

Summary Notes from Community of Solutions Meeting, 9/16/13

Our Mission (draft): To help teens deal with adversity and build resilience through idea and resource sharing between teens, parents and professionals

Actions/solutions resulting from this meeting. Who will take this on?

1. Obtain clarification on consequences for reporting information and/or problems with depression and substance abuse.
 - a. Teens want to know who to turn to and what the risks/consequences are for reporting that a friend is in trouble with depression or substance use (or that they are)
 - i. Corollary 1: school needs to clarify new rules
 - ii. Corollary 2: teens should be counseled to identify three adults that they feel safe in approaching with concerns
 - iii. Corollary 3: Parents, teachers may need coaching on nonjudgmental listening
 - b. Parents need clarification about new FCPS rules and resources—how do they help their student without risking expulsion?
2. Need a group to create a concussion type model that includes a set of actions to take, resources and places to go when teens are in crisis or having a difficult time—like the Concussion “Heads Up” campaign. Need a “total package” of school and community resources that are offered to a family when a student is identified as having mental health problems, substance use issues, or both.
3. Mindfulness, yoga, meditation. Corinne Krill offered to do a short session on mindfulness and breathing! Lorraine Beaulieu (Licensed Professional Counselor) also offered to do some short courses. It was mentioned that a school health/PE course may be the place for this.
4. Offer Mental Health First Aid course for students, parents and for faculty at Woodson.

Meeting Intro and insights from previous Community of Solutions discussions

Carol Davis shared the mission of the Community of Solutions and the following insights and actions:

- Several priorities were identified by parents and teens during the first meeting (notes posted on Face book Facebook.com/groups/communityofsolutions). Trying to act on these over time.
- Thanks to Sam Scheele for creating a website; we'll post the link soon! Will include teen art and pictures.
- Fairfax Youth Survey looked at youth behaviors and environment. Youth with at least 3 assets are less likely to be involved in risky behavior (some assets: parent support, teacher recognition, does community service, extracurricular activities, etc.)
- Biggest risk factor for drinking – having a teen peer who drinks

Bob Phillips mentioned that as a result of our last meeting, the Community Services Board and FCPS held its first Mental Health First Aid class for teens; 12 FCPS teens attended; We are trying to get more classes offered and one at Woodson

Teen Scenarios: discussion facilitated by Blake Phillips. During the July meeting 6 teens discussed potential scenarios about friends in trouble. Below is the feedback and discussion from this meeting.

Teen in supportive relationship forbidden by parents (with another student) parent forbade it, but teen continued. Parent reaction? Group ideas:

- listen, don't jump to conclusions
- is teen aware that he/she suffers from depression?
- teen would like to be able to have someone to talk to without worrying about the reaction. Probe and listen well, "That's interesting, tell me more"
- what can a teen do if s/he knows that parent will not react well? Go to another source and get help talking to the parent (a friend's parent, teacher, minister, etc.)
- focus on the depression issue, maybe more critical than concern about the relationship

What to do if you suspect a friend is involved with drugs?

- Mentioned self-assessment tool on various websites; encourage the teen/friend to do this
- Many teens who are depressed don't have the energy to seek help or do self-assessment. If a friend lets a parent know about it this is useful and the parent can help seek treatment
- Can't always recognize depression in yourself
- Teens who use drugs often hang out with other kids who use drugs
- FCPS counselor – if a teen friend shares that friend may be using drugs, counselor will bring teen in to discuss, perhaps parent too – with psychologist or social worker, they will maintain your confidence if no direct threat to student's immediate health

Threat of suicide by a friend

- Clinician – Call 911! this is an emergency, take teen to ER or call police to take teen. If no adult call one right away and keep person on the phone
- Talk to teen and try to calm her/him while waiting for adult and/or professional help.
- Talk to them about empathy, how this will impact family and friends.
- Make a deal with caller, don't do anything until I get there. Take someone knowledgeable with you.

Follow up ideas to teen discussion:

- Parent workshop on how to listen/respond
- Peer counseling/coaching – where can teens get this?
- Safety theme should be addressed – why not report?
- Teacher workshop – they need to understand how/when to communicate?
- What are consequences of reporting? We need to understand this – need to have defined steps, how can this be dealt with as a mental health issue vs. a disciplinary issue?
- Megan McLaughlin, Braddock District School Board representative, stressed the need for discipline that restores, not punishes. Projects she's working on: SRR, 2nd chance marijuana, need to understand why teens use drugs (vs. going right to punishment). We have concussion screening, why not a similar model for depression (take a baseline, teachers can see changes, report, etc.). Fairfax County kids have higher rate of depression than elsewhere.
- Teens said it is taboo to talk about problems. There is pressure to be perfect and everyone knows what you're doing because of social media, which also creates many pressures.

Guest speaker: Ethan Kalcheff, www.isharedmystory.com

Recently featured in the [Fairfax Times](http://FairfaxTimes.com). Westfield High school grad, now at NVCC started Share Your Story (www.isharedmystory.com). Ethan responded to everyone's stories, mostly kids he didn't know. Many teens feel social media pressure to make their life look better than it is. Implemented at Westfield as a hard-copy, confidential process with trained teen peer-responders; teens can elect to have their story posted in the school for others to learn from.

Share Your Story helps kids talk about their issues/problems in a safe forum. Teens are more comfortable talking to friends. They fill out a form, one kid writes a story, another responds by giving advice. Have to id yourself but have implied confidentiality. Program instructors may be teachers. Ethan provides guidance to them. List is kept of program participants. Currently hard copies and not electronic yet.

Therapist cautioned: Telling stories can amplify negative feelings/effects, affect regulation is important to understand, understanding your body and how it reacts to stress, learning to regulate yourself and your feelings.

When students know that they have another peer to listen to them, it's a great resource for them. Good resource in every school. Clinician pointed out that this program opens up teens to the idea of therapy.

Large group discussion: How do we pool resources? Collaborate?

A parent mentioned that there are not many resources locally. She heard about a good program that Colorado State University put in place after Aurora tragedy-- everything about drugs are centered on drug treatment/clinic/group therapies - how can we create a similar resource at each HS?

Discussed a community-based model, which is an all-inclusive program offering assistance; located in schools and county government funded.

How do we address drug issues in the schools? In the past, Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) were in the schools, but these positions were defunded.

Mary Anne Pannarelli discussed the SAP idea was to put one in each HS and it never got to that point. SAPs were pulled as day treatment programs needed funding and staffing. Now trying to get psychologists/social workers in the schools to address drug issues – got funding for 14 new social workers/psychologists In the schools for this year.

How can we afford School Resource Officer (police) in each school but not enough social workers/psychologists with training in substance use? This is a prioritization issue. What about something like an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) that many companies offer their employees who are dealing with mental health or substance use?

Need to have a game plan when a drug issue is addressed. Discussed need for family therapy when there is a drug issue. Some suggested that a school plan should be about identification of the issue, not about providing the therapies. Need to have a professional in the building to at least identify the issues – even when SAP was in the school, they just provided guidance to other resources, not providing treatment.

Summary from teens

- Important for teens to be comfortable in, feel safe and accepted in their schools and around other kids
- Teens appreciate parent support/feedback
- Need to spread message that it's ok to talk about your problems – ok not to be perfect
- “Perfection isn't real”
- “I Am Not...” program last year went over well (I Am Not Depression and other conditions)

Panel every year at Woodson, **“Saturday Night in the Suburbs”** – 20 teens present to parents, teens describe what happens on the weekends. Community of Solutions could do same type of panel with teens and adults who would share recovery stories.

De-stigmatizing is important – teens think depression is a stigma, feeling of separation. Our culture needs to shift to think about mental health issues like physical issues. We get treatment for physical illnesses as well as mental illnesses. Often mental health issues are not just easily fixed.

“I am Not” program at Woodson – junior did this, idea is that people's conditions do not define them.

Upcoming Program on addiction and recommended book: Sarah McDade recommended the book on the development of the teen mind, *Recovering My Kid*. She encouraged parents and teens to attend a program on Sun 10/27 at Temple Rodef Shalom in Falls Church. It is about addiction and alcohol use. The speaker is Christopher Lawford who has written 4 books on addiction.

Please talk to us, the source noted or a professional for clarification and more information regarding these notes.

Notes summarized by Margaret Scheele, Bob Phillips and Carol Davis