

February 4, 2008 - Special Town Council Meeting

At a Special Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Middletown, RI, held at the Middletown Town Hall on Monday, February 4, 2008 at 6:00 P.M.

Council President Paul M. Rodrigues, Presiding

Vice Chair Shirley R. Mello

Councillor Barbara A. Barrow arrives at 6:22 PM

Councillor Louis P. DiPalma

Councillor M. Theresa Santos

Councillor Robert J. Sylvia, Members Present

Councillor Edward J. Silveira, Jr., Absent

POSTED – January 31, 2008

Wendy J.W. Marshall, Town Clerk

Town of Middletown

Town Hall – 350 East Main Road

Middletown, Rhode Island 02842

Dear Mrs. Marshall:

Pursuant to the provisions of Article II, Section 203 of the Town Charter and in accordance with Sections 42-46-2., 42-46-4. and 42-46-6., RIGL, I hereby call a Special Meeting of the Town Council to formally consider, discuss and act upon the following item of business:

Presentation by Substance Abuse Task Force – Strategic Plan and matters related there to

Said meeting will be held on Monday, February 4, 2008, at 6:00 P.M. at the Middletown Town Hall, 350 East Main Road, Middletown, Rhode Island 02842.

Paul M. Rodrigues, President

Middletown Town Council

CC:

Town Council

Public Library

Town Administrator

Finance Director

Town Solicitor

School Department

Public Library

This meeting location is accessible to the handicapped. Individuals requiring interpreter services for the hearing-impaired should notify the Town Clerk's Office at 847-0009 not less than 48 hours before the meeting.

On motion of Vice Chair Mello, duly seconded, it was voted unanimously to receive said communication.

Present representing the Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force were Lt. Fred Bodington, Chairman, Lori Verderosa, Coordinator/SPF SIG Manager, Dr. Jill Pfitzenmayer, Senior Vice President of Organizational Management and Performance, Child and Family Services, Inc., SPF SIG Needs Assessment Consultant and Genevieve Verdi, Graduate Assistant to Dr. Pfitzenmayer, SPF SIG Needs Assessment Assistant.

The Council was issued the following handouts in preparation for the presentation:

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR

MIDDLETOWN, RI

Presented to:

Prepared by:

Middletown Substance Abuse

Genevieve Verdi, MA and Jill

Prevention Task Force

Pfitzenmayer, Ph.D.

Child & Family

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings

The state of Rhode Island and town of Middletown currently face considerable challenges around issues of substance use and abuse. The findings presented in this assessment endorse the opinions of many local residents: Middletown has a number of needs around substance use prevention. Some key findings are as follows:

- Alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use among students at Middletown High and at Gaudet Middle School has been decreasing since 1997, but MHS usage rates remain higher than the statewide average.**
- There is a rise in the number of students who report heavy alcohol use since 1997.**
- Usage rates at Gaudet have decreased, but 23% of 8th graders report drinking alcohol.**
- Drinking has risen slightly among students in elementary school, most noticeably at JFK, where 10% of students reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.**
- Elementary school students whose families qualified for free or reduced lunch have higher rates of ATOD use than the general**

student population.

- **Youth who come from military families face greater risk for ATOD use than nonmilitary families due to the high rates of transition from base to base**
- **The two substances used most often by Middletown youth and adults are marijuana and alcohol. Alcohol is made available to youth through older siblings, through local stores and most frequently, through their parents' liquor cabinets. This represents both retail and social access.**
- **Binge drinking among those 18-25 in the state of RI is highest in the nation and Bristol/Newport County ranks 10th of 377 national substate regions in alcohol/substance abuse.**
- **Alcohol use is pervasive among all community members and is believed to be exacerbated by the area's tourism industry and residents' generally permissive attitudes toward drinking.**
- **A prevailing complaint from students and adults alike is that there are not enough recreational options, with readily accessible transportation, to encourage positive, healthy behaviors among Middletown youth.**
- **There is no central location for gathering or for getting**

information about youth-oriented events held on the weekends. Many stated that these issues led to feelings of boredom and ATOD use among Middletown youth.

- Some Middletown youth and parents report a lack of concern about the effects of marijuana on driving, believing that it is a safer alternative to drinking and driving.**

MIDDLETOWN STRATEGIC PREVENTION FRAMEWORK PLAN

Executive Summary

The State of Rhode Island received funding from the United States Department of Health and Human Services/Substance Abuse Mental Health Administration/Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (SAMHSA/CSAP) to implement the Strategic Prevention Framework

State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG). The overarching goals of the SPF are to:

Prevent the onset and reduce the progression of substance abuse including childhood and underage drinking

Reduce substance related problems in communities and

Build prevention capacity and infrastructure at the State and Community levels.

There are 14 communities in the State that have been awarded funds to change the norms around substance use/abuse in their Town or City. The Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force (MSAPTF) is one of the sub-recipients for this initiative. The project period is July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2010.

The SPF is a five step data driven planning process used by states and communities to achieve the goals described above. The five steps are listed below:

Step One: Profile population needs and resources and readiness to address needs and gaps

Step Two: Mobilize and/or build capacity to address needs

Step Three: Plan and develop a comprehensive strategic plan

Step Four: Implement evidence based programs, policies and practices

Step Five: Monitor, evaluate, sustain and improve or replace those strategies that are not a “fit”

Following is a brief overview of each of the SPF steps and what the MSAPTF did/will be doing to accomplish said step.

Step One: Assessment (July 1 – November 30, 2007)

As stated above the grant award was received for a July 1, 2007 start up. The MSAPTF Coordinator, already in place, will also serve as the SPF Manager for the three year period. A SPF Grant Coordinator was hired by the end of August, 2007.

The intent of this first step which ran from July 1 through November 30, 2007, was to identify relevant data sources from which to assess the substance abuse problem in Middletown.

The MSAPTF saw the need to examine the Town in greater depth than has been done to date. We engaged a needs assessment consultant, Dr. Jill Pfitzenmayer, Senior Vice President of Organizational Performance and Training from Child & Family Services of Newport County, Inc., to analyze and author our data collection efforts.

A SPF SIG subcommittee was also created to guide the SPF process. They, along with the Executive Committee, steer the development of the plan and the implementation of programming.

Primary (qualitative) data, gleaned through eleven focus groups and five key informant interviews, and secondary (quantitative) data, gathered from SALT Survey data, State Drug/Alcohol Admissions data, Alcohol Purchase Survey Statistics, etc., was researched and

reviewed to paint a profile of the substance use and abuse issue in the Town of Middletown

This process allowed the MSAPTF to define more specifically the problem in Middletown. Assessment also involved the mobilization of key stakeholders to identify the existing prevention infrastructure, examine service gaps and begin looking at overall community readiness.

Upon completion of this step the MSAPTF chose the State priority consequence that posed the greatest burden to the town to be DSM IV Alcohol Abuse/Dependence. The priority consumption pattern is underage drinking. The risk factor that we will target is youth access/availability, both social access and retail access in an attempt to impact underage drinking in Middletown.

Step Two: Capacity Building (July 1 – December 14, 2007)

Capacity building involved the completion of a “Community Resources Readiness Assessment” tool by key community stakeholders. The results of this instrument yielded information to help us understand the Town’s readiness for community based substance abuse prevention efforts. Knowledge within the community regarding substance abuse prevention services is clearly lacking. Also some members of the community see underage drinking as a “rite of passage” or a “kids will be kids” issue.

Our initial task in this step will be to raise awareness in the community about the risks and consequences of underage drinking. This will create an atmosphere of “readiness” prior to the implementation of programs that will follow. Community public forums will be facilitated throughout the Town to attain this consciousness raising effort. Additionally, we will educate key community stakeholders so they in turn can impact/educate their particular agency/organization.

A media campaign to support these above mentioned goals will be coordinated simultaneously to truly bring the issue of underage

drinking to the forefront.

Step Three: Planning (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008)

The above two steps afforded the MSAPTF the opportunity to better understand the problem and the capacity of the town in order to start to plan for programs and strategies to address the problem. Both the primary data and the secondary data cited the issue of “availability” as being an integral factor to reduce underage drinking in Middletown, therefore the Task Force chose this risk factor.

The justification for said decision was primarily guided by the goal of SPF SIG which is to demonstrate population change at the community level, while reducing the State priority consumption pattern of underage drinking. It was decided during this planning stage, that to target this risk factor would show measurable data changes.

The MSAPTF felt strongly that to prioritize both social and retail access for programming would have a powerful synchronized effect on availability.

This phase of the process allowed us to explore programs, policies and practices that would be a “conceptual fit” (they specifically address the condition of availability by decreasing access) and a “practical fit” (they are comprehensive, feasible and will produce a synergistic effect as they reinforce each other). Lastly, we reviewed approaches that were supported by the research, empirical data and consensus judgment by experts in the field, thus were “evidence based programs” (EBPs).

Our months of planning brought us to the choice of EBPs highlighted in the next step, implementation.

Step Four: Implementation (Date of Plan Approval – June 30, 2010)

To bring about reductions in community problems, a comprehensive prevention approach must be employed. The MSAPTF will implement a series of evidence based strategies and programs that will utilize diverse approaches to policy change, media campaigns and enforcement/compliance regulations that provide a thorough, tiered approach that will impact Middletown population change.

To impact social access, implementation will involve a three pronged approach. There will be a second phase of the media campaign which will raise awareness about the laws/penalties associated with providing alcohol to minors. Multiple activities such as press conferences, press releases, PSAs, letters to the editors, advertisements, public forums, print media, radio and possible TV time in collaboration with the other 13 SPF sub-recipients statewide. This media campaign at the local level will be shared with the Newport Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force, also one of the 14 sub-grantee agencies, since we share the same media outlets.

Tied into the media campaign will be the strengthening of local town ordinances that impact access/availability. Noise ordinances and “teen party” ordinances are examples of possible additions/modifications to policies that would support these efforts.

Lastly, the Middletown Police will be the increase of enforcement strategies such as party patrols and “shoulder tap” programs.

In order to address the retail access issue the MSAPTF will coordinate another multi pronged approach. Initially we will work with our alcohol vendors to raise awareness about the risks of underage drinking, the SPF process and the forthcoming enforcement of both state and local ordinances related to youth accessing alcohol. Our goal is to partner with our retailers and let them know that the Middletown Police will be enforcing the laws.

Secondarily, we will look at local ordinances that relate to the sale/distribution of alcohol to minors to ascertain what policies might be tightened to decrease access. Currently, Class A license holders (liquor stores) do not need to provide “responsible beverage server”

(RBS) training. This could be a possible change at the local level, requiring “RBS” training and could allow for better equipped alcohol vendor sales persons and thus reduce sales to minors.

Research indicates that the frequent use of compliance checks decreases alcohol sales to minors almost by half. The Middletown Police will increase and publicize well designed compliance checks and we will solicit community support in doing so.

These programs, practices and possible policy changes are at the center of our implementation design plan. It is our intention that these strategies will build a substance abuse prevention infrastructure in the Town that can serve to reduce underage drinking by reducing the access of alcohol to minors. The goal of the MSAPTF is to sustain this infrastructure beyond the life of SPF.

Step Five: Evaluation (September 1, 2007 – June 30, 2010)

As required by SPF there will be a rigorous external evaluation of all five steps of the SPF planning process, conducted by W. Bradley Crowther Consultants, LLC. Methods and measures to be utilized have been developed and mandated by the federal government funding source, SAMHSA/CSAP, the State Evaluation Team at the University of Rhode Island and Crowther and Associates.

In summary, it is the goal of the MSAPTF to build an infrastructure of substance abuse prevention services for the Town of Middletown that will be successful in reducing the State priority consumption pattern of underage drinking.

Lt. Fred Bodington, Chairman, Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force, addressed the Council noting that the Task Force has been awarded a Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF-SIG) in the amount of \$420,000., funding was

through the RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The grant covers a (3) three-year project period for July 1, 2007 thru June 30, 2010.

Lori Verderosa, Coordinator, Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force, noted the presentation will begin with an overview of the Strategic Plan and a review of the Needs Assessment.

Ms. Verderosa presented the following portion of the power point presentation:

Dr. Jill Pfitzenmayer, Senior Vice President of Organizational Management and Performance, Child and Family Services, Inc., SPF SIG Needs Assessment Consultant, addressed the Council reviewing the following portion of the power point slides:

Genevieve Verdi, Graduate Assistant to Dr. Pfitzenmayer, SPF SIG Needs Assessment Assistant, reviewed the following portion of the power point presentation:

Lori Verderosa, Coordinator, Middletown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force, reviewed the following Assessment Conclusions:

Discussion centered around where the data was collected from for the needs assessment, what is being done locally and nationally for substance abuse prevention and the importance of prevention being community based.

On motion of Council President Rodrigues, duly seconded, it was voted unanimously to direct the Town Solicitor to review Class A liquor licenses in other communities pertaining to a requirement for employees to have RBS Training (Responsible Beverage Server Training).

On motion of Vice Chair Mello, duly seconded, it was voted unanimously to adjourn this meeting at 6:55 P.M.

Wendy J.W. Marshall, CMC

Council Clerk