

Gray & New Gloucester Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

Presented with support from the 21 Reasons Coalition

Wednesday, April 27th, 8:30AM-10:15AM – Gray-New Gloucester High School

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome & introductions

a. In attendance:

Jeanne Adams, Parent and Business Owner

Victoria Burns, Superintendent, MSAD #15

Kate Genovese, School Counselor, GNG High School

Kathleen Potter, School Board Member, MSAD #15

Carol Swicker, Project Manager, 21 Reasons, Medical Care Development

Sarah Kinsler, Project Assistant, 21 Reasons, Medical Care Development

II. Community Assessment

a. Preliminary survey results: As of this meeting, 182 community members have responded to our online survey. Sarah discussed some of our initial findings, looking at the raw data as well as data cross-tabulated for respondents' level of concern (question 4):

- 98% of respondents are adults; 95% are parents. Only four respondents identified themselves as youth.
- Violence/bullying was the issue affecting youth about which respondents most often expressed concern (70%). Substance abuse was a close second (64%), with academic failure the third most common response (52%).
- Most survey respondents are concerned about youth substance abuse: 74% identified themselves as either moderately (43%) or very (31%) concerned.
 - o For the 53 parents who are "very concerned," substance abuse was the most commonly chosen issue of concern, ahead of violence/bullying.
- Respondents reported concerned about alcohol most often (87% of respondents selected this answer); marijuana and illicit drugs were also substances of concern across the board (57%).
 - o When cross-tabulated by level of concern, this is true for all.
- Respondents believe that parents (90%), co-curricular activities (48%), schools (40%), and friends/peers (38%) are the strongest protective factors in the community.
 - o Vicky and Kathleen noted that the school's co-curricular activities policy was recently upheld by the school board – kudos to them for their work on what is clearly an important tool to keep youth from using.
- Respondents report that most substances (tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs, inhalants) are very easy for youth to access in Gray-New Gloucester, though many selected "don't know" with regards to illicit drugs.

- Major sources of substances identified by respondents were older friends, peers, parties, and in the home.
 - Respondents say that youth in the community believe they would probably not be caught for drinking or using drugs by police, parents, the school, or other authority figures.
 - o Carol noted that, since most respondents are parents, this could indicate that parents don't believe they will catch their children if they're using; giving parents more tools to effectively monitor their teens is a potential future strategy for addressing this.
 - We also discussed common themes from the write-in comments: that community members know about youth substance use but don't take action; that parents need more tools to monitor youth and prevent substance use; that community norms send mixed messages or even encourage youth substance use; the need for local law enforcement; and the protective factors which keep youth from using.
- b. Preliminary results of 1x1s: though there are still a few key interviews to perform, the 1x1s needed for the assessment are nearly complete. Carol distributed a table which analyzed recurring themes (attached), and the group discussed these common themes.
- G-NG schools were brought up often by 1x1 interviewees, who mentioned the strengths and the weaknesses of the district (especially the high school). The group discussed the challenges the school faces in catching kids who use; most don't use at school or bring substances, and some community members expect the school to monitor teens' behavior even when they're not at school.
 - They also noted the reputation of the school and the positive changes it has undergone over the past 10 years or so; community members' attitudes about the schools have not shifted so quickly.
 - Carol brought up a possible point of view we're missing: the area's home-schooling families. She will work on connecting with them.
- c. Possible focus groups: Carol said that she would like to consider holding two focus groups, one for parents and one for youth. Vicky and Kate discussed the challenges of working with youth on this issue, in terms of parental consent and in terms of kids' willingness to share their experiences. We discussed the possibility of creating a voluntary survey for youth, but parental consent would still be necessary, and Kate estimates the response rate would be very low.
- d. Process for writing the report: Carol and Sarah will begin drafting a report in May, and it should be ready for feedback sometime in June. Sarah emphasized the importance of this review process; coalition members provide necessary insight into sensitive issues addressed, content, and how the report will be received by community members.

III. Community Capacity Building

- a. Currently our coalition functions without a chair. Carol noted that a successful DFC grant application would likely show proof of more structured leadership

within the coalition. Though we have amazing human resources present here, we should begin to consider who might be willing to act as a chair.

- b. In addition, we're still lacking representation from some of the required sectors.

IV. Parent Outreach and Involvement

- a. Results from our Survey show that there are many parents in Gray and New Gloucester who care about preventing youth substance use; they could be a great source of energy and membership. Kathleen, Kate and Jeanne suggested reaching out to younger parents whose kids might benefit from our efforts; Carol will work on making these connections by our next meeting.

V. Training Opportunities (See list, attached)

- a. Carol distributed a list of training opportunities available from 21 Reasons Coalition members, and the group weighed in on which trainings we might be interested in having during a future meeting. Carol will get back to the group with more information about popular options.

VI. Public Awareness Materials

- a. We briefly discussed reconvening our Materials Subcommittee to create a new handout, or possibly a brochure, to present at future tabling opportunities and to publicize our coalition. No decisions were made.
- b. For totes sent out to elementary school students, Kate suggests a focused, brief ½ page flyer. Carol suggested reconvening the materials subcommittee.

VII. June Vote on law Enforcement

- a. Gray's upcoming town vote addresses the lack of community law enforcement. If townspeople vote in accordance, Gray will soon have its own officer. Carol asked about the likelihood of this outcome; however, no one had heard much buzz in the community regarding this issue.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Carol and Sarah will begin to draft our community assessment, and make connections with more parents.
2. Carol will consider training opportunities to strengthen our Coalition's capacity.

Next meeting date: Wednesday, May 25
Time and location TBA

Carol Swicker, Project Manager, 21 Reasons Mentor project, cswicker@mcd.org 773-7737.

Sarah Kinsler, Project Assistant, 21 Reasons, skinsler@mcd.org 773-7737.

The G-NG Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition is partnering with the 21 Reasons Coalition as part of a 2-year Drug-Free Communities Mentoring Project, funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, US Dept of Health & Human Services. 21 Reasons is a project of Medical Care Development. FMI: www.21reasons.org

