

East Greenwich Opioid Task Force
Minutes-May 22, 2019
Swift Community Center, 121 Peirce Street, East Greenwich, RI 02818

The meeting was called to order at 2:40pm by Bob Houghtaling

Members present: Catherine Bradley, Kelly Matson, Chief Bernie Patenaude, Carolyn Mark, Tom Mears, Marcia Sullivan, Matt Larsen, Christine King and Jen Stern

Others in attendance: Michaela Shunney, Sheri Shunney, Kevin Kidd, Nick Callahan, Jane Johnson, Mary Bryne, Pasco Troia, and Ella Saint.

I Welcome and Introductions

Members and guest at the meeting introduced themselves.

II Approval of Minutes of March 20, 2019 meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. Mark to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mears. All were in favor.

III Presentation by Survivors Speak RI

Mr. Houghtaling introduced the members of Survivors Speak RI. Ms. Johnson gave an introduction on how Survivors Speak RI was formed. Ms. Johnson, Ms. Bryne and Mr. Troia met at Day One and then branched off to form Survivors Speak RI. The organization provides speakers, all who are survivors of abuse, on domestic violence and sexual assault against children and adults, to groups and organizations. They train others from a victim's perspective. They have made tailored presentations to hospitals, emergency room doctors, judges, social workers, police, medical students, at the ACI, to sex offenders, at colleges and K-12 schools, to teachers and educators, as well as sports teams and to the military. Ms. Bryne gave her own history of child abuse. She explained how they use their own experiences to educate others. Mr. Troia explained his abuse experiences and how he uses that to help others.

Mr. Houghtaling noted the correlation between the group's experiences and the opioid task force mission and the ASAPP program with substance abuse and suicide. Ms. King thanked Mr. Troia for his remarks about bringing back self-love into the discussion. Ms. Mark noted that the Middle School curriculum requires a healthy relationship component. She believed it was only for peer to peer relationships. The students present did confirm that only peer to peer relationships are addressed and does not include family or adult abuse. Mr. Kidd felt that adult abuse should be included at a younger age as that is when it happens. Ms. Johnson talked about her experiences with audience members after giving a presentation and how they reach people who haven't addressed their abuse.

4. Presentation by East Greenwich High School Students from ASAPP

Mr. Houghtaling introduced the students present and gave an overview of ASAPP. The original idea was to have a peer to peer group make presentations to elementary students so they could have a plan when they are in need of mental health support, in a crisis or have a problem. He noted how the students have now turned ASAPP into a club and are expanding it further.

The students provided a hand out on the program. Ms. Saint began by explaining the “A” stands for Assess-assess the problem by identifying and accepting a concern. Ms. Michaela Shunney explained the “S” stands for Support-seek support by finding helpers and feeling comfortable asking for help. Mr. Kidd explained the second “A” stands for Action-take action by putting a team and plan in place that will lead towards change. Mr. Callahan explained the first “P” stands for Proceed-proceed by moving forward using supports, and incorporating them into you daily life. He then explained the second “P” stands for Prevent-prevent future problems by developing skills that will help you avoid potential triggers.

Ms. Saint explained the idea is to learn a process (an outline) to cope; it’s not an instant solution. She hopes to use the program to open up communication. They also want the program to reach out to other groups to get the conversation going and they want the program to grow and evolve overtime.

Mr. Callahan stated that stress is not only school related and there are other outside sources that cause stress.

Mr. Troia thanked the students for this idea and thought it would have been helpful when he was younger going through his struggles.

Ms. King likes the universality of the program. It can be used for all people with stress. She expressed her appreciation to the students and to the survivor speakers. Ms. King also talked about bringing mindfulness training and programming to Town (similar to ASAPP).

Mr. Houghtaling talked about the importance of play. He noted we need to create a culture to talk about issues and stress- a more open dialogue.

5. Updates

A. Youth to Youth Conference-July 25th – July 28th

Mr. Houghtaling explained this year’s conference is July 25th – July 28th at Bryant College. He gave a brief overview of the conference- that it is a youth leadership and substance abuse conference which attracts youth from all over New England as well as other regions. Mr. Kidd talked about his experiences at last year’s conference. He was skeptical at first, but learned about drug and alcohol abuse and was able to relate to this personally. He found it both fun and educational and learned that you can still have fun without using substances.

B. E-cigarette Legislation

Mr. Houghtaling noted that he and Mr. Bob Siminski testified at the State House in regards to moving the age to purchase and use tobacco to 21 years. This included vaping which he has seen as a major problem in youth and has grown in epidemic proportions. He has had 40

clients referred to him for using e-cigarettes and with some subsequently using them with marijuana. Mr. Kidd explained his experiences at the High School with the amount of use he has seen and how older students sell them to younger students. Ms. Michaela Shunney commented that she is often uncomfortable using the restrooms because students are in the stalls using e-cigarettes.

6. Set Next Meeting

The group set the next meeting date to be September 11, 2019 at 2:30pm.

7. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Houghtaling to adjourn the meeting at 4:20pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Matson with all voting in favor.

Minutes submitted by: Catherine Bradley

Approved on: September 11, 2019

- 4 in favor (K. Matson, R. Houghtaling, C. King, J. Heath)
- 0 opposed
- 1 abstained (R. Siminski)