

Western District Coordinating Council for Public Health

Meeting Minutes

September 24th, 2020

Online via Zoom

Present: Corrie Brown, Allie Burke, Emilee Caradonna, Cherie Cates, Michelle Coulliard, Christine Hufnagel, Fatuma Hussein, Michael Hatch, Laure Johnson, Katherine Lary, Holly Lasagna, Joanne Lebrun, Sabrina LoPizzo, Nate Miller, Jamie Paul, Andrea Richards, Laurie Soucy, and Shawn Yardley

Introductions: Nate Miller welcomed participants and opened the floor for participants to introduce themselves on Zoom.

Participant Updates Around Covid-19: Nate Miller opened discussion to members to discuss challenges and successes, goal, and other updates since the pandemic. Nate also noted that his Western DCC Chair Term will finish December 2020 so that position will be available.

Participants largely shared the change in the way their work looks now – from working from home and limited face-to-face interactions, to helping the communities virtually and over the phone. Successes included maintaining work within the community and even expanding to people who weren't reached before. Many highlighted the amazing work being done within the community and the dedicated staff members who contribute to the public health needs in Western District.

Those who shared staffing updates were mainly positive – highlighting maintaining employees or even expanding, however some participants have experienced direct staffing impact due to the Coronavirus.

Members highlighted the increased food distribution efforts, the campaign to catch-up on vaccinations, new various support systems in place, and noted Maine's significant racial disparities during the pandemic. For more information on programs impacting Western District - the Family First Act, Community Concepts' workforce development program, and the Choice Neighborhood effort: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/family-first-act.shtml>, <https://www.ccimaine.org/workforce-development> and <https://www.lewistonmaine.gov/933/Choice-Neighborhood-Grant>

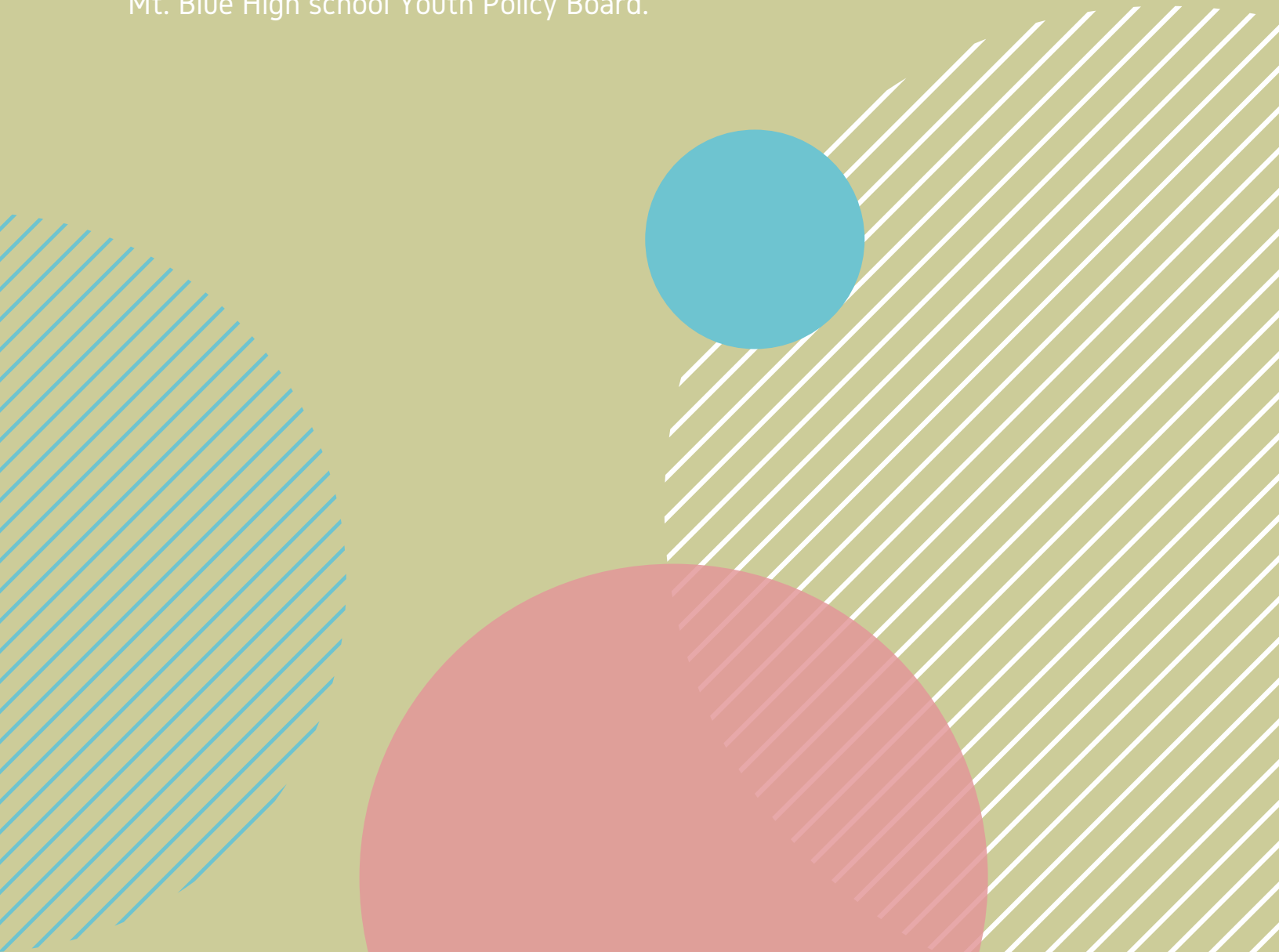
Challenges were met with creative adjustments, and some members asked if there is anything that could be improved within their organizations, and if there are any noticeable gaps since many services have moved virtual.

Local Public Health Systems Assessment (LPHSA): Before Coronavirus had hit Maine, we had participated in the first of a series of LPHSA meetings. Due to the pandemic, is State-wide assessment has been put on hold.

Next DCC Meeting is scheduled for December 18th, 2020. Please stay tuned for meeting details.

HERE GROUP RESEARCH REPORT 2019-2020

Mt. Blue High school Youth Policy Board.



HERE GROUP

BACKGROUND & TOPIC

Here Group started 3 years ago at Mt. Blue High school by a student who was fed up with bullying and the way it made people feel. Quickly the group grew from one to up to six per meeting. The group focuses on anti-bullying , and how to make school a safer space for all. Originally a youth taking action group, they started reviewing the schools bullying policy and took it from there!

The topic of anti-bullying was left broad to tackle the other factors involved when someone is bullied. Our group felt it was necessary to talk about mental health while learning more about bullying and how it affects someone's wellbeing. Our research expands from personal experience, MIYHS data, studies, and more!



RESEARCH PART 1: MIYHS DATA.

Through group discussion the group felt some data might not be reported accurately with fear of retaliation. While school feels like a relatively safe space the group felt the number would be higher if there were more drills on school shootings, since it was such a big topic in the news. It was also discussed that the percentage of students who reported bullying off and online seemed low based on personal experience. Group was also shocked to see only 35% of students reported in the past 12 months of feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities. Group felt more students than not have talked about experiencing sadness or hopelessness. The data collected is from Franklin County high schools not just Mt. Blue.

85.7% of students reported feeling safe at my school.

23.9% said in the past 12 months they've been bullied on school property.

20.1% reported during the past 12 months they have been electronically bullied.

RESEARCH PART 2: MAINE'S ANTI- BULLYING LAWS & POLICIES.

After reviewing Mt. Blue's bullying and harassment policies it was clear to see that the language and terms were very confusing as were the general state policies. Recommendations to follow, but advisor (Sabrina) would share our views to state's bullying task force who created their own recommendations similar to ours. We hope to have more collaboration in the future.

POLICY FINDINGS.

- 5 pages extremely lengthy
- consequences for policy violation are unfit and unfair. Doesn't have an affect or doesn't ever get taken as seriously as it should.
- LGBTQ+ rights are missing.
- confusing language/ hard to read.

PHOTOVOICE PROJECT.



"I let what bothers me eat away at me. It's hard to nourish my body while having anxiety and depression."
- Franklin County high school student

"Bullies make me feel like I'm on a bus going down a back bumpy road."
- Franklin County high school student



PHOTOVOICE PROJECT CONTINUED.



"It's hard to stay strong when I am trapped in my own mind & body."
- Franklin County high school student

"When going through personal stuff during school, and trying to work on academic work makes it difficult to get through the day. The school supports students ideas, but we need more services like the SIC. It's a safe, calming place filled with people who genuinely care."
- Franklin County high school student



Policy Recommendations & Future Steps.

Recommendations:

- Staff training around bullying and ways to support students
- Language change in policy
- Restorative measures for consequences
- Resources available and widely known

Future Steps:

- Work with SRO to share recommendations and find solutions
- Peer to peer trainings to help support students being bullied
- More events like the previous karaoke night, and tabling at lunch with bracelets & information.