

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from April 13, 2022, Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:30 pm, in person and via Zoom per Governor's Order of Spring 2021 allowing virtual public meetings

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, Jill Mullaney, David Bookston, Julie Stevens

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Minutes March 9, 2022. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the minutes; Ms. Patkin seconded. The March 9th minutes unanimously approved.

Community Needs/Crisis Response

Ms. Shine discussed the continued need for mental health services and the mental health system being overwhelmed. Ms. Shine explained that Youth & Family Services are seeing more acute clients and these clients have needed more intensive clinical services. Staff within the division are looking at focusing on group treatment so that youth who may be on long waitlist for individual treatment can get group treatment as more youth can be treated at the same time with group work.

Ms. Shine discussed community partnerships and ways that the division is ensuring the community is supported. Ms. Shine discussed the teen Mental Health First Aid initiative and the work that will be done with Needham Public Schools to be able to push out this initiative.

Update Programs, Services and Awards

Ryan's Story was a community presentation that was focused on bullying, social media use and suicide prevention. This event included 3 separate presentations, one virtual event on March 1st for just parents, one student presentation at the Rosemary Recreation Center on March 16th at 2:30PM, and one Parent/Child presentation on March 16th at 6:30PM. Over 150 participants at the various events. The presentations were a partnership between Park & Rec, the Needham Public Library and Youth & Family Services. Thank you to the **Needham Exchange Club** for making this event possible.

Youth & Family Services is working on another community presentation - **Mindful Resiliency in the "New Normal" -April 27th at 7PM**

Even as the pandemic shifts to a "new normal," how can we ensure that our families and communities emerge from this time more resilient than ever? Dr. Chris Willard will explore the foundations of resilience, looking to positive psychology, neuroscience and mindfulness as we explore tools that have boosted human resilience in the face of adversity for generations. He will discuss the most common mental health challenges our kids and teens are facing today, from depression and anxiety to addiction, self-harm and body image

concerns, and ways to help support them. This workshop will include many experiential exercises along with simple takeaway tips for yourself and your communities.

A presentation on **Screen Time and Anxiety** is occurring on May 10, 3:30 pm
Clinicians, educators, parents: This is a special presentation for anyone who works with youth. Dr. Patricia Conrod is a renowned researcher at The University of Montreal, with a focus on how screen time can cause increases in anxiety in youth. Dr. Conrod will discuss the science behind this and will offer practical tips for regulating screen time and dealing with anxiety. Joe Clement and Matt Miles, teachers and authors of the book "Screen Schooled," will join after Dr. Conrod's presentation to discuss how the increased use of screens in schools are having a negative impact on children's ability to learn.

Mural Project: Y&FS is working on the next mural project and are close to a final design. They are working with students, local artists and interested adults to finalize the mural, which we will be working on this month. The project is going to be in the tunnel connecting Defazio Park and Pollard Middle School, which has also been the target of graffiti. The hope is that the MBTA will approve the application soon so that the painting can start. 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. Over 100 people participated in this project ranging in ages from 3 to 76.

Our **Needham Paintfest Project** through the Foundation for Hospital Art is almost completed. 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 includes 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 has been a success so far as we have 5 of the tiles painted. **Thank you BID Needham** for sponsoring this event!!! To learn more about their history here is the link to the website: [Foundation for Hospital Art - Painting a brighter world.](#)

Y&FS is going to pilot 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.

Y&FS is working closely with Park and Rec on a Spring Fair Wellness Day. This will be aimed at Middle School students and will take place on a half-day in May. The goal will be to keep the free part of this half day more structured in addition to having some wellness activities and resources.

Y&FS is working with a local expressive art therapist, Tova Speter, on providing workshops for the community. These workshops will center around mindfulness and expressive arts. The first one we ran for parents, and it was a huge success with 16 participants. Y&FS is hoping to do a series of these for all ages. **Tova Speter, LMHC** consultant based at Gorse Mill Studios in Needham, Massachusetts. With a Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling and Art Therapy, she has over 20 years of experience working at the intersection of arts and healing, and offers art therapy and mental health counseling services through her

private practice. Tova is also a practicing painter, installation artist, and community muralist. All of her work is based on her belief that engaging in art-making is inherently therapeutic and formative. More at www.tovaspeter.com.

The Peer Tutoring Program continues to go strong through this school year. There are 43 pairs of students matched together over the course of the year and continue to meet at the library. Staff are continuing to monitor state guidelines and have made 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.

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The VIP Program is coming to an end for the year - the last group will meet April 5th. It has gained a lot of attention this year and we have had more interest than in years past. There was a long waitlist for the program and had 21 pairs meeting regularly. All Big and Littles have been very engaged in the program.

Volunteers Around Needham: Youth & Family Services is in the beginning stages of planning for this program this year. There are 6 days planned (July 12th, July 14th, July 19th, 21st, 26th and 28th from 9-12PM) with the following organization Community Farm, Community Council, Park and Rec, COA, Parks and Forestry and the hope is to have about 15 students each of those days.



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 ran a training for High Rock Church and trained 8 people and are working on one for BID Needham in May. We are also looking to get certified to teach Teen Mental Health First

Aid which will allow us to train students how to respond to peers with mental health challenges. We recently got approval for the funds to train 4 staff members to be instructors.

Volunteer Program Update: This program is designed to assist students in finding volunteer and community service opportunities in and around the Needham community. This listing details opportunities in and outside of Needham. This program is currently on hold.

Employment Program Update: We have made it easy for employers, as businesses now email us posting information about job opportunities, and we will then post all new jobs on our website Mondays (www.needhamma.gov/youth/jobsforyouth). Learn more about the Employment Program at: www.needhamma.gov/youth/employment.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:

Y&FS is filling in and supporting students at High Rock School 2X a week for an average of 2 hours each visit due to a school adjustment counselor out on maternity leave. Our staff member will carry a small caseload of 5 students through the end of the school year. This will continue to build the relationships with the school system and help to get our services into the schools.

Y&FS has gotten involved with the **Lighthouse Initiative** - this started with 2 parents who are concerned about youth mental health and who have organized multiple community forums to discuss needs and solutions. There are currently 2 working groups who are meeting regularly to plan out services, 1 for middle school youth and 1 for parents. The details are still being discussed but the thought is that Y&FS would help to run all of these needed groups.

Get Connected Needham is a resource list that can direct residents to find needed services. Youth & Family Services was part of a larger town group to put this list together and update the list regularly. This list can be found on the COVID-19 website in addition to the Public Health website. We are now also providing phone support during business hours for people who are having difficulties navigating the internet or do not have access to a computer.

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 the members is part of the 84 Leadership Team and has taken the lead on many initiatives. Most recently, our group participate in "Kick Butt Day: Take Down Tobacco" which is a national day that raises awareness of the importance of preventing tobacco use among teens. It is typically held at the Massachusetts Statehouse but this year it was virtual. The Needham Chapter helped to lead the workshop and met with Representative Denise Garlick and Senator Michael Rush to discuss the importance of legislation, mental health and addiction. The Needham Chapter was also won the 2022 Outstanding Chapter Award.

Y&FS regularly attends 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. Staff 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. SPAN held an event on 3/14 around Mental Health and Substance Use - Y&FS spoke at this event and answered questions around mental health.

The **Internship Collaborative** with the Dedham Youth Commission, Medfield Youth Outreach and Westwood Youth and Family Services has been going well and Elizabeth has been attending regularly.

The **Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC)** has started meeting. Youth & Family Services has a representative at these meetings. Please contact the office if you would like more information.

Y&FS has 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. Staff 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.

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.

Y&FS is attending the quarterly **Youth CommissionNorth Services meeting**. Represented at the meeting are directors from towns such as Northborough, Bedford, Burlington, Westborough, Winchester, and several more. Ms. Shine has also joined a smaller group of Directors from the Metro-West region to increase collaboration.

Ms. Shine has joined a **Community Health Resource Group** which gets local agencies/departments together for information sharing/support. This meeting is attended on a regular basis.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:

The budgeting process for FY23 is in its final stages. It is going to be a difficult year and it is still unclear the extent the pandemic is going to have on future budgets, so we are being very careful in our budgeting requests. Ms. Shine has requested increased funds for training for staff and equipment to work remotely. Ms. Shine also made a number of requests, which were approved, through the ARPA funds including a 2 year FT clinician, funds for specialty consultation services and funds for community wide educational programming. All of these would help support the community at this time of a mental health crisis. **Kelsey Nichols**, our PT staff member, has accepted the 2 year FT position and started on 2/28/22.

Y&FS is excited to welcome Alyssa Cellucci to the team. Alyssa comes to Y&FS with administrative experience from Baypath Humane Society and has a bachelors degree in Social Work. She is looking forward to continuing her career in mental health and is excited to be part of the team. Welcome Alyssa.

Y&FS continues to raise money for family in need by promoting the **Crisis Donation Fund**. Most recently there have been a number of donations from various Clergy Association Members and 100 Women Who Care of Needham. We are also working to allow for donations to be made electronically so that it is easier to make these donations.

Y&FS staff are in the process of working with William James College to continue the **Interface Referral Service** to the town. BID-Needham and the Needham Community Council has generously offered to fund part of the program for the next two years. Since Needham is an active user of the resource the cost as gone up and therefore, we are currently looking for more

sources of funding. A long-term plan would be to see how the town and schools could add funding to the operational budget to secure consistent funding for this great service. Please contact the office if you would like more information.

Y&FS worked with the COA on a grant through the Metro West Health Foundation for \$4,000 to go towards increased clinical supervision and consultation. Given the increased needs of the community and the newer staff coming into the division, we thought this was an important plan to help train staff and keep skills current.

Y&FS has been very focused on training staff to make sure that staff have the clinical skills necessary to manage the current mental health crisis. 3 staff members have recently attended a SMART trainings and one staff member is going to be trained in EMDR. All of these are trauma based treatment modalities. Staff have also attended a number of suicide prevention trainings.

**Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Mullaney seconded the motion.
Unanimous vote to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm**

Notes by: Sara Shine
Director of Youth & Family Services

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