



Fairfield CARES Community Coalition

Minutes

October 21, 2020

View a recording of the meeting on our [YouTube channel](#)

Welcome: Cristin McCarthy Vahey welcomed all to the meeting at 8:32am

Attendance:

Co-chair Cristin McCarthy Vahey (Government/State Rep)

Members: Colleen Ahmad (Youth Serving Org, Parent), Janice Andersen (Substance Misuse Org), Steve Baker (Parents), Wendy Bentivegna (Community Member), Dana Bossio (School), Steve Brogan (Community Member), Leonora Campbell (Community Member), Bernadette Coppola (Parent), Wendy David (Community Member), Tom Dorney (Community Member), Philip Dwyer (Civic/Volunteer Org), Donna Fletcher (Health Care), Bridie Hagan (Substance Misuse Org), Cathy Hazlett (Staff), Jen Hrbek (Substance Misuse Org), Jennifer Jacobsen (Government/BOE, Parent), Santina Janko (Government/Health Dept), Reini Knorr (Parent), Lori Mediate (School), Emily Melnick (Evaluator), Sylvia Sanchez (Health Care), Alison Seyal (Government/Social Services), Pam Walker (School), Margaret Watt (Substance Misuse Org).

() indicates community sector.

Secretary for the meeting: Cathy Hazlett agreed to serve as Secretary for this meeting. If anyone would like to serve as Secretary, please inform any members of the Leadership team.

Approval of Minutes: Wendy Bentivegna made the motion to approve the September 21st Coalition minutes and Pam Walker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Data Dive: Due to the desire to engage coalition members into committee work, Cristin announced that we would defer the mini-training portion of the meeting to a future time. As a way of introducing the topic of data, coalition members participated in a short poll – guessing the percentage of Fairfield high school youth who, in the past month, drank alcohol, used marijuana, smoked cigarettes, vaped, and misused prescription drugs. Not surprisingly, coalition members guessed that higher than the actual percentages. Emily Melnick, Fairfield CARES' evaluator discussed the 30-day use data, along with students' lack of perception of harm, and the degree to which students thought their parents disapprove of substance use. Emily reiterated that data helps to determine the activities that the coalition conducts, and Fairfield CARES uses the "7 Strategies to Affect Community Change" recommended by SAMHSA.

Committees: Program, Resources, and Data: Each Coalition member participated in one of the three committees for about 20 or so minutes then there were reports back out to the larger group.

Data Task Force

Emily Melnick stated that the Data Task Force discussed the need to review the data we have, and to think of the questions we want to ask in our focus groups if parents and youth. The state is wanting focus groups done to explore how people are handling Covid and their substance use, so the coalition can apply that data for its own purposes as well.

Resource Committee

Phil Dwyer stated that the committee will work on the development of a mission statement, and then get the blessing from whole group. They are also charged with recruiting new coalition participants as well as orienting new folks to the coalition. The coalition is only as active as its membership, so we want all members to feel engaged in helping to achieve the coalition's goals. The committee will also provide assistance with the coalition's Drug Free Communities Grant application as needed and as identified by Cathy Hazlett who will be the principal author of the grant. Cristin mentioned that Fairfield CARES would like to have parents of elementary and middle school age children so they could participate in our prevention planning activities. Members are encouraged to recruit.

Program Committee

Reini Knorr updated everyone on the status of the "Let's Mention Prevention" campaign with Fairfield's 19 package stores and that some committee members had volunteered to call their local store to inform them of the initiative and to please participate. Wendy Bentivegna shared that the LPC (Local Prevention Council) Grant is focused on vaping and that the coalition will be sending out a series of four postcards to parents of 6th-12th graders to educate them on consequences and dangers of vaping. Reini also mentioned that the coalition will be participating in the virtual 'Walk Out Of Darkness' suicide prevention walk on Sunday, October 25th and other coalition members are welcome to get information about the walk on the Fairfield CARES website. Saturday is Drug Take Back Day and Fairfield CARES will be partnering with the Fairfield Police Department to accept expired or unneeded medications so they can be disposed safely.

Hub Update: Janice Andersen, Deputy Director of RYASAP, parent organization to the Hub, informed the group that Daniella Arias has been hired to be the Hub's conduit to the coalitions in southern Fairfield County. The Hub has recently started a weekly newsletter and Janice hopes that everyone is receiving it. She mentioned that Ingrid Gillespie will work continue her gambling prevention as part of the Hub. And, the Hub has closed its Norwalk office since Covid required staff to work from home and there was no need to have two offices.

Other Business: Margaret Watt shared information about two webinars: LGBTQ 101 – Identities & Allyship on Nov. 9th from noon to 1:30PM and LGBTQ 201 – Substance Use in LGBTQ Communities on Nov. 16th from noon to 1:00PM. Contact Positive Directions if interested in attending, email info@positivedirections.org. Margaret also mentioned that at the Regional LPC meeting that coalitions are asked to review school alcohol, tobacco, and other drug policies for their comprehensiveness and inclusion of counseling services and restorative practices. Each town will also be approaching grocery stores and pharmacies and encouraging them not to sell vape products. In Fairfield the Youth Committee is working on this project.

Adjournment: Dana Bossio moved to adjourn the meeting and Margaret Watt seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted

Catherine T. Hazlett
Temporary Secretary

