

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from December 13th, 2023 Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:32 pm, in person in the Highland Room, Needham Town Hall.

Board in Attendance: David Bookston, Joe Brienze, Karen Mullen, Susan Patkin, Natalya Ly (student representative)

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Staff: Alyssa Cellucci

Minutes from November 8, 2023. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the November 8 minutes. Mr. Brienze seconded. The November 8 minutes unanimously approved by voice vote.

Updates on Community Needs/Crisis Response

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 **64** active clients.
- We currently have **25** on our waitlist.
- We have provided **13** Parent/Community consultations.
- We have had **8** 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 has been running since October and is well attended with about 8 participants per week.
 - **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 we are working with the HS to get this back up and running during an X block. This was a group where youth could provide mutual support, learn skills to manage grief and connect 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 have

added Newman this year. We have been running 3 groups per week in Eliot and Sunita Williams and 2 groups per week at Newman and each group has between 5-8 students in each. These groups were focused on social skills and coping.

Staff are also going to attend a training on **IDEcide**, which is a therapeutic substance misuse treatment program. The hope is that this program will be incorporated into the **Substance Awareness Program**.

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

UPDATES ON PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES:

We have gotten a number of nominations for the annual **Patrick and Patricia Forde Good Person Memorial Award** and hope to have a chosen winner in a couple of weeks. The 2024 event is scheduled for Monday, January 29th in Powers Hall.

Family Night was held on November 30th and over 60 people attended. This was a great way to reach the community, inform them about our services in addition to providing a fun-

filled night. Families engaged in arts and crafts, played Bingo, and enjoyed a cookie bar. Wegmans also donated \$200 towards this program which helped support the program – thank you Wegmans!

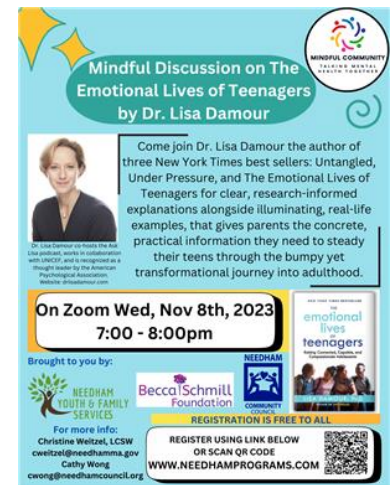
Youth & Family Services has partnered with the Needham Community Council and the Becca Schmill Foundation to create a speaker series to help support the community called **Mindful Community Lecture Services – Talking About Mental Health**.

We have helped to support the following upcoming presentations for this initiative:

January 10, 2024 – “Mindful Community: Navigating Mental Health Resources for Our Kids” presented by Riverside Community Care;

March 13, 2024 – “Resiliency in Children and Teens” presented by Dr. Robert Brooks, and in early May 2024 we are hoping to host Lynn Lyons, Anxiety Expert – “Modeling Matters: What parents need to know (and do) to decrease stress, worry and anxiety.”

Youth & Family Services hosted a workshop planned with **Dr. Lisa Damour on Wednesday, November 8th**. The event was a huge success as over 127 people attended and some who were not able to attend have the ability to watch the recording. Dr. Damour presented virtually to Needham and talked about her newest book, *The Emotional Lives of Teenagers*. The workshop focused on helping parents understand their teenagers’ intense emotional lives and how to support them through this developmental stage. The Becca Schmill Foundation helped to sponsor this 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 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 21 pairs meeting regularly. This year we also have some “big” floaters to help make sure the “littles” can still participate when a “big” misses a meeting.

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 in August 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. Staff have planned another session on January 24th, 2024.



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. The rollout is expected to begin in January 2024.

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 training is 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. Ms. Stein and Ms. Cellucci are working with Family ACCESS on scheduling another playgroup in the Spring.

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. This meeting is a meeting to address homelessness on a larger scale and discuss patterns and solutions for individuals and families, many of the attendees in this group help with specific incidents on a day-to-day basis.

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. In February 2024, there will be a presentation called "No App for Life – Celling Your Soul" hosted in Powers Hall.

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. The Take Back the Night event will be hosted in February 2024 by the high school student committee in Powers Hall.

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 Medfield, Hopkinton, Holliston, Wayland, Wellesley, Southborough, 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 training 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.

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 to 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. This position is very important as it has helped us support 26 families with clinical services, helped to support the addition of one intern (which has helped to support an additional 7 families), helped to keep the waitlist down, and helped to support important groups and programming.

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 and Youth & Family Services has submitted job postings to the HR department for review. We hope to hire these positions after the holidays.

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, grief, the impact of screentime and social media, 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: 615 Followers @NeedhamYouthServices

NotifyMe (Listserve): 1133 signed-up

A board discussion commenced on the nominees for the **2024 Forde Award**. Mr. Bookston made a motion to nominate the 2024 recipient. Mr. Brienze seconded the motion. The recipient of the 2024 Forde Award was decided upon unanimous vote.

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Patkin seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.

Below are the voted upon meeting dates for FY 2024:

Wednesday, September 13 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, October 11 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, November 8 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, December 13th	Town Hall
Wednesday, January 10 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, February 14 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, March 13 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, April 10 th	Town Hall
Wednesday, May 8 th	Center at the Heights
Wednesday, June 12 th	Town Hall