

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from September 14, 2022, Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:35 pm, in person in the Highland Room, Needham Town Hall

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, Karen Mullen, David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Will Holland, Jill Mullaney, Nicole McMahon, Massiel Gallardo

Student Resource Officer Joseph Brienze also joined the meeting

New Board Member: The new Board member Massiel Gallardo was introduced in addition to Joseph Brienze.

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Minutes June 1, 2022. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the minutes; Ms. Patkin. The June 1 minutes unanimously approved.

Update on Crisis Response

A discussion occurred about the new school year and the impact of the pandemic. Without the mask requirement it seems that many students are feeling better about the medical risk of attending school but students are still struggling with the mental health implications of the past couple of years.

Ms. Shine noted the acuity of the referrals is still high as there continues to be significant mental health needs. The acuity of many of these referrals is also higher than in years past.

Ms. Shine noted the length of the wait list. 44 on the wait list; 63 active clients. Also provided 24 parent community consultations and 2 discharges. There have been 16 emergency consults this month.

The Board raised the issue of actively advocating for the division to address the increasing mental health needs in addition to the extensive waitlist. Mental health challenges have significantly increased since the beginning of the pandemic and it seems that there will be increased needs for years to come.

Ms. Shine noted that space is limited in Town Hall and that even with the current staffing configuration staff are sharing spaces in order to meet the community needs. All Health and Human Services Divisions are being very generous with sharing space but everyone seems to have space limitations. It is also difficult to have one staff stationed in other buildings due to the lack of support for professional needs. Youth & Family Services staff have been very creative in finding spaces in various schools and community spaces when necessary.

The Board will write a letter in support for increased mental health staff and bringing the additional space needs to the Town's attention. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the letter which will be addressed to the Select Board, the town manager as well as Mr. McDonald. Ms. Patkin seconded. The vote was unanimous, and the Board will write the letter of support.

Update on Programs, Services and Awards

Summer groups were successful:

- A parenting group series – Youth & Family Services ran a therapeutic group for parents over the summer. Topics included depression and anxiety, social media use and peer relationships.
- Friendship Files - Friendship Files continues for rising 6th graders. This group ran for 6 weeks, every Thursday from 4-5pm. Eight members attended the group and actively participated in all aspects of the group. The focus of the group was to engage members in learning how to make and keep friends, develop confidence and build social skills, practice how to cope with anxiety and change, and plan for middle school success. Group members created art, played games, made new friends and relaxed in a fun and welcoming space.
- Keep it Cool - Keep Your Cool was offered for 3rd-5th graders. The focus of the group was to help members work on anger management and impulse control. This group ran for 4 weeks, every Wednesday from 4-5pm. Seven members attended the group and were engaged in all aspects of the group. Group members engaged in skill-building and interactive games.

Fall Groups – planning for ongoing groups is underway. These are the groups that are going to be implemented this fall:

- A middle school social skills group
- An elementary agreed coping group
- Ongoing parenting series
- Lunch groups in 2 elementary schools
- NHS drop in groups during X Block

Nicole noted the Junior Police Academy was a success with 20 participants. In summer 2023 they will run a second session if there is a wait list. Youth & Family Services helped set up the program for the police department. This was a free four-day program is offered for youth rising to 8th grade and they explored police related activities such as K-9 and Community Resource Dog units, SWAT, Honor Guard, patrol and detective work. Youth were active participants and had an opportunity to learn about and experience first-hand the duties of different roles within a police department.

Students Helping Older People (SHOP) - Y&FS is piloting an intergeneration program where we pair students with older adults to make connection and help the older adults with their grocery shopping. We hope that this program will give students volunteer opportunities in addition to connecting with the older population. The hope is that this program will pick up this fall.

Y&FS hosted a Family Night at the end of June that was well attended with 8 families. The goal was to help build family unity while engaging in some fun activities. Families engaged in arts and crafts, played Bingo and enjoyed a build your own ice cream Sundae bar. Staff are planning on hosting another one of these in the late fall

The Mural project is starting September 17 and 18th and continuing the next half day September 21. The MBTA has primed the tunnel and there is a platform so the top can be painted as well. So far 125 people registered for the weekend. Ms. Shine thinks they may need another weekend of painting, but it will depend on the amount of work left. Conversations occurred around the space and possible lighting of the mural. Ms. Shine will discuss with Town officials. The rail trail mural needs some board fixed and repainted. Ms. Shine is hoping to get this done in the Spring.

Youth & Family Services staff have taken on the role of the adult advisors in for the Take Back the Night club. This club organizes the Take Back the Night event every year in addition to building awareness around domestic violence.

The Peer Tutoring Program is starting back up this fall. Staff are in the process of interviewing peer tutors and making matches with tutees. We are working on pairing 30 students to work with each other over the course of the year.

The VIP Program planning has started for this year. Staff have started working with big VIPs on getting set up and interviewing little VIPs so that pairs can be matched. We will be working with 20 pairs over the course of the year.

Volunteers Around Needham was a huge success this year. Youth & Family Services had over 30 volunteers who registered and earned community service hours. Staff hosted 6 days with Parks and Forestry, the Council on Aging, Needham Community Council, Needham Fire Station and the Needham Community Farm (2 days).

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 in the process of reaching out to students who are currently on the list and recruiting new students. Staff are also hoping to start a volunteer list as well so that people who need assistant but may not be able to afford to hire someone can still receive the services.

The Patrick and Patricia Forde Good Person Memorial Award planning has started. Youth has not decided whether it will be in person, hybrid or remote depending on COVID numbers. The 2023 event is scheduled for January 30th.

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. We are planning to run a couple of classes in the fall. 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. Staff are working closely with the school department on training this to students in the schools.

Call community collaboration meetings are occurring:

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. One of our members is part of the 84 Leadership Team and has taken the lead on many initiatives. The Needham Chapter was also won the 2022 Outstanding Chapter Award.

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 supports, peer support, community activities and educational webinars.

The **Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC)** has started meeting. Youth & Family Services has a representative at these meetings. Some of the Y&FS staff have attended various trainings to help support their committee work around domestic violence.

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. Y&FS chairs this meeting monthly.

Staff are attending the quarterly **Youth Commission/Youth Services meeting**. Represented at the meeting are directors from towns such as Northborough, Bedford, Burlington, Westborough, Winchester, and several more. We have also joined a smaller group of Directors from the Metro-West region to increase collaboration.

Y&FS is now 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.

New/ Old Business

Ms. Shine noted the budgeting process for FY 24 has begun.

The letter in support of the full-time staff position and more space will be recapped at the October meeting

The Board suggested programming that through the list serv might draw students in who are on the clinical wait list; this could provide some connection.

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Patkin seconded the motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm

Notes by: Faith Crisley, Recording Secretary

Edited by: Sara Shine, Director