

SERAC

SouthEastern Regional Action Council



Annual Report 2015



WORKING TOGETHER FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Table of Contents

About SERAC.....	2
Needs Assessment & Surveys.....	3
Youth Programs.....	4
Training.....	6
Local Prevention Efforts.....	8
Awards & Recognition.....	9

About SERAC

Who We Are

Southeastern Regional Action Council is a regional, community based, non-profit agency working to raise awareness, provide education, prevention and advocacy to youth, families and the entire community in order to reduce the impact of addiction and related risky behaviors.

Our Core Functions

- Assess the impact of addiction and other risky behaviors
- Identify gaps in services
- Support prevention, intervention and treatment efforts

Our Areas of Focus

Mental Health Promotion
Substance Abuse Prevention
Problem Gambling Awareness
Suicide Prevention

Our Communities

As a Regional Action Council we serve 20 towns in the southeastern region of Connecticut. These towns include: Bozrah, Colchester, East Lyme, Franklin, Groton, Griswold, Ledyard, Lisbon, Lyme, Montville, New London, North Stonington, Norwich, Old Lyme, Preston, Salem, Sprague, Stonington, Waterford, and Voluntown. Our efforts in gambling awareness, tobacco education, and suicide prevention extend to the entire eastern region of the state. We also continue to contract with communities across the state to provide needed services and support.

SERAC is funded by DMHAS, DMHAS Problem Gambling Services, and the Tobacco Trust Fund.

Needs Assessments & Surveys

Youth Surveys

Between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015 six youth surveys were conducted by SERAC. This included youth surveys on attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors regarding substance use as well as school climate. We would like to recognize the following the towns and their commitment to data collection this past year: East Lyme, Litchfield, Montville, Norwich, Windham, and Woodstock. SERAC will be compiling a new regional report for the 2014-2015 year and it will be available in early 2016.

Gambling Focus Groups

SERAC had senior focus groups (age 62 and older) around the region to better understand the impact of problem gambling among their peer group. We wanted seniors that did not attend senior trips to the casino. A few findings include:

- Most did not start gambling until after retirement.
- They go to forget loneliness, sickness and loss.
- All knew someone who was a problem gambler by the definition we gave.
- Most felt expansion of gambling would put added pressure on families (financial, technology, connectedness and local social services).
- They don't want the younger generation raised with it in their face.

Youth Programs

Adolescent Learning and Leadership Institute

2014-2015 represents the fourth year that SERAC has hosted ALLI, a regional leadership program. The goal of ALLI is to bring together students from across the Southeastern Connecticut to learn about current health issues and to develop leadership skills. Participants learn about the importance of prevention activities aimed at reducing substance abuse and other risky behaviors.

This year's program included a total of 69 students from the following schools: Griswold High School, Ledyard High School, Montville High School, Norwich Free Academy, Sachem School, Stonington High School, Waterford High School, and Wheeler High School.

Each of the 8 meetings included a prevention lesson modelled after the evidence-based prevention curriculum, Too Good for Drugs from the Mendez Foundation. Specific topics covered this year include: Media Portrayal of Alcohol and Marijuana, Conflict Resolution and Mediation, Healthy Decision Making, Effective Communication, Regional Data Review and Current Drug Trends.

This year, ALLI participants chose to plan and host a family-friendly fun run to raise awareness about the dangers of drug and alcohol use. On May 3, 2015 about 140 runners and walkers came out for the 1st Annual ALLI Fun Run / Walk at Dodd Stadium in Norwich. The planning and staging of the run, ALLI students had many opportunities to take leadership roles, to troubleshoot issues, to make budget decisions, and to negotiate compromises among competing interests. SERAC would like to **thank Dodd Stadium and the Connecticut Tigers** for their support of the event.

This past year ALLI members created a mission statement.

ALLI empowers young minds, educates them on contemporary issues, and engages them in leadership opportunities in their communities.

Below are quotes from ALLI members this past year:

“Prevention isn’t about simply knowledge, it’s about changing behavior.”

“ALLI gives me something incredibly valuable: a place to see what other kids my age think on issues I care about and the tools to handle them.”

“Learning how to make positive choices in life will go a long way. We learn not only how to help ourselves but influence others positively.”

“I have a unique opportunity to meet students from other schools, all here for a common cause: institute good decision making in our schools.”

SERAC 8th Annual Youth Forum

Dream It! Believe It! Live It!

On May 2, 2015 SERAC hosted the 8th Annual Youth Forum for middle school students across the region at Three Rivers Community College. This year 70 students attended from 6th, 7th, and 8th grade in the following 7 communities: Lyme/Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Waterford, Norwich, Montville, North Stonington, and New London.

Workshops this year included: friendship skills, internet safety, prescription drug abuse, energy drinks, and current drug trends.

Statewide Tobacco Education Program

This past year SERAC continued to offer the STEP program throughout the eastern region in CT.

Three hundred and fifty youth were trained in STEP during the 2014-2015 year. The following communities participated in this

initiative: Norwich, Griswold, Preston, Montville, East Lyme and Thompson. Thank you to Jennifer Buckley for coordinating the STEP trainings last year!

Financial Literacy and Gambling Awareness

Approximately 400 youth participated in financial literacy and gambling awareness programs through SERAC this past year. Thank you to the following partners who continue to support gambling awareness in our region: Chelsea Groton Bank, Montville High School, New London High School, and Connecticut College.

Training

6th Annual Prevention Conference

October 23, 2014 marked the 6th Annual Prevention Conference hosted by SERAC. This conference, which is a full day event focused on prevention, continues to grow year after year. Youth workers, school personnel, counselors and prevention professionals gathered at the Mystic Hilton to become educated on various prevention topics. Workshops included marijuana, gambling awareness, family factors, and underage drinking. Participants were welcomed with an opening session on Juvenile Justice.

SERAC would like to thank the following partners for a successful 6th conference: Glastonbury Youth Services, CT Youth Service Association, CT Council on Problem Gambling, and CT Association of Prevention Practitioners.

Workforce Development

This past fiscal year SERAC staff and members took part in several training opportunities to increase the prevention workforce. Staff became trainers in Inhalant Abuse Prevention, Adult Mental Health First Aid, and Psychological First/Post-Traumatic Stress Management.

This year 6 people received Gambling Prevention Specialist Certificates. Each completed 25 hours of gambling education and will incorporate the information into their community work. Receiving a certificate of completion are: Rayallen Bergman, Christine Miskell, and Angela Duhaime, David Brailey, Margaret Gilbert and Pamela Luketich.

This past year SERAC staff had the honor of presenting two workshops at the National Prevention Network Conference which was held in Hartford, CT. Below is information on the workshops that were presented.

Data-Based Planning for Effective Prevention

Michele Devine, Christine Miskell, David Brailey

This presentation reviewed the importance of using locally sourced data for prevention planning and how to overcome the some challenges of implementing local surveys.

Family Predictors of Underage Drinking in SE CT

Angela Rae Duhaime, M.A.

The presentation discussed the findings of research conducted in 2011 through the implementation of youth surveys during 2008-2010 with a sample size of 7,364 youth in grades 6th through 12th.

Community-wide Training

The following training were offered throughout our region to our dedicated partners:

- Question Persuade Refer
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Training for Intervention Procedures
- Youth Compliance Check Procedures
- Current Drug Trends
- Family Predictors of Underage Drinking in SE CT
- Data-Based Planning for Effective Prevention

Local Prevention Efforts

Regional Gambling Team

The regional gambling team worked on several projects including events, training, and awareness for Problem Gambling Week in March 2015. Members continue to work on integrating gambling awareness across the spectrum of services and prevention in southeastern CT.

Drug Free Communities Grant

SERAC was awarded a second round of Drug Free Communities funding this past October 1st, 2014. The DFC grant is made available through the Office of the National Drug Control Policy. The grant provides five years of prevention funding to support prevention work in the following 8 communities in southeastern CT: Bozrah, Preston, Griswold, Lisbon, Norwich, Montville, Sprague, and Voluntown.

Legislative Initiatives

In response to member concerns about lack of access to the opiate reversal agent, naloxone, SERAC created a taskforce to address the growing issue of heroin and overdose deaths. At the same time, a statewide taskforce was also looking into access issues across CT. Passed in early 2015, Public Act 15-98, *An Act Concerning Substance Abuse and Opioid Overdose Prevention*, increases the use of the prescription monitoring program, drug education, and access to naloxone through pharmacists.

Members also testified this past year in opposition to the expansion of legalized gambling in Connecticut. New laws allowing the introduction of keno into bars and restaurants go into effect in 2016. SERAC members will continue their efforts to raise awareness about problem gambling and associated risks. SERAC will also support the implementation of local environmental strategies through education on ordinances and policy.

Awards & Recognition

Outstanding Community Leadership

This year SERAC would like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Kay Eyberse, Coordinator of the Norwich Prevention Council. Kay has been coordinating the Norwich Prevention Council for since 2010. She has been with Norwich Youth and Family Services for over 34 years. Her dedication to collaboration with community partners has tremendously boosted the efforts of the council the past few years. Kay continues to work across departments and community agencies in order to maximize prevention efforts in the city of Norwich. Her contributions have resulted in several successful initiatives

Outstanding Coalition Involvement

SERAC would like to acknowledge the incredible coalition member involvement of the Voluntown Local Prevention Council. The council first started in 2005. The membership of the council reflects diverse and rich perspectives from youth, parents, school, law enforcement, and religious leaders. The mighty efforts of this small town proves that when we work together and make every effort to inclusive, great things can happen in our community. Through the council, Voluntown was able to establish a Youth Service Bureau in 2013 to increase the opportunities for youth and families in Voluntown.

SERAC Board Members

Ed Chmielewski
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Michelle Sylvestre
Stacey Lawton
Carly Higganbotham
Scott Trepenier
Ann Irr Dagle
John Duca
David Brailey

SERAC Staff

Executive Director – Michele Devine
Community Coordinator – Angela Rae Duhaime
Epidemiologist – Christine Miskell
Program Coordinator – Rayallen Bergman
Accounting – Julie Nazaro

SERAC Communities

Bozrah
Colchester
East Lyme
Franklin
Griswold
Groton
Ledyard
Lisbon
Lyme
Montville

New London
North Stonington
Norwich
Old Lyme
Preston
Salem
Sprague
Stonington
Voluntown
Waterford

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