

Mayor's Taskforce on Suicide Prevention and Mental Health

November 18, 2008
8:30-9:30pm
Health Department,
20 Evergreen Ave.

Facilitators: Patty Contente

Note taker: Patty Contente

Attendees: Karen Hacker, Institute for Community Health/ Cambridge Health Alliance; Nancy Bacci (Youth Program, City of Somerville); Lisa Brukilacchio (Health Agenda, Cambridge Health Alliance; Patty Contente (Health Dept., City of Somerville); Cayenne Isakson, Ma. Department of Veterans Services, SAVE Team; Cory Mashburn, SCAP; Peter Lenrow, Somerville Mental Health; Teresa Forestell, Somerville Hospital;; David Todtfeld, Teen Connection/ Cambridge Health Alliance, Regina Bertholdo, Director, Parent Information Center

Guest: Bob Anthony, Adolescent Wellness, Wellesley, MA

Regrets: Tim O'Keefe (Somerville Public Schools); Dana Gordon, Somerville Mental Health; Samuel Hamm, Massachusetts Veterans, SAVE Team

Minutes

Agenda item: *Introductions – group and new members*

Presenter: Patty Contente

Discussion

The Task Force goal for this year will be to raise awareness around depression and particularly to focus efforts on reducing the stigma related to receiving mental health services.

Agenda item: *Review of Meeting Goals*

Presenter: Patty Contente

Discussion:

- Share information and resources to develop strategies and identify methods to raise awareness on Depression and to inform the community about available supports.
- Review results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey for Somerville High School Students 2009
- Develop strategy to raise awareness – how to get information, brochures, cards about resources to youth, parents and community in general. – Guest Bob Anthony from Adolescent Wellness will talk about resources and strategies that their group has found effective.
- Institute for Community Health article on Somerville's response to Youth Suicide and Overdose

Conclusions: Article was published by Cambridge Health Alliance in November 2008.

Agenda item: *Results of the 2007-2008 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Somerville High School, related to Mental Health and Suicide*

Presenter:
Cory Mashburn,
Acting Director of
SCAP

Discussion: A great deal of concern was expressed about bullying and emerging gang culture. There are incidents reported at the middle school level as well as the high school. At the high school new arrivals and immigrants see to be targeted.

Although the numbers for suicide related behaviors are lower, this continues to be a concern, especially as the % of youth experiencing depression continues at a similar rate.

Taken from the Executive Summary:

SELECTED POINTS

- Thirty-one percent (31%) of 2008 Somerville high school students reported experiencing *depression* in the 12 months prior to the survey, while 14% reported hurting themselves on purpose, 12% *seriously considered* suicide, 11% *planned* to commit suicide, and 5% *attempted* suicide.
- **Trends:** Trend data on self-harm are not available as that was a new item in the 2008 survey. The rate of reported *depression* remained steady at 31%. Rates of suicidal ideation and behavior varied slightly: *seriously considered* suicide (14% to 12%), *planned* suicide (9% to 11%), *attempted* suicide (6% to 5%).
- **Comparisons:** The 2008 rate of reported depression among Somerville high school students (31%) was higher than the Massachusetts 2005 average (27%). Rates for suicidal ideation and behavior were similar among both populations, with the Somerville rates falling slightly below state averages: *seriously considered* suicide (12% Somerville, 13% MA), *planned* suicide (11% Somerville, 12% MA), *attempted* suicide (5% Somerville, 6% MA). *MA data from the 2005 MA Youth Risk Behavior Survey.*
- **Gender:** Female Somerville high school students were far more likely than their male counterparts to have reported each of these issues in 2008: reported *depression* (22% males, 40% females), self-harm (9%, 17%), *seriously considered* suicide (8%, 15%), *planned* suicide (7%, 14%), *attempted* suicide (4%, 6%).
- **Grade:** There were no consistent differences by grade in reports of these mental health issues (see Appendix A).

- Conclusions:**
- ✓ There have been emerging concerns related to developing gang mentality and younger (middle school age children being drawn into gangs) Indicators related to bullying support these concerns. This information will be brought to the Youth Networkers meeting as well as the TRN to determine best course to address this.
 - ✓ Reaching the immigrant communities, Roberta Bertholdo stated that the Parent Information Center recently held a meeting for parents with record numbers in attendance. When talking with parents about what influenced their attendance, attendees cited the new system which announces the meeting in 4 Different languages. They were able to hear first hand what the meeting was about in their own language increasing comprehension and motivating them to attend.

Action items

Person responsible

Deadline

- ✓ Concerns related to bullying and emerging gang behavior will be raised at the Youth Networkers meeting to continue gathering information.
- ✓ Patty will set up a follow-up meeting with Tim O'Keefe to discuss what the schools are doing related to suicide and mental health.

Next meeting
Patty will provide updates

Agenda item: *Guest Speaker: Bob Anthony, Adolescent Wellness, Wellesley, MA* **Presenter:** Bob Anthony

Discussion:

- Adolescent Wellness is collaboration between the work of McLean Hospital and Boston Children's Hospital. They have curriculum as well as have coordinated a number of community responses to raise awareness about youth depression and ways to implement prevention.
- Talked about accessing schools, clergy youth groups utilizing art to help kids express themselves
- Discussed local resources, Mass Coalition stated that there were regional monies available.

Conclusions: Need to develop Prevention Model and come up with Strategic plan to implement. Need to come up with an outline of talking points we would like to highlight when doing outreach. Should think about population to target. Three groups to consider are Parents, Youth and Community Stake Holders.

Discussion continued about what we are realistically able to do – May be more realistic to focus on getting some articles in the local news as a start.

| Action items | Person responsible | Deadline |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------|
| ✓ Cambridge Health Alliance will be publishing article about Somerville Response to Youth Suicide and Overdose in the coming weeks. | Karen Patty | December |
| ✓ Patty will work on drafting an article on Depression and the Holidays for release before the holidays. | | |

Conclusions: ✓ Once draft of press release regarding publication of "Coping with Youth Suicide" is completed, Patty will forward to Task Force members to determine whether it is appropriate for the Task Force to support and then it will be sent to the Mayor's office for input and final authorization

Other Information

Next Meeting

Tuesday January 13, 8:30 – 9:30am
Health Department Conference Room, 50 Evergreen Ave., Somerville, 1st floor