



Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – January 24, 2022

Attendance: Mary-Carol Waters, Daniel Tryder, Janica Midiri, Julia Ritzenberg, Nicola Midiri, Danielle Sutton, Mary Ellen LaRose, Katy Colthart, Jeremy Stern, Trish Tucke, Paul Marino, Eli Wasserman, John Loughnane, Christy McKenney, Diana Martucci, Melissa DePina, David Russell, Brad Pindel

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting convened via Zoom Webinar and was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. **Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made by John Loughnane and David Russell seconded to accept the 12/20/21 minutes. All were in favor of approving the minutes.

III. Director's Report:

Clinical Services

*There are currently **42 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, 35 individual clients; 2 family clients; 5 parent consultations. (*This total is compared to 38 in December; 52 in January of 2021; 37 in January of 2020 and 48 in January of 2019*).

*There have been **5 new intakes for counseling services** so far in January (*compare to 2 intakes in January 2021; 5 intakes in January 2020; 7 in January 2019*).

-*There were **6 new intakes for counseling services** in December (*compare to 5 intakes in December 2020; 5 in December 2019; 4 in December 2018*).

-There were **8 new intakes** for counseling services in **November** (*compare to 5 intakes in November 2020; 8 in November 2019; 9 in November 2018*).

-There were **12 new intakes** for counseling services in **October** (*compare to 7 intakes in October 2020; 5 in October 2019; and 9 in October 2018*).

-There were **7 new intakes** for counseling services in **September** (*compare to 5 intakes in September 2020; 6 in September 2019; and 6 in September 2018*).

*There are currently **20 individuals or families on our "waitlist" for counseling services** (*This is compared to 20 in December, 5 in January of 2021; 7 in January 2020, zero in January 2019, 2018 and 2017*). Whenever there is a waitlist, we also share the William James INTERFACE Referral Service information as another option for residents, and offer a one-time meeting with a Y&FS clinician so that families might have some initial resources while waiting. As always, referrals are triaged so that those residents in most immediate need are prioritized.

*In the first week of December we began our second round of groups, three different eight-week **Structured Play Groups** (K/1st and 2nd/3rd) that are being held in-person at Wentworth Hall. All groups are full with 8 participants in each, for a **total of 24 participants**, and there are waitlists for all groups.

Program Updates

*On January 6th, we welcomed Liz Craig, a second Graduate Intern to the **Y&FS Graduate Internship Program**. Liz is a second-year student in the part-time program through Boston University's School of Social Work, and is with us for 16 hours per week through August of 2022. She's already gone through initial orientation and onboarding, and has begun co-leading groups and reaching out to families on our waitlist to begin seeing them for counseling, under Katy's supervision.

*The **Bullying Prevention Theater** program pivoted gracefully amidst this latest COVID surge, moving to a videotaped performance that will be shown to 6th grade students at Thurston Middle School during their Advisory Block on Wednesday, February 2nd rather than the in-person performances that were scheduled for the 6th grade teams on January 28th. The BPT Mentors *will* be able to go into individual 6th grade classes on that same day of February 2nd to lead the classrooms in discussion and activities to reinforce the teachings of the BPT skits from the performance video. A big thanks to the Mentors, to the High School for their flexibility, and to our Emily Greco who made it possible to bring back Bullying Prevention Theater this year!

*Katy and Julianne are coordinating and supervising two back-to-back, in-person sessions of the **Friends Network** program each week in Wentworth Hall. The **twenty-four (24) 1:1 pairs** of high school students and 3rd, 4th and 5th grade residents are enjoying games, crafts and conversation each Thursday evening.

***Teen Scene @ the Library** also started up this fall, with the Teen Librarian at the main library coordinating volunteer shifts for Mentors on early release Wednesday and on Friday afternoons.

***Westwood Writes** currently has **19 student/senior pairs**, two more than at our meeting in December, with more expected as we continue to market to seniors in the community so that they might be matched with interested high school volunteers.

Community Connections

*Thanks to our partners in Administration at Westwood Public Schools, who submitted a wonderful article to local news outlets, allowing us to give some history and information about the **Body Safety Theater** program, and to encourage high school-aged residents to volunteer as BST Mentors.

*Thanks to Emily and Mary Ellen, for heading to WHS today to hold informational tables outside of the cafeteria, encouraging students to volunteer for the **Body Safety Theater** program!

*In the role of appointed Co-Chair of the Westwood Human Rights Task Force, Danielle joined a second regional group, titled **Massachusetts Human Rights Committees (MAHRC)**, to learn about the efforts and best practices of human rights groups across the Commonwealth and how that information might be useful to the Westwood community.

IV. Old Business

ARPA Funding Request: Danielle shared how the department is addressing the growing wait list for services. The department with the support of the HR department is seeking funding for additional clinical support through the federal American Rescue Plan Act. She explained the department would be requesting funding for two additional clinicians (one full time and one part time) to meet the need of residents seeking mental health services for their children.

IV. New Business

Wentworth Hall Update : Danielle mentioned that public building including Wentworth Hall are putting in place a new mask mandate. The new COVID surge has had an impact on some of our programming in the building. One of our groups was cancelled last week due to not having enough space to properly distance. Luckily, we were able to quickly book a larger space at the Hanlon School and will resume the group next week.

Community Chest: Danielle reported that Westwood School Superintendent, Emily Parks gave an update at the last Community Chest meeting. She remarked that the district has seen a significant increase in bus and

athletic waivers. Y&FS is thoughtful about that and will coordinate with schools to make sure residents are aware of services that we provide that could be of assistance (i.e.: Holiday Giving and Birthday Giving Programs).

Early Childhood Council: Danielle shared that Janet and Taryn are settling into their office space and Y&FS staff is enjoying sharing the space with them.

Food Pantry: Trish reported that the pantry continues to be well stocked due to recent drives and the generosity of residents. Clients recently received a recertification letter that goes out every two years. She reminded everyone that summer is when the pantry runs low on food. She encouraged residents thinking of running drives to do so in the late spring and summer.

Police Department: Brad mentioned that John McAllister has graduated from the academy and is joining the force. Brad is visiting with Thurston Wellness classes and sharing with them information on substance abuse issues.

Westwood Cares: Danielle stated that she recently met with the Public Health Department about how to allocate resources back to the group. In the coming months the group will work on finding interested residents and students with the hopes of getting the group actively running and offering programming next fall.

Schools Update:

Westwood High School: Julia shared information about a tree sapling planting fundraiser that the Climate Action Group is currently running. Jeremy stated that the Drama department will be putting on the musical, Mama Mia this spring. The cast is looking forward to the performance back in the high school theater. Paul talked about upcoming events for Seniors. Melissa spoke about a possible change to school start times for the high school and elementary level and how this would affect METCO students travel times to/from school. Christy shared that many surrounding towns have already made this change. Brad talked about how the change in start times would affect high school and town sports practices/games.

Thurston Middle School: Christy mentioned that the first two weeks after break were difficult due to high COVID positivity rates but things seem to be stabilizing now.

Elementary: Danielle shared that next school year Westwood will welcome 32-38 METCO elementary level students. This will mean the program will run from K-12th grade. With this expansion of METCO at the elementary level the district will receive additional funding from the state to add a diversity, equity and inclusion staff member at the administration level. Melissa and others shared their excitement for the expansion of the program.

VII. Public Comment: None

VIII. Adjournment - The meeting was called to adjournment at 7:55 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose