

TNP Coalition Meeting Minutes of Virtual Meeting October 25, 2023

Attendees: Victoria O'Neill, The Hub; Ryan Harold, NPS; Shaaron Sinvilcin, Norwalk ACTS; Shari Van Ness, Norwalk Health Department; Ryan Harold, Norwalk Police Dept; Erma Benedetto, MFAP; Anamilena Moreno, Norwalk ACTS; Jake Tejada, Anthony Certo, Dyan Sommerville, Norwalk Strong clubs; Tory Sullivan, NPS; Robert Stowers, Recreation & Parks; Julienne Foy, Odyssey Family Executive Center; Lisa Gregory, CCT Norwalk Hospital; Jenna Albano, NPS; Cadence Pentheny, Triangle Community Center; Rob Pennington, NPS; Diamond Sead, Human Services Council; Mireiya Mayorga, Norwalk Community Health Center; Vicki Oatis, Norwalk Public Library; Diana Revolus, Councilwoman; Marissa Mangone, Mid-Fairfield Community Care Center; Nina Chanana, project evaluator; Margaret Watt, Positive Directions

Introduction: Attendees were asked to use the chat feature to introduce themselves. New members introduced themselves in person.

Summary:

1. Update on cannabis forum & new laws -
 - a. Margaret Watt - Overview on tax dollars going to prevention from cannabis retail sales. To date there has been 100 million in retail sales to date. DMHAS is distributing \$14,000 to Region 1 for prevention from past sales. Where is all the money going? This does not seem like enough to get anything done across the 14 towns in Region 1.
 - b. Ryan – learned a lot; not aware of the vendors coming to Norwalk. Surprised to hear that gas stations and unlicensed stores are selling. Staff and fellow coworkers felt very information.
 - c. Margaret – marijuana subcommittee has been talking a lot of signage and posters. Retailers who were at the forum agreed to use our materials when they open. Also talked to Fine Fettle about the illegal billboard that has been in Norwalk for a while. He is going to go to head company and see if he can have it removed (Lamar advertising)
 - d. Shaaron – great forum. Can you explain about the zoning that allows use in public? How were areas determined? Art Space versus Art Park? Is this away from where kids would be (ie. Near Stepping Stones) There was discussion on where exactly the space was designated and TNP needs further clarification on this. [Robert Stowers confirmed the space is the Art Park on Wall street.]
 - e. Margaret shared slides on updates to newest laws around cannabis sales and will send out to TNP members. Some modifications include definition of Hemp (less than .03%), edible packaging, warning labels, billboards (timing)
 - f. Anthony – like the new laws and how specific they were
2. Report & discussion from Norwalk Strong clubs - Teens
 - a. Jake+ at BMHS – table at lunch and asked – name one thing you could change about the school in terms of MH? Got 100 responses – less HW or more time to do it; a climate day; getting to know our counselor; fix the bathrooms; music in classroom (calm environments)
 - b. Dyan at NHS – table at lunch and asked same as above – listening to music in class (known stress reliever); more pep rallies (as a way to connect); fix the bathrooms; creating classes for mental wellness (meditation, ways to combat addiction); take a break during the periods; dog therapy;

taking our problems seriously (bring a problem to teachers – to admin and seems to stop there so how do we get relationship with admin); no HW or less HW; wellness day (bring back, used to have these); more Teen Talk counselors and a Teen Talk group.

- c. Tomorrow meeting with Miss Albano at school and coming up with ideas to work with them on MH and wellness
 - d. Rob Pennington – thank you for sharing; the idea of a mental health day is promising; appreciate your involvement and suggestions.
3. Programming discussion (Screenagers / health fair) - Margaret & Jenna Albano
- a. Jenna – agrees that there needs to be a MH/wellness day. Even teachers and staff need this support. Not aware of what is happening at BMHS but
 - b. TNP does not have approval to run a freshman forum as we did last year. Instead we will be screening Screenagers this semester and hoping 2nd semester we can show My Ascension (suicide prevention film); both times we can bring community resources to the event to share with parents and youth who attend.
4. Report & discussion from NPS Security/operations - Ryan Harold
- a. Love the collaborative nature of this group and everyone who is here at the table!
 - b. Ryan shared slides with some data – we are seeing a rise in substance use at schools (2021-24). It is here and an issue – most often use is in bathrooms, lower found in classroom/hallway, also on buses. What we do at elementary school will help in the long run! About ¾ of use is at HS level; some usage at middle school level. There are some MS youth selling drugs but most at HS level.
 - c. Products include THC & nicotine vape cartridges, cannabis flower, liquor, all types of cannabis edibles – homemade and retail
 - d. Prevention strategies – staff at bathrooms, sensors, most use goes undetected, multiple youth in bathrooms at one time
 - e. LineWize Alerts – used to ID activities – where and when
 - f. NHS and BMHS - mentioned favoritism with certain security guards, memorizing guards schedules, use in stairwells and locker rooms (NHS)
 - g. Dyan - I believe the DARE program that the Police Dept. provides was very helpful for me and other students who participated. I agree with Mr. Harold when he said teaching young kids about these things are very important. Also, I know that students have the option of Anonymous alerts for the things we are talking about but I do think its a bit outdated. its not talked about in school either. The site also asks for your name and email which might deter students.
 - h. Margaret - We're looking at having Norwalk Strong students do presentations in middle schools (talking to Ponus about it Friday), as part of a larger prevention effort in MS. Also will show Screenagers and have police and prevention speakers for parents there. We would like to do a vape awareness & collection initiative during November, ending with a ditch the vape / turn in your vape collection event. Will need to discuss with solid waste on how we would dispose of vapes. Diana - Can we include parents in this too? Teens who want their parents to stop as well.
 - i. Cadence – gender neutral bathrooms are always the first to get closed when there is an issue.
 - j. Behavior intervention guides – shows codes used which is mandated by the state. Also includes suggested response by the school and most of discretionary by the schools. They work in Power School to track disciplinary actions and other outcomes.

- k. Supports – counseling, mentoring, JRB, Care Coordination. Try to find the best fit for youth and their families.
- l. What are the substances you are finding - 99% is THC and vaping; very low % of opiates.
- m. Last year 39 expulsions and 36 were state mandated, in attempts to make it more equitable.

5. Announcements

- a. We will be hosting the following program tomorrow evening at the Main Library: The Power of ME Craft for Kids: Learning to Make Safe Choices: Thursday, 10/26, 6 pm. Kids in grades 2-5 and their caregivers can join us to make a craft showcasing their powers and what makes them unique. The Norwalk Partnership will be available to answer parent questions and provide resources.