

H. 293 Testimony for House Government Operations Committee

February 25, 2021

Sara Chesbrough, Department of Health, Division of Maternal & Child Health, Adolescent Health Coordinator

Holly Morehouse, Vermont Afterschool, Executive Director

Cheryle Wilcox, Department of Mental Health, Interagency Planning Director

**tri-chairs of the Youth Services Advisory Council*

Background on Youth Services Advisory Council (YSAC)

YSAC was convened in the mid-2000s by the Agency of Human Services' Secretary's Office. The Council held youth focus groups to articulate the outcomes for the Council-which are still being used today.

YSAC was utilized on an ad hoc basis from the late 2000s until 2014, when the Vermont Department of Health's Vermont Youth Treatment Enhancement Project (VYTEP), funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), revitalized the network of providers and brought a focus to youth substance misuse prevention and treatment.

The members of this group felt strongly that YSAC should not be supported solely by grant-led initiatives and should have a holistic view on prevention of risk and promotion of protective factors for youth. When the VYTEP grant ended in 2018, the YSAC remained in place. Since 2018, YSAC has solidified membership, more clearly defined Operating Guidelines and a governance structure, and committed itself more firmly to the seven outcomes (seen on the next page under "how do we know we are making an impact") originally defined by youth in Vermont.

YSAC's Position on this bill

As an Advisory Council we support the implementation of this bill and are prepared to offer the assistance needed to ensure this Youth Council is representative of youth in Vermont.

This bill provides a key opportunity to elevate the voice of youth in Vermont. The most recent results from the [Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) show that only 58% of high schoolers (down from 61% in 2017) feel valued in their community. This bill puts forth a positive and intentional way to increase the value of youth voice in Vermont. YSAC discussed this bill at the January 2020 meeting and the group all responded positively to the possibility of this bill moving forward. While the bill calls out 15 youth, these youth will also have the opportunity to talk to their peers and gather information to share back to the full council.

In the bill, the following is requested of the YSAC:

- appoint members from an applicant pool with a focus on prioritizing diversity and inclusion, including characteristics such as county of residence, gender identity, racial identity, disabilities, age, and other characteristics identified by the applicants.
- assist in notifying the public regarding the opportunity for youths to serve on the Council.

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- accept applications for service on the Council and assist in notifying the public regarding the opportunity for youth to serve on the council.
- solicit and accept applications for service.
- appoint one youth member from each county and one statewide member; and
- support the Youth Council.

We are prepared to fulfill these requests. The YSAC is made up of a varied, diverse group of state and community providers who have deep respect and knowledge of youth and youth development.

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YOUTH SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL

VISION

Youth thrive and feel hopeful, respected, empowered and connected to their communities.

MISSION

The Youth Services Advisory Council (YSAC) promotes shared responsibility across state and community stakeholders for achieving positive outcomes for youth and young adults in Vermont. The Council promotes, advocates for, and monitors the continued evolution of culturally competent, holistic, strengths-based service systems for Vermont's young people, advocates for improved quality of and access to these services, and organizes policy responses to remove barriers to achieving these goals.

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT WE DO

The Youth Services Advisory Council (YSAC) is made up of community and state partners who present an organized and unified voice for youth services by:

- Understanding and clarifying services and supports that make up the youth serving system
- Identifying gaps in services and making recommendations to bridge those gaps
- Increasing the skill of staff working with young people
- Leveraging funding opportunities
- Mapping and connecting to other groups providing youth services

HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING AN IMPACT?

The YSAC seeks to support better outcomes and increased resilience for youth, including:

- Increased job opportunities and levels of employment
- Increased positive relationships
- Increased mental health and decreased substance use
- Increased access to safe and stable housing
- Increased educational engagement, including post-secondary opportunities
- Decreased involvement in the justice system
- Increased access to health care

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Youth Services Advisory Council Membership

**Chairs*

| First | Last | Department/Division | Position |
|----------|------------|--|--|
| Adam | Sancic | Secretary's Office - Field Services Unit | Field Services Director, Middlebury/Rutland |
| Ariel | Carter | VDH/ADAP | Workforce Development Manager |
| Cheryle* | Wilcox | DMH/Interagency Planning Director | DMH Interagency Planning Director |
| Helen | Beattie | Up for Learning | Executive Director |
| Holly* | Morehouse | Vermont After School | Executive Director |
| Julia | Hampton | | Health Program Specialist |
| JoEllen | Tarallo | Center for Health and Learning | Executive Director |
| John | Spinney | AOE | Post-Secondary Transition Coordinator |
| Karen | Price | Vermont Family Network | Director of Family Support |
| Kathy | Griffin | ADAP | School Based Prevention |
| Kreig | Pinkham | Washington County Youth Services Bureau | Executive Director |
| Leslie | Farrer | Spectrum Youth and Family Services | Clinical Director |
| Lisa | Maynes | Vermont Family Network | Family Support Consultant |
| Lindy | Boudreau | DCF/Family Services Division | Juvenile Justice Director |
| Lori | Uerz | VDH/ADAP | Prevention Manager |
| Martha | Frank | Vermont Family Network | Family Support Consultant |
| Matt | Wolf | VT Afterschool | Youth Voice Coordinator |
| Kate | Luscomb | DVHA | Quality and Clinical Integrity Unit |
| Mitch | Barron | Centerpoint Adolescent Treatment Services | Executive Director |
| Pam | McCarthy | Vermont Family Network | Executive Director |
| PJ | LaPerle | Student Assistance Program | Student Assistance Professional |
| Rose | Lucenti | DOL | WIOA Youth Program Manager |
| Sara* | Chesbrough | VDH/Maternal Child Health | Program Coordinator |
| Song | Nguyen | VDH/Health Surveillance | Hep C Program Coordinator |
| Tara | Howe | DAIL/VocRehab | VocRehab Transition Program Director |
| Thomas | Delaney | Vermont Child Health Improvement Program | VYTEP Evaluator |
| Tracy | Harris | | Behavioral Supports in Schools |