

Holliston Youth and Family Services Advisory Council

Minutes of Meeting held on December 11, 2023 (Hybrid format)

Present: Matt Putvinski (chair), Kate Cunningham, John Drohan, Peggy Payne, Alison Quinan, Cat Correia, Jackie Winer, Zoe Moreau

Absent: Dee Phair, Kirsten Rancourt, James Ryan

Opening Remarks:

Matt read the opening statement and rollcall attendance was called. Alison made a motion to open the meeting which was seconded by Peggy. Having a motion and a second, Council members unanimously agreed to open this meeting.

Kate made a motion to accept the November 2023 meeting minutes which was seconded by John. The minutes were unanimously accepted.

Director's Report:

1. It is a busy time of year; check out the new Public Service Announcement!
2. Jackie attended the inaugural meeting of the Hate and Bias Coalition with Peggy Payne.
3. Jackie has started the MSW intern search. It can be challenging to find the right candidates for this position. Jackie hopes the Town could help to incentivize this role for the department. Not having the position filled creates strain on Jackie and the department who rely on the interns to help with caseload. It is getting harder to attract candidates to the position and this is currently an unpaid position which makes it difficult to fill with qualified candidates. In the past Jackie has been able to secure a grant of \$2,500/year from the MetroWest Foundation which helps. Jackie would like to go before the SelectBoard, Finance Committee, and Town Administrator to discuss funding. The placements are 24 hrs/wk for 3 days/wk and are extended placement based on the school year (September – June). HYFS recruits separately from the Town. Jackie often has to call Schools of Social Work weekly to ask for resumes.
4. Thank you to Allegra who set up the HYFS Resource Tree at Blair Square which showcases the department and shows resources for the public.
5. Update on initiatives: 1) Stakeholder request and referral form; and 2) Budget proposal for 2025 which will be due on January 19, 2024.
6. As of next year the ARPA-funded service navigator position will be moving off of the ARPA budget onto the annual HYFS budget. Additionally, Jackie will be asking the

Town to appropriate funds for a strategic planner and consultant for the department which came out of the feedback which was submitted to the Town Administrator related to the Town's overall Strategic Plan. HYFS was not represented in the Town's Strategic Plan as much as Jackie feels like it should be while other departments which had their own Strategic Plans (ie., Police, Parks & Rec) were more strongly represented. Jackie has worked hard to develop the mission statement and policies and procedures to help better define the services that HYFS provides for the Town.

Peggy asks if other department which are revenue producing have developed Strategic Plans, perhaps HFYS ought to start "invoicing" other departments (ie, HPS, Police) for services provided such as programming, restorative work, etc. This could illustrate the value of the department and show that the department could be generating revenue, it is just that it is internal work and therefore not visible as revenue to HYFS and other departments are not paying outside providers or consultants for the services which are being provided by HYFS. The suggestion was made to start tracking "billable hours" for services provided to other departments to justify the need for a strategic plan and bigger budget. Matt pointed out that at Town Meeting, one of the goals of the SelectBoard was to support HYFS.

Jackie will also be seeking funding for interpreter services. There have been instances of need in which confidentiality is affected when the client needs to bring a friend to help translate. Having access to interpreter services is in-line with DEI and accessibility goals. HPS has a budget for interpreter services but at present is not sharing those services with HYFS. Jackie is grateful to HDAAC for sharing translation services for printed materials and documents.

7. Jackie reviewed the data report. CAF continues to be well utilized: over \$10K of relief has been distributed this year. Allegra has been working on the monthly newsletter. There has been an increase in referrals for middle school students from RAMS due in part to staffing issues, turnover and changes, especially in the Pathways program at RAMS. Jackie is working with Dr. Kustka and Jess Beatty (Student Services) in a consultative and support role to try to figure out what the mental health needs are and why HYFS clients are being so impacted.

There were 8 additional referrals this month which shows an upward trend. HYFS is on track to have over 100 contacts with residents this year with 100 contacts per year being the average. Much of the increase has to do with having the Service Navigator position in the department which is allowing the department to increase its capacity and ability to serve more community members. Support happens in many ways other than direct service and may involve multiple interactions per client.

Other Business:

1. HDAAC Update - Zoe

- a. The upcoming December HDAAC meeting will be important because the group will be working on an action plan and brainstorming and planning for work to be done in the fiscal year September 2024 through September 2025. The meeting will be held on December 14, 2023 from 6-8pm via Zoom. If you can only attend one meeting, this is it!
- b. Two focus groups have been merged to get 10 responses to substance and DEI questions. This information is needed for the grant reporting and will be helpful as they plan for the year ahead. They will be revisiting the questions in the spring because the timing of the survey can make a difference. Spring events (ie., prom) can impact substance use.
- c. Holliston was invited to become a cluster with 5 other communities (Hopkinton, Medway, Medfield, Wayland) through the MassCALL3 (Massachusetts Collaborative for Action Leadership and Learning: <https://csps-ma.org>) grant which is a DFC grant through the CDC in the amount of \$250K over 2 years. The idea is for the Towns to work together with the similar goal of reducing substance use because youth travel across town lines to use or procure substances. It will be a good opportunity for collaboration with other nearby towns with one example being that there could be a compliance check process across the town police departments to enforce carding and regulations at retail establishments. It can help identify any issues or fragility in the various communities which are impacting youth substance use rates and can help design action plans around specific community concerns.

2. Community Action Fund (CAF) – John

- a. Held a fundraiser and community outreach where they connected with Project Just Because to create holiday gift boxes with gently used stuffed animals and a personal note for needy families. PJB serves 850 families per week. For the fundraiser, folks can sponsor a box for \$30 via the CAF website and a PSA on HCAT and email blasts. This current project is for the holidays but the partnership might continue after the holidays. While they are located in Hopkinton, Project Just Because also serves families from Holliston.

3. Coalition Against Hate & Bias Update – Peggy

- a. The group in the room was not as diverse as it should have been.
- b. Peggy made the point that if an incident of hate happens in a school, the school and HPS should be addressing it and working to keep kids safe. But having a community forum is important for unity in the community and in response to incidents. The Coalition can back up any school response and can hold groups accountable. This is an opportunity for including those from other departments with training and expertise on the Coalition to help other groups.
- c. The question was asked whether the Coalition will be pro-active or re-active?

- d. Dr. Kustka took the lead in discussions and it seems that the school is looking to enlist the help of the community and is not just passing the buck. This forum is another opportunity for visibility and validation for what HYFS does and has to offer.
 - e. Next meeting will be in January with the frequency of meetings to be determined. Peggy and John will represent HYFS in the Coalition.
4. Student Representative Update – Cat
- a. The Winter Chorus concert will happen tomorrow night at HHS. The HHS Chorus teacher is leaving at the end of the winter break and as of now there is no replacement for the afterschool chorus or the music classes. The band teacher at the middle school will also be leaving. The HHS Fall musical went well and the new theatre director is very supportive. Winter break is coming up and everyone is looking forward to the break.
 - b. Another incident of hate speech happened at HHS in November. The HHS Hate Prevention Council (a HHS club started by Cat in their junior year – for students to communicate with, to among students) met with Mr. Taylor, an Assistant Principal (?) to discuss the incident.

Closing Remarks:

Kate is working on Jackie's annual performance evaluation and will send out a semi-final version for Board feedback. Please respond ASAP as it is due on January 16th to the Town Administrator.

John made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Alison and the meeting was adjourned at 8:23pm.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Youth and Family Advisory Council will be held on Monday, January 8, 2024 at 7pm in a virtual format.

Respectfully Submitted By: Alison Quinan