

Minutes of Coalition Meeting held November 17, 2021

Present: Amy Jeffereis (Family & Children's Agency); Anielle Fignon (Health Dept); Cadence Pentheny (Triangle Community Center); Chris Perone (parent & legislator); Dajuan Wiggins (Youth Business Initiative); Dave Walenczyk (Youth Services Bureau); Denise Rollinson (Norwalk CHC); Diamond Sead (Human Services Council, parent); Donna Fletcher (Child & Family Guidance); Ed Milton (Kids in Crisis); Erma Benedetto (Mid Fairfield AIDS Project); Eve St Surin (CAAWC); Frank Castorina (Catholic Charities of Fairfield County); Jeffrey Santo (RIPPLE); Kelsey Ciarleglio (High Focus Centers); Lynn Kelley (Beacon Health); Margaret Watt (Positive Directions, parent); Maria Escalera (Norwalk Community Services); Marilyn Moreau; Nina Chanana (project evaluator); Peter King (Alateen); Sabine Romsaint (Odyssey Learning Center) – 1 other

Introductions were made in the chat. Focus on provider sector:

1. Catholic Charities of Fairfield County (Frank Castorina):
 - Run several programs; Frank manages the Behavioral Health program, which serves all ages & all types of severity, including co-diagnoses (mental health + substance use).
 - Frank's main focus is adolescent prevention. Biggest gap is helping the school system; getting into the schools and city hall and offering more, primarily around MH.
 - Have a Spanish-speaking clinician.
 - Not running a waitlist right now.
 - Can refer to Frank Fcastorina@ccfc-ct.org or to intake line: 203-743-4412. Callers will immediately get a date for first intake session.
2. High Focus Centers (Kelsey Ciarleglio):
 - Opened in Norwalk in March 2020; home base is New Jersey and have been around for 25 years.
 - Provide 2 levels of outpatient care: Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP) and Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), for mental health &/or substance use.
 - PHP level of care is rare in CT; a non-residential interim level between IOP and hospitalization. Involves group therapy 6 hrs/day (4 hrs clinical group therapy learning skills and psychoed + 2 hr school component), 5 days/week, for 2-3 weeks to stabilize the patient.
 - IOP can be 3-5 days/week for 3 hrs/day.
 - 3 weekly individual sessions; sometimes family sessions.
 - Psychiatrist on staff.
 - Adolescent program runs from 13yo+ to adulthood; recently opened an Adult program (primary mental health or co-occurring); will be bringing back their middle school track for 10-12yos in near future. Will also have LGBTQ+ track in near future.
 - Big challenge is the acuity of teen clients right now.
 - In-network with commercial insurances though not with HUSKY; for adults can manage a small portion of state insurance; may be able to provide scholarship, sliding fee scale.

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- Programs are operating in person. Can contact Kelsey directly as the liaison or intake (start seeing people within 1-2 days). Scheduling assessments about a week out.
 - Families can use Kelsey as a resource for support, including referrals to other agencies as needed. Kelsey is also a resource for other providers / community partners. Can support with trainings, co-hosting events, can partner up.
 - Intake department @ 1 (800) 877-3628. Please always feel free to share my direct contact to colleagues/families/etc. Cell: 203-939-3085, kciarleglio@highfocuscenters.com
3. Norwalk Community Health Center (Denise Rollinson):
 - NCHC is a site for physical health, with a small behavioral health department, primarily treating mental health with some supportive work for substance use.
 - Provides outpatient therapy (no IOP) to individuals of all ages, primary population is Hispanic, some LGBTQ youth.
 - Mostly operating through telehealth.
 - Currently seeking a psychiatrist.
 4. Comments:
 - Dave noted that YSB stopped providing direct services last year, but now that there's such a mental health crisis there are waitlists.
 - Frank commented that timing matters because of kids being in school during daytime hours. Clinicians are full from 2:30-6:30pm
 5. From the chat: Donna Fletcher, Director of Co-Occurring Treatment Programs at the Child & Family Guidance Center. I am the supervisor for the SSTRY Program - Substance Screening, Treatment and Recovery Program for Youth. We are an outpatient level of care and do not have a wait list. We serve youth ages 12 through 24 in DCF regions 1 and 5. We have an office in Norwalk. We can provide treatment in Spanish and in English. We take any insurance and will serve undocumented youth. My number is 203 273 6529. dfletcher@cfguidance.org.

Agenda & Minutes

Nina reviewed the agenda & October minutes – Dave moved to approve the minutes without amendments, Maria seconded.

Planning the upcoming presentations of our survey findings

6. Margaret summarized the types of information that TNP collected earlier this year: community survey (adults, with extra component for parents), and youth survey. Both capture mental health and substance use information. Youth survey also captures developmental relationships with teachers, stress related to COVID, racial injustice, etc.
7. To date we have presented to:
 - Board of Ed
 - Common Council (health & safety committee)
 - School & community clinicians
 - Health teachers from middle and high schools
 - Teens via the Teen Town Hall organized by the Center for Youth Leadership
 - We plan to present to youth via our new prevention clubs in the high schools, and to Community Health Workers and Family Navigators.
8. Parents have only received information via our parent newsletter. Our goal is to share the information to parents through presentations on Dec. 1 (English) and Dec. 2 (Spanish), at 7pm. Using this meeting to seek input into the presentation, panelists, etc.
9. **DECISIONS:**
 - Share information from both the youth and adult surveys, not just youth.
 - Split presentation into 2 halves: mental health and substance use.
 - In each section, provide education, data, strategies for what you can do, and have a brief Q&A.
 - Panelists/resource people for Dec. 1st, 7pm, English event:

Vision: Norwalk is a community that fosters mental wellbeing and supports safe and healthy behaviors across the lifespan.

Mission: The Norwalk Partnership brings our community together to prevent substance misuse among youth and young adults by addressing local conditions.

- MFCGC
- TCC (Cadence)
- Child & Family Guidance (Donna Fletcher)
- Alateen (Pete)
- School-Based Health Centers
- Kids in Crisis (Ed)
- Catholic Charities (Frank)
- High Focus Centers (Lenny) – unconfirmed
- Panelists/resource people for Dec. 2nd, 7pm, Spanish event:
 - MFCGC?
 - TCC (Edson?)
 - Kids in Crisis (Corina?)
 - Norwalk ACTS (Anamilena)
- Comments:
 - Dave thanks TNP for the youth survey work. City is formulating an RFP to address youth MH needs, and the data from the Positive Directions survey has been instrumental in identifying and targeting the needs
 - Ed – educate people that there’s robust coordination and data collection.
 - Lynn – share the adult data as well as the youth data – adult mental health impacting the youth indirectly
 - Lots of kids are so open about being LGBTQ but their parents/ grandparents are not – need to be careful with the audience
 - Eve & Sabine can help with similar future event in Haitian Creole ☺
- ACTIONS:
 - Margaret will email those who will be participants
 - If you want to help organize or attend as a resource person, let Margaret know
 - Please help disseminate the flyer and encourage parents to attend!

Updates on TNP Coalition Work

10. Alcohol Committee: Help needed dropping off Liquor Stickers for our holiday campaign! This campaign raises awareness by having a fact card near the cash registers at participating retailers so people who are buying alcohol can learn about underage drinking in Norwalk and the social host law. Also provides stickers as a deterrent for youth to access alcohol in their homes. Dave asked about the response to the information. Laila has followed up with all the retailers a couple of times. Some have said parents have appreciated the messaging and asked for more. We originally mailed information twice to all retailers; the ones on the current list are those who said they’d participate during future holidays.

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- Volunteers: Aniella; Eve (Harbor View, Main Ave); Diana (Woodward Ave); Amy J (can do a couple – usually route is between Ben Franklin and toward Wilton); Diamond & Margaret
- ACTION: Margaret / Diamond will get the info / stickers to the volunteers

11. **Marijuana Committee update:** Nina reported on the findings from the coalition survey last month:

- Coalition members identified as the key content to disseminate: impact of MJ on teen brain, permanent changes, increase in potency. Also comment on impact of peer pressure
- Prioritized types of messaging: impact on brain, health effects, role of parents
- Preferred ways to get info out: #1 – social media, #2 – digital signage, #3 – bus ads or bus shelter ads
- Margaret proposed that we organize a meeting with our local state reps in January, ahead of the legislative session, to discuss the cannabis act and share feedback on loopholes /areas for amendment /etc. As a group we would educate ourselves in greater depth ahead of that meeting. Asked for feedback on the idea and whether to do it at the coalition level or a separate committee meeting.
 - Aniella & Pete are interested and recommend doing it at the committee level
 - ACTION: Margaret will send email to identify others interested

12. **Our parent newsletter** went out through schools! Thanks to those who wrote for it. We will have it monthly in English and Spanish. November issue focused on mental health; December will be on alcohol

13. **Congressman Jim Himes** had a panel for the Drug-Free Communities grantees in the region:

- Norwalk, Darien, Fairfield, Trumbull, Greenwich
- Attending from TNP: Laila (panelist), Nina, TCC, YSB, Courage to Speak, NPD
- He asked about stigma around opioids/overdoses – how to reach at-risk populations, inner cities – what are members seeing in terms of the impact of COVID (primary response: impact on MH)

14. **Health teacher professional development:** TNP provided 2 days of PD to health teachers on our data, mental health & suicide resources, marijuana education, and vaping curriculum

15. **Teen prevention clubs:** Our Norwalk Strong club at BMHS started today! The NHS club will start after Thanksgiving.

Coalition Member Updates

16. Maria Escalera is leaving as Human Services Director for the City – moving on to Optimus – last day tomorrow; please contact Lamond Daniels, Community Services Chief in her absence. We thank her for her support as part of the TNP leadership team
17. Trans Day of Remembrance Nov 20th – Triangle hosting an event
18. Freshman Forum in Westport takes place tonight if anyone wants to attend to assist in planning our event for Norwalk! Contact Margaret for more info
19. Alateen live again at NHS at Thursday mornings 8:45 (2nd period) - not at BMHS, would need more sponsors
20. Youth Business Institute is having its Grand Opening TOMORROW 11/18 at 11 Day Street. Drop in from 5:30-7:30pm. Learn about their business, entrepreneurship, workforce development work, meet students & staff. See News12 piece from 11/16.

Upcoming Dates

- Parent forum: Dec 1st 7pm and Dec 2nd 7pm
- TNP marijuana/vaping committee: Thurs. Dec 2nd 4-5pm
- TNP alcohol committee: Wed. Dec 8th Scheduled for 3pm; possibly changing to 4pm
- Freshman Forum planning: Friday, Nov. 19th, 9am-10am
- No Full Coalition Meeting in December!
- Next Coalition Meeting: **January 26, 2021 from 2-3:30pm** – focus on our collaborative efforts with schools (prevention clubs, freshman forum, wellness breaks through Google Meet, Fresh Check Day, etc.)