



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## Minutes 12\_08\_11

**AYHSC Minutes – December 8, 2011**  
**5:30pm-7:00pm**

**I. Welcome:** (18) Kathy Hirsch, Cindy Bouvier, Cindy Sheridan, Carlene Newell, Maryellen Wyman, Ethel Doyle, Ned Walsh, Jack Flood, Rich Flynn, Joe Curro, Christine Connolly, Natasha Waden, Judith Carol, Bronwen Wirta, Karen Dillon, Rebecca Wolfe, Mary DeCoursey, Colleen Leger

Coalition members were reminded to submit documentation of volunteer/in kind hours related to Coalition work. Colleen introduced Bronwan Wirta to the Coalition. Bronwan is the new substance abuse clinician at AYCC, and will be working on the Diversion Expansion Project- a grant project of AYCC and AYHSC. Bronwan provided a brief summary of the project, and informed the group about upcoming focus groups to assess the needs of substance-involved youth.

### II. Upcoming Trainings and Events

Compliance Checks: Colleen asked Coalition members to recommend youth (preferably who live outside of Arlington) who might be interested in conducting compliance checks with the Board of Health and the Arlington Police Department. Youth should be between the ages of 15-17 for tobacco compliance checks, and 17-20 for alcohol compliance checks. Several coalition members indicated that they had candidates in mind. Youth recommendations should be directed to Colleen- [cleger@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:cleger@town.arlington.ma.us).

Introduction to Mindfulness: This parent forum will be held at the Ottoson Middle School, on January 11, from 7:00-8:30pm. Speaker, Adam Liss, will introduce parents (and school personnel) to a mindfulness-based approach to inner resilience and social/emotional learning.

Designer Drugs: The New Frontier- this webinar will be held on January 26, from 1:00-2:00pm. It is a Multijurisdictional Counterdrug Task Force Training, and will cover new, synthetic drugs (bath salts, K2, spice), their associated risks, and efforts to prevent their use. To register, click on the following link: [http://www.mctft.com/telecasts/view\\_course.aspx?telecastID=2012-01-26-1](http://www.mctft.com/telecasts/view_course.aspx?telecastID=2012-01-26-1).

### III. Coalition Updates

#### Parent Support

Colleen read from a summary sheet of parent concerns and resource needs, which Lynn compiled based on feedback from brief Coalition surveys and parent questionnaires. Some of the concerns expressed by Coalition members included: permissive attitudes; social host liability; lack of parental awareness (prevalence and implications of use); pressure; binge drinking; Rx pain meds; drinking while driving; and ways to support kids to make healthy decisions/ prevent risky behaviors. Coalition members suggested increasing educational opportunities for parents, offering support services to youth and parents (AYCC, Diversion Expansion), and making information and resources more easily accessible. Feedback from these surveys also included suggestions for improving the AYHSC website. Compared to other Coalition websites in the area, Coalition members found the AYHSC site less user friendly, hard to access (link is too long), less visually appealing (no social media integration) and not as "upbeat".

At a recent Parent Forum, 36 parents completed a brief questionnaire about concerns related to parenting a teenager. Among the top concerns selected by respondents were: communication strategies, setting limits and clear standards, and emotional health. A number of parents were interested in the informal "Table Talks"

model as a way to communicate with other parents around these issues.

Guiding Good Choices: Cindy completed a group on December 6<sup>th</sup>, and was excited to report that parents from the most recent series were eager to continue meeting as a group (in some form).

### School Dances

AHS administrators declared a moratorium on school dances due to concerning behaviors, including wide scale drinking. AHS Principal, Mary Villano scheduled a meeting for next Wednesday night (12/14/11) to review the matter with parents, and to discuss setting safety standards for future dances. Colleen and Lynn, as well as other Coalition members will be attending the meeting, and Colleen asked the group to provide feedback (and possible recommendations) that could be shared with Mary. The group considered a number of options for reducing underage drinking at dances, including:

- Setting dance eligibility criteria: students with recent disciplinary citations, or students with unexcused absences from class or school would not be eligible to attend dances.
- Enforcing stricter penalties: for example, seniors who are caught drinking at a school event (dance) would not be allowed to walk at graduation.
- Enhanced monitoring: implement random breathalyzing; use passive alcohol sensors for all students; breathalyze students mid-dance.
- Increased supervision: increase the number of volunteers, including parents (not of students attending the dance) and other community volunteers.
- Parent education: increase education around social host liability.

Mary is also interested in including resources, stats/facts, and other information related to youth health behaviors (including substance use) in her parent newsletters. The Coalition will support Mary in this effort by compiling some useful information.

### YRBS

AHS and AYHSC staff and volunteers helped administer the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to Arlington High School students on Wednesday (12/7). The surveys will be submitted for analysis within the next few weeks, and the Coalition should have the results by March. Colleen further explained that the open-ended responses would be compiled and analyzed internally, and asked for volunteers to help with data entry. Volunteers also needed, in time, to help fine-tune YRBS presentations for various audiences.

### Underage Drinking Prevention Town Hall Meeting

Colleen informed the group that the Coalition had been invited to host an underage drinking (or other drug prevention) Town Hall meeting, as part of SAMHSA's national Town Hall Meeting initiative. SAMHSA will provide a \$500 stipend to the Coalition. The group agreed that the Coalition should participate, and Colleen said she would confirm with the MA project coordinator.

## **IV. Marijuana Policy**

Colleen provided a brief summary of current MA initiatives related to the legalization of marijuana. Several of the initiatives pertain to medicinal marijuana only, and one calls for the regulation and taxation of marijuana (like alcohol). Prevention groups throughout MA are concerned about the public health implications of these initiatives, and are interested in organizing a statewide educational campaign. Colleen asked the group whether they thought AYHSC should get involved in this effort. The group recognized that this was a complicated matter, and suggested learning more about the issues before joining forces with the statewide prevention group. Colleen said she would prepare information for Coalition members (to be presented at January's meeting).

## **V. Next Coalition Meeting: January 19, 2012**

**Happy Holidays!**

