

## **Minutes of the Bernards Township Municipal Alliance/Youth Services Commission**

October 5, 2021

### **Mayoral-Appointed Members Attending**

Joan Bannan, Chair, Township Committee Representative  
Kaitlin Cartoccio, Vice Chair, Health Department Representative  
Ellen Houlihan, Civic Group Representative  
Catherine Santaiti, PTO Representative  
Lucy Forgione, Bernards Health Officer  
Robert Green, Clergy Representative (arrived at 6:20)  
MJ Postal, Senior Representative  
Rebecca Tritt – SAC Representative

### **Other Attendees**

Amy Mahoney Harris, Epiphany Community Services  
Amy Lewis, Chatham/Westfield Municipal Alliance  
Ava Alonso, REACH  
Charlie Geary, REACH  
Matthew Leopold, REACH  
Stephanie Bilitiz – Somerset County Municipal Alliance Coordinatio  
Susan Visser, CIC  
Tone Knoll, CIC

### **Call to Order**

Kaitlin Cartoccio called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Mission Statement**

Joan Bannan read The Mission Statement and Three goals of the Alliance; “ESP!”

### **MINUTES APPROVAL**

No Quorum (tabled)

### **REPORTS**

Kaitlin Cartoccio provided

### **Somerset County Alliance Coordinatior - TBD**

- No report.

### **Youth Services Commission – Monique Sprague**

Kaitlin Cartoccio provided a brief report on behalf of Ms. Spargue. Deadlines for grants are approaching, October 6, 2021. The MA has reapplied for the grant to continue the Grab & Go Program which has been an ongoing partnership with BT Library.

### **Community Program Coordinator -Kaitlin Cartoccio**

This report was deferred until after the CIC presentation summarized below. Kaitlin reported:

- The Pride survey will go forward – date TBD.
- CIC – enjoys a new space in Bernardsville.

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **a. Community In Crisis Community Needs Assessment Results**

Toni Knoll provided a background concerning the survey. She also introduced Amy Harris, an epidemiologist with Epiphany Community Services who shared highlights from the survey and other factual information.

- Overdose deaths increased 30% in Somerset County in 2020 attributable to opioids and Fentanyl
- Parents expressed concern regarding their children's mental health, demonstrating the greatest concern with the 19-22 age group.
- Parents not seeing the link between mental health placing children at higher risk for using substances.
- Counsellors in mental health are seeing students struggling, isolated and less engaged which are all predictors of substance use disorders.
- Parents are greatly concerned about substance use among youths, concern was expressed for all substances.
- Drilling down a bit further, parents are less concerned about their own children using substances.
- This is concerning because if parents do not perceive their child is a risk, they will not seek education.
- Somerset Hills has a culture of drinking and binge drinking.
- Parents did not believe alcohol use was not appropriate. While most parents won't host a party, they were willing to drop their child off at a party where alcohol will be served because of no perceived options.
- Marijuana use was used by over ½ the Somerset Hill students surveyed which is higher than the national average.
- Somerset Hills enjoys a successful and affluent population. Parents have high expectations for their children creating a culture of achievement which can increase anxiety. Thus, Somerset Hills youth are at high risk for substance use and mental health issues.
- Prevention messaging that focuses on substance use as detrimental to achievement may serve as strong motivation against use.
- Incorporating messages into other topics and from several angles. For example: social hosting: peer pressure angle and insurance liability angle.

The presentation was followed by group discussion including topics concerning efforts to start messaging early in elementary school and reconvening parents education.

### **b. REACH**

- Meetings via zoom
- Freshman Boot Camp
- Working on action plan

c. **Grab and Go Outreach**

- Next pick up October 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>

d. **Upcoming Programs**

- Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day – Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>
- MA Football Game – Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> @ 7 PM
- DEA Takeback Day – Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup> 10 AM to 2 PM

e. **Subcommittee Discussion**

No updates other than the Twilight Challenge will go forward in June

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**LOCAL EVENTS/MUNICIPAL ALLIANCE MEMBER COMMENT ADJOURNMENT**

Members were reminded to complete their notice of intent to continue their service.

Meeting was adjourned on motion by Robert Green, seconded by Catherine Santaiti.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joan Bannan, Chairperson