

BEDFORD YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

Sue Baldauf
Director

Tom Pinney
Advisory Committee Chair

2015 Annual Report

Purpose

As a result of our Strategic Planning process some years ago, we continue to live our revised mission and operate with a revised bylaw. The *mission* of Bedford Youth and Family Services (YFS) is to *identify and address the social, emotional, and developmental needs of children, youth, adults, and families in Bedford through programs and services that support and nurture.* The services we provide include:

Supportive Counseling

- Confidential individual and family counseling related to family life and adjustment issues
- Crisis intervention and assessment
- Assistance with local entitlement programs like veterans benefits and fuel assistance

Community Education

- Forums and seminars to strengthen parenting skills, improve life adjustment, and encourage healthy lifestyles and family life
- Collaboration with community groups and school and town officials on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and towards best serving the needs of youths and families

Resource and Referral

- Information about existing resources
- Outreach and referral for appropriate services
- Up to date educational pamphlets, resource guides and materials

Youth Empowerment

- Positive alternatives for youth through after school programs; tobacco, alcohol, and substance use education, prevention and diversion programs; and the Job Match Program
- Promotion of the development of a strong and positive youth voice through collaboration with schools, police and other youth serving organizations on youth programs, the Peer Mentoring Program, and a youth website.

Bedford Youth and Family Services envisions a town committed to the well-being and safety of children, youth, and families; a town that promotes community awareness of healthy lifestyles; and a community where these commitments are demonstrated in policies and actions. Our focus will be on prevention, wellness, and a commitment to excellence. We continue to strive to improve the health of the people we serve through individual or family intervention, community education, resource assistance, and youth empowerment and support. The Department works closely with schools, police, community agencies, citizen groups, and the courts.

Youth and Family Services is guided by the following strategic goals:

1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive system to serve the social, emotional, and developmental needs of the citizens of Bedford.
2. Strive to improve the health of our residents through supportive individual and family counseling, community education, and youth empowerment and support.
3. Collaborate and model partnership in service to our mission with Town departments, schools, community organizations, parents, youth, and citizens at large.
4. Promote inclusiveness, diversity, and cultural competence in mobilizing community resources to best serve the needs of all citizens.
5. Obtain and manage the financial resources necessary to further our mission and accomplish our strategic goals.
6. Advocate for and implement the infrastructure necessary to accomplish our tasks.

Employee Statistics

Number of Employees:

Full-time:	2
Part-time:	2

FY2015 Highlights

The Department successfully met or actively worked on its strategic goals as well as its special projects for the year. We remain active partners with several Town departments, all the schools, parent groups, and citizen groups like the Violence Prevention Coalition, the Bedford Community Partnership, the Regional Early Childhood Advisory Council, and the Chamber of Commerce. We continue to promote inclusiveness, diversity, and cultural competence in both our individual and programmatic dealings. We manage our resources with frugality and seek outside funding for special projects to offset Town budget expenditure. Our honed mission statement and strategic goals will continue to guide our daily work and future initiatives.

The department receives community oversight by a 9 member citizen advisory committee that is scheduled to meet 5 times a year.

We continue to benefit from our office space centrally located in the renovated Town Center building. Our residents drop in with more frequency and are positively impacted by the bright, cheery surroundings. We continue to be grateful to the Town and its residents for continued support of our work.

Supportive Counseling

This year marked the twenty-fifth successful year collaborating with Eliot Community Human Services in Concord on the provision of counseling services to Bedford residents. Services were provided by four licensed, trained clinicians at our offices at Bedford Town Center building, at other school or community sites, or at the Eliot offices in the Community Agencies Building next to Emerson Hospital. Just at our

Bedford site, counseling services have been provided to about 150 different people over the course of the year with over 700 contacts, from a low of 49 to a high of 69 people each month. The four clinical staff have held almost 1200 sessions during the year at our Bedford site, the low being 73 sessions a month and the high being 122. Slightly fewer sessions have been reported in Concord, with about 42 residents choosing that site for services.

The contract owes its success to the commitment of responsiveness established by Bedford and carried out by Eliot as well as the range of services available at Eliot, including psychological testing and medication assessment. This year provided some extra challenge as the seasoned Clinical Coordinator took a position in another agency. Fortunately the vacancy was filled quickly with another Eliot clinician already working in Bedford on a Jail Diversion grant with the Bedford Police Department and on a Hoarding collaboration grant with the Bedford Hoarding Task Force. That clinician left Eliot in the spring, presenting yet another challenge to the department as well as the two grant-funded programs.

The Prevention Coordinator also continued responsibility aiding residents with the Fuel Assistance application process, completing nine of the ten new applications this year and two re-certifications as well as assisting residents with applications for housing, Food Stamps, or other forms of aid. This included fielding countless phone calls, as well as the regular maintenance of the Youth and Family Services and Teen websites on the Town homepage.

This year marked the second full year of providing Veterans Services for Bedford residents as part of a district with the Town of Lexington. Created in February 2013 and recertified by the Massachusetts Department of Veterans Services through June 30, 2016, the Lexington-Bedford Veterans District *mission* is to *support veterans and their families in need of service and provide information and access to services for which they are eligible under the law*. The district has a full-time Director and part-time Veterans Services Officer (VSO). This service also experienced a transition this year when the District Director took another position closer to his home. The hiring process went smoothly, the vacancy was filled within two months, and the VSO facilitated services in both towns during the interim.

Due to the marked increase in veterans residing in the community and increased need for services, the Lexington-Bedford Veterans District provides high visibility, regular Bedford hours, newspaper articles, and regular visits to community settings for educational and support purposes. We have documented around 400 face-to-face contacts on veterans' related issues, fielded about 800 phone calls and email contacts, and provided about 35 community support sessions. We continue to be involved with the sixty units of veterans housing developed and occupied at the Bedford Veterans Hospital and have the majority of new clients from that site. We participate regularly in the Patriotic Holidays Committee and Veterans Day and Memorial Day remembrances.

Community Education

We continue our twenty-first year of school and town collaboration on Prevention Services. Our full time Prevention Services Coordinator has responsibility for not only the prevention work but also the After School, Peer Mentoring, and the Youth Website. The Safe Homes Program, which is designed to support parental limit setting about alcohol and drug use at teen parties, entered its ninth year with a stable enrollment of

about 348 families. This year marked the sixteenth annual town-wide Substance Abuse Awareness Month with prevention focused newspaper articles and bulletin board displays at both the middle and high schools related to topics like stress, friendship, transitions, safe driving, and alcohol use. We facilitated dissemination of the results of the eighth Youth Risk Behavior Survey done April 2014 in collaboration with the Bedford Public Schools and Social Science Research and Evaluation (SSRE), this year utilizing Information Graphics or “infographics” to make the results more informational and motivational especially for youth. We continued our regular prevention programming at all schools and successful offering of tobacco, drug and alcohol education and diversion programs with both the Police Department and the school system. We continued the ninth year of our Volunteer Opportunities Book with listings from Bedford organizations and made available to Bedford youth and other residents looking for community service possibilities. We published a wallet size Bedford Youth Resource card and distributed those to youth at the high school.

Our parent education series was limited this year to co-sponsorship of three events, one at Lane School, one at the High School, and one with First Connections. We reached about 240 parents and professionals and collaborated with the schools and local parent organizations. Due to on-going scheduling constraints in offering evening seminars, we continue to develop and enhance the web based parenting section on our website. We also have been incorporating favorite articles from our Celebrating Parenting Engagement Calendar into our own newsletter as well as selected school newsletter submissions since that calendar is no longer published.

We collaborated with the Bedford Police on alcohol and drug diversion, domestic violence response, and a school resource officer. We continue to work with School and Town representatives to further develop crisis response capability in sync with the Town’s emergency procedures. We maintain contact with our core group of community professionals available on the mental health crisis team known as Community Crisis Response Team and who would be activated through our office at a time of need. We met every other month this year with the school crisis team.

We participate in a monthly Hoarding Task Force involving Health, Police, Fire, Council on Aging, and community representatives and that better informs our community response to these cases. We continued work on the \$15,000 collaborative grant we were awarded through the Northwest Suburban Health Alliance/CHNA 15 along with the Health Department for an 18 month hoarding case management project. Working with the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership Hoarding and Sanitation Initiative, Bedford continued partnering with Burlington along with regional providers Eliot Community Human Services and Minuteman Senior Services to develop case management capacity for identified hoarding cases in both communities.

On behalf of the Selectmen, we continue to be available to collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce and the Violence Prevention Coalition of Bedford to educate about Diversity Training for Bedford businesses. In lieu of scheduling large group training, we continued to work with the Chamber of Commerce to add materials related to diversity and cultural competence to the Chamber website. We plan to continue to offer small group training by request. Total Bedford businesses trained to date remains at forty-four.

Regionally we continue to be active in the Northwest Suburban Health Alliance, or CHNA 15, the 12-town public health region that serves Bedford. We also worked on and completed the Implementation Phase of our 18-month Healthy Communities

planning grant with our award of \$25,000 in DoN funds from Lahey Clinic last November for “Healthy Bedford by Design.” These Planning and Implementation efforts afford Bedford the opportunity to ensure healthy community principles are guiding community planning efforts and project implementation ideas. This grant is overseen by a task force known as Healthy Bedford and includes partners from local government, the state, and citizen advisory boards. We continued to participate in quarterly consultation meetings with communities who are also implementing their planning efforts and report or present regularly at bi-monthly CHNA meetings. Our Healthy Bedford task force successfully worked with DPW and Bicycle Advisory Committee on a Pedestrian/Bicycle Master Plan for Bedford and completed an analysis for the Selectmen about local options to respond to resident transportation needs. Our Healthy Bedford Coordinator was supported as a part-time Town position in next year’s budget at Annual Town Meeting, and we are grateful that the Selectmen, Finance Committee, and residents see the benefit in this staffing going forward after six years of grant funding.

Statewide we are active with the Massachusetts Municipal Association Human Services Council, or MMAHSC, formerly known as Local Officials Human Services Council, or LOHSC, the human services arm of the MMA and serve on the Executive Committee as Treasurer again this year. We continue to sit on the Young Adult Initiative Board of the Metro South West Regional Employment Board, now known as Partnerships for a Skilled Work Force. We serve on the Regional Early Childhood Advisory Council which provides childcare assistance for working families of pre-school children.

Resource and Referral

Our office has had approximately 6,000 resident contacts this year in several of our services and youth events. We documented about 2000 specific contacts with over 620 residents and have fielded over 1100 calls, 330 emails, and 300 generic visits to the office. We distributed about 155 new resident packets.

We continued to be available to work with the Town Manager to ensure community efforts towards Bedford’s continued fight against hate and bigotry in collaboration with the Violence Prevention Coalition of Bedford (VPC). On behalf of VPC we were pleased to see the code of conduct for field use for sports activities made into signs by DPW and posted at all the fields. We also continue to work with VPC, the Bedford Police Department, and local clergy in support of gun safety through a local gun buyback program. The VPC provided technical and financial support to the Bedford Embraces Diversity community coalition and their first Multi-cultural Festival.

Though this was our year to distribute the ninth edition of the Community Social Services Reference Guide, we completed the updating process and decided not to print a new edition. The changes were not that significant to warrant the printing or mailing expenditure. We updated the Guide on our website and may decide to print another edition at a later date.

Youth Empowerment

Our Prevention Coordinator continued collaboration with the Middle School on a successful after school program. We again offered fall, winter, and spring programs for a

total of 50 registrations. We were fortunate to have a total of 4 Middle School teachers/staff and 2 community instructors offer a total of 6 classes and activities.

The Peer Mentoring program was quite successful this year as an After School option as part of the activities offered in the Corner, the youth space in Town Center overseen by the Recreation Department.

Other projects the Prevention Coordinator worked on include an After School Video Production Club jointly run with Bedford TV and participation in the Bedford Youth Task Force and the Bedford Public Schools Wellness Council.

Job Match continues to be an important resource for residents and a rewarding learning experience for teens. Many students who would otherwise have not been able to find work have found employment through Job Match. We have had approximately 100 contacts related to that service with about 58 matches. The number of students throughout the year signed up to work averaged 33. Many satisfied residents have participated in this service for years.

Working under the auspices of the Bedford Community Partnership (BCP) and its Youth Task Force, we continued the work with the Schools, Police, Recreation, and Health on our local policy on youth. We continue to maintain our fifth award as one of America's **100 Best Communities for Young People**, though there again was no new application or award this year from America's Promise Alliance. For the eleventh year in a row, we coordinated the "Bedford Families Unplugged" event in November and continued the second unplugged event in March. This involved a calendar for November and one night of each month designated as no homework, no sports events, no night meetings evenings and encouraging families to 'unplug' and spend time together in face-to-face interaction.

We continue to use the Healthy Bedford, formerly Bedford in Motion, website to promote healthy lifestyles and health and wellness resources for families to address high Body Mass Index (BMI) rates, especially in children, and the promotion of "Healthy Bedford/Healthier Dining" initiative in conjunction with the Health Department. This website also incorporates the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) initiative begun five years ago in initial collaboration with Health, Bedford Public Schools, Police, and Bicycle Advisory Committee and which involves designated days for students to walk or bike to school as well as on site bicycle and pedestrian safety training at the two elementary schools. All eligible Bedford schools have signed on to SRTS – Lane, Davis, and John Glenn Middle School - and participated in events this past year. Bedford received a positive response to application we submitted on behalf of the John Glenn Middle School for a SRTS Infrastructure Assessment and is in the queue to receive funds for a project developing better student walking access to the school.

We collaborated with the Bedford Chamber of Commerce on the fourth RAY (Recognize A Youth) Award, which was established to identify a high school age young person who performs outstanding service to the Bedford community and/or who by their actions are excellent role models for their peers. The fourth award was given at the Chamber's Annual Dinner in January.

FY 2016 Projects

We are continuing our efforts to maintain our accessibility to the community at large. We plan to continue to ensure public awareness about our services through our seasonal newsletter, up-to-date website, regular press releases, and new resident packets. We plan to continue to be on the lookout for new ways to better educate youth and parents about tobacco, alcohol, and substance use and abuse. We will continue to support the Selectmen, Recreation, and the community in their response to maintaining adequate youth space, following up on the continued success of the Corner again this year for middle school youth. In addition to continuing our ongoing projects like coordinating the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, sponsoring the Safe Homes Program and the Peer Mentor Program, we are planning the following special tasks for next year:

1. Enhance parent education web based resources and offerings for the community.
 2. Assess viability of a twelfth Bedford Families Unplugged event November 2015 in conjunction with Bedford Community Partnership, Selectmen, Schools, and parent associations, and coordinate if deemed appropriate.
 3. Plan and coordinate with Violence Prevention Coalition and other community groups events and activities ensuring Bedford as a community welcoming of diversity and free of hate and bigotry.
 4. Provide administrative oversight and support of Healthy Bedford including on-going initiatives like Safe Routes to School and Healthy Dining in conjunction with Board of Health and on behalf of the Youth Task Force and enhance sustainability of the efforts long-term.
 5. Collaborate and coordinate with Bedford, Burlington, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, Eliot Community Human Services, and Minuteman Senior Services on developing hoarding case management capacity in the two municipalities.
-

