

Needham Youth Commission

Annual Town Report - Fiscal Year 2001

PURPOSE

The mission of the Needham Youth Commission is to provide leadership and a community focus on youth and family issues and to promote community wellness by: Identifying and addressing youth and family needs; Advocating for youth and family interests; Partnering with other youth and family serving agencies; Developing and implementing quality programs and services; and Educating and communicating with the public regarding youth and family issues.

The Needham Youth Commission operates as a mental health resource offering a wide array of confidential clinical and programmatic services to children, adolescents, and families. While the Youth Commission's services are reaching more people and having a greater impact, it is clear that the need for such services far outstrips the department's resources; thus, many in Needham are not receiving support. The Youth Commission has worked diligently to construct meaningful services designed to meet the increasing and ever-changing needs of the Needham community.

BUDGETARY DATA

Salaries	\$ 160,340
Purchase of Service	\$ 2,800
Expenses	\$ 1,990
Capital Outlay	\$ 2,100
Total Department Budget	\$ 167,230

Staffing: 3 full-time, 1 part-time, 1 intern (unpaid), volunteers

FISCAL YEAR 2001 HIGHLIGHTS

SAVE Program (Seminars on Anger and Violence Education): The issues of Anger and Violence are not new to youth; teens live in a culture where these topics are on constant parade. Prior to graduation from elementary school, a young person will witness 100,000 acts of violence on television alone. The SAVE Program, funded by the Tolman Trust Fund, worked with elementary school students teaching anger/violence prevention and intervention techniques. SAVE utilized the visual model of an AEscalator as students charted how anger can Aescalate from a benign situation to one which can spiral out of control. Over the course of the past year, the SAVE Program worked with more than 125 elementary school students.

LINCS Program: The LINCS Program (Loss Information and Community Support) was designed in collaboration with the Needham Public Schools and was funded by the Tolman Trust Fund. LINCS' mission was to assist youth in addressing the frequently upsetting, overwhelming, and confusing issue of Aloss. This included, for example, the death of a parent or grandparent, the separation/divorce of parents, the loss of a cherished pet or possession, or the break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend. Loss is a topic youth will be dealing with more and more as they get older, and it is critical to understand the impact loss can have upon a young person's academic, physical, social, and emotional well-being. The LINCS program engaged more than 300 youth in FY 2001.

Teen Dating Violence Program: In conjunction with the Needham Domestic Violence Action Committee and the Norfolk County Sheriff's Office, the Youth Commission provided seminars on Teen Dating Violence for all 9th graders at Needham High School. The seminars were designed to teach the unique aspects of Teen Dating Violence, how to recognize the warning signs, and ways to access community supports. Over 300 youth were involved in this program over the past year.

Parenting Program: This program was created to encourage parents to continue to develop their parenting skills. Over the course of the past four years more than 500 parents have attended presentations by Dr. Robert Brooks on a variety of child-rearing issues. In addition approximately 300 parents have completed the Youth Commission's 12-hour AActive Parenting of Teens groups.

Employment and Volunteer Programs: The Employment Program consists of two primary services: 1) Youth are linked with residents and provided around-the-home support in the form of babysitting, yard-work, and snow removal; and 2) Youth investigated employment opportunities in local businesses such as offices and restaurants. Additionally, the Volunteer Resource Directory was created to inform youth of area volunteer opportunities. In FY 2001 these programs fielded 425 inquiries.

Individual/Family Counseling: The Masters level clinicians on staff are skilled at working with youth and their families experiencing difficulties with issues such as family discord, loss, drugs, alcohol, stress, and other mental health concerns. Who uses these counseling services? They are neighbors, cousins, children, and friends; they are people with no health insurance or expired health insurance; they are people who are grappling with either a short or long-term problem; and mostly, they are people who have the hope and determination that life can bring greater satisfaction and reward. Perhaps the most frightening area of concern is that young people are encountering more complex issues at a younger age. It is not unusual to work with an elementary age youth coping with a significant loss, a middle school student coping with parental alcohol use, or a high school student with a serious drug problem. In the past year 631 hours of counseling hours were provided to Needham youth and their families.

Counseling/Psycho-Education Groups: Group counseling/psycho-education is a practical and effective mode of treatment and allows the staff the opportunity to interact with greater numbers of people. Group interventions offers a unique opportunity for young people to learn about issues which effect their peers and to receive feedback from their peers regarding issues such as: divorce, stress, self-esteem, abuse, depression, social skills, loss, drugs/alcohol, and violence/anger. Of special note in FY 2001 was the AExtreme Looks@ program, a four-day mind/body/spirit group for girls. In FY 2001, 233 hours of group counseling/psycho-education services were provided.

Substance Abuse Awareness Program: The Youth Commission continued to offer a structured 15-hour Substance Abuse Awareness Program (SAAP) for drug/alcohol-involved youth. This service provides an assessment of current substance use, intervention, education for youth and their families, and counseling services to support healthy lifestyles. All participants and their parents must attend an Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meeting to assist in transmitting the message that drugs and alcohol can impact any person without regard to age, gender, or status. In FY 2001, more than 150 hours of SAAP services were provided to youth.

RAY of Hope Program: RAY (**R**ecognize **A** **Y**outh) was established by the Needham Youth Commission in an effort to acknowledge the outstanding service and positive contributions that young people are making to the Needham community. Working in collaboration with the Needham Business Association, each month a young person is selected as the RAY of Hope recipient and is awarded a certificate from the Youth Commission and a check from a member of the Needham Business Association. The RAY of Hope program validates youth and recognizes their role in making the Needham community a special place to live.

Diversion/Restitution Program: In conjunction with the Needham Police Department and the Dedham District Court, the Youth Commission continued to offer those who have committed minor violations of the law the opportunity to participate in community service work in lieu of further court action. The Youth Commission=s role is to work with offenders and their families to identify the motivations for their behavior, to provide support as required, and to oversee the placement and completion of community service. In the past year, participating youth have completed assignments at the following sites: Needham Public Library, Needham Police Department, Needham Fire Department, and Council on Aging. In Fiscal Year 2001, the Youth Commission monitored 335 hours of community service to the Town of Needham.

Peer Tutor Program: The Youth Commission=s Peer Tutor Program represents a progressive youth-to-youth collaboration. This program matches high school students with middle and elementary school students in need of academic or organizational/study skills assistance. The Youth Commission=s role consisted of outreach to potential participants, training of high school volunteers, monitoring weekly tutoring sessions, providing support if problems occur, and facilitating communication between volunteers and participant families. Over the past year, Peer Tutor Program volunteers provided 1,100 hours of support to younger students.

Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD): This collaboration with students at Needham High School focused on a range of issues that impact youth. SADD members devoted their energies this year toward a “Sober Night” and a survey of youth regarding what activities/programs they would like to see instituted at the Needham Teen Center.

Books and Bridges - The Mother/Daughter Book Club: Using literature as a Abridge@ between generations, this program was created to provide girls and their mothers an opportunity to share a common experience and to address issues of mutual concern.

In FY 2001, 72 girls and mothers participated in this program.

Project VAN: Project VAN (**V**olunteers **A**round **N**eedham) offers youth ages 13 to 17 the opportunity to work as part of a team providing valuable community service to non-profit organizations in Needham. Sites included Charles River ARC, Avery Crossings, Needham Public Library, Wingate at Needham, and Briarwood Health Care. VAN participants provided more than 328 person hours of free volunteers services over the past summer.

Transitions Program The distance between Pollard Middle School and Needham High School is less than a mile, but for the majority of students the leap from 8th grade to 9th grade is a challenge that looms larger than a galaxy. The Transitions Program worked with 8th graders at the conclusion of their year to prepare them for high school, and with 9th graders in the fall to better acclimate them to their new building and to the social, academic, and emotional road ahead. Funded by the Needham Education Foundation, Transitions worked with over 400 students in the past year.

Graduate/Undergraduate Internship Program: In FY 2001, the Youth Commission welcomed a clinical Graduate School Intern from Northeastern to provide individual, family, and group counseling services as well as extensive work on the Substance Abuse Awareness Program. In FY 01 this intern provided over 600 hours of free service to the Needham community.

Seminars/Workshops /Presentations: The Youth Commission designed and facilitated numerous trainings in the past year including a training for new Needham Public School Staff, Babysitter Training Seminars, PEEPS (**P**ositive **E**ducation for **E**xperiencing **P**eer **S**tress), Picture Perfect, Active Parenting of Teens, and many others. In FY 2001 the Youth Commission worked 2,000 children, 2,141 youth, parents, and professionals in seminars and/or workshops.

Networks Book: With funding from the Tolman Trust Fund and the Exchange Club, the Youth Commission researched and publish -ed “Networks: A Directory of Mental Health Supports and Services.” This document lists twenty categories of services (over 300 pages in length) and was distributed extensively within the Needham Public Schools, town departments, and non-profit organizations in town.

E-Mail Sign Up: In an effort to inform youth and families of the services of the Needham Youth Commission, e-mail addresses from residents were accepted and information sent regarding programs. By the end of FY 01 hundreds had registered for this free service. To register, residents may send e-mail complete with their name and the age(s) of their children to: Needhamyouthcommissison@town.needham.ma.us.

Partnerships: The Youth Commission devotes considerable time to assisting youth and family-related groups advance their message and impact. In the past year the Youth Commission collaborated with groups such as:

3	Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC)	3	YMCA
3	Deaconess Glover Hospital	3	Needham Business Association
3	Needham Community Wellness Collaborative	3	School Crisis Response Protocol
3	Needham Public Library	3	Needham Board of Health
3	Needham Park and Recreation	3	Riverside Community Care
3	Massachusetts Prevention Center	3	Needham AIDS Committee
3	Needham Teen Center	3	Needham Public Schools
3	Community Health Network Area	3	Olin College

Perhaps the “partnership” highlight of the year was the establishment of the Needham Teen Center. The Youth Commission was instrumental in raising funds and leading the charge to make this concept a reality. Opening in the winter of 2001, the Teen Center provided a safe and healthy environment for Needham youth on Friday nights.

The Youth Commission received grants and/or donations from the following organizations: Westwood Pembroke Health System; Deaconess Glover Hospital; Needham Police Union; Exchange Club of Needham; Friends of Needham Youth; Tolman Trust Fund; and many others.

Publications: The Youth Commission created and/or distributed the following original publications in FY 2000:

- # Needham Youth Card (updated)
- # Suicide Education Kit
- # Parent Guide to Teen Parties (updated)
- # Ask the Youth Commission (bimonthly newspaper column)
- # Youth Source (newsletter)
- # Parenting Literature (developed in collaboration with the Community Wellness Collaborative)

FISCAL YEAR 2002 FORECAST

The coming year holds enormous promise and challenge for the Youth Commission:

- # The Youth Commission will welcome back Deborah Winnick as Chair and Lorene Whyte as Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors. They will be joined by returning members Connie Barr, Tom Lambert John Romeo, Rebecca Sherman as well as new member Joey Nowd.
- # Deaconess Glover Hospital will again underwrite AActive Parenting of Teens@ seminars.
- # The Youth Commission was a recipient of a grant from the Needham Education Foundation to establish the “Survivor” program.
- # Thanks to the partnership of the Data Processing Department, the Youth Commission will establish an extensive web site as part of the town’s website. Visit the site at: www.town.needham.ma.us/youth.htm.
- # In collaboration with Olin College and the Needham Public Schools, the Youth Commission will launch the NOTE Program in FY 2002.
- # A new community effort entitled “Needham Unplugged” will be launch in FY 2002

BOARD OF DIRECTORS - FY 2001

Debbie Winnick, Chair
Lori Whyte, Vice-Chair
Connie Barr
Bismoy Dasgupta
Toms Lambert
Barbara Popper
John Romeo
Becca Sherman