



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

November 19, 2024- 9:30 am In-Person/Hybrid Meeting

Meeting Minutes/Summary

Attendees:

Allison Bardon (MCC Director), Jen Caldwell (Drew University Civic Engagement Coordinator), Sam Dooley (Morris County Sexual Assault Trauma Center), Diane Mann (Y CEO), Christine McIntyre (Project Community Pride Director), Ed Stoner (Y VP of Advancement & Strategic Initiatives) Gabe Suarez (MCC Staff), Rozella Clyde (Chatham- citizen)

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

- Allison starts the meeting and thanks everyone for coming. She asks the members in attendance to introduce themselves and their sector. *This reflects the above attendance.*
- She provides a brief overview of the agenda for the meeting with MCC updates and sector updates.

9:33 Sector Spotlight (Law Enforcement)

- Allison explains MCC and PCP's Bagels and Brainstorming with community sectors that started about two years ago. Since then, it has become more focused on law enforcement from both Madison and Chatham. It is to give them an opportunity to discuss what they are seeing in the schools and community in relation to substance use. During the last session, there were 18 officers, which is an increase from where we first started. The conversation is always collaborative, and law enforcement is one of MCC's strongest sectors continuously over the years.
- At the last Bagels and Brainstorming, we discussed how we can continue to collaborate based off of the things going on in the schools.
- *Allison asks the Student Resource Officers what they are currently seeing in the schools.* A Madison SRO says that he thinks things are better this year. Zyns are more prevalent, and they are finding more of those. Alcohol use rates are relatively consistent. Previously, there were problems with mushrooms, but that problem seems to have declined. He feels the biggest concern is still vapes and edibles. Allison asks if the vaping detectors in the bathrooms have helped with the problem and what bathroom security is during lunch hours. He replies that the detectors have definitely helped, and some bathrooms are locked and others are monitored throughout the lunch period. Another officer says that mushrooms are still an issue, and they are working on solving that problem.
- *Sue Heffernan asks the SRO if the vapes seen in school are THC or nicotine,* and he shares it is both, but mostly nicotine. Allison asks if everyone they find is sent out for testing. He explains everything they find is marked and you can tell what the product is and the percentage number. He also says that a lot of these issues are dealt with by the school and becomes a school rule violation and he doesn't hear about it until later.
- Allison asks how the changes in laws have affected what they are able to do. An officer explains that the change in the statute tied their hands in connection to underage possession, including

alcohol and marijuana. Now, they are very limited in what they can do if they encounter someone who is in possession of or under the influence of alcohol or marijuana. They previously could prevent it because people were at risk of being charged for it, but now they cannot charge, only warn. The warnings are only a piece of paper, and they aren't tracked statewide, only in their own agency. He doesn't feel like there are any good disciplinary actions for it because they are legal substances, but the people are still underage.

- *Sue asks if they contact the parents about these things.* He explains that they do upon the second offense, and they provide resources. Previously, they were not allowed to contact the parent's because it would violate the person's civil rights. Another officer adds that it still affects school policy the same way and if they find a substance in the schools, the punishment is worse than what the officers are allowed to enforce outside of schools. Guidance counselors are immediately involved.
- *Allison says that previously vaping offenses that led to in-school suspensions had to do some sort of dangers of vaping curriculum, she asks if SAC's school provide this at the schools.* Alex Mandala explains that some schools are starting to adopt specific curriculum, but Chatham hasn't yet. They do meet with the SAC at least 3 times, but currently they don't have a set curriculum for in-school suspension.
- *Allisons asks the Madison Junior School and what their status is.* The SRO replies that their numbers are down from last year, which were higher than normal. He explains that the substances are easier for people to access, and they are also easier to conceal, like even consuming edibles that appear as food or candy. They also are planning another vape program and they are still working on it. They go over the long-term effects and it is almost scary. *Allison says it is good how much programming the schools do with assemblies and presentations.*
- Allison asks for an update from the Chatham SROs. The CMS SRO explains that he did not hear much about vaping but it has become a more discussed topic this year. The health classes are mentioning the dangers of vaping, but it isn't a significant problem at CMS. Allison adds that typically middle school student survey data shows almost no data for 30-day past use, it is primarily high school students bringing the usage up. Both towns have programs in 5th grade like DARE to establish the dangers early.
- Allison asks if anything significant is going on with adults regarding opioids or any other substance we haven't mentioned. The officer replies that there is nothing out of the ordinary.
- Allison then moves on to the initiatives that they are currently working on with law enforcement. Christine McIntyre starts by thanking law enforcement for their involvement in Basketball at the Y. There were around 40 kids at the last program and very successful. This is a great opportunity for kids to be exposed to the police in a positive way. If anyone has any different ways for the police to be involved with MCC, they ask for new suggestions. These events are heavily attended by athletes, so they want to find other ideas to appeal to more kids.
- The main goal is to make it casual and not have kids feel like they are being monitored by the police. Many officers come straight from patrol and are wearing their uniforms. To make it appear less serious, they are working on making shirts for kids and law enforcement to wear to the event.
- Allison asks Christine to discuss the referrals from law enforcement to Project Community Pride. Christine explains that if a juvenile is in trouble, law enforcement will refer them to different organizations instead of charging them with something. PCP helps them with volunteer hours, apology letters, essays, etc. They work with the detective to determine the proper alternative. They also receive referrals for counseling.
- *An officer asks when the next date is for Basketball at the Y.* Allison replies that it is the 2nd Friday of December and they will send more information out soon. It is also open to members and non-members. A lot of kids said that they are either in sports clinics through the Y or saw the email Frank Perrone sent to the Madison Junior School.

- Allison continues to discuss the PCP referral process and how MCC is sometimes involved in referrals made due to youth substance use. PCP and MCC collaborate to create a workshop which relates to the substance they were referred for. An example of this is the Vaping Workshop which discusses dangers and provides them with important information. Allison adds that they can also use it as an informal listening session when teens start to open up about if this was a one-time thing or is a pattern that they need to pay additional attention to for all teens. Christine adds they also did a workshop on binge drinking.
- *Sue Heffernan asks how parents are involved in this process.* Christine replies that police talk to the youth and the parents to address the situation and discuss the consequences.
- *Allison asks Chatham Borough Police about the Internet Safety Workshop.* An officer answers that they just had one in October for parents, but parents and the principal want him to do the presentation for students. *Christine asks if he would be interested in bringing it to Madison and he said he is happy to do so.* A member asks the officer's thoughts on doing the presentation for 4th and 5th graders before they go to middle school. The officer explains that talking to parents with any age child is fine, but for students in those grades there are younger programs. He explains that the youngest case he has been involved in was with a six year old. It often starts with chatting through video games and the person grooms young individuals over time. *Allison mentions that some presentations can be extremely scary for parents, but this presentation does a good job of providing good information but not being triggering for parents.* The officer agrees the goal is not to make the parent paranoid, but for them to be aware of how to communicate.
- Another officer asks if they have heard of 764. The FBI recently came to the station looking to go to a kids house because he had become a victim of 764 and had become a predator for 764 through their indoctrination. This group finds people through the chat groups in games and they start to ask the people to cause harm to themselves and others. Then these kids feel stuck and don't know what to do to get out of the situation, which makes the situation even more harmful. He gets a lot of information from missingkids.org and it has presentations for parents, teachers, and students. The key for parents is to ensure they have an open line of communication with their children.
- *Allison asks them to talk about the drug trends presentation law enforcement does.* An officer explains that they do a presentation to show the signs and symptoms of someone using drugs. He reviews all the types of substances, what they are and what they look like. It is presented to parents, not kids. *Allison explains it is always well attended and that is led by local police who can explain it is really affecting our community.* The officer explains it has gotten a lot longer and he shares a lot of videos throughout the presentation. *Allison hopes to have that presentation in the spring for parents.*
- Allison asks if anyone has questions for law enforcement. *A member asks if the presentation is online or in person.* The officer replies that it is in person. Allison adds that it was at the Elk Lodge. It had previously been done for Y staff at the police station. This is a good opportunity for PCP and MCC to table so it being in person works well. *Sue Heffernan adds it being in person can build community and show parents they aren't alone.*
- Allison thanks law enforcement and shares that MCC will always be a resource that is there to support them.
- *A member asks if they are placing SROs in all three elementary schools in Chatham.* The officers explain that they are currently bouncing but it is a goal for them and they are talking about it, but there is no solid plan currently.

10:10 MCC + PCP Updates (Christine McIntyre- PCP Director, Allison Bardon- MCC Director, Gabe Suarez- MCC Staff)

- Allison moves the conversation into MCC and PCP efforts. Christine starts by explaining the tabling they have had, most have been at Madison schools but they are working on more with Chatham in the coming months. They went to the MJS Green Club and talked about mindfulness while being outside in nature. They also met with the art club about journaling and healthy coping skills. They got to talk to students about the services that MCC and PCP offer. They were also at Doodles and Donuts, which helps kids destress.
- They had a refusal skills table at MJS and students really well with talking about potential scenarios and what to do in those situations. 8th graders were a little more aware of the answers and clued into the realities of what they were talking about. There is a clear shift between 6th and 8th grade. The Academy of Saint Elizabeth's students were also taking it more seriously. They are interested to see how students react to it at MHS next week. A counselor explains that they heard the kids talking about it as they left the table, and the ultimate goal is to make them all talk about it and be aware about it.
- Allison explains that they alternate these tables monthly for MJS and MHS to be mental health focused one month and substance use focused the next. The next table will be on positivity, and the following table will be with fatal vision goggles. Gabe adds that the students are starting to recognize them more and know who it is.
- Gabe explains that the partnership with the Academy of Saint Elizabeths has been great. They are starting a Teen Task Force cohort with students there. 14 girls came to the interest meeting last month, and we're excited to work with them. The goal is to have everything they work on, flow back into helping the school in some way. TTF is supposed to be the teens taking the lead and we are excited to see how it goes. Allison adds that they had an interest meeting after people signed up and it was held at the Y on a Wednesday night and only one student showed up. MCC went to AOSE for a tabling and asked if they could stay longer to meet with the students who were interested. They are all from different parts of the region and the school made it possible and 15 girls showed up. The initiatives are going to be directly for their school, so the school can see the benefit of having them there.
- Christine adds that they also did a workshop with the Rosettes and will be having another workshop with them soon.
- Allison mentions that they were at the rest and relaxation room at CHS during lunch. They had a positivity workshop with prompts for students to rethink their negative thoughts and went very well. They have had a lot of workshops, and they are trying to continue to expand however they can.
- Gabe thanks Shawn and Jen from Drew University for coming to the meeting. MCC is working on creating a new partnership with their Center for Civic Engagement and to get students involved in our efforts as advocates. Drew is such a significant part of Madison and we are thankful to be forming a relationship with them.
- Allison asks them to give an overview of the Center for Civic Engagement is. Jen explains that it offers immersive experiences and students need two of those to graduate from Drew. They have a scholarship program called Action Scholars, and they must do 100 hours of experiential learning per year, and they have to take some specific courses. The center offers community-based learning courses in the classroom and partnered with community partners. They also have a Change Makers program which has fewer requirements and no scholarship. Experiential learning is not just volunteering, it means they also need to reflect on what they are doing and connect it to their classroom experience. Allison explains that they are so excited about this opportunity and that she worked with the Civic Scholars and the students were fantastic. It seems like a lot of the students seem to have interests that align with the coalition, like with cultural sensitivity and DEI. Gabe and Allison are working on making those opportunities available and are excited.

10:22 Community Survey (Allison Bardon- MCC Director, Elyse Wheatley- MCC Staff)

- Allison moves on to discuss the community survey and explains that Elyse sent an update video. Elyse is a sophomore at the University of Kentucky and a public policy and economics major. She was a Teen Task Force member and has been working for the coalition virtually this semester. At the end of the summer, Gabe, Elyse and Allison met about their goals for the rest of the year and we wanted to prioritize the community survey. We are a data driven coalition and we have a survey that we offer a survey for parents. The survey asks about their perception of underage substance use and we also ask about mental health. Elyse has been working with the coalition for long enough to know what has worked and what isn't.
- Elyse explains that she is working on the community survey as we enter year 8. The main focus is to have a social media campaign. They will be breaking up the community survey logo to have the logo take up the entire grid face. This will separate the Instagram and put an emphasis on the campaign being important to the coalition. One post will be the basics of the survey and what it is, another will be about Draw the Line and how it progressed from the community survey to the campaign itself, and two reels. The goal is for it to go up the week of December 9th.
- Elyse continues by mentioning another piece of the campaign is a collaboration with Dr. Adams from Adams Dental, who is a coalition member. We asked if she would be interested in placing a card with the survey information in the bags, they give patients, and she said yes. Allison and Elyse met with Kelli Keck from Epiphany to also widen the survey to be applicable for people that live or work in Madison/Chatham. She hopes to be in the middle of the launch of the campaign for the next meeting and more can be shown.
- Allison explains that they only want the survey to be open for about four weeks. They discussed whether or not they should wait until after the holidays, but decided it was okay since people will be home on breaks. She adds that she wants to have more partnerships with businesses in the future. Madison and Chatham High School both agreed to send a survey out to parents when they administer the student survey or send the student survey data out. All of this helps with the quantitative piece of the needs assessment along with the key informant and listening sessions. All of this will come together to create an infographic that gives high-level findings.

10:31 Potency Matters (Gabe Suarez- MCC Staff, Sue Heffernan- Madison Parent)

- Gabe introduces the Potency Matters campaign by showing the poster Sue made for Bottle Hill Day. It was up on the table, and it shows a wide variety of THC products that she has found over the years. It had edibles which looked a lot like everyday snacks. Gabe adds that they don't want to scare parents, but they want to educate parents with informational videos about all types of THC and Delta-8 products. They will also be giving parents a call to action and providing them with the resources to lead conversations with their children.
- Sue continues that she likes the term of call to action. She read a book that parents often don't know information to use as a rebuttal to their child's argument that "it's just a plant" or "it is safer than alcohol." As a parent, she also wonders what the barriers are for parents to act, like if they are afraid of judgment or alienation. They also want to create a business card that gives parents a resource to call if they need help or want to talk if they notice something with their children.
- Allison adds that Gabe and Sue have been very focused on this project, but if anyone else is interested in helping, reach out and let us know. She wants this to resemble the process of Draw the Line in that we started small and made it a coalition-wide effort.
- Sue shares they want to make three videos on Delta-8/THC, edibles, and nicotine products. Allison says we spent a lot of time today talking about the importance of parents talking to their kids. This is the best way to close the gap between what parents know and what children are learning in school and in social settings.

- Allison explains that Gabe and Sue are doing something like Night of Conversation which PCP and the Y have done in the past. The whole goal of the initiative is for parents and teens to start a conversation about drug and alcohol use if they never have before. We may consider bringing our prevention podcast back with this campaign. They are still working on more details with that idea, but it is a good goal for them.
- Sue adds that there is a new nicotine product with 15,000 puffs and it is equal to 1,000 cigarettes. We want to give parents a visual of the potency associated with these products.

10:40 Additional Upcoming MCC Initiatives (Allison Bardon- MCC Director)

- Allison shares that her, Gabe, and Vicky are working on a podcast episode about ACES. They are working on finalizing the details of the target age group before recording, but the goal is to do that before the holidays.
- She adds that they trained the first cohort for Teen Mental Health First Aid earlier this year with the Rosettes. They are working with the Mariners next, which is the competitive swim team at the Y. There are about 30-40 teens on the team from 9th-12th grade that they would be offering it to. They are looking to start the sessions in January. There are 6 45-minute sessions with 3 instructors from the Y. We are excited to launch another cohort of that training. The Rosettes will be going into the practice to speak about some of the benefits of the program.

10:42 Sector Updates

- A member asks that everyone support the Madison girls soccer team who are in the state finals and are playing fantastic.
- Sam Dooley from the Morris County Sexual Assault Trauma Center shares that she was just trained in a program called Coaching Boys Into Men and there is a program for women called Athletes as Leaders. It is training for coaches to talk to their athletes about violence prevention, consent, and bystander intervention. The young men's program focuses on men's mental health and ensuring men know to reach out for support when they need it. She hopes to pilot that program in the new year and if anyone is interested, she would be happy to host that. Christine shares that Chatham and Madison's athletic directors would be great people to reach out to about the program. Allison asks how long the training is, and Sam explains the coach training is only 2.5 hours. It gives them small bits of information and conversations so that they can have the conversation in a casual setting.
- A Madison police officer shares they have a bias prevention presentation coming up and the Morris County Prosecutor's Office runs it. They are more focused on middle school students because they have the biggest problems with bias-related incidents and the superintendent is very behind the presentation. Allison asks if there is a parent component, but the officer replies that it is only being administered to middle school students. It makes kids aware that they have been warned and can be charged for their actions, and the county is serious about it. A member asks if the presentation can be recorded and sent to parents after, and the officer says he will ask but it is up to the county. He says more than likely they won't be willing to record it. However, maybe they would do a parent version of the presentation, but they are very backed up.
- Allison adds that Hidden in Plain Sight will be in April in Madison.
- Allison thanks everyone for coming and the meeting closes.

Next Meeting:

December 10, 2025 @ 9:30AM

Hubbard Room

Madison Area YMCA