

Annual Report



*Working together
for community
change!*

SERAC Remarks

The past year at Southeastern Regional Action Council has been unique and transformative in shaping our mission and future direction. As with many nonprofits, SERAC continues to brainstorm ways for sustainability and growth. We constantly seek new opportunities and partnerships to enhance a local community based approach to prevention and wellness.

As SERAC moves forward in the upcoming years we hope to expand our partnerships and prevention initiatives as a community based agency which raises awareness, provides education, prevention and advocacy. We hope to reach even more youth, families, and residents in order to reduce the impact of addiction and related risky behaviors.

2

SERAC is deeply committed to supporting prevention efforts at the local town level while continuing to help develop a regional network of resources and collaboration. We believe in an integrated and comprehensive approach to prevention that allows for creativity and innovation. We hope that these coordinated efforts will help sustain Southeastern CT as leaders for community wide prevention.

This year SERAC worked with Web Solutions to rejuvenate our website and streamline information in a more useful way. Please visit our new website www.sectrac.org and check out our services and initiatives! You can also sign up for the SERAC email list on our new website.

We are also excited to announce that SERAC has been awarded a Drug Free Communities Grant (2014) to support prevention work dedicated to 8 communities in Southeastern CT for the next five years.

The following annual report highlights the accomplishments of SERAC during the 2013 -2014 fiscal year in the areas of:

- Substance Abuse Prevention
- Gambling Awareness
- Suicide Prevention
- Regional Data
- Youth Leadership

Thank you for all your support and dedication!

Michele Devine, M.A. Executive Director

Angela Rae Duhaime, M.A. Community Coordinator

Substance Abuse Prevention

Drug Endangered Children

This past year SERAC collaborated with CT State and local Police, and the Department of Children and Families to launch trainings in several communities on the importance of Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Teams. The collaborative team approach is intended to increase communication among sectors within the community serving children and families at risk for drug endangerment. The approach is intended to increase proactive opportunities for early identification and intervention. Communities in Southeastern CT that participated in the training opportunities include: Ledyard, Montville, Groton, Norwich, Mohegan Tribe, and Voluntown. Every police officer in the towns of Montville and Ledyard were trained on the DEC approach. Other community members who also participated in training include staff from Department of Children and Families and UCFS, local school personnel and human and youth service organizations.

5th Annual Prevention Conference

November 1st 2013 marked the 5th 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 school climate, resiliency, marijuana laws, mental health and gambling awareness. Participants were welcomed with an opening session on Drug Endangered Children.

Prescription Drug Awareness

A campaign created in collaboration with CT Prevention Network with funding supported by Purdue Pharma highlighted the importance of educating parents and community members on safe disposal of medications. Information was also disseminated to realtors about the importance of secured medications in open housing events. Newspaper print insertions and parent rack cards were distributed in the late spring of 2013. Towns still continue to take part in DEA

prescription take back programs as well market individual boxes.

Call to Action: Opioids

On May 14th 2014, SERAC hosted a community forum to address the misuse of prescription drugs and opioid abuse/overdose. This meeting was in response to the growing need for community education and concern for prevention of heroin overdose deaths in CT. Approximately 40 community members from across the region attended the forum where SERAC presented data on the use and treatment rates for prescription drug and heroin use. Attendees at the forum also spent time brainstorming and networking priorities and local needs for Southeastern CT.

DMHAS Bi-Annual Regional Priority Report

This spring SERAC participated in the bi-annual priority process for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. In partnership with the Eastern Regional Mental Health Board and Northeast Communities Against Substance Abuse (NECASA), several focus groups and community needs surveys were conducted. Information provided guidance

for an Eastern Region Priority Report highlighting strengths and barriers in prevention and treatment for substance abuse and mental health services.

TIPS (Responsible Seller Server Training)

SERAC continues to provide TIPS Training (Training for Intervention ProcedureS) for alcohol sellers and servers. Responsible alcohol sales are vital to community prevention of underage drinking. This past year in collaboration with Groton Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (GASP) and Ledyard Safe Teens Coalition (LSTC) four TIPS trainings were hosted in the region (1 off premise, 3 on premise). Fifty four individuals were certified in TIPS by SERAC this past year. For more information on providing TIPS training in your community please visit our website.

Problem Gambling Prevention

SERAC continues to work in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to increase

awareness about the risks associated with gambling addiction. This past year approximately 200 youth participated in a youth survey on attitudes and perceptions regarding gambling in Southeastern CT. SERAC also organized adult focus groups to discuss the impact that gambling has on individuals and the larger community. SERAC also helped launch a statewide community survey on gambling. Approximately 100 people took the survey in our region. Thank you to all who took the time to complete the survey! Results will be made available in the fall of 2014.

This year SERAC also coordinated a Regional Team for Gambling Awareness. This team met quarterly throughout the 2013-2014 year to discuss specific issues related to the Eastern Region. Members of this team include UCFS, DMHAS, Chelsea Groton Bank, SCADD, and CT Council on Problem Gambling. Through this network individuals are offered training opportunities related to gambling. Three individuals received a Problem Gambling Awareness Certificate this past year! They were: David Brailey, Pamela Luketich, Margaret Gilbert. Each received

25 hours of gambling specific training through workshops, conference attendance or regional meetings.

We are currently looking for volunteers who want to join our Regional Team and receive training opportunities. For more information on how to get involved please call us 860-848-2800 or visit our website.

Suicide Prevention

SERAC completed the requirements for a Suicide Prevention Grant from the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services this past summer in 2014. The grant provided support to 8 towns/organizations (Old Lyme/Lyme, Groton, Montville, Ledyard, Mansfield, UCONN, Norwich, Shiloh Baptist church in New London) to implement local campaigns, training, community and campus supports, and youth awareness opportunities.

Approximately 75 community members were trained in Connect Suicide Prevention Community/Campus Program (NAMI, NH) in the Eastern Region of CT.

Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid is a public education program that helps identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The Youth Mental Health First Aid program introduces participants to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents. The program builds understanding of the importance of early intervention and teaches individuals how to help a youth in crisis or experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. The course teaches participants the risk factors and warning signs of a variety of mental health challenges common among adolescents, including anxiety, depression, psychosis, eating disorders, AD/HD, disruptive behavior disorders, and substance use disorder. Participants do not learn to diagnose, or how to provide any therapy or counseling – rather, participants learn a core five-step action plan to support an adolescent developing signs and symptoms of mental illness or in an emotional crisis.

This past year Michele and Angela conducted 3 locally based Mental Health First Aid

Trainings (2 youth and 1 adult). Approximately 75 people in Southeastern CT were certified in MHFA by SERAC.

Regional Youth Data

In April 2014 SERAC released an updated Regional Youth Data profile. The full report can be found on our website. Below are some highlights from the full report:

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among youth in the region.

- 35% of youth report **ever** having used alcohol **in their lifetime**.
- 15% of youth report having used alcohol **in the past 30 days**.

About one-half of youth surveyed (54%) **strongly disapprove** of someone their age having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day.

Among youth who do report having used alcohol in their lifetime:

- The most common source of alcohol is **friends**.

- 61% report **ever** having consumed 4 or more drinks in a single occasion in their **lifetime**.
- 28% report having had 4 or more drinks in a single occasion in the **past 30 days**.

Marijuana is the most commonly abused illicit drug among youth in the region.

- 22% of youth report **ever** having used marijuana **in their lifetime**.
- 12% of youth report having used marijuana in the **past 30 days**.
- The most common source of marijuana is **friends**.

Overall, 14% of youth in the region report **ever** having **misused a prescription medication** in order to get high. The most commonly abused type of prescription medication is **pain medication**.

- 10% of youth report **ever** having **misused** prescription pain medications to get high.

Gambling

- Overall, about 19% of youth report **ever** having gambled.
- 8% of youth report that someone in their **family** has gambled so much that it created problems at home, at work or with friends.

Among youth who report ever having gambled in their lifetime:

- About 5% report ever having thought they might have a problem with gambling or having been told that they might.

Comparisons

In general, lifetime and recent substance use rates among youth in the region tend to be similar to or lower than reported national rates.

Between 2006 and 2013:

- Recent use of cigarettes and alcohol tended to decrease while recent use of marijuana remained constant.
- Perception of harm associated with marijuana use tended to decrease dramatically.
- Perceived parental disapproval of cigarette,

alcohol and marijuana use have all tended to remain constant or to increase.

Youth Leadership

7th Annual Youth Forum

On May 6th, 2013 SERAC hosted the 7th Annual Youth Forum at the Mystic Hilton. Our annual theme: Dream It! Believe It! Live It! was continued in order to motivate and empower over 100 middle school students to make healthy choices. This year workshops emphasized stress reduction and positive coping skills. Students participated in sessions that included youth empowerment, accepting diversity, Zentangle, Legos and Team Building, Tobacco Prevention., Energy Drink Awareness, Yoga, and Creative Painting. Thank you to the teachers, administrators, counselors and youth workers for allowing the youth to be a part of this special day. Thank you to the following towns for providing their students with such a great opportunity: Ledyard, Norwich, New London, LOL, Voluntown, Waterford, Montville, North Stonington, and East Hampton.

Adolescent Learning & Leadership Institute (ALLI)

SERAC kicked off the 3rd Year of ALLI in October 2013.

Participating high schools last year were from the following towns: Colchester, Norwich, Griswold, Stonington, Ledyard, North Stonington, Montville, and Waterford. Approximately 55 students were enrolled in the ALLI program (2013 – 2014). Sessions throughout the year included Jennifer Walsh on Youth Leadership, MADD on the Power of YOU(th), Anne Wernau on Healthy Relationships, and a session on public policy and marijuana. Students presented points and counterpoints on the issues related to medical marijuana policy and marijuana addiction. ALLI youth members continue to amaze SERAC staff and volunteers with their incredible levels of participation, engagement, and initiative.

The third year of ALLI concluded in May 2014. Students presented creative projects to highlight awareness on the reasons youth choose not to drink alcohol. Projects included billboards, t-shirts, social media outlets, community events, and public service announcements.

Awards and Recognitions

Outstanding Community Leadership

Barbara Lockhart

Barbara Lockhart is one of the longest standing supporters and members of Southeastern Regional Action Council. Her involvement with the organization can be detailed back over 10 years. Barb has helped to support SERAC through many transitions and opportunities for growth through the years, beginning back when the organization was Citizens Task Force on Addictions. She is a dedicated citizen and parent first and foremost with passion and energy for making changes happen. Through her role with CT Youth Services she commits her time endlessly for improving the lives of young adults and families in Southeastern CT. Barb's role with SERAC as a Board Member, LPC Coordinator, and local champion goes well beyond outstanding throughout the years. She has been **essential** to our existence: past, present, and future.



Outstanding Coalition Involvement

Norwich Prevention Council (Suicide Alliance)

The Norwich Prevention Council has continued to evolve for almost 15 years to meet the needs of the community and sustain their efforts in prevention. This past year membership blossomed once again to rally behind the effort to increase suicide prevention in town. Over 300 individuals (youth and adults) were trained in QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) this past year in Norwich alone. The council continues to work on a highly collaborated effort with the following organizations: Norwich Free Academy, Norwich Technical High School, Norwich Public Schools, Otis Library, Norwich Police Department, Norwich Youth and Family Services, BullyBusters, Juvenile Justice, Adult Probation, Department of Children and Families, and UCFS. Congratulations to the Norwich Prevention Council for their exemplary example of a comprehensive community

coalition! Special acknowledgements to the current coordinator Kay Eyberse and the coalition's longest standing member Joanne Zenowitz.

Dedicated Member Acknowledgements

Former Members:

Lisa Cook
Kerensa Mansfield
Michelle Hamilton
Sarah Butterfield
Christopher Sandford

Special thank you to the long standing Prevention Committee Members:

Kate Sikorski
Kay Eyberse
Jennifer Martino
Tony Mollica
Kimberly Grant
Karen Fischer
Missy Garvin

Employee Acknowledgements:

SERAC welcomed **Julie Nazarro** this past year to our team. Julie assists with the accounting and fiscal reporting for SERAC. She is a resident of Montville. Julie's skills and pleasant personality have been a welcome addition to our staff, not to mention her incredible love for nature and horses!

We would also like to welcome **Rayallen Bergman** back to our team at SERAC. After living and working in Rhode Island for the past few years, Ray has returned to CT and will be assisting SERAC in youth leadership programs across various areas of the organization. We are excited to have Ray back and look forward to the upcoming year!

We would also like to thank **Susan Keach** for her hard work and time spent with us at SERAC. We wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors and retirement.

SERAC Board of Directors

Chairman- *Pamela Luketich*, Chelsea Groton Bank
Vice Chair- *Michelle Sylvestre*, Dept. of Consumer Protection & *Carly Higgibotham*-School Psychologist, North Stonington
Secretary - *Barbara Lockhart*, Montville Youth Services
Treasurer – OPEN

Stacey Lawton – SCADD
Scott Trepanier- Principal Hickory Street School Norwich, CT
William Melanson- Retired DOC and National Guard
David Brailey - Mitchell College/ University of New Haven

11

SERAC Staff

Executive Director – Michele Devine
Community Coordinator – Angela Rae Duhaime
Epidemiologist – Christine Miskell
Program Coordinator – Rayallen Bergman
STEP Coordinator – Jennifer Buckley
Accounting – Julie Nazarro

***Thank you to all the communities in Southeastern CT for
the excellent work you do!***

Bozrah	New London
Colchester	North Stonington
East Lyme	Norwich
Franklin	Old Lyme
Griswold	Preston
Groton	Salem
Ledyard	Sprague
Lisbon	Stonington
Lyme	Voluntown
Montville	Waterford