

Vermont School Crisis Planning Team
Department of Public Safety – State Emergency Operations Center
Waterbury, VT

September Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Barbara Bloom, School Counselor Association
Bob Costantino, Agency of Human Services
Charlotte McCorkel, Howard Center, representing
Department of Mental Health
Dan Batsie, Vermont Department of Health EMS
David Manning, Vermont Principals Association
Emily Harris, Vermont Emergency Management
Mark Moody, Vermont School Boards Insurance
Trust
Mary Ellen Mendl, Vermont 211
Pat McManamon, Department of Motor Vehicles

Rob Evans, Agency of Education
Roger Marcoux, Vermont Sheriff's Association
Tim Clouatre, Vermont State Police
William Brown, Division of Fire Safety
Winton Goodrich, VT Superintendent Association
Deanna Ryerson, Howard Center
Margaret Joyal, Washington County Mental Health

On the phone:

Sharonlee Trefry, Vermont Department of
Health – School Nurses

Introductions, acceptance of August 8 minutes

Meeting was called to order by Rob Evans at 1300.

Tim Clouatre mad motion to accept 8/8 minutes as proposed, motion was seconded by Pat McManamon.
Minutes were unanimously accepted as written.

Mental Health Response to the Harwood Tragedy - *Margaret Joyal, Washington County Mental Health Services*

In October 2016, 5 High School students were killed when a pickup truck drove the wrong direction on the interstate. In the initial days and week following the incident, the Washington County District School Emergency Team was at Harwood Union High School to debrief with staff, faculty and administration, and provide emergency onsite counseling, assessment and referral for students. Margaret Joyal was in the school 3 days a week from October until January, focused on identifying interventions, identifying the students/staff that may need more intensive services, and analyzing the success of various interventions. Some of those interventions included:

- Therapy dogs – They came on the first day and were a huge success with the students. There was some initial concern about the location and structure of having therapy dogs, but it ended up being useful at both the High School and Middle School.
- Body Processing – This came in the form of drumming groups and yoga.
- Wellness Series – including a wellness fair, acupuncture (for staff), and on-site massage
- Meetings - with families that lost students, with faculty/staff, with families whose students were impacted. These meetings were a lot of coordination and psycho-education, but also included a referral list for those needing higher levels of care.
- Parent-teacher conferences – There were a lot of discussions about how to frame these conferences when some students were feeling like nothing matters.
- Curriculum modification – working with teachers on their curriculum to see what impacts

upcoming subjects could have on students, and avoid negative impacts.

- Grief Groups – Many students didn't want a grief group, so rather than bringing one to the school, the Washington County Mental Health and Community Groups were offered up for those that were interested.

Trauma processing shouldn't be done at school. The interventions are designed to stabilize the class and school while returning to normal as soon as possible.

This is a tight knit community, which in some ways caused more of an impact, but has also led to more resilience. Though this incident was a unique situation for Vermont, these sort of incidents do occur so it is important to have plans for them. Though some students didn't directly know the 5 students that died, this had an impact on the community.

Some students and teachers didn't get better – and that's to be expected in a situation like this. We worked with those folks to get a higher level of care.

Margaret had support from the Department of Mental Health, but additional administrative infrastructure was needed. It took over a month to get administrative support for scheduling time with therapy dogs and sending out thank you notes – and if that infrastructure could be in place ahead of time, it would make the process smoother. During situations like this, it is important to have someone like Margaret in place to look at the resources available and to vet them on behalf of the school.

Harwood has decided to put up a gazebo as a memorial, but it brings up the questions of what to do with memorials that were created for the incident. When do memorials come down? What precedent does it set for creating memorials?

After this event, Washington County Mental Health conducted a survey that had a very high response rate. 80% of those students felt that therapy dogs were the best intervention. Yoga and drumming were also useful, but not as useful as the therapy dogs. The onsite counselors (and School Social Worker hired by Washington County Mental Health) have a lot of demand. There were lots of referrals were given out – but we won't know how successful that was. The Parent/Child Therapy post-event wasn't well attended.

Its important to build off the strength of the community, but also bring in resources to support them. It's a challenge for some staff who have a relationship with the parents and students, because they can be very involved and not understand that they aren't in the best position to assist. They are also impacted by the incident, and they don't have the expertise to provide those mental health resources. Previously, the Agency of Human Services had a Trauma Services Coordinator – that individual would gather information about the situation, and develop programs that could be sustained for the impacted organization. If that position existed again, it could help bring consistency to response around the state and bring in the Designated Agencies in a more organized way.

As far as supporting staff, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) presented at the wellness fair and received referrals, and Margaret did 2 wellness series related to self-care (acupuncture and neuro feedback).

School Spirit helped, and it was important that the therapy dogs were at the first game after the incident. It was difficult when soccer ended, so they started having afterschool activities in the gym to burn energy and fill that void.

Though 5 students died, there were 9 siblings/close relatives so every grade was affected in some way. Even if students didn't know the ones who died or their siblings, tragedies like this can bring up previous traumas for other students. Margaret worked with teachers on expectations and how to scale up and return to normal. For the first week and part of the second week, classes didn't really happen – but it gradually phased up to steady state.

There were 5 funerals in 3 days. Folks would get on the bus, then come back to the school afterwards – so we would have therapy dogs in the auditorium to help them recover from those funerals.

(Rob Evans) Resource Management, Donations Management, Memorials, Continuity of Operations – these are all things that aren't incident specific but can be discussed/planned before an event.

*Action: Create a “Things to Consider” document that provides guidance and resources for schools.
(Charlotte McCorkel, Margaret Joyal)*

Discussion of Opiate Crisis in State - Sheriff Roger Marcoux, Vermont Sheriffs' Association

Every 3 days, someone in Vermont dies of a drug overdose. This has now surpassed the amount of people dying in car accidents around the state. 4 out of every 5 people suffering from addiction started with legally prescribed drugs. Last year, there were over 600,000 prescriptions written for opioids and 70% of those prescription drugs aren't used.

Governor Scott appointed a Drug Policy Director and created the Opioid Coordination Council. The Opioid Coordination Council is co-chaired by Sheriff Marcoux, Secretary Holcombe has a seat on the council, and is focused on statewide treatment, recovery and prevention. Many folks get addicted between 18-25 years old, so it's important to focus efforts on students. One of the current efforts of the Council is to create a statewide forum for students to lead the effort of prevention. Currently in Lamoille County, Sheriff Marcoux is working with principals to meet quarterly with the student councils and let these student councils discuss the issues of drugs and cyberbullying. Though right now we are focused on opioids, its important to work with students to avoid self-destructive behaviors and figure out how to create impactful and effective programs.

There are new laws in Vermont where doctors must have informed consent, provide information to patients about alternatives to opioids, and ensure that they provide the appropriate amount of drugs for a patient. Individuals on opioid for 5 days or more increase their risk of addiction, so it's important to transition from opioids to another drug to manage the pain as soon as possible.

There are 20,000 people addicted to opioids in the state right now. Its important that we be proactive and stop new people from getting addicted, rather than just focusing on being reactive.

(Win Goodrich) The superintendents and principals associations have conferences and it might be good to have someone speak about this issue at those conferences.

(Win Goodrich) The Agency of Education is assessing education standards this year and some schools are struggling to create curriculum for alcohol and drugs. That might be a way to get information out about this issue.

(Barbara Bloom) There is a program called Peer Leadership at the middle and high school levels. This program helps students deal with alcohol, tobacco and addiction, as well as alternative ways to manage stress. There may be a way to tap into that program.

(Barbara Bloom) It's important to tap into teachers who know the subgroups of kids, and those teachers can tap into the leaders of those subgroups. You can have in-school leadership conferences for those students.

(Barbara Bloom) CVU has a model called "Connecting Youth" that might help get teenagers involved in this effort.

(Barbara Bloom) Potential funding sources for these issues are Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont or the VT NEA.

(Sharonlee Trefry) Peer Leadership groups are very successful. The Up for Learning program supported by the Department of Health and Agency of Education is also useful. They take data, identify strengths in schools, and decide where to focus efforts to help people make healthier choices. There is a program for both high school and middle school, but this year the focus is on middle school.

(Sharonlee Trefry) We encourage schools to use the "Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child" approach. This is an ideal place to address a targeted approach to prevention efforts, and since there is some funding that accompanies that program we would encourage schools to tap into that.

(Mark Moody) We previously used VCAT to do age appropriate skits, and student council helped set it up. After this program, we were able to identify drug abuses and catch sex offenders.

(Rob Evans) The Vermont School Crisis Planning Team would like the opportunity to speak at the Opioid Coordination Council.

Action: Discuss a statewide SRP and SAP forum. (Roger Marcoux & Mark Moody)

Action: Create additional Naloxone guidance for schools (Sharonlee Trefry, Charlotte McCorkel, Rob Evans)

Action: If you are aware of peer leadership resources, please send them to Revans@margolishealy.com and he will compile a list for Sheriff Marcoux. (all members of the Vermont School Crisis Planning Team)

Finalize details for School Safety Conference – Rob Evans

VISBIT has volunteered to donate some money towards the conference, and will also be handling the vendors. The Agency of Education will provide logistical support for registration.

We're planning to move the conference to Chittenden County and hold it at the end of November/beginning of December.

We're planning to move back to the old conference style.

- Morning: Governor & Keynote Speaker (about 2 hours)
- Afternoon: 30-45 minute sessions. Potential sessions include: Managing the media and mass notifications during a critical incident (including how to notify parents), After action – lessons learned from Essex and SB school threats last year, Tactical EMS, Trauma informed responses to a critical incident, How to conduct a school safety training/exercises at your school, updates and

best practices on technology security solutions (vendor agnostic), opiate crisis impacts on our communities. In the past folks have specifically asked for sessions on technology and public messaging, so we should make sure to do those sessions.

We need to lock in the speakers and session titles within the next 30 days.

Action: Reach out to Tony for his previous suggestion. (Rob)

Action: Provide Rob with the contact information for Joelle Van Lynn, a psychologist who has a talk about Adverse Child Events (ACE) kids. (Win)

Action: If you have a suggestion for a 1-2 hour keynote speaker, send it to Rob. (all members of the Vermont School Crisis Planning Team)

Action: Send Mark/Tim information about how much vendors are being charged and where that money goes. (Rob)

Action: Create an online vendor set up form for registration. (Tim/Mark)

Governor's Proclamation: School Safety Month – Rob Evans

In an effort to reinforce National Preparedness Month, the Governor signed a proclamation on September 1st declaring it School Safety Month. In attendance at this signing was Secretary Holcombe and Deputy Commissioner Herrick representing the School Safety Center, and Rob Evans, Emily Harris, Leo Nadeau and Steve Earley representing the School Crisis Planning Team.

So far this month, we've received pictures of troopers doing reading programs and traffic control assistance being provided by law enforcement to schools. We'd like to create a white paper at the end of September to show all the things across the state that were accomplished during preparedness month (September).

Action: Send pictures of school preparedness efforts being done by your organization to Rob. (all members of the Vermont School Crisis Planning Team)

Review School Safety Training and Awareness Calendar and identify potential training videos that can be created by the team – Rob Evans

Some folks on the team have participated in Voice Over Powerpoint videos that are on the School Safety Website, but it would be great to have involvement from more members of the team. For October we're looking for someone to talk about Fire Prevention or School Bus Safety Awareness, For November we're looking for someone to talk about Winter Weather Awareness, and For December we're looking for someone to talk about School Relocation.

Action: If you would like to volunteer to create a voice over powerpoint, please contact Rob. (all members of the Vermont School Crisis Planning Team)

(Post-meeting update: Sharonlee has volunteered to speak about School Relocation for December)

Video Acceptable Use Policy – Rob Evans

Rob is currently working with the school board association and Win on an acceptable use policy. Some schools are using the language "Responsible Use" rather than "Acceptable Use".

Discussion of parking lot items – Rob Evans

Best Practices for dealing with trauma following a disaster and untimely death recovery best practices

Action: Considerations document will be created by Charlotte and Margaret.

Opiate Crisis Guidance – Include presentation from AOE & VDH Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Program Facilities (Sharon Lee, Rob, Mary Ellen)

Action: Sharon Lee will take the lead on this to schedule a conference call.

Video Acceptable Use Policy (Rob, Win)

Action: Rob and Win will continue to work with the School Board Association on this document.

Tactical EMS and how school medical staff can get involved in the process (Dan B, Tony) Work has already begun on this with Vermont State Police. This document should really focus on what it looks like to have tactical EMS inside of the school, as well as the resources that schools can provide to ease the burden on EMS, including first response medicine (such as Stop the Bleed).

Action: Dan B. will continue to lead this effort.

Liability Insurance for schools serving as non-arc shelters (Mark)

Action: Mark will continue to lead this effort.

American Red Cross MCI course

Action: Wait until Dan L is available to discuss.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, October 10th, 1-2:30pm that the 1st floor Conference Room. During that meeting, we'll discuss last minute conference items.