

Minutes of Coalition Meeting held October 27, 2021

Present: Laila, Margaret, Daniella Arias (The Hub), Dave Walenczyk (YSB), Margaret Watt (Positive Directions & Norwalk parent), Diamond Sead (HSC & Norwalk parent), Diana Revulus (Common Council, business owner), Jeff Santo (RIPPLE), Jodi Giorlando (CT Counseling Center), Kelley Meier (Norwalk Health Dept), Maggie Young (Liberation Programs), Megan Faugno (Norwalk Health Dept), Nicole Hampton (Norwalk parent, person in long-term recovery & recovery coach), Peter King (Alateen), Vanessa Wilson (Positive Directions), Nicole Wichowski (MADD), Cadence Pentheny (Triangle Community Center), Dajuan Wiggan (Youth Business Initiative), Denique Weidema-Lewis (Norwalk ACTS), Dan Cicero (Norwalk Hospital community support program / outpatient psychiatry), Aubrey Grobin (Family & Children's Agency), Aniella Fignon (Norwalk Health Dept), Wendy Mendes (NCC), Mary Connelly, Michelle Barker, Sof Ramos (TNP Prevention Intern & Brien McMahon HS junior), Denise Rollinson (Norwalk Community Health Center), Ed Milton (Kids in Crisis), Anthony DiLauro (Human Services Council & Norwalk parent)

1. Laila welcomed everyone & introductions were made. Laila introduced our new TNP prevention interns. They will coordinate prevention clubs in each high school building to raise awareness and take action around substance use and mental health.
 - a. Grace Galeano is a senior at Norwalk HS, a globally certified Tai Kwon Do master, and a speaker at Alateen.
 - b. Sof Ramos is a junior at BMHS, very active in band and CYL.
2. Margaret & Nina provided an update on the new marijuana law and shared findings on the impact of legalization from other states. Click [here](#) for the summary of the new law from the CT Clearinghouse and [here](#) for the Smart Approaches to Marijuana document summarizing what has happened in states that legalized marijuana. Among other findings, states that legalized cannabis for adults had a 25% increase in marijuana addiction among teenagers 12-17 years old.
 - a. Group discussion around the City's role (zoning / enforcement):
 - i. **FOLLOW UP NEEDED:** Sales in Norwalk can be limited or there can be a moratorium on sales with a vote from a majority of townspeople. The new Marijuana law has yet to be discussed by the Common Council
 - ii. Coalition members expressed interest in zoning and laws around where marijuana can be used in public (namely what park location will be designated as the legal public area to use marijuana). As a coalition we can write, send letters, emails, and make it known as the Norwalk community that we want a voice in identifying the public location where it marijuana use is allowed.
 - iii. Jeff Santo reported that while patrolling Bayley Beach he has estimated there are 60-70 kids at the beach who are drinking and using marijuana. He has found thousands of dollars' worth of vaping products, alcohol, and condoms. Believes that there need to be consequences for the youth.
 - iv. Anthony commented that laws must be enforced. Community needs consensus on consequences for youth.

About Us: Our coalition seeks diverse representation from the many cultures and groups that make up Norwalk, including youth and families, individuals in recovery, schools, community and volunteer groups, municipal services, business, faith-based groups, treatment providers, law enforcement, and others.

We are funded by the federal **Drug-Free Communities** grant to **Positive Directions** and the state's **Local Prevention Council** grant to the **Human Services Council**.

- b. Group discussion around teen use in Norwalk:
 - i. Dave Walencyk said that Youth Services has not yet seen an increase in marijuana issues among teens.
 - ii. Ed Milton: Youth are telling him that messaging around marijuana is pushing them to use marijuana. Especially as a form of coping with anxiety and depression. He is seeing a large number of youth are anxious this year
 - iii. The schools have a zero tolerance policy but it may not be administered the same way in each building. Equity must be considered when responding to marijuana and its consequences on kids of color.
 - iv. FOLLOW UP NEEDED: Need for clearer protocols for underage students who are caught with marijuana.
 - v. Our role as a coalition is focused on preventing youth marijuana use and raising awareness of its risks for the developing teen brain. There is less of an impact on adults, and adult use is now legal over age 21.
 - vi. Dajuan suggested creating a space to educate youth about the risks of marijuana and where they are not influenced by drug use. Multiple coalition members agreed that youth need things to do, there are not enough opportunities for youth to get involved and stay occupied. Sof agreed that there are not a lot of things to do for kids in Norwalk
3. We administered a survey about types of messages and signage related to marijuana that the coalition would find effective: <https://forms.gle/4p9RMhmKVrKiYr6GA>
4. Updates on TNP Coalition Work
 - a. Margaret & Denique were able to provide professional development for NPS high school health teachers on Oct 25th covering the youth survey results and mental health resources
 - b. We will provide another PD on Nov 2nd to middle and high school teachers on substance use
 - c. Our Wellness Bulletin for Norwalk Parents has been published with content from various community partners and will be sent out to all parents in the district by Jim Martinez tonight. Coalition members have received it as a blog post and are encouraged to share it with their networks including through social media.
 - i. Update after the fact: The school district decided to send it on November 10th instead.
 - d. We are planning a Freshman Forum for parents and 9th graders. Join us for next meeting
5. Announcements from the group:
 - a. Norwalk Hospital is moving all psych beds to Danbury by December 2022. Community will need to advocate for alternatives like crisis stabilization or respite beds.
 - b. NCC hosted its 9th annual Fresh Check Day.
 - c. The Center for Youth Leadership (CYL) at BMHS is hosting a Teen Town Hall tonight where students will interview Board of Ed candidates.
 - d. Triangle Community Center hosting a pumpkin decorating event.
6. Upcoming Meeting Dates
 - a. Red Ribbon Week is this week
 - b. TNP marijuana/vaping committee Thurs. Nov. 4th 4-5pm
 - c. TNP alcohol committee Wed. Nov. 10th 3-4pm
 - d. Freshman Forum planning Monday, Nov. 1st 9am-10am
 - e. Planning for next parent bulletin Nov. 9th, 9am-10am
 - f. NEXT COALITION MEETING: **November 17, 2021 from 2-3:30pm**