**Minutes for Coalition Meeting on February 24, 2021**

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| **Present:** Anthony DiLauro (Human Services Council & NPS parent), Dave Walencyzk (Youth Services Bureau), Denique Weidema-Lewis (Norwalk ACTS), Diamond Sead (Human Services Council & NPS parent), Diana Révolus (Common Council & NPS parent), Ed Milton (Teen Talk counselor at NHS), Ginger Katz (Courage to Speak Foundation), Jim Martinez (NPS), Laila McGeorge (Prevention Intern), Margaret Watt (Positive Directions & NPS parent), Maria Escalera (Norwalk Human Services), Nina Chanana (Partnership evaluator), Tory Sullivan (BMHS), Peter King (Alateen), Erma Benedetto (MFAP), Danielle Walker (Rowan Center), David Heuvelman (Common Council), Jennifer Rolinson (NPS Health Services), Marcea Koffsky (community member), Acting Lt. David Orr (Norwalk Police Dept), Daniella Arias (The Hub CT), Jessica Minieri (Norwalk Hospital intern), Kelsey Ciarleglio (High Focus Centers), Pat Tinto (communications) |
| **Updates on Coalition Work:** * Alcohol Committee: Liquor Stickers & #mentionprevention campaign materials
	+ Diana Revolus explained the efforts we are making with Norwalk alcohol retailers. Stressed that all coalition members can help by building relationships with local package stores to have them be a part of prevention. We want to support and highlight those who are safe, protecting kids, following the law.
	+ Let us know if you can help get materials out!
	+ Lt. Orr mentioned the Norwalk PD Tipline now has a new app for people to provide info on any drug sales. Tipster can remain anonymous.
* TNP Community Survey:
	+ Community survey is extended until the middle of March. More responses are needed. Please help.
* TNP Youth Survey:
	+ Jim Martinez: Margaret and Denique met with key people in the school district to present the plan for approval to the superintendent
	+ Survey would include 3200 students.
	+ Target dates: March 23rd present to BOE for approval; April 5th distribute survey in English classes (35 mins for middle schoolers, 45 mins for high schoolers)
* MADD Power of Parents workshops on underage drinking:
	+ We offered the workshop twice and advertised through various networks including paid advertising on Patch and Facebook. 29 parents attended. Feedback was positive. We added some additional content the second time.
* Freshman Forum discussion
	+ We held a meeting with coalition leaders from Norwalk, Fairfield, Westport, Trumbull to discuss how Freshman Forum has worked in the past in other towns and online during COVID. It is typically aimed at having all 9th graders and all parents come together for an evening of prevention education. Leaders are meeting again for more discussion and then we will bring the planning back to the coalition.
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| **Advocacy** * Since the legislature is in session and there are a variety of bills related to substance use and mental health, Margaret discussed advocacy and how it’s community members play a key part in laws that get passed.
* There is a difference between advocacy (which includes educating on an issue and supporting a general topic) and lobbying (which involves trying to get someone to vote a specific way on a specific bill). Individuals can do both. Our coalition can educate but cannot lobby due to federal funding restrictions.
* Reviewed the CT General Assembly website ([www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov)) and showed how to find / track bills on the CGA website & current bills of interest, how to find your representatives and committee members, and how to create testimony (oral and written).
* Public hearing coming up on the legalization of marijuana: <https://blog.positivedirections.org/blog/public-hearing-on-marijuana>
* Discussion about the hearing:
* CT may gain tax revenue.
* Revenue should be used to fund addiction and mental health treatment and prevention
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| **Follow-up Discussion from last month’s Marijuana Presentation:*** Asked what the group’s takeaways were from the presentation. Responses:
	+ The strength of today’s marijuana
	+ What it does to the teen brain
	+ People are willing to legalize marijuana because they think it’s “not that bad” but it seems like opening up a whole can of worms and another way to harm children
* Nina commented on the findings from the focus groups she conducted statewide in November/December:
	+ Teens report that marijuana is the drug they use to cope with their stress, whereas alcohol is what they use to be social or when they’re bored.
	+ Parents are not having conversations about marijuana with their children even though they do talk about alcohol.
	+ The majority of kids who use marijuana are vaping it. Vaping of nicotine peaked a couple of years ago and is not so common now.
* Discussion:
	+ Agreement that parents aren’t comfortable talking about marijuana with their kids.
	+ Driving while high: people don’t discuss, not aware of the risks.
	+ Concerns about edibles
	+ Some people are using marijuana instead of prescribed medication. Teens think it’s natural so it’s safer than prescribed drugs. Don’t realize its risks and aren’t aware that marijuana can actually exacerbate mental health symptoms.
* Tory commented that in her health classes, she is trying to teach life skills to her students:
	+ smoking and driving, financial burden, difference between meds and marijuana
	+ students struggle with understanding that marijuana can be just as dangerous as alcohol
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| **Action Items*** Please print and distribute flyer for our community survey at schools, meal distribution, COVID testing sites, grocery stores.
* Join alcohol workgroup: Next meeting Thu. March 4th at 4pm (rsvp to mwatt@positivedirections.org)
* Group to work on online Freshman Forum / video series: Fri. March 5th at 11am (rsvp to mwatt@positivedirections.org)
* Join marijuana workgroup: Meeting Thu. March 11th at 4pm (rsvp to mwatt@positivedirections.org)
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| **Community Announcements:*** Please share your prevention-related updates!
* NEXT MEETING: **Wednesday, March 31, 2021 from 2-3:30pm – results of community survey**
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