



# Annual Report 2020-2021

# About SERAC...

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## Our Mission is ...

To engage and unite the individuals and communities of eastern CT around issues related to addictions and mental wellbeing across the behavioral health continuum through needs assessments, capacity building, and advocacy.

## Our Areas of Focus are...

Mental Health

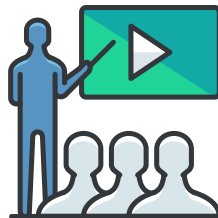
Substance Abuse

Problem Gambling Awareness

Suicide Prevention



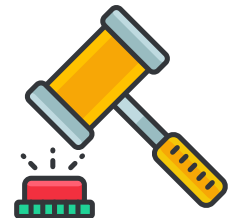
Assessment



Education



Advocacy



Action

For more information visit our website at [www.seracct.org](http://www.seracct.org)

# Table Of Contents

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- 04** Chairperson's Remarks
- 05** Data and Needs Assessment
- 06** Regional Behavioral Health Action
- 07** State Opioid Response Efforts
- 08** Partnerships for Success Grant
- 09** Mental Health Awareness Training Grant
- 10** Board Members & Staff
- 11** Funding and Campaigns

**A message from  
SERAC Chairperson,  
Christopher J. Sandford...**



# Chairperson's Remarks

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Each year the Chair of SERAC: Supporting and Engaging Resources for Action and Change, has the pleasure of reporting to the larger community about the successes throughout the year. While in previous years we have had the pleasure of sharing our impact and success in our region, this past year was a very unique year.

With the ongoing health reality, the impact on the region SERAC had has only increased and we have become more impactful. As we all know, SERAC plays a significant role in all our communities by engaging and uniting individuals and communities around issues related to addiction and mental well-being across the behavioral health continuum.

We all know we can do more by working together. Booker T. Washington said, "If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else." By lifting others, we are really benefiting ourselves and our entire community. Just by looking at the accomplishments of our many partners, I can assure you that our greatness comes from our larger community. We are all drawn to the work of helping people in need for many different reasons. No matter how we all ended up partnering with SERAC, we should all be proud of the work we are doing in this region. It is not easy, it is often thankless, and it is never-ending, but our efforts are very necessary.

On behalf of the SERAC Board and staff, I want to thank you for making our community better. You are doing the real work. Although our efforts have become significantly more difficult during a time when our country is grappling with social injustice and political strife during a world-wide pandemic, what you are doing matters now more than ever. Looking at all SERAC has accomplished over the last 31 years should fill you with pride. I know I am honored to be part of a group so deeply committed to improving the lives of others.

I also want to take this time to thank all the Board members who are currently serving or who have served in the past. Your dedication to SERAC and its mission is nothing short of an inspiration and a testament to what can happen when good people step forward to help.

Stay safe and be well,

Christopher J. Sandford, Chairperson  
SERAC Board of Directors

*A snapshot of the 2020-2021 regional assessment and priority planning process...*

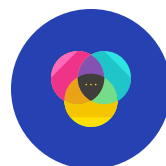


## Data and Needs Assessment

A core function of our mission is to conduct needs assessments and assist in the local collection of data to support data driven prevention planning at the state, regional, and town level. This year SERAC participated in the following data collection efforts: a needs assessment for the northeast region and priority report for the entire eastern region.



In the fall of 2020, SERAC conducted a regional needs assessment for the northeast region. Priority substances were identified as underage alcohol use, nicotine/Vaping, and marijuana use. The top risk factors include availability, access, and community/family norms.



In partnership with CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, SERAC completed the bi-annual priority process for eastern region 3. Over 70 key leaders participated in this process. Top priority issues for the next 2 years include suicide, depression, anxiety, trauma, alcohol, heroin/fentanyl, and prescription drugs.

To access the full reports please visit our website:

<https://www.seracct.org/technical-assistance/needs-assessment-and-surveys/>

*A glance at this year's  
prevention efforts in  
behavioral health across  
the region...*



## Regional Behavioral Health

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This past year, local prevention councils participated in many activities for vaping/electronic nicotine delivery systems across Eastern CT. This included a review of school policies, education on the new age restrictions, THC device testing, merchant education, banners for parks and recreations, and compliance checks!



SERAC resumed all regional team meetings online to encourage attendance through the 2020-2021 year. This included Team meetings for Local Prevention, Gambling Awareness, and Regional Suicide Advisory Boards.



March was Gambling Awareness Month! SERAC increased social media messages and information on the risks associated with underage gambling behaviors. We hosted a regional training, with Dr. Weigle, on gaming and its potential as a risk factor for developing gambling disorders. Messages were hosted on our local wellness televisions, gas station pumps, and senior centers.



Over 50 people were trained in the statewide Community Awareness Program. This is a behavioral health literacy program that provides education on suicide, substance abuse, mental health, and problem gambling.

A look at prescription drug  
misuse and opioid  
addiction...



## State Opioid Response Efforts



This past year we held over 25 trainings that provided individuals with the skills needed for suicide prevention and naloxone administration. These trainings resulted in the certification of almost 300 participants across the region.



Prevention and Wellness kits were distributed to over 500 senior citizens and 120 individuals with lived experience (catchment area council members). The kits included information on prescription drug misuse (Change the Script Campaign), opioid overdose awareness (Live LOUD), and various suggestions for healthy coping strategies.



Information was disseminated across the region through mass mailers, radio messages, and billboards to promote safe disposal of prescription medications. More than 2500 lbs of prescriptions medications were collected at various sites in the eastern region in October 2020 and April 2021.



SERAC provided 100 individuals with re-entry bags to support their recovery. This included amenities for personal care, naloxone, and information on local treatment, recovery, and support services along with Change the Script and Live LOUD campaign materials.

*A glance at this year's  
initiatives on suicide  
prevention efforts in the  
region...*



# Partnerships for Success

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The Partnerships for Success Grant- Strategic Prevention Framework (PFS-SPF) is a 5 year infrastructure grant dedicated to building capacity and readiness in the Quiet Corner of CT.



21 for A Reason launched a full media and marketing campaign to highlight the legal age for alcohol, nicotine, and vaping products. This included a new website with information for youth, parents, and businesses. This initiative included billboards, radio messages, print ads in shopper's guide, resident mailers and information packets for seller/servers. The seller/server component included liquor stickers, counter mats, table tents, window clings, ID guide books, and shoppers bags.



Prevention Training was offered for the region in 2020-2021 through virtual platforms. We surpassed the annual goal for training attendance through providing 2 sessions on Asset Development through the SEARCH Institute and a regional session on marijuana prevention and public policy.



This year staff became trained in the evidence based program, Communities That Care! This process will assist our northern communities in identifying risk and protective factors that are unique to prevention in rural communities.



Efforts to decrease stigma around mental health and increase access to treatment and support.



## Mental Health Awareness Training



Over the course of the grant, 170 individuals were trained in evidence based mental health awareness training. This has included Mental Health First Aid and Question, Persuade, Refer for Suicide Prevention. In addition, more than 350 individuals were connected to services by participants who received training from SERAC.



SERAC partnered with Riverside Trauma Center in Massachusetts to increase access to online training during the pandemic. Four sessions were made available online to raise awareness about trauma informed



Two new staff members became certified instructors of Youth Mental Health First Aid in 2021! Congratulations Deborah Walker and Jennifer Buckley!



In 2021-2021 SERAC expanded social media messages to reduce stigma on accessing services and treatment. The *Bring Light to Mental Health* Campaign was distributed through bus advertisement, billboards, resident mailings, and public service announcements for SERAC Community Wellness Television Networks.

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***Chairperson***

**Christopher Sandford**  
**Woodstock Academy**

***Vice-Chairperson***

***Brenna Jaskiewicz, M.S.***

***Licensed Professional***

***Counselor***

***Treasurer***

**Kate Alves**

**Chelsea Groton Bank**

***Secretary***

**Stacey Lawton**

**SCADD**

# Board of Directors

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**Members**

David Brailey  
Mitchell College

Oliver Jones  
Community Member

Mark Juhola  
Killingly Police Department

Melinda Smith  
Thompson Public Schools

# Staff Members

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Michele Devine  
Executive Director

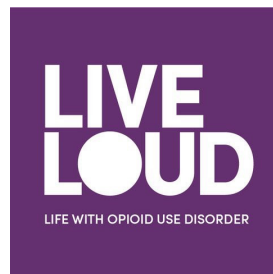
Angela Rae Duhaime  
Associate Director

Jennifer Buckley  
Regional Prevention Specialist

Deborah Walker  
Program Assistant

Patrick Boyle  
Program Assistant

Brenda Thibeault  
Bookkeeper



Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

