

Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria
Mental Health/ Substance Abuse Work Group
Draft Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2007
Lee Center 3:30- 5:00 PM

Work Group Members Present:

- Mary Riley, Chair, Community Services Board; Member, Public Health Advisory Commission; Co-Chair, Mental Health / Substance Abuse Work Group
- Allen Lomax, Chair, Alexandria United Way and Economic Opportunities Commission; Co-Chair, Mental Health / Substance Abuse Work Group
- Deborah Warren, Division Director, Child, Family and Prevention Services, Alexandria Community Services Board
- Mike Gilmore, Executive Director, Alexandria Community Services Boards
- Cathy Thompson, Representative, ALIVE!
- Elizabeth Willingham, Representative, NVFS Healthy Families
- Ann Huston, Representative, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
- Charles Konigsberg, Director, Alexandria Health Department
- William Chesley, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation
- Nancy McCormick, Representative, Youth Policy Commission; Executive Director, Families First of Alexandria, Inc.
- Peggy Cressy, Director, Community Health Division, Inova Health System for Rick Leichtweis, Senior Director, Inova Kellar Center
- John Porter, Assistant Superintendent, ACPS
- Dave Cheney, Chair, Substance Abuse Education and Violence Prevention Advisory Committee
- Christina Theokas, Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst, ACPS
- John Davies, Retired Psychiatrist
- Rose Berler, Chair, School Health Advisory Board
- Carol Loftur-Thun, Executive Director, CrisisLink
- Mary Azoy, Director of Community Education, CrisisLink
- Tiffeny Sanchez-Brown, Co-Chair, Friends of Alexandria Mental Health Center
- Veronica Aberle, Nurse Manager, Alexandria Health Department
- Cara Pennel, Health Planner, Alexandria Health Department
- Jennifer Colburn, GWU Intern, Alexandria Health Department

I. Approval of October 26, November 30 and January 18 Minutes

- October 26, 2006, November 30, 2006 and January 18, 2007 meeting minutes were approved.

II. CrisisLink Presentation

- Carol Loftur-Thun, Executive Director of CrisisLink, presented an overview of their organization and the programs & services they provide (for a hard copy of the presentation, please contact Cara).
- The discussion also focused on the inclusion of Youth and Faith Ministry outreach in Fairfax County, specifically the faith-based toolkit co-developed by CrisisLink and Fairfax Partnership for Youth. CrisisLink held a 2nd annual Interfaith Conference last year, in which over 200 people attended. They will hold the 3rd annual conference this May, which will focus on 18-25 year olds in transition (leaving home for college, military or jobs).
- Mary Azoy, CrisisLink's Director of Community Education, also attended to provide insight into community programs and programs involving the faith community, including how to get the message to the congregations.

III. Discussion – Action Steps

- Inventory
 - Cara Pennel compiled a list of Alexandria mental health and substance abuse programs and services for youth ages 6-12 that are currently in existence. This list was provided for the group. They were invited to review and provide feedback, corrections and/or additions to the inventory.
- Anti-Stigma Campaign
 - The Elimination of Barriers Initiative (EBI) toolkit was passed around. The group was reminded how to obtain a copy of the EBI toolkit.
 - Jennifer Colburn presented the findings from the Youth Focus Group Report. Cara and Jennifer attended a T.C. Williams High School student council meeting to get their insight into a youth anti-stigma campaign and to invite students to advise the work group in the development of the campaign. The findings were summarized in a handout. Major points included:
 - Students prefer a media based campaign, through internet, video, etc. in combination with speakers who have had personal experience with mental health problems and stigma. They also expressed interest in small group/person-to-person support. Students indicated relying heavily on peers and then parents for support. For more information, see attached TCWHS Survey Results.
 - Because May is a busy time for students, there was discussion about whether to launch the anti-stigma campaign in May. The anti-stigma

campaign task force will need to talk more about whether to try to launch before May or to postpone youth-directed activities until fall.

- Future focus groups will also be held with more at-risk students as well as faith-based groups, to gather more information about the development of the anti-stigma campaign.
- The Work Group is working with CSB and Friends of Alexandria Mental Health Center (Friends) on Mental Health Month Activities in May.
 - Friends co-chairs have contacted Pete Earley, author of “Crazy: A Father’s Search Through America’s Mental Health Madness,” to speak at a community-wide event in May. Tiffeny Sanchez-Brown, Friends co-chair, updated the group on her correspondence with Mr. Earley. He is available on May 24, 30 & 31. The High School is holding graduation on May 24th, and the last day of school for other students is May 25th, so the group decided the 24th would not be a good choice. (Update: Tiffeny has confirmed Wednesday, May 30 with Mr. Earley).
 - First Baptist Church and Minnie Howard are available and Tiffeny will follow-up with facilities after confirming a date with Mr. Earley. Carol Loftur-Thun mentioned that Mr. Earley is the keynote speaker at the Interfaith Conference and that all are welcome to attend the event. The work group would still like to host an event with Mr. Earley in Alexandria in the evening, as it was felt that Alexandrians were not likely to travel to Fairfax for this event.
- The Faith Based Toolkit, co-created by CrisisLink and Fairfax Partnership for Youth, can be used with the help of ALIVE! to get Alexandria congregations introduced to the issue of mental health and how to reach parents and youth. Focus groups with clergy and youth ministers will be conducted to see how to target youths and parents through the faith community. Mary reiterated that this toolkit is a way to practically address these issues and tailor them to each congregation’s needs. The faith community could be a target for May and through the summer for anti-stigma activities.
 - Carol and Mary suggested that anti-stigma efforts also target parents to ensure vulnerable youth get access to mental health services, especially since parental consent and support is usually needed to access professional mental health screening, assessment and treatment. She later added that when CrisisLink provided training for Arlington’s juvenile probation officers, these officers indicated that even when parents are court-ordered to seek mental health services for their child, they often do not do so because of what seem to be the stigma, cultural views, and denial. The least likely to seek services were identified as Hispanic parents and affluent, professional parents.

- Creation of Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force
 - Although the outlook for administering YRBSS in spring 2007 wasn't looking good, Christina Theokas informed the group that the Mayor brought up the issue at the City/Schools meeting the week prior. YRBSS might be administered in the 2nd or 3rd week of April, but it is not yet confirmed.
 - The Work Group decided to create a Substance Abuse Task Force to begin looking at the issue in Alexandria, examine those programs that are in place, and analyze data from the Developmental Assets survey, which should be available in March. The first meeting will be Wednesday, February 21, 3:30 p.m. at the Lee Center. Dave Cheney, Cate Alexander, Mary Flynt, Mary Riley, and Cara Pennel will attend. An invitation was extended to all interested Work Group members to attend the meeting.
 - Nancy McCormick suggested that the Work Group should present to the Youth Policy Commission. Cara will contact Ron Frazier to get on the agenda. (Update: Mary Riley, Cara Pennel and Nancy McCormick are on the agenda for the YPC February 7 meeting.)

- Mentor Recruiting
 - Mary asked the group members to help spread the word about the mentoring information session. It will be held on Wednesday January 31 at 7:00 PM at the Lyceum. The informational handout was provided.
 - Currently about 50 people have RSVPed and they would like twice that number in attendance. (Update: More than 80 people have RSVPed.)

- Creation of Donation Account for the Partnership
 - The Public Health Advisory Commission discussed establishing an account, in which people can make tax-deductible donations to support the *Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria*, including Mental Health/Substance Abuse Work Group and Healthy Lifestyles Work Group activities.

IV. Handouts (not previously discussed)

- MH/SA Needs
 - Mary briefly discussed the data on this handout. Data from the Community Health Assessment and from the CSB's 2006 Public Hearing was the impetus for the formation of the MH/SA Work Group. Data were also provided from the 2001 Developmental Assets Survey on the drinking habits of Alexandria youth.

- Binge Drinking Article
 - Mary indicated that this article, forwarded by Cate Alexander, illustrates the need to address the issue of underage binge drinking, which had been a concern of several work group members.

- Teen Screen Article
 - TeenScreen has been discussed as an option for a long-term program to address mental health issues in teenagers. The drawback of implementing such a program is the potential lack of follow-up services available to youth. The article states that there is a protective factor for adolescents simply by being screened, so the group agreed that this might be an option to demonstrate the need, but without guaranteeing follow-up services. After the meeting, Deborah Warren provided a recent SAMHSA statement related to mental health screening of children and adolescents that indicated, “if problems are detected, screening must be followed by an appropriate, in-depth assessment, conducted by trained personnel, with linkage provided to appropriate services and supports.” With this new information, it seems clear that screening should not be done without appropriate staff in place to provide follow-up services.

- School Resources
 - Cara shared a draft grid of mental health/substance abuse resources currently available within the ACPS. The grid also provides a ratio of students to staff members. (See attached MH/SA School Resource Grid)

- Deborah Warren found an award winning movie, “Eternal High,” that includes a short film, made while the filmmaker was unaware he was clinically depressed, followed by a speech to his school after receiving treatment (detailing his experience with depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, self-injury, self-medicating substance abuse, and his treatment). It also addresses stigma. Deborah ordered a preview of the film. The group discussed previewing the film at the next meeting and possibly using it as a part of the anti-stigma campaign with youth.