

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from February 14th, 2024 Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:34pm, in person in the Highland Room of Needham Town Hall and on Zoom.

Board in Attendance: David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Susan Patkin, Karen Mullen, Massiel Gallardo, Joe Brienze, Natalia Ly

Director: Sara Shine

Minutes from January 10th, 2024: Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the January 10 minutes. Ms. Mullen seconded. The January 10th minutes unanimously approved by voice vote.

NEW AND OLD BUSINESS

A board discussion commenced about supporting the financial request for moving the Full Time ARPA Clinician position into the operating budget. Ms. Shine explained the request and how the request would help support the mental health needs of the community. The Board wrote a letter of support to be distributed to the Finance Committee. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the letter, Ms. Patkin seconded. There was a unanimous vote to approve the letter.

CLINICAL SERVICES

Ms. Shine explained that there has been a recent surge of calls for youth needing clinical services and support. There has also been an increase in the use of nicotine products – specifically Zyn. 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 66 active clients.
- We currently have 23 on our waitlist.
- We have provided 13 Parent/Community consultations.
- We have had 5 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 8-12 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 have been running lunch groups at 3 of the elementary schools, Eliot, Sunita Williams and Newman. The first cycle has been completed and staff are working with the school guidance department on getting another cycle started. 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 monthly.
- **Candid Conversations** – We are planning a social skills group for 4th and 5th graders. This group will start in March and meet weekly on Thursdays.

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 ADDRESS:

- 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:

Needham Unplugged: The 2024 edition is not far off and it is exciting to think that this program will be our 22nd year of operation. Needham Unplugged is a calendar that encourages families to spend time off their electronic devices. Needham Youth & Family Services partners with the YMCA, Needham Park and Rec, Needham Public Library and many other local organizations to offer activities for the month. This program has been copied in dozens of communities in Massachusetts and nationally.



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 was Monday, January 29th and had over 100 attendees as Dan's work was honored in addition to remembering Patrick and Patricia Forde. 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 Alzheimers 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. Staff have organized and helped to support the following presentations for this initiative: 1/31/24 – Navigating the Child and Teen Mental Health System presented by Riverside (postponed from 1/10 due to illness). This workshop was presentation by Kimberly Martin, Assistant Vice President of Children and Family Services at Riverside Community Care and she spoke on Navigating Mental Health Resources for Kids. On March 13th, Dr. Robert Brooks will be speaking on Nurturing Hope and Resilience in Children and Teens During Troubled Times and again this presentation will be held in person at Broadmeadow Elementary School Performance Center between 7:00-8:30. Finally, we are excited to announce that nationally recognized anxiety expert, Lynn Lyons, LICSW will be presenting a talk titled *Modeling Matters: What Parents Need to Know (and Do) to Decrease Stress, Worry, and Anxiety* on Thursday, May 9 at Broad meadow Performance Center from 7:00-8:30.

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 fun and peer mentoring. This program is filled to capacity with 21 pairs meeting regularly and we just added another pair to accommodate a little in need. This year we also have some “big” floaters to help make sure the “littles” can still participate when a “big” misses a meeting.

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 have two days planned for February Vacation, one at Cricle of Hope to help sort clothes and donations for homeless families and one with Youth & Family Services to help prepare for future programming. Staff are also planning some days for April Vacation.

Youth & Family Services has also started a new volunteer relationship with Newbridge on the Charles. We had a second event with them where 8 students joined to get connected to complete community service hours. At this event, 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.



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 another training is occurring March 4th.

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. The hope is that the class will not only give skills to the students but will also help eliminate barriers to treatment (including stigma and access), and will help identify students in need. The goal this year is to teach the entire 10th grade which has required hours of planning, scheduling, and preparing. Staff are in the second cycle of trainings, 6 out of the 20 classes have been trained. Each class required 4.5 hours of training time over six sessions. The session contact the following information:

Session 1: Mental health, what mental health challenges are, and how common they are in teens.

Session 2: The impact of mental health challenges on teens, how people with mental health challenges can get better, professionals who can help.

Session 3: Helping a friend who is in crisis because they are suicidal, introducing the tMHFA action plan (look, ask, listen, help your friend) and how it can be used in a crisis situation. A video shows a teen helping a friend who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Session 4: Helping a friend who is in another type of crisis, such as threatening violence or harm to others, engaging in nonsuicidal self-injury, or experiencing a traumatic event such as bullying, abuse or assault; practicing using the tMHFA Action Plan in these types of crisis situations

Session 5: How to help a friend who may be in crisis due to substance use, how to help if someone might be developing a mental health challenge. tMHFA does not teach you how to diagnose! It's information about being a supportive friend, encouraging friends to seek help and knowing when it is time to get a responsible, trusted adult involved.

Session 6: Recovery, resiliency and all final activities to complete the tMHFA course.

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 help connect residents to students who are looking to do various residential jobs such as lawn care, shoveling, babysitting and odd jobs. Staff are slowly recruiting more students for these lists that have helped to support older adults and other residents in need. Staff have also started 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.

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 staff also ran a fall session as many families participated. There is another session planned this winter as well. 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.

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.

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. The group is also planning a program which includes a showing of *Celling Your Soul*. The details are still in the works.

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 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, Neuroscience, and suicide prevention. One staff also attended the SEL Resource Showcase Conference on Jan. 18th and listened to the opening remarks made by Dr. Christina Cipriano, Assistant Professor at Yale University Child Study Center. It was a national conference bringing together a wide array of professionals interested in learning more about social and emotional learning.

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 729

Instagram: 623 Followers @NeedhamYouthServices

NotifyMe (Listserve): 1135 signed-up

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 10 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, February 14th	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

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Patkin seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.

Notes Written By: Sara Shine, Director