



Mission: Prevent and reduce youth substance use and abuse in the communities of Madison, Chatham Borough and Chatham Township through collaboration, education and community-wide change.

Madison Chatham Coalition Membership Meeting

February 18, 2025- 9:30 am In-Person/Hybrid Meeting

Meeting Minutes/Summary

Attendees:

Allison Bardon (MCC Director), Vicky Bukey (PCP Clinician), Jen Caldwell (Drew Center for Civic Engagement), Rozella Clyde (citizen), Brian Colatrella (Chatham PD), Sam Dooley (Morris County Sexual Trauma Center), Jon Finocchiaro (Madison PD), Christine McIntyre (PCP Director), Ed Stoner (VP of Advancement YMCA), Gabe Suarez (MCC staff), Elyse Wheatley (MCC staff),

9:30 Meeting is called to order (Allison Bardon- MCC Director)

- Allison opens the meeting by thanking everyone for coming. She asks everyone to introduce themselves with their name and sector.
- She starts by explaining that we have a busy meeting of MCC updates, but we'll start first with sector updates. Ed Stoner of the YMCA explains they hired a new director to help coordinate the community needs assessment.
- *Rozella Clyde asks if MCC funding is being impacted by government changes. Allison explains that we will discuss updates with that later in the meeting. Rozella explains that the League of Women Voters are not a member of the coalition, but they are non-partisan, and they want people to be alert and informed.*

9:34 MCC Updates (Allison Bardon- MCC Director)

- Allison explains that there have been an ever-changing situation at the receiving end of a federal grant. MCC receives a grant administered by the Office of Drug Control Policy which the CDC manages. When the executive order was signed, the management system where we draw funds from was down. Our funds were authorized in September for the fiscal year, which is \$125,000 deposited into the payment management system. The Y covers our expenses, and they are reimbursed from that grant. That system was completely down when the executive order was signed. The next day, access was reinstated with the court order.
- Our project manager and our grant specialist had scheduled trainings, but they were cancelled. Allison shares she reached out with questions to the project manager, and they replied that the CDC was not allowed to give any mass communication. Allison has been talking to other coalition directors around the country, and they have all been receiving the same answers.
- Allison says the grant continuation application that we complete to receive our grant next year is due March 11. The training was to provide instructions on changes made to the application, but that was cancelled and there has been no communication since then.
- She continues that all federal employees are required to be back in the office. MCC's project officer is located in Denver, so Allison does not know if she is still employed by the CDC. Project officers are regional and manage all 23 New Jersey coalitions.
- Allison explains that the Monday after the funding freeze, MCC was scheduled to go to CADCA, which contracts with the ONDCP and the CDC to provide technical support to coalitions. This

year, there was no one from the CDC or NIH. It was frustrating because no one was willing to talk about it or answer questions.

- Allison shares that there is Capitol Hill Day where coalitions go to meet with senators and advocate for continued funding. Typically, there are scheduled appointments to lobby, but this year there were no appointments. They were told to show up and knock on doors. They ended up meeting Cory Booker, Mark Kelly, Gavin Newsom, and a few other people. She explains that the atmosphere was very different, and it was very dull. Substance abuse is a bipartisan issue, and people are normally very receptive to it. Cory Booker was nice to talk to.
- It is unclear what will happen with this grant program and so far, there have been no words of change. There have been cuts by the CDC, but it seems to be more on the investigative side, like with diseases. The push back on the federal freeze was an issue, but these funds are authorized for the year. Then it becomes a question of whether funds are authorized for the rest of our grant term technically. The best strategy for the coalition right now is to act as if everything is normal.
- Allison explains that MCC received notice to stop DEI efforts, which is in complete juxtaposition of what the CDC says. When the DFC grant moved to the CDC, they made a big effort to turn efforts toward being more culturally competent and taking more consideration of groups affected disproportionately by health disparities. We post awareness often on our social media, and she wonders if the grant is in jeopardy if we continue that. However, a pending lawsuit allowed them to reinstate their DEI policies for the time being.
- *Rozella mentions how we have received this grant for 10 years and throughout that period we are supposed to be looking for continued funding. She asks where we currently stand in that situation.*
- Allison answers that many of the grants we are looking for continued funding are also in jeopardy. The Y is our fiscal agent, and the CEO of the Y made it clear that MCC would be okay. We are lucky because most coalitions do not have that type of relationship with their fiscal agent. We are and will continue to look further into state grants and private foundation grants. Allison asks Sam Dooley if they have been dealing with any similar problems.
- *Sam said they are in a different position, but they have found a lot of information and resources have been taken down regarding gender-based violence.*
- Allison asks Sean and Jen if Drew has been affected.
- Sean explains that funding has not been impacted, but students have been affected. Many students had internships set up, and their offers were rescinded so now they have to find alternatives. Some policies and community partners have been impacted as well.
- Allison reiterates that we just need to keep working. She adds that everything we do as a coalition is recorded and quantified, so we can easily show our impact. She hopes that the next meeting has more updates.
- *Sean asks if funding is taken away, are there still allowed to be meetings?* Allison explains that if people continue to show up, we can meet.
- Rozella adds that it is crucial to have stories and anecdotes to further illustrate the impact.
- Allison explains that they were told to let the dust settle, which isn't really helpful because we need to share with our state legislators for them to advocate for the funding.
- Rozella suggests using culturally responsive now to replace DEI to show meeting people where they are and supporting them. She explains that things will be okay, and we just have to continue to work and not be intimidated by the changes. People support us because of the mission, not because of the money.

10:04 MCC Event Updates (MCC Staff- Allison Bardon, Gabe Suarez, Elyse Wheatley)

- Allison asks Gabe to give a recap on what MCC has been doing.
- Gabe says last week they had a mindfulness and coloring table for the Rosettes with Project Community Pride. Christine adds that the Rosette coaches asked that we have mindfulness events for them occasionally, and it went very well. This tabling was focused on coloring, and they discussed taking time for themselves other than training and school. It went very well, and the kids really enjoyed it.
- Gabe continues to explain tomorrow is another Teen Topics, which focuses on Teen Dating Violence with Sam Dooley at Madison High School.
- Later this month, they will be going to CHS for their rest and relaxation room to talk about taking care of their mental health.
- On March 11th, they will be going to the BeWell Summit at Drew University for the second time. There are student leaders from many Morris County schools who come to talk about suicide prevention, mental health, and becoming advocates. This is a good opportunity to learn more from community groups and find groups they may be interested in volunteering for. Last year was very successful and the students were very interested.
- On March 13th, there will be Bagels and Brainstorming with local law enforcement from Madison and Chatham, and newly Florham Park. Another law enforcement event involved is another basketball and volleyball at the Y event, which is always very fun and successful. The goal of this event is to provide students with a safe place to reduce risky behavior on Friday nights.
- Allison discusses Every 15 Minutes which is being held at Madison High School. It is a reenactment of a drunk driving accident. The students become actors at the scene on the football field, a state helicopter comes, goes to the hospital, a funeral, and the students all watch the footage from the event. MCC will be tabling there to provide students with resources after watching the video and then we will be meeting with the actor students for a debrief meeting. We have created a card about binge drinking and drunk driving to give to students at the event.
- Elyse provides updates on what she has been working on. She explains she has been updating REACH and quantifying the efforts of the coalition. She is also working on social media and organizing upcoming posts. The Madison High School student survey data is back, and she is going through that data to start thinking about a social norms campaign for Instagram. Lastly, everyone is working on vaping signs for the MHS bathrooms.
- Allison explains that she and Elyse are working on a data entry series to show how she does the data entry in REACH, which we've never shown before.
- Gabe adds that we have made a connection with ESL classes at Madison High School. They will be visiting to talk about stress and mental health, especially dealing with current events. MCC and PCP want to make sure they are taking care of themselves, first by limiting social media and then by connecting with each other and their support at school. We are also asking them to visit the Y to show them the resources we offer. MCC has been pushing to ensure they feel included in the community, like by translating materials and the Hispanic Heritage Night.
- Christine adds that law enforcement went to the school and explained to them that no one is allowed to come into the schools and wanted to emphasize they are safe at the schools. Students did not come to school out of discomfort, but with these discussions and letters they started to come back.
- *Rozella asks if every student in the ESL class speaks Spanish.* Christine explains there are 25 students and 24 speak Spanish and the other student is from Iran. Gabe explains that they did the presentation in English and Spanish. *Rozella adds she thinks this is so meaningful in connecting the community.*

- Gabe moves on to discuss the revival of Draw the Line, which was a campaign from December 2023. We relaunched that with updated flyers and asked for feedback and updated the store owners. We did this for the Super Bowl weekend since it tends to be a more high-risk time.
- Gabe then shares that he and Sue Heffernan are working on Potency Matters. They provide updated information about marijuana. They share information about trends and help educate parents and give conversation starters. After the meeting, they will share the link with everyone. *Rozella asks if there are pictures*, and Gabe shows the included pictures. The presentation goes from lowest to highest potency products. Allison explains that we conduct environmental scans and other data collection to know that this is important and relevant to the community. *Rozella thinks this is important because so many adults don't know about all the different things, and this is a way to ensure we can protect kids and grandchildren.*
- Allison also mentions that we focus on 12–17-year-olds, which is the discussion this campaign is focused on. Gabe explains that in the past adults would come talk to us and wonder why we are sharing this information, but we are not focused on adults, only students. Marijuana is still illegal for anyone under the age of 21. It is an opportunity to share information with parents and grandparents about their teens and also safe storage.
- Allison moves on to discuss the ...Now You Know campaign which Elyse worked on with help from her, Gabe, and Jordan last summer. They have worked on creating rack cards with information from social media posts. The first we have created is focused on impaired driving and binge drinking. There is another card on BORGs, which is popular for colleges. The others are on alcohol overdose, zyns, and more. They have information and resources for parents and students. They will be done for the next coalition meeting, and we are excited to have them at Fishawack.
- Allison adds we are also working on a conversation starters magnet, which we hope to have done for the next meeting. We got the idea from Community in Crisis which is a coalition focused on opioids. The idea is to have conversation starters about the monthly observance that deals with our mission. There will also be a QR code to a Canva document with more information, resources, and additional conversation starters.
- Gabe announces this is his final day working for the Madison Chatham Coalition, and he says thank you for all the support and this opportunity. He will be working the Maplewood Health Department. Everyone thanks him for his hard work.

Upcoming Meeting:

March 18th, 2025

9:30 – 11:00 AM

Hubbard Conference Room, Madison Area YMCA