**Minutes of Coalition Meeting held October 28, 2020**

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| **Present**: Anthony DiLauro (Human Services Council & NPS parent), Barbara Meyer-Mitchell (BOE & NPS parent), Daniella Arias (The Hub), 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), Erika Keyes (Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance), Ginger Katz (Courage to Speak Foundation), Jeff Greenblatt (CT Counseling Centers & NPS parent), Jen Hrbek (Positive Directions), Jessica Minieri (Norwalk Hospital intern), Jim Martinez (NPS), Kelsey Ciarleglio (High Focus Centers), Laila McGeorge (Prevention Intern), Lisa Cooper (Open Door Shelter), Margaret Watt (Positive Directions & NPS parent), Maria Escalera (Norwalk Human Services), Nina Chanana (Partnership evaluator), Pamela George (SAVE), Shamariah Grant (Norwalk Hospital intern), Tory Sullivan (BMHS), Wendy Mendes (NCC) |
| 1. **Presentation of data on substance use among teens in Norwalk**

Nina Chanana, DFC grant evaluator, and Laila McGeorge, Prevention Intern, presented a slideshow summarizing the risky behaviors from the 2018 Norwalk youth survey and the findings from 2 focus groups conducted this month at BMHS. See slideshow here.Discussion comments & questions: * Need current data to see how COVID-19 is impacting youth substance use. Survey this year
* 20% of youth ages 10-24 suffer from anxiety and depression leading to suicidal ideation, attempts and completions. - making suicide the 2nd leading cause of death for adolescents. We have to identify why this population is not coping
* These same factors contribute to substance use as a negative coping skill.
* 2018 data show Norwalk has unusually high percentage (16%) of 7th graders who have attempted suicide.
* Norwalk had a high percentage of youths who drove or rode in a car with an impaired driver three or more times in the past year
* Question: are students currently engaging less or more with parents/family?
* Comments that parents have varying perspectives on marijuana use. It could be generational, based on usage for health, cultural, etc.
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| 1. **Planning for Prevention**

Margaret Watt, Prevention Director at Positive Directions, explained the concepts used in planning prevention efforts, particularly the identification of root causes, and explained the logic model developed for alcohol. See slideshow here.Discussion comments: * There is a correlational relationship between alcohol and marijuana use and what we might consider harder drugs like cocaine. Most people who are using harder drugs (PCP, cocaine, opiates) started with alcohol and marijuana. However not everyone who uses alcohol/marijuana will end up using harder drugs. Correlation, not causation.
* Alcohol usage is normalized in the community and culture must be taken into account. One of the root causes identified in our alcohol logic model is the cultural norms. Our work would never seek to undermine any culture, but we can still inform and educate people about the laws (drinking age of 21, social host law that you can be fined if anyone underage is drinking on your property) and about the impact of alcohol on the developing brain.
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| 1. **Small Group Discussion**

Participants discussed what they thought were the 2 primary root causes underlying use of marijuana and vaping/nicotine in Norwalk. Possible root causes, based on prevention science, include: **social availability, retail availability, community norms, laws & enforcement, pricing & promotions, parental attitudes about the substance, youth attitudes about the substance.**Marijuana: * 6 participants felt that youth attitudes (low perception of harm) was one of the top 2 root causes
* 5 identified social availability – with comments added about boredom & lack of activities being a factor
* 3 identified parental attitudes/use of MJ – comments about parents who use MJ but don’t think their kids know (though they smell it)
* 2 identified perception of harm without specifying parent vs youth
* 1 mentioned retail availability (ie dispensary) – and others commented on the use of “medical” marijuana

Vaping comments: * 3 participants stated retail availability of vapes was one of the top 2 root causes.
* 3 identified social availability -with comments added around normalization of use among teens.
* 1 identified community norms as a root cause - with comments about youth who sees vaping as a competition or something “everyone does.” (This is more of a social factor than a community norm.)
* 1 identified parental attitudes – *not* that parents are accepting vaping but are just not aware of it.
* 1 mentioned change in teen attitudes around vaping: no longer seen as a better alternative to cigarettes.
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| 1. **Survey on Next Steps in a Virtual Environment**

Participants filled out an online survey regarding next steps (training for coalition members, for agencies/youth serving groups, volunteering for committees & activities, etc.). Please fill it out at <https://forms.gle/3NJY41CpX3LaHvTp6> Based on the first 20 responses received: * 90% feel very aware of the risks of underage substance use
* Top topics people want training on at a coalition meeting:
	+ #1 - Anxiety/mental health (19 responses)
	+ # 2 (tie) - Positive youth development (13)
	+ #2 (tie) - Marijuana (13 responses)
	+ #3 (tie) - Vaping (11)
	+ #3 (tie) - Alcohol (11)
* Interest in trainings that would be useful to agencies’/groups’ work with youth:
	+ Developmental Relationships (10)
	+ Mental Health First Aid (9)
	+ Suicide prevention training, e.g., QPR or TSL (9)
	+ Motivational Interviewing (8)
	+ Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment (7)
	+ Party patrol (4)
	+ E-TIPS (2)
* Most beneficial projects for this year:
	+ Plan Freshman Forum for next Fall (14)
	+ Develop Youth Committee (14)
	+ Monthly newsletters for parents (8)
	+ Web series (6)
	+ Campaign to provide information via curbside alcohol pickups (3)
* People indicated their interest in working on different projects/ activities:
	+ Youth survey for February (14): Laila, Tory, Daniella, Dave, Erika, Jim, Pamela, Denique, Peter, Anthony, Ed, Giovanna, Barbara, Lisa
	+ Parent survey for November (9): Laila, Tory, Maria, Jim, Wendy, Pamela, Denique, Giovanna, Daniella
	+ Info/resource tables at meal pickup (7): Laila, Maria, Erika, Wendy, Denique, Ed, Jeff
	+ Environmental scan (6): Laila, Denique, Nicole, Anthony, Giovanna, Sgt Orr
	+ Compliance checks (5): Laila, Denique, Anthony, Giovanna, Sgt Orr
	+ Membership recruitment (5): Laila, Ginger, Denique, Ed, Giovanna
* People signed up for workgroups / subcommittees:
	+ Youth engagement (9): Tory, Dave, Diana, Pamela, Denique, Nicole, Peter, Ed, Laila, Maria
	+ Parent engagement (5): Tory, Diana, Denique, Peter, Barbara
	+ Alcohol (5): Tory, Diana, Wendy, Anthony, Laila
	+ Marijuana (5): Tory, Wendy, Anthony, Jeff, Laila, Ginger
	+ Vaping (4): Tory, Daniella, Giovanna, Laila, Diamond
	+ Communications (4): Jim, Denique, Laila, Giovanna
	+ Data (5): Tory, Denique, Giovanna, Laila, Lisa
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| 1. **Announcements & save the dates**
* The Norwalk Partnership is providing 2 free LGBTQ workshops for the Norwalk community: Nov 9 12-1:30 and Nov 16 12-1. Please rsvp to info@positivedirections.org One training is on LGBTQ identities & allyship and the other is on substance use in the LGBTQ community.
* Please like & follow our Facebook and Instagram pages @NorwalkPartnership
* The Hub (the Behavioral Health Action Organization for Southwestern CT) announced that the national DEA Drug Takeback Day over the weekend was a success. In Stamford alone, 699 lbs of medications were turned in.
* The Hub received a grant from Fairfield County’s Community Foundation to provide ASIST and QPR suicide trainings to the EMS departments of Southwestern CT.
* Please sign up for The Hub’s weekly behavioral health newsletter at [www.thehubct.org](http://www.thehubct.org)
* Mark your calendars for our next meetings:
	+ In November we will meet a week early due to Thanksgiving: **Wed. 11/18, 2-3:30**
	+ No meeting in December
	+ In January we will be back to the last Wed. of the month: **1/27/21, 2-3:30**
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