

Colchester Youth & Social Services

127 Norwich Avenue, Suite 205, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

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Youth First Coalition Meeting Minutes

December 7, 2022 | 5:30 PM – 6:45 PM | In-Person / Hybrid Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Russell Melmed, Carol Wikarska, Lauren Lorincz, Ann Marie Maffuid

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Koji, Samantha Van Zilen

OTHERS PRESENT: Charity Benedict, Sophie Melmed, Denise Turner, Craig Scheel, Ashley Zaugg, Janet DePratti, Jeff Rodman, Holly Rozanski, Kylie Fontaine, Jessica Perreault, Michelle Millington

1. CALL TO ORDER

Russ Melmed called this meeting to order at 5:45 pm.

2. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Add Drug Take-Back Program to the Agenda as item 8a.

Motion by: A. Maffuid

to add Drug Take-Back Program to the Agenda as item 8a.

Second by: R. Melmed

Vote: Unanimous to approve

3. CITIZENS' COMMENTS

None.

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES FROM 10/12/22

Minutes of the October 10, 2022, meeting presented for review and approval.

Motion by: R. Melmed

to approve the minutes of October 10, 2022, meeting as presented.

Second by: L. Lorincz

Vote: Unanimous to approve

5. RESOLUTION RUN PLANNING STATUS & NEXT STEPS

Charity stated the following as complete: payment from sponsors is arriving, advertising and promotion has begun on Facebook, town website, Digital Backpack, Youth Services website and emailed out to the coalition's parent distribution list, the Race Roster website is live for registrations, medals ordered (to be delivered on 12/19), all set with the timing company. Contact Charity if you can volunteer the day of the race. Charity also asked if those at the meeting could share the Youth Services link on their own Facebook page to spread the word. Carol stated that she communicated with coach Browning to have the track team participate.

6. NOMINATIONS/APPOINTMENTS FOR SECRETARY & VICE CHAIR

There were no nominations.

7. VOTE TO APPROVE NEW BYLAWS

The Youth First Coalition functions as the Youth Services Advisory Board and fulfills the requirements of the Drug Free Communities Program. The goals of the Drug Free Communities Program are to strengthen and enhance the functioning of the Coalition and to reduce youth usage of Marijuana and Alcohol. The Coalition does this by developing culturally appropriate substance use prevention and education initiatives based on local data collected annually from Colchester Youth and Parents.

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Approve the November 16, 2022, revisions to the Colchester Youth First Coalition Bylaws.

Motion by: A. Maffuid

Approve the November 16, 2022, revisions to the Colchester Youth First Coalition Bylaws.

Second by: R. Melmed

Vote: Unanimous to approve

8. CHECK IN RE: OUTREACH TO BACON ACADEMY – VAPE DETECTORS AND COALITION MEMBER ASSIGNMENT

Russ stated he emailed the principal and vice principal to establish a relationship with Bacon Academy administration. YAC also wrote a letter to the Board of Education stating the need and their support for Vape detector installation. Charity stated with Local Prevention Council funds CYFC was able to purchase vape detectors, and understands the need for conversations to establish policy and procedures before they are installed.

Ashley and Jessica stated that the high school counseling department is understaffed, and the mental health needs are higher than before. A counselor position was cut by the Board of Education and there were no applicants to the two temporary two-year counseling positions the Board of Education posted. They are having to call mobile crisis daily, sometimes multiple times per day. They are taking home hours of work to be completed on their own time because the school day is taken up dealing with students in crisis. They are only seeing the students who are in active crisis and there are many other students suffering with mental health needs that they are not able to reach due to the demands on their time dealing with crisis. Ann Marie offered her cell phone number to the school counselors. The school is saying it would be helpful to have discussion/support groups available after school at Bacon, asking if UCFS could come after school. Ann Marie stated a fee for service or per diem second job would be required which most clinicians are declining due to burnout with their current responsibilities. Jeff stated he would be willing to stay after school and offer support groups if there was a way to expand the funding to Project Courage to cover more hours.

Russ asked what is the status of the statewide or eastern CT workforce capacity? If money is available to pay for positions and time, can those people fill the gap? Ann Marie shared that there are workforce shortages for community mental health type of jobs because of the changes to licensing requirements and insurance billing that now allows an unlicensed clinician to work in private practice and bill insurance under a licensed provider at the practice who is already empaneled with the insurance companies. This option is more financially lucrative and thus more appealing to job candidates over community mental health positions, so they are having trouble finding people. Russ asked if the Town's Opioid Settlement Funds could go to Project Courage to help expand after school counseling support services? Ann Marie stated even with funds available it is difficult across the state to fill vacancies. Charity stated she would check in with Val about the intended usage of the Opioid Settlement funds.

Ashley and Jess talked about Bobcat Block which is a new program this school year that occurs every Friday for about 30 minutes. Staff, Teachers and School Counselors have students participate in small sessions that the students can decide on what to attend. Jeff holds Bobcat Block sessions with six students that focus on mental health and is hoping student participation will increase. Jess and Ashley talked about options for expanding the mental health support type

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of options that could be offered during Bobcat Block. Carol suggested involving teachers to run Bobcat sessions with topics they are passionate about such as meditation.

8a. DRUG TAKE-BACK PROGRAM – Jeff stated that he had talked to Corporal Scheel about the possibility of offering a Drug Take Back program at the high school where students could turn in their illicit substances in exchange for a gift card. Charity stated that more discussion would be needed with law enforcement and school administration around the logistics and feasibility of this type of program and funding for gift cards would need to be identified if approved.

9. DISCUSS BUILDING AN INFLUENCER NETWORK & IDENTIFY NEXT STEPS

Charity gave an overview of where CYFC is at in establishing an Influencer Network. Further discussion will be covered at the CYFC January meeting due to time.

10. NEXT STEPS

Charity: Talk with Val about expanding Project Courage to run groups after school.

Charity: Check into the intended use of the Opioid Settlement funds.

Craig: Connect Charity and Jess and Ashely for more discussion about how Youth Services may be able to help with mental health service needs at Bacon.

11. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS

None.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

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