> </tr> </table>	Scott	Barton	Suicide Prevention Resource Center & Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation	Rebekah	Behan	Child Health and Development Institute	Amery	Bernhardt	CT Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation	Kate	Bohannan	CT State Dept. of Education	Kevin	Borrupt	Connecticut Children’s	Dana	Bossio	Cooperative Educational Services	Stephanie	Bozak	CT Dept. of Children and Families	Bill	Brassard	National Shooting Sports Foundation	Kathleen	Chapman	CT Psychological Association	
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	Ann	Dagle	Brian Dagle Foundation	
	Andrea	Duarte	CT Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services	
	Amy	Evison	Community Health Resources	
	Russell	Iger	Coventry Police Department	
	Valerie	Lepoutre	National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) CT	
	Susan	Logan	CT Dept. of Public Health	
	Cathy	Ludlum	Second Thoughts Connecticut	
	Steve	MacHattie	Charter Oak Family Center	
	Abby	Maldonado	Western CT Coalition	
	Lesley	Mara	CT State Colleges and Universities	
	Steven	Rogers	CT Children's	
	Sara	Wakai	UConn Health	
	Marissa	White	Correctional Healthcare Quality Improvement Solutions	
	LoriBeth	Young	CT Dept. of Social Services	
	<p>Coalition members in attendance (non-voting): Jose-Michael Gonzalez (CHRO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requested feedback on bylaws being inclusive of policies and procedures or separating out operating procedures so bylaws don't have to be redone when procedures change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Lesley Mara moved to remove the operational procedures from the text of the bylaws. Steve MacHattie seconded. Susan Logan abstained. No board members opposed. Motion passed. - Discussed appointed voting board member membership and involvement, especially among members who have not regularly attended meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Stephanie and Andrea will send the voting board a draft email regarding appointed voting members who are not attending meetings o If someone is unsure if they are an appointed voting member or not, contact Stephanie and Andrea - Feedback about new agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Marissa White – felt the meeting felt more engaging 			

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Susan Logan – more interactive and less rushed, more organized, structured, time to ask questions, more participation ○ Rebekah Behan – times on agenda hold people accountable differently and are accountable to others who have something to share ○ Leslie Mara - people were better prepared and more succinct <p>- Registration for May CT Suicide Prevention Conference will be sent through the CTSAB listserv; registration is first come, first serve</p>	
	Board meeting adjourned at 10:50 am	
<p>2026 Meeting Schedule</p> <p>Meetings are the second Thursday of the month</p> <p>Coalition meeting: 9:00am—10:30am</p> <p>Board meeting: 10:30am-11:00am</p> <p>Meetings are currently scheduled virtually. Please refer to the monthly meeting announcement for meeting information.</p>	<p>2026 Meeting Dates/Presentations (2nd Th. monthly):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4/9: Megan Avery and Laura Vandermeulen, DMHAS MSW Interns, Research on AI and Youth Mental Health - 5/7: State Conference (Registration Required) - 6/11: Christine Cha, Ph.D., Yale Child Study Center, New Research in the Field of Suicide and Capturing the Youth Perspective - 7/9: James Kimmel, JD, Yale School of Medicine, The Science of Revenge - 8/13: James Geisler, Ph.D., JG Consulting, Joiner Theory and New Research - 9/10: (World Suicide Prevention Day) Paula Gill-Lopez, Self Care and Wellness Practices for Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Specialists - 10/8: Lisette Rimer, Author, Back From Suicide: Personal Story of Suicide Loss - 11/12: Elisha Logan, Suicide prevention and use of the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) in the veteran population - 12/10: Year End Committee Summaries <p>Subcommittee meetings are listed in the monthly meeting announcement sent on the CTSAB listserv.</p>	