

SAC Highlights from 3/05-Present

Project TEAMS:

Project ALERT substance abuse education was offered to 6th graders, afterschool and in the summer at several Taunton middle schools. Also, a 5 week parent program which teaches parents about setting limits and ground rules for their children, consists of 2-3 hour sessions was offered. The grant ended with a free training of “Guiding Good Choices, (formerly “Preparing for the Drug Free Years”) a science based middle-school curriculum, to prepare attendees to offer the 5 session parent programs. Eight individuals are now qualified as presenters of the science based program.

Coalition Building: Stronger Attleboro Ties

Co-Chairpersons represent each hub –Arlene Dickinson (Southbay Mental Health in Attleboro) and Lorraine Rosa (GATHER/GTHHSC in Taunton)

SAC has new Mission and Vision:

The GATHER / GTHHSC Substance Abuse Committee addresses health and social issues in the Greater Attleboro/Taunton communities resulting from substance abuse. This is accomplished by coordinating with existing community resources to heighten public awareness and to develop programs to prevent, reduce and treat substance abuse.

Networking – Trends are identified and expressed at monthly meetings. An example of networking was a case in which a youngster got into treatment. The Committee will “keep at it” with continued networking. Members will do outreach to widen the network.

Expanding Area

- ♥ The SAC participated in South Coast Drug Collaborative and prepared a White Paper report of substance abuse in Taunton.
- ♥ SAC members attended informational presentations of student drug testing and the committee supports THS with the writing of a drug policy to include the use of a breathalyzer for admission to dances/proms and available to the administration during the school day. The breathalyzer was introduced in response to students who first brought the issue to the adults’ attention. They recommended alcohol testing because they want a safe environment. The draft is due tonight.

Environmental Strategies/Social Norms

- ♥ **Surveys** including perception questions were given at THS to assess both actual alcohol use and perceived use by peers.
- ♥ Project YELL sponsored **A Social Norms** conference at the Middleboro Town Hall. Montana’s “Most of Us” did the training. (See www.mostofus.com)
- ♥ **Mini-Grant** – A \$1,400 mini-grant was received using the Taunton SADD chapter as the youth group component. A social norms project – SADD Gets the Word Out - will be used.
- ♥ **Project YELL kids did compliance checks** in the southcoast area.

Substance Abuse Round Tables X and XI:

SART X: Change Through Perseverance examined Youth issues, Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement. The full report, prepared by GATHER and available at the GTHHSC/GATHER website, contains highlights of the day, issues and possible solutions from each. Evaluations showed another successful year. Nearly half of attendees were youth. In October, a smaller follow up meeting was held to include letting people know about area interagency collaboration.

SART XI: Kids, Cops and Courts brought together individuals from each of the Greater Attleboro/Taunton local communities to form an "interdisciplinary" team willing to collaborate on ways to more effectively prevent and treat substance abuse by local youth, to learn about resources that may help each community deal with issues related to youth and substance abuse, and to have each community team set some specific, doable

"next step(s)" for dealing with one or more issues related to substance abuse by local youth. A full report, prepared by GATHER and available at the GTHHSC/GATHER website, contains Greg Hughes keynote address, highlights of the day, critical local issues and possible solutions/next steps, and team evaluations.

Annual meeting – Gary Marino of the Million Calorie March was keynote speaker at the GTHHSC/GATHER celebrational Annual Meeting at the Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School Silver Platter Restaurant. Over 40 individuals attended.

Currently Addressing Disturbing Recent Trend – Unsupervised after prom parties have been taking place in hotel rooms. Parents see this as a harm reduction approach, but in fact parents condoning this as a social norm, and allowing children to participate leads to unhealthy consequences. There is a need to raise awareness of this danger. Suggestions include an awareness campaign to contact hotels about the issue and their liability, and contact local newspapers, television stations, PTOs, SADD, etc. for parents, grandparents, and others who care about youth to take a stand against underage alcohol. A letter from the PTO or SADD would be effective, as may a discussion on the "Pathways to Hope" local radio show. Youth need safer ways to have fun without alcohol, such as at school sponsored after prom parties.