



Somers Youth Service Bureau Advisory Board Minutes
Sept. 9, 2026
Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Matthew Cox, Jen Griger, Ed DePeau, Renata Bowers, Colleen Meier, Kelley Garrison, Alex Murdoch

Absent: Gerard Joyal, Nathan Poirier, Vicki Clark

Guests: none

Call to Order: Matthew Cox called the meeting to order at 4:45pm. Ed moved to approve the March minutes; Colleen seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

New Business/Updates from the Field

- Talk about the move in the state and nation to move away from so much tech.
- Lost 5-6 large families in Somers due to housing costs, cost of living.
- Continue to serve families well, but fewer families to serve.
- Colleen mentioned it would be good to check to outreach to migrant worker families who may need help.

Program Updates and Next Steps

Youth Services

- August 31: Open house at the Teen Center at the Library.
- September 1: The Teen Center launch. The program has more than 70 students registered this year. Working on a snack shack project, helping kids learn to count money, make change, make simple foods. Library staff is helping to cover shortage since Arianna left.
- Back-to-School clothing, shoes, haircuts – 23 youth participated
- 20 Minute Project: Facebook and school newsletters
 - Offering screen-free family time activities to promote better relationships, behaviors
- NEW Start the Conversation campaign – also via Facebook and school newsletters – provides conversations starters for parents to better connect with their children
- Youth Diversion Team – lots of changes coming to improve record keeping, administration, and outcomes.
 - CT moving toward restorative measures instead of punitive; YDT following suit
 - Meeting next week with Ellington and Stafford to help make things more organized, move in the direction of a more restorative approach

Prevention Services

- Year 5 of the Drug Free Communities Grant approved, \$125,000
 - Next 5-year application is due in April
- Jen Griger, Prevention Coordinator effective 8/24/26. Approved by CDC, Office of National Drug Control Policy.
 - Jen's previous position is currently being posted. Part-time with a focus on helping with Teen Center, back to school, holiday events, etc.
- National Night Out event at Field Road Park, August 4. Approximately 400 in attendance, more than 30 exhibitors
- Open House at middle school, August 31. Met with parents, distributed approximately 80-100 Operation Parent Handbooks to incoming 6th grade families, and new 7th and 8th grade families
- In partnership with Amplify, Inc, our Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization, hosted a Suicide Awareness training on September 2nd at the senior center with more than 20 participants (September is Suicide Prevention Month). Age 65+ is the highest percentage of suicides in the U.S. Another training will be held at Woodcrest in the future.
- Somers Youth for Change (SYC)
 - Launched new *A Slice of Prevention* campaign, connecting families to resources and gathering data on family norms around substance use, family rules, etc.
 - Table tents, pizza box stickers, and information distributed through local pizza shops: Mario's, Johanna's, and Somers Pizza.
 - Participants are given the opportunity to win a gift card
 - Will also be offering this at the Teen Center twice a month
- Jen and Matthew are now certified to facilitate Health Futures, an evidence-based nicotine and marijuana education and cessation program
 - An educational component of self-study that the student can do at home. Also a one-on-one component with trained adult to talk through
- Prevention campaigns (information, training, activities, and social media) – August, Substance Use Primary Prevention Month; September, Suicide Prevention Month
 - October, Red Ribbon Week – week-long activities at the schools; kids learn about how/why to stay away from substances, the dangers of substance use, and encouraging them to lead substance-free lives. Narcan training will be hosted at the library. A Narcan distribution cabinet has been installed at the library. Drug Take Back program will also be offered at the Fire Dept.
- It was reported that the full-time social services specialist position was eliminated during the budget referenda this past summer. This is a tremendous loss that affects the most vulnerable people in Somers. Matthew currently helping to make sure that the highest impact assistance programs will continue.

Updates/New Business

- Good board conversation about tech in schools

Meeting was called to adjourn by Alex at 5:30, seconded by Ed

Respectfully submitted,

Renata Bowers, Secretary

Meeting minutes are not Official Until Approved at a Next Meeting