

Connecticut DESPP/DEMHS Region IV  
**Recovery Steering Committee**

## Health, Social Services and Housing Working Group

March 16, 2021 - Meeting Notes

**Attendance:**

John Filchak	Fionnuala Darby-	Brianna DeVivo	Sue Starky
Mickey Morabito	Hudgens	Sue Bolen	Steve ??
Anne Miller	Emma King	Maryam Elahi	Judy Gaudet
Amanda Kennedy	Melissa Meyers	Carla Iezzi	Esther Pendola
Jim Butler	Mark Oefinger	Les King	
Carol LaBelle	Peter DeBiasi	Darlene Richards	
Nancy Gentes	Diane Manning	Dina Sears-Graves	
Megan Brown	Cathy Zall	Avery L.	
Mary Demarco	Jean Cyr	Mike Caplet	

Following introductions, Fionnuala Darby-Hudgens opened the discussion with the new UniteCT Program is to help stabilize Connecticut's Rental Housing Market - with plans to distribute \$237 millions in rental assistance. The new emergency rental and utilities assistance program, called [UniteCT](#) opened on Monday, March 15, 2021. The assistance is available to everyone with a household income at or below [80% of AMI](#) who has experienced a financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Applications must be made on-line. Visit <https://portal.ct.gov/DOH/DOH/Programs/UniteCT> to submit an application or call 1-844-864-8328 to get a referral to a community agency who may be able to assist tenants in applying.

Concern was expressed that the actual location where people can go to apply are not yet established for eastern Connecticut and that persons may not have access to computers, scanners, printers, etc. Both Congressman Courtney's office and the Access Agency stated that they are working to correct this deficiency and hope to have eastern Connecticut locations in place shortly.

Congressman Courtney's office stated that they are working on insuring that local municipal electrical companies/Dept of Housing is doing outreach in regards to utility assistance payments

Concerns were additionally raised that:

- Landlords need guidance in directing their tenants to resources. It was noted that in the southeast that TVCCA in Norwich and New London are open. There are staff very experienced to help with applications and have safety protocols in place and PPE. Case managers are also available.
- Mental Health issues have increased significantly. United Services reported that:
  - Adult crisis services experienced a 260% increase over the same period last year (July-Dec). It has only gotten worse over the last months, but March and April last year were way down as everyone hunkered down at the beginning of the pandemic. They also had a huge increase in outpatient referrals for adults, and children and adolescents are

starting to increase as kids return to school and the issues are less hidden. Over the last weeks United Services were averaging 2 adolescents being sent by ambulance to the hospital from our clinics due to active suicidal behaviors/attempts, and the inability for families to keep the kids safe. There was (as of last Friday, the last day they had numbers) 40 kids in hospital EDs waiting for inpatient beds. Many get discharged because the hospital cannot keep them in the ED that long.

- To date United Services has not seen any new money for COVID issues except for the PRF funds that ended 12/30 for mostly PPE, etc. There has been no talk of resources to respond to the community need, and there is concern any new funds will end up outside of this area, similar to housing resources.
- Additionally, this is a very labor-intensive effort to support individuals who are applying for the housing funds. No one out here has extra staffing to do this, so it will be at the expense of other things that need to get done. The tenants and landlords will be happier, and the people that need other help will get in longer lines with no added staffing resources

NDDH expressed concern that their efforts in responding to the pandemic are not being met with appropriate funding to support their work.