

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from December 9, 2020 Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:32 pm, via Zoom per Governor Charles Baker order of March 2020 during COVID Crisis

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Kevin Keane, Josh Tuttelman, Karen Mullen, Adrienne Anderson, Arina Collins, Karen Mullen

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Staff Clinician: Ms. Carolyn Tracey

Motion to Approve November 18 Minutes made by David seconded by Josh. Minutes unanimously approved.

Community Collaboration and Initiatives

Ms. Shine noted that the department is supporting Needham smoothly on the macro and micro level around many increased mental health needs. Community collaborations continue across committee meetings and organizations. Significant increase in counseling and emergency consults needs continue to be met. In general, virtual programs are going well.

- 1) Suicide coalition is now called the Alliance for Safety and Wellness of the Greater Needham Community. It meets bi-weekly. Ms. Shine ensures the inclusion of Metco students and families as well as those who work in Needham. The December 8th community meeting included the COA, several community members, several members of the Clergy Association, BEI, and Riverside Community Health and the short-term and the post vaccination world. One of the major discussion topics--how to better share information across silos. The group is also connecting groups that may not have connected prior to COVID-19. This group is also focusing on next initiatives such as webinars, magnets with mental health information and further meetings to connect groups.
- 2) Y&FS is also involved in a number of initiatives to address the issues around racism and racial inequalities including policy review and trainings.

Members asked about the broader community outreach. It was noted it was good that Ms. Shine was working on social isolation issues within the senior community through the COA.

Community Needs/Crisis Response Discussion

Ms. Shine asked for input from the Board as there is no foot traffic through the office.

It was noted that the increase in positive cases and students having to quarantine is making students nervous but that the school is doing a great job at contact tracing. It was discussed that the hardest part is not being able to be as social and for students to not see each other

regularly. There were additional discussions about mental health and abuse that is being recognized because of virtual learning and what teachers are seeing. In response, Ms. Tracey noted that Youth included DCF at their bi-weekly internship collaborative meeting week of November 30th. The DCF topic included their training procedures/mandated reporter procedures. She noted that there are more numbers with mandated paper filing during the pandemic and increase in cases, but the follow-up takes more times as the housing visits need to be spaced to meet distancing requirements.

Board members noted that the letter from the high school principal each week keeps everyone connected. He also noted that the Light Up Needham project seems to be building a sense of community; more lights than 2019.

Programs and Services

Ms. Tracey provided an overview

- Ms. Tracey is working with Rohan Roberts-Goldman, the intern from Lesley University, on an expressive art program for the elementary schools in third, fourth and fifth grade. The theme is developing coping and self-esteem tools. The 20-person class filled quickly, and they are planning a second session. A program for high school seniors is under development with Rohan.
- A program ran on cyber wellness December 15 with 25 middle school students. Ms. Tracey prefers a more intimate setting to encourage questions so smaller workshops are planned for January and February 2021. Ms. Tracey conducted a survey of parents. She noted the awkward balance families experience between technology is the connection during the pandemic and the need for unplugged time.
- Peer Tutor is thriving with 40 pairs
- VIP is using Zoom breakout rooms to great effect.
- The Rolling Van may occur in April.
- Ms. Shine noted in conjunction with Ms. Tracey's overview that committee meetings include a shifting perspective on substance prevention as well as racial equity issues. She noted again that the flexibility of Zoom /remote scheduling translates to more counseling sessions. She noted behavioral interventions such as bullying prevention is now a behavioral prevention program with a racial equity track developed within it, and the substance use prevention program continues.

Staff and members discussed who is accessing the programs – followers on various social media sites, the Listserv, guidance recommendations and other community outlets. It was noted that these programs are helping youth connect and many more are participating due to the current crisis regardless of previous mental health.

New/Old Business

- Adrienne has been promoted out of SRO role to Detective--so she will leave her position on the board when a replacement is found.
- Forde Award Discussion – the Board Members and staff processed the Forde Award process and how to best recognize all of the great work residents are doing.

The Board asked about the March Unplugged program. Ms. Shine noted that it would a socially Zoom event same as March 2020.

The Board supports continuing No Homework Night to fight pandemic fatigue.

David made a motion to adjourn at 6:15 pm, seconded by Julie. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Next meeting: January 13.

Notes by Faith Crisley, Recording Secretary
Edited by Sara Shine, Director