



CT Zero Suicide Learning Community Special Meeting September 24, 2025

The **CT Zero Suicide Learning Community (CT ZSLC)** is an open group of the *CT Suicide Advisory Board* for health and behavioral healthcare providers and supportive community providers. The CT ZSLC invites you to attend its September meeting in honor of National Suicide Prevention Month and 10 years of CT ZSLC service. The meeting will include a brief overview of the Zero Suicide approach, two educational panels and a question and answer period.

Panels

♦ Pathways to Care - Prevention Panel:

Nicole Bengston, Amplify, CALM and QPR Training

Taylor Gainey, Alliance for Prevention & Wellness, AFSP Soul Shop Training

Valerie Lepoutre, NAMI-CT, Out of the Abyss Suicide Support Group

Elisha Logan, Homes for the Brave, Use of the C-SSRS in Community Settings

♦ Clinical Care - Treatment Panel:

Dr. Shykina Brown, CT Judicial/Court Support Services Division, DBT for Juvenile Justice

Jessica Markure, VACT Healthcare, Use of the C-SSRS with Veteran Populations

Dr. Steve Rogers, CT Children's Medical Center, ASQ and C-SSRS for Universal ED Patients

Dr. David Tolin, Institute of Living/Hartford HealthCare, CBT-SP for Psychiatric Inpatients

Meeting Information

- ♦ **When:** Wednesday, September 24, 2025 from 9-10:30 AM (Sign-in & Networking 8:30-9)
- ♦ **Where:** CT Hospital Association, 110 Barnes Road, Wallingford
- ♦ **Who should attend:** Employees of health and behavioral healthcare institutions and partnering organizations interested in continuous quality improvement to prevent suicide
- ♦ **Registration Required by 9/19:** [CT Zero Suicide Learning Community Special Meeting - 9/24 | Connecticut Hospital Association | CHA](https://www.preventsuicide.org/get-involved/committees/ct-zero-suicide-learning-community)
- ♦ **For more information on the CT ZSLC or if you'd like to connect with the Chairs, please visit:** www.preventsuicide.org/get-involved/committees/ct-zero-suicide-learning-community

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September 24, 2025, 9:00-10:30 AM

CT Hospital Association

Panelist Biographies and Presentation Descriptions

Pathways to Care - Prevention Panel

Nicole Bengtson, Amplify, CALM and QPR Training

Bio: Nicole Bengtson is the Regional Suicide Advisory Board Lead at Amplify, Region 4 Behavioral Health Action Organization. With a background in youth crisis services and wellness, she is passionate about suicide prevention, reducing stigma, and creating healthy communities. Nicole is a Rowan University graduate.

Contact: nbengtson@amplifyct.org.

Description: Utilizing our suicide prevention network in CT gives organizations, schools and community members access to best practice trainings promoting mental health across the lifespan. Trainings like QPR (Question Persuade Refer) Gatekeeper Training teach how to help someone at risk for suicide, while newer trainings like CALM (Counseling on Access to Lethal Means) go one step further in normalizing conversations regarding firearm and medication safe storage, all while maintaining an individual's autonomy.

Taylor Gainey, Alliance for Prevention & Wellness, AFSP Soul Shop Training

Bio: Taylor Gainey, MHA, PMP is a Suicide Prevention Specialist at the Alliance for Prevention & Wellness, a program of BHcare. She co-chairs the South-Central Regional Suicide Advisory Board, focusing on suicide prevention across the New Haven and Middlesex counties. Taylor is a certified instructor in QPR, CALM, and a presenter in L.E.T.S. Save Lives.

Contact: tgainey@bhcare.org

Description: Soul Shop™ for Faith Leaders is a one-day workshop designed to equip faith community leaders with the skills and resources necessary to minister effectively to individuals impacted by suicide. Participants learn how to create worship resources, train congregation members in suicide awareness and basic conversation skills, and extend invitations to those who have experienced suicidal thoughts to share their stories. The workshop engages participants in exploring how to cultivate a soul-safe culture within their congregations. It's not just for clergy—it's also for lay leaders and anyone who feels called to respond to the desperate need for suicide prevention and support within their community.

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Valerie Lepoutre, NAMI-CT, Out of the Abyss Suicide Support Group

Bio: Valerie Lepoutre is the Director of Peer Initiatives, Education & Training at NAMI Connecticut. With a certification in Peer Recovery Support, Val incorporates her lived expertise into her professional role by supporting, advocating for, and educating others about mental health, trauma, and suicide.

Contact: ylepoutre@namict.org

Description: Out of the Abyss is a dynamic, peer-led suicide support model that offers upstream, community-based care rooted in lived experience and practical skill-building. Through compassionate connection and hands-on strategies, participants learn to navigate suicidal urges and manage emotional distress. This presentation will introduce a transformative referral resource that not only complements clinical care but also strengthens core elements of the Zero Suicide Framework.

Elisha Logan, Homes for the Brave, Use of the C-SSRS in Community Settings

Bio: Elisha Logan LPC, LADC, serves as the Chief Clinical Officer at Homes for the Brave. Elisha's experience includes supporting the USMC and USN Reserve as a Training Specialist and Clinician, and as Clinical Supervisor at the Camp Pendleton Substance Abuse Counseling Center in San Diego. Elisha is a committed advocate for suicide prevention.

Contact: elogan@homesforthebrave.org

Description: The Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), is an evidence based suicide risk assessment that is endorsed for use by the CDC, SAMSHA, and many others. The protocol can be used by any person and in any setting. The questionnaire invites discussion of the relationship between an individual and thoughts related to wanting to die, allowing for more accurate risk assessment, and mitigating unnecessary emergency trips to the emergency room. The C-SSRS also empowers all who are trained in it's use, be it a mental health professional or a caring parent, with the tools and confidence to open up the dialogue that might save a life.

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Clinical Care - Treatment Panel

Dr. Shykina Brown, CT Judicial/Court Support Services Division, DBT for Juvenile Justice

Bio: Shykina Brown, PsyD, is a licensed clinical psychologist and Program Director of Yale's Juvenile Justice Mental Health Program. An Assistant Professor at Yale School of Medicine, she specializes in trauma-informed, culturally responsive care for justice-involved youth and diversity, equity, and inclusion in correctional healthcare. Contact: shykina.brown@yale.edu

Description: Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing suicide risk among justice-involved youth by targeting deficits in emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness. This structured, skills-based intervention is well-suited to address the high emotional reactivity, impulsivity, and trauma histories prevalent in this population. By fostering adaptive coping strategies, enhancing problem-solving abilities, and promoting safer responses to stress, DBT serves as a critical component of suicide prevention and supports successful rehabilitation and reintegration.

Jessica Markure, VACT Healthcare, Use of the C-SSRS with Veteran Populations

Bio: Jessica Markure, LCSW has worked for Connecticut's Veteran's Health Administration since 2020 as their Suicide Prevention Case Manager. She is an LCSW with experience working in emergency departments, inpatient psychiatric hospitals, and private practice. In her current role at VA, she assists in providing trainings on veteran specific suicide prevention topics.

Contact: Jessica.Markure@va.gov

Description: This presentation will cover information regarding VA's shift to universal suicide screening through use of the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) across the healthcare system both annually and when there is a clinical indication that a screen is needed, as well as veteran's feedback regarding this increase in screening frequency. It will also provide information regarding how the VA responds when a C-SSRS is positive, including next steps in the screening process to gather more information regarding their suicidal ideations or behaviors and VA specific resources that are available to veterans to help reduce the risk for suicide moving forward.

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Dr. Steve Rogers, CT Children's Medical Center, ASQ and C-SSRS for Universal ED Patients

Bio: Steven Rogers, MD, MS is the Medical Director of Emergency Behavioral Health Services at Connecticut Children's. He is an Associate Professor at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. He is also a Research Scientist at the Connecticut Children's Injury Prevention Center. Dr. Rogers is also a member of the Connecticut State Advisory Board for Children's Mental Health and the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board. His current research, academic and advocacy efforts focus on youth suicide prevention including the recent establishment of the Connecticut Children's Youth Suicide Prevention Center.

Contact: scrogers@connecticutchildrens.org

Description: Dr. Rogers will present the suicide screening program that was established in his emergency department in 2019 and has screened over 100,000 youth. Over the life of the program, staff compliance rates are greater than 90% and a positive screen rate of 18%. He will share analysis of the screening data and interesting findings that support universal screening starting at the age of 10 years old.

Dr. David Tolin, Institute of Living/Hartford HealthCare, CBT-SP for Psychiatric Inpatients

Bio: Dr. David Tolin, Ph.D., ABPP is the Founder and Director of the Anxiety Disorders Center at the Institute of Living, and an Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine.

Contact: David.Tolin@hhchealth.org

Description: Dr. Tolin will discuss a recent randomized controlled trial of brief cognitive-behavioral therapy for inpatients who have attempted suicide. The treatment was highly effective, reducing the rate of suicide reattempts and readmissions.