

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from January 10th, 2024 Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:33pm, in person in the Highland Room of Needham Town Hall and on Zoom.

Board in Attendance: David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Karen Mullen, Susan Patkin, Will Holland (student representative), Massiel Gallardo

Director: Sara Shine

Staff: Alyssa Cellucci

Minutes from December 13th, 2023: Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the December 13 minutes. Ms. Patkin seconded. The December 13 minutes unanimously approved by voice vote.

NEW AND OLD BUSINESS

A board discussion commenced on the Needham Health and Human Services Department's strategic plan and evolving Youth & Family Services board goals. After review, Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the board goals. Ms. Patkin seconded. Board goals were unanimously approved by voice vote and added as an addendum to this packet.

CLINICAL SERVICES

Youth & Family Services provides individual and family therapy for residents and have significantly increased our capacity for this. While we typically focus on youth and their families, we are aware that there are many people in the community who need extra support. We have been able to offer crisis/urgent supportive services to all residents and have been able to help in these crisis situations.

- There are 61 active clients.
- We currently have 27 on our waitlist.
- We have provided 18 Parent/Community consultations.
- We have had 4 emergency consults this month.
- Winter Groups –
 - **Coffee Talk** is a drop-in group of HS students that staff started last year. The topics have included: active shooter drills, homework stress, NHS cellphone policies, and end-of-the-semester exams. It has been running since October and is well attended with about 8 participants per week.

- **Grief Group** - The school system has asked Youth & Family Services to put together a group for students who have lost family members as there are several students who have experienced this. Staff ran a couple of these groups last school year, and we are working with the HS to get this back up and running during an X block. This was a group where youth could provide mutual support, learn skills to manage grief and connect with a clinician.
- **Lunch Groups**-Staff are working with the schools to run lunch groups in 3 schools this year. Last year we worked with Eliot and Sunita Williams, we have added Newman this year. We have been running 3 groups per week in Eliot and Sunita Williams and 2 groups per week at Newman and each group has between 5-8 students in each. These groups were focused on social skills and coping.
- **Parent Support Group** – we are hoping to start this on a monthly basis as a drop-in model.

Staff attended a training on IDECIDE, which is a therapeutic substance misuse treatment program. The hope is that this program will be incorporated into the Substance Awareness Program.

COMMUNITY ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED:

- Highlights from the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey finds that in Needham:
 - For the middle school: reports of mental health issues increased since 2018: 12-month reports of depressive symptoms increased from 9%-13% and self-injury increased from 6%-8%. Life reports of seriously considering suicide also increased from 10%-12%. This increase in mental health concerns in increasing consistently among various genders.
 - For High School Students: depressive symptoms increased from 13%-22%, self-injury increased from 9%-16% and seriously considering suicide increased from 9%-12%. All of these areas also grew substantially in the Metro-West region.
 - For both middle school and high school, the proportion of youth spending 3 or more hours on screen time on the average school day increased substantially (50% for middle school and 52% in high school).
 - For both age groups: the indicators of school connectedness are lower in 2021, reports of having a friend to talk to about personal problems decreased (M:68%-62%/HS: 73%-66%), and reports of adult supports at school have also decreased (MS:72%-70%/HS:75%-72%).
- We are assessing additional community needs and virtual programming.
 - Our focus is to continue group treatment to increase the number of youth accessing services
 - We are working on increased training for staff in trauma informed care
 - We are working closely with a school group on helping support the school community and families on many different levels.
 - We are planning some community presentations to help educate and support residents.
 - We are finding nontraditional ways to address mental health such as expressive art therapy workshops and community outreach projects

- Helping to address issues of racism and inequalities and ensuring that all have access to services if needed

PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES:

Patrick and Patricia Forde Good Person Memorial Award – Youth & Family Services is pleased to announce that Dan Brownridge has won the award this year. The 2024 event is scheduled for Monday, January 29th. Dan lives in Needham along with his wife Jen and their three boys, Landon, Carson and Wesley. He has been actively involved in the Needham soccer community since his oldest son was young and devotes an enormous amount of time to Needham soccer and other community causes. In addition to being a co-owner in two local businesses, Joint Ventures Physical Therapy and Mass Athlete Performance (which is based in Needham and provides camps, clinics, and personal training for local youth), Dan is commonly found on Needham soccer fields, where he not only plays for Needham's team in an over-30 league but often coaches 6-10 practices and 3-6 games each week during the spring and fall seasons. Dan has worked tirelessly to bring lessons of persistence, sportsmanship, teamwork, resilience, attitude, leadership, and respect to Needham's youth through the sport of soccer. Dan coaches kids with a positive mindset and challenges them to work together to become better than the sum of their parts. Dan has taken several courses from, and is a supporter of, the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), an organization whose mission is "to change the culture of youth sports so that every child, regardless of social or economic circumstance, has access to a positive youth sports experience." Additionally, Dan is a coordinator for the Holiday Dreams Foundation, where he recruits families to purchase gifts to fulfill wish lists for specific children of limited means. Over the years Dan has spent a significant amount of time collected and distributing hundreds of gifts to ensure that families in need are supported around the holidays. Also, through Mass Athlete Performance, Dan also works to support Needham Goes Purple for Alzheimer's and the MAP Passback Program which collects and donates soccer gear to kids in impoverished countries including Antigua and Uganda. Dan's work is admirable as he is someone that inspires others to give back and to make the community a better place.

Youth & Family Services has partnered with the Needham Community Council and the Becca Schmill Foundation to create a speaker series to help support the community called **Mindful Community Lecture Services – Talking About Mental Health**. We have helped to support the following presentations for this initiative: 1/10/24 – Navigating the Child and Teen Mental Health System presented by Riverside; 3/13/24 – Dr. Robert Brooks will be presenting on Resiliency in Children and teens, 5/9/24 we are hosting Lynn Lyons, Anxiety Expert – Modeling Matters: what parents need to know (and do) to decrease stress, worry and anxiety.

Peer Tutor – the peer tutor program is up and running. Staff have collaborated with the librarians to provide two times weekly for tutors and tutors to meet. The program will operate from October through April, and tutors (high schoolers) will earn 30 hours of community service for their participation. Mrs. Stein and Mrs. Nichols have coordinated the meetings and have helped support the pairs while meeting.

VIP (peer mentoring program) started on October 17th. This program pairs High School Students with 3rd, 4th and 5th graders to offer a fun environment and peer mentoring. This program is filled to capacity with 21 pairs meeting regularly. This year we also have some “big” floaters to help make sure the “littles” can still participate when a “big” misses a meeting. We are discussing how to expand the program, potentially hosting more sessions in the future.

Volunteers Around Needham is an opportunity for middle and high school students to give back to the community while also getting their needed community service hours. Staff are planning for two days during February Vacation and two days for April Vacation.

Youth & Family Services has also started a new volunteer relationship **with Hebrew SeniorLife’s Newbridge on the Charles**. We had a kickoff event with them this past August which included 6 volunteers who are interested in earning community service. At this Kickoff, our volunteers learned about Newbridge on the Charles and services that are offered. We want to give Needham High School students an opportunity to earn 30 plus hours and have flexibility with their schedules. There is another session planned for January 24, 2024.



Members of the Health and Human Services team have been trained to teach **Youth Mental Health First Aid virtually**. Youth Mental Health First Aid is a public education program that teaches participants how to recognize and respond to the signs and symptoms that suggest a potential mental health challenge, how to listen nonjudgmentally and give reassurance to a youth who may be experiencing a mental health challenge, and how to refer a person to appropriate professional support and services. Staff have trained 11 people in the past couple of trainings and are planning additional trainings. In addition, 5 staff have been trained to be teen Mental Health First Aid trainers which teaches teens how to help their peers experiencing a mental health challenge. This roll out is going to require 90 hours of teaching time at the high school and is going to start on January 22nd.

Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) training– 2 staff members, Mrs. Whirley and Mrs. Weitzel, completed QPR training and have started to provide training. There was a soft roll out on November 3rd and more training is being scheduled. “QPR is a suicide training for participants to be able to recognize warning signs of suicide and question, persuade and refer people at risk for suicide for help.”

Employment Program Update: Youth & Family Services helps connect residents to students who are looking to do various residential jobs such as lawn care, shoveling, babysitting and odd jobs. Staff have received a number of new sign-ups which has successfully increased the number of available youth on the list. Staff are also hoping to start a volunteer list as well so that people who need assistance but may not be able to afford to hire someone can still receive the services.

Youth & Family Services has also started helping students with independent volunteer projects for them to give back to the community and get their community service hours. Staff collect proposals and help students to implement their volunteer ideas. There have been some very

impressive proposals so far and the students seem excited about the opportunity.

Ms. Stein worked with the Needham Public Library and Family Access Community Connections on a **Family Playgroup** for caregivers and their babies (ages 0-1). This playgroup started this past summer and is continuing this fall as many families participated. This program provides a space for parents to connect and have the support of clinical staff to discuss stressors and coping. It also creates a social environment for very young children. There were 12 families signed up for this program and we have more sessions scheduled for the spring.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:

Youth & Family Services has joined a **Needham Homelessness Prevention Coalition** that helps assess needs in the areas and helps to prevent homelessness. This meeting occurs monthly. This meeting is a meeting to address homelessness on a larger scale and discuss patterns and solutions for individuals and families, many of the attendees in this group help with specific incidents on a day-to-day basis. We are currently promoting Youth & Family's Crisis Donation Support Fund in the hopes of garnering the community's support along with donations from the Community Council and other holiday donations.

Youth & Family Services has joined the **Online Safety Coalition**. This is a group that has gotten together to help caregivers navigate the always changing online environment that children spend so many hours engaging in. The Coalition includes representation from the Needham Board of Health, Youth and Family Services, Community Council, Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital, Walker School, Needham High School, Becca Schmill Foundation and community members. The coalition will provide parents with reliable information about various online safety topics. The group is working on a newsletter to be distributed regularly. This month the Coalition was able to sponsor a cellphone and parenting class for parents free of charge.

Youth & Family Services continues to work closely with the students involved in our **Chapter 84**, which is a peer-to-peer led nicotine prevention group. Students are involved in various trainings and advocacy initiatives.

Youth & Family Services' staff regularly attend the meetings of **SPAN** --- Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham (formerly known as the Needham Coalition for Youth Substance Abuse Prevention). Youth & Family Services is represented on all 3 action teams and are also represented on the steering committee. There are several initiatives coming out of this group including creating online substance use support, peer support, community activities and educational webinars. Staff are also involved in strategic planning initiatives with the group.

Narcan - We have two staff who are currently trained in Narcan administration (aka Naloxone) through the Public Health Department. We are now more equipped to educate families on the use of Narcan to prevent fatal overdose, how to contact emergency responders, and the existence of the Good Samaritan Law in Massachusetts. While we cannot directly provide residents with Narcan due to required licensing, we are collaborating

with public health nurses on the best protocol to provide to families in need who may be facing stigma. Narcan is a life-saving measure that works as an opioid-antagonist which means that when opioid use overwhelms our brain's receptors and begins to cause respiratory distress, slurring of speech, nodding off and other signs of overdose - Narcan is an agent that binds quicker to our receptors, effectively "knocking off" the opioids, restoring the brain back to normal functioning and reversing the symptoms of overdose in a matter of minutes.

The **Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC)** meets regularly. Youth & Family Services has a representative at these meetings. Some of the staff have attended various training courses to help support their committee work around domestic violence. In addition, staff have joined a DVAC has a sub-committee that is working on a cable channel series to be aired in October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This is a 6-part series and staff will be participating in the 4th episode called Healthy relationships.

Staff have continued to be involved in the **Community Crisis Intervention Team (CCIT)** and attend these meetings regularly. This meeting is attended by the police department, fire, town social workers from various divisions, the health department, a SPAN representative, and Riverside Crisis Team. The team discusses community members in crisis who may need additional supports. Quarterly, there is a larger meeting that includes other community partners including the hospitals, Walker, local mental health, and substance use organizations. Quarterly this team meets with larger community providers (including local mental health agencies, BID, NWH, Walker) to discuss the overall community needs and trends. The team has experienced a larger number of youth in crisis as opposed to individual adults.

The Youth Resource Network is a roundtable including representatives from multiple youth-serving organizations that meets during the academic year to address specific needs of school-age youth and families that reside and/or attend public school in Needham. These meetings have been very popular this year as there are so many families in crisis. Youth & Family Services chairs this meeting monthly.

Staff are attending the quarterly **Youth Commission/Youth Services meeting**. Represented at the meeting are directors from towns such as Medfield, Hopkinton, Holliston, Wayland, Wellesley, Southborough, and several more. We have also joined a smaller group of Directors from the Metro-West region to increase collaboration. There has been an effort to bridge gaps between programs so that staff have more co-workers to collaborate with. There have also been conversations about working together on therapeutic groups and community presentations. We hosted an all staff meeting on October 26th – staff from 8 towns participated and staff were able to collaborate and share resources.

Youth & Family Services is part of the **Community Health Resource Group** which gets local agencies/departments together for information sharing/support. This meeting is attended on a regular basis.

Youth & Family Services is working closely with the **Needham Resiliency Network** to help support the mental health needs of the community as it relates to their work. There is possible collaboration on some grant funded initiatives and supporting community training on a larger

scale.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:

Case Management Services: Youth & Family Services staff helped many families in need with various support such as camps, gym, YMCA memberships, after school programs, childcare and transportation. In addition, staff have been able to connect families with some specific mental health supports and wrap around services.

Youth & Family Services has submitted the budget for FY25. There is a modest request for increased funds for expenditure. Youth & Family Services will also advocate to move the FT ARPA funded position as well into the operating budget – it will be a request of a half year position this year (ARPA funds the position until January) and then for a full year in FY26. This position is very important as it has helped us support 26 families with clinical services, helped to support the addition of one intern (which has helped to support an additional 7 families), helped to keep the waitlist down, and helped to support important groups and programming.

Youth & Family Services has made a proposal for the use of funds that have come in from Children's Hospital. The recommendation is for two full time positions, one a community base clinician and the second is a training coordinator. This proposal was approved at Town Meeting on 10/30/23 and Youth & Family Services has submitted job postings to the HR department for review. We hope to hire these positions after the holidays.

Youth & Family Services continues to raise money for family in need by promoting the **Crisis Donation Fund**. There is now the ability to donate to this fund online electronically, making it easier for people to donate. Youth & Family Services has received a number of donations this holiday season.

We were able to secure funds for **Interface Referral Service** and residents can now reach out directly to Interface for support. BID-Needham and Needham Public Schools have generously offered to help fund the program. We hope to keep these services as they help support residents, but they continue to increase their cost significantly, so staff are monitoring this.

Youth & Family Services has increased our intern program this year, we have two interns who have started. Kirstin Wilcox is from Boston College School of Social Work and Alexandra Nagle is from Smith College. Both interns will meet with clients, run groups, create programs, and sit on various committees.

Youth & Family Services has been very focused on training staff to make sure that staff have the clinical skills necessary to manage the current mental health crisis. Some of the trainings staff have attended include topics around play therapy interventions, trauma informed care, documentation, grief, the impact of screentime and social media, and suicide prevention.

We have been building our social media platforms in hope of reaching more community members with the information, programs, and events our department has to offer.

Facebook: Facebook.com/needhamyouthservices 720

Instagram: 618 Followers @NeedhamYouthServices

NotifyMe (Listserve): 1132 signed-up

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Patkin seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:17pm.

Below are the voted upon meeting dates for FY 2024:

Wednesday, September 13 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, October 11 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, November 8 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, December 13 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, January 10th	Town Hall
Wednesday, February 14 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, March 13 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, April 10 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, May 8 th	Center at the Heights
Wednesday, June 12 th	Town Hall

2024 Youth & Family Services Board Goals:

Clinical Work

- ❖ Eliminate all barriers to treatment and continuously assessing potential barriers on a quarterly basis (eg: transportation, cost, language capacity)
- ❖ Given the acute needs of the community, increase access to clinical services by increasing therapeutic services and crisis calls by 25%
- ❖ Ensure the availability of clinical staff to respond to families in crisis in need of additional support as evidence by responding to these situations with 24 hours.
- ❖ Increase the accessibility of Y&FS treatment by providing language capacity. All forms will be translated into multiple languages by the end of this year.

Larger Community Needs

- ❖ Review policies and procedures to ensure racial equality. All policies and procedures will be reviewed this year and ongoing as necessary.
- ❖ Make efforts to increase visibility to ensure that the community is aware of Youth & Family Services. This goal will be achieved by attending at least 3 community gatherings monthly and having a presence during larger events.
- ❖ Y&FS will host broader community events to raise awareness in areas of mental and social health. This will occur at least 3 times per year.
- ❖ Provide crisis support to the larger community at times of need. This goal will be achieved as necessary and will involve staff supporting community partners and residents.
- ❖ Y&FS will provide enrichment programs to the community. At least 4 enrichment programs will be provided every quarter.

Collaboration - the following activities will occur on a regular basis with at least 3 meetings per week

- ❖ Y&FS staff will meet regularly with community partners for collaboration
- ❖ Join or chair committees to address issues around substance use, racial equality, residents in need, and mental health

Professional Development

- ❖ Ensure that all staff are properly trained to manage crisis situations
- ❖ Staff will attend at least 3 trainings per year
- ❖ Clinical consultations will occur on an ongoing basis, at least monthly.

Vision: To support Needham in being a community where 100% of youth and families are mentally well.

Goals:

Goal 1: Y&FS will ensure that all residents will receive the needed services and will have access to care (previously – have a waitlist of 2 weeks or less and will have the availability to respond to crisis situations within 24 hours).

M1: Eliminate all barriers to treatment so that all residents will have access to needed services and programming

- ❖ Assess potential barriers on a quarterly basis (including transportation, cost, language capacity)
 - Staff will attend and discuss the issues in regular meetings both internally and externally
 - The issue will also be addressed in surveys
 - Staff will identify areas of concern and provide community outreach to help resolve these barriers
- ❖ Increase the accessibility of staff by providing additional language capacity
 - All forms will be translated into multiple languages this year
 - Y&FS will also increase the utilization of translation services for all work
 - Y&FS will advertise the availability of various language availability
 - Review policies and procedures to ensure equity

M2: Increase staffing to address issues around waitlist

- ❖ 1 additional staff member has been added with ARPA funds this year, through the budgeting process a request will be made to consider this position as a permanent one

M3: Increase space to help support increased staffing needs

- ❖ Explore options for additional spacing needs
 - Explore other options in town and assess accessibility in supervision
 - Share space with other town divisions – Council on Aging, library, RRC

M4: Staff consultation and training

- ❖ Staff will attend at least 5 trainings per year in order to stay educated on the best current practices

- ❖ Clinical consultations will occur on a monthly basis

M5: Community collaborations will continue to best support students and residents

- ❖ Y&FS will meet regularly with community partners for collaboration
- ❖ Staff will join committees to address issues around substance use, racial equity, residents in need and mental health

Goal 2: Every person, regardless of background, knows Y&FS exists

M1: Youth & Family Services will increase community outreach

- ❖ Staff will attend at least 3 community gatherings quarterly
- ❖ Y&FS will host 3 community events to raise awareness
- ❖ Provide crisis support for larger community

M2: Staff involvement in the town in various ways

- ❖ Organizing groups in the school systems
- ❖ Increase social media presence
- ❖ Provide crisis support to the larger community in times of need

M3: Increase promotions/swag

- ❖ Order items that youth will be interested in

M4: Staff will increase community connections

- ❖ Join various committees and alliances
- ❖ Meeting regularly with community partners for collaboration

M5: Increase language capacity

- ❖ Increase the utilization of translation services

M6: Work to ensure equity of services and availability

- ❖ Review policies and procedures to ensure racial equity – this will occur yearly
- ❖ Staff will get involved with various organizations to have visibility with all residents

Goal 3: Youth & Family Services will work to reduce stigma around mental health

M1: Organize and implement community conversations around mental health

- ❖ Y&FS will hold quarterly presentations around mental health
- ❖ Y&FS will join committees and other community groups to participate in conversations
- ❖ Staff will continue to explore other media outlets to get messaging out. This will include interviews with the Needham Channel, social media posts and newspaper articles

M2: Youth & Family Services will help to provide education to community members

- ❖ Provide educational opportunities for adults and youth (Mental Health First Aid)
- ❖ Increase social media presence around mental health education

M3: Youth & Family Services will offer various treatment options and various programming to ensure larger community participation that will build awareness around mental health

- ❖ Staff will have the ability to at least 1 unique treatment method that targets a specialty need

- ❖ Increase funding for specialty programming by \$5,000
- ❖ Assess equipment needs for specialty services
- ❖ Collaborate with other town divisions for space
- ❖ Y&FS will increase enrichment programming to target larger groups of youth who may not benefit from traditional therapy

M4: Increase awareness with promotional items and swag

- ❖ Research popular items and order
- ❖ Attend events where staff have the opportunity to give out items

Goal 4: Youth & Family Services will create global action plans for the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges helping Needham to be a community where the majority of residents understand mental health and know how to respond to someone experiencing mental health challenges.

M1: Ongoing community trainings will be held

- ❖ Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) will occur at least quarterly
- ❖ Teen MHFA will be implemented at Needham High School
 - 3 staff will be trained trainers in this model
 - Collaboration with NHS will occur to assess the ability to implement the training
- ❖ Engagement with the school system and setting up various partnerships/groups

M2: Youth & Family Services will assess ways to create visual aids to help reinforce the goal

- ❖ Order visual aids, swag
- ❖ Engage in social media posts and interview to help communicate information to the community

M3: Youth & Family Services will work to create a larger community awareness and adoption of the importance of this work

- ❖ Collaborate with stakeholders
- ❖ Attend various internal and external town meetings