

CT Counseling Association Annual Conference Fall 2023
Hilton Garden Inn Wallingford/Meriden, 1181 Barnes Road, Wallingford
Friday, November 3, 2023



Good morning and thank you for having me at today's conference. My name is Nancy Navarretta, and I am the Commissioner of the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. As a Nationally Certified and Licensed Counselor myself, it is an honor to be able to address this group of professionals today, as we gather to celebrate the vital work that counselors do and to share our collective wisdom and experiences.

During the course of my career, the counseling landscape has continued to evolve. As a group, we have gained recognition as an essential part of the workforce. When I became licensed in Connecticut, I was one of the first LPCs in the state. This was before LPCs were covered by all insurance providers and employers were not as familiar with the skill set we brought to the table as part of multidisciplinary teams. It is because of your advocacy and promotion of the valuable work we do that counselors are now embedded in all healthcare environments serving individuals across the lifespan. Our education and licensure allow us to flexibly meet the needs of individuals seeking behavioral health services. The world is rapidly changing, and so are the challenges that people face. From the pandemic to the increasing stressors of modern life, the demand for mental health support is

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greater than ever. We also bring our expertise to leadership roles in large healthcare systems – we are Directors, CEOs and even Commissioners! Our role in the well-being of our communities is increasingly crucial, and it is incumbent upon us to continually adapt and enhance our skills to meet these new challenges.

This is a profession of empathy, compassion, and transformation. We are guides who help individuals navigate the sometimes tumultuous internal and external challenges. We are advocates for emotional healing and motivators who ignite the spark of change. Our work is the embodiment of hope, and our presence can be a lifeline for those in need.

In your role as counselor, you may walk beside an individual who has experienced one or more traumatic events, struggles with substance use or emotional distress or all of the above. Focusing on individuals' strengths, counseling can help in overcoming trauma, navigating mental and emotional roadblocks, and regaining feelings of self-worth and confidence.

In Connecticut and across the nation, we are contending with behavioral healthcare workforce shortages and the DMHAS system of care has not been immune to this. As such, the Connecticut adult mental health system, which I am proud to say is among the best in the nation, is actively recruiting to fill open positions. We have positions available for LPCs across our statewide system of care—from Stamford to Middletown, Hartford to Norwich, and everywhere in between. We want people to be excited about a rewarding career at DMHAS, knowing that the work is challenging but also that there is nothing quite like bearing witness to someone as they discover that recovery is possible, and within reach. Our work is about personal connection to people, a job that is a vocation unlike most others, one which can be life changing for individuals, families and communities. If you are looking to make an impact, I would encourage you to join our team of professionals providing recovery-oriented mental health and

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substance use disorder services. Visit the DMHAS website to learn more including loan repayment options.

Remember that your work has a profound impact, not just on individuals but on communities and society as a whole. By providing guidance, support, and a safe space for individuals to explore their emotions and challenges, you are helping to build a healthier and more resilient world.

In closing, I'd like to express my gratitude to each one of you for the dedication and passion you bring to your work. Let us make the most of this opportunity to learn, connect, and grow, and may our collective efforts continue to shine a light of hope and healing in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you, and I wish you all an inspiring and productive conference.

