

READING COALITION AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE-2017 ANNUAL REPORT

SUMMARY- Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse (RCASA) mobilizes community partners, residents and youth to build collaborative approaches and reduce youth substance abuse. With grant support, RCASA offers educational programs for residents in Substance Abuse Prevention, Youth Mental Health First Aid and Active Parenting. To address substance use, staff operates a juvenile diversion program in concert with the Reading Police Department and a Chemical Health Education Program with the Reading Memorial High School. To increase access to mental health services, RCASA sponsors the Interface Referral Service, operated by William James College. Learn more at www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa

FINANCE-The Director compiled federal reports for annual grant funding totaling \$125,000. For this fiscal year, the town, school and police departments contributed match resources for RCASA's office/meeting space, supervision, and oversight. During this year, the Director and Town Accountant worked with SAMHSA to address the closeout of the AWARE and STOP Act Grants from the last fiscal year. The SAMHSA Auditor requested information and we responded to that request. The Auditor approved amendments to close out the previous projects.

SAMHSA Grants Supporting RCASA	Annual	End
White House Office of National Drug Control Policy	\$125,000	9/30/19

We are implementing our sustainability plan. The Director presented to the Board of Selectman twice during this year regarding the need for future town funding for staff positions. The Director presented to four local groups to increase donations. Staff increased collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce to host a special event to raise the coalition profile and soften the ground for future fundraising and partnerships. The Director carved out discrete opportunities for sponsorship of specific coalition programs or activities. Board members discussed issues of sustainability at monthly board meetings.

We accepted donations totaling \$4,250--(Young Women's League of Reading (\$2,000), First Congregational Church (\$250), and the Hospital Board of Trustees (\$2,000). In December, the Reading Hospital Trustees awarded \$4,000 to RCASA to support a portion of the INTERFACE Referral Project for 2018. This will be the final year of trustees funding.

STAFF- This year, the RCASA staff included 1.64 full time employees with strong prevention and addiction expertise. They are employees of the Town of Reading and maintain an office at the Reading Police Department. The Project Director oversaw personnel, fiscal management, public relations, and coordinated collaborative coalition work, including community planning, training, coalition communication, data collection, dissemination, reporting, and program evaluation. The *Outreach Coordinator* coordinated project services and project activities, including training, communication and information dissemination. The OC is a Certified Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counselor.

LEADERSHIP- RCASA's *Board of Directors* met monthly and served as the core leadership group for the coalition. The group includes 26 members representing 12-plus community sectors who live, work, or attend school in Reading. The Town Manager, School Superintendent, and Chief of Police all serve on the board. The Board provided overall governance, education, public relations, and strategic plan guidance. Membership increased this year for Parent Liaisons. The

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Board received training and guidance on federal grant lobbying restrictions. The Town provided an “Ethics Guide for Ballot Question Political Activity” for town staff, appointed town officials, elected officials, and other roles associated with town government.

GOALS

1. **REDUCE SUBSTANCE USE** among youth and, over time, among adults by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse
2. **IMPROVE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION** among RCASA’s partner organizations in support of the community’s effort to prevent and reduce youth substance use

OUTCOMES- RCASA received their report from the federal evaluator. We demonstrated progress in reducing substance misuse and strengthening community collaboration. In Rx misuse in the past 30 days, there was a 3% decrease at the both the middle and high school levels from 2011-2017. For alcohol use in the past 30 days at the high school level, rates dropped by 12% from 2011-2017. For alcohol use in the past 30 days at the middle school level, rates dropped by 6% from 2011-2017.

Prevention activities under the *DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES GRANT* are described below:

COLLABORATION- Staff and law enforcement representatives participated in regional monthly meetings including the *Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition on Opioid Abuse*, *Eastern Middlesex DA’s Task Force*, and the *Woburn Police Roundtable on Opioid Abuse*. Staff disseminated regional information to the community and board leaders to deepen their understanding of current opioid concerns. We responded to 10 requests for information from other communities on how RCASA has developed our policies and programs.

Staff participated in valuable professional development opportunities to enhance our knowledge. The Outreach Coordinator attended the Cape Cod Symposium on Addictive Disorders. The RCASA Director completed training on the SEARCH Institute’s Asset Model.

RCASA adult volunteers and youth members participated in Board of Health hearings to amend tobacco regulations to increase the minimum age of purchase from 18 to 21 years old, to remove flavored products from current tobacco retailers, and to limit flavored products to only tobacco shops if they come in to Reading. The Board of Health approved all three changes.

Coalition leaders supported a town election to vote against hosting a recreational marijuana shop, store or lounge in Reading. A separate town election was necessary due to the wording of the ballot initiative that was approved by voters in Nov. 2016. The Town Election was successful and recreational marijuana will be unable to be sold in our town. This project was led by parents and local elected officials.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH- In March, the Middlesex District Attorney conducted a presentation to 20 members of the community on opioid use at the Reading Senior Center. RCASA engaged two police officers and the Deputy Chief to be part of the event. We provided onsite medication collection and disseminated Dterra med disposal pouches.

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The Director facilitated 56 hours of first aid training this year certifying 97 adults in Youth Mental Health First Aid. Three classes were offered in Reading certifying 55 adults (47 school staff, 8 community members). Four classes were offered in Stoneham resulting in 42 adults certified (5 school staff, 37 community members).

RCASA assisted with a *Substance Use Awareness* evening hosted by a local college student at the First Congregational Church in March. The Pastor and others who attended shared their personal experiences. The RCASA Outreach Coordinator and a representative from Learn 2 Cope Support Group were able to provide feedback and resources. The Pastor, a past RCASA Board member, joined with other clergy to promote the #State Without Stigma” campaign.

RCASA staff assisted 15 high school educators and 5 clinicians in addressing the premiere of *13 Reasons Why*, a Netflix Series, with themes of substance use, sexual assault, suicide and family communication. Staff viewed the content, provided resources for teens and parents, and met with RMHS staff. A letter was sent to parents and Clinicians hosted a discussion group for students.

In August, the Police Chief and Superintendent joined efforts to address vaping use by sending a joint letter and educational information to 35 local health professionals and pediatricians.

In May and September, RCASA Board Liaisons attended two Sunday services at Old South to share their personal recovery stories and to answer questions.

RCASA coordinated a six-month planning process to host a series of events in September. The theme was “*Join the Voices for Recovery: Strengthen Families and Communities*”

- RCASA accepted the Recovery Month proclamation from the Board of Selectman.
- RCASA's booth at the Reading Fall St. Faire featured a recovery theme staffed by coalition volunteers and staff.
- RCASA & the Chamber of Commerce hosted the Business Community at Fusion Restaurant reaching 15 adults. The event focused on ways to prevent, reduce, or intervene in substance abuse in the workplaces.
- The First Congregational Church hosted an RCASA blanket-making booth at their 2-day Church Faire. Volunteers from Old South Methodist Church also promoted the activity. At the Annual Meeting, church members presented 54 homemade blankets to be matched with children that experience opioid-related trauma.
- RCASA hosted regional partners and 80 people at Reading Memorial High School to hear from speakers, exchange resources, and & remember loved ones through the luminaria walk.
- RCASA's Annual Meeting featured the Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan & Dr. Ruth Potee as keynote speakers. The event drew 100 people.

In addition to recovery month, RCASA presented on *Substance Abuse & Community Resources* at the Reading Citizen Police Academy educating 26 adults. We conducted three presentations on *Data Trends* for the Reading School Committee (12 adults); High School PTO (24 adults); and Parent University (7 adults). In October, we hosted a Guest Speaker at Reading Memorial High School with the Guidance Department on *Strategies for Managing Anxiety* featuring Lynn Lyons that drew an audience of 300 adults. From August-November, we provided support and resources to FRIENDS OF JAKE, a planning group of young adults from Reading to host the

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first *Jams for Jake* event. The event, hosted in November, featured local musicians and recovery resources reaching an audience of 300.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT- Youth leaders represented RCASA at the 2017 Massachusetts Kick Butts Day and participated in leadership development training on working with public officials.

Staff and School Resource Officer met with small groups of students to conduct *Opioid Prevention Workshops* in the spring and fall (reaching 320 students). The Director presented in the High School's Child Development Course on *Substance Exposed Newborns* in the fall of 2017 reaching 25 students. The Outreach Coordinator facilitated a *Test Your Knowledge* workshop for Boys Scouts at Old South Church, reaching 30 youth.

The 2017 *SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention & Referral to Treatment)* screening went smoothly with 326 freshman students eligible for screening. The Nurse at the high school conducted the SBIRT along with vision, hearing and postural screens. Two parents submitted opt out forms to withdraw their children from screening. Based on how the 324 students responded to questions during screening, the nurse provided educational info and positive reinforcement, a motivational interview, or referral to additional services. Of those screened, 319 students received positive reinforcement; three participated in motivational interviewing; and one student referred to services. RCASA conducted the data entry and referral functions. Eleventh graders will be screened in 2018.

The Outreach Coordinator provided case management for teens referred by the *Reading Police Pre-arraignment Diversion Program*. The Outreach Coordinator and the H.S. Health Educator facilitated the *Chemical Health Education* program monthly. Staff also contacted parents and provided resources.

The RCASA Director worked with a High School student from to plan a video project. We are collecting brief statements from high school students and their teachers that address the struggles they might have faced in middle school or messages of hope, support or encouragement. We will turn them into a video for our middle schools called *DEAR 13 YEAR OLD ME*.

DATA ANALYSIS-1) The Director served as the 2017 YRBS Survey Coordinator and developed the Survey Results Presentations. The Survey Consultant is Rothenbach Consulting. 2) The Rx Round Up kiosk continues to see an increase in drop offs from residents. In 2017, 8,211 Rx bottles were processed. This reflects a 19% increase compared to 2016. Since 2009, residents turned in 35,273 Rx bottles. 3) To assess the number of opioid overdoses, the staff tracked log reports, reviewed death certificates, and analyzed info from DataVis.

PUBLIC RELATIONS- We expanded our communication strategies using print, online and in person approaches. RCASA staff used Twitter to increase event attendance including twitter.com/rcasa15 (153 followers compared to 73 in 2016) and twitter.com/ReadingPolice (10.5K followers). We maintained the website at [Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse](http://ReadingCoalitionAgainstSubstanceAbuse.org) with the support of Reading Public Schools and continue to send out our newsletter (600 people). Local cable access taped the business breakfast and Annual Meeting. Staff were interviewed for an episode of "Reading Public Schools Today" by Sherri VandeAkker that aired on RCTV.