

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from May 12, 2021 Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:30 pm, via Zoom per Governor Charles Baker order of March 2020 during COVID Crisis

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, Josh Tuttelman, Karen Mullen, Kevin Keane, Nicole McMahon, David Bookston, Julie Stevens

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Staff: Carolyn Tracey

Motion to Approve April 14 Minutes made by Mr. Bookston, seconded by Mr. Tuttelman. Minutes unanimously approved.

Community Focus

Ms. Shine mentioned that have been several iterations around the report Mental Health: A Growing Crisis by Mental Health America by MHA. The report raises several major issues. There has been a 9% higher than in 2019 11-17 who have moderate to severe feelings of anxiety and depression. Frequent suicidal iteration was noted throughout the report. She noted there is a real need for additional services especially for LGBTQI+ youth and for the BIPOC community. Group therapy for various groups (youth and adults) are being planned. Even with the new part-time staff the wait list is growing. The Interface Referral Service is overworked, and it was noted there is likely to be a ripple effect as the pandemic lessens. Ms. Shine noted she the community needs are continuing to be assessed for the potential request of more staff hours.

Ms. Shine also mentioned it might not slow down this summer as in pre-COVID times and there will be lingering trauma and loneliness/isolation issues could change to fears around the opening. In addition, peoples' sense of security has been challenged during this time as no one thought that they would live through a pandemic, and many thought we were protected from situations like this. This could increase the need of mental health supports and the need for additional staffing.

Board members discussed that COVID created a divide in the community as there were varying opinions on important issues and how things were handled. On the other hand, there were ways that it brought some unity and collaborative efforts. Ms. Shine mentioned there has been much across department and across agency working during COVID and team building that would not have occurred without the pandemic.

Board Members discussed some supports in the community that have been helpful - the LGBTQI+ club at Pollard is one positive sign for reaching out to marginalized communities and the spring clean-up which his young children participated in and seemed to be really

helpful for this age group. Both of these are examples of ways youth can stay connected to others which is crucial right now.

Members discussed the transition back to full time school. The impression people have is that Seniors are especially happy to be back in person to finish out their year. Some also discussed the efforts of the school system around supporting various groups of students and how some events have been very successful.

Mr. Keane mentioned that at Town Meeting last week the police union contract was discussed which includes a community outreach specialist from Riverside shared between Dedham and Needham. This outreach specialist has already been working and this support is going very well.

Updates on Programs, Services and Awards

Ms. Shine noted that sharing the counseling space at the schools has worked well. She would love to have space in Town Hall where the windows opened; the basement office set up is not helpful for this. Some Zoom will be kept.

Volunteers around Needham will be outside for most of summer 2021.

Youth Mental Health First Aid classes have gone well. Ms. Shine hopes to offer a fall session for teachers and school staff.

The Chapter 84 Kick Butts Day/Take Down Tobacco went well. Both the Needham Times and Hometown Weekly covered the event and State Senator Rush and State Representative Garlick spoke.

Vaping spring 2021 update. It was noted it is less prevalent and less socially acceptable. This may be due to not having as many students together through the year and that people are mostly wearing masks, but it also seems like there has been a culture shift around vaping. There have also been less middle school student who have gotten caught vaping.

Ms. Shine mentioned that both CCIT and The Youth Resources network have benefitted from the online world.

Ms. Shine mentioned the staff attended May 7 trauma training at Wayside went well. Additional staff training around trauma is essential and will be a priority moving forward. Two staff will be attending the Suicide Prevention Conference on May 17th. Ms. Shine will introduce the two new part-time staff at the June meeting. She will also introduce the junior who will replace Mr. Tuttelman in June; Mr. Tuttelman is attending the University of Maryland.

There was a discussion around keeping some programming virtual (or leaving the virtual piece as an option. This may eliminate some barriers to access and comfort level. Ms. Shine indicated that the division was planning on having virtual options for most programs.

New/Old Business

Ms. Shine said that meetings continue on the Children's Hospital expansion, but she is not sure if they have answered the Health Department questions and concerns yet.

She also noted that the acuity of referrals is increasing and there are high needs in the community. The intern program was successful this past year at helping to manage some of this but the use of interns is not ideal with high acuity needs. The increased staffing has helped with getting these needs met and the hope is that we can significantly reduce the waitlist over the next couple of weeks. In addition, the division is prioritizing the highly acute referrals.

Ms. Shine will be meeting with the new Select Board members on May 17th.

Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn at 6:10 pm, seconded by Mr. Tuttelman.

Meeting unanimously Adjourned at 6:10 pm

Next Meeting June 9.

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

Proposed meeting dates 2021-2022

September 7, 2021

October 13, 2021

November 10, 2021

December 8, 2021

January 12, 2021

February 9, 2021

March 9, 2021

April 13, 2021

May 11, 2021

June 15, 2021 (or on a Tuesday - June 7th)

