



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
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Minutes 09-17-09

Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2009
5:30-7:00PM

Present: Natasha Thorne, Andrea Razi, Ellen Digby, Cindy Sheridan Curran, Cindy Starks, Susan Stewart, Kim Spencer, Christine Connolly Sharkey, Mindy Davin, Chris Schultz, Ethel Doyle, Cindy Bouvier, Caroline Ress, John Scheft, Molly Simmons, Lynn Horgan, Kathy Hirsch, Bryan Gallagher, Robert Bongiorno, Colleen Leger, Susan Svencer

Attendees: 21

I. New Member Introductions: Susan Stewart: Youth Coordinator, Calvary Church; Kim Spencer: Parent; GGC Facilitator; member, Calvary Church; Mindy Davin: Parent; GGC Facilitator; Molly Simmons: Parent; GGC Facilitator

Reflection: Verbal summary of AYHSC activities over the past year. AYHSC received glowing feedback from DFC officials and CADCA trainers for its accomplishments in its first year as a federal grantee.

II. Summary of Summer Activities

Ottoson YRBS: Results expected by October 9th. Review of open-ended responses revealed concerns about depression, stress and violence among middle school students. A report summarizing students' responses is available. Please contact Susan Svencer at ssvencer@town.arlington.ma.us for a copy.

HRC Summer Experience: Summer program offered to 100 Arlington youth by the Department of Recreation, Arlington Police and the Department of Health and Human Services (AYHSC.) Activities included Police & K9 demonstrations, games, swimming, bowling, a scavenger hunt and interactive lessons about sun safety, nutrition/healthy eating and bullying prevention. Feedback from youth and parents was exceptionally positive, with many references to the positive connections youth made with police officials.

CADCA Midyear Training: Colleen, Christine CS, Chris S, Cindy SC and Lynn H attended training. Workshops covered multiple topics including coalition development, evaluation and sustainability, social host liability and resource development. Chris remarked on how lucky AYHSC is to have such strong inter-agency collaboration, as she realized at the training just how many coalitions lack community support and coordination.

Coalition Corner: Monthly AYHSC columns in the Advocate began in July. The first article (re)introduced AYHSC to the community (who we are, what we do and why we do it.) The second article, written by John Scheft, addressed Social Host Liability, and the third article covered a piece of legislation to ban alcohol advertising on state-owned property.

Guiding Good Choices (GGC): Eleven community members were trained to become facilitators of the Guiding Good Choices program, a parenting skills-building program for caregivers of youth ages 9-14. Our

GGC facilitators will implement this program at various locations throughout Arlington.

III. Upcoming Events

Town Day: September 25th & 26th

Volunteers needed to staff AYHSC booth on Friday night (5:30-8:00) and on Saturday day from 10:00-3:00pm. Please email Colleen at cleger@town.arlington.ma.us, if you are available to help.

The Children's Room Annual Memories Walk: October 4th from 1-3pm

Walkers needed to represent AYHSC in support of this important community resource. \$20 to walk. Email Colleen if you are interested.

Health and Safety Awareness Day: October 13th at AHS

Featuring speaker Jordan Burnham, who suffered from depression and substance abuse as an adolescent, and survived a significant suicide attempt to share his experiences. There will be advisory groups set up after the presentation. Please contact Andrea Razi, the event coordinator, at arazi@arlington.k12.ma.us, if you would like to volunteer.

Unwanted Medication Collection: November 14th at the Town (DPW) Yard

Community members are encouraged to bring all unused or expired medications for disposal as part of the household collection day. Volunteers needed from 9:00-1:00. Please email Colleen, if you are interested.

Monthly Newsletter: Coming soon.

Feedback from Coalition: would like newsletter imbedded in email, include upcoming events, parent forums, AYHSC meeting summary and info/data from surveys (a "did you know..." section.) A link to the Parent Resource List should also be included, along with links to other resources. AHS parent resource book should be available on website by next week.

IV. AYHSC Organizational Structure

Membership Agreement Forms

Forms outline the mission and vision of AYHSC and describe the two membership options, Core and Affiliated. All Coalition members are expected to be Core members, meaning they are expected to provide on-going support to the Coalition, attend monthly meetings and be continuously active. Members in attendance were asked to sign the agreement on the spot, and all complied. Affiliated membership is for others in the community who are unable to commit to active membership, but would like to be involved in specific Coalition tasks and/or events. We will have membership agreements available at Town Day and all other events where the Coalition has a presence.

Working Groups

The working groups document outlines the options for Coalition Core members to become involved in specific groups focused on eight areas in which the Coalition is looking to improve and expand its role.

Some groups are already at capacity. Coalition members were asked to read through the document, including the activities, skills, various levels of time and commitment. Members should email Colleen within the week with where and within which groups they would like to commit. The most promising work takes place within the groups themselves. Feedback from members was that the form is clear and set up well. It was also noted that the Youth Council group is very excited and to get started again.

V. DFC Grant Year Two

Summary of Work Plan

Due to the loss of the state earmark, there has been a one-third cut in the Coalition budget for the coming year. This means the budget is set and cannot be altered, so no additional programs or services can be funded. We'll need to be creative in how we disseminate information and raise awareness. We do have

Guiding Good Choices (will run up to 5 groups, first at Calvary with John Scheft and Kim Spencer facilitating), Cops and Shops, Compliance Checks for tobacco and alcohol sales (may involve the Youth Council and exchange with kids in other communities), YRBS which will be administered at the high school in November (plan to discuss the results on the Ottoson and AHS surveys at the Community Forum in March). Also will be running the Community Forum (March 18, 2010), the medication take-back event that is part of the Community Collection Day and the plan for installing a permanent drop box in the Community Safety Building. Also have CASCA training mid-year in Arizona, training for all liquor-licensed business (explore making it mandatory, but voluntary at this point), and Parent Forums.

Open Discussion of Ideas for the Future

Semi-formal and Prom safety: Want to know how to promote healthy behaviors around school dances and parties. Concern that post-prom is the problem, not before or during and most existing materials are related to pre-prom activities. The recent incident in Saugus occurred at 7 am, after the post-prom party. Maybe revisit the contract parents sign to be sure it includes something about driving after the party, which could be a light bulb for parents. Ellen will bring in a copy of the contract and one of the working groups could take on revising and updating it. MIAA regulations do now cover the current and next sport season, but kids try and get around that by playing a sport they don't care about. The problem is that there is the pervasive attitude that drinking is a right of passage. Parents don't believe that it makes sense to not let kids have alcohol in their own home; it is really common. We're not going to get agreement among parents, but parents do need to understand the social host law and know the consequences. They need to know it is not simply a social / moral issue, but that they are legally responsible for the safety of every child in their home. Need to have a dialogue with many points b/c what reaches people is different. Perhaps the Coalition can send a letter directly home to parents with information, with options and resources. The concerns are not unique to Arlington, so we can see what other communities have done in terms of social norms campaign. Parents need to know they are not alone and are doing the right thing.

VI. Community Outreach

One-on-Ones

One-on-one interviews and survey forms are intended to get the pulse of the community, start conversations, and gain a broader understanding of perceptions around substance abuse. We will remove the request for names so respondents can be anonymous. Distribute widely at Town Day. PTO meetings, elementary schools, Ottoson and AHS open houses, and senior parent night were mentioned as places to capture parents' perspectives.