### Dear Norwalkers,

We hope that the start of the school year has been a smooth transition for your family! **To ensure the supports** everyone needs, this issue of the "Wellness Bulletin for Norwalk Families" focuses on <u>important local resources</u> everyone should know about.

### INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER:

- STUDENT RECOMMENDED RESOURCES: hotlines and mental health supports in our high schools
- PREVENTION CORNER: free training options, upcoming 2022 Norwalk Youth Survey
- CITY PAGES: Community Resource Hub, new suicide prevention grant
- NORWALK ACTS: extracurriculars, early childhood app, teen opportunity
- RESOURCE OF THE MONTH: New nonprofit, At The Corner
- RESOURCES FOR TEENS: free support groups for high school and middle school students
- TCC CORNER: support LGBTQ+ youth.



As always, please share this info! You can find past issues at <u>thenorwalkpartnership.org/parents</u>. To receive this bulletin by email, please subscribe to <u>TheNorwalkPartnership.org!</u>

Thank you and be well! Margaret, mwatt@positivedirections.org Denique, dlewis@norwalkacts.org

#### About this newsletter:

The Wellness Bulletin for Norwalk Families focuses on mental health and substance misuse topics. It is put together by
The Norwalk Partnership and Norwalk ACTS, which are community collaboratives involving a wide variety of residents
and organizations. We partner to promote mental health and prevent substance misuse, together with the City and NPS.









# School Resources



# **Kick off the School Year Right**

by Dyan Sommerville, TNP Intern & Norwalk High School junior

Dyan is TNP's Prevention Intern at NHS this year, coordinating the Norwalk Strong prevention club for NHS and PTECH. Her column in our newsletter this year provides a teen's voice directly to other teens! In her first column, she acknowledges the stress of high school and shares the best (free!) in-school resources and 24/7hotlines. Parents, make sure your kids know about these! Get more resources at thenorwalkpartnership.org/get-help

August 31, 2022, our long-awaited normal school year was finally here. It's the time to come back to school to learn new things, meet old friends and new, and go through new experiences. I know for me and many other students here in Norwalk we looked at our schedules and reality set in. I don't lie to you when I say I'm in 11th grade and still feel like I'm in 8th. Middle school went by quicker than we thought and we are now moving on into 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th grade.

It may be overwhelming but before you start to overthink, take a deep breath and relax. There are teachers, staff, and friends who you can confide in. Here in Norwalk, we have a plethora of programs, activities, and services that can help you along your high school journey. Most importantly you should know about the **TeenTalk counselors** at each high school building in Norwalk, the **Kids in Crisis 24-hour Helpline** (right here in Fairfield County), and the national **Crisis Text Line** (just **text 741741**).

It's important to handle your anxiety before it handles you. Homework may be important, but if your mind is a mess, then so are your relationships, work, and thought process. So when you are at the point where you realize you can't recognize anything on your homework and you've lost all motivation to try to understand, here are some things you can do:

- 1. Do a breathing technique to calm yourself down: smell the roses and blow out the candles!
- 2. Take a break from screens and get some fresh air
- 3. Try to avoid unhealthy coping skills like nicotine and go for a walk instead
- 4. Avoid the stressful situations you know you can control
- 5. Don't bottle up your negative feelings! If you are feeling stressed out, anxious, or depressed, open up about it. And definitely make use of the free counseling resources at school.

I wish us all luck throughout this 2022-2023 school year! Remember to stay healthy and to work hard and play hard!



## Visit the TeenTalk crisis counselor <u>at school!</u> It's free & confidential.

Visita al consejero TeenTalk <u>en la escuela</u>. Es gratuito y confidencial.

- BMHS & CGS: Ms. Restrepo, Room 11319 203-852-9488, ext. 11319 crestrepo@kidsincrisis.org
- NHS & PTECH: Mr. Milton, Room 218E 203-838-4481, ext. 13279 emilton@norwalkps.org
- 24-Hour Helpline/Línea de Crisis 24 horas al día: 203-661-1911.

\*TeenTalk can arrange a safe place for you to stay if you need it.\*

\*Si necesitas un alojamiento seguro, TeenTalk te puede ayudar.\*



Free services at the Dr. Robert E. Appleby

- School-Based Health Centers:
- Physicals
- Medical visits

Servicios gratuitos en los centros de salud basados en la escuela:

- Salud mental y del comportamiento
- Exámenes físicos

At BMHS & CGS: Room 1209
At NHS & PTECH: Room C301
Also at Nathan Hale, Ponus & West Rocks!

- Free therapy at both high school buildings
- Free group trauma therapy in the schools
- Latinx Integrated Care Program (LINC)
- Call Megan Iosifidis at (203) 299-1315 ext. 6175 or email miosifidis@mfcgc.org



- Servicios terapeuticos gratuitos en ambos liceos
- Terapia para trauma gratuita en las escuelas
- Programa especializado "LINC" para estudiantes
- latinos llegados desde 2019
   Llama a Megan losifidis en el (203) 299-1315 ext.
- Llama a Megan Iosifidis en el (203) 299-1315 ex
   6175 o por correo: miosifidis@mfcgc.org



988 is a free national suicide & crisis hotline. Save the number in your phone!

988 es una línea de crisis y prevencion del suicidio gratuita.
Introdúcela en tu teléfono.



CTL is a national text hotline for any type of crisis. Save the number in your phone!

# PREVENTION

The Norwalk Partnership (TNP) is Norwalk's community coalition to prevent underage substance use. We bring together stakeholders from 12+ sectors, including interested parents and teens, to develop plans and strategies to support our youth. Our work includes:

- Norwalk Youth Survey (coming up again in October!)
- NorWALK for Mental Health
- Freshman Forums (coming up this fall!)
- Training health teachers
- Training teens to be peer educators
- Legislative forum on marijuana
- Liquor Stickers at your local package store
- "Norwalk Strong" teen clubs at the high schools
- Weekly teen support groups, planning Teen Nights Out
- Postcards, awareness videos at DMV, messages on buses and in mall
- Family days and backpack drives
- Website full of resources and local data

Looking to take a training or to get a speaker for your PTO or SGC? Through our staff and coalition organizations, we can directly provide or organize free trainings on marijuana, vaping, mental health, suicide prevention, parenting, and more. List of ideas at thenorwalkpartnership.org/training-resources

We always welcome new members to join our coalition, alcohol or marijuana committees, or help plan events!

Please visit thenorwalkpartnership.org and/or contact Margaret Watt at mwatt@positivedirections.org.

> We're recruiting for a young adult to serve as a PreventionCorps member! Contact preventioncorps@ryasap.org

### Join The Norwalk Partnership (TNP)!

- 1st meeting of school year: Wednesday, Sept. 28, 12-1:30pm at City Hall (Community Room) - open to all
- Join alcohol or marijuana committees
- Help plan educational and community events
- Subscribe to TheNorwalkPartnership.org for 3-4 emails a month including this newsletter
- Get trained as a JOHNNY'S AMBASSADORS marijuana presenter
- Attend a Courageous Parenting 101, Question-Persuade-Refer, or other upcoming training, listed at thenorwalkpartnership.org/events
- Contact Margaret Watt at mwatt@positivedirections.org



**Prevention Corps Class of 2023** 

The Norwalk Partnership &



PreventionCorpsCT.org





As a Prevention Corps

# Prevention

# 2022 Norwalk Youth Survey: What It Is & Why It Matters

In early September, the Norwalk Board of Education authorized the 2022 Norwalk Youth Survey, which will be given to 7th through 12th graders during the last week of October.

**Why Survey Our Youth?** This will be the third time Norwalk has surveyed our middle and high school students. The survey allows students to share their beliefs and experiences on matters beyond academics that impact their learning and their lives. The information is used to guide community, municipal, and school initiatives to support our youth and address issues they experience. A few ways the survey findings have been used include:

- The 2018 survey resulted in a five-year federal grant to support The Norwalk Partnership in preventing underage substance misuse and promoting mental wellness.
- The 2021 survey, conducted during COVID, was used to identify the mental health crisis in our students as well as to target the highest-risk populations. As a result, NPS brought in new mental health resources and trainings in our schools, and The Norwalk Partnership, Norwalk ACTS and community nonprofits developed plans, sought funding, and launched support groups for the highest-risk students.

What Data Will Be Collected? The survey is intended to gather information on both risk factors and protective factors facing our youth today. Specifically, it will gather information on students' perceptions and experiences around substance use, mental health and suicide, online gaming, social media, bullying, toxic stress, sexual behaviors (high school only), extracurriculars, and connectedness to others. It will ask for demographic information (grade, race/ethnicity, gender and sexual identity, English Language Learner, IEP) in order to identify groups that may be at higher risk. You are welcome to look at the survey questionnaire at your school's administrative offices.

**Is the Survey Confidential?** Please be assured that the survey is fully confidential and all findings will be anonymous. No personally identifying information will be collected. There is no way to identify an individual student.

**Who Will be Surveyed?** The survey will be administered to all 7th through 12th graders on the selected date. Schools are sending 2 letters home to parents advising them about the survey. Parents may inform their school if they do not want their child to take the survey. Students can also choose not to participate on the date of the survey. Those who do not take the survey will be asked to work independently and quietly during the survey administration.

When and How Will the Survey Be Given? Each school will identify a period when the survey will be administered in their building. At that time, classes will watch a short video made by NPS students to explain the survey's purpose, types of data collected, and confidentiality. Students will then click a link to complete the survey online in English or Spanish. The survey takes the average student 15-17 minutes to complete.

**When Will Survey Findings Be Available?** The findings will be presented to the BOE and school administration in January, followed by a variety of presentations for parents and community members. Results will be posted at www.thenorwalkpartnership.org/presentations.

**Who Funds the Survey?** This survey is funded by Positive Directions–The Center for Prevention and Counseling, through a Drug-Free Communities grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Norwalk Partnerships is a coalition of community members and organizations dedicated to preventing substance misuse and promoting mental wellness in Norwalk youth and young adults. For more information, please contact Margaret Watt, Prevention Director, at mwatt@positivedirections.org

# CITY RESOURCES

# City of Norwalk's Community Resource Hub is Available to Help

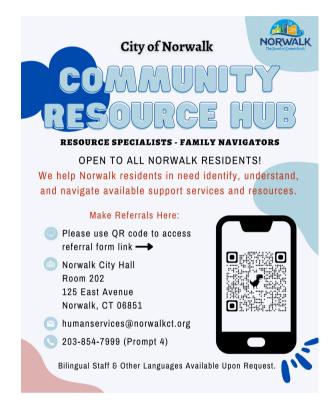
Norwalk has a Community Resource Hub with resource specialists and family navigators who can connect residents in need to support resources – including food assistance, employment resources, and health related supports.

The Community Resource Hub is open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. Spanish and additional languages are available.

To connect with the Community Resource Hub:

- use the QR code on the flyer
- visit us at City Hall in room 202 (no appointment necessary)
- call our office at (203) 854-7999 (prompt 4).

We are here to help!



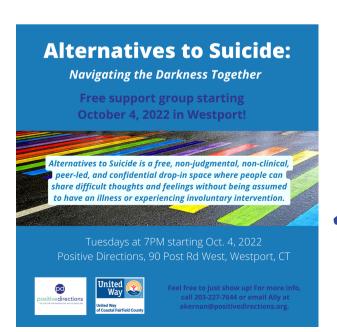


# **Suicide Prevention Grant: How the Health Department Will Use it**

by Kelley Meier, Health Educator - Norwalk Health Department

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. This September, the Norwalk Health Department began work on a CT Suicide Prevention (CTCSP) grant awarded by the CT Department of Public Health. Suicide is a significant public health crisis that impacts the lives of individuals, families, and entire communities. This grant will allow for the opportunity to work together with existing local, regional, and state partners to address suicide prevention, intervention, and response (SPIR) efforts in our area.

The Norwalk Health Department will use this grant opportunity to work collaboratively in identifying ways to better understand risk and protective factors to suicide, highlighting existing resources in our community, looking for additional supports for those in need, sharing available resources on how to access help, and spreading messages of hope to all members of our community.





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

# IN A MENTAL HEALTH OR SUICIDE CRISIS?

# **FREE HOTLINES ARE AVAILABLE 24/71**

- Crisis Text Line: Text 741741 National Suicide Lifeline: Call or text 988

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

- CT's Action Line (mobile crisis): Dial 2-1-1, option 1

- CT'S Action Line (Mobile Crisis). Diai 2-1-1, option 1
  Kids in Crisis (ages 0-18): 203-661-1911
  Domestic Violence SafeConnect: 888-774-2900
  JoinRiseBe Young Adult Warmline: Talk to a young adult peer specialist 12pm-9pm daily: 800-6-HOPENOW









You are not alone. If you, or someone you know, is struggling or in crisis, help is available. For the full Norwalk Behavioral Health Resource Guide, visit thenorwalkpartnership.org/get-help

Positive Directions is starting a new in-person suicide support group in October. Group will meet at their office on the Norwalk/Westport border.

# Norwalk ACTS: Cradle to Career Partners



Norwalk ACTS is a community partnership that connects people, organizations, and systems throughout Norwalk to align efforts and work in collaboration to coordinate improvements at every stage so that children and youth are on track academically, physically, and social-emotionally from cradle to career.

# Have you checked out our "Play and Learn" Out-of-School-Time Program Locator?

We believe that every Norwalk young person should be engaged in meaningful out of school experiences. Our Out of School Time (OST) Initiative works with community and school partners to develop and sustain a system that ensures our city's children and youth are provided with high-quality, affordable learning opportunities that meet academic, social-emotional, and health & wellness needs. We have created a Norwalk Out of School Time Program Locator as a resource for families to find programs that meet the needs of their children. This resource is available yearlong and is available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.



Learn about the After School Programs that exist in Norwalk



Search for local programs by age, price, type, time, and day



Working Together, Everything Is Achievable.



# Calling all parents of children 0-5! Do you know about Sparkler?

SPARKLER is a FREE mobile app for Connecticut families, helping parents support children's development from birth through 5! Check-in on your child's development and get a library of 1000+ play activities just right for your child's age.

Use the QR code to download Sparkler in English or Spanish.



Opportunity for Norwalk Teens ages 14 to 18!

## YOUTH COMMUNITY ADVOCATE POSITION

#### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN:

- · Supporting local mental wellness efforts?
- Learning about youth advocacy and leadership opportunities?
- Creating shared spaces and platforms for youth-led work?
- Participating in workshops and trainings on Norwalk's community supports and resources?



# RESOURCE OF THE MONTH

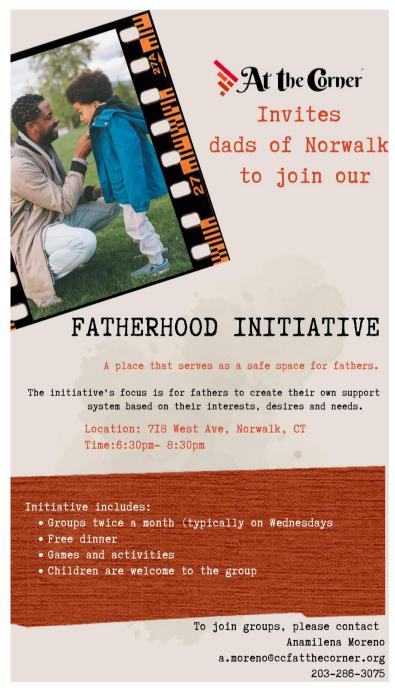
"At the Corner" is a new nonprofit here in Norwalk, created by the amazing Pastor Liz Abel, formerly of Cornerstone Community Church. At The Corner is launching several **free youth initiatives**, including **Spark Groups**, **Deborah's Academy** for high school aged girls, and **Timothy's Project** for high school aged boys.

They also have a **Fatherhood Initiative** and **Immigrant Support Services**! Learn more at <a href="http://ccfatthecorner.org/services/">http://ccfatthecorner.org/services/</a>!



## For more information, contact:

Anamilena Moreno, MSW
Program Coordinator
Email: a.moreno@ccfatthecorner.org
Call/Text: 203-286-3075
English or Spanish



# RESOURCES FOR TEENS

Free Groups for Norwalk Teens by
Positive Directions &
Youth Business Initiative

COME HANG WITHUS!

Check out our FREE programs for high schoolers in Norwalk!

Fall 2022 schedule:

Support group for teen boys - Wednesdays 5-6pm for 10 weeks starting 9/28/22
SMART Teen group - All year, every Monday 4-5:30pm
Substance use & mental health awareness trainings
Monthly social events

FOOD WILL BE PROVIDED!

LEARN MORE & SIGN UP AT TINYURL.COM/NORWALKTEENGROUPS

Positive Directions, the Youth Business Initiative, Human Services Council and The Hub have been partnering to offer FREE supports for high schoolers in Norwalk, thanks to City & ARPA funding. The program responds to critical issues identified in our 2021 Norwalk Youth Survey: depression, relationship issues, self-management and self-awareness, particularly among girls and BIPOC youth.

Norwalk teens ages 14 to 18 can join any or all of the following:

- SMART Teen skills group, meeting every Monday from 4-5:30pm. SMART Teens teaches kids to use therapy-based tools to understand their motivations and urges, set goals, and make positive changes in their lives. Join at any time!
- Clinician-led support group, meeting every Wednesday from 5-6pm, alternating between a 10-week girls' support group (just ended) and a 10-week boys' support group (starting 9/28/22). There will be a second round of girls' and boys' groups later this year.
- During each 10-week session, the teens have a Check-Up from the Neck Up day where they take a behavioral health screening and are referred to additional services they may need following the end of each group.

All groups meet at YBI, 11 Day Street (2nd floor), South Norwalk, and food is provided. These groups are open to any high school-aged teen from Norwalk! Participating students also get the opportunity to join fun monthly social events. We had an amazing kayaking day at the end of August! Students also receive training around substance use prevention and suicide prevention.

To learn more or register, please visit <a href="mailto:tinyURL.com/norwalkteengroups">tinyURL.com/norwalkteengroups</a>

positivedirections

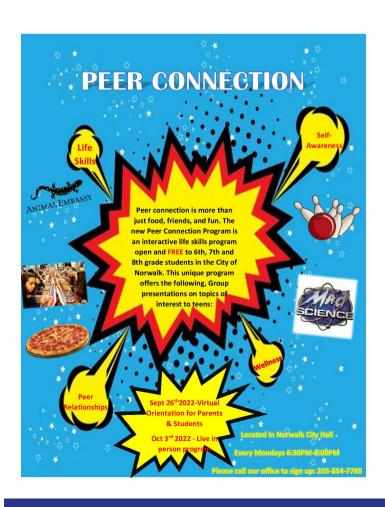


# Free Groups for Teens



At the Grner







A SAFE PLACE TO TALK WITH OTHER TEENS ABOUT
ALL THINGS HIGH SCHOOL





- · Identify stressors and learn coping skills
- Deal with family and peer pressure
- Explore anxiety around school violence
- Develop strategies to maintain grades

Join this **FREE** virtual group of High School Students



RSVP for link at: positivedirections.org/support-groups or call 203-227-7644 to learn more





# Triangle Community Center: LGBTQ Resource

# TCC CORNER

# **Back to School with Pride!**

Cadence Pentheny, Triangle Community Center, cadence@ctpridecenter.org

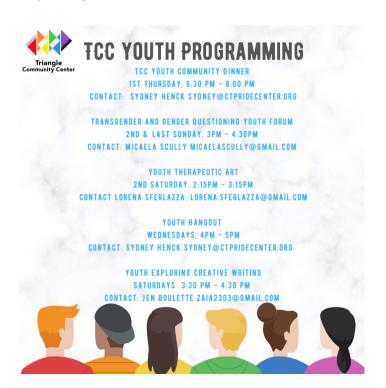
Heading back to school after the summer break can bring up a lot of mixed feelings! LGBTQ+ young folks in particular may specific concerns about heading back to student life - here's some thoughts on how to best support them.

#### Check on their Records

If your child is going by a different name now, or their gender identity has shifted, make sure that the school office is aware. While "legal" information has to be used on official documents such as health records and transcripts, there is no reason that your child should be referred to incorrectly in class or anywhere else in their day-to-day school life. Connecticut Safe School Coalition has published guidelines that public schools must follow, which includes respecting the gender identity of transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming students.

#### Stand up to book/information bans

All comprehensive research shows that all students, regardless of their identities, benefit socially, emotionally, and academically from diverse curriculum. Students have the right to learn about LGBTQ+ history in school. There is no book or piece of media that will "turn" a young person gay - it will just make them feel seen, understood, and like they belong.



#### Join the GSA/Pride Club

Find out information about the school's Pride or GSA Club, and encourage your child to join! If the club meets as an after-school space, do your best to figure out how your child can attend. Peer support is something that all young people can really benefit from!

#### Stay Involved

Keep an open line of dialogue with your child. If you talk about life and catch up regularly, you are more likely to hear about if they are experiencing any issues early on. Be aware of schools' anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies, too!

