

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from November 8th, 2023 Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:30 pm, in person and on Zoom in the Highland Room, Needham Town Hall.

Board in Attendance: Julie Stevens, Joe Brienze, Nicole McMahon, Karen Mullen, Massiel Gallardo, Will Holland

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Staff: Alyssa Cellucci, Hannah Stein, Ellen Whirley, Kelsey Nichols

Minutes October 11, 2023. Ms. Mullen made a motion to approve the October 11 minutes. Mr. Brienze seconded. The October 11 minutes unanimously approved by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Shine discussed the new staff positions recently approved at Town Meeting. The personnel board is next to approve before the positions will be posted. The department hopes to have these positions filled within 6 months. A board discussion commenced on what locations the new staff members would work out of, potentially the Needham Free Public Library or within the Rosemary Recreation Complex with Park and Recreation.

Clinical staff discussed their individual caseloads and the community programs they are leading. Ms. Nichols discussed Trail Talks, an outdoor mindfulness group for middle school students, and the ongoing success of the Peer Tutor Program. Ms. Whirley discussed QPR training and implementation as well as the ongoing success of the VIP Program, brainstorming social skills groups, and running Coffee Talk at the high school. Ms. Stein discussed running a well-attended Family Playgroup for children under 1yr with Family ACCESS Community Connections and the brainstorming of Grief Group for middle and high school students who have dealt with recent loss.

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 61 active clients.
- We currently have 35 on our waitlist.
- We have provided 17 Parent/Community consultations.
- We have had 4 emergency consults this month.
- Fall Groups – planning for ongoing groups is underway.
 - **Coffee Talk** is a drop-in group of HS students that staff started last year. The topics have included: active shooter drills, homework stress, NHS cellphone policies, and end-of-the-semester exams. It was fairly well attended weekly, and we hope to get it back up and running mid-October
 - **Grief Group** - The school system has asked Youth & Family Services to put together a group for students who have lost family members as there are several students who have experienced this. Staff ran a couple of these groups last school year, and the hope is that they will continue this year starting in November. This was a group where youth could provide mutual support, learn skills to manage grief and connecting with a clinician.
 - **Lunch Groups**-Staff are working with the schools to run lunch groups in 3 schools this year. Last year we worked with Eliot and Sunita Williams, we are hoping to run groups at Newman this year as well. These groups were focused on social skills.

COMMUNITY ISSUES BEING ADDRESS:

- 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

PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES:

We are in the beginning stages of planning the annual **Patrick and Patricia Forde Good Person Memorial Award**. We have been in touch with the Forde family about the event and hope to release the nomination forms this month. The 2023 event is scheduled for Monday, January 29th.

Y&FS is planning on hosting another Family Night on November 30th. Multiple family nights were run last year and we always filled to capacity. Families engaged in arts and crafts, played Bingo, and enjoyed a cookie bar. The event helped to connect families while also connecting to our services and programs.

Youth & Family Services is working closely with Family Access Community Connections to run a 9-week Circle of Security Parenting workshop that started October 5th. This workshop is for parents and caregivers based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened. Facilitators work with parents and caregivers to help them to understand their child's emotional world by learning to read emotional needs, support their child's ability to successfully manage emotions, enhance the development of their child's self-esteem, honor their innate wisdom and desire for their child to be secure. Youth & Family Services helped 6 families from Needham connect to the group.

Ms. Shine and Ms. Cellucci met virtually with the Program Manager for the BabySteps Savings Plan with the MA Treasurer's Office of Economic Empowerment. BabySteps is an incentivized children's savings account (CSA) where infants in Massachusetts can receive a free \$50.00 seed when they enroll in a 529 account in MA. This program is intended to have the potential to make a positive impact on families, particularly those welcoming

newborns or adopted children. Youth & Family Services staff will attend a training through the OEE to become a hub for the program. We will be able to assist families with the necessary paperwork to enroll in this program and offer a warm hand-off to the OEE. By providing this resource for families early on, as their children age into the school system we can be recognized as a resource for other needs as necessary.

Mindful Discussion on The Emotional Lives of Teenagers
by Dr. Lisa Damour

Come join Dr. Lisa Damour the author of three New York Times best sellers: *Untangled*, *Under Pressure*, and *The Emotional Lives of Teenagers* for clear, research-informed explanations alongside illuminating, real-life examples, that gives parents the concrete, practical information they need to steady their teens through the bumpy yet transformational journey into adulthood.

On Zoom Wed, Nov 8th, 2023
7:00 - 8:00pm

Brought to you by:

NEEDHAM YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES
Becca Schmill Foundation
NEEDHAM COMMUNITY COUNCIL

REGISTRATION IS FREE TO ALL

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WWW.NEEDHAMPROGRAMS.COM

Youth & Family Services have a workshop planned with Dr. Lisa Damour on Wednesday, November 8th and staff secured funding from the Becca Schmill Foundation to bring Dr. Damour virtually to Needham to present on her newest book, *The Emotional Lives of Teenagers*. The workshop will focus on helping parents understand their teenagers' intense emotional lives and how to support them through this developmental stage. There are over 125 people signed up for this event and we expect more as we get closer to the date of the event.

Peer Tutor – the peer tutor program is up and running. Staff have collaborated with the librarians to provide two times weekly for tutors and tutors to meet. The program will operate from October through April, and tutors (high schoolers) will earn 30 hours of community service for their participation. Mrs. Stein and Mrs. Nichols have coordinated the first couple of meetings and have helped support the pairs while meeting.

VIP (peer mentoring program) started on October 17th. This program pairs High School Students with 3rd, 4th and 5th graders to offer fun and peer mentoring. This program is filled to capacity with a waitlist.

Volunteers Around Needham was a huge success this past year. This program is an opportunity for middle and high school students to give back to the community while also getting their needed community service hours. We were able to offer 6 different volunteer opportunities during the month of July including: Circle of Hope, Needham Community Farm, Needham Parks and Forestry, Needham Community Council, Youth and Family, and Needham Fire Station. We had over 40 volunteers this summer. Staff also had our own dignity drive in multiple town buildings to donate to Circle of Hope and collected a full carload of personal hygiene products for homeless individuals and families who are in need of soap, shampoo, conditioner, and other hygiene products. Staff are planning for February and April vacation weeks.

Youth & Family Services has also started a new volunteer relationship with Newbridge on the Charles. We had a kickoff event with them which included 6 volunteers who are interested in earning community service. At this Kickoff, our volunteers learned about Newbridge on the Charles and services that are offered. We want to give Needham High School students an opportunity to earn 30 plus hours and have flexibility with their schedules. We hope to do another Kick Off to engage more High School students who were not available in August for the initial kick off.



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. Staff have trained 11 people in the past couple of trainings and are planning additional trainings. 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.

Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) training– 2 staff members, Mrs. Whirley and Mrs. Weitzel, completed QPR training and have started to provide training. There was a soft roll out on November 3rd and more trainings are being scheduled. “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 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 assistance but may not be able to afford to hire someone can still receive the services.

Youth & Family Services has also started helping students with independent volunteer projects for them to give back to the community and get their community service hours. Staff collect proposals and help students to implement their volunteer ideas. There have been some very impressive proposals so far and the students seem excited about the opportunity.

Ms. Stein worked with the Needham Public Library and Family Access Community Connections on a **Family Playgroup** for caregivers and their babies (ages 0-1). This playgroup started this past summer and is continuing this fall as many families participated. This program provides a space for parents to connect and have the support of clinical staff to discuss stressors and coping. It also creates a social environment for very young children. There were 12 families signed up for this program.

A board discussion commenced on bullying in the schools and a new mobile app that checks messages for bullying or harassment-type language. Ms. Shine is going to look further into this app. It was suggested that downloading this app could be an activity listed on our March Unplugged Calendar for parents and adolescents to do together.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:

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.

Youth & Family Services has gotten involved with 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. This month the Coalition was able to sponsor a cellphone and parenting class for parents free of charge.

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. Staff are also involved in strategic planning initiatives with the group.

Narcan - 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 **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. 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. We hosted an all staff meeting on October 26th – staff from 8 towns participated and staff were able to collaborate and share resources.

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.

Youth & Family Services is working closely with the Needham Resiliency Network to help support the mental health needs of the community as it relates to their work. There is possible collaboration on some grant funded initiatives and supporting community trainings on a larger scale.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:

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.

Staff attended a meeting at Needham High School to collaborate with all of NPS guidance staff. Various presentations occurred and Youth & Family Services ensured that all guidance staff are aware of services and opportunities to support community members.

Youth & Family Services has submitted the budget for FY25. There is a modest request for increased funds for expenditure. Youth & Family Services will also advocate for move the FT

ARPA funded position as well into the operating budget – it will be a request of a half year position this year (ARPA funds the position until January) and then for a full year in FY26.

Youth & Family Services has made a proposal for the use of funds that have come in from Children’s Hospital. The recommendation is for two full time positions, one a community base clinician and the second is a training coordinator. This proposal was approved at Town Meeting on 10/30/23 so Youth & Family Services is going to be working on a job description to get these positions posted.

Youth & Family Services is building a relationship with the Needham Community Council to help create and fund a speaker series. This would help support the community need for educational opportunities around mental health. Staff would help consult on topics, speakers and help to coordinate the events.

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.

We were able to secure funds for **Interface Referral Service** and residents can now reach out directly to Interface for support. BID-Needham and Needham Public Schools have generously offered to help fund the program. We hope to keep these services as they help support residents, but they continue to increase their cost significantly, so staff are monitoring this.

Youth & Family Services has increased our intern program this year, we have 2 interns who have started. Kirstin Wilcox is from Boston College School of Social Work and Alexandra Nagle is from Smith College. Both interns will meet with clients, run groups, create programs, and sit on various committees.

Youth & Family Services has been very focused on training staff to make sure that staff have the clinical skills necessary to manage the current mental health crisis. Some of the trainings staff have attended include topics around play therapy interventions, trauma informed care, documentation, and suicide prevention.

We 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: Facebook.com/needhamyouthservices 720

Instagram: 608 Followers @NeedhamYouthServices

NotifyMe (Listserve): 1129 signed-up

Below are the voted upon meeting dates for FY 2024:

Wednesday, September 13 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, October 11 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, November 8th	Town Hall
Wednesday, December 13 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, January 10 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, February 14 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, March 13 th	Town Hall

Wednesday, April 10th
Wednesday, May 8th
Wednesday, June 12th

Town Hall
Center at the Heights
Town Hall

