



**CONNECTICUT STATE
COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**

Connecticut State Colleges & Universities
Plan for Access to Reproductive Health Care Services by Students
Pursuant to Public Act 23-41
January 2024

Introduction:

Public Act 23-41 charged the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) to establish and update, as necessary, a plan for each residential campus under the board's jurisdiction regarding access for students who live on these campuses to reproductive health care services from a health care provider licensed to provide these services. According to the public act, such plan shall include but not limited to:

1. the availability of requirement and licensed health care providers for the provision of reproductive health care services on the residential campus or in the surrounding community,
2. the provision of referrals for and transportation services to access reproductive health care services at any off-campus location,
3. opportunities for providing reproductive health care services or other associates services, including, but not limited to, counseling services, through telehealth,
4. the provision of available educational materials concerning maternal mental health care and resources for maternal mental health screenings,
5. means for ensuring continuity of care during holiday and vacation periods during and between semesters,
6. an estimate of the costs associated with implementing such plan and the availability of funds, through public and private sources, to cover such costs, and
7. the provision of information and materials about pregnancy being a qualifying event for health insurance coverage in the state.

The act requires that no later than 30 days after establishing or updating the plan, that the plan be sent to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, and the plan be posted on each institution's webpage-including Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU).

For the purpose of the plan, reproductive health care services are defined per Connecticut General Statutes Section 52-571m as, "... all medical, surgical, counseling or referral services relating to the human reproductive system, including, but not limited to, services relating to pregnancy, contraception or the termination of a pregnancy and all medical care relating to treatment of gender dysphoria as set forth in the most recent edition of the American Psychiatric Association's "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" and gender incongruence, as defined in the most recent revision of the "International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems."

Methodology:

The public act calls for a plan for each residential campus under BOR's jurisdiction. For CSCU, these residential campuses are: Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), Eastern Connecticut State University (ESCU), Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU), and Western Connecticut State University (WCSU).

Each residential campus was asked the 7 questions above to gather the information for the plan. The next section of the plan reports the findings of these 7 questions, as an overall system response and each institution's response.

Findings:

Question 1: The availability of requirement and licensed health care providers for the provision of reproductive health care services on the residential campus or in the surrounding community.

Overall System Response: For reproductive health care services, the availability of licensed health care providers can be found on the residential campus of each institution or in the surrounding community.

CCSU Response: The Health Services staff at CCSU offers an array of reproductive health care services to all enrolled students. Some services offered include point of care pregnancy testing, STI testing and treatment, contraception counselling and care, gynecological exams, and treatment of vaginal infections along with most routine issues dealing with women's health. Referrals are made to the surrounding area providers for those services not available on campus. We aid students undergoing gender transitioning by offering them the ability to continue getting their injections at our office instead of traveling off campus once their dosing has been determined by their gender affirming care provider.

ESCU Response: There are two APRN's on Eastern's campus that address reproductive health care including women's gynecological exams for diagnosis, screenings, STI, pregnancy testing and education. We offer STI treatment, oral contraception, and Plan B. Once a diagnosis is made, the issue will be treated in house (i.e., STI) if possible. Other conditions are referred to the appropriate Medical Specialty. We will refer out for issues that may include menstrual cyclicity, pregnancy, fetal development, lactation, termination of a pregnancy and/or medical care relating to treatment of gender dysphoria.

SCSU Response: Student Health Services provides a comprehensive range of services within the scope of practice of licensed Advanced Practice and Registered Nurses. These services include contraceptive management, STI testing and treatment, sexual health counseling, gynecological exams, and preventive health maintenance. The campus has established partnerships with local healthcare providers to offer extended support and additional services. Southern Connecticut State University provides referrals to reproductive health providers in the surrounding community for pregnancy, termination of pregnancy and the treatment of gender dysphoria.

WCSU Response: WCSU Health Services provides a range of services related to contraception management, STI testing and treatment, sexual health counseling, education and urgent women's and men's health issues. WCSU provides referrals to local reproductive health providers in the surrounding community for pregnancy, termination of pregnancy and the treatment of gender dysphoria. The list of local providers and services is readily available.

Question 2: The provision of referrals for and transportation services to access reproductive health care services at any off-campus location.

Overall System Response: Referrals are made to off campus locations for services not provided on campus. U-Pass is available for students, and several campuses work with their Dean of Students to coordinate transportation as well.

CCSU Response: Currently, we make referrals to off-campus locations, specifically for abortion services (Planned Parenthood in Hartford), and for OB/GYN services that are not provided on campus such as pap smears and cervical exams. Due to CCSU being in New Britain, referrals for off campus services are made to service providers in the New Britain and Greater Hartford area. If a student chooses to seek treatment off campus, they can utilize free bus/ train passes to travel within Connecticut.

ECSU Response: Eastern has partnerships with local providers and makes referrals to the appropriate facilities. Currently we do not have specific transportation to off-campus locations. If a student is without transportation, the Dean of Students will coordinate with the student and Health Services.

SCSU Response: The U-Pass is available for undergraduate students when transportation is needed for off-site care. Health Services can refer students to transportation resources for reproductive health care and pregnancy termination. Health Services will also work with the Dean of Students office to offer transportation to students through the Financial Assistance Program where necessary.

WCSU Response: WCSU provides referrals to local providers for services not performed at WCSU Health Services. Transportation to off-site providers in the Danbury area are accessible via Housatonic Area Regional Transport (HART) bus lines. U-Pass is available to students to cover the cost of HART transportation.

Question 3: Opportunities for providing reproductive health care services or other associate services, including, but not limited to, counseling services, through telehealth.

Overall System Response: Telehealth services are provided on three of the four CSCU campuses. If telehealth services are not provided, the service provider that is used to refer students for counseling offers virtual appointments.

CCSU Response: Central offers telehealth appointments for counseling services and other services related to general and reproductive health care. Students may have to utilize local off-campus pharmacies to fill prescriptions.

ECSU Response: While Health Services does offer initial counseling (education), they refer to Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) for follow up of psychiatric counseling. CAPS provides free professional counseling services to students who are pregnant and will collaborate with medical professionals as part of a treatment plan. Student Health Services does not offer Telehealth Services. For medical conditions, telehealth has a multitude of shortcomings that can

have significant unfavorable outcomes, especially in this age group. CAPS does offer virtual appointments if preferred by the student. The CAPS webpage provides a listing of additional telehealth providers.

SCSU Response: Student Health and Counseling Services both offer telehealth services to students. Alternative telehealth providers will be listed as resources on the university's website.

WCSU Response: WCSU offers telehealth visits for counseling services and certain health related services. If referred to off-campus provider, that provider's office policies regarding telehealth apply.

Question 4: The provision of available educational materials concerning maternal mental health care and resources for maternal mental health screenings.

Overall System Response: Campuses offer these educational materials, and if they currently do not, they are in the process of identifying the appropriate resources and materials to make them available.

CCSU Response: Health Services and the Counselling department at CCSU offer educational materials based on the needs of all students, including those who are pregnant or parents. Educational materials are readily available in both departments, which are located adjacent to each other. Mental health screenings are performed on all students accessing Health Services. Additionally, mental health screenings are performed by counselors in the Counseling Office during their initial visit. We currently use the PHQ-9 screening tool and the Columbia Depression Screen.

ECSU Response: Students with mental health issues requiring counseling are referred to CAPS on campus. CAPS does not currently have educational materials specific to maternal mental healthcare, but is working to identify appropriate resources and will make them available on the department webpage.

SCSU Response: The Student Health and Wellbeing team is in the process of examining a range of maternal mental health tools to determine those best suited to the college age population. Such assessments will be added to the existing tools available for students.

WCSU Response: Mental health screenings are performed on all students accessing Health Services. Additionally, mental health screenings are performed by counselors in the Counseling Office during their initial visit. We currently use the PHQ-9 screening tool. Health Services and the offers educational materials based on the needs of all students, including those who are pregnant or parents.

Question 5: Means for ensuring continuity of care during holiday and vacation periods as well as during and between semesters.

Overall System Response: Health services are open between semesters. Campus police can also be called for an emergency or during holidays.

CCSU Response: Health Services is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. We are open year-round, with offices closed only on Federal Holidays. The longest duration of closure on campus is two days for Thanksgiving. We ensure there is minimum to no disruption in care. Campus police are called for after-hour emergencies or during holidays for urgent situations. Students can also call campus police and opt to be transported via ambulance to the Hospital of Central CT as the nearest area hospital or another hospital of their choice.

ECSU Response: Student Health Services and CAPS are available and open between semesters. For students who live further away and are home over break, providers all have access to secure messaging and coordination with Eastern's counselors and medical personnel.

SCSU Response: Student Health providers will provide continuity of care during holiday and vacation periods between semesters in the care plans that are developed with patients. This may include telehealth services. Emergency and after-hours care information are provided to students.

WCSU Response: WCSU Health Services office is open for appointments Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1 p.m.- 4 p.m. We do not close our office during semester breaks. For after-hours emergencies, campus police can be called to assist. If housing is needed for continuity of care during school breaks, holidays or vacation periods between semesters, the student needs to apply through the housing portal.

Question 6: An estimate of the costs associated with implementing such a plan and the availability of funds, through public and private sources, to cover such costs.

Overall System Response: The costs associated with the plan would be minimal. There is some potential for additional costs on certain campuses related to transportation and housing.

CCSU Response: The current public transportation system available to students does not require additional university funds. Students pay a transportation fee as part of their tuition expenses. That fee provides all students with the U-Pass which allows for free transportation on buses and trains in CT. If we were to implement a reimbursement process for utilizing a ridesharing or taxi service, it would depend on the distance traveled and/or time.

ECSU Response: Counseling Services and Student Health Services are free to students. Students may incur a small charge for some medications. If a student is unable to afford the medication, Health Services will coordinate with the Dean of Students office for financial assistance.

SCSU Response: Currently everything in this plan will be covered by operating expenses in Health Services. Additional funds needed to implement this plan may be necessary through the Dean of Students Financial Assistance program for transportation.

WCSU Response: Office visits to Health Services are of no charge to students. Prescription medications incur small charges that are applied to the student's banner account, alternatively,

prescriptions can be sent to local pharmacies and billed to students' insurance plan with applicable copays. The public transportation U-Pass is available to students and will not be an additional expense. There is no current plan to reimburse private sources of transportation. The weekly cost of housing during semester breaks is currently \$315 dollars and does not include meals, which would be additional. There are currently no designated funds to cover this cost

Question 7: The provision of information and materials about pregnancy being a qualifying event for health insurance coverage in the state.

Overall System Response: Health services help students navigate how to apply for insurance benefits if there is a qualifying event. If this information is not readily available, the campus is working on making it so.

CCSU Response: This information is provided to students when needed and is also readily accessible on the CCSU website at <https://www.ccsu.edu/health-services/insurance-information> and on the CT.gov website under Connecticut Insurance Department. Health Services offers guidance to students on all levels when it comes to navigating insurance related issues and helping them understand their options as related to their health and/or those impacting their healthcare, including but not limited to pregnancy and gender affirming care being qualifying life events.

ECSU Response: Currently we do not have this information but will be working to make it available.

SCSU Response: Confidentiality, sensitivity, and inclusivity are prioritized to create a safe and non-judgmental environment for all students seeking reproductive healthcare and needing referrals. Regular educational programs and outreach initiatives are also implemented to raise awareness and promote reproductive health and wellness. This includes providing materials and information regarding pregnancy being a qualifying event for health insurance coverage.

WCSU Response: Pregnancy is a qualifying event for health insurance coverage in the State of Connecticut. Health Services can aid students in navigating how to apply for insurance benefits if a qualifying event is determined.

Conclusion:

Our residential campuses are providing the reproductive health care needs of their residential students with on-campus care or through their partnerships with community providers. Certain services or materials that are not currently being provided on all campuses are being reviewed to ensure students will have access to them in the future.

CSCU remains dedicated to supporting our students' basic needs, which includes physical, mental, and behavioral health care. If our students' needs are met, they have a better chance of achieving their educational goals.

