



Advisory Board

February 24, 2021

For all coalition resources, learn more at www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/readingcoalition

OUR MISSION

Reading Coalition's mission is to strategically address our substance abuse problem that local youth abuse alcohol, prescription drugs, tobacco, and other illegal drugs at unacceptably high rates that emerge early in adolescence, happen frequently, and indicate heavy use. To realize our mission, we will promote a healthy community environment using the strategic prevention framework to ensure everyone who lives, works, or goes to school in Reading can enjoy an optimum quality of life.

ABOUT OUR BOARD

The **Advisory Board** is made up of stakeholders, appointed by the Coalition Director, from our community and region that serve in an advisory capacity to:

- Exchange and share information that will enhance our community approach to substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion.
- Supply Reading Coalition staff with feedback on activities, projects and emerging initiatives.
- Spread the word about coalition resources and events

Welcome to new members!

Lynna Williams, Reading resident and parent. Lynna is currently the Director of Guidance at Reading Memorial High School and a longtime coalition supporter and collaborator.

Elise Brucato, Reading resident, Master in Public Health. Elise has worked in substance misuse prevention at Harvard University, and currently at Babson College as the Assistant Director of Wellness and Prevention Services.

A LOOK BACK AT 2020

The Reading Coalition for Prevention & Support completed their annual report for the calendar year. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the coalition sought to meet its goals to improve community collaboration and reduce substance misuse. To read the report highlights, see attachments.

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHT- STUDENT LEADERS RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Tom Zaya, Brian Lewis, Matt Vatcher and Coalition staff hosted a special virtual gathering for 15 student leaders on February 11th to check in and offer support. Coach Hopkinson, Coach Fiore and Coach Ring were also on hand to offer their guidance. Student leaders represented various RMHS sports teams, clubs, and activities and shared some of the leadership challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this discussion, which was hosted by the RMHS Athletics, Clubs, and Activities Department and the Reading Coalition for Prevention &

Next meeting will be online on Wednesday, March 31, 2021 at 5:30 pm.

Support, student leaders explored what leadership means to them, how their leadership roles have changed in response to COVID-19, and how they have managed to continue to engage their peers. The student leaders have risen to the challenges presented by COVID-19 and are doing excellent work to support their teammates, club members, and the entire RMHS student body. We would especially like to thank the following student leaders for participating: Alex Cullen, Alexis Burnham, Andrew Daley, Bridget Parks, Colby Goodchild, Colin O'Sullivan, Ellen Richards, Emily Martell, Jackie Caraco, Kevin Yatsuhashi, Matt Geraghty, Ryan Connolly, Sophia McGonagle, Taylor Holmes, and Tyler Lindmark.

STAFF UPDATES

Recent Presentations:

- Coalition staff presented to the District Support Team and District Leadership Teams on coalition resources
- Coalition staff assembled packets including various resources available the Reading community which will be distributed to all Reading Public Schools buildings and the Reading Public Library this week
- Coalition staff hosted information sessions with Doc Wayne in February. **25 parents** attended information sessions to learn more about services
 - **4 students** have begun receiving individual therapy, 2 on waitlist
 - Group therapy
 - Still accepting referrals!
 - Contact: Maggie Yuan, Program Director, myuan@docwayne.org

Staff Committees:

- We continued to participate in the **Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition** meetings. The Mystic Valley work is currently focused on supporting those adults working directly with students through hosting peer collaboration meetings and enhanced training opportunities across the seven communities. Erica is serving on the **RPS Portrait of the Graduate Committee**. Erica and Sammy both attend the **District Support Team** which brings together the school clinical leaders to improve student support protocols. The **2021 YRBS Data Action Team** was launched and data will be collected this spring with the support of district and school leaders, Lahey Health, JSI (Data Consultant) and the Middlesex League partners.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Coalition Director participated in the National Leadership Forum, a four-day training. Workshops focused on substance misuse prevention and reaching youth experiencing disparities. The Director participated in this month's Pulse of Reading conversation hosted by the Reading Public Library on privilege.

SHINING A LIGHT ON CONNECTIONS FORGED DURING THE PANDEMIC

Coalition staff met with Kerry Dunnell, Board of Health member, to discuss ways the coalition could support the community. We discussed the challenges facing our community as well as some of the amazing connections born out of the pandemic. We would like to host a special event next month highlighting some of the ways Reading residents, staff and volunteers have worked together over the last year. **Do you have a story to share or know about a special project related to the pandemic that has helped our community?**

OPIOID MISUSE UPDATE

A new study indicates that the [opioid crisis in the US is deepening](#). Opioid overdoses are 29% higher in 2020 than before the pandemic. This is largely attributed to increased stress and isolation due to COVID-19.

RESOURCES

[Coalition Resource Guide During COVID-19](#)

Call the INTERFACE Helpline 888-244-6843 (M-F 9AM-5PM) for resource info or provider referrals from a mental health professional. <https://interface.williamjames.edu/community/reading>

The Reading Police Department resumed medication drop off on February 1, 2021 in the green disposal box in the lobby of 15 Union St. We encourage residents to bring back controlled substances only (**please no 'over the counter' medications at this time**). Masks are required for entrance to the lobby. Residents can also request mail in boxes through Med Rx. <https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/readingcoalition>

Meeting dates

- The March meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 31, 2021 at 5:30pm

Excerpt from 2020 Annual Report for Reading Police Department focused on coalition activities

Reading Coalition for Prevention & Support, formerly Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse (RCASA):

The Reading Coalition for Prevention & Support mobilizes community partners, residents and youth to build collaborative approaches and reduce youth substance abuse. Learn more at www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/readingcoalition

The Coalition falls under the Detective Division of the Police Department and works closely with police, town and school liaisons to carry out their work. The Coalition Director and Outreach Coordinator are the primary staff and work closely with a 24-member Advisory Board.

The Reading Coalition Advisory Board meets monthly to:

- Exchange and share information that will enhance our community approach to substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion.
- Supply Reading Coalition staff with feedback on activities, projects and emerging initiatives.
- Spread the word about coalition resources and events

The coalition is guided by two major goals. Progress on each goal is tracked annually and in benchmark increments of five years.

- **Goal 1:** Establish and strengthen collaboration among the Reading Coalition's partner organizations in support of the community's effort to prevent and reduce youth substance use
- **Goal 2:** Reduce substance misuse among youth in Reading, MA, and, over time, reduce substance abuse among adults by addressing the issues in our community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse.

Outlined are a number of activities the Reading Coalition was involved in for 2020:

- Programs coordinated by the Coalition within the Police Department include the Crisis Intervention Steering Committee (CIT) and Team Follow-Up Program, Interface Referral Service (operated by William James College), Tip411/Anonymous Text a Tip Program (operated by Citizen Observer) and Rx Round Up for medication collection. The Rx Round Up program was temporarily suspended from March 2020-December 2020 due to the pandemic. Covanta, the facility responsible for medication disposal was unable to accept medications. The program will resume in February of 2021. The Reading Coalition procured medication dissolving packets for residents to self-dispose of medications as well as promoted the state program. Through the MA Med Project, residents can easily request a free, pre-paid mail-back envelope sent directly to their home for safe and secure disposal of unwanted medications. Learn more at <https://med-project.org/locations/massachusetts/>
- Assistance provided to the local School District included referral consultation, program coordination and guest presentations. Major initiatives include the Youth Mental Health First Aid Training for staff, RMHS Chemical Health Student Education Program, Health Education Classroom presentations, and staff collaboration on action teams and committees. Additional presentations and support provided to Austin Prep in coordination with their wellness team.
- Virtual programming was quickly introduced by coalition staff via Zoom in the spring of 2020 to adapt to the pandemic. We joined with Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition (Medford, Malden, Melrose, Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield and Winchester) to offer the Connect&Cope campaign on social media in

the spring of 2020. The campaign included weekly social media messages, Dear Mysty advice column, uplifting posts, and a webinar on coping during the pandemic.

- New or updated resources developed in 2020 included the Substance Misuse Coalition Resource List, Mental Health Coalition Resource List and Helpful Services During the Pandemic Guide for Reading.
- The Coalition adopted use of the Apricot Cloud Based Software program in June of 2020, administered by Social Solutions, to track their coalition activities, meetings, and case management.
- The Coalition was trained to use the Critical Incident Management System (CIMS) system to join in the Middlesex County effort to track follow-ups for mental health and overdoses. CIMS is a software product developed by Kelley Research Associates to support countywide police led programs intending to document all overdose incidents within county jurisdictions and facilitate the transition of those experiencing drug overdoses to treatment. Coalition staff is responsible for data entry and follow-up for relevant cases.

Committees/Action Teams that involved coalition staff included: Reading Coalition Advisory Board, Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition (Coordinators meetings, Pandemic projects and regional grant development), RPD Crisis Intervention Team Steering Committee, Medford Regional HUB Crisis Team, RPS Portrait of a Graduate, RPS Data Action Team and the RPS District Support Team.

Coalition Output =

- 3130 individuals reached through outreach programming (in person and virtual)
 - Austin Prep "The First Day" Chris Herren Film Screening
 - Austin Prep Middle School Vaping Education Classes
 - Crisis Intervention Team/SRO Presentation for RPS Clinical Support Staff
 - Coolidge Middle School 8th Grade Vaping Education
 - Chemical Health Education Programming for RMHS
 - Junior Wellness Class Vaping Presentations for RMHS
 - Maternal Substance Misuse for Child Development Class at RMHS
 - Recovery Month Lawn Sign and Narcan Distribution
 - Reading Public School Nurses Narcan Training
 - Substance Use Disorder & Domestic Violence Trainings for the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition, Wakefield and Winchester Coalitions.
 - Supporting Health Teen Dating Webinar with RESPOND Inc.
 - Vaping Game Show Parker Middle School
 - Vaping Trends and Cessation Support Webinar
 - Vaping Webinar for Beth Israel Hospital System
 - Virtual Health Impacts of Vaping Q&A
 - Virtual Vaping 101 Q&A for 9th Grade Wellness Class
 - Virtual Vaping Legislation Q&A
 - Coalition Overview for the Reading Select Board
 - Coalition Resources for the Reading Board of Health
- 240 Crisis Intervention Team Follow-ups provided by Outreach Coordinator related to Mental Health/Substance Use.
- 74 residents used the Interface Referral Service from January through November of 2020 which confidentially matched Reading callers with licensed mental health providers from an extensive database. Each referral met the location, insurance and specialty needs of the caller. Telehealth was more widely available in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic and increased mental health access for callers.
- 27 new Reading Public School teachers trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

- 3686 Facebook users and 4,868 Twitter impressions engaging Reading residents made via the social media campaign “Connect & Cope” with the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition)

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