



Decisions at Every Turn Coalition

Meeting Minutes

Feb. 25th, 2019

Ashland Middle School Library, 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Welcome & Introductions

Dave Muri, Ed Burman, Kathy Silva, Jen Culter, Haley Boccuzzi, Neha Shabeer, Amy Turncliff, Diane Mortensen, Ron Etskovitz, Dave DiGirolamo, Saumya Sankhavaram, Kristin French

Welcome and Acceptance of Jan. 8th meeting minutes

The meeting began at 5:30 P.M. The group took some time to introduce themselves and they role they each play in the community and coalition. After confirming that no one had any outstanding comments on the minutes, Saumya moved to accept the minutes. Amy seconded, and minutes were accepted unanimously.

Jen Cutler – Director of Guidance

Jen Cutler, Director of Guidance and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for Ashland Public Schools, introduced herself to the group and explained how she came to the position. Jen began her career as a school psychologist at Boston Public Schools, continuing on to Milford, where she started as a psychologist and then an adjustment counselor. She has a passion for working with kids and has been working with kids for 12 years. Her current position is the first role where instead of working directly with kids, she is working with adults (school staff). In order to get to know Ashland, she has been meeting with many community groups. Jen commented that SEL doesn't end when you leave school, so she wants to be as connected to the community as possible.

Jen recently sent out an SEL Family Survey through the schools. She has had 230 responses from parents of pre-school through 12th grade students. She is trying to figure out how to work with those parents to create an SEL task force. After a task force is created, she is hoping to administer an SEL survey for staff.

Amy asked what Jen's SEL priority areas for the schools were. Jen explained that her priority area is competencies of staff in the SEL area. She wants to set up a Health and Wellness fair for staff to see what is available in the community around SEL. Neha also asked Jen what she

thought SEL should look like at the high school. Jen explained that when talking with high school students she sees stress about a number of things, including tests, and academics. She hopes to incorporate SEL into everyday activities at the high school – she participated in Challenge Day this year along with staff and 100 AHS students - and sees it as an example of activities she would like integrated into the high school.

Positive Community Norms at AMS

Saumya let the group know that the coalition is planning to implement a positive norms campaign at the Middle School. Dave D., Betsy Emberley, Kristin, and Saumya met to discuss the campaign, and the data gathering that would have to take place before it. In order to assess the perceptions of middle schoolers around substance use, the middle school will implement a Positive Community Norms (PCN). Saumya let the group know that survey cost will be around \$3500 – this has already been included in the coalition’s budget. The plan is to administer the survey mid-April (before April break), and to use the data to plan and implement a campaign similar to STAND at AHS. Dave commented that it will be interesting to see the data, and Amy added that it will be interesting to see if there are differences in perceptions between grades. The coalition will have an opportunity to review the survey questions before administration in order to determine if they are appropriate for the middle school level. Montana State University, who is developing the survey, has noted that there may be lower perceptions of use for middle schoolers. The group commented that it will be interesting to see what the data says. The group also discussed possibly messaging 9th grade data to 8th graders, or using grade by grade breakdowns of data to message.

Ed also wanted to note more generally that the police are seeing lower overall overdose responses. However, they don’t know what is causing the reduction – it might be fewer adults using opioids, or it may be greater access to Narcan to prevent overdoses.

The group discussed the current curriculum around substance use prevention in the schools. Dave said that they use Second Step in the lower grades, including at the middle school. The group discussed other resources that were also available. There is an 8th grade vaping model, and a state program around vaping education. Project Here was also started by the Attorney General to encourage substance use prevention education. In the health classes at the schools, the 6th grade focuses on nutrition, and in 7th grade they focus on decision making/skills based education. The group also discussed the “One Choice” campaign on choosing not to use any substance, which was designed by Dr. Sharon Levy.

Reducing Youth Nicotine Use

The group discussed local and regional efforts around reducing youth vaping and e-cigarette use. At AHS, evidence or admission of vaping by a student is the starting point of sending the student to Lauren Carreiro and Erin Lachapelle, the high school deans, for a vaping education program. On a student’s first offense, there is first a call to their parents, and to the MIAA if the student is an athlete and in violation of the MIAA chemical health policy. On the second

offense, the deans talk to the student who has to participate in an educational research model with Erin. They then meet with Dave Muri, then the high school Nurse, then back to Lauren and Erin. Students will also meet with Stephen Marks if they are athletes. The students take this day as an in-school suspension to meet with all the participants and conduct research on vaping.

Dave M. and Ed commented that a major component that is needed is educating the parents, who may not be aware of the risks of vaping. They also commented that it is hard to control the purchasing of vaping products as well as CBD oil that students may buy online for use in products. Ed commented that through his work as a nurse he has also seen a few kids that are withdrawing from nicotine in the hospital.

The group discussed, aided by Ed and Dave M., how the number of students found to be vaping at AHS goes in cycles. During this school year, 16 students have been found vaping on school grounds. They also discussed how parents are often not really concerned about their high school aged children vaping, but often the parents of children at the middle school are shocked or upset.

Saumya let the group know that one educational activity the coalition conducted was a Q&A on e-cigarettes & vaping – students submitted their questions to the Coalition during lunch, and the questions were then taken to experts in the community for answers. These answers were distributed during lunch, and will be posted in school bathrooms.

The group also discussed a number of other activities going on in the community to prevent youth access to and use of nicotine products. The Board of Health conducts yearly compliance checks on sale of e-cigarettes in retail stores. A comment was made that parents and adults are often the ones purchasing e-cigarettes which are then used by youth. Diane and Ron commented that they would like the BOH to be more involved in community efforts to reduce youth access to and use of e-cigarettes. Dave asked if the BOH could sponsor a tobacco licensee training, similar to the one currently held for alcohol retailers, and if they could do a compliance check like what the policy currently do with alcohol (having a youth under 21 attempt to purchase). Ed suggested it might be useful to distribute a tip sheet or information card with the purchase of e-cigarettes, which the group supported.

Diane asked if there might be a PSA made about vaping – Kristin let her know we would be interested in making one from the Coalition. Amy and Dave M. also suggested sharing Maky Kotob's vaping PSA with the BOH to share. Saumya will follow up and do so. Neha and Haley commented that Maky had shown his PSA in a Breaking the Barriers meeting and it was well received. They felt it might be paid better attention to if it was shown at Student Council, with Peer Leaders, and at National Honors Society meetings, and if it could be broken down into smaller chunks. Kristin and Saumya also noted Maky is planning to send to Kelley St. Couer to have it shown in health classes.

The group also discussed the possibility of signage and advertising bans or limitations, but that this would go through zoning laws.

Diane and Ron wanted to know if the diversion program at the school is helping to reduce student vaping. Dave M. commented that the education piece is great, and students are held to a high standard on the work. However, parents do not seem to be concerned when their children are caught vaping.

Amy discussed the MWHF regional vaping prevention initiative. This consists of a cohort of interested community leaders. The regional group is divided into a Youth Vaping Prevention Steering committee and ongoing sub committees. The regional group has identified several priority stakeholder groups: students who use e-cigarettes and those who do not use these products, schools, families, and pediatricians. The group put together a brief family survey to gauge adult's understanding of vaping, as well as several focus group style questions for students.

CADCA Update

Saumya updated the group on the recent CADCA trip. Kristin, Saumya, and 5 Breaking the Barriers students traveled to the CADCA Forum outside of Washington, D.C. The students learned about the Strategic Prevention Framework and how to implement it, and got a chance to meet representatives of Rep. Clark and Sen. Warren, as well as to meet Senator Markey. They also got to meet and interact with a number of other students from around Massachusetts and hear about the prevention work going on in other communities. Saumya will invite the students to the next meeting to talk about their experiences and work with them on following up on the plans they developed at the conference.

Announcements and Celebrations

There were no announcements made. Ron commented that he was glad he and Diane had come to this meeting to hear about all the work the coalition and its members are doing to prevent youth substance use in Ashland, and that the Board of Health hopes to be more connected and better support the coalition in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 P.M.

Next meeting: March 12 from 3-4:30 PM (Youth Focused Meeting)