

## **Meeting Minutes of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Public Education Subcommittee October 18, 2023, Approved**

### **Attendees:**

Keigan Abel-Brown, Susan Bissett, Tahnee Bryant, Cathy Capps-Amburgey, Carolyn Canini, Brian Gallagher, Jenny Lancaster, Lyn O'Connell (chair), Jay Phillips, Amy Saunders, Joanna Vance, Jessica Smith, Crystal Welch, Sarah White, Shanen Wright

### **Opening:**

Lyn O'Connell (chair) provided welcome and opening remarks of this meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, Public Education Subcommittee. The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, October 18, 2023, and was conducted by Zoom conference. A quorum was present to approve May meeting minutes. Joanna made the motion for approval and Sarah seconded the motion. The objective of this meeting was to receive updates from the state stigma workgroup and focus on 2024 planning for the State Plan.

### **Agenda Items:**

#### **State Stigma Workgroup Updates**

- Jessica noted that the state stigma campaign – government has made changes and on hold awaiting feedback and how it will look moving forward with the state regarding funding for the rollout of that campaign.
- Joanna stated the rollout of the first mural has occurred in Beckley. She notes they ended up putting it on the side of the drug court building, going through the county commissioner to do so. It was completed over a three-day period. Teachers, law enforcement, children, those in recovery, drug court participants were involved in painting. Still need to have branding “break through stigma with love” included, which will be added later this week. Joanna noted the mural ended up being just under \$500 for supplies. Received great feedback from all of those involved. Mountain Craft is confirmed to do marketing around it: capturing footage on the scene and will be incorporated to overarching stigma campaign at the state level. Joanna noted she could put together one-pager for other communities to rollout murals themselves.

## **Town Hall Meetings**

- Tahnee observed that the new Town Halls' revised format received positive feedback. The facilitators skillfully guided discussions, enabling participants to express their statewide concerns. Much of the conversation centered around addressing stigma.
- Tahnee also mentioned a training session with 99 slides, expressing the challenge of maintaining students' attention for that duration. She emphasized the need to streamline it. Notably, Mayor Joyce attended one of her sessions and has already convened a group to discuss the distribution of settlement funds.
- However, she pointed out the absence of discussions about how stigma affects prevention efforts in the videos. She suggested that we should also address this aspect to demonstrate how individuals fit into the equation. Jenny and Keigan expressed their willingness to create a more specific video training on youth-focused prevention efforts. Joanna shared that she had taken some of the slides from the stigma training and condensed them into a youth-focused training program, collaboratively created by middle school and high school students, which she plans to distribute.
- Jenny mentioned that there was a desire among participants to see a connection between the public education and prevention workgroups. Amy offered to invite them to the November meeting.

## **2024 Planning**

- Continuing into the next year, the stigma training and the state's stigma campaign will persist.
- One objective is to organize specific strategies concerning the stigma experienced by youth, making it the primary area of collaboration with the prevention efforts for next year's subcommittee focus. A separate meeting will be led by Lyn with subject matter experts to explore the coordination of messaging.
  - Joanna brought to attention that there will be a criminal law reform conference in November, incorporating a youth track with 25 youths who have firsthand experience already signed up. She proposed creating a questionnaire for the subcommittee's use. Susan mentioned her ongoing youth documentary project with WVPBS and expressed the need for youth participation. Tahnee shared her participation in a youth-focused listening session during the pandemic and expressed curiosity about how perspectives may have evolved post-pandemic.
  - Tahnee also emphasized the importance of combatting the stigma associated with mental health conditions to enhance coping skills and discourage turning to addiction as a coping mechanism. This involves developing a toolkit. Susan endorsed this notion and pointed out the lack of resources or discussions in schools when children face reprimand, which only serves to exacerbate the stigma around these conditions. Having open and candid conversations with youth about accessing support and clearly delineating the availability of behavioral healthcare is crucial.

- A bill mandating naloxone in schools is gaining traction in the senate. Susan also informed us that Aetna Better Health has provided funding for naloxone in any elementary, middle, or high school that requests it.
- The subcommittee should also to expand the existing stigma training to include youth-focused videos and interviews, incorporating the history and progression of the epidemic.
- It is imperative to incorporate messaging regarding marijuana, emphasizing its potency as a more harmful substance and its association with adverse health consequences, such as psychosis in some young individuals. Lyn mentioned the forthcoming publication of a case study involving the treatment of individuals who have experienced THC overdoses. Tahnee informed us that Laura Stack from Johnny's Ambassador will be addressing the topic of THC and its evolution on November 8th in Charleston. Two sessions are scheduled, one tailored for professionals and another for youth. While there will be a live stream, attendance in person is strongly encouraged.
- Joanna stressed the importance of using language carefully, avoiding the use of scare tactics for individuals currently using substances.

#### **Next Steps**

- Lyn will start developing the youth component for the 2024 planning and share it with the group for their input and review.
- Amy will extend invitations to subcommittee members for the upcoming November Prevention Subcommittee meeting.

#### **Adjournment:**

Without further comment, Lyn thanked the subcommittee members for their attendance and involvement. The subcommittee is scheduled to reconvene in November.