

## BEDFORD YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

**Sue Baldauf**  
**Director**

**Peter Ricci**  
**Advisory Committee Chair**

### 2018 Annual Report

#### **Purpose**

The *mission* of Bedford Youth and Family Services (YFS) in the Town of Bedford General Bylaws continues to formally be 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*. YFS Committee and staff continued using an abridged version - **to identify and nurture the social, emotional, and developmental growth of individuals and families in our community** – on various publications this year. The services we will continue to provide include:

- Supportive Counseling
- Community Education
- Resource and Referral
- Youth Empowerment and Support
- Healthy Communities Efforts and Programs

Bedford Youth and Family Services envision 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, other Town departments, community agencies, citizen groups, and the courts.

We continue to be 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.
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## **Employee Statistics**

Number of Employees:

Full-time:	3
Part-time:	1

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## **FY2018 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 Bedford 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 office space centrally located in the Town Center building. Our residents drop in frequently 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-eighth 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 and community sites, or at the Eliot offices in Concord. Counseling services have been provided to about 170 different people over the course of the year with over 1600 contacts, from a low of 44 to a high of 64 people each month. The four clinical staff held approximately 1350 sessions during the year at our Bedford site, the low being 69 sessions a month and the high being 140. Slightly fewer sessions have been reported at Eliot's new office site on Baker Avenue in Concord, with about 54 residents choosing that site for services.

The Prevention Coordinator continued sharing responsibility with the Director in aiding residents with the Fuel Assistance application process, completing two of the ten new applications this year and one re-certification 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 fifth 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, 2018, 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).

Due to the marked increase in veterans residing in the community and increased need for services, the Lexington-Bedford Veterans District provided high visibility, regular Bedford hours, newspaper articles, and regular visits to community settings for educational and support purposes. We have documented around 500 face-to-face contacts on veterans' related issues, fielded about 800 phone calls and email contacts, and provided about 12 community support sessions with over 600 participants. We continue to be involved with the Bedford Veterans Hospital on the sixty units of existing veterans housing there and with the newer 70 bed Bedford Green housing for chronically homeless veterans age 55 and over. With Bedford Green being fully occupied, we continue to see a the majority of our Chapter 115 clients come from that venue, necessitating Veterans Agent presence on site at least one day a month. We participate regularly in the Patriotic Holidays Committee and Veterans Day and Memorial Day remembrances.

## **Community Education**

We continue our twenty-fourth 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. Highlights include:

- The 12<sup>th</sup> year of the Safe Homes Program, designed to support parental limit setting about alcohol and drug use at teen parties, had a stable enrollment of about 305 families, representing 396 students.
- The 19th 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.
- Administration of the 10th Youth Risk Behavior Survey done April 2018 in collaboration with the Bedford Public Schools and Social Science Research and Evaluation (SSRE).
- Regular prevention programming at all schools and successful offering of tobacco, drug and alcohol education and diversion programs with support from both the Police Department and the school system, including a new pilot vaping education program at the high school.
- Continued sponsorship of the Bedford High School All Night Graduation Party, now in its 31<sup>st</sup> year and a long-standing tradition in Bedford designed to keep youth safe alcohol and substance use after graduation festivities and reflecting our on-going commitment to students to the very end of their academic career in Bedford.
- The 12th 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.

Other community education offerings include the following:

- Parent education events at Bedford High School, reaching about 400 parents and professionals in collaboration with the schools, local parent organizations, Health Department, and Middlesex Partnerships for Youth.
- Further development and enhancement of the web based parenting section on our website.
- Incorporation of favorite articles from our Celebrating Parenting Engagement Calendar into our seasonal newsletter as well as selected school newsletter submissions.
- Collaboration with the Bedford Police on alcohol and drug diversion, domestic violence response, a school resource officer, a regional jail diversion program, now primarily focused on opioid use prevention with the hiring of a Recovery Coach.
- Participation with School and Town representatives to further develop crisis response capability in sync with the Town's emergency procedures, including 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.
- Involvement with the Bedford Hoarding Task Force, reconvened this year as the "At-Risk Task Force" and continuing to include Health, Council on Aging, Police, Fire, and community representatives.

We continued our seventh year of monthly involvement coordinating the Bedford Housing Task Force, renamed the "Safety Net" Task Force, and meeting quarterly as an ad hoc group of Town, School, and community organizations working to support families in need at or below the poverty level.

Regionally we continue to be active in the Northwest Suburban Health Alliance, or CHNA 15, the 12-town public health region that serves Bedford and that funded our Healthy Bedford Planning and Implementation grants. After successful completion of the Pedestrian/Bicycle Master Plan in 2015, our Healthy Bedford Task Force continues to meet quarterly as well as to review the non-infrastructure sections of the plan twice a year. This marked the third year of our Healthy Communities Coordinator being a permanent, part-time employee, and we continue to be grateful that the Selectmen, Finance Committee, and residents saw the benefit in this position for the Town. The Coordinator was especially active this year with the Selectmen, Town Manager's office, Council on Aging, and Economic Development administering the pilot local transportation option called the "DASH" to address resident transportation needs. The Coordinator represented Bedford at the MassDOT Moving Together Conference presenting on "First Mile/Last Mile Solutions." Continuing initiatives include promoting and expanding the Park and Pedal program, collaborating on annual summer and winter "Walkabouts," revitalizing the Healthy Dining program, and revisiting a community garden project, to name a sample of activities.

Statewide we are active in the following:

- Treasurer of the Massachusetts Municipal Association Human Services Council, or MMAHSC, the human services arm of the MMA.
- Board member of Partnerships for a Skilled Work Force.

- Bedford representative to the Regional Early Childhood Advisory Council which provides childcare assistance for working families of pre-school children.
- Bedford representative to the Massachusetts Hoarding Task Force facilitated by Mass Housing.
- Mentor in the Leadership Initiative of the Massachusetts Providers' Council
- Working Group member of the Hoarding Intervention Training Institute.

## **Resource and Referral**

Our office has had approximately 10,000 resident contacts this year in regards to several of our services and youth events. We documented about 4,800 specific contacts with over 800 residents and have fielded over 1100 calls, 350 emails, and 300 generic visits to the office. We distributed about 170 new resident packets.

We continue to work with the Violence Prevention Coalition of Bedford (VPC), the Bedford Police Department, and local clergy in support of gun safety through a local gun buyback program. We worked on behalf of the VPC to provide community education in collaboration with Bedford Embraces Diversity and Middlesex Community College for a second Bystander Intervention Training.

We updated and continue to print up and distribute the eleventh edition of the Community Social Services Reference Guide, most specifically to new residents, and which is also available at the office and on our website.

## **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 59 registrations. We were fortunate to have a total of 3 Middle School teachers/staff and 2 community instructors offer a total of 5 classes and activities.

The Peer Mentoring program was again 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 the teens. Many students who would otherwise have not been able to find work have found employment through Job Match. We have had approximately 120 contacts related to that service with about 70 matches. The number of students throughout the year signed up to work averaged 40. 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. While we believe Bedford is still one of America's **100 Best Communities for Young People** and remain committed to the five promises for youth of caring adults, a healthy start, safe places, effective education, and opportunity to serve, we took down our signs this year as the competition has not been funded since 2012. After eleven years coordinating the "Bedford Families Unplugged" events, we again supported residents and organizations creating their own unplugged evening and activities this year, offering suggestions and encouragement.

We continue to use the Healthy Bedford, formerly Bedford in Motion, website to promote healthy lifestyles along with 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 eight 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 actively worked with MA Department of Transportation on behalf of John Glenn Middle School and the SRTS Infrastructure Assessment by completing a project developing better student walking and bicycling access to the school along Mudge Way. That project was completed and dedicated October 2017 to great acclaim. Bedford was honored with an award at the State House end of June by Massachusetts SRTS leadership for its long-standing commitment to SRTS.

We collaborated with the Bedford Chamber of Commerce on the seventh 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. This award was given at the Chamber's Annual Dinner in February.

### **FY 2019 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 web based parent education resources and offerings for the community.
2. Support and assist with any future Bedford Unplugged type events that focus on stress reduction and relationship building in conjunction with Bedford Community Partnership, Selectmen, Schools, and parent associations.

3. Plan and coordinate with the Violence Prevention Coalition and other community groups on 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 pilot initiatives like the DASH Transit project on behalf of the Selectmen and on-going initiatives like Safe Routes to School on behalf of the Youth Task Force and Healthy Dining in conjunction with Board of Health and enhance sustainability of all the efforts long-term.
  5. Collaborate and coordinate with Bedford Hoarding Task Force, now At –Risk Task Force, on not only developing hoarding prevention and de-cluttering education but in working on prevention interventions for any resident at risk in any area.
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