

The Partnership Convening
Friday, November 7, 2025
10:00 - 11:30 AM ET



Meeting Minutes

This convening focused on the critical interplay between youth mental health and substance use, underscoring the key reminder **that for many young people, substance use is a search for relief, a way to quiet the “noise” and solve immediate problems - not primarily a pursuit of pleasure.** We walked away with tangible strategies to:

- Avoid stigma in conversations.
- Encourage choices that reduce harm.
- Promote healthier decision-making.
- Factor in the profound impact of past traumas..

Attendees (46): Amanda Merrill (NH DHHS), Amy Michaels (Greater Portsmouth Youth Wellness Coalition), Ann Crawford (NH DHHS), Ashley Wheeler (Strafford County Public Health Network), Barbara Holstein, Becky Pearson, Brooklyn Mellett, Carol Furlong, CJ Vinas (Keene Youth Services), Corinne Shea Institute for Behavior and Health), Dakota Burrill, Dan Andrus (Foundation for Healthy Communities), Danielle Crowe (Greater Nashua Prevention Coalition), Dawn Shimberg, Deryn Smith (Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center), Desiree Trevino, Elizabeth Duffy (NH DHHS BDAS), Elizabeth Mazige (Rochester School District), Emma Scott (Makin' It Happen), Erika Alusic-Bingham (Community Action Partnership), Heather Inyart (Media Power Youth), Jackie Hafner, Janelle Havens (Makin' It Happen), Jen Thomas (Granite United Way), Jennifer Landon, John Webb (Goffstown High School), Jordan Havens (Makin' It Happen), Jorian Gallucci (Riverbend Community Mental Health Center), Kandyce Mohan (NH DHHS BDAS), Kate Frey (New Futures), Kate MacDonald (Granite United Way), Kristie Curtis (Recovery Friendly Workplace), Lidia Martinez, Marissa Carlson (NH Teen Institute), Mary Calhoun (Portsmouth School District), Meghan Stewart (Pinetree Institute), Melissa Allen (Shaker Regional School District), Monica DeRico (NH DHHS Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program), Paul McNeil, Randy Herk (Reality Check), Sarah Cain (New Futures), Savitri Horrigan (Nashua Community Services Department), Terri Alford, Tricia Brannen (YouthWell NH), Tristan Anderson (Seacoast Community Diversion Program), Vicki Harris (Dover Coalition for Youth/Dover Youth to Youth)

JSI: Julie Yerkes, Martha Bradley, Christina Curell, Audrey Foxx, Hannah Owen, Ryan Barry, Amy Daniels

[Please complete our meeting evaluation here.](#) CEUs and attendance certificates are available for those who fill out the evaluation form.

[Watch the recording here.](#)

1. Welcome (Julie Yerkes)

2. Uncovering the Connection: The Link Between Mental Health and Substance Use in Adolescence (Jorian Gallucci)

- Jorian Gallucci, a Family Support Specialist at Riverbend Community Mental Health Center, presented on the interconnected relationship between adolescent mental health and substance use. She explained how mental health issues can lead to substance use as a form of self-medication, and conversely, how substance use can exacerbate mental health problems. Jorian highlighted the developmental vulnerabilities of adolescents, noting that 90% of substance use disorders have roots in teenage years, and discussed the importance of early intervention. She emphasized that the opposite of addiction is not always sobriety but connection, and shared strategies like the 7 Challenges program to support youth in addressing both mental health and substance use issues.
- Jorian discussed the impact of substance use on young people's brains and the importance of early intervention. She emphasized the role of connection as a natural antidote to addiction, highlighting how positive human connections can activate the same dopamine reward pathways as drugs. Jorian also stressed the significance of building relationships with young people to help them develop healthy coping skills and seek help when needed.
- Jorian discussed the importance of schools in addressing substance use among adolescents, emphasizing the need for universal screening, integrated care, and restorative practices instead of punitive measures. She highlighted the importance of building a culture of support through social-emotional learning, trauma-informed training for staff, and harm reduction education. Jorian also stressed the need to meet adolescents where they are, rather than pushing them to quit substances abruptly, and to focus on building protective factors such as strong attachments, clear boundaries, and access to mental health care.

3. Partner Updates

- **Prevention Certification Board of New Hampshire**
 - The Board will be holding regular office hours on the first Friday of each month from 11:30am - 12:30pm. The office hours will take place via Zoom and can be accessed using the link below. Come meet the Board and get your questions about CPS certification answered!
 - Next office hour session is **December 5th**
 - Office Hour Zoom Link:
<https://jsi.zoom.us/j/93824998464?pwd=Z1orMDdnZHZYWnhaNHVzNOowcHlhcz09>
- **Carroll County**
 - 1 middle school is exploring Getting to Y.
 - The local Youth Center has asked Jen Thomas to host a Prevention Night.
 - Carroll County Veteran's Coalition is beginning to focus on prevention and substance use disorder in the service member and family world. The Coalition is looking for partners to further this work.
- **Institute for Behavior and Health**
 - Check out the [One Choice website](#) for information and resources on primary prevention. The goal of primary prevention is One Choice: no use of any alcohol, nicotine, cannabis/THC, or other drugs by youth before age 21 for reasons of health.
- **NH Teen Institute**
 - There are 1 - 2 spots available for each of the [Leaders in Prevention Weekends](#) for middle school students.
 - Registration is open for the [Summer Leadership Program](#) for high school students!
- **New England High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)**
 - Virtual training on **Friday, November 14th at 1pm** with the Stanford REACH Lab on the [Triangulum of Nicotine, Vaping, and Cannabis](#)
- **YouthWell New Hampshire**
 - YouthWell is creating a youth mental health support app with resources for youth, parents/caregivers, and educators. Please complete their survey at this [link](#) or reach out to Tricia Brennan for an interview at tbrannen@youthwellnh.org.

4. Partnership Updates

- **2026 Partnership Convenings - [REGISTER TODAY](#)**

- **January 9th (10:00am - 11:30am)** - Violence Prevention: Regulating Big Emotions, Managing Anger and Preventing Dating Violence
 - **March 6th (10:00am - 1:00pm)** - Beyond the Lecture: Building Trust to Guide Youth Conversations About Cannabis Use
 - **Date To Be Announced** - Understanding the YRBS Data for Impact in Your Community
- **[NEW Get Ahead Toolkits](#)**
 - Get Ahead Prevention and Early Intervention Toolkit: School Mental Health
 - Get Ahead Prevention and Early Intervention Toolkit: Cannabis
- **[The Power of Prevention Podcast](#)** is in Season 2
 - Latest episode: [Lessons for Every Age: A Unique Partnership with Parents, Schools and the Community to Prevent Child Abuse](#) with Elizabeth Rizzitano, a dedicated advocate and community outreach professional with Thrive Survivor Support Center.
- **[Youth Vaping Prevention Resources for Educators](#)**
 - Access free eLearning modules, videos, and a community vaping prevention toolkit
 - Hosted on QuitWorksNH.org
 - **eLearning Module:** Effective Alternatives to Suspension: Promoting Student Wellbeing
 - **Video:** Moving Beyond Suspension – A Better Approach to Discipline
- **[The Partnership Prevention Blog](#)**
 - Recent blog posts:
 - [We Should Be Able to Agree on Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Prevention](#)
 - [Building Belonging: How Connection Helps Prevent Youth Substance Use](#)
 - [The Ripple Effect: How Your Dry January Impacts Family, Friends, and Community](#)
- Hosting an event? We can help you promote it! Let us know by [connecting with us on our website](#).
- [Sign up for The Partnership's eblast](#)