



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF SOUHEGAN VALLEY**

TO: SOR@dhhs.nh.gov

RE: FOA No. TI-18-015

This submission is in response to the request from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for public input on its plan to submit a proposal to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for the State Opioid Response (SOR) Grant.

The Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley (BGCSV) would like to recommend that the DHHS consider providing funding for further development of Supportive Education for Youth Impacted by a Loved One's Substance Use Disorder; Peer Mentoring Services for Youth; and Youth-Led/Adult-Guided Rx Drug Prevention Campaign.

One stated purpose of this funding opportunity is to "utilize evidence-based implementation strategies to identify which system design models will most rapidly address and adequately address the gaps in systems of care." Gaps include the lack of direct services available to children and youth impacted by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) which include a loved one's substance use disorder; training for Peer to Peer Mentoring of Youth; and Youth Led Rx Prevention Campaigns.

BGCSV is home to the Community Action for Safe Teens (CAST) Coalition, which is the youth substance use prevention coalition serving Souhegan Valley. CAST is a committee of BGCSV which includes over forty community stakeholders and youth with the following mission:

The mission of Community Action for Safe Teens (CAST) is to prevent substance misuse in the Souhegan Valley, promote healthy choices among youth, and educate, support and strengthen families.

The Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley's (BGCSV) mission is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to be great today and reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens tomorrow. The Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley is providing supportive education services to children directly impacted by the addiction crisis, which includes opioids. At BGCSV we offer the Children's Resiliency Retreat on a monthly basis during the school year. This program primarily serves children through grade eight. The intent

of the programs is to interrupt the intergenerational disease of addiction and provide these youth with opportunities to change their trajectory.

Substance Use Disorder, also known as addiction, is a family disease. When one is affected, all are impacted. In the Children's Resiliency Retreat program offered by BCGSV children learn:

- ◆ How alcoholism and drug addiction affect the family
- ◆ About the disease of addiction and whether to use alcohol or other drugs
- ◆ How to recognize and handle feelings in positive ways
- ◆ How to develop positive feelings about themselves
- ◆ How to cope with problems safely
- ◆ How to make safe decisions
- ◆ How to get help, stay safe, and have fun

The Children's Resiliency Retreat has been very well received in our community but there are critical needs not currently being met by this program and there is a need for additional supports to be included in these programs.

The following are recommended strategies to be considered in order to address our community's needs with this funding opportunity:

Strategy 1: Supplement Supportive Education Programming for youth and development of support groups for older teens.

Although our Children's Resiliency Retreat is serving our youngest children impacted by the opioid crisis (ages 6-13), there is a gap and critical need for supports and services for our older teens and young adults.

Supportive Education for youth impacted by a loved one's substance use disorder should be considered an integral piece of a family's comprehensive plan for recovery. While we are currently provide programming for children and young teens, there is a significant need for support groups for older teens as well. Building community capacity and staff development in the area of ACEs

Strategy 2: Support training for Youth Peer Mentoring Groups.

BGCSV has an active youth arm of the CAST Coalition and they are excited to work with youth to make a positive impact in building a healthy, resilient community. Peer mentoring training would include supportive education programming for our older teens and incorporate their participation into the Children's Resiliency Retreat to provide cross age mentoring.

Peer mentoring has long been identified as an effective method for developing healthy behaviors among youth. "Peer mentoring allows for the incorporation of skill-building

activities; reinforcement of self-regulation activities; engagement in individual and group activities; and social support to meet personal health goals.”(R. L. Petosa & Dr. Laureen H. Smith (2014) Peer Mentoring for Health Behavior Change: A Systematic Review, American Journal of Health Education, 45:6, 351-357, DOI: [10.1080/19325037.2014.945670](https://doi.org/10.1080/19325037.2014.945670))

The evidence-based Positive Peer Mentoring program would provide a healthy protective factor and reduce the potential for substance misuse onset in our youth. In addition, collaborating with outside agencies to provide service activities for our older teens and young adults would give them a deeper sense of hope and belonging. This sense of belonging is critical for children and youth whose families are affected by substance use disorder as well as other ACEs. Research has shown young people. Especially those who have experienced ACEs, need to be connected to positive peer role models and adults in the community to diminish the feelings of isolation and hopelessness that frequently accompany the disease of addiction. “The mentoring relationship is linked to positive outcomes for youth in domains such as self-concept, behavior, and academic achievement.”(Rhodes, J. E., Spencer, R., Keller, T. E., Liang, B. and Noam, G. (2006), A model for the influence of mentoring relationships on youth development. J. Community Psychol., 34: 691-707. DOI:10.1002/jcop.20124)

Strategy 3: Supporting the Development of Youth Led Rx Drug Misuse Prevention Campaigns

Positive peer pressure is also considered a significant protective factor in substance misuse prevention efforts. Providing financial support to initiate public awareness campaigns, such as Generation Rx, would provide another strategy to curb the early onset of substance misuse in our youth. There desperately needs to be more attention and funding directed toward youth-led prevention and community coalition efforts. It is the upcoming generation that will turn the tide on this crisis. According to the 2015 NSDUH survey, at least 120,000 over the age of 12 qualify for a substance use disorder. That is over 10 percent of New Hampshire’s population. By providing funding to empower communities to develop and strengthen community protective factors, the state of New Hampshire could reduce the economic impact caused by Substance Use Disorder.

Thank you for your consideration of the above captioned recommendations. If you have any questions or feedback, please do not hesitate to contact me at 603-672-1002 ext. 39.

Sincerely,



Monica Gallant, CPS

Director of Prevention Services

