

HHS Advisory Council Minutes

October 22, 2019

Room 205, City Hall

In attendance: Deborah Youngblood, Michelle Freshman, Rebecca Mozaffarian, Lisa Terrizzi, Asa Fanelli, Brenda Pring

1. Gavin Foundation – newly opened Newton location, providing substance use services to residents. Commissioner shared the news that Gavin now has a PT presence in Newton to serve residents. This new contract is being paid for with Marijuana host community agreement dollars. The new peer to peer coach will be able to provide individually tailored, flexible services to both people with substance use disorders and their loved ones including helping to access treatment resources. HHS is working to help spread the word around the community and connecting the Gavin staff to other service providers in the community.
2. Promoting food allergy awareness – discussion. Council discussed the pros and cons of a resident request to place food allergy awareness signs at the entrances of our playgrounds. The request was made a parent in the community who thinks this awareness building might decrease the spread of allergens on play equipment by children eating and touching the equipment and could protect those children in the community who have food allergies. The advisory council was of a mixed opinion. Some members think this could be a great way to enhance awareness generally and possibly make our parks more allergy safe. Others think this type of signage is rarely effective in changing behavior. Other negatives include the possibility that awareness signs could be misinterpreted as expressing rules that can be enforced and people calling for a city response when someone is “breaking the rules”. Also problematic is a proliferation of signs and difficulty in choosing between multiple priorities when various residents ask for a wide range of signs to be posted throughout the community while others would like a stricter limitation on the number of signs in general. Lastly, there is some concern that such signs could make parents of children with allergies less vigilant thinking that these play structures are allergen free. The council’s opinions will be considered as this discussion continues with other stakeholders in the community and decision makers.
3. Film “If They had Known”: HHS has leased this documentary on a young man who died after mixing alcohol and benzodiazepines and was made by his friends to inform other young people of the risks. We are able to show it in a variety of Newton based locations for the next year. The group discussed various possibilities including the schools, library, youth serving organizations such as the Boys and Girls club and NWH. Commissioner will follow up with outreach to those organizations and hopefully set up a number of showings.
4. Group had a lengthy discussion on the declining rates of condom usage among teens and brainstormed possible education/intervention strategies. The group agrees that condoms should be available in school health rooms with no barriers to access (don’t have to ask, don’t have to agree to a health-based conversation etc). Group discussed other possible locations for easy access to teens. One suggestion was putting low cost condom dispensers in high school bathrooms alongside informational posters on rates of STIs. Also discussed ways to present health information regarding STIs that would be well received by teens. Advisory group approves of the idea of framing these discussions as part of a “healthy relationships” messaging

campaign with STIs being just one part of it. HHS will also work on getting this data out to NWH pediatricians to help spread the word among patients.

5. E-cigarette regulation update: The regulation was signed into effect mid-October. Commissioner reported that the feedback during the public comment period was overwhelmingly in favor. The new regulation has an implementation date of Dec 16, 2019. It will likely be super-ceded by the Governor's emergency order but when that is lifted (currently scheduled for 1/25/2020), the Newton specific regulation will already be in place and no regular retail stores will be allowed to sell any e-cigarette products in Newton again. E-cigarette products will be allowed to be sold in Newton's two age 21+ stores.

6. Programs round up: Commissioner briefly shared some program highlights. Marijuana forum at NWH in September was a full auditorium and very well received. There is a panel on how to apply for affordable housing coming up in November. And HHS is busily hosting many community flu clinics as well as holding clinics in each of our schools.

Next meeting day and time TBD – likely January 2020.