



Cambridge Prevention Coalition E-Newsletter

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Subcommittee Updates

Although summer tends to be a quieter time for coalitions, this year it is heating up for the CPC. With the two new grants it has received, many of the Coalition's Subcommittees and Task Forces have continued their great work.

The Environmental Strategies Sub-Committee has met and is continuing to build on its work plan. Since the Coalition's new underage drinking prevention grant is requiring a new needs assessment on the issue, the committee is taking a step back and looking at its goals for the year and is ensuring that it has the data to support the need for the work.

In addition, the Opioid Overdose Reduction Task Force is also meeting during the summer months. The Task Force is in a needs assessment phase, and it is gathering data from as many of its partners as possible. So far, members of the Task Force have been extremely helpful in obtaining the necessary information, and they will continue meeting monthly.

Although TADAA in itself has not been meeting, the youth have been working hard on the 3 City Collaborative, which is further described in this newsletter.

Cambridge Prevention Leaders of 2008

Even while they aren't in meetings, members of the Coalition all play an important part in the effort toward substance abuse prevention. **Nominate the Cambridge Prevention Leaders of 2008** for the Outstanding Youth Leader, Outstanding Youth Organization, Outstanding Agency/Organization, Exemplary Leadership Award, and the Richard V. Scali Most Responsible Retailer Award.

The nomination form is attached and can be returned to CPC Director Gisela Rots at grots@cambridgema.gov.

Launch of New Marketing Campaign Aimed at Reducing Prescription Drug Abuse

Cambridge, July 23, 2008- The 3 City Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative of Somerville, Cambridge and Everett is launching a campaign that aims to reduce access to prescription drugs in the home, to raise awareness about the dangers of prescription drugs, and to provide addiction treatment information to their

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communities. The collaborative is composed of the cities' substance abuse prevention coalitions: Somerville Cares About Prevention, Cambridge Prevention Coalition and Everett Community Health Partnership – Substance Abuse Coalition.

With this campaign, the coalitions will address the growing danger of prescription drug abuse in their cities. The campaign will raise awareness about the link between prescription medication and substance abuse addiction by targeting locations where these drugs are prescribed, such as dentist offices, pharmacies and health clinics. Campaign materials will be distributed in late July and August and include postcards, posters and magnets that publicize the signs and symptoms of addiction, prescription drug awareness and addiction treatment contact information.

The drugs the collaborative is focusing on include **painkillers**, **depressants** and **stimulants**. The introduction of Oxycontin, a highly addictive synthetic opiate, and other oral painkillers in the late 1990s created a dangerous path for teens that often led to severe addictions and sometimes death. Among intravenous drug users between the ages of 18-25 at Cambridge Cares About AIDS, the progression of their addiction typically began with the abuse of oral medications including Vicodin and benzodiazepines by the age 16. By age 17, this youth group progressed to Oxycontin; and by age 18, they had moved on to heroin.

View more information about the [3 City Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative](#) and their campaign for prescription drug abuse awareness and prevention.

3 City Youth Collaborative

In association with Somerville Cares about Prevention, Cambridge Health Alliance, Cambridge Prevention Coalition, and Somerville Community Access Television (SCAT), teens from Cambridge, Everett and Somerville have joined together to form the 3 City Youth Collaborative.

Throughout the summer, these individuals have been studying and working on media projects that will be shown on each city's local cable access channel. The final products, which consist of two public service announcements, two music videos (including a spoken-word piece) and one documentary have been written, produced, performed and edited by these talented young people. Together, these media pieces will help inform people about an issue that is currently a hot topic among teenagers: prescription drug misuse.

Prescription drug misuse has increased tremendously over the past decade. With such insight, the 3 City Youth Collaborative, is working together to help spread awareness in their communities through positive media outreach. These teens, while learning advanced media skills from Prince Charles and Dacia Kornechuck of SCAT, have also increased their own personal knowledge on the topic of prescription drug misuse. Putting their creativity to the test, the students had to produce all media projects around this topic.

The youth hope to target teenagers and any other individuals who may feel the effects of the controversial topic. As a reward for their communal effort and achievement, the teens will be compensated by a grant that warrants the making of these awareness videos.

21 Proof Successful in Reading, MA

Already well on its way to becoming one of Rhode Island's alcohol server-seller trainings, the Cambridge Prevention Coalition's *21 Proof* has continued its expansion in Massachusetts as well. The latest community for which the training has been adapted is Reading, MA, where CPC Project Coordinator Frank Connelly recently delivered a series of trainings.

Additionally, the 21 Proof trainings for "Serving Smart" and "Selling Smart" were conducted at the Reading Police Station in conjunction with the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse, providing training for all servers and sellers and managers/owners.

"This was another successful adaptation of our training for another community," said Connelly.

With the success of *21 Proof*, which is a science-based, award-winning program, the Cambridge Prevention Coalition has more opportunities to promote substance abuse awareness, prevention and treatment within the community.

Marijuana and Schizophrenia: The Disturbing Connection

Over generations, marijuana has often been viewed as a natural, harmless drug, and efforts have even been made to legalize the substance. However, although marijuana does not appear to have the same devastating effects as other illegal narcotics, new research has found that its use may cause more damage to the brain than is immediately apparent. Several studies have concluded that there may be a link between marijuana use and schizophrenia in people vulnerable to the psychotic disorder.

An [article on MedicalNewsToday.com](#) explained the findings of one report published in *Archives of General Psychiatry*, a journal of the American Medical Association. According to the article, marijuana use interferes with the brain's attempt to compensate for gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) deficiency, which is a common trait in schizophrenics. GABA is an important neurotransmitter essential for core cognitive processes such as working memory.

"Heavy marijuana use, particularly in adolescence, appears to be associated with an increased risk for the later development of schizophrenia, and the course of illness is worse for people with schizophrenia who use marijuana," said David A. Lewis, M.D., one of the authors of the study. "I believe that we can narrow down at least part of the 'why' to CB1R."

CB1R, the abbreviation for the cannabinoid 1 receptor, is the site of action for the main chemical ingredient in marijuana, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Typically in schizophrenics, the expression of this receptor is significantly lower than in those without the disorder. According to Lewis, the reduction of this receptor's activity is the brain trying to counterbalance the abnormality in GABA levels. When marijuana is used, the stimulation of CB1R negates this compensation, increasing the effects of the schizophrenia.

A separate study published last year in *The Lancet*, one of the oldest peer reviewed medical journals in the world, concluded that individuals who used

cannabis were 41 percent more likely to have any psychosis than those who had never used the drug. According to a [News-Medical.net article](#) synthesizing the study, the risk increased relative to dose, with the most frequent cannabis users more than twice as likely to have a psychotic outcome.

"It is difficult to be certain about whether cannabis use causes psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia. It is possible that the people who use cannabis might have other characteristics that themselves increase risk of psychotic illness," said Professor Glyn Lewis from the University of Bristol, senior author on the paper. "However, all the studies have found an association, and it seems appropriate to warn members of the public about the possible risk."

New information regarding the drug is especially pertinent this season, as voters prepare to make a monumental decision on the state's policies regarding marijuana. This November, Massachusetts voters will determine whether to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana. Question 2 will decide if adults possessing an ounce or less of marijuana for personal use will still face the current punishment, which includes up to six months of jail time and a \$500 fine, as well as a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) report.

The [Cambridge Prevention Coalition](#) will release a marijuana fact sheet later this summer to aid in your decision.

Member Profile: Ruth Woods Dunham



Ruth Woods Dunham is the Executive Director of On The Rise, a daytime resource and community for women from throughout Greater Boston who are homeless or in crisis and falling through the cracks of our social service system.

What does your job at On The Rise entail?

I oversee the agency, I'm responsible for fiscal oversight fundraising, and I'm responsible for strategic planning. I also work to insure the quality of the program, the facility and the staff. I'm in charge of increasing the visibility of On The Rise and maintaining relationships with other professionals in homelessness, and I work with the board to make sure we're working toward our mission: "Helping women who are homeless or in crisis find safety and discover new possibilities."

What are some of your interests outside of work?

I love to cook and to garden, which are creative outlets for me. I enjoy walking, and I love listening to all different kinds of music. I also try to spend as much time as possible with my family.

What are some of the services On The Rise provides?

It's a program that meets women where they are. We meet women at different stages of crisis, and we recognize that they all have different needs. We try to help them achieve their own goals, not what we think their goals should be. We develop strategies to help women meet emergency and long term needs. The house is a dignified space, where a woman can explore steps she needs to take to enhance her quality of life. Homeless shelters don't allow people in during the day, so we open our doors to women during these times so they aren't roaming the streets.

We provide basic assistance like food, transport, meals and showers. We also have a health access program with a nurse practitioner who does health screens as well as immediate emergency needs, among other medical services. She makes referrals to connect women with a primary care physician or to specialists.

We have a wellness program where a local artist comes in once a week, and a writing group to help women find creative outlets. Staff members also participate, and this is often where women start to share their stories. We also have a massage therapist come into the house. We want the women to feel safe and to trust us. We want to provide a community for women in crisis who have lost their community.

What are some of your goals for On The Rise?

I'd like to see On The Rise continue to effect change on a policy level, and I'd like to see the greater community more involved in ending homelessness. We have a goal of getting more women into housing—we helped place 44 women last year.

We will also be launching a new program that will provide services to women already in housing. These services will help them develop and increase life skills so they earn greater independence and self sufficiency. We want to help them develop new communities, instead of only focusing on survival skills, so that they don't fall back into homelessness.

[Visit the On The Rise website.](#)

Parent Navigator Trainings

The June Parent Navigator training drew 27 participants to get informed about "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Prevention Resources" that exist in their communities. New participants received one-on-one training on how to use the Parent Contact log and report any information from the training they've shared with people in their communities. The presenter used a three-minute video clip drawn from the movie *Ray* to highlight substance abuse's impact on a family's wellbeing, and also to show how families can be the first resources to help people with substance abuse problems.

Upcoming Parent Navigator Trainings
All trainings are held from **6:00-7:30 p.m.**

August 28 Topic: Signs & Support: Mental Health
Location: Early Head Start 474 Broadway Somerville
Speaker: JoAnne Thrasher

September 25 Topic: Signs & Support: Substance Abuse
Location: Somerville Hospital, 230 Highland Ave. Somerville, Cafeteria
Conference Room
Speaker: North Charles

All trainings are **FREE** and open to the public, and refreshments will be provided. The first 15 Cambridge residents to register will receive a Shaw's gift card.

To register, contact:
Lamos Paul at 617-388-3857
Gisela Rots at 617-349-6283

TADAA Youth Group Seeks Mentoring Volunteers

The Mentoring program is designed to better integrate the youth of TADAA (Teens Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse) into the Coalition and its efforts. The session will begin this fall. Mentors are asked to meet with their mentees once a week for about 10 weeks. The goal is to design a project of mutual interest to reduce substance abuse, which the mentor and mentee will work on together. The youth will meet with their mentors wherever is most convenient for them. Mentoring is a great way to engage our youth, to create positive relationships with youth and to be a role model.

If interested, contact Gisela Rots, grots@cambridgema.gov.

October Conference to Address Substance Abuse at U.S. Colleges

It's often disturbing to find that severe substance abuse is widely accepted and often chuckled at when it comes to American college students. On October 23, media and substance abuse specialists will meet with members of the higher education community, including faculty, parents and students to confront the larger issue. This conference will be hosted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University ([CASA Columbia](http://CASA.Columbia)) in New York City.

The conference, called CASACONFERENCE, will address "How to Stop Wasting the Best and the Brightest: Substance Abuse at America's Colleges and Universities." Keynote speakers will be National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Director Nora D. Volkow, MD and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Administrator Terry Cline, PhD. Panel Moderators will include Jeffrey Toobin of CNN and *The New Yorker* and Lesley Stahl of "60 Minutes" and CBS News.

The discussion will include the panels "Getting the 'High' out of Higher Education: College Presidents, Trustees and Alumni" and "Parent Power: the Role of Parents."

"Accepting as inevitable America's college culture of alcohol and other drug abuse threatens not only the present well-being of millions of college students, but also the future capacity of our nation to maintain its leadership in the fiercely

competitive global economy,” according to CASA Columbia. “By bringing the nation’s college presidents, trustees, alumni, parents and students and the larger community together with leading journalists for dynamic panel discussions, this important and timely conference will create a dialogue that will offer *solutions* for how America can stop wasting its best and brightest young people.”

[Register for CASACONFERENCE online.](#)