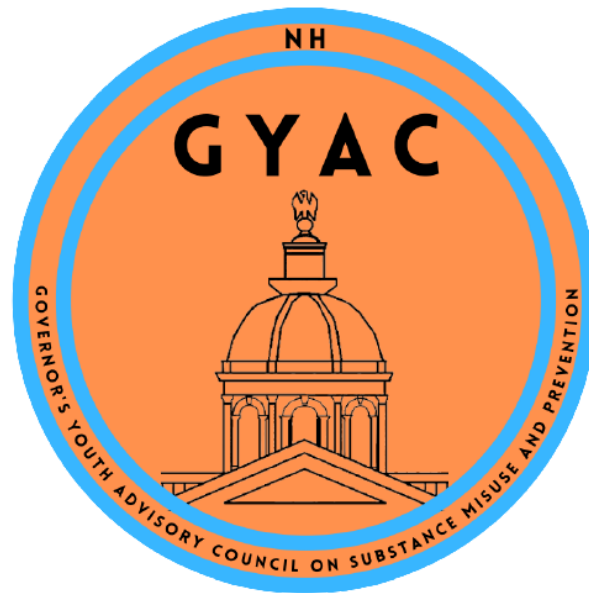


NEW HAMPSHIRE
GOVERNOR'S YOUTH
ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON SUBSTANCE MISUSE & PREVENTION



ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

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INTRODUCTION

The New Hampshire Governor's Youth Advisory Council on Substance Misuse and Prevention (GYAC) was created in 2017 by Governor Christopher T. Sununu. The purpose of the Council is to offer a youth perspective on the drug crisis in the State of New Hampshire. Our goal is to advise the Governor on related issues, such as, prescription drug misuse and general mental health concerns with teens. When it comes to approaching issues surrounding youth and substance use, having youth voices is crucial. Teens have a better understanding of how they themselves think and how to reach their peers. This Council offers that perspective, not only to the Governor, but to all citizens willing to listen.

To kick off the year, GYAC began with welcoming returning members, as well as new members and voting on positions. Members of GYAC include Abigail Bone, Lyla Buxton (Vice Chair), Kylie Cloutier, Grace Coughlin, Hailey Dubois, Loreley Godfrey (Executive Officer), Jacob Lebroda, Bradley Matarazzo, Spencer Matarazzo, Autumn Pelletier (Secretary), Luisa Pelletier, Kaisar Perry, Elsa Rogers (Chair), Narayan Sajeev (Executive Officer), Likhita Thiriveedi (Executive Officer), and Kaylee Truong. The Council is advised by Timothy Lena and Maura McGowan, and Dave Mara and Eliza Zarka serve as the Governor's liaisons.

Over the past year, we as GYAC, have targeted youth substance misuse and prevention methods through our social media platforms, and through the creation of new committees in order to effectively work on projects to fulfill GYAC's mission. We have had presenters attend our meetings to share with us their expertise on topics relating to our mission statement, and had the privilege to attend the Drug Free is Up to Me Virtual Youth Summit this previous fall. We are still in the process of recruitment, and are continuously setting goals to strengthen our Council.

YEAR IN REVIEW

In October 2021, the Governor's Youth Advisory Council heard from The Partnership for a Drug Free NH. They introduced their work and shared volunteer opportunities regarding National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. We also moved forward with the following collaboration opportunities:

- 1) We highlighted two youth members, Hailey Dubois & Jacob Lebroda, on The Partnership's podcast.
- 2) We created a shared social media page for National Drugs & Alcohol Facts Week.
- 3) Several youth members joined The Partnership's advisory councils to continue to raise youth awareness.
- 4) We organized a social media takeover for Prevention Week from May 10th - 14th.



Karyn Dudley Madore from The Partnership presenting to GYAC at their October meeting

Together, our youth members were able to collaborate with resources so generously shared by The Partnership, while lending a younger perspective to both our respective programs. Our mission to raise drug and alcohol awareness is ultimately benefited by this collaboration.

In November 2021, the Governor's Youth Advisory Council had the opportunity to participate in the annual *Drug Free Is Up To Me* Virtual Youth Summit - held by the Drug Enforcement Agency. The summit was viewed by approximately fifteen thousand students and teachers across the state of New Hampshire. GYAC members Likhita Thiriveedi, Loreley Godfrey, and Narayan Sajejev had a significant role within the summit, all participating in a panel discussion. The panel discussed their personal viewpoints about drug use in schools, and how to support a peer who may be using substances. Elsa Rogers also got the privilege to speak in front of the virtual crowd about her time in the Council, along with her work in her local community. Overall, the summit allowed the Governor's Youth Advisory Council to gain publicity, which helps the groups goals to further help and educate teenagers across the state.



GYAC members at the set where the Drug Free is Up to Me Summit was broadcast live

In February 2022, we were able to learn about the upcoming launch of the 988 lifeline from Jenny O'Higgins, from the NH Department of Health and Human Services, as well as Mary Forsythe-Taber, from *Makin' It Happen Coalition for Resilient Youth, Inc.* The group attended a listening session to the presentation about the 988 hotline and how the line will work prior to its

launch in July. We discussed the presentation, and had the opportunity to give our feedback from the youth standpoint.



NH 988 virtual presentation to the Council by Jennifer Higgins of DHHS and Mary Forsythe-Taber of Makin' It Happen

In March 2022, we hosted a presentation from Live Free Recovery Consultants. We learned about their clinically-based adolescent peer recovery support program based out of Newton, NH. In conjunction with Live Free Recovery Consultants, we heard from the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability regarding their Creating Connections program. This program implements a system of care for youth with Substance Use Disorders (SUD) and co-occurring mental health disorders through methods like Alternative Peer Groups. Both of these presentations were valuable in that they explained how their programs help youth who are experiencing trouble with substance use. Expansion of services for youth is necessary, and we were happy to hear about these programs starting to fill that gap.



Bob Faghan and Elizabeth Nash from Live Free Recovery Consultants presenting to the Council

This year in the Governor's Youth Advisory Council, we continued the momentum we had last year with our social media platform. We viewed it best to use Instagram to connect with individuals of our generation as we found that Instagram is what the members of the Council primarily used. As of the end of March 2022, we have amassed one hundred and fifty-two Instagram followers. While initially, we primarily used social media to advertise the activities of those on the Council—such as when we welcomed new members or when we participated in the “*Drug Free is Up to Me*” Virtual Youth Summit—we eventually also used it to spread important information. So far, the Council has made information posts on the following topics: seasonal depression, how to help loved ones with addiction, and a 4-part series on drugs and their impacts. From our point of view, it is best to spread the word about these topics from a youth perspective, as that is the perspective that will be most digestible for fellow members of the youth community.

MOVING FORWARD

As a group, we hope to increase the number of youth applying to be a part of the Council, as well as reach out to communities to raise awareness toward GYAC itself. We started to get the ball rolling on recruitment. This year we set a focus on trying to recruit eighth graders. We want to ensure that this council remains intact, long after its current members have graduated. The most effective way to do this is to recruit young students who will remain with the program through high school. Our first step is to contact New Hampshire schools that contain students who will be grades 9-12 in the following year. We also have intent to expand our recruitment using the press, social media, and word of mouth by our current members.

GYAC has also brainstormed plans for the future by highlighting new ways of promotion and communication. The Council plans to expand on social media platforms by posting more frequently and gaining a larger following. We also plan to highlight and execute our upcoming Spotlight Project that will help to promote youth advocates across NH. We have discussed running booths at events to raise overall awareness. We also plan to keep connections with partnerships allowing us to stay involved with the community and youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNOR

- Better education standards regarding mental health and substance use issues
- Host a forum to spread the word about GYAC
- Expand youth treatment options in the State
- Advertise GYAC on social media platforms and follow us

WHERE TO FIND US

At the State House in Executive Council Chambers every 3rd Saturday of the month...or...

- GYAC State Site: www.governor.nh.gov/youth
- GYAC Google Site: www.sites.google.com/view/gyac
- GYAC Instagram: www.instagram.com/nh.gyac/ >> (@NH.GYAC)

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Abigail Bone, Danville

Lyla Buxton, New Ipswich

Kylie Cloutier, Fremont

Grace Coughlin, Etna

Hailey Dubois, Jaffrey

Loreley Godfrey, Portsmouth

Jacob Lebroda, Derry

Bradley Matarazzo, Pelham

Spencer Matarazzo, Pelham

Autumn Pelletier, Manchester

Luisa Pelletier, Dover

Kaisar Perry, Derry

Elsa Rogers, Dover

Narayan Sajeev, Nashua

Likhita Thiriveedi, Nashua

Kaylee Truong, Rindge