**Minutes for Coalition Meeting on March 31, 2021**

|  |
| --- |
| **Present:** Anthony DiLauro (Human Services Council & NPS parent), Denique Weidema-Lewis (Norwalk ACTS), Ed Milton (Teen Talk counselor at NHS), Ginger Katz (Courage to Speak Foundation), Laila McGeorge (Prevention Intern), Margaret Watt (Positive Directions & NPS parent), Maria Escalera (Norwalk Human Services), Nina Chanana (TNP evaluator), Peter King (Alateen),Daniella Arias (The Hub CT), Jessica Minieri (Norwalk Hospital intern), Kelsey Ciarleglio (High Focus Centers), Maureen Sullivan (Norwalk Public Schools), Diana Toomey-Wilson (NPS Parent) |
| **Updates on Coalition Work:**   * Surveys:   + Planning for youth survey is still underway.   + Community survey was extended through end of March. 284 responses received. Data will be presented at next coalition meeting. * Bulletin:   + We created a bulletin that compiles community events from TNP, Norwalk ACTS, and the City of Norwalk. Purpose is to minimize emails and maximize visibility to parents and community members. We are encouraging principals to send it to parents. Please reshare!   + March bulletin went out as blog post from the TNP website and through partners and is also available from thenorwalkpartnership.org/blog.   + Please send event flyers prior to each month.   + Discussion: Looks great (2 comments). Please add testing schedules for vaccines. * Alcohol Campaigns:   + 12 alcohol retailers are making our “Liquor Stickers” available in baskets near the cash register for parents to be aware of underage drinking and the “lock your liquor” message. Package store owners have mentioned that parents are responding positively to the stickers, including requests for more.   + 10 package stores have accepted the #MentionPrevention posters to hang in stores (with messages about checking IDs druing COVID, including the fact that customers should lower masks to check IDs) and/or the #MentionPrevention inserts for liquor sales.   + A number of restaurants also accepted the MentionPrevention posters. We tried to get those out to as many places as possible before St Patrick’s Day since it’s such a drinking holiday.   + We’d like to get these materials into all package stores and restaurants. Volunteers are needed! Let Margaret or Laila know if you can help with dropping materials off and talking to the store manager. * April is Alcohol Awareness Month:   + We just held 2 “Power of Parents” events around underage drinking in English so would like to organize something in Spanish and/or Creole. Let us know if you can help. Ed recommended Carola Osses and Martine Bernardel at NPS as resources.   + Tonight we are holding a planning discussion with Haitian community members. Let us know of others who may want to join. * Freshman Forum discussion:   + Diamond & Margaret have had a couple of meetings with other towns that do Freshman Forums in the fall. These are events that are aimed at all freshmen \*and\* their parents. The events focus on raising awareness about risky behaviors during high school and resources for mental health & substance use. We would like to start planning for this to happen in Norwalk in the fall.   + Interested in helping: Kelsey, Ed (can recruit school leaders), Ginger, and Diana Toomey-Wilson (can talk to CGS) * Postcard series to parents on prevention topics:   + The marijuana/vaping committee met and broadened the discussion around information dissemination to a series of postcards to parents on various prevention topics (alcohol, vaping, marijuana). Postcards can be designed to also be shared on social media, website, etc.   + Daniela would like to be added to this group. |
| **Community Partner Updates**   * High Focus Centers did a series of 4 presentations on substance use that were well received. (See info in March bulletin.) * Courage to Speak has 2 presentations coming up: 4/15 Grand Rounds at Norwalk Hospital psych dept and 4/1 at Southern CT State University. They have done 20 presentations during COVID. * Next Teen Town Hall will be 4/21 at 7pm * Next Community Fair will be 4/23 from 11am-2pm at Grace Baptist Church * St Vincent’s parent forum on zoom tonight |
| **Discussion: School Reopening & Prevention Needs**   * How can we support students with the reopening (currently planned for April 19th)? Issues raised:   + Some kids are very anxious about going back to school. High Focus Centers is seeing a huge spike.   + Some kids really don’t know each other! They haven’t been face to face with other kids in so long.   + Nothing is concrete but NPS would like to hold prom and graduation for students. Fear that some will party too hard – alcohol / drugs – when they start socializing again. What about supervised substance-free events for those milestones? (No info yet.)   + Parents & teachers are tired too. * Options to support kids:   + Elementary schools are already doing a lot of social-emotional supports because the SEL initiative rolled out at younger grades first. Some schools like Roton are also ahead of the curve because teachers had received more training. The high school teachers aren’t as equipped to provide social-emotional supports.   + NHMS is doing Wellness Wednesdays where the day has shorter periods so they can do wellness activities at the end of the day.   + Can offer mindful moments throughout each day.   + Messaging: It’s ok to feel like this is hard. Communicate that if they started some bad habits (e.g., using marijuana to cope with stress), then the reopening is an opportunity for a re-set/fresh start. OK to Stop!   + As more kids go back, have table tents in the cafeteria where each day for a week (or once a week) tables are identified with different topics (soccer, rap, minecraft, etc.) and maybe a conversation starter for that topic so they keep mixing and matching and meeting new friends. * Decisions/TNP supports:   + We would like to bring a motivational speaker, [David Edward Garcia](https://davidedwardgarcia.com/student-programs/high-school/), to the high schools. He is both inspirational - with a message of “flip the script” - and a comedian. He is Latino and talks about how he was failing 3 classes when in high school but was able to overcome the odds to reach his goals. Target of May for mental health month which is also 2 weeks after the kids will be back.     - Our Drug-Free Communities grant can fund about half of this. Courage to Speak and High Focus Centers will contribute. Will seek others – please let us know.   + The community providers working with TNP could support the teachers with social-emotional learning during the weekly Advisories by Zooming in with mindfulness exercises or similar. We will follow up with the schools. Maureen recommends focusing on high schools.   + The SMART Recovery teen support group – co-facilitated by Diamond from HSC and TurningPointCT.org at Positive Directions – will go back into the buildings. Peter offered the use of the Alateen room at NHS. At BMHS can use the School-Based Health Center. |
| **Next Meeting**   * Wednesday, April 28, 2021 from 2-3:30pm – results of community survey |