

# WELLNESS BULLETIN *for Norwalk Parents*

November 2021

*Dear Parents,*

**Are you concerned about your children's mental health & wellbeing? We're here to help!** We are The Norwalk Partnership (TNP), a coalition of caring community members and agencies who want to keep Norwalk youth & young adults substance free & mentally well. We have created this parent newsletter with our collaborators at Norwalk ACTS Social-Emotional Health (SEH) Committee and the City of Norwalk to support parents with information and resources. This issue focuses on **MENTAL HEALTH**, with data from our recent Norwalk surveys.

***If you find this useful,*** please share it! Subscribe to [TheNorwalkPartnership.org](http://TheNorwalkPartnership.org) for 1-2 monthly blog posts, and follow us on Facebook and Instagram for daily info! You can also invite us to present data or training to your PTO or other parent group. And we'd love to see you at our monthly coalition or committee meetings!

Wishing you & your families good mental health on behalf of the leadership teams of TNP and Norwalk ACTS SEH Committee,

**Margaret**, [mwatt@positivedirections.org](mailto:mwatt@positivedirections.org)     **Denique**, [dlewis@norwalkacts.org](mailto:dlewis@norwalkacts.org)

## Upcoming Events

- **Question-Persuade-Refer (QPR):** a free training for the general public ages 16+ to help prevent suicide. Several dates & times in November. RSVP at [thehubCT.org/events](http://thehubCT.org/events)
- **Center for Youth Leadership** - November 17th discussion by & for teens - email [amoreno@norwalkacts.org](mailto:amoreno@norwalkacts.org)
- **Great American Smoke Out** - November 18th - Get resources & support to quit smoking or vaping!
- **Youth Business Initiative** - Grand reopening Nov. 18, 5pm. <https://youthbusinessinitiative.wpcomstaging.com/>
- **How are Our Kids? Findings from the Recent Youth Survey:** online presentation for parents - Dec. 1st, 7pm - rsvp to [lmcgeorge@positivedirections.org](mailto:lmcgeorge@positivedirections.org)
- **¿Cómo están nuestros hijos? Resultados de la reciente encuesta de jóvenes:** presentación en línea para padres de Norwalk - 2 diciembre, 7pm - contáctese con [lmcgeorge@positivedirections.org](mailto:lmcgeorge@positivedirections.org)

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



# CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH IN NORWALK

by Margaret Watt, *Positive Directions*

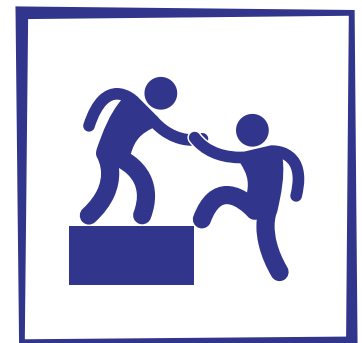
TNP surveyed Norwalk adults in January-March 2021 and surveyed 7th-12th graders in June 2021, through our federal Drug-Free Communities grant. Not surprisingly given the pandemic, many of us are struggling with our mental health:



- **It's not all bad news -- 41%** of Norwalk students said their relationships with their families were stronger due to COVID! Only **8%** said their family relationships were weaker.
- **83%** of Norwalk 7th-12th graders feel connected to their friends, but **61%** *do not* feel connected to other kids at school.
- About **1/3** of Norwalk adults reported anxiety or depression.
- About **1/3** of Norwalk middle schoolers and **1/2** of Norwalk high schoolers are reporting depression.
- **13%** of Norwalk middle and high school students told us they were contemplating suicide. Most concerning of all, **6%** said they had made a suicide attempt.
- *Groups experiencing the highest rates of depression:* Students identifying as LGBTQ, those experiencing financial strain, girls, multiracial, Black and Hispanic students, English Language Learners and students with IEPs.

## HOW TO HELP?

- **Prioritize self-care for everyone in the family:** Have meals together, play games, decrease screen time, spend time outdoors, practice a hobby, connect with friends, do things that make you laugh, be mindful, try relaxation apps, eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep!
- **Talk about mental health regularly with your family.** Open up about your own feelings & ask about theirs.
- **Learn about warning signs:** Take a Mental Health First Aid or QPR suicide prevention training class, free & open to anyone aged 16+.
- **Know where to get help!** Find local mental health & substance use resources at [thenorwalkpartnership.org/get-help](https://thenorwalkpartnership.org/get-help) or call Norwalk Community Services at (203) 854-7999.
- **Help your kids make friends** by joining a club or sport at school, attending an after-school program such as the [Carver Center](#), connecting with the [Youth Business Institute](#), taking a free art class at the [Norwalk Art Space](#), joining Scouts or another community- or faith-based youth group.
- **Make sure your kids have 1-3 trusted adults in their life who they can turn to.** The [Norwalk Mentor Program](#) provides role models who build relationships and provide support to kids.



### *Free Resources at School:*

1. **TeenTalk counselors** in the high schools
2. **School-Based Health Centers** in the middle & high schools
3. School counselors

# Tips for Monitoring Your Child's Mental Health

*by Laila McGeorge, TNP coordinator*

**Notice any changes in your child's behavior.** Children & teens may tell us how they're feeling in many ways, not always verbally. Sometimes physical symptoms like stomach aches indicate emotional issues like anxiety.

**Turn confrontation into conversation.** When things get argumentative, take a step back: Remind your child you care about them and want to understand them. Ask questions and really listen, rather than telling them what to do. Use humor!

**Teach (and model!) healthy coping skills.** Work with your kids to discover coping skills to deal with uncomfortable emotions. Breathing exercises, coloring, going for a walk outside, or calling a friend are just a few strategies that might help. What works for one child might not work for another, so try out different options, and practice together!

Take a look at [this article](#) from Newport Academy in Darien on how social media impacts your child's mental health

Learn to manage anxiety proactively in [this great handout](#) from Frank Castorina, LPC at Catholic Charities in Norwalk!

## Fostering Resiliency with your Child

*by Niana Nieves, LCSW, [Family & Children's Agency](#)*

1. **Think positive!** Modeling positive attitudes and positive emotions is very important. Children need to hear parents thinking out loud positively and being determined to persist until a goal is achieved. Using a "can do" problem-solving approach to problems teaches children a sense of power and promise.
2. **Express love and gratitude!** Emotions such as love and gratitude increase resiliency. Praise should always occur much more often than criticism. Children and adolescents who are cared for, loved, and supported learn to express positive emotions to others. Positive emotions buffer kids against depression and other negative reactions to adversity.
3. **Express yourself!** Resilient people appropriately express all emotions, even negative ones. Parents who help kids become more aware of emotions, label emotions appropriately, and help children deal with upsetting events are giving them useful life skills.
4. **Get fit!** Good physical health prepares the body and mind to be more resilient. Healthy eating habits, regular exercise and adequate sleep protect kids against the stress of tough situations. Regular exercise also decreases negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression.
5. **Foster competency!** Making sure that children and adolescents achieve academically is great protection against adversity. Children who achieve academic success and who develop individual talents, such as playing sports, drawing, making things, playing musical instruments or playing games are much more likely to feel competent and be able to deal with stress positively. Social competency is also important. Having friends and staying connected to friends and loved ones can increase resiliency. Social competency can even be created by helping others.



## TeenTalk: a FREE resource for high school students!

*By Ed Milton, LMSW and Corina Restrepo, MSW*

Hi! We're the TeenTalk counselors from Kids in Crisis, based at Norwalk High School and Brien McMahon as a free support to students and families! We identify and help students navigate difficult personal, family and school-related issues. We provide confidential individual, group, and family counseling, as well as preventive education on issues that support the health and well-being of young people.



In addition to providing immediate support, Kids in Crisis also has a Helpline available to students and families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 203-661-1911. The helpline can also connect youth in need to our emergency shelter beds. *Parents, make sure your kids know about us!* Here's how to reach us:

- **NHS or PTECH:** Ed Milton, Room 218E, 203-838-4481, ext. 13279, emilton@norwalkps.org
- **BMHS or CGS:** Corina Restrepo, Room 11319, 203-852-9488, ext. 11319, crestrepo@kidsincrisis.org

## TCC CORNER!

*by Cadence Pentheny*

### *3 Tips for Creating a Safe and Affirming Home for LGBTQ+ Youth*

**Answer questions your child might have about gender and sexuality with as much openness and honesty as you can. Young people are often looking for signs of acceptance from others, so avoiding these subjects can make a child feel like they are bad or wrong. Remember also that it's okay to say "I don't know, but we can find out."**

**Recognize that privacy/confidentiality might be needed outside of the home, for your child's comfort and even potentially their safety.**

**Avoid thinking or saying "It's just a phase". This can make anyone feel like they aren't being heard, but especially a young person who is already trying to match words and ways of expression to the ways they feel inside. Accept and affirm what they say when they say it. Embrace - don't dismiss - their evolving sense of self.**





# PREVENTION CORNER



## WARNING! IT ONLY TAKES ONE PILL!

Counterfeit pills are causing overdose deaths in people of all ages in Connecticut and around the country due to products being laced with fentanyl. **If you didn't get your medication from a retail pharmacy and if it's not prescribed for you, you can't be sure it's safe!**

Remember: If it's fake, it can be a devastating mistake.

Learn more at [youthinkyouknowCT.org](http://youthinkyouknowCT.org)

**Keep your kids & the planet safe!** Did you know you can drop off any unneeded, unwanted or expired prescription meds at the **Norwalk Police Department?** (Don't flush them!) And make sure to keep any prescription drugs that you are currently using locked up away from your kids!

## Talk, They Hear You



Parents, get this **wonderful free app** to learn info & skills to speak to your children about the **risks of alcohol and drug use.**

[www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/mobile-application](http://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/mobile-application)

## Awareness Resources

- **Domestic Violence Awareness:** Coffee shops in Norwalk are raising awareness, the library is offering programs, and help is available at [www.dvccct.org](http://www.dvccct.org)
- **ADHD Awareness:** Get info & resources at <https://chadd.org/nrc-toolkit/>
- **Bullying Prevention:** Check out the National Bullying Prevention Center at <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/nbpm/> and [StopBullying.gov](http://StopBullying.gov)

# PREVENTION CORNER

## **Welcoming TNP's interns!** *by Laila McGeorge, TNP coordinator*

We're excited to welcome NHS senior **Grace Galeano**, who will be working with us to start a teen prevention club at NHS/PTECH, and BMHS junior **Sof Ramos**, who will do the same at BMHS/CGS!

**Teens who are into social causes, promoting mental health and being substance free--join us!**  
**Clubs are starting in November at your high school!** Contact me for more info:  
[lmcgeorge@positivedirections.org](mailto:lmcgeorge@positivedirections.org)



**Courage to Speak Foundation**  
**has recently presented**  
**substance use prevention**  
**programs in Norwalk middle**  
**schools this fall. Parents, take**  
**their online Courageous**  
**Parenting course [here!](#)**



Join the national movement to **quit**  
**smoking or vaping** on **November 18th!**

Get resources at:  
[www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/great-american-smokeout.html](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/great-american-smokeout.html)

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## **Get Involved with TNP's Work!**

The Norwalk Partnership is a coalition of volunteers and agencies working together to prevent substance use in our youth & young adults. Interested? Join our coalition or committees, listed below! RSVP to Laila, [lmcgeorge@positivedirections.org](mailto:lmcgeorge@positivedirections.org):

- **TNP coalition** meets online on the last Wednesday of each month from 2-3:30pm.
- **TNP alcohol committee** meets 2nd Wednesdays of the month from 3-4pm.
- **TNP marijuana/vaping committee** meets 1st Thursdays of the month from 4-5pm.
- We are also planning a **Freshman Forum** for 9th graders & parents and would love your help!

Want to focus on mental wellness?

- Norwalk ACTS **Social-Emotional Health committee**. RSVP to [dlewis@norwalkacts.org](mailto:dlewis@norwalkacts.org)



Save these numbers in your  
and your family's phones!

# MENTAL HEALTH OR SUICIDE CRISIS?

**FREE HOTLINES ARE  
AVAILABLE 24/7!**

## National:

- Crisis Text Line: Text 741741
- National Suicide Lifeline: Call 800-273-8255 (Starting July 2022, just dial 988)
- Disaster Distress Helpline: 800-985-5990
- First Responders: 911 (ask for a CIT officer)

## LGBTQ:

- The Trevor Project: Text 678678
- Trans Lifeline: Call 877-565-8860

## CT Resources:

- Kids in Crisis (ages 0-18): 203-661-1911
- CT's Action Line (mobile crisis): 2-1-1, option 1
- JoinRiseBe Young Adult Warmline: Talk to a young adult peer specialist 12pm-9pm daily: 800-6-HOPENOW

# Peer Support for Teens

## Feeling Down? Struggling to Cope? We've Got Your Back.

TurningPointCT.org: Online resources & supports,  
created by young people in CT for their peers



TurningPointCT.org was developed by young people in Connecticut who are in recovery from mental health and substance use issues.



Guiding the search  
for mental wellness

**TurningPointCT.org**  
CT's online community on mental health & substance use, developed by young people in recovery for their peers

### THE TURNINGPOINTCT PODCAST: BY & FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CT

Teens and young adults from CT talking about things that really matter.

Relationships, mental health, drugs & drinking, self-care, life, stress, and more!

**NEW EPISODES EVERY OTHER FRIDAY!**

Or find us @TurningPointCT on Spotify, Google Podcasts & Apple Podcasts

[TURNINGPOINTCT.ORG/PODCASTS](https://turningpointct.org/podcasts)

Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Twitch, TikTok

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## FREE PEER SUPPORT WITH ALLY! For young people in their teens & 20s

Need to talk to someone who gets what you're going through?  
Want help figuring out next steps?

Connect with Ally Kernan, Peer Support Specialist at TurningPointCT!  
In-person or virtual, Tuesday & Thursday mornings... or by request.  
Call or text: 203-858-1819




Provided by TurningPointCT.org,  
the mental wellness community  
by & for young people in CT





# Norwalk Health Department News

*By Aniella Fignon, Public Health Program Associate*



**Norwalk Health Department**  
**FLU CLINICS**

Thursday, November 4th  
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.



Norwalk Health Department  
137 East Avenue

Thursday, November 18th  
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Norwalk Health Department  
137 East Avenue, Norwalk CT 06851

High-dose and standard flu shots are available. Please bring all insurance cards with you to your appointment. No cost to you with most insurances.

By appointment only. To schedule an appointment for a flu shot visit [www.norwalkct.org/flu](http://www.norwalkct.org/flu) or call 203- 854-7985.



The City of Norwalk has partnered with Community Health Center, Inc. to provide **free COVID-19 vaccine clinics** at Veteran's Park:

- Pfizer is available for anyone aged 12+. Those 12-17 must have parent/guardian consent.
- Moderna and Johnson & Johnson are available for ages 18+.
- No appointment needed.
- Click [here](#) for information on dates and times.

## NORWALK COVID VACCINE CLINICS NOVEMBER 8 - NOVEMBER 14

Monday November 8	Tuesday November 9	Wednesday November 10	Friday November 12	Saturday November 13
8:30 am - 4 pm <b>Vet's Park*</b> 42 Seaview Ave Pfizer (Ages 5+), Moderna, J&J	8:30 am - 4 pm <b>Vet's Park*</b> 42 Seaview Ave Pfizer (Ages 5+), Moderna, J&J	9 am - 3 pm <b>Alliance for Community Empowerment</b> 108 Main St Pfizer (Ages 12+), J&J	11 am - 4 pm <b>Norwalk Public Library (South Norwalk)</b> 10 Washington St Pfizer (Ages 12+), J&J	8:30 am - 4 pm <b>Vet's Park*</b> 42 Seaview Ave Pfizer (Ages 5+), Moderna, J&J
9 am - 4 pm <b>Open Doors</b> 55 Chestnut St Pfizer (Ages 12+), J&J	1 - 5 pm <b>Open Doors</b> 55 Chestnut St Pfizer (Ages 12+), J&J	10 am - 1 pm <b>Open Doors</b> 55 Chestnut St Pfizer (Ages 12+), J&J		
11 am - 4 pm <b>Norwalk Public Library (Main Branch)</b> 1 Belden Ave Pfizer (Ages 12+), J&J	1 - 6 pm <b>Norwalk Public Library (South Norwalk)</b> 10 Washington St Pfizer (Ages 12+), J&J			

*Please note: This list includes clinics held by the Norwalk Health Department's partners, including CHC Inc. and Griffin/DPH. The Health Department makes every effort to keep this list up to date, but information/schedules may change due to weather or other circumstances. Questions? Please call 203-854-7985. Thank you!*



\*Grocery store gift vouchers offered at these locations for any adults receiving a first or second dose of the vaccine.



Scan the QR  
code to sign up!



## Become a Mentor!



## Norwalk Mentor Program

**Just one hour a  
week can change  
a student's life.**

For more information, contact  
**Jasmine Prezzie** at 203-354-1956  
or [jprezzie@hscct.org](mailto:jprezzie@hscct.org)



## PEER CONNECTION

Mondays 6:30pm – 8:00pm  
Norwalk City Hall 203-854-7785

**Peer Connection is more than just food, friends, and fun.  
The New Peer Connection Program is an interactive life  
skills program open and free to 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade  
students in the City of Norwalk. This unique program  
offers the following:**

*Group presentations on topics of interest to teens:*

*Life Skills*

*Self – Awareness*

*Peer Relationships*

*Substance Abuse*

*Wellness*

*Exciting Team Building Activities*

*Our Past Guest Speakers have included:*

*Robotics, Animal Embassy, Internet Safety Concepts, Artists, Mad  
Science, just to name a few.*

*As a member you will have the opportunity to assist in the program  
activities, as well as planning of all guest presentations.*



# Help Is Here

## Monthly payments for families with kids

Raising kids can be expensive, and the Child Tax Credit is here to help. President Biden's American Rescue Plan increased the amount of the 2021 Child Tax Credit to support families with children.

The full benefit of the Child Tax Credit is now \$300 per month per child under age 6 and \$250 for each child age 6 to 17.

**Did you file taxes in the last 2 years? Then you don't have to do anything to get the money you're already owed!**

If you filed your 2020 taxes this year or filed your 2019 taxes last year, or used the IRS "Non-Filer Portal" to get a stimulus check last year, you don't need to do anything. The IRS will automatically send you a monthly payment by direct deposit or check starting on July 15, 2021.

**The Child Tax Credit is \$3,000 to \$3,600 per child with advanced monthly payments.**

In order to get money to families quickly, the IRS will pay half of the credit as monthly payments now and the other half when you file your taxes next year. In total, you'll receive a total of \$3,600 for each child under 6 and \$3,000 for each child between 6 and 17.

**Didn't file taxes in the last 2 years? There's 1 easy step to start getting your Child Tax Credit payments.**

Just fill out a simple form to begin receiving your monthly Child Tax Credit payments. You can access it by going to [childtaxcredit.gov](https://childtaxcredit.gov)

**All you'll need to apply are:**

- A reliable mailing address
- E-mail address
- Your children's Social Security Numbers
- Your Social Security Number (or ITIN)
- Your bank account information (if you want to receive your payment by direct deposit)

**Eligibility:** Most families, even those with little to no income, can receive the full amount. If you are a single parent making less than \$112,500 or a married couple making less than \$150,000—and have children under age 18 who will live with you for more than half of 2021—you are likely eligible for the full benefit. These benefits do not affect your eligibility for other federal benefits like SNAP.

Learn more and check out resources to help you fill out your form at **[ChildTaxCredit.gov](https://ChildTaxCredit.gov)**

## SUPPORTS FOR NORWALKERS

*Struggling with isolation, stress, depression, or substance use? Help is here.*

### 24/7 HOTLINES

- **CT's Mobile Psychiatric Crisis:** Dial 2-1-1, select option 1
- **CT's Substance Use Access Line:** 800-563-4086
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text Hello to 741741. National
- **Trevor Project** (LGBTQ): Text 678678 or call 866-488-7386. National

### CITY SERVICES

- **Community Services:** Info, referrals, family navigators. 203-854-7255
- **Youth Services Bureau:** Care coordination, referrals, Juvenile Review Board, life skills. 203-854-7785

### FREE IN-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- **Teen Talk:** Free crisis counseling provided by Kids in Crisis. BMHS: 203-852-9488, x11319, Room 11319. NHS: 203-838-4481, x13279, Room 218E. Or call 24/7 helpline: 203-661-1911
- **School-Based Health Centers:** Behavioral health, telehealth, medical, physicals. BMHS: Room 1209. NHS: Room C301. Also NHMS, Ponus & WRMS.

### FREE PEER SUPPORT

- **Alcoholics Anonymous:** Meetings in English & Spanish. [ct-aa.org](http://ct-aa.org)
- **Courage to Speak Foundation:** Parent support group, education. 877-431-3295
- **NAMI:** Support groups for young adults & families, training programs by & for families with a loved one with mental illness. [namisouthwestct.org](http://namisouthwestct.org)
- **Alanon/Alateen:** Support for people affected by someone's substance use. *Adults:* Call Karen at 203-962-5427. *Teens:* Call Peter at 203-856-1614
- **RIPPLE:** Late-night online support groups & more. [RockingRecovery.org](http://RockingRecovery.org)
- **SMART Recovery:** Support & skills building to quit bad habits & make positive changes in your life. Local groups: [turningpointct.org/smart](http://turningpointct.org/smart)
- **TurningPointCT:** Online drop-in social activities, info & peer support by & for teens and young adults in CT. [TurningPointCT.org](http://TurningPointCT.org)

More info at [www.thenorwalkpartnership.org/get-help](http://www.thenorwalkpartnership.org/get-help)



# SUPPORTS FOR NORWALKERS

*Struggling with isolation, stress, depression, or substance use? Help is here.*

## NONPROFIT TREATMENT AGENCIES

- **Catholic Charities:** Mental health counseling, all ages. English & Spanish. 203-750-9711
- **Child & Family Guidance, ACRA program:** Substance use treatment for teens ages 12-19. English & Spanish. 203-810-4404
- **Child Guidance of Mid Fairfield County:** Mental health services ages 5-21, including home based. English & Spanish. 203-299-1315
- **Community Health Center (Day Street):** Mental health & substance use, all ages. Must be medical client of CHC. Multiple languages. 203-854-9292
- **CT Counseling Centers:** Behavioral health for adults, including IOP and opioid treatment. English & Spanish. 203-838-6508
- **CT Renaissance:** Behavioral health for ages 13 through adult, including gaming/gambling. 203-866-2541
- **Family & Children's Agency:** Psychiatric services for children & teens, including IICAPS; mental health & substance use for adults. 203-855-8765
- **High Focus Centers:** Intensive mental health & co-occurring for ages 10-18, including IOP and PHP. 877-670-5120
- **Keystone House:** Residential rehabilitation program for people with a psychiatric disorder. 203-855-7920
- **Liberation Programs:** Drug & alcohol counseling middle school through adult. 855-542-7764
- **MFAP Drug User Outreach:** Outreach, Narcan, syringe exchange. 203-855-9535 x107
- **Norwalk Community Health Center:** Mental health & substance use counseling, all ages. Must be medical client of NCHC. English, Spanish, Haitian Creole. 203-899-1770 x1203
- **Norwalk Hospital:** Behavioral health treatment for adults, including IOP, PHP and inpatient. 203-852-2988
- **Positive Directions:** Mental health & substance use treatment, prevention, recovery support. English & Haitian Creole. 203-227-7644
- **St. Vincent's:** Mental health & substance treatment, all ages, including IOP in Norwalk and inpatient / detox in Westport. 203-221-8899
- **Services in Nearby Towns:** [TheHubCT.org/treatment](https://TheHubCT.org/treatment)