

NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

MEETING NOTES

May 8th, 2025

Meeting Goal

Providing an opportunity for people and organizations across Northwest and Central Vermont to come together to share information, make connections, and explore opportunities related to prevention of substance misuse and promoting wellbeing in our communities.

Welcome & Agenda Overview

Agenda:

Prevention Partner Updates

Backbone Updates

Region 1 Prevention Consultant Updates

Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community

Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention Coalition

Wrap-Up

Prevention Partner Updates

Mo Sivvy, Good Samaritan Haven: GSH no longer applying for the grant they had mentioned last time; they are still interested in, but holding off for now.

Christine Hughes, Richard Kemp Center: Summer Youth Activities and Free Lunch Program that they are looking to enroll kids in; capacity is around 15 kids, ages 8-12. RKC also had a fantastic Sankofa trip to Washington DC, and are going to share more about it at their Juneteenth celebration.

James Downes, NEHIDTA: Having a Webinar on July 2nd from 2:00pm – 3:00pm, and identifies drug threats throughout the region. Three labs that came back indicated what they are seeing in terms of illegal drugs in the market. This webinar is open to any of their partners. Email James at to get more information at jdownes@nehidta.org

Mariah Flynn, BPHC: BPHC is having their annual award ceremony next week, and anyone is welcome to attend. It is on Thursday, May 15th, at 5:15pm. [Link here.](#)

Holly Rossi, Dismas House: Dismas is holding their 38th Annual Celebration and Silent Auction on Sunday May 18th from 12:00pm – 3:00pm at the Delta Hotel in South Burlington

Marcie Hambrick, Prevent Child Abuse VT: Driving Change for Vermont's Children is on Saturday June 21st from 4:00pm – 7:00pm in Wardsboro VT. [Link here.](#)

Christie Holmes, TPCCC: 2025 Stand Up For Recovery Comedy Night and Silent Auction is on June 18th from 5:30 – 8:30pm.

Backbone Updates

The Funding Committee is about to begin developing the portfolio for Region 1, and have received and rated all applications.

Region 1 Prevention Consultant Updates

Hilary Denton, PC for the Barre Health District: There has been an uptick in needles in places where children and families spend time. They are working on connecting with law enforcement more, and looking to distribute more naloxone boxes. They have relationships with law enforcement already but are looking to expand and deepen them. Vermont Department of Health also has some videos around alcohol use, [linked here.](#)

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Nick Tatakis, PC for the Burlington Health District: The DSU Substance Use Conference is on May 20th and 21st at the Double Tree in South Burlington. In-person tickets are sold out, but you can still [register here](#) to attend virtually.

There is a survey on school-based prevention that opened yesterday and Prevention Consultants will be sending out links to school-based contacts starting this week.

Mary Pickener, PC for St. Albans Health District: There is a webinar that PTTC is putting out around leveraging youth and adult relationships to promote social responsibility. [Link here.](#)

Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community

Let's Talk Community Forum

Healthy BTV Work Group has 2 Goals

- Goal 1: Increase Burlington's ability to make policy decisions informed by public health and science
- Goal 2: reduce accessibility and promotion of alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco/nicotine through improved zoning and local policy

BPHC also collects data about the community, looking at retailers in the community who sell alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis. They look at how close they are to schools. Also looking into poverty rates in the town.

BPHC collects visual data as well, showing blocks on Church Street that are packed with bars and dispensaries.

The goal for the events are 1) people leave with increased understanding of what is happening in school and the larger community that impacts substance use, 2) hear from our community about the things that they are impacted by, and what they want to see change, and 3) draw attention to Healthy BTV Workgroup and how to get involved in our efforts and next steps

Root Causes of Youth Substance Misuse at a community level

- Community Normalization
- Access to and promotion of substances in the community
- Low perception of harm by adults and youth
- Early onset of youth substance misuse

Program

- An activity facilitated by middle schoolers to highlight local youth data (YRBS), and then gave a brief presentation on the data and issues specific to the community
- Then had small group facilitated discussions around the data, strengthening community assets, improving local policy, and supporting healthy social norms

What We Learned

- A lot of nice feedback and folks following up afterwards to say that people knew about the event and it was talked about
- It is impactful to be able to bring a bunch of people together in a room to talk face-to-face
- The forums were well aligned with the recommendations that they were going to give to the city

If you want to give information and feedback to BPHC, here is a [link](#) to a form that you can submit if you live or are connected to Burlington.

Questions/Comments

- 1) In what ways has your work been connected to Burlington City government? Or other key players to the local government?

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- All city councilors were invited to attend both events. Our City Council/decision maker engagement is part of the process that they have outlined, but it is important to be strategic about when you engagement. That's not the space we are really in right now.
- 2) Mahat: During the work group, people brought up that the stretch between the Echo Center and the Skate Park is naturally substance free and it's a really nice thing to see and be able to have.
- 3) Stefani Hartsfield: We had a couple of our high schoolers attend the Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying workshop and they were so inspired by it.

Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention Coalition

Amy Brewer and intern from St. Michael's College Anna Comiskey.

Project that they had been wanting to do for a while in schools. They have partners in schools, mainly in guidance counselors and health classes, but having Anna on board enabled them to extend their reach into the athletics department and coaches.

The Hidden Opponent: Nicotine vs. Athletes

- Targeted 2 high schools in the region, BFA St. Albans and MVU
- Talked about understanding high use products, how Big Tobacco targets certain populations, the impact on overall health, data from the YRBS and Young Adult Survey, being a coach on the field, and resources for cessation

Provided information about how nicotine interacts with the brain, disrupting focus, decision-making, and impulse control. It also physically affects you by increasing heart rate, while also reducing oxygen flow. It decreases endurance, muscle fatigue, and longer healing times, all of which are critical for an athlete.

They talked to coaches about 5 things they can do

- 1) Avoid judgement
- 2) Reinforce support, letting them know that you are on their side
- 3) Establishing clear expectations within the team culture for a nicotine-free environment
- 4) Validate experience and challenges, letting athletes know it is okay to ask for help
- 5) Shared resources for cessation of tobacco that coaches might not have known

Anna also created posters that could be put up that talk about nicotine addiction, with QR codes that link to quitting resources

This process was difficult and had its challenges with engagement within high school athletic directors and coaches.

Looking Ahead

Next meeting: June 12th, 2025

10:00am-11:30am

NEW MEETING LINK: [Join the meeting now](#)

