

Marijuana/Vaping Committee

9/6/23

Present: AnaVivian Estrella (City of Norwalk), Jahliah Green and Kelley Tomlinson (Health Dept), Diamond Sead (School-Based Health Centers & parent), Diana Revolus (Ase Kreationz, Common Council), Ginger Katz (Courage to Speak), Dyan Sommerville (Norwalk Strong teen club), Daniel Cicero (Nuvance Health outpatient), Jeff Santo (RIPPLE), Nicole Hampton (High Focus Centers & parent), Dayna Macari and Margaret Watt (Positive Directions & parents)

1. Committee Member Updates: who we are, what we're seeing/concerned about, resources needed (or to be shared)

- a. Dyan - NHS had vaping alarm and had to evacuate 1st week of school
- b. Dan - seeing a lot of MJ and vaping in the YA MH population at Nuvance outpatient. Nuvance outpatient serves adults 18yo+.
 - i. Mostly vaping MJ, maybe 60% MJ / 40% nicotine, or combo
 - ii. A lot of their behavioral health clients come in already using cannabis, and they feel it helps them with their anxiety. Example of elderly client who can't afford medical mj card but it's the only thing that helps him right now. No one has discontinued because they're aware of downsides.
 - iii. As the provider Dan facilitates a conversation about where they are getting it, safety considerations.
 1. Diana pointed out that sometimes when people are getting cannabis from the "streets" - it could be from a trusted friend. Also talked about pros and cons of different products for adults – e.g., lorazepam vs medical MJ - different side effects & safety considerations.
 - iv. Dan feels Nuvance can use literature in the waiting room - talking points, information, pros and cons, THC vs CBD, responsible adult use, medicine interactions, driving after using, etc. -
 - v. **ACTION: Compile / share resource material for providers - Margaret will share resources to committee to review, please send other recommended materials**
- c. AnaVivian - is working on compiling information on what other towns are doing related to their opioid funding - looking at the gaps for youth/adults/etc
- d. Kelley & Jahliah - looking at how to promote awareness around the health impacts on youth and pregnant women - get the talking points as far and wide as possible - parent newsletter, info to parents - also using You Think You Know CT messaging from the state
- e. Diamond - daughter started at Roton and they gave info about cannabis - will report back after Open House next week -
 - i. Resources needed for MS SBHCs would have to be creative due to very limited space

- ii. Could do a group at SBHCs, discussed with WRMS - would be a general behavioral health or enrichment group, would change every 10 weeks or so - could address vaping/MJ cessation but not sole purpose of group
 - iii. BMHS might want an after-school group
 - f. Ginger - son Ian was addicted to marijuana as a teen back when the amount of THC was 3%-6% so very concerned about today's teens (due to higher potency).
 - i. Marinol is a cannabis drug approved by the FDA which can make people feel better without getting high
 - ii. Shared article:
 - <https://eagleforum.org/publications/efr/aug23/wrong-way-on-the-high-way.html>
 - g. Nicole:
 - i. Seeing MJ at the beach. The "young lungs at play" signs apparently don't help the cops with enforcement because they can't point to them and say "it's the law, you can't vape or smoke," since it doesn't use those words
 - ii. At NHS Zoe says they haven't talked about vaping yet - she & her friends think it's not that dangerous
 - iii. ACTION: Nicole will share vaping training for clinicians (by Vicky Adams, DMHAS) that High Focus Centers found excellent
 - iv. Should we advocate for a Marijuana Commission Amendment this year at our legislative forum? Diana says that was brought up before
 - h. Jeff - Concerned about how available marijuana is to underage people, since folks are growing in portable greenhouses with mylar walls and misting systems (only \$100 for a 4x4 grow tent!). Knows of a 19yo HS student with grow tent in his closet. Students are trading different strains through Discord servers
 - i. Margaret: As of July 1st, 2023, CT's cannabis law says adults can grow up to 3 mature and 3 immature plants at home, max of 12 plants per household. This also applies to 18-21 year olds who have a medical MJ card.
 - ii. Diana R - it's now a career path - knows a lot of growers
 - i. Margaret - Currently up in Canada due to family emergency; couldn't prepare materials for review today as a result. Our teens will be developing resources this year; we'll be providing materials to retail stores; want to cost share on a billboard or other signage around town.
2. Restaurant discussion:
- a. People were using cannabis in a Norwalk restaurant recently and people eating there were arguing about it. Someone suggested the manager call the Health Dept.
 - i. Margaret: Instead of leaving it to restaurants/bars to figure out these issues on their own, we can proactively send them all a letter clarifying the laws, resource materials. Did this in Westport last year with all smoke shops so they can provide training to their staff and also just post and point to the law if people are questioning it.

- ii. Jeff posted: "All restaurants and bars must be smoke free regardless of the number of employees. Establishments with a cafe or tavern permit or the bar area of a bowling alley and in any area of a dog race track or a facility equipped with screens for the simulcasting of off-track betting race programs or jai alai games must be smoke-free by April 1, 2004"
- iii. "Restaurants and bars must post signs stating smoking is prohibited by state law. This sign must be prominently posted and maintained and any such removal of this sign is punishable by law up to \$99. Smoking is prohibited in outside seating of a restaurant that has a ceiling or other type of covering. Outside seating that does not have a ceiling or other type of covering can have up to 25% of the seating designated as smoking. Signs must be posted designating smoking area."

b. ACTIONS:

- i. First committee step will be key Informant data gathering (suggested by Diamond): **All committee members** will each reach out to 1 local bar or restaurant manager (either someone we know or just talk to the manager when you're at a local establishment) to gather information from them about what they're seeing / dealing with in terms of vaping/substance use and what help or resources they might need.
 - 1. **Margaret** - will talk to Coals
 - 2. **Ginger** - restaurant where incident took place
 - 3. **Diana** - will make phone call, can't go physically rn
 - 4. **Diamond** -
 - 5. **Jahliah** -
 - 6. **Jeff** -
 - 7. **Nicole** -
 - 8. **Dan** -
 - 9. **Dayna** -
 - 10. **Ana** -
- ii. After we compile their information, we will put together a letter to all restaurants to support them by answering their questions and sharing resources. (Maybe a FAQ and a poster?)
- iii. Suggest to the state's BeInTheKnow project that they do a campaign aimed at bars/restaurants - **Margaret** will follow up

3. Other:

- a. Dan pointed out that 25 Van Zant has a sign on the right side advertising for a cannabis retailer. Here is the related article: ["100-year-old Norwalk hat factory seeking cannabis tenants"](#)

4. NEXT STEPS:

- a. Margaret will send resources for committee member review
- b. Everyone please let the group know which restaurant or bar manager you will be talking to so we don't duplicate

- c. Everyone please talk to the restaurant/bar by end of Sept and share info back so we can compile it for next steps