

READING COALITION AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE-2013 ANNUAL REPORT

HISTORY

RCASA formed in 2006 as a sustainable, collaborative community approach to substance abuse prevention based on a strategic prevention framework and model of community change.

STRUCTURE

The executive partners of RCASA are the Town of Reading, represented by the Town Manager; the Reading Public Schools, represented by the Superintendent; and the Reading Police, represented by the Police Chief. Their Executive Partnership Agreement, signed in 2007, describes the process for staff supervision, financial support, and access to data.

STAFF

The **RCASA staff** included 2 full time employees. The **Project 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 (LADC), the Outreach Coordinator provided support to residents seeking services.

LEADERSHIP

The Board of Directors met monthly and members served on a variety of workgroups and committees to accomplish critical tasks including data gathering, outreach, and leadership development. The Board is governed through their by-laws. Adult and student representatives provided valuable status reports on initiatives.

Board Appointments: The Nominating Committee filled vacant slots and reported roster changes at the fall Annual Meeting:

The following Board members served through 6/30/13: Kelsie Pace (RMHS Student), Scott Freeman (RMHS Student), Jesse Shamon (Austin Prep Student) and Peter Hechenbleikner (Town Manager).

The following Board members served through 9/29/13: Maureen Hanifan (RMLD), Ann-Marie Baccari (Austin Prep), Timothy Kutzmark (Clergy Council), Mary-Ann Tillotson (Hallmark Health), Steven Goldy (Selectman) and Larry Berkowitz (Riverside Community Care).

The following Board members served in 2014 and were re-appointed on 9/29/13: Meghan Whelan, Sophia Kalogeris (Reading Memorial High School, RMHS Student Liaisons), Elaine Webb, Patrick Shannon and Richard Abate (Parent Representatives), John Doherty (Reading Public Schools, Superintendent), Chuck Robinson (Reading School Committee), Kevin Higginbottom (RMHS, Principal), Tom Zaya (RMHS, Assistant Principal of Athletics & Joanne Senders (Reading Advocate, Reporter), James Cormier (Reading Police, Chief), Corey Santasky (Reading Police, School Resource Officer), Rich Hand (Reading Recreation, Appointee), Ruth Clay (Reading Board of Health, Appointee), Lynn Dunn (Reading Public Schools, Director of

Nursing), Melissa Roberto (Hallmark Health Liaison), James Dwyer (Massachusetts State Representative, 30th Precinct).

The following Board members were newly appointed: Jason Moscato- Riverside Community Care, Clinical Program Director (February 2013), Robert LeLacheur- Town of Reading, Town Manager (June 2013), James Bonazoli- Reading Board of Selectman, Elected Official (September 2013), Kevin Barile, Barile Family Funeral Homes (September 2013), Brian Snell, Law Office of Brian Snell (September 2013), Carol VanBuskirk, Reading Clergy Council, Appointee (September 2013) and Leeann Blaise, Austin Prep Liaison (November 2013)

Data Workgroup: A key focus for the Workgroup was planning for the *2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Project*. Products developed included: 2013 Questionnaires, Frequently Asked Questions Document for Parents, Survey Rationale, Confidentiality Form, Parent Letter and Staff Guidance Packet, Questions added to comply with federal core grant measures and to explore areas of stress and behavioral health. The survey consultant (retained by Reading Public Schools) is Amanda Ayers of Health Resources in Action. Survey results were disseminated at the RCASA Annual Meeting.

Risk Behavior Workgroup: The group focused on developing ways to educate the school community on multiple risk behaviors including substance abuse. First, the School Wellness District Committee and the Youth Leaders planned the *4th Annual Health & Wellness Day* at the Reading Memorial High School. RCASA working with School Leaders continued the *Chemical Health Education Program* to address the needs of school and court referrals.

Youth Workgroup: The Youth Crew comprised of 15 members focused on leadership development, media projects, and community outreach. Youth Crew developed a prevention exhibit highlighting alcohol industry tricks and shared it at the town's Friends & Family Day in June. Over the summer, staff worked with 8 youth leaders (2x per week) and during the school year (bi-weekly).

Regional Work: In 2013, the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition, with Medford serving as the lead agent, was awarded the *MA Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative grant from the MA Department of Public Health*. The Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition involves the communities of Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, Stoneham and Wakefield. Reading does not directly receive grant funds but will benefit from the regional collaborative through access to data, capacity building and training.

PROJECTS/EVENTS

Staff carried out federal STOP (Sober Truth on Underage Drinking Prevention) grant activities:

A.) TARGETED ALCOHOL PREVENTION

A1.) Implement Extracurricular Alcohol Education Programs

Staff and board leaders developed a 3-part film series to raise awareness about addiction. Local businesses donated the screening rooms. Each screening opened with the Youth Crew's *Dear 16 Year Old Me Video* on substance abuse and closed with a panel discussion. In February, RCASA screened "**My Name is Bette: The Life & Death of An Alcoholic**" for 250 community members at Jordan's IMAX Theatre in Reading. The Panel featured a Family Healing

Consultant, Treatment Director, Dual Disorders Specialist, Social Worker and the film's co-producer. In May, RCASA screened "**Point of No Return**" on underage drinking at Showcase Cinemas in nearby Woburn for 175 community members. The Panel featured Chief Cormier, *Reading Police* and Chief MacKenzie, *Kennebunk Police & Film Co-Creator*. In June, RCASA hosted two small screenings with the Reading Public Schools Behavioral Health Task Force of "**Who Cares About Kelsey?**" for 40 key stakeholders at the High School. This documentary addresses behavioral disability.

Other efforts included: In March, over 1200 students participated in the RCASA Health & Wellness Day, which featured underage drinking prevention and behavioral health exhibits. Staff worked with Police, Arbella Insurance and Gilbert Insurance to offer Distractology 101, an interactive impaired driving program for 260 students. Staff and the School Resource Officer taught underage drinking prevention classes for 200 juniors. Staff educated 60 students on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in the high school's Child Development class.

A2. Health Educators use new Glencoe Health Education Program-Staff working with the School District created a plan to align health education and integrate substance abuse prevention in grades K-12. Staff conducted key informant interviews with health educators (grades 7, 9 and 11) to monitor implementation. Staff convened elementary health educators to develop a pilot using an evidence-based curriculum (McGraw Hill since Glencoe not available at lower level).

A3. Improve Underage Drinking Prevention Policies- The high school issued Chemical Health violations under their progressive discipline policy for students enrolled in sports, clubs, drama and band. The school policy was updated in the spring. Police continued their Zero Tolerance Policy for youth caught with substances and enrolled youth in their pre-trial diversion program. To keep the community informed, staff presented the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Results to the RCASA Board, School Committee, Selectman and community members at our Annual Meeting in September of 2013. School and Police Representatives reported on Chemical Health Education and Diversion Programs.

A4. Improve Local Sanctioning Procedures- Since STOP grant funds only partially supports staff time, additional town funds supported the other staff time needed to operate the **Chemical Health Education & Diversion Program** for sanctioning. RCASA staff conducted classes for 90 youth with violations and provided case management for court-involved youth.

A5. Provide Chemical Health Expectations and Attitudes Training-The Director worked with the School Department to create 200 training booklets of the **ADULTS ASSIST To Deter Substance Abuse: A Brief Guide for Adult Advisors, Coaches & Trusted Adults**. In October, the School Resource Officer and Health Educator participated in the 2013 National Association of Drug & Alcohol Addiction Counselors Conference to receive training on adolescent substance use trends.

A6. Enhance Referral and Counseling- Youth involved in the Chemical Health Education Program received resources lists and met individually with staff to debrief. Staff disseminated resources at workshops, events and through our website. Staff mounted a wall display with 30

different local resources outside the high school health classrooms. Staff partnered with Police to expand resources for referral through a grant application to the state.

A7. Provide Risk Screening- Staff compiled the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey questionnaire and provided guidance to the School District to engage a qualified consultant to analyze the data. Results received in August of 2013. In June, staff was included in the School District’s 2 day training on the **Multi-Tiered Support System**. The system developed in Kansas provides a framework for identifying and addressing students’ needs.

B. CONDUCT ALCOHOL COMPLIANCE PROGRAM- We promoted our anonymous text a tip program and police received 215 anonymous tips pertaining to underage drinking and/or illegal drug activity. With state funds, detectives conducted alcohol compliance checks and party patrols. In June, there were 23 checks with two failures for ‘sale to a minor’ or 87% compliance. Selectmen conducted public hearings and issued a 2-day suspension (1st offense) and a 5-day suspension (2nd offense). Detectives conducted a Party Patrol in June and weekly patrols in September. No problems detected. Staff conducted field training for new officers on underage drinking. Staff assisted businesses in meeting the town’s training requirement on responsible beverage service education. In November, staff presented an annual update to the Selectmen

FINANCE

The coalition is primarily supported by grant funding detailed below:

Grant Supporting RCASA	Amount	End	Renewal
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration- Sober Truth on Underage Drinking	\$48,000	9/30/13	2014- pending

The coalition supports other town departments through collaborative grant applications:

Grant Applications written by RCASA	Amount	Start	Status
Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety & Security (Reading Police working with RCASA)	\$ 5,000	10/01/13	2014-approved
Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Police-Based Diversion	\$ 83,000	2014	Pending
Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office Behavioral Health Grant-Category 3: Education & Training	\$151,303	2014	Pending

The in-kind resources provided to RCASA totaled \$160,000 from the town, school and police departments. These resources included the provision of office and meeting space, matrix supervision, and financial oversight.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Throughout the year, youth and staff created quarterly newsletters and updated social media to keep the community informed about our project. Reading Police posted RCASA news on their twitter reaching over 2,000 followers. Staff updated the coalition website and social media sites often. Town staff added RCASA info to the new town website and linked the page to the existing RCASA website. 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 including the Patch, Chronicle, and Advocate. Local newspapers published 35 coalition articles and shared info on Facebook, Youtube and RCASA Website.