

Belmont Wellness Coalition (BWC)
DFC Grant SPO-80659-01
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, Jan. 9, 2019 at 10:00 AM
Fire Department HQ Conference Room, Belmont, MA

BWC Members in Attendance:

Lisa Gibalerio (Wayside), Kristine Pugliese (CMS SRO), Marisa Melanson (Youth Coordinator), Wesley Chin (Director, Health Department), Anne Wang (EDC, Grant Evaluator), Diana Ekman, Assistant Health Director

BWC Members Absent:

Stephanie Sunderland (Wayside), Fire Chief David Frizzell, Rev. Joe Zarro (Clergy), Sara Masucci (Parent/Teacher), Beth Rumley (Nursing Director), Asst. Police Chief Jamie MacIsaac, Brittany Taylor (Fire Department), Melissa O'Connor (BHS SRO), Janet Amdur (Health Department), David Neylon (Health Department Nurse), Mike Clark (Clergy), Jasen Boyle (Substance Use Disorder Clinician), Kara Harlow (Clinician), Jeff Hansell (Media Specialist), Mark Paolillo (Board of Selectman), Wendy Conroy (Chair, Parent, Sexuality Educator), Jane Fox (Parent, Public Health Professional) Cristina Palladino (VP Belmont Savings Bank), Caroline Dustin (Youth), Lily Sama (Youth), Portia Thompson (Parent), Julie Crockett (Parent)

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 AM.

I. Introductions

Introductions were made; Lisa reviewed the agenda.

II. Brief Review of December Meeting Data Highlights (Anne)

Anne had those present read over the handout which identified the summary data points that bubbled to the top at the December meeting, e.g., vaping, alcohol use, the perception that “everyone is doing it”, low parental disapproval (concerning vaping, unsupervised parties, etc.), and the sense that students have a low perception of harm.

III. Brainstorm on Possible Root Causes of Behaviors Noted Above (Group)

- Education around these topics could start earlier
- Parental knowledge around vaping seems low
- Student knowledge / dangers of vaping is low
- Overall low perception of harm among parents and students
- Curiosity is present in this age group

- Access to vaping – (6th graders have access, there is internet access)
- Teens may think it's only a “fun flavor” and are not aware that Vaping has nicotine and other harmful chemicals and is addictive
- Certain kids are wired to experiment (nature, genetics/biology and nurture i.e. what they see happening in their homes, cultural norms) – some kids are at higher risk for substance use (LGBTQ, poverty, racial inequity)
- Lack of parental presence on weekends (going away to second homes)
- Or, parents are ok with parties in their basement (“better in my home and not driving ...” “better to experiment before college when parents are not around ...”)
- Parents/kids feel that there are not enough places to go – lack of youth centered space (Could kids use the Beech Street Center?)
- Academic stress and pressure in Belmont – could be a protective factor as these kids are very engaged in school -- or could be a coping mechanism (for other kids) who might use substances to blow off steam
- Overwhelming stress (and mental health issues) are generally related to substance use
- Using substances to make other risky behaviors (engaging in sexual activity) easier
- Are there enough local clinicians for kids/families who are in need of mental health services? (Guidance Office is often first point of contact for kids in school.)

Action Item:

- Kristine will try to gather some data from the school principals on the numbers of kids seeking help from guidance office and/or nurse's office.

IV. Make a Data Collection Plan to Understand Root Causes (Group)

Anne posed the question:

Where can we get additional information to inform the real root causes? Some of what has been brainstormed can be confirmed through the YRBS, but we may need to be in direct contact with parents and youth to gather information about other root causes.

Possibilities:

- Have a parent focus group (parent coffee) to discuss these issues
- Have a student focus group (ice cream event) to explore these issues
- Ask Parents what they believe about substances? About supervision at home?
- FB Post – Could start a dialogue on FB and ask their thoughts on vaping, thoughts on unsupervised parties, etc.
- Survey Monkey – to parents on questions above, could link to PTO newsletters and such

- Would be good to understand various socio economic brackets
- Paper Survey – create a concise survey for parents concerning the questions above – and capture parents at various events, e.g., PTO meetings, concerts, theater performances, Rec department, sporting events, Vision 21 survey

Action Items:

- Anne and Lisa will draft a parent survey and questions for a student focus group.
- Anne will dig up the Parent Survey done in Belmont for SAPC – fall of 2017
- Marisa will assist with a student focus group.

Next BWC Meeting: analyze any collected data, review draft of parent survey, make a plan for implementing parent surveys, and also -- identify Belmont's strengths!

V. Updates, other topics of concern

Sale of Vaping materials in Cushing Sq.:

A parent contacted Lisa to express concern about the "Over 21" signage and lack of posted vaping health risks at a local store selling vaping paraphernalia. Wes said the Health Department will look into it.

VI. Set Next Meeting

Lisa will send a scheduling doodle for the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 AM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lisa Gibalerio,

Prevention Specialist

Wayside Youth & Family Support Network