

**Public Comment:** Access Health CT Board of Directors Meeting

**From:** Deb Polun, Chief Strategy Officer, Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHC/ACT)

November 20, 2024

Good morning, everyone –

I regret that I am not available to provide these comments during the meeting, as I am traveling, but I wanted to take the opportunity to share some of the feedback we are hearing from the Community Health Centers over the first few weeks of Open Enrollment. As you may know, CHC/ACT works with the state’s Community Health Centers, which provide medical, dental, and behavioral health care to 440,000 people across the state each year.

CHC/ACT and CT’s health centers have been privileged to partner with Access Health CT since its inception, with dozens of health center staff serving as Certified Application Counselors (CACs) each year. CACs help thousands of state residents enroll in Access Health CT, Covered CT, or HUSKY. Many CACs have numerous years of tenure, including several who have been providing services to Access Health CT clients since 2013. CACs are trained and certified by Access Health CT annually.

During Open Enrollment each year, CHC/ACT hosts regular check-ins with CACs and liaises with dedicated Access Health CT staff, who work to resolve issues. Some of these issues are individualized, while others are system-wide.

Today, I want to share some ground-level feedback with the Access Health CT Board of Directors regarding the first few weeks of Open Enrollment:

- **Call Center wait times are excessive this year, with many dropped calls.**  
CACs report that, over the past two weeks, wait times average approximately 40 minutes. Additionally, they report many dropped calls, including in the middle of an application, resulting in the CAC having to call back and get back in line. The dropped call issue was reported across the board, and also specifically for clients needing Portuguese or Haitian Creole translation.
- **Call Center representatives do not allow a CAC to speak on behalf of their client if this is the initial application.**  
This means that the CAC – *who has been trained and certified by Access Health CT* – sits in the background and is not allowed to speak on behalf of, or otherwise assist, the

customer. Even if the customer agrees to allow the CAC to assist, the CAC cannot, even through language or comprehension issues. The CAC is a trusted advisor to the customer but cannot advise. This leads to errors in the application (particularly if there are language barriers) and longer calls, impacting enrollment for the client, and wait-times for everyone else. This apparently is not a new policy, but it has been problematic over the years. Please consider changing this policy and allowing CACs to fully assist their clients.

- **Call Center representatives unnecessarily create a new account.**  
When a CAC starts to create an account but is unable to verify the identity of the customer, s/he calls the Call Center to assist with this piece. Sometimes, the Call Center representative will instead create a brand new account for the customer, resulting in there being two separate accounts. This leads to problems down the line.
- **Customer portal is volatile.**  
CACs report being kicked out of the customer portal in the middle of an application; other times, the portal is simply out of service.

Again, I want to express my gratitude to Access Health CT for our longstanding partnership. Together, CHC/ACT, Community Health Centers, and Access Health CT are helping hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents access health care.

I am confident that these issues can be resolved, and I am happy to provide additional information to assist towards that goal. Please reach out to me with any questions: [dpolun@chcact.org](mailto:dpolun@chcact.org) or 860.878.7760.