



Community Planning Council

The Community Planning Council was established by Greenwich United Way to encourage the most effective and efficient health and human service delivery system for Greenwich. Comprised of community leaders, nonprofit service professionals, Greenwich United Way board members, and community volunteers, the work of the Planning Council, particularly through its periodic Needs Assessments, has led to the development of some of the Town's most valued programs and institutions.

Help us grow awareness and tell your network about this and other upcoming presentations by sharing on social media #GUW_CommunityPlanningCouncil or visit www.greenwichunitedway.org

Community Planning Council Meeting Tuesday 1/16, 8:30 am, Temple Shalom

Mental Illness/Youth: Anxiety in Teens and College Students

Margaret Watt, Executive Director, Southwest Regional Mental Health Board

Michelle Ebert, Teen Talk Crisis Counselor at Eastern Middle School

Eliza McNamara, Blogger at TurningPointCT.org

Jessica Schilero, Clinician at Family Centers

According to the Greenwich United Way's Needs Assessment, there has been a substantial increase in the number of teens experiencing anxiety and seeking mental health services.

Highlights from the Presentation:

- Anxiety affects 18% of the US population, with an average age of onset of 11, and is more prevalent in women. Anxiety is increasing among young people; 18% of college freshman reported being “overwhelmed” in 1985—in 2016, 41% did. Among current college students, 62% report “overwhelming anxiety.” In Connecticut, only 50% of teens suffering from anxiety receive treatment. Anxiety can lead to substance misuse, depression, and even suicide.
- Evidence suggests that the incidence of anxiety is increasing among teens. This is due to several factors: an increased focus by teens and families on constant achievement; a culture encouraging perfectionism; lack of unstructured time for teens; and an increased involvement with technology and social media. Teens in affluent communities are at greater risk for these pressures.
- There are a number of warning signs for teen anxiety: depression; panic attacks; social withdrawal; perfectionism; aggression; lack of focus; substance abuse; sleep problems; and problems at school. Families can help teens manage anxiety by: taking away stresses that aren't necessary; validating the teen's concerns in a nonjudgmental way; and avoiding the temptation to “fix” the problem. There is a broad range of mental health services available for teens suffering from anxiety: individual talk therapy; group therapy; dialectical behavioral therapy; and psychiatric services.
- In Greenwich, one of the programs to help teens manage anxiety is the Teen Talk program, in which clinicians from Kids in Crisis are deployed at all three middle schools (this program is funded by the Town, as part of a K-12 social-emotional learning initiative that includes mindfulness training). Teen Talk counselors help 6th graders manage the transition to middle school through group exercises and encouraging teens to exercise and practice mindfulness. For those teens with more severe anxiety problems, the counselors are an in-school resource and can educate the teachers about the student's needs. In addition to Kids in Crisis, Family Centers and the Child Guidance Center also provide mental health services for the Town's youth.
- In CT, TurningPointCT.org is an online peer support resource for mental wellness among young people; it includes a Q&A guide, discussion forum, videos, blogs, and a resource map. Ms. McNamara, a blogger for TurningPointCT.org, described her personal experience with anxiety and noted that the following had been helpful for her recovery: group therapy; medication; alternative school; yoga; art; music; and social activities.
- Adults and youth should be aware of the State's 24/7 free mobile crisis line at 211 (option1) and the Young Adult Warmline available daily from 12-9pm at 855-6-HOPENOW. Online screenings and regional lists of providers and peer support groups are available at HealthyMindsCT.org, website of the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board.

Next Community Planning Council Meeting:

Tuesday, 2/20, 8:30 am, Temple Shalom. Topic: Youth: Restorative Justice and the Interagency Team Program

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