

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from January 8th, 2025 Board Meeting

Meeting commenced at 5:30pm in person and over Zoom in the Highland Room of Needham Town Hall.

Board in Attendance: Julie Stevens, Susan Patkin, Massiel Gallardo, Joe Brienze

Director: Sara Shine, LICSW

Staff: Alyssa Cellucci

Minutes from the November 13th, 2024: Mr. Brienze made a motion to approve the November 13th minutes. Ms. Gallardo seconded. The November 13th minutes unanimously approved by voice vote.

NEW AND OLD BUSINESS

A discussion continued on the strategic plan goals of the Youth Commission Board. Goals are attached as an addendum to this document.

Ms. Shine shared the flyer for the divorce group that clinical staff are running this month. The board discussed the plans for the group and ways to have age-appropriate conversations around divorce that cater to the understanding of the varying ages of children who participate. Staff plan to host a series of three workshops in January and February for parents and children to attend parallel to each other for support. We are marketing this program and anticipate registration from a number of families who have expressed interest.

The Board discussed the nominee for the 2025 Patrick and Patricia Forde Good Person Memorial Award and the plans for the public award ceremony scheduled to take place on Monday, January 27th, 2025 and is expected to be well-attended.

Staff are in the process of interviewing graduate-level interns for the fall.

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 63 active clients.
- We currently have 6 on our waitlist.
- We have provided 8 Parent/Community consultations.
- We have had 4 emergency consults this month.

NEW AND OLD BUSINESS

The Youth Commission Board voted to postpone the December 11th, 2024 meeting. Throughout the month of December, Youth & Family Services staff continued to monitor the needs of the community as the school year continues have seen an increase in referrals for clinical services as well as inquiries about programs for youth and parents. Staff are monitoring the department's waitlist for services and have started seeing new clients for both individual and family work and have been able to offer some in-home consultation services. Referrals for groups and other YFS programs continue and staff are gearing up for events planned in January.

- Programming –
 - **Parent Support Group/Coffee Talk** – Y&FS has continued to host a drop-in group for parents and caregivers to be able to get support from a clinician and peers. Four dates were planned for the fall schedule which centered around specific topics: “Back to School Butterflies”, “Children Love Language”, “Healthy Living”, and “Chat ‘n Chill”. Groups were held in the morning on the third Wednesday of each month from September to December. 6 families participated and staff are working on the logistics of offering these open office hours on a continuous basis for the community to utilize.
 - **Volunteers Around Needham, NewBridge on the Charles** – Volunteers Around Needham provides an opportunity for students in grades 7-12 to participate in single-day service projects in the community. Staff have been closely working with NewBridge on the Charles in Dedham, a senior living facility, to help high school students connect with the volunteer program and earn hours towards their graduation requirement, while making meaningful intergenerational connections. Staff have helped to offer multiple sessions for students to get connected to this organization. On September 25th, staff hosted a kickoff orientation which allowed students to tour the campus, meet the residents and participate in a group art activity. 3 students participated and have reported back that they have interest in pursuing volunteer roles with NewBridge going forward. Referrals to NewBridge continue as new students reach out to the office seeking community service opportunities.
 - **6th Grade Workshop** – Following the success of the workshop hosted on September 18th, staff are in the midst of planning another half-day workshop to offer in the new year to focus on building confidence and social skills as students rise to middle school through interactive games and team-building activities. Students learn communication skills through name games and write a letter to their future selves which staff will mail to them at the end of the school year.
 - **Social Skills Groups** – Staff have wrapped up the current series of social skills groups for youth in elementary school and have opened registration for the next cycles running from January through March. These groups work on social skills, affect management, and coping strategies while building on peer

connection. The November-December series of the 2-3rd grade group had 6 participants and the 4-5th grade group had 5 participants. Staff have continuously updated the group curriculum for new members and added new activities each session. The next cycles are scheduled to start on January 14 and January 16.

For high school students, Ms. Shine discussed plans for staff to help facilitate a senior-first year mentoring program to help younger incoming students with the adjustment to the new school.

- **Family Night** – Y&FS hosted another Family Night on December 12th at the Center at the Heights from 5:30-7pm. The purpose of this event is to help families connect with each other and the Y&FS staff through dinner, games, arts and crafts, and cookie decorating. Staff also added a photobooth which families enjoyed. The event was very successful and maxed out at 70 attendees with a waitlist. Staff will plan the spring event in the new year.
- **Community Connections Office Hours** – Mr. Serio and Ms. Kozak have established office hours to strategically place themselves in the community to offer on-the-spot case management, referrals, and check-ins with community members. Additionally, both staff will administer surveys to persons served in order to track and assess the needs of the community on an ongoing basis.
- Over the months of November-December, at Needham Free Public Library:
 - 4 patrons made contact with Community Connections staff. Referrals were made for social skills groups, information was provided through the resource guide, and counseling referrals were made.
- Over the months of November-December, at the Needham Community Council:
 - 3 patrons made contact with Community Connections staff. Referrals were made for social skills groups, and information was provided through the resource guide.
- Over the months of November-December, at the Turkey Hunt with Park and Recreation and at the Charles River YMCA:
 - 7 patrons made contact with Community Connections staff and referrals were made.

Additionally over the month of December, connections were established at Needham Housing Authority and Needham Charles River YMCA. Staff are planning to offer Community Connections hours in these locations.

- **Drop-in Teen Group** - Mr. Serio has offered a weekly Drop-in Teen group in the Community Room of Needham Free Public Library. This group is a free opportunity for middle and high school students to congregate and develop healthy relationships, while having snack and learning about mental health and wellness related information through fun activities. Since its inception, the group has had over 20 students in attendance each week, with weekly themes varying from expanding their emotional vocabulary, practicing mindful meditation, and practicing opposite action to cope with emotional distress.
- **Coffee Talk for High Schoolers** – Coffee Talk is a drop-in morning group for high school students that will continue this school year. Topics include: peer pressure, homework stress, socialization, and NHS cellphone policies. The

last academic year had 10-14 students that attended on a regular basis and we hope to engage the same amount of students or more this year. Staff are also coordinating with the high school on the logistics of launching a 9th grade “New To Needham” walk-in group during X-Block. The purpose of this group would be to support 9th graders new to Needham High School who are coming from out of state or private schools and support them around social connections. Topics include getting to know each other as well as open ended conversations how to support new students and connect them with others as well as learn the routine and activities at NHS.

- **Lunch Groups** – Lunch groups continue to be successful. Staff are running lunch groups at 3 of the elementary schools: Sunita Williams, Newman and Broadmeadow during the academic year and are coordinating with other schools to offer groups. Each group has between 5-8 students who have been referred to the group by school guidance staff. These groups are designed to provide a supportive and engaging environment for students, fostering social skills and friendships.
- **Diversion Program:** Mr. Serio continues to collaborate with the police department on client diversion cases. He currently has a handful of students on the caseload.

Staff attended a training on IDECIDE, which is a therapeutic substance misuse treatment program. Ms. Kozak has already begun to incorporate this training into the Substance Awareness Program. Ms. Kozak completed IDECIDE training on October 23rd.

COMMUNITY ISSUES BEING ADDRESS:

Needham Youth & Family Services is awaiting to receive data from the 2023 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey once this data is made available to the public

- 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

FURTHER PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES:

Peer Tutor – This program pairs high school students in grades 10-12 with younger students in grades 3-8 in need of academic support and mentoring after-school. This program is an opportunity for high school students to receive their 30 hours of community service, completing half of their requirement for graduation in one academic year. Ms. Stein hosted an orientation session for tutors and this year's program is already underway with tutor and tutee pairs meeting at the Needham Free Public Library, as we coordinate adding another option for tutors to attend the Extended Day Program at Eliot Elementary. The program will run from October 2024 to April 2025.

VIP Peer Mentoring Program - This program pairs high school students with 3rd, 4th and 5th graders to offer a weekly space for socialization, a space to play games, and peer mentoring. The 2024-2025 program is underway with 20 pairs of Bigs and Littles. It continues to be a positive experience for the mentor-mentee pairs and to see the development of some wonderful peer mentoring relationships. This year staff also have some "Big" floaters to help make sure the "Littles" can still participate when a Big missed a meeting. Staff held an orientation training for the BIGS on October 8th where participants reviewed guidelines of the program. The first session of VIP was held on October 22nd at 6:30pm and staff and participants are very excited to kick off another year.

SHOP (Students Helping Older People) – SHOP is an intergenerational program where we pair students with older adults to make connections and help with grocery shopping. This need started as a response to the post-pandemic challenges faced by the older community in public but the need continues to prevail. This program will give students an opportunity to volunteer directly within the community in addition to connecting with the older population, reinforce the importance of relationships, especially to more vulnerable populations during a time when many connections are lost. Y&FS has also talked to some local housing for older adults with the idea that the program could be brought directly to these communities as well. We currently have 6 students signed up to volunteer.

Mindful Community Lecture Services – Talking About Mental Health. 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. The committee is actively researching and contacting various speakers in an effort to meet the most pressing needs of families in our community. Upcoming events include:

January 16th, 2025 in Powers Hall: Community Screening of "Screenagers" in collaboration

with St. Joseph School

March 5th, 2025 at Broadmeadow Elementary School: “Emotions 101” with Deborah Farmer Kris

April 2nd, 2025 in Powers Hall: “Essential Parenting Conversations” with Michelle Icard who will be presenting to school guidance staff during professional development and host the presentation for parents that evening

The department has partnered with St. Joseph School to premiere the documentary “Screenagers”, an award-winning film that probes into the vulnerable corners of family life and depicts messy struggles over social media, video games, and academics.” The film offers solutions on how we can help our kids navigate the digital world. Staff plan to show the movie and offer time and space for a discussion.

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 in the midst of planning for February and April 2025 school breaks.

Staff had two successful days during February vacation 2024, one at Circle of Hope to help sort clothes and donations for homeless families and one with Youth & Family Services to help prepare for future programming. Staff implemented two days of April vacation at Temple Beth Shalom and had 15 volunteers. Volunteers helped them clean up their grounds, laid mulch in the playground area, put new sand in the playground sandbox, and replenished the pollinator garden box in addition to created 250 kits for preschool kids for a bookmaking project. Summer 2024 dates have been secured. Staff will host days at Temple Beth Shalom, Circle of Hope, the Needham Community Council, Clean up at Riverside Park with Parks and Forestry, The Needham Community Farm (2 days), and the Needham Fire Station.

Cuerd@s- Staff are collaborating with a local non-profit, Cuerd@s, to host a parent and teen workshop. Cuerd@s is an organization that teaches embroidery to groups to create tactile patches for sensory seeking people to use on their everyday clothing. This workshop will be a space for parents to make clothing for their children while processing the stressors or parents and share strategies.



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. Eleven people were trained on March 4, 2024 including all of the school nurses. Youth & Family Services and Public Health have trained all big groups of staff at the Needham Housing Authority and the Needham Community Council. Thank you to the Needham Community Council for sponsoring these trainings. There has been a huge increase in interest in this training. In addition, the department now has a total of 6 staff who 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 have completed training the entire 10th grade and plan to continue the work next school year.

Each class required 4.5 hours of training time over six sessions. The session contains 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 non-suicidal 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.

Additionally, staff are currently being trained to offer **Adult Mental Health First Aid** to the community. Ms. Kozak was trained on Adult Mental Health First Aid on October 29th, 2024. This will allow the department to implement this training more broadly across the community to make sure all needs can be effectively met.

Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) training– 2 staff members, Mrs. Whirley and Mrs. Weitzel, completed QPR training and have started to provide training as instructors. Staff are working on developing a training schedule for this. “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 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. We have shared those lists with multiple residents who have reached out especially as the winter months approach for snow shoveling services.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:

Pollard Middle School Student Appreciation Day - Mr. Serio and Social Work Intern, Yin Teng, presented at for Student Teacher Appreciation Day on October 23rd. During these workshops, staff informed over 80 Pollard students about programs offered by Needham Youth Services, including the Volunteers Around Needham (VAN) program. Students then completed appreciation cards for each of the VAN community partner agencies.

Needham Harvest Fair – Youth & Family Services hosted a table at this year's Harvest Fair

on Greene's Field in Needham on Sunday, September 29th. Staff were able to make connections with residents and members of the community to discuss programming and clinical services. This year the department's "swag" and goodies seemed to be popular with the young people, including sensory fidgets and textured mindfulness stickers as well as a temporary "tattoo" station.

Jog for Joy- Highrock Church Metrowest hosts their annual Jog for Joy. The Jog for Joy is an annual 5k which started in 2019. The fun run is in support of mental health resources for the community and build awareness around mental health, decreasing stigma. A portion of the proceeds continues to support Youth & Family Services. This run was hosted on June 9th at 10AM.

Staff have partnered with the **Charles River YMCA** to provide scholarships to youth to attend YMCA sleepaway camps in New Hampshire throughout the summer months, for families who have limited financial means. All youth reported having a significantly positive experience, most having never attended camp before, and expressed a desire to return next summer. Staff will continue to work with the YMCA to make this a reality for youth in the community.

International Overdose Awareness Day - Youth & Family Services joined a group last year dedicated to planning and implementing the Annual International Overdose Awareness Day and continued the collaboration again this year. The 3rd Annual vigil occurred on Thursday August 29th with the annual flag display commemorating those affected by overdose. Y&FS was able to coordinate two student volunteers to assist with the flag display in front of Memorial Park.

Youth & Family Services has joined a group led by the Needham Housing Authority called **Family Self Sufficiency Program Coordinating Committee**. This purpose of this program is to provide a comprehensive range of services including education, job training, financial literacy and homeownership assistance which will equip participants with the tools and resources necessary to achieve self-sufficiency and break the cycle of poverty. The first meeting occurred March 12th and staff will continue to be involved in this initiative.

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.

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. Director, Sara Shine, was part of a SPAN community event titled "Edibles, Vapes & Spiked Seltzers: Tips for talking with your teens about drugs & alcohol in today's world." The event hosted Dr. Safdar Medina as he spoke about tips for talking with teens about drugs and alcohol, followed by a panel with Pollard Middle School Principal, Tamatha Bibbo, Sara Shine and a SALSA student.

Narcan Administration - 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 municipal **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. Two breakout groups have recently formed with municipal staff, one for case management and prevention and another for clinical consultation, and these groups meet monthly. Needham will host the next All-Staff meeting on March 11th, 2025 in Powers Hall.

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.

STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Staff members are continuing to work on Post-Graduate Certificate in Advanced Clinical Practice for Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) through trainings at Boston College School of Social Work. The Certificate in Advanced Clinical Practice for Children, Youth, and Families provides a deep exploration of theoretical perspectives of attachment, trauma informed care, and neuroscience, as they relate to the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of these groups.

De-escalation, Diffusion and Self-Care for Library Staff: Christine Weitzel and Kristina Kozak participated in the Needham Public Library's professional development day to present on techniques on how to de-escalate and diffuse difficult situations and then how to engage in self-care. The presentation included whole-group techniques, and then small group break out scenarios and ended with meditation. The presentation lasted 90 minutes and was presented to approximately 30 staff members.

On September 12th, Christine Weitzel attended a training titled "Trauma Informed De-Escalation: Calming the "I" of the Storm" that was hosted by the MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services & AdCare Educational Institute.

Playmaker University: Two clinical staff members have attended Playmaker University hosted by Life is Good in October of this year. This training is a two day in-person training in Beverly, MA. "Life is good Playmakers is national movement, started in 1989, to heal and strengthen children – especially those whose lives have been deeply impacted by trauma." Playmakers Life is Good Training is a program that focuses on enhancing both physical and mental well-being through running and walking. It is designed to promote a positive mindset, personal growth, and community engagement. The training usually involves structured workouts, group sessions, and motivational elements, all aimed at helping participants improve their fitness levels while fostering a "Life is Good" philosophy. This philosophy emphasizes optimism, gratitude, and resilience, encouraging participants to find joy and purpose in their physical activities and daily lives.

Mr. Serio attended an in-person **DBT** training through the Boston Child Study Center in September. This immersive, introductory in-person four-day workshop introduced clinicians to the foundational principles and techniques essential to provide Dialectical Behavior Therapy

(DBT) to fidelity with an emphasis on working with adolescents and families, providing our clinical staff with further professional development to deliver the utmost quality of care to our families.

Mr. Serio was trained as an instructor for teen Mental Health First Aid on December 10-12th.

Ms. Kozak was trained to be certified in Mental Health First Aid and trained as an instructor for Teen Mental Health First Aid from November 12-14th. She also attended at Serv Safe Alcohol Instructor program from November 19-20th and was trained in “Supportive Parent of Anxious Childhood Emotion (SPACE) from November 24-25th.

Ms. Weitzel attended the Growing Up Mindful course, which involved practice and discussion of the best practices for teaching mindfulness to kids and teens. Each week, there was a live hour-long meeting as well as supplemental videos. A few of the weekly themes included introductions to each other and mindful awareness, understanding the research and neuroscience behind mindfulness, how to get kids engaged and willing to buy in to practice, adaption of mindfulness to specific populations and various diagnostic disorders or symptoms, and the importance of one's own practice of mindfulness and understanding its role in treatment.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:

Staffing Update: The two new positions funded by money from Children’s Hospital have been filled. Youth & Family Services has welcomed Anthony Serio as the Community Outreach Clinician and Kristina Kozak as the Community Training Coordinator. Both new employees started in June 2024. We also had Grace Burnham join the team as a full-time clinician in September. In addition, we have two graduate-level interns, Maddie DuBaldo and Yin Teng from Boston College School of Social Work.

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 Resource Guide: A resource guide has been established, both in electronic and in paper form for the community to be aware of different resources and trainings that are available in Needham and surrounding communities. The following topics are explored: neurodiversity, disabilities, special education, school avoidance, mental health support, LGBTQIA+, substance use, domestic and/or interpersonal violence, suicide and self-harm, basic needs, eating disorders, and bullying. In each section, there is information about the topic, available trainings by the Department of Youth and Family Services, and available resources that take referrals.

Curriculum: As part of the new community training coordinator position, Ms. Kozak has been establishing new short-term curricula that are available for families in need. A restorative justice training is being established as a program for students who have bullied others. This 6-session course is designed to explore relationship, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration and how they impact bullying. In the month of October, one client has been referred to this program. A school avoidance training is being established. This will be a short-term program that occurs in-home and include counseling and parent training to increase a child’s willingness to

attend school. The tentative date for this program is 12/1.
A de-escalation program is also being established. This will be a short-term program to teach family members how to de-escalate a dysregulated family member. This program can occur in-home or at any private site. The tentative date for this program is 12/1.

Youth & Family Services’ budget for FY25 has been approved by the finance committee and Town Meeting. There is a modest request for increased funds for expenditure in addition to keeping the FT ARPA funded position, moving this position to the operating budget.

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. Most recently the Needham Community Council has donated \$5,000 and we continue to receive donations and support from residents towards this fund.

Interface Referral Service is a service that helps connect residents to therapeutic services when needed. Funds for this service were secured last year but the contract ends in June – HHS is working on the contract for FY25. BID-Needham and Needham Public Schools have generously offered to help fund the program as they have in the past. The hope is to keep these services as they help support residents, but they continue to increase their cost significantly, so staff are monitoring this.

Staff 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: Town of Needham Youth & Family Services 766 Followers
Instagram: 653 Followers @NeedhamYouthServices
NotifyMe (Listserv): 1128 signed-up

Proposed schedule for FY 2025:

Wednesday, September 11 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, October 9 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, November 13 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, December 11 th	Town Hall (Voted to postpone to January meeting)
Wednesday, January 8th	Town Hall
Wednesday, February 12 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, March 12 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, April 9 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, May 14 th	Center at the Heights
Wednesday, June 11 th	Town Hall

Ms. Patkin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Brienze seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:20pm.

Notes Written By: Alyssa Cellucci
Reviewed By: Sara Shine

Youth Commission Board Strategic Plan Goals 2024

Vision: To support Needham in being a community where 100% of youth & 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 ability 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 this issue in regular meetings both internally and externally
 - This 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 the accessibility in supervision
 - Share space with other town divisions – COA/library/RRC
 - M4: Staff consultation and training
 - Staff will attend at least 5 trainings per year in order to stay educated on best current practices
 - Clinical consultation 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 equality, 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 at 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 equality – 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 the stigma of mental health
 - M1: Organize and implement community conversations around mental health
 - Y&FS will hold quarterly presentations around MH
 - 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 Cable Channel, social media posts and newspaper articles.
 - M2: Youth & Family Services will help to provide education to community members
 - Provide educational opportunities for adults & youth (MHFA)
 - Increase social media presence around MH 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 offer 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 increased 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
 - MHFA trainings will occur on at least quarterly.
 - tMHFA will be implemented in the HS.
 - 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/interviews to help communicate the information to the community.
- M3: Youth & Family Services will work to create a larger community awareness and adoption the importance of this work
 - Collaborate with stakeholders
 - Attend various internal and external town meetings