



2023 - 2024
ANNUAL
REPORT

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As the new Executive Director of SERAC, I'd like to recognize Angela Duhaime, the former Executive Director, for her years of dedicated service to SERAC and her direct connection to the accomplishments in this annual report. Additionally, I'd like to thank SERAC's Board of Directors for their steadfast dedication and support of the agency's staff and mission.

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude and pride for what we have achieved together. This annual report is not just a snapshot of our activities but also a testament to the unwavering commitment and passion of our staff and partners to bring the best prevention practices to our region. SERAC's scope and staff have grown over the past year, and we are positioned to continue our great work across the life span on the topics of substance misuse, gambling prevention, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention. Looking ahead, we are excited to announce that SERAC will be receiving JUUL settlement dollars, as well as a portion of a proceeds from the cannabis tax. Both initiatives, generated by the state's investment in SERAC, will allow us to build on our momentum and will bring additional awareness, education and resources to our communities on the topics of vaping and cannabis usage. Thank you to all of our funders and partners for their support and continued collaboration. We believe connection is prevention and look forward to partnering with you to make a difference in your community and the forty-one towns in region 3.

—Mark Irons

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Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization (RBHAO)

SERAC is the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services RBHAO and serves the forty-one towns in Eastern Connecticut. RBHAOs are responsible for a range of planning, education, and advocacy of behavioral health needs and services across the lifespan. Under the purview of DMHAS and the RBHAO are the Problem Gambling Awareness Grant, State Opioid Response Grant, Recovery Friendly Workplace Grant, and the Regional Suicide Advisory Board.

SERAC administers Local Prevention Council (LPC) grants to build each municipality's readiness and resources in their prevention efforts. This year, SERAC awarded twenty-six grants that covered thirty-three towns in Region 3. These grant dollars allow for prevention efforts to reduce vaping rates, policy implementation, education on new age restrictions, curriculum updates, and merchant education.

SERAC participated in National Prevention Week by offering Narcan trainings at community centers in our region, delivering tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis awareness materials to vendors, a presentation by Sara Wilkinson, Suicide in the Military Connected Community, and hosted its first virtual Annual Prevention Conference.

Problem Gambling Awareness Grant

SERAC partners and engages community leaders in problem gambling prevention, treatment, and recovery and to integrate problem gambling awareness and advocacy into behavioral health programs. Highlights include: training 207 community members through our Community Conversations about Gambling; Outreach efforts included tabling events, wellness fairs, and connecting with the twenty-eight senior centers in the region; The Regional Gambling Awareness Team increased membership by 25%; SERAC also trained 90 people in Gambling: A Leading Risk Factor for Suicide.



State Opioid Response Grant

This grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funds efforts to increase opioid awareness and opioid overdose prevention. Highlights include: dispersal of over 300 Narcan kits, over 150 people trained in suicide prevention, disseminating information on safe medication storage and disposal, and promotion of state campaigns on opioid awareness. SERAC awarded six \$5000 mini-grants to communities to assist them in their opioid prevention efforts.

Regional Suicide Advisory Board

The goal of the board is to integrate and coordinate suicide prevention, intervention and postvention and grief support and recovery activities across multiple sectors and settings within the 41 towns of the region. The Board's membership has grown to 140 members from diverse backgrounds. Over 800 people have been trained in Question, Persuade, & Refer, Talk Saves Lives, and Youth Mental Health First Aid. SERAC has offered a variety of presentations connected to the topic of suicide prevention with over 300 people attending.

Below are some of the presentations which were offered to our region:

- Caring Contacts
- "Understanding Mental Illness: What people affected by mental illness want you to know"
- Ageism and Mental Health
- Supporting Asian Clients in Mental Health Settings
- Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (CSSRS)
- "Understanding Anxiety, Alexithymia and Impulsivity to Support Autistic Adults in Suicide Prevention"
- Suicide and Suicidal Risk Characteristics in the Black Community
- Sara Wilkinson – Suicide in the Military Connected Community
- Bullying and Suicide

SERAC staff has provided direct support to several schools and communities following suicide losses. The support has involved coordination with local providers, sharing resources and best practices and follow-up educational offerings. On several occasions, SERAC staff facilitated Post-Traumatic Stress Management Groups for individuals impacted by loss. An overview of Postvention has also been provided to a variety of organizations with the goal of developing postvention teams.

Recovery Friendly Workplace Grant

This state initiative is dovetailed into the State Opioid Response grant and partners the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization with the Department of Labor, Department of Public Health, and Department of Mental Health Addiction Services.

SERAC celebrates the addition of Town of Coventry, Community Speaks Out, and SCADD to our growing list of Recovery Friendly Workplaces, where they are joined by Beer'd Brewing, Keith's Appliances, Right of Way Solutions, Town of Thompson, Thompson Public Schools, Alarming Ideas, the Town of Windham, Madonna Place, Cozy Corner, Covenant Soup Kitchen and TEEG. If you are interested in making your workplace Recovery Friendly, please contact SERAC for more information.



Partnerships For Success Strategic Prevention Framework

In October 2019, SERAC was awarded a five-year PFS-SPF grant from SAMHSA to increase the capacity and address youth substance abuse in the Quiet Corner of CT with the grant ending in September 2024. During this grant cycle, SERAC targeted 21 communities in Eastern CT. These communities were Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Lebanon, Mansfield, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Union, Willington, Windham, and Woodstock.

During the grant we launched the 21 For A Reason campaign. 21 For A Reason provides resources and information regarding the risks associated with alcohol, nicotine/ vaping, cannabis, and online gambling and gaming. The website contains helpful facts, warning signs, tips for parents, merchants, and resources on each substance. SERAC also used this funding to provide multi-media messaging around the 21 For a Reason campaign.

SERAC reached out to all the alcohol retailers in the northeast and provided ID checking guides, liquor stickers, window clings promoting 21 For a Reason. Training for Intervention Procedures (TIPS), the responsible server, sale, and consumption training, was offered to all retailers of liquor stores and restaurants.

SERAC has provided yearly training from The SEARCH Institute, CADCA, The Montana Institute, and Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM), as well as trainings on Cultural Inclusion, and Prevention Ethics.

Congressional Direct Spending (CDS) Grant

SERAC was awarded a congressionally funded program to support wellness and community engagement in 13 rural communities within Eastern CT affected by COVID, racial inequality, and economic change by implementing SAMHSA 8 dimensions of wellness. Towns included by this grant included Ashford, Bozrah, Canterbury, Chaplin, Columbia, Eastford, Franklin, Hampton, Lebanon, Lisbon, Scotland, Sprague, and Union.

Through the Congressional Direct Spending grant, we held multiple tabling events to promote community resource awareness as well as safe medication storage and disposal and promoted National Prevention week within the communities. We additionally provided a 4-part training series to promote overall wellness based on the 8 dimensions of wellness, a Life Initiated training focused on personal development and leadership training, as well as providing a virtual Mental Health First Aid training.

Under the Congressional Direct Spending grant we launched a Bring the Light to Mental Health campaign that provided resources and information regarding who is at increased risk of mental health conditions, test individuals knowledge of mental health, as well as providing local and national resources to support mental health. SERAC also hosted a Wellness Through Connection Festival that was attended by 179 community members.



STOP Grant-DHHS and SAMHSA Funded

Sober Truth on Prevention Underage Drinking Act Grant works to prevent and reduce alcohol use among youth and young adults aged 12-20 in communities across Southeastern CT. SERAC aimed to reestablish the Adolescent Leadership and Learning Initiative (ALLI) program to increase and strengthen youth coalition members and expand education on underage drinking and binge drinking. SERAC utilized the ALLI program to host a Bullying Round table for 41 students from 6 schools to discuss bullying, ways to improve community climate, and how to stop bullying in Eastern CT. SERAC also hosted a Diversity and Equity training for 35 middle school students from 5 schools to acknowledge and embrace everyone's differences.

Epidemiology

SERAC's epidemiologist collected valuable regional data used in the Regional Priority Report and provided presentations to LPCs, the Regional Prevention Team, the Regional Suicide Advisory Board, and the Regional Gambling Awareness Team. A total of eight coalition partnerships completed Youth Surveys, resulting in over 6,000 youth surveyed in Connecticut. The Epidemiologist in partnership with Dr. Cara Zimmerman, Brown University, presented a series on Emerging Drug Trends that focused on fentanyl, xylazine, and stimulant use in Region 3.

Partnerships

Regional Prevention Team: Meets every other month on the first Thursday at 9am, to discuss emerging issues, events and training opportunities, and state, regional, and local updates.

Regional Gambling Awareness Team: Meets every month on the second Thursday at 9am, to build local capacity to address problem gambling and underage gambling.

Regional Suicide Advisory Board: Meets every month on the first Tuesday at 9am, and brings individuals from diverse sectors together to integrate and coordinate suicide prevention and mental health activities.

Offerings

Opioid Use Disorder: Learn about opioid use disorder, statistics, signs of an overdose, how to administer Naloxone and receive a box of Naloxone.

Vaping: Free training for parents and youth regarding the dangers of vaping. Research based curriculums to prevent or stop vaping among youth. Receive free THC test strips for vape assessment.

Alcohol: TIPS alcohol safety training, prevention education bags for community vendors, and training for youth empowerment.

Cannabis: Learn the reasons the cannabis age is twenty-one, get free lock boxes to protect youth and pets, learn about safe consumption and storage of cannabis products.

Suicide Prevention: Training includes myths and facts of suicide, warning signs, how to have a conversation, suicide data, and how to get someone the help they may need.

Board & Staff

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Vice Chair:

Michele
Fontaine

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Stacey Lawton

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Kate Alves

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Deborah Walker

**Recovery
Friendly
Workplace
Coordinator**

Eric Reynolds

**Cannabis
Grant Program
Coordinator**

Megan Erdman

**Juul Grant
Program
Coordinator**

Jessica Garcia

**Office
Assistant**

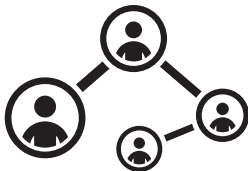
Hayleigh
Huhtala

**Problem
Gambling
Program
Coordinator**

Katie Wilt

**Financial One
Associate**

Kathryn
Sadowski



SERAC

Mission statement:

SERAC engages the communities of Eastern Connecticut to implement proven practices that reduce the impact of behavioral health challenges across the lifespan through collaboration, needs assessment, capacity building, and advocacy.

Contact Us



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