

NEWSLETTER

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Hello fellow MFTs!

Winter is here and 2022 is right around the corner. The new year sparks a season of change; and what better time to reflect on our previous growth and future plans than right now? 2021 was a year full of virtual workshops and advocacy advances for MFTs here in CT.

We began our year with a Spring Equinox workshop, intentionally reflecting on the previous year and planning for the year ahead. And we ended the 2021 workshops with a Self-Care workshop for many of us who are either struggling with or at risk for burnout. It was a great way to come full circle and remind ourselves to tend to our own needs as well as our clients. In between we covered Kink and Non-Monogamous Relationships, Private Practice set-up and expansion, LGBTQ+ affirming care, and Advocacy for the practicing MFT. I hope that you were able to attend one or more of these great workshops throughout the year. Our Education team is already hard at work planning for 2022. I can't tell you how excited I am to hear of some of the offerings they are coordinating, but I am most looking forward to the return of our conference in the fall (more details to come in the months ahead).

Our advocacy team saw both new leadership and many successes in the 2021 legislative session. Amongst our successes were several bills passed related to mental health and telehealth care. I have been part of our advocacy efforts for several years, and while I have experienced the lengthy legislative process (did you know it took us 8 years to pass the associate license?); I am so proud of CTAMFT's efforts in creating a collaborative approach amongst the various mental health organizations. These combined efforts truly were a key factor in helping us pass critical legislation against larger insurance lobbying. While our work is not completely done, I hope that you have been following along and may even consider joining the advocacy team in the upcoming year.

2021 has been a great year to serve you all, and I hope 2022 brings us even more to be proud about as MFTs in Connecticut!

Best,
Rebecca

Rebecca Ruitto, LMFT
CTAMFT Chair

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The No Surprises Act goes into effect January 1st, 2022. (see our No Surprises Act section below for more information and resources)
 - Our newly elected Board members will begin their terms in January 2022.
 - The 2022 legislative session begins in February and mental health is projected to be a priority.
 - Our first events of 2022 are posted and registration is open. Check out our Events page to see the workshop offerings and to register.
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2022 CTAMFT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair: Rebecca Ruitto, LMFT

Chair-Elect: Dani Moye, PhD, LMFT

Secretary: Kristina Chomick, LMFT

Treasurer: Rachael Farina, LMFT

Advocacy Chair: Jaime Rodriguez, LMFT

Education Chair: Briana Hansen, LMFT

Board Member: Tatiana Melendez-Rhodes, PhD, LMFT

Did you know the CTAMFT Board is made up of volunteers? For those interested in learning more about CTAMFT Board activities or becoming part of our smaller committees, we invite you to attend one of our monthly board meetings. Board meetings are held the second Friday of each month from 10:30am-12pm. Our next CTAMFT Board meeting will be held on Friday February 11th via ZOOM. For the link, please email us at chair@ctamft.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS -

Registration and details for all events can be found on our website event page.

CTAMFT Book Club

February 4th, 2022

2pm-3pm

Book: Atlas of the Heart by Brene Brown

*book should be read prior to attending this discussion group

CTAMFT February Board Meeting

February 10th, 2022

10:30am-12:00pm

*open to all members, for ZOOM link, contact us at chair@ctamft.org

What's Next?: The Difficulties Veterans Face after the Military

February 25th, 2022

10am-12pm

NO SURPRISES ACT

In December 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act was signed into law, of which the No Surprises Act was part of and goes into effect January 1st, 2022. CTAMFT has awaited direction from AAMFT regarding guidelines about how providers can remain in compliance with these new standards. Below are some common questions and resources.

**** Please note:** Each individual and practice is different, and CTAMFT is not legal counsel. This is not an exhaustive list of questions and requirements. For any further questions you cannot find answers to below or in the resources, specifically how this law may apply to you; we strongly encourage you to seek advice from a lawyer, or utilize AAMFT's legal consultation here (a free benefit to your AAMFT membership).

When do I have to make these changes by?

The No Surprises Act goes into effect on January 1st, 2022. Yes, this is a quick turn around, but you most likely already include much of the information required to be presented to clients in your paperwork already, and will simply need to create an additional form to include the additional details (outlined below).

Are LMFTs included? What about LMFTAs?

The act defines providers as any healthcare provider who is acting within the scope of their license or certification under state law. Therefore LMFTs and LMFTAs are considered providers and must abide by this law. This holds true regardless of your facility type (hospital, agency, group practice, or solo practice).

What is the law requiring?

This law requires providers to discuss fees with clients before treatment, to avoid surprise billing for consumers. This will require all providers to discuss fees with clients before services are rendered through a Good Faith Estimate to any client that is uninsured, out-of-network, or self-pay for services when they are scheduled or when the client requests an estimate. Currently requirements are not in effect for providers in-network with clients using insurance (although we anticipate further changes in the future regarding insurance clients).

What about practices with both in-network and out-of-network providers?

Requirements under this act should particularly be reviewed by practices with both in and out of network providers. The act prohibits out of network providers from balance billing non-emergent services provided by nonparticipating providers at an in-network facility unless the clients provide their written consent (that they are waiving their No Surprise Act rights). The act limits out-of-network providers from billing these clients more than the in-network amount that would be charged.

What is needed in the Good Faith Estimate?

The good faith estimate must include the following:

1. Client's name and date of birth
2. A clear description of the primary item or service (for many of us, therapy) and if applicable the date of which the service is scheduled.
3. Itemized list of items or services, grouped by each provider or facility, reasonably expected to be provided for the primary item or service, and items or services reasonably expected to be furnished in conjunction with the primary item or service, for that period of care
4. Applicable diagnosis codes, expected service codes and expected charges associated with each listed item or service
5. Name, NPI and TIN of each provider or facility represented in the Good Faith Estimate, and the state(s) and office or facility location(s) where the items or services are expected to be furnished by such provider or facility
6. List of items or services that the convening provider or convening facility anticipates will require separate scheduling and that are expected to occur before or following the expected period of care for the primary item or service
7. Disclaimers that there may be additional items or services the convening provider/facility recommends that must be scheduled or requested separately
8. Must state that the information provided in the Good Faith Estimate is only an estimate of items or services reasonably expected to be furnished at the time the Good Faith Estimate is and that actual charges may differ
9. Must state that the client has the right to initiate the client-provider dispute resolution process if the actual billed charges are substantially in excess of the expected charges included in the Good Faith Estimate
10. Must state that the Good Faith Estimate is not a contract and does not require the uninsured or self-pay individual to obtain the items or services from any of the providers or facilities identified in the Good Faith Estimate.

Woah, that's a lot- anything else I have to do?

Information regarding availability of a good faith estimate must be prominently displayed on your website, in the office, and on-site where scheduling, provisions and questions about the cost of healthcare occur. The notice must be made available in either paper or electronic format and in the language spoken by the client. You can find the DHH forms here, which is considered to be a good faith effort by the government.

I have more questions, where can I go?

We recommend the following additional resources: (click on item to follow link)

- [AAMFT No Surprises Act Blog post](#)
 - [CMS standard notice and consent documents under the no surprise act sample forms.](#)
 - [Schedule a consultation with AAMFT's legal and ethics team](#)
 - [Consult the CMS resource page](#)
 - Consult with your own practice lawyer
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ADVOCACY UPDATES

The 2022 legislative session begins in February. It is a short session year, meaning fewer bills will make it through the legislative process. We have been working hard with our lobbyist; and are happy to see mental health as a primary agenda item of interest.

In preparation of the 2022 legislative session, let's review a few myths about MFTs and advocacy:

Myth: I'm a therapist, advocacy really isn't in my wheelhouse.

Fact: MFTs are the best people to be involved in legislative efforts that effect our work. As practicing MFTs, professors, or students, we understand the direct effects legislation has on our work and the future of our profession; and we should be at the table when legislators are making decisions that impact our work.

Myth: CT is advanced in mental health legislation, we don't really need to worry do we?

Fact: While CT is farther ahead than some other states, particularly for MFTs, there is still a long way to go. We need ongoing active advocacy to defend our current status and make additional changes as our society evolves (ex. telehealth). Remember the Texas lawsuit that AAMFT stepped in to aid that would have taken away an MFTs right to diagnose? Without a specific MFT presence in the local legislation, there is nothing preventing that same thing from happening here. Advocacy work is a constant effort.

Myth: Advocacy is intimidating, isn't that best left for those who have an interest in politics?

Fact: We have a lobbyist to help clarify the political and legislative process and jargon. CTAMFT has been working with the same lobbyist for over 10 years. This means she's well versed in the MFT profession, what are needs are, and who to speak to to create effective legislative relationships. Our lobbyist is uniquely suited to support our advocacy team. When relationships are built, we can educate representatives on who MFTs are (because all mental health professionals are not social workers) and create political advocates for the profession (those who raise and sponsor bills that support, protect, and advance MFTs).

Myth: I'm not prepared to talk to representatives or do advocacy work, I wouldn't do a good job.

Fact: CTAMFT has an advocacy team and our lobbyist who help direct efforts. We teach our members how to understand the legislative process, draft emails, talk to representatives, etc. Many of these tasks take simply a few minutes a day, and the more people we have on our team, the more effective and quickly we can take action on key legislative items. Whenever there is a question, our team and lobbyist are always available to provide assistance.

Our advocacy team is in need of volunteers for the 2022 advocacy season. We are looking for individuals who are willing to: be an advocacy contact for your local area, make calls/send emails to their representatives, help us draft letters of outreach, help us review and update informational handouts to present to representatives, and provide testimony (written or virtual in-person) during this exciting time. You do not need to commit to every task, but if you have between 1 minute and a couple hours to spare, we would appreciate your efforts. To hear more and be added to the team, contact us at advocacy@ctamft.org.

Jaime Rodriguez, LMFT

CTAMFT Advocacy Chair

EDUCATION UPDATES

CTAMFT's Education Committee first wants to thank every one for a successful 2021 year. We had several workshops throughout the year that focused on a wide range of topics. Between our workshops, networking events, and study sessions, CTAMFT was able to offer 15 different events this year!

Even more exciting are our plans for 2022, including ongoing workshops, study sessions, and networking events. We are additionally planning on bringing back our conference in the fall. This event will cover various topics and will be designed for both new and seasoned therapists alike. Stay tuned as we solidify the details and share more with you all soon.

In the meantime, 2022 is already kicking off with a couple of events scheduled for February. Join us for our first ever CTAMFT Book Club on February 4th! We will be discussing Brene Brown's latest book "Atlas of the Heart". Those wishing to attend the discussion should plan on reading the book before the February 4th meeting. Our next meeting date and book choice will be determined at the February event.

Looking for your veterans CEs? We have that covered as well in our February 25th event, What's Next?: The Difficulties Veterans Face after the Military. This training will focus on the mental health needs of veterans as they reintegrate into civilian life. Assessment for suicide as well as understanding changes/ resources available for veteran families will be reviewed.

As always, if you know anybody who is interested in becoming involved with the Education Committee or if you have any questions, please email education@ctamft.org.

Briana Hansen, LMFT

CTAMFT Education Chair



SPOTLIGHT: CTAMFT thanks Nick Nelson, LMFT for his service to the Board.

Nick has been the CTAMFT treasurer since 2018. His work has helped us with various transitions after the AAMFT restructuring, and has continued to maintain a healthy financial status for CTAMFT. Thank you Nick for your years of hard work and dedication to CTAMFT!

Interested in being featured in our Spotlight section? CTAMFT is currently accepting submissions! Types of submissions can include: your blog post, an opinion piece, research abstract, or publication excerpts. To learn more and to submit your piece for consideration, email us at chair@ctamft.org.