

Eastern Connecticut Healthcare Partnership (ECHP)

June 5, 2025 Meeting Summary

Hybrid Meeting / EWIB, Franklin

MEETING SUMMARY

- The Quality of Life Team shared resources that can promote **employee wellness and safety**. Speakers included Emily Morse (UCFS) discussing the Katana safety system they use with their Mobile Crisis unit, Sarah Jones (Hartford HealthCare Wellbeing Department) sharing efforts including a peer support program, and Stress First Aid training and resource card, and Melissa Root sharing her Calmpak web-based stress management techniques (see [meeting handout](#) for details). Participants shared additional resources – including a robust [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) and [Code Lavender](#).
- David Allard (EWIB) and Alan York (Futuro Health) shared information on **training opportunities** for prospective and incumbent employees:
 - The [Healthcare Pipeline Initiative \(HPI\)](#) provides free training for short-term certificate for un- and under-employed jobseekers.
 - The Business Services Team works with employers to support [Incumbent Worker Training \(IWT\)](#) and [On the Job Training \(OJT\)](#) for incumbent employees. Contact Jeff Martel (jeffrey.martel@ctstate.edu) and Joelle Garrett (jgarrett@chamberect.com) for more information.
 - The [Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative \(YHPI\)](#) expanded to 10 schools and 112 students in 2024-25, with students earning CNA and EMT certificates.
 - **Futuro Health** received grant funding to provide tuition-free training to 2,000 residents in Connecticut and Florida's Miami-Dade region for roles in allied and mental / behavioral health. Their model includes a 6-week Human Touch training, success coaches for each student, and partnering with local training providers for technical training. The initial training programs for CT are: medical assistant, phlebotomist, patient care tech, CNA, and community health worker. ECHP members who would like to engage Futuro Health can contact David Allard (allardd@ewib.org) at EWIB to be connected.
- Click on [this link for all the slides](#) and [this link for the employee wellness resources](#).

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

ECHP Co-Chair Mike Davis (Hartford HealthCare) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and participants introduced themselves.

PROMOTING EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND SAFETY

ECHP Co-Chair Pamela Kinder (United Community & Family Services) provided background on the work of the Quality of Life Team. This team first addressed improving access to child care for healthcare employees – which is a statewide, systemic challenge. The team gained valuable insights about available resources – which were

shared at the October 2024 meeting (see [this link](#) for details). The team then addressed employee wellness and safety – doing background research and information sharing across ECHP members.

Panelists then shared the following wellness and safety resources:

- **Emily Morse, United Community & Family Services (UCFS).** UCFS has a state Mobile Crisis unit that works with youth experiencing mental health crisis, offering statewide 24-7 services. To address safety concerns, UCFS secured a grant to purchase the KATANA safety system (in consultation with Mobile Crisis staff). It includes a device on the employee’s phone and a fob on their badge that can trigger a silent alarm to call 911. Staff can also designate their “circle of security” on the app for other staff / individuals to map their location when out in the field. And the app has a “walk with me” feature to be connected to the Response Center while walking to and from their car (or in other situations). On pre-post surveys, Mobile Crisis staff rated the system highly and reported improvements in their sense of safety (and peace of mind).
- **Sarah Jones, Hartford HealthCare (HHC).** The HHC Well-Being Department began four years ago and now has three staff for 40,000+ employees. They focus on low-cost approaches to promoting employee well-being. Sarah shared lessons learned from their Peer Support Program: start with a pilot program and slowly weave the program into the culture of the organization. Sarah also shared information on the Well-Being Fundamentals Learning Series – which includes trainings on Stress First Aid, Responding to Colleagues in Crisis, and Wellness Centered Leadership. As part of Stress First Aid, the department created pocket cards which include color codes to “assess your stress” and “address your stress.” These cards have been very effective as tangible tools that are being used regularly at morning huddles and staff meetings. It has helped normalize the idea of assessing and talking about stress. Sarah encouraged partners who are creating well-being programs to reach out to her, and she would share feedback about the HHC journey creating their program to help peers avoid growing pains in startup.
- **Melissa Root, Ph.D., Calmpak.** Melissa developed Calmpak as a web-based, anonymous stress management system that includes 35 techniques for pro-actively managing stress using guided imagery. Most techniques are short (1 to 5 minutes); Melissa led participants in a 1-minute breathing exercise as an example. There are different versions of the system – including accessing via a fob, QR code, or a website with a universal passcode for a larger organization (e.g., Lawrence & Memorial Hospital is using for all staff and patients).

Pam asked Sarah to also share information about **Code Lavender**, another program at HHC. Code Lavender is a national model that HHC has been using mostly in eastern CT as part of its pastoral care. Teams can schedule visits (or request in response to stressful incidents) – which includes a cart with lavender scents, warm and cold cloths, a massage therapist, and (sometimes) a therapy dog.

Quality of Life Team member Ginger Frasca (Generations Family Health Center) shared her experience with building a robust **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**. The EAP at Generations includes many resources to help employees with stress, including specialized programs (e.g., program for the “[sandwich generation](#)”). Ginger has trained supervisors in all the resources available through the EAP, so that they can help employees take advantage of these services.

For more information, please see the [meeting slides](#) and the [Quality of Life Team handout](#), which includes contact information for the panelists.

Employers completed a **poll** to identify future employee wellness and safety topics for the Quality of Life Team to address. The top two priorities identified by employers were:

- Employee recognition and appreciation
- Psychological safety

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYERS & JOB-SEEKERS

David Allard (EWIB) began by updating the group on plans from the October Partnership meeting to collaborate on a Congressionally Directed Spending application to expand training opportunities across the region. Changes at the federal level have led to the opportunity being unavailable this year. David then presented a variety of training programs that **currently have funding and are available** through EWIB and the American Job Centers (AJCs). These include:

- **Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (HPI)**. HPI provides free, entry-level training for unemployed and underemployed workers, with support services / stipends and job search assistance. Current training programs include: Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Phlebotomy, Pharmacy Technician, Medical Coding/Billing, Medical Assistant, Personal Care Aide, and Community Health Worker and others.
- **Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) and On the Job Training (OJT)**. David, along with Jeff Martel and Joelle Garrett from the AJCs, shared these programs to help employers with upskilling employees and training new employees. Through IWT, employers can get reimbursed up to \$2,000 per employee for training that upskills employees (e.g., from PCT to phlebotomist). Through OJT, employers can be reimbursed for a percentage of new employee wages for on the job training (e.g., completing certificate). David suggested that interested employers contact [Jeff](#) and [Joelle](#) directly to discuss the details (which can vary by employer size). Ginger noted that Jeff was very helpful in working with Generations – they were able to double the applicant pool when they changed the requirements for medical assistants (allowed CNAs and EMTs to apply). Joelle agreed that opening up the positions can attract many candidates with great background (i.e., just need to get certified).
- **Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (YHPI)**. David shared information on the growth of YHPI this year, from 4 to 10 schools serving 112 students earning CNA and EMT certifications. 90% of students are planning to attend 2- or 4-year colleges, with half planning to work while going to school. 12% have already accepted a job in the field (with most graduating this month). All schools have at least one employer partner (for clinicals), and David encouraged employers to consider “adopting a school.”

Pam asked how many students have taken a job with their clinical host (employer partner)? EWIB is collecting this data now, but other participants shared data from their programs. Linda Farinha (Norwich Free Academy) noted that several EMT students were hired by partner American Ambulance. Jacquie Wetherall (CT State Quinebaug Valley) shared that all 12 Tourtelotte HS students were offered jobs at their clinical site, and at least 7 are going to work there.

Pam also suggested starting career awareness in middle school. David noted that Mitchell College is launching a [Healthcare Academy for middle school students](#) this summer. The Partnership could also expand its Healthcare Expos to middle school students. Linda F. agreed that it would be helpful to start in middle school.

Alan York (**Futuro Health**) then shared a [new opportunity for Connecticut residents](#) interested in jobs in allied and mental / behavioral health:

- Futuro Health received a \$10 million grant from the Elisabeth C. DeLuca Foundation Partnership for tuition-free training of 2,000 residents across Connecticut and Florida's Tri-County area through April 2028.
- Futuro focuses on underserved, underrepresented populations, and offers personalized success coaching and a 6-week interactive Human Touch course, to build the interpersonal competencies that employers value to transform patient care.
- Futuro is in the process of partnering with local training providers to deliver the technical training. The initial training programs for CT are medical assistant, phlebotomist, patient care tech, CNA, and community health worker – but Futuro can identify additional employer needs that they can recommend to the DeLuca Foundation.

Mike Davis (HHC) noted shortages in respiratory therapists, and surgery and imaging technicians. Alan will meet with Mike to discuss options. Jennier Granger (UCFS) asked about dental assistants. Alan can suggest this as an option to DeLuca.

Ginger shared a panel Generations hosted for ECSU students on non-clinical jobs – in billing, informatics, coders, HR, etc. Many students are interested in healthcare, but do not want to work directly with patients.

For more information, please see the [meeting slides](#) or contact [Alan](#) directly.

Employers completed a **poll** to identify next steps in developing training opportunities. Results included:

- Most (63%) agreed to hold a **follow-up meeting** focused on Healthcare demand planning, the healthcare pipeline, and upskilling.
- Meeting topics should include Incumbent Worker Training / Upskilling (88%), Critical Occupation Shortages (63%), and Partnerships with Training Providers (63%).

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

ECHP Co-Chair Diane Manning (United Services) thanked everyone for attending and noted the following opportunities:

- **Join the Policy Team.** The ECHP Policy Team joined up with the healthcare policy teams from three other regions to develop a statewide policy agenda – which focused on increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates, provide funding for nonprofit healthcare providers delivering services without third-party reimbursement (e.g., case management), investing in healthcare workforce education and training particularly for underserved and rural areas, and implementing tax and loan forgiveness incentives to attract and retain licensed healthcare professionals in Connecticut. The four regional sector partnerships wrote an Op-Ed and held a legislative breakfast at the Capitol in late May. Diane noted the groups came together a little late in the process this year, so the goal is for the policy teams to gather in the fall to prepare for the next legislative session. Diane invited other members to join the team.
- **Join the Quality of Life Team.** The team will continue to address employee wellness and safety.

Members can email Dave Bechtel (bechtel@xsector.com) to join the teams and learn more about the topics discussed at the meeting.

All participants completed a **meeting feedback** poll. Results included:

- All (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the content of the meeting, were able to share their ideas, and the meeting was a good use of their time.
- Most (87%) agreed that the hybrid meeting format worked well.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Industry Partners: Maryanna Arsenault (CareCo Medical); Dana Dowdell, Cynthia Przekop (Eastern CT Hematology & Oncology); Ginger Frasca, Melissa Meyers (Generations Family Health Center); Mike Davis, Sarah Jones, Carley Warzecha (Hartford Healthcare); Jennifer Granger, Pamela Kinder, Emily Morse (United Community & Family Services); Diane Manning (United Services)

Support Partners: Angelina Zabbo (CNA Bootcamp of CT); Linda Ladas (CT Department of Labor); Michelle Fuhrman (CT Office of Workforce Strategy); Erin Sullivan, Jacquie Wetherell (CT State); Joelle Garrett (Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce); Michael Nogelo, Carol Labelle, David Allard, Linda Riquier, Melissa Laws (EWIB); Jeff Martel (Northeast Chamber of Commerce); Linda Farinha (Norwich Free Academy); Michelle Garabedian (Windham Chamber of Commerce); David Bechtel (Cross Sector)

Guest Speakers: Melissa Root (Calmpak), Alan York (Futuro Health)