

**Dedham Organization for Substance Awareness
June 9, 2020**

Town of Dedham Health Department
Virtual Meeting

In attendance:

Allison Staton, DOSA Vice Chair
Mike Butler, DOSA Chair
Mike D'Entremont, Chief of Police
Gail Kelley, DPS Health Services Director
Cassandra Bigness, DOSA Coordinator
Mary Ellard, Board of Health
Kathy Reda, Board of Health
Sarah MacDonald, Select Board
Fred Newton, Dedham Resident
Mike Buckley, DPD Deputy Chief
Dot Walsh, Media Sector Rep
Kim Rutherford, Dedham Parent
Krissy King, DOSA Director
Maria Antonuccio, DPS Nurse
Ann Stephens, Dedham Parent

Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM

Introduction

- Mike Butler welcomed the group and read the following prepared statement composed by Allison Staton, Kristina King, and himself, with input from Melissa Pearrow of the School Committee:

During the past two weeks we have witnessed the outpouring of pain, sadness, and anger from people of color after the killings of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Breonna Taylor in Louisville and Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia. Here in Dedham, neighbors, friends and colleagues have been sharing their stories of how at times our town has not been welcoming, has treated them as if they have criminal intent and how their families have heard racial slurs. And many of us who are white have started to hear and really listen to these stories, sometimes for the first time. On Sunday, May 31st, with only a few days' notice, nearly 400 Dedham residents - wearing face coverings and maintaining distance in light of continued efforts to contain the COVID19 virus - stood along the sidewalks in the Square to show support for black and brown neighbors, classmates and friends. This shows what Dedham is and can be: a town that welcomes and values all residents.

The Dedham Organization for Substance Awareness (DOSA) is committed to addressing and preventing youth substance use. In doing so, we acknowledge the role that racism, particularly antiblack racism, has played and continues to play in creating health inequities. We pledge to do everything we can to reduce and ultimately eliminate those disparities, and believe this is possible in partnership with the community. Moreover,

we will continue to listen to the experiences of families of color and ensure those experiences help to inform our prevention work.

Public Comment

- No members of the public had a comment at this time.

Group Discussion – Mental Health and Trauma Strategies

- Krissy King facilitated a discussion on ways the coalition could address mental health and trauma in the community, since all three work groups had selected mental health/trauma as a risk factor to prioritize in the April 21st meeting. This factor was selected due to a strong association between mental health issues (e.g. depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation) and substance use among Dedham youth, as evidenced by the 2018 MetroWest Health Survey data.
- Gail Kelley expressed concern that while youth mental health was certainly a concern in Dedham, the Dedham Public Schools had already devoted many resources to addressing mental health among DPS students, including hiring new clinicians. She was worried that this conversation would lead to DOSA duplicating efforts that the schools are already implementing.
- Allison Staton noted that the coalition's work in this area was not intended to duplicate or compete with anything the schools are doing. She mentioned that the coalition chose to pursue this conversation because it was notable that all three groups during the risk factor meeting decided to prioritize mental health and trauma.
- Chief D'Entremont noted that mental health was an important issue, particularly among adults. He has seen that many adults with mental health issues in the community come through a "revolving door" in and out of treatment.
- Krissy clarified that the Drug Free Communities Grant focuses on youth substance use and so any DFC-funded strategy must be tied to reducing youth substance use. These strategies, however, can target adults (e.g. parents) in the community in order to influence risk and protective factors for youth substance use.

Social Support

- The alcohol group

Marijuana Group (Mike Butler, Jay Sullivan, Mike D'Entremont, Mike Buckley, Laura Hickson, Dot Walsh, and Melissa Pearrow)

- The marijuana group selected low risk perception as its most important risk factor. Kids view it as "safe" because it is "legal" and there are no easy tests, like for alcohol. The shift to make for 'recreational' use dismisses that it is a Schedule I drug and can be a gateway to other, more serious drugs. Also, because marijuana is commercialized, it has become more about profits and money for distributors.
- Adequate capacity and resources: middle and high schools provide health classes and assemblies that provide a consistent message, with PSAs and posters around school. Officer Sullivan does presentations with facts about marijuana, its impact on brain development, and the legal and social consequences of using marijuana.

- The second most important risk factor is Trauma and Mental Health. Marijuana can be used as a way to self-medicate. This requires more intensive and individualized intervention.

Nicotine Group (Gail Kelley, Kristina King, Maria Antonuccio, Monica DeWinter, Lester Hartman, Erin Boles Welsh, Cassandra Bigness)

- The nicotine group selected trauma/mental health and favorable youth attitudes toward use as risk factors to prioritize, with price and promotion as a potential third.
- Trauma/mental health was selected because of the stark mental health disparities evidenced in the data: for example, 22% of high school students who vape report considering suicide as opposed to 10% of students who do not vape. This was also supported by the experienced of several clinicians who were in the working group.
- Favorable attitudes toward use was chosen because the majority of the group felt that if youth attitudes didn't shift, youth would find a way to procure vaping products.
- Price and promotion was chosen because of its influence on youth access as well as its potential changeability within the town.
- One member emphasized the importance of policy in changing attitudes and requested that the group look further into possible policy options to pursue.

Action Team Updates

Action Team Leaders: Team Updates

- Parent Team:
 - The Parent Team recently teamed up with EDC to host brief webinars for parents led by parents and informed by the parent survey (10-15 minutes long). These webinars addressed topics such as how to talk to your child about substance use, how trauma affects the developing brain, and community norms around youth substance use. These webinars have been recorded and will be available on the DOSA website.
- Youth Team:
 - In order to engage youth during the pandemic, Cassandra partnered with Michael Medeiros, a high school teacher at DHS and together developed an online social media challenge.
 - The social media challenge was open to all high school students. There were 5 activities students could complete to earn community service hours and entries into DOSA's gift card raffle.
 - 37 students participated in this challenge, almost all completing at least 3 out of 5 activities.
 - On Thursday, April 30th, one student's name will be drawn to win an Amazon gift card.
- Data Team:
 - The Data Team met earlier in the year to review results of the Parent Survey and 2018 MetroWest Health Survey. The Data Team is currently planning to look into substance use and mental health trends by comparing the 2018 MWAHS results with the results of previous school-based surveys.
- Harm Reduction Team

- The Harm Reduction Team met earlier in the year to discuss a PSA to reduce stigma against substance use disorders and medication assisted treatment. In the wake of the pandemic, the harm reduction team is focusing on distributing mental health and sobriety support resources throughout the community.

Wrap up

Looking ahead at the next meeting

- At the next meeting, we will build on the discussion on risk factors and select prevention strategies to implement over the coming year.
- The meeting will take place at 6 PM on May 4.

Meeting ended at 7:30 PM