

READING COALITION AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW

As a community convener, RCASA has several critical roles and functions. We leverage our position in the community by connecting programs, organizations, agencies and sectors to increase positive results for substance abuse prevention. We plan and promote community-wide and special events, community education, coalition trainings, youth leadership development, ongoing meetings, and advocacy. We promote inter-departmental resource sharing through the *Reading Chemical Health Education* and *Reading Police Diversion Programs*.

STAFF

The RCASA staff included two full time employees. The Director oversaw personnel, fiscal management, public relations, and coordinated coalition work, including planning, training, communication, data collection, dissemination, reporting, and evaluation. The Outreach Coordinator coordinated project services and activities, including communication and information dissemination. As a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, the Outreach Coordinator supported residents impacted by substance use disorders. A seasonal Youth Organizer, provided support to the coalition during the summer and winter of 2015. Staff participated in professional development opportunities to enhance our knowledge including the Active Parenting of Teens Program, 2015 MA Medical Society Public Health Leadership Forum, Heroin Education Action Task Force Conference, the and SAMHSA Webinars on substance abuse topics. The MA Board of Substance Abuse Counselors acknowledged the RCASA Director for receiving her Certification as a *Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist* and renewed licensure for the Outreach Coordinator as a Licensed Alcohol & Drug Counselor.

LEADERSHIP

The 24-member Board of Directors met monthly to accomplish critical tasks including data gathering, outreach, and leadership development. Board representatives provided valuable status reports on initiatives. In September, the RCASA Nominating Committee conducted officer elections and reported roster changes at their Annual Meeting. James Cormier (Reading Police Chief, Founding Member, Parent) and Richard Abate (Reading Police Lieutenant, Founding Member, Parent) celebrated 9 years of board service.

Per our needs assessment of members, staff coordinated specific Board Education throughout the grant period. The RCASA Director facilitated interactive small groups working on sector-specific projects twice during the year. Special guest presentations and/or media shared with the board included:

- Understanding Vaping by Maureen Buzby, Regional Tobacco Control Coordinator
- Recovery High Referrals by Michelle Lipinski, Principal)
- The Continuum of Recovery by Rich Winant, Kelly House/ WBUR (NPR Affiliate)

Sherri VandenAkker, Reading resident, RCASA Board member, filmmaker was featured on the national talk show “The View” last winter to raise awareness about women suffering from alcoholism. View her appearance at <http://www.thebettefilm.com/>

COLLABORATION

Staff worked on the *Multi-tiered System of Support Plan* to expand behavioral health support for all students in the public school district by participating in District Leadership Council meetings and providing expertise on substance abuse prevention. Reading Public Schools/RCASA hosted our first *Behavioral Health Providers Breakfast* in June at the High School Library for 25 healthcare, behavioral health, and mental health professionals to exchange information on the district's behavioral health needs.

Staff conducted outreach at events including Reading Fall St. Faire, Friends & Family Day, Future Freshman Night, and the Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration (600 people reached).

RCASA honored RCASA Youth Crew leaders including Sophia Kalogeris, Meghan Whelan, Emily Breen, Jennie Dockser and Claire Bishop at this year's RMHS Awards Ceremony.

RCASA hosted their 9th *Annual Coalition Meeting* on 9/30/15 at Jordan's Furniture/Sunbrella IMAX Theatre for 425 participants. Youth volunteers and board members welcomed guests in the lobby. Guests viewed a 12-foot display of the coalition's vision/mission, goals & strategy, growth & development, initiatives & projects. The RCASA Info tables staffed by Board Leaders featured over 50 valuable free resources including SAMHSA literature, upcoming RCASA events and local resource directories. A second table featured an Al-Anon representative to address questions and engage in conversation.

The formal program included the Annual Report Highlights delivered by Erica McNamara, RCASA Director, 2015 Recovery Month Spotlight by MaryAnn Frangules, Mass Organization for Addiction & Recovery and the presentation of a short film. The **Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation** and **Millennium Health** created the film "**If Only**" to raise awareness among teens and adults about the opioid epidemic. Following the film, James Wahlberg spoke and eight addiction professionals answered audience questions. Click here to view local media coverage of the event. <http://reading.wickedlocal.com/article/20151007/NEWS/151006520/?Start=1>

Staff were actively engaged in the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition involving the communities of Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, Stoneham and Wakefield continued their opioid prevention and intervention project. Reading benefits from the collaborative through access to data, capacity building and training. Staff participated in the United for Recovery Candlelight Vigil and Rally held in Wakefield). Staff and police representatives also participated in the *Eastern Middlesex DA's Opioid Task Force* (leveraged important connections to the three hospitals serving Reading).

RCASA was chosen to host the Regional World Café on Opioid Abuse for the second year in concert with State Senator Lewis to update residents and leaders on progress happening at the local, regional and state levels.

Substance abuse prevention efforts as outlined in our work plan included:

- I) **Alcohol Compliance:** RCASA provided support to officers to procure state grant funds through the MA Highway Safety Division. In January and June of 2015, the Reading Police

issued the Annual Public Notice for operations. In May, officers arranged their ‘Cops in Shops’ operation with four off premise establishments and reported enhanced collaboration with those businesses. Officers recruited underage operatives to conduct the compliance operation in June. No violations found at any of the 23 establishments checked. Following the operation, RCASA prepared "pass" letters signed by the Chief of Police and a press release was shared with local news. Officers conducted surveillance patrols in September. On September 18, officers observed three locations resulting in one criminal application for procuring alcohol for a minor and two juvenile criminal applications for minor in possession of alcohol. The last patrol in September, officers reported no illicit activity.

- II) **Prevention Education:** RCASA conducted *Student Leadership Training* for 63 Student Leaders at Reading Memorial High School. RCASA hosted the *2015 Regional Dialogue on Opioid Abuse* with State Senator Jason Lewis. Staff and School Resource Officer met with small groups of students to conduct *Opioid Prevention Workshops* (300 students total). RCASA engaged 45 parents in the second cycle of the *Active Parenting of Teens Online Program*. Staff conducted *Substance Abuse training* for all new officers & dispatchers (10 staff total). Staff prepared resource packets for officers to give to residents in need of support. During the Reading Public Schools *Blue Ribbon Conference*, 70 school personnel turned out for the RCASA Opioid Prevention workshop featuring the *Heroin Rising* video. Seventeen high school students completed the skill-based *Chemical Health Education Program* this year facilitated by RCASA. The Director presented in the High School’s Child Development Course on *Substance Exposed Newborns* reaching 15 students. Staff used the CADY Ready, Set, Done Media Kit to guide media messaging throughout the year via Twitter and Facebook. We placed four large ads in the *Reading Recreation Fall Magazine*, which reached 19,000 households, largely parents of school age children.
- III) **Mental Health Promotion:** Under the Project Aware Grant awarded to the Reading Public Schools, the RCASA Director launched a training project. In 2015, the National Council on Behavioral Health credentialed nine town/school/police staff members as Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructors. Overall, these instructors certified 424 school and town staff during the last calendar year.
- IV) **Data Collection:** 4900 bottles collected through our *Rx Round Up*. Four Lock-med boxes raffled off at events. RCASA administered the *Pride Faculty & Parent Surveys*. We developed the *2015 Reading Youth Risk Behavior Survey* with the Reading Public Schools, grades 6-12, and data release in October 2015. The data results indicated a decline in lifetime cigarette use of 20% since 2005; decline of recent cigarette use of 8% since 2005; and recent cigar use declined by 3% since 2005.

Reading has implemented a number of tobacco control policy and education initiatives through our local substance abuse coalition, Board of Health, and School Committee, which had reduced tobacco use. However, the influx and availability of vaping in just the last year has increased with 24% of high school students reporting lifetime use of e-vapor products. We are also concerned with the increased use of synthetic marijuana (8% of high school students reported lifetime use), opening of medical marijuana dispensaries in Massachusetts and a potential ballot question to legalize the use of recreational marijuana. The RCASA Board felt it was important to increase education on the dangers of marijuana and the growing availability of synthetics by inviting Dr. Kevin Hill to speak in Reading on his research and book in October of 2015.

We coordinated with regional tobacco control to have their staff conduct presentations for the RCASA Board, the School Committee and Boards of Selectman in 2015. We updated educational materials for health educators to include vaping; addressed policies related to vaping use, and made parents aware of the trends through disseminating information.

We launched a new Youth Leadership capacity-building strategy called “RCASA School Chapters”, modeled after the RCASA Youth Crew, to engage younger youth (12-14) in substance abuse prevention initiatives and to expand involvement of older teens. This process involved interviewing previous RCASA youth leaders through key informant interviews on program elements to include in chapter replication; receiving approvals from local principals; engaging district leaders in providing classroom space; and designing training materials. RCASA staff developed a Chapter Training Booklet, ordered Asset Development materials and put together School Chapter kits for each local school.

Per our needs assessment, we wanted to increase online training offerings for local parents. RCASA staff was trained in implementing Citrix GotoWebinar modules to expand online training. We developed our first webinar with a local college student called *Teen Athletes and Painkiller Addiction Webinar*. We chose this topic because our local athletic participation rate (97%) is higher than the state rate of 78%, expanding the risk pool of potential student athletes that may be injured and at higher risk. We plan to launch the webinar in 2016.

FINANCE

RCASA staff worked diligently with town, police and school staff to generate quality grant proposals for a number of public funding entities. RCASA, Police, and the Reading Public Schools were successful in securing five grants to support substance abuse prevention and mental health education. RCASA contributed to grant proposals for the Police (\$5,000 for Alcohol Compliance) and Schools (\$1.25 million for School Climate).

SAMHSA Grants Supporting RCASA	Annual	Amount	End	Renew
Sober Truth On Underage Drinking Prevention Act	\$48,258	\$190,032	9/30/16	N
White House Office of National Drug Control Policy	\$125,000	\$625,000	9/30/16	Y
Advancing Wellness & Resilience in Education	\$50,0000	\$100,000	9/30/16	N

The Director compiled all required federal reports for funding. The town, school and police departments contributed \$160K in match resources for RCASA’s office/meeting space, supervision, and oversight.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Staff created newsletters, updated the website and social media to keep the community informed. Police posted RCASA news on their twitter reaching over 2,200 followers. Large posters, online invitations, flyers, and a program were developed for the Coalition Film Series, which reached 500 people. Staff sent Press Releases to three local news outlets. Local news shared coalition articles. RCASA also used YouTube to release four new videos. Staff connected with elders through two senior center events including their Annual Health Fair.