

**Belmont Wellness Coalition (BWC)**  
**DFC Grant SPO-80659-01**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 25, 2019**  
**Fire Department HQ Conference Room, Belmont, MA**

**BWC Members Present at the 11:00 – 12:30 PM Afternoon Meeting:**

Lisa Gibalerio (Wayside), Sam Chan (Wayside), Stephanie Sunderland (Wayside), Anne Wang (EDC, Grant Evaluator), Janice Darius (Assistant Superintendent), Beth Rumley (Nursing Director), Barbara Bulfoni (PTO President, Chenery Middle School), Corinne Jackman (Belmont High School Nurse), Kristine Pugliese (CMS SRO), Fire Chief David Frizzell, Portia Thompson (Parent), Kate Bowen (School Committee member), Elizabeth Dionne (Warrant Committee member), Wesley Chin (Director, Health Department), Diana Ekman (Assistant Director, Health Department)

**BWC Members Present at the 7:00-8:30 PM Evening Meeting:**

Lisa Gibalerio (Wayside), Anne Wang (EDC, Grant Evaluator), Melissa O'Connor (BHS SRO), Jane Fox (Public Health Professional) Caroline Dustin (Youth), Pam Eager (Town Meeting Member)

**BWC Members Absent:**

Cristina Palladino (VP Belmont Savings Bank), Rev. Joe Zarro (Clergy), Julie Crockett (TMM), Sara Masucci (Teacher), Wendy Conroy (Chair, Sexuality Educator), Lily Sama (Youth), Jeff Hansell (Media Specialist), Jonna Logan (Nurse), Annie Gladfelter (BASEC)

**I. Introductions**

**II. Brief Review of Recent BWC meetings**

- **January - Root Causes**– Anne provided a quick summary of the identified root causes that rose to the top of the list in Belmont for why kids are engaging in certain behaviors, (e.g.: vaping, drinking alcohol, marijuana). Some root causes include: overwhelming youth stress, low perception of harm among youth and their parents, boredom, and a lack of parent supervision.
- **February - Identifying Belmont's Strengths** – Lisa provided a quick summary of the identified strengths in Belmont. Some strengths include: an educated community, very invested parents, access to Cambridge and Boston, excellent music, theater, and sports options.
- **March Data Gathering:**

1. we held a student focus group at BHS (with 25 students participating)
2. we disseminated about 70 parent surveys (throughout March)
3. we surveyed the guidance counselors at both the middle and high school and asked them to rank the reasons students sought them out

(A special thanks to all who helped out with the above data gathering efforts! Coalition work really does “take a village”.)

### **III. Review Current Data**

Clarifying Questions Concerning Data: Having taken a moment to review the new data pieces (outlined above), Anne asked if there were any questions about the data.

#### Data Observations/More Root Cause Analysis:

- stress and academic pressure seem prevalent
- it is “the thing to do?” or “just something to do?” has become a part of the culture (becomes normal)
- it is perceived as “cool” among some students
- lack of education from the right people
- substances are readily available and there is affluence \$\$ for obtaining substances and fake IDs
- there is some parental permissiveness for substance use (esp. alcohol) at home
- parents need a toolbox for having prevention conversations with their kids – they need more knowledge
- kids are excited for 5<sup>th</sup> grade DARE and slowly that excitement wanes
- the middle school deals with a lot more mental health issues
- there is a low perception of harm among youth (and parents too) esp. with regard to Vaping
- social media creates peer pressure and social media is spreading the cool factor via snap chat, instagram
- unsupervised house parties (while still an issue in Belmont, as parents leave town to visit their second homes) may not be happening as frequently because parents (who are at home) are sometimes OK with kids drinking in the basement (this may be seen as “harm reduction”)
- lack of ability to cope with boredom, stress, negative emotions, and overwhelm may lead to substance use

#### **Top Root Causes:**

- overwhelming stress/academic stress (lack of ability to cope)
- availability/easy to acquire and use
- low perception of harm among youth (perceived as cool, kids are curious, older siblings and friends are engaging)

- parent permissiveness (low perception of harm among parents)
- cool/curious factor
- a way to cope with mental health issues

#### **IV. Discuss Coalition Next Steps:**

- The next steps involve the BWC doing some research into “best practices” (evidence informed programs/promising strategies) with regard to keeping youth from engaging in substance use, e.g., alcohol, Vaping, marijuana. We will together create a plan for implementing a strategy/program and we will test this strategy/program via the rollout of a pilot plan.  
Please consider helping to uncover a substance use prevention strategy or program that we might consider using in Belmont. Any help is appreciated. Thank you.
- Another next step will be to review the YRBS data once it is available.

#### **V. Updates, other topics of concern:**

- We have BWC swag!
- June 3 – 6 is week two of the training conference for implementation of BWC’s DFC (Drug Free Community) grant – would any one like to accompany Lisa to Alexandria, VA?

#### **VI. Set Next Meeting**

Lisa will send a scheduling doodle for the next meeting (late May).

Respectfully submitted by:

Lisa Gibalerio,  
Prevention Specialist and BWC Program Coordinator  
Wayside Youth & Family Support Network