

Upper Valley Regional Network for Substance Misuse Prevention



Who We Are

New Hampshire's Regional Network System for the prevention and reduction of substance misuse is a coordinated system made up of regional substance misuse coordinators and networks of community stakeholders who lead, plan, support, monitor, and carry out prevention efforts in their region's communities. These networks serve their communities' needs in addressing the occurrence of substance misuse and its negative impacts. Regional prevention efforts are informed by and build upon the statewide strategic plan, [*Collective Action-Collective Impact: NH's Strategy for Reducing the Misuse of Alcohol and Other Drugs and Promoting Recovery*](#), working primarily toward the goal of reducing the percentage of New Hampshire residents misusing alcohol or other drugs.

[ALL Together](#) is the Upper Valley Regional Substance Misuse Prevention Network and substance misuse work group of the Public Health Council of the Upper Valley. We are an action-oriented regional coalition \ working to reduce the impact of alcohol and drug misuse, and to support the development of healthy, safe, and resilient communities in the Upper Valley region of New Hampshire. ALL Together is co-coordinated by the Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator, the Continuum of Care Facilitator and the Drug Free Communities Coordinator with regional and local partners representing community and family supports, the health and medical sector, education, safety and enforcement and the business sector. Regional prevention efforts are initiated and sustained by ALL Together's regional partners and local coalitions in the Dresden School District, Lebanon School District, and Mascoma Valley School District. Dartmouth-Hitchcock is the regional fiscal agent which provides additional financial and structural resources for sustainability.

Substance Misuse and Our Community

Based on regional needs identified using a strategic planning process, ALL Together maintained its effort to target youth and young adult populations during this past year. As a result of ongoing efforts to educate and engage community members, there are high-levels of readiness within the region to address substance misuse in the youth and young adult populations.

The young adult focus has developed in the past two years. In the Upper Valley, there is a lack of resources and prevention programming aimed at this population. 18-25 year old community members are often isolated from the community, making them more vulnerable during times of transition. This was confirmed by Young Adult Focus groups held in fall 2015. We continue to recruit partners from the business sector so that we could have a greater impact on this population often found in the work force. We continue to identify and pursue partnerships with community members in or connected to this population.

Substances targeted include alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs. Alcohol continues to be the most widely used substance by high school students and by adults. Rates of alcohol use by high school students has gone down but overall use is higher than other substances. Rates of binge drinking also remain high but continue to decrease. Young adult focus groups reflected that alcohol consumption is an engrained part of the culture of the Upper Valley

and the Young Adult Survey showed that 38% of young adults believe that there is no risk or slight risk to binge drinking. Alcohol offers unique prevention opportunities as it is a legal substance that is so engrained in our culture and it requires our constant efforts in order alleviate the harms of overuse.

Marijuana was a focus of ALL Together because of the legalization of therapeutic cannabis in New Hampshire, the possibility of legalization of recreational marijuana, and the decreasing perception of risk of marijuana. As national and local conversations continue to normalize use and highlight benefits of medical and recreational marijuana, the risks of marijuana have become a confusing topic for parents, youth and young adults. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), marijuana is the most highly used illicit drug amongst our region's high-school aged youth. The prevalence of suicide associated with heavy marijuana use (Julia D. Buckner, 2017) was also a driving factor in the decision to focus on marijuana as reducing suicidality in the Upper Valley is another goal of ALL Together.

Prescription drugs are a focus due to the crisis that our state is facing with opioid and heroin use. As prescription drugs are often a precursor to heroin use, effort went into educating the community around safe storage, use, and disposal of prescription medications as well as making lock boxes and prescription medication disposal more accessible. Strategies provided opportunities to engage law enforcement and focused on education and environmental changes which would impact the general population.

Strategies to Prevent Substance Misuse

Based on statewide, regional and local data, ALL Together prioritized the five following strategies: suicide prevention and mental health promotion, prescription drug drop box/take back events, community education and training, policy or practice adoption or improvement, and media campaigns/social marketing.

1. Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion

This year, ALL Together put significant effort into Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion. Youth targeted activities were built on to begin to target young adults as well. ALL Together identified this as an important strategy as suicidality is a risk factor for substance misuse and vice versa. Activities included developing a Community Crisis Resource Partnership, offering Connect Suicide Prevention and Postvention trainings, and information sharing.

ALL Together has developed a Community Crisis Resource Partnership (CCRP). The goal of this partnership is to increase supports to individuals and organizations in the community in the event of a traumatic event or sudden death. It was created as a number of gaps were identified during some sudden deaths and traumatic events in the Upper Valley. Partners include community and family supports, mental health care providers, law enforcement, support staff in schools, and experts in suicide postvention protocol. CCRP is working to identify resources already in the community and additional resources that we may be able to offer in terms of policy or protocol development, connection to mental health support, consultation on safe messaging, or information sharing. Resources will be offered at the individual or community level depending on results of a gaps survey to community partners. This activity may result in policy or practice adoption or improvement strategies over the next year.

Connect Suicide Prevention and Postvention trainings have been offered to a variety of partners including law enforcement, community and family supports, and young adults. Many organizations were youth serving and will serve to target youth in order to lower self-reports of suicide ideology and attempts. We also partnered with the New Hampshire chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to create a training that equips young adults to help peers who are at risk of suicide and substance use disorders. This training was piloted on 9 young adults and it will be used throughout the state over the next two years. This training addresses hopelessness of young adults that was identified in focus groups and the Young Adult Survey in 2015. The network will help to identify the need for trainings, publicize the trainings and teach trainings.

ALL Together shared the suicide prevention hotline, information about suicide loss survivor support groups, and images and information meant to de-stigmatize mental health issues on social media, at events where we tabled, and on flyers that will be posted in local restaurants. Distribution of mental health flyers has been used as an activity to increase young adult and coalition engagement. These activities targeted the general population, suicide loss survivors, individuals with mental health concerns, high risk populations, and the business sector. Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion will continue to be a priority for ALL Together.

2. Prescription Drug Drop Boxes/Take Back Events

ALL Together continued to focus on safe use, storage and disposal of prescription medications due to the heroin crisis within the state and the fact that prescription drug misuse can be a precursor to heroin use. Prescription drug use is higher among high school students than heroin use and our Drug Free Communities Survey shows us that Upper Valley residents are concerned about prescription drug misuse.

ALL Together worked towards spreading access to Prescription Drug Drop Boxes through continued distribution of our Twin State Safe Meds campaign. This strategy targeted the general population. We continued to target the general population by sharing information on safe use, storage and disposal at local events, on the radio, and on social media. Our regional network helps to disseminate this information.

We also supported local police departments in participating in National Take Back Day. Support involved encouraging police departments to participate, delivering materials needed for the event, and advertising on social media. This strategy targeted the general population.

Lock boxes were purchased in the end of May which were distributed to target populations around the Upper Valley including parents, those prescribe opioids, and patients receiving therapeutic cannabis. Lock boxes were distributed by health coaches, community health workers, marijuana dispensary, community events, and community organizations. All of these strategies are intended to decrease access to prescription medications and, secondarily, increase perception of harm.

3. Policy or Practice Adoption or Improvement

Over the past year, ALL Together partnered with Windsor County Prevention Partners to develop a Community Retailer Program which is a harm reduction activity that recognizes local alcohol and tobacco retailers that create

store environments that do not glorify use of these products, especially to minors. Alcohol continues to be the most used substance by both youth and adults. This was a unique opportunity to use this strategy to target tobacco use as well. While this activity partners with the business sector for implementation and creates positive association with prevention activities, the activity itself targets customers in the store including adults and youth. The activity aims to decrease overall favorable attitudes towards alcohol and tobacco to then in turn decrease use over time.

Recently, ALL Together has adopted InShape Prevention Plus Wellness as an evidence-based program that will be used by young adults in the Upper Valley. It focuses on goal setting behaviors and has been shown to reduce frequent and heavy drinking, drinking and driving, and marijuana use. It will be implemented in partnership the River Valley Community College, community agencies and potentially local businesses. This program will be spread to other partner organizations as appropriate.

4. Community Education and Training

ALL Together provided Community Education and Training at events in Grantham, Lebanon, and Canaan, NH. Each of these events was requested from the community. Two of these events were targeted at parents and one was targeted at the general population. The events targeted at parents included information on monitoring children and using prevention to talking to children about drug use; two skills that are protective factors again youth substance use. These nights also served as capacity building activities in the towns and school districts where they were held. The third night was focused on information sharing and the main goal was overall awareness as well as capacity building. Community coalitions or local networks recruited community members to attend each meeting.

5. Media Campaign/Social Marketing/PSAs

ALL Together continued to put an emphasis on media campaigns, social marketing and PSAs in 2016-2017. This year, we have been working to develop a media campaign to increase perception of risk of marijuana use. Many community members have been confused about the level of risk associated with marijuana use due to the changing medical and legal status of the substance. When individuals and communities believe that a substance is risky to use, they are less likely to use it. This campaign seeks to address the confusion around marijuana use. Population targets for this campaign include parents, youth, and young adults. We have developed 4 radio PSAs and tested out 3 online PSAs which we have put into circulation. We are in the final stages of developing print materials. Focus has been put on creating a campaign that culturally competent and that will be able to be used regardless of the medical or legal status of marijuana. This campaign will be circulated throughout 2017-2018. The ALL Together leadership team and local coalitions will play a major part in disseminating this information.

We also provided technical assistance to Hypertherm, a major employer in our region, in developing a resource card targeted at those with addictions and their friends and family. The purpose of the card is to destigmatize addiction, using the Speak Up NH campaign, and increase access to the treatment and crisis resources available in the Upper Valley. These cards were developed due to the high rates of overdose deaths throughout the state. They will be distributed at community events, to partners in the region, and at Hypertherm.

The ALL Together newsletter was sent out quarterly. It targeted those who have had some contact with ALL Together; typically through a community event or professional meeting. It is meant to build capacity and awareness of the resources available in the Upper Valley. We will be working to provide more education in our newsletters in the coming year.

We continue to use social media to highlight events, educate, and celebrate positive things happening in our community. Social media posts targeted populations based on the platform used. Facebook targeted parents and typically community members older than 18 years old. Instagram targets youth and young adults and twitter is more targeted at organizations and those over 18 years old.

Highlights – A “Story” of Prevention Efforts in Our Region (a.k.a. Logic Model)

Introduction

To address the problem that 6% of Upper Valley high school aged youth report misusing prescription drugs in the past 30 days (2013 YRBS), we chose activities that would increase the perception of risk of prescription drugs. These activities included implementing the [Twin State Safe Meds](#) Campaign, supporting local police departments in participating in [National Take Back Day](#), distributing medication lock boxes throughout the community, and sharing information with parents about monitoring their children (see Appendix A for logic model).

This strategy, in coordination with other regional strategies addresses the following goal and objectives from our regional three year strategic plan:

- Goal: Decrease the percentage of high school aged youth who report misusing prescription drugs in the past 30 days from 6% to 4% (Strategic Plan, Goal 5, page 22).
- Objectives:
 - Increase percentage of youth who believe that their friends think it is wrong or very wrong to misuse prescription drugs (Strategic Plan Goal 5, Objective A, page 22)
 - Increase percentage of high school youth who say using prescription drug misuse puts them at moderate or great risk (Strategic Plan Goal 5, Objective B, page 22)
 - Increase percentage of youth who think it is very hard to access prescription drugs (Strategic Plan Goal 5, Objective C, page 22)

Evaluation Methods

To understand the impact that distributing the Twin State Safe Meds Campaign had on perception of harm of prescription drugs we measured the number of people that the radio PSAs reached, and the number of PSA engagements on the Daily UV which is our local online news source, and the number of website visits to www.twinstatesafemeds.org and the pounds of prescription drugs collected by the Lebanon and Hanover Police Departments (where we had access to this data). These data were collected from media and law enforcement partners at the end of each PSA cycle by the Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator and Drug Free Communities Coordinator. These measures show the reach of each campaign activity.

To understand the impact that supporting National Take back Day had on reducing access to prescription medications, we measured the pounds of drugs collected by participating police departments at the National Take Back Days as well as the numbers of social media engagements on posts related to National Take Back Day. Pounds of drugs collected was given to us by the Drug Enforcement Administration after each Take Back Day. This shows the direct impact of how many prescription medications are taken out of households which will decrease access to prescription drugs for those who may misuse them. Social Media posts were also tabulated after each Take Back Day. This shows the reach of these posts. This information was collected by the Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator.

To understand the impact that distributing lock boxes had on reducing access to prescription medications, we measured the number and sectors of partners distributing the lock boxes as well as the number of lock boxes distributed. As different sectors distributed the boxes to different populations within our community, this

information shows populations reached. It also shows us the number of community members that have access to a tool to keep their prescription medications out of the wrong hands. This information was collected by the Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator as boxes were distributed.

To understand the impact that the Lebanon Partners United for Safety and Health parent night had on increasing parents' abilities to address substance use, we measured the percentage of parents who attended our event who felt that they had the tools they needed to monitor their children as well as the percentage of parents who felt they had the tools to talk to their children about substance use. These questions were asked of parents that attended the event immediately following the presentations. They were given to parents by an anonymous paper survey. Half of the parents in attendance answered the questionnaire. This information was collected in partnership with the Lebanon coalition, Lebanon Partners United for Safety and Health.

Intermediate Outcomes included data from our annual [Drug Free Communities Survey](#) (see Appendix B), the bi-annual [Stakeholder Survey](#) (see Appendix C) and the bi-annual [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) (see Appendix D). The Drug Free Communities Survey is given to community members electronically as well as at community events, the annual Stakeholder Survey is sent out to those who have been involved with ALL Together in some way in the last year, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey is given to high school students. Measures address perception of harm of youth, parents and the community; ease of access; wrongness perceived of misuse of friends and parents; parental monitoring and rates of disposal of unused prescription medications. Each of these measures addresses a risk or protective factor of prescription drug misuse.

Our long term goal: decrease youth and young adult prescription drug misuse. This will be measured through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey as well as the [Young Adult Survey](#) (see Appendix E) which is an incentivized online survey that is given bi-annually by the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services.

Results

Activities to increase perception of harm of prescription drugs were implemented as planned. We continue to use these activities as we continue to see positive results. Radio campaigns were aired this year after positive results last year. Similarly, lock boxes were quickly distributed so we were able to purchase more to distribute. The following were short term results:

Twin State Safe Meds Campaign

- 684 campaign radio spots
- 35,000 people reached for 25 weeks by radio ads
- Campaign materials were distributed at 12 local community events
- 375.2 pounds of unused medications were collected at Hanover and Lebanon Police Department
- Twin State Safe Meds website was viewed 1,080 times April-September 2016 (time of radio campaign)

National Take Back Day

- 5 participating police departments for October 2016 National Take Back Day
- 4 participating police departments for April 2017 National Take Back Day

- 9 National Take Back Day social media posts with 592 impressions
- October 2016: 327.8 LBS collected
** This number does not include drugs from Plainfield Police Department*
- April 2017: 251.7 LBS collected
** This number includes Plainfield PD collection from both October 2016 and April 2016 Take Back Days*

Lock Boxes Distributed

- 115 lock boxes distributed
- Distributed by health coaches, community health workers, marijuana dispensary, community events, and community organizations

Parents Night

- 33 attendees
- 15 [Operation Parent Handbooks](#) distributed
- 100% of the 7 parents who answered the event survey felt that they got the information they need to help them talk with their teen(s) regarding challenges they face like; substance use, bullying, unhealthy relationships, stress etc.
- 71% of the 7 parents who answered the event survey felt that they got the information they need to be able to effectively monitor their teen

While the most recent intermediate results are still yet to come from the Drug Free Communities Survey and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, we have received these positive results from the Stakeholders Survey as seen below (see Appendix C).

- 63% of stakeholders believe that the community is less tolerant than they were a year ago of prescription drug use without a doctor's orders.

Our long term results will come from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the next Young Adult Survey.

Discussion

The activities in this logic model built off of preexisting activities, strengthening the work already in place. Activities served to further promote the message and increase access to events and tools to safely store and dispose of medications. Activities included four out of the [Seven Strategies for Community Change](#) (see Appendix F) including: provide information, increase access, provide support, and enhance skills. Research supports the importance of using multiple strategies to create lasting community change. These activities allowed ALL Together to engage with many different partners and sectors including law enforcement and safety, business, health and medical, community and family supports, parents, and youth. They also permitted contact on an individual basis as well as a wide reach of over 35,000 people through radio PSAs.

Results created were through these activities were positive. We will continue to reevaluate our progress as more results become available. We will continue using and building upon this strategy to increase perception of harm of prescription drug misuse in the Upper Valley.

What We Are Doing Next

ALL Together will continue to expand capacity with all target populations and sectors as noted in our current Strategic Plan. We will work towards sustainability in all of our projects including the Community Retailer Program, local coalitions, Community Crisis Resource Partnership and others. Initially, we will prioritize sustainability with the community retailer program, increasing Suicide and Mental Health Interventions, and targeting the young adult population by implementing InShape Prevention Plus Wellness. Marijuana will remain a focus as we continue to develop strategies to increase the perception of harm.

Conclusion

ALL Together benefits from its dual role as the Upper Valley Regional Substance Misuse Prevention Network and regional Drug Free Communities Coalition. The coordination and resource sharing amplifies the impact of the regional work. ALL Together coordinators actively involve health and medical, education, law enforcement and safety, community and family supports, and business partners as well as community members in the foundation of the regional network.

This past year, ALL Together supported local coalitions in their growth and continued to build the capacity of the regional coalition. We focused on reducing prescription drug, alcohol, and marijuana use. We primarily engaged individuals who work with youth, but we continued to build foundational relationships to expand our work with the young adult population. We will continue to focus on strategies targeted at youth over the next year and will also begin implementing strategies targeted at young adults.

We have been able to build off of a strong foundation of suicide prevention and mental health promotion as well as strong strategies to address prescription drug misuse. We will continue to grow programs aimed at alcohol, marijuana and tobacco misuse with an emphasis on creating sustainability through broad community ownership. Communication and data sharing will continue to be important. It has been a successful year and ALL Together will continue to recruit and invite others to get involved in ALL Together sponsored activities and initiatives.

Contact Information

Upper Valley Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator:

Jacqui Baker, CPS

603-653-6817

info@uvalltogether.org

www.uvalltogether.org