

Belmont Wellness Coalition (BWC)
DFC Grant SPO-80659-01
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 11, 2019 at 2:30 – 4:00 PM
Fire Department HQ Conference Room, Belmont, MA

BWC Members Present:

Lisa Gibalerio (Wayside), Stephanie Sunderland (Wayside), Barbara Bulfoni (Chenery PTO), Anne Wang (EDC, Grant Evaluator), Wendy Conroy (Chair, Sexuality Educator), Caroline Dustin (Youth), Leah Lesser (parent), Julia Patriciu (parent), Kim Raubenheimer (parent)

BWC Members Absent:

Melissa O'Connor (BHS SRO), Nicole Rogers (Wayside), Annie Gladfelter (BASEC), Beth Rumley (Nursing Director), Corinne Jackman (Belmont High School Nurse), Pam Eager (Town Meeting Member), Sara Masucci (Teacher), Kristine Pugliese (CMS SRO), Elizabeth Dionne (Warrant Committee/TMM member), Julie Crockett (TMM), Jonna Logan (Nurse), Lily Sama (Youth), Jane Fox (Public Health Professional), Portia Thompson (Parent), Janice Darius (Assistant Superintendent), David Frizzell (Fire Chief), Wesley Chin (Director, Health Department), Diana Ekman (Assistant Director, Health Department), Kate Bowen (School Committee member), Rev. Joe Zarro (Clergy), Jeff Hansell (Media Specialist), Patti Forte (parent)

1. Introductions

Introductions were made around the table.

2. YRBS Event(s) Debrief

Lisa noted that the BWC, together with the support of Janice Darius, offered two events to share the YRBS data highlights. It was shared with the School Committee and then with the residents at a community event. About 30 parents were present at the community event.

Barbara offered that a follow up middle school specific event would be helpful in unpacking some of the more concerning data points, e.g., middle school suicide ideation. This event will be set up like a Principal's Coffee with a loose agenda – not a formal presentation, but more of a *conversation*. The BWC will offer an 8:00 a.m. opportunity in January and also an evening event at the end of March.

To Do: Barbara will check on room availability (for Parent Conversations) and get back to Lisa.

The BWC next discussed the SEL initiative called "Community Block." Every Wednesday at Chenery, for the first block, smaller groups of students meet with a faculty or staff member, i.e., one caring adult. The hope is that this will offer the positive impact of having the presence of "one caring adult" as well as the opportunity to create a connection between students and teachers. The one caring adult connection is an important protective factor with regard to youth mental health and other issues. Teachers have guidelines for activities but they are loose guidelines. A pilot program occurred last year.

Wendy informed the group about a similar initiative at the high school.

To Do: Lisa will talk with Mike McAllister (CMS Principal) about the Community Block initiative and will explore working with the Health Teachers to create additional content options around increasing positive coping mechanisms, coping with peer pressure, coping with stress, mental health awareness, etc. She will also discuss what if any training the faculty have had in suicide prevention as well as explore the 8th to 9th grade BHS transition.

3. Discuss: Does 2019 YRBS Data Impact BWC's Action Plan?

Lisa noted that in looking at the preliminary Strategic Action Plan (SAP), in light of the YRBS results, she and Anne wanted to take some time to make sure the SAP reflected any concerns raised with the YRBS data. Anne noted that while the BWC did use multiple data sources to inform the root causes that were identified, the BWC engaged in this work *before* the YRBS results were known. Therefore, the SAP did not plan for middle school suicide ideality, for example. Again, this is because we did not know numbers until the YRBS data was available. Barbara noted that the CMS faculty/staff may have insights on suicide ideation. (What are the guidance counselors hearing from their students? What are the nurses hearing from kids? etc.) Stephanie noted that she trained Watertown and Brookline school staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA). Perhaps it is time to propose a way to do that training here in Belmont.

Wendy raised the data point concerning the perception of harm with marijuana, which drops each year as the kids get older. The BWC agreed that this effect is likely to be a direct result of the legalization.

The BWC discussed the Dog Sniffing exercise that occurred at BHS today. Lisa expressed that the Principal's follow up communication might be more helpful to parents and students if it contained offers of support or resources for any students who might be struggling with addiction. Otherwise, the exercise feels a bit draconian.

Steph suggested that maybe the BWC could do family outreach offering education, support, and resources. She explored the topic of harm reduction as a way to modify behavior. Harm reduction teaches skills, removes punitive consequences, and meets people where they are at.

Barbara noted that the Urban Improv group will be at the Chenery again this year. And she noted that Michael Fowlin had spoken at CMS as a result of an FBE grant; the presentation was well received. Steph noted that he is a phenomenal presenter and that he is coming to Watertown on March 16, 2020. He will speak to the students during the day and then the parents are invited to meet with him in the evening.

To Do: Barbara will check with the CMS PTO to see if they are sponsoring Mike Fowlin again this year for 7 and 8th grades. If so, she will check into the possibility of adding on an evening event, which would be open to families, too. The BWC can consider contributing to the extra expense.

4. Discuss: Can We Develop a Social Norm Campaign Using YRBS Data?

Lisa informed the BWC that communities that have a Peer Leadership Youth Group often work closely with that group to develop and execute some type of social norm campaign using the YRBS data. Given that we do not currently have such a group, what would be possible for us to do with the data that might inform students and faculty? Could we do a fun engaging, game show type of activity? Or a poster campaign?

Anne liked the idea of doing an activity at the high school. She suggested we have a day where we share the data with the high school students in a fun way – maybe via an activity in the cafeteria. Wendy asked if we could combine this with the BHS PTSO’s new “stress busters” initiative.

To Do: Wendy will follow up with the BHS PTSO Presidents to see if a YRBS activity could be combined with a lunch time stress buster.

Leah noted that the BHS seniors are currently under huge amounts of stress as they wait for feedback on their early action and early decision college applications. She suggested that the Coalition submit an article to the community paper offering stress reduction tips for both students and their families.

To Do: Leah will draft an article and she and Lisa will work on getting it submitted to either the Belmont Citizen Herald and/or the Belmontonian.

The Committee also explored using the National Honor Society students as a vehicle to either disseminate the YRBS data school-wide or as a means to begin a peer leadership group.

To Do: Lisa will add this topic to those items she will discuss with the school administration.

5. Upcoming Events:

- **Managing Stress/Anxiety - Belmont High School with McLean Hospital – Tuesday, Dec. 17, 6:30-8:30 PM**
- **The Loved Child: Parent Conversations Three Wednesday evenings in January: 8, 15, 22 ~ 7:00 – 8:30 PM facilitated by Lisa and Wendy**
- **Screenagers Part 2 – *rescheduled* to Tuesday, January 14, 2020 ~ BHS Auditorium at 7:00 PM**

6. Youth Feedback/Insights

Caroline noted that she is seeing a lot less vaping in the bathrooms this year, but she is smelling more weed at school.

Regarding sharing the YRBS data, Caroline noted that the data should be presented in more depth—possibly *by* students—to teachers and administration at Belmont High School, specifically addressing the data on suicidal ideation, sleep and depression from 9 to 12th grades. There are trends in the data and disturbing numbers that should be addressed at the high school, and the students are the best people to do it. She added that she would be happy to gather friends and peers to create a panel and present to teachers and

administration at BHS. Personal accounts and the data gathered from the YRBS survey are both powerful ways to reveal the struggles that students have on a day-to-day basis at BHS. Hearing directly from students might help to break down the wall between teachers and students.

To Do: Lisa will present Caroline's idea to the administration.

7. Set Next Meeting

- Lisa will send a scheduling doodle for the next meeting in January.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lisa Gibalerio,

Prevention Specialist/Program Coordinator

Wayside Youth & Family Support Network