

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from November 10, 2021, Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:30 pm, in the Great Plain Room Needham Town Hall

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, Karen Mullen, David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Nicole McMahon,

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Motion to Approve October 13 Minutes made by Mr. Bookston seconded by Ms. Patkin. Minutes unanimously approved.

Ms. Shine noted that all the new staff would be at the December meeting.

Community Needs/Crisis Response

Referrals are up and the waitlist is growing. Ms. Shine has also seen a need for both the Behavioral Intervention Program and the Substance Misuse Awareness Program and the hope is that the curriculums for both of these programs can be reviewed in the near future.

Y&FS is in the beginning stages of working on an anti-bullying seminar in collaboration with the Needham Exchange Club. The plan is host a seminar with a speaker who specializes in bullying prevention. The seminar will be aimed at middle school students (6th, 7th and 8th) and then a parallel program for parents and caregivers. We are hoping to run this event March 16th after the half day.

One of the new clinicians, Hannah Stein, has started and is trained in many forms of trauma informed care. She specializes in SMART and the hope is that Y&FS can get therapeutic materials to support this model and will allow for some more intensive treatment for chronic trauma related symptoms.

(SMART stands for Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Treatment, an innovative mental health therapy for children and adolescents who have experienced complex trauma to help them with emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal regulation.

SMART utilizes an array of therapeutic equipment, such as weighted blankets, balance beams, fitness balls, and large cushions, in shared play to support children's natural ways of regulating their bodies and their emotions to facilitate attachment-building, and to allow for embodied processing of traumatic experiences.

The treatment blends movement and relationship to regulate arousal states and powerful affect, thereby engaging the subcortical and cortical neural pathways to increase behavioral and psychological integration.

Moreover, SMART widens the child's window of tolerance for both positive and negative emotional states and for interpersonal connection so that healthy development can proceed.

Our approach does not rely on language and awareness as an entry point. A coherent narrative and cognitive understanding emerges as a result of fully embodied play engaging the sensory, motor, limbic, and arousal systems for self-exploration. Our program:

- Engages the sensory motor systems, especially the vestibular, proprioceptive, and tactile sensory systems for emotional, psychological, and relational regulation and repair.*
- Follows the child's lead while tending to safety and using full body participatory play with the child to work with the unfolding process of developing new skills and processing traumatic experience.*
- Uses videotape case review and reflection to support more precise focus on the underlying patterns of behavior, including areas of avoidance and of strength for the child, which informs more tailored interventions and treatment plans.*
- Rapidly builds both general and SMART specific clinical skills in therapists and promotes strong, supportive clinical team camaraderie through shared review and discussion of SMART treatment.)*

Ellen Whirley, the other clinician, will start 11/15, and has a lot of substance use treatment experience.

The Board discussed an increase in behavioral issues that the school system is seeing a significant increase this year. The thought is that this is directly impacted by the pandemic and the combination of the loss of social connections and supports over a long period of time in addition to the direct stressors/trauma of living through a pandemic. Youth & Family Services is working closely with community partners to help support the community.

The Board discussed the usefulness of a former program, Reach Out Day, which helped to build a sense of community. This program was only a one year program but Ms. Shine will bring this feedback to the schools to see if there are opportunities for similar programming.

Ms. Shine has joined a school based group of staff to help increase supports in the school system and how to ensure that students are getting their needs met on many different levels. Mary Lammi is currently running the group.

Forde Good Person Award ceremony is set for January 31, 2022, and Ms. Shine will likely keep it virtual as it attracted such a strong response. The nomination papers close December 3rd. The Board agreed that Ms. Patkin, Ms. Stevens and Ms. Mullen will serve as the selection committee this year.

Update on Programs/Services

Ms. Shine noted that we are taking on many new clients recently and the staff have been great at supporting this increase. Youth & Family Services is also lucky to have an intern on staff who is working with a number of clients.

The VIP Program has gained a lot of attention this year and we have had more interest than in years past. We have a long waitlist for the program and have accepted 20 pairs. All of the Big VIPs attended a training early this month and are excited the program has started.

Everyone has been matched and all of the Big VIPs have written letters to their Little VIPs. The program is started on Tuesday November 9th.

The Peer Tutoring Program has launched for the 2021-2022 school year. There are 43 pairs of students matched to together over the course of the year and they have started meeting at the library. We will be monitoring state guidelines and will make adjustments as needed to ensure all students safety. All tutors attended a training for a refresher on the program and to review strategies for tutoring. Everyone is very excited to be returning for another great year!

Mural Project: Y&FS is in the beginning stages of planning for the next mural project. We are currently recruiting students, local artists and interested adults to help plan the project. Youth & Family Services has been in contact with Pollard Middle School and the HS art department. The project is going to be in the tunnel connecting Defazio Park and Pollard Middle School, which has also been the target of graffiti. We have put in multiple applications with the MBTA and are waiting for approval to move forward. The first mural project done on the fence near Red Wing Bay was a huge success. Youth & Family Services got the community involved in creating and painting a mural that would focus on unity. We had over 100 people participate in this project ranging in ages from 3 to 76.

In collaboration with Temple Aliyah and Equal Justice Needham, we presented at a **Needham Speaks** event on October 17th. Along with Katrina Martyn, a Personal Counselor at NHS, we talked about mental health trends, signs and symptoms, and how to respond to a mental health need. This event was a huge success as it was very interactive with the audience and allowed for some processing and problem-solving specific issues people were managing. The Cable Channel also ran a story on the event: [How to Support the Mental Health of Adolescents During the Pandemic - YouTube](#)

We are working with a community member on helping to host a **Needham Paintfest Project** through the Foundation for Hospital Art. The Foundation for Hospital Art was established in 1984 and is dedicated to involving patients and volunteers worldwide to create colorful, soothing artwork donated to hospitals to help soften the often stressful hospital experience. The event would include youth and families who may have some special needs to come together and create a piece of art that will then be donated to a local hospital. This project is being supported by BID Needham in terms of funding and accepting the work of art - **thank you BID Needham!!!** To learn more about their history here is the link to the website: [Foundation for Hospital Art - Paintin12 a brighter world.](#)

Y&FS worked with Engaging Minds to provide another workshop on executive functioning. This event, which took place 11/4, was a huge success. At **Engaging Minds**, they focus on teaching the increasingly important executive function skills so students are better able to manage nightly homework and long-term assignments, and are better poised to achieve their full potential. They offer one-on-one in-person and online tutoring sessions. This workshop is to give families some skills to help with these executive skills and to talk more about their services.

Members of the Health and Human Services team have been trained to teach **Youth Mental Health First Aid** virtually. We have successfully run 4 virtual classes and have another 3

scheduled. Most recently we have partnered with the Health and Wellness Department to train the wellness teachers. This training was successful and added 12 people to our list of Youth Mental Health First Aiders. 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. The Cable Channel recently ran a story about the class: https://youtu.be/TH-1_cK92TO
It was so successful that the December class is almost full without any advertising.

School Workshops on Hold since Covid in March 2020 but Ms. Shine will be redoing curriculum.

Community Outreach Updates

We 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. We are also represented on the steering committee. There are several initiatives coming out of this group including creating online substance use supports, peer support, community activities and educational webinars. One of team members designed impaired driving PSA to warn students about dangers of driving high. Rocket the police dog features and both students and Board enjoy it.

Youth Resource Network is going well - The Youth Resource Network, 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, is starting back up this fall. We hope to continue these meetings over zoom as they were well attended last year.

We 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. We discuss 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.

Crisis Donation Fund continues to receive donations.

Budget Update

The first **FINCOM** meeting is 11/16/2021. Y&FS has made requests of the APPA Funds (The American Rescue Plan 2021) towards mental health support for 2 years. We have requested a FT position to help with the need for Mental Health Services and some additional specialized consultation services. We are waiting for these funds to be approved/

Also Ms. Shine is finishing interviewing candidates for the **Diversion** position.

HR is moving to an online application for distributing applicants to Division heads that will roll out in 2022.

Ms. Shine noted all the new people are excellent, but she wants everyone to get to know programs and services over a couple of months. Group work will be priority before distributing individual programs among the new clinical staff.

This also allows the new staff to become familiar with Needham.

New/Old Business

All the new staff will be at the December 8th meeting

Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn at 6:20 pm seconded by Ms. Mullen. The board unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:10 pm

Next meeting December 8 Room TBD

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

Town Hall-Town Common/Highland Room
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Town Hall - Great Plain Room
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