



Somers Youth Services Advisory Board Minutes
September 11, 2024
Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Matthew Cox, Arianna Flagg, Brian Langan, Ed DePeau, Renata Bowers, and Colleen Meier.

Absent: Cadence Bidwell, Joe Radziewicz

Guests: none

Call to Order: Matthew Cox called the meeting to order at 8:56am

Financial Update – Matthew reported that he was working with our funders and technical assistance providers on the renewal of the Youth Service Bureau grant, which funds about half the salary of the Youth Services Coordinator position.

Program Updates and Next Steps (Matthew)

- **Staffing Update**
 - Jen Griger has been hired for the Youth Services Coordinator position and will be starting on Sept. 30.
- **Programming Updates**
 - Teen Center. Library space is essentially finished and launched. Youth librarian will coordinate with Youth Services and Prevention Services staff to develop and implement programs and activities in the Teen Center.
 - Juvenile Review Board. Tri-town with Ellington and Stafford. Not many youth from Somers have been involved this year and most have completed their service.
 - Community Needs Assessment. Vinny Hollister, LCSW, is working with Bonnie Weyland Smith, an evaluation consultant to two community surveys as part of a comprehensive needs assessment of resident needs for mental health services. The Adult Community Survey will be released this fall and the Youth Voices Count survey will be administered during the winter of 2025. Counseling services through the town are paused until we complete our due diligence with data collection and program design. The survey results will help inform our work in both mental health counseling and also the Drug Free Communities programming.
- **Youth Leadership Council (Arianna)**
 - Working on new meeting schedule. Did a lot of programming around the end of the year, including the PTO Foam Run. Also assembled and handed out mental health

goody bags for the middle school students and staff at the end-of-school walkathon. National Night Out – Arianna worked with the Somers Police Department to lead planning and execution of this now-annual event. She reported that we are in the process of rebranding to better reflect what the participants find value in, to gain a better draw of other students. Will be participating in Red Ribbon Week in October.

- Drug Free Communities
 - Arianna is working with middle school leadership to design and launch the new Peer Mentoring Program in the middle school. Last spring, recruited mentors to help with transitions to middle school. Program will launch late September. Field trip to Springfield College for mentors. Stipend for a middle school staff member to facilitate on site.
 - Arianna just finished training for TTS (tobacco treatment specialist) to provide tobacco cessation offerings.
 - Youth Programming. Collaborating with other organizations to create more programming, with an emphasis right now on more elementary programming.

New Business

- New meeting time.
 - Agreed on 3:30pm instead of 8:30am for scheduled future meetings.
- Car Seat Clinic this Sunday from 9am-1pm at the firehouse, led by Brian.
- Next Drug Takeback is Oct. 26 from 10am-1pm @ the firehouse.

Meeting was called to adjourn by Matthew at 9:31.

Respectfully submitted,

Renata Bowers, Secretary