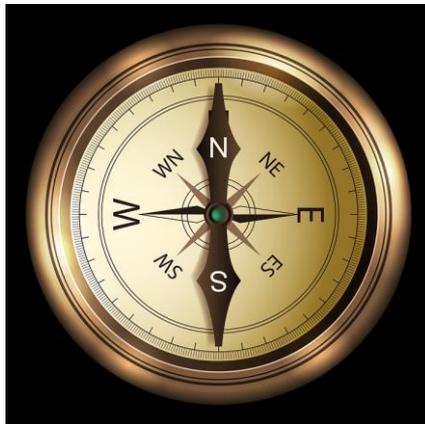




Annual Report 2019



WORKING TOGETHER FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Chairman's Remarks

Letter from Leadership

In the summer of 2018, the Board and Staff of SERAC came together to launch a strategic planning process after being awarded the contract to serve as the Region 3 Behavioral Health Action Organization through CT DMHAS.

SERAC's mission grew to include some of the functions of the Eastern Regional Mental Health Board and doubled our geographic service area. These changes, combined with efforts to sustain our work, resulted in SERAC hiring Fio Partners, LLC, to help develop a strategic plan that created a new vision and mission for the new region and responsibilities.

This planning process was designed to be a team effort between Board and Staff with the support of Fio Partners. Shared discussions that focused on moving forward and not backwards helped us create a shared understanding of the current realities facing SERAC, as well as a shared vision for the future potential impact of SERAC.

Together, we have made great strides over the past year to support SERAC through developing a three-year strategic plan, strategies and tactics for implementation, updated policies and procedures and a solid board development and recruitment plan.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the Strategic Planning Committee Members for all of their efforts in helping to develop the plan's framework. The Committee's contributions to the content took a significant amount of coordination, sensitivity, skill, teamwork and time. At times it was challenging, but the community service focused results are rewarding.

I want to thank our Executive Director, and the staff for their insight and input, and the substantial meeting time spent working with Fio Partners to ensure we developed the background and knowledge needed to push the process forward.

Lastly, thank you to our dedicated volunteer Board of Directors who gave so much of their time and energy to accomplish this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Congratulations and well done!

Sincerely,

Ed Chmielewski, Former Chairperson
John Duca, Vice Chairperson

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Glossary of Acronyms

ALLI: Adolescent Learning and Leadership Institute

A-SBIRT: Adolescent Screening Brief Intervention Referral to Treatment

CAC: Catchment Area Council

CAP: Community or Congregation Awareness Program

DFC: Drug Free Communities

DMHAS: Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

LPC: Local Prevention Council

MHAT: Mental Health Awareness Training Grant

QPR: Question Persuade Refer

RBHAO: Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization

SPF: Strategic Prevention Framework

STOP: Sober Truth on Prevention Grant

(Y)MHFA: (Youth) Mental Health First Aid

About SERAC

SERAC is a regional, community-based, nonprofit organization. Our role is to conduct needs assessment, capacity building and training across eastern CT to address behavioral health across the lifespan. We oversee the planning and implementation of local prevention activities and aim to maximize resources where gaps in capacity exist. Created in 1989 as a council by state legislation, to address gaps and needs in local level issues around substance use, SERAC has grown in both the scope of prevention to include mental health promotion work as well as expanded their catchment area. This past year marked a major milestone for SERAC that included strategic planning with Fio Partners for our vision, mission, values, and goals for the future.

We envision...

- Less substance abuse and problem gambling and a greater degree of mental well-being among residents.
- Greater recognition of the importance, value, and impact of prevention.
- Individuals with addiction and/or mental health needs are engaged, supported, and empowered to work on their own behalf and feel included by their communities.
- Communities are empowered and responsive to their own mental health, substance abuse, and problem gambling needs.
- Communities are aligned and acting in collaboration across sectors, with data, and through responsive and evidence-based programs, activities, and services around prevention and promoting optimal mental wellbeing.

Our mission is ...

To engage and unite the individuals and communities of eastern CT around issues related to addictions and mental wellbeing across the behavioral health continuum through needs assessments, capacity building, and advocacy.

We value...

Integrity
Excellence
Collaboration
Innovation

Our Core Functions

- Conducting needs assessment for behavioral health issues.
- Identify gaps in services.
- Surveys
- Capacity building and training.
- Strategic aligning of local, regional, state, and national priority issues through coordination and local grant opportunities.

Our Areas of Focus

- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Problem Gambling Awareness
- Suicide Prevention

Needs Assessment & Surveys

DMHAS Regional Priority Report

A major accomplishment this past year was the completion of a bi-annual priority report in collaboration with CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Each region conducted a yearlong assessment and ranking of the following priority issues: alcohol, tobacco/ENDS, marijuana, prescription drugs, heroin, cocaine, suicide, problem gambling, and mental health. Through a series of facilitated discussions and surveys, key stakeholders provided feedback on the strengths, barriers and needs for the region. The following list depicts the priority issues for the upcoming year in the region:

- Mental health
- Suicide
- Heroin
- Alcohol
- Prescription drugs
- Tobacco/ENDS
- Marijuana
- Problem gambling
- Cocaine

Community Projects

Historical Trauma In New London County

In September 2018, Angela Duhaime worked in collaboration with the Good Medicine project at Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation to complete a report and presentation at the International Fields of Conflict Conference in Ledyard CT. Regional data from the SERAC youth survey was compiled to assess the trends and issues among local native youth on substance abuse and mental health. The project culminated in a presentation at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum with Scott Barton, of the Good Medicine Project, highlighting the impact of historical trauma on native youth.

Drug Related Deaths in New London County

In January 2019, SERAC completed an epidemiological profile of the drug related deaths in New London County. Through collaboration with Alderman Samuel Browning of Norwich, SERAC was able to collect secondary data on social determinants and drug related deaths in the region. Several notable findings include issues related to gender, ethnicity, geographic location, relationship and dependent status, occupation, history of treatment, and types of substances used. The information has helped to guide SERAC's interventions and strategies to address opioid use disorder and overdose.

Surveys

Between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019 SERAC surveyed nearly 8,500 youth enrolled in grades 7-12 from fourteen communities/school districts in Connecticut. The SERAC youth survey gathers feedback about youth attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors regarding substance use, problem gambling, mental health and suicide. We would like to recognize the following communities and organizations for their commitment to data collection this past year: Alliance for Prevention and Wellness (Ansonia, Derby, Shelton), Amity Regional School District #5, Colchester, Gilbert School, Montville, New London, North Stonington, Regional School District 10, Waterford, West Haven, Windham and Windsor Locks. SERAC also conducted community surveys of adults from Colchester and Griswold. The community survey collects data regarding adult attitudes and perceptions about youth substance use. The questions in the adult survey are designed to mirror the questions in the youth survey.

Capacity Building & Training

Local Prevention Councils

The Local Prevention Council Grant (LPC) program is a cornerstone of the work at SERAC. In fulfilling the designated role of the DMHAS Regional

Behavioral Action Organization for Region 3, SERAC works with local prevention councils to implement the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF). The SPF process is an evidence-based approach that outlines five steps of community coalition activities. Each LPC is in a different stage of the SPF process and SERAC provides technical assistance and support across the region. This year SERAC gave out 27 mini grants.

Catchment Area Councils

Connecticut is divided into 23 Catchment Area Councils with 2 in the Eastern region. This citizen body consisting of those receiving services, family members, providers, and town representatives is the grassroots level for citizen involvement in planning for needed treatment services. CAC members advocate for change, recommend funding for mental health services, and provide inspiration to the community from those who have lived experience.

Candidate Forums

This past year SERAC hosted two forums allowing candidates for the CT General Assembly to address issues regarding behavioral health and prevention. Approximately 100 people attended the forums in the north and south where 35 candidates answered questions from community members on mental health, substance abuse, problem gambling, and suicide. Congratulations to this year's newly elected officials and we look forward to our continued work in creating effective public policies.

Regional Gambling Prevention Team

SERAC partners and engages community leaders in problem gambling prevention, treatment, and recovery. The regional team members provide guidance, information, and awareness on problem gambling through faith-based communities and civic organizations. SERAC partners on a local and regional level to integrate problem gambling awareness and advocacy into substance abuse prevention and mental health treatment programs.

EVERFI

SERAC collaborated with CT Prevention Network to implement the EVERFI curriculum in 10 schools/youth serving organizations across eastern CT. Youth participants in 8th through 11th grade completed an online training on the harms associated with prescription drug misuse.

State Targeted Response

This past year SERAC awarded 10 grants to local coalitions to implement prescription drug misuse information, Change the Script campaign materials and safe disposal locations. During police appreciation week in May, SERAC delivered sweet treats and opioid response kits, CPR breathing kits, and deterra disposal bags. SERAC also disseminated physician packets that included information on the prescription monitoring program, Change the Script campaign, and brief screening materials for use with patients.

Mental Health Awareness Training

In the fall of 2019, SERAC was awarded the Mental Health Awareness Training Grant from SAMHSA, a three-year grant to increase training and referrals for treatment. Approximately over 50 professionals and students have been trained in Mental Health First Aid. Thank you to the Waterford School District and High Hopes in Old Lyme for partnering with us to increase mental health awareness. Since the implementation of the first training under this grant in March, approximately 13 youth have been connected with services and supports.

Narcan Administration Training

In 2018-2019 SERAC provided Narcan training for over 250 individuals and distributed over 550 nasal Narcan sprays. SERAC provides Narcan in partnership with CT DMHAS through the State Opioid Response Grant Initiative. Although providing name and contact information is not required in order to receive Narcan through this initiative, feedback provided to SERAC indicated that at least 15 lives were directly impacted by the Narcan that was distributed last year. In the summer months, QPR, Question, Persuade, Refer was added to the training due to the possible relationship of suicide loss and overdose. To date, an additional 150 QPR/Narcan trainings have been presented across the region.

A-SBIRT Training

This past year SERAC worked with the CT Clearinghouse (Wheeler Clinic) to implement A-SBIRT training for youth serving professionals. SERAC collaborated with UCFS, Good Medicine Project, and other local providers to introduce the brief tool in order to increase universal screening in youth substance use through schools and community-based organizations. Over 50 professionals and key leaders were trained in ASBIRT this past year.

Community Awareness Program (CAP)

SERAC launched the Community Awareness Program targeted at faith-based communities to increase knowledge about behavioral health issues. This 6-hour training includes information on mental health, suicide prevention, current drug trends, and problem gambling. We thank our local churches that gathered their parishioners to share in this valuable training.

Annual Prevention Conference

In May 2019, SERAC hosted the 9th Annual Prevention Conference for professionals across the eastern region of CT. This year Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon from DMHAS delivered a keynote on the intersection of suicide and drug related deaths. Subsequently, workshops were offered for participants to receive certifications in ASBIRT and QPR.

Other workshops included topics on diversity, trauma, problem gambling, and drug trends.

Community Collaborations

Problem Gambling Prevention Outreach

This year SERAC participated in community events to raise awareness on problem gambling and addiction. SERAC partnered with Montville High School and Chelsea Groton Bank for the *Bank On Your Future* program which provides an opportunity for high school students to learn about problem gambling through financial literacy and planning. SERAC also participated in *Money Madness* which was held at Connecticut College, this event was attended by three hundred high school students in the region. SERAC hosted an interactive informational table on the costs associated with gambling.

Wellness Television System

SERAC continues to work with Roy Tutunjian of TV Screen Ads to coordinate and host 16 Community Wellness TVs across eastern CT. Some of the locations include town halls, libraries, business owners, and a transportation system. Messages are crafted to coincide with national themes such as Suicide Prevention Month, Problem Gambling Awareness Month and other important awareness topics. Messages provide information on risks and resources for help. Thank you to our local business and partners who continue to support this local effort of information dissemination strategy that reaches thousands of residents daily.

Youth Programs

Adolescent Learning & Leadership Institute (ALLI)

In 2018- 2019 ALLI, SERAC hosted a leadership program for high school students in eastern CT. ALLI's mission is to empower young minds, educate them on contemporary issues, and engage them in leadership opportunities in their community. ALLI continues to deliver dynamic learning outcomes around youth development, leadership skills and behavioral health education. Our membership is steadily growing, bringing together 65 students from 8 area high schools. **ALLI** has successfully developed into **two cooperative divisions**:

1. ALLI Youth Summits: Held in September, November, February, and April. These will be hosted on local campuses during school hours. Summits bring together youth from all participating schools and include a dynamic speaker, leadership skills training, engaging activities, large and small workgroups, and the opportunity share ideas alongside peers from other schools. This year we had presentations from Generation Leadership, author and national speaker Ed Gerety, and a reporter from CT Style.

2. ALLI Home Groups: These monthly one-hour meetings are held at individual schools for youth and coordinated by a local advisor during designated times (i.e. after-school, lunch period, study halls, homerooms, etc.). These groups place a priority on interactive activities (i.e.: multi-media campaigns, creating prevention memes), and accomplish work plans in their small group. Project ideas continue to support the established ALLI Home Groups. East Lyme students created a problem gambling public service announcement and Montville students launched a community wide campaign on vaping. Montville students presented their campaign to legislators and local town council members.

SERAC Youth Forum

This year marked the 11th annual youth forum! The forum was open to communities across the region. Over 75 youth participated this year to attend workshops on key topics for youth development such self-esteem, leading by example, self-expression through drawing, drug prevention, and goal setting. This year's speakers included an opening session with Interactive Theater on topic such as gambling, bullying, substance abuse, and sexting. Youth attendees also had a session with Ed Gerety on student leadership based off his book *Combinations: Opening the Door to Student Leadership*.

Awards and Recognition

Outstanding Community Leadership

This year SERAC would like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Katherine Bell. Katie has her B.A in Psychology and French from Pepperdine University; Master of Arts degree in Clinical Practices and a Doctorate of Psychology (PsyD), both from The University of Hartford's Graduate Institute of Professional Psychology. Currently, she is the Youth Services Supervisor for the Town of Mansfield where she oversees grant management, staff supervision, and youth and family counseling. This past year Katie has been instrumental in leading local prevention efforts in Mansfield. She has assisted SERAC with expanding regional efforts, participated in the priority ranking process, and helped coordinate multiple training opportunities.

Outstanding Coalition Involvement

SERAC would like to acknowledge the incredible coalition member involvement of the Windham PRIDE Coalition. The Windham PRIDE Coalition is a collaboration of local agencies, business leaders, media, town officials, police officers, school & college administrators, clergy, health care workers, social service leaders, parents and youth. Windham PRIDE was funded for ten years through the federal Drug Free Communities grant which concluded in September of 2018. Since that time, the Town of Windham picked up funding the Prevention Coordinator's position, with additional ancillary funds and in-kind support to keep the prevention department in good working condition. SERAC would like to commend the members of the Windham PRIDE Coalition for their tremendous accomplishments in sustainability.

Special Acknowledgements

Congratulations to Deborah Walker, Vickie Meyer, and Art Mongillo who received their certification in Problem Gambling Competency from CT DMHAS Problem Gambling Services.

SERAC would like to welcome this year's newest team member Peter Schultheis who is currently assisting in the coordination of the Mental Health Awareness Training Grant activities.

Special recognition to Rayallen Bergman for his work served at SERAC over the years and congratulations on his new endeavors!

SERAC would also like to acknowledge the work of former board members and wish them well in their future endeavors: Ed Chmielewski, Ann Dagle and Susan Zimmerman.

Thank You to the Members of the SERAC Strategic Planning Team

Jim Bearson, Fio Partners

Rayallen Bergman, Former Community Coordinator

David Brailey, Board Member

David Burnett, Board Member

Ed Chmielewski, Former Board Chair

Michele Devine, Executive Director

John Duca, Vice Chair

Angela Duhaime, Associate Director

Mark Juhola, Board Member

Brenna Jaskiewicz, Board Member

Oliver Jones, Board Member

Stacey Lawton, Board Secretary

Kevin McBride, Board Member

Christine Miskell, Epidemiologist

Vickie Meyer, Community Coordinator

Chris Sandford, Board Treasurer

Deborah Walker, Program Assistant

Susan Zimmerman, Former Board Member

Funding Support

SERAC would like to thank our funders for supporting our efforts in Eastern CT!



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Christopher Sandford – Treasurer
Stacey Lawton - Secretary
David Brailey - Member
David Burnett - Member
Brenna Jaskiewicz- Member
Oliver Jones - Member
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Kevin McBride - Member

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Community Coordinator – Vickie Meyer
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