



CONNECTION IS PREVENTION



Annual Report

2024 - 2025



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SERAC engages with the communities of Eastern CT to implement proven practices that reduce the impact of behavioral health challenges across the lifespan.

This is achieved through collaboration, needs assessment, capacity building, and advocacy.



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The past year has been one of stabilization and growth for SERAC. In September 2024, Mark Irons was hired as the Executive Director. Previously, Mark was the lead for the Regional Suicide Prevention Board. His working knowledge of the organization and relationship with staff allowed him to step into the ED role with minimal disruption to staff and begin outreach activities to connect with communities throughout Eastern Connecticut. Mark embraced the statement that an organization is *only as strong as its presence* in the community and initiated an organization initiative to see how many cups of coffee during the year could lead to new connections and partnerships. The answer? 100! SERAC provided training to 4,000 people across the lifespan and from diverse settings. Read on for the accomplishments achieved with 1 federal grant and 11 state grants. A special thank you goes to the staff and board for their continued efforts in addressing prevention-based needs in Eastern Connecticut.

Sincerely,
Susan A. Radway, EdD





EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

As I reflect on my first year as Executive Director, I'm filled with gratitude—for our dedicated staff, engaged board, and the countless partners who make our work possible. This year has been one of growth, renewal, and a deepened commitment to our mission: prevention across the lifespan in Eastern Connecticut.

We welcomed two new staff members whose energy and expertise have already made a meaningful impact. Our leadership team was further strengthened by the addition of four new board members, bringing fresh perspectives and renewed dedication to our strategic vision.

One of the most exciting developments this year was the discovery of new funding streams, which have expanded our capacity to serve and innovate. These resources are helping us build a more sustainable future and deepen our reach in the communities, and we are thankful for their investment.

Over the last year, we have brought our prevention messaging, presentations, trainings, and materials to classrooms, parks, churches, libraries, town halls, businesses, and everywhere in between. The following pages are filled with examples of this incredible work.

We couldn't have achieved this year's success without your unwavering support.

Always remember: Connection is Prevention.



Mark Irons
Executive Director





REGIONAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ACTION ORGANIZATION CORE GRANT

The Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization Core Grant funded by DMHAS provides support in the prevention of substance misuse, suicide, problem gambling, and increasing mental health awareness across the forty-one towns of Eastern Connecticut. SERAC provides capacity building for local communities and its members; conducts assessments of needs, gaps, and services of the region; and oversight of the Local Prevention Councils (LPCs) within the region.

- Trained over 500 people on behavioral health topics and worked across the lifespan to promote good mental health.
- Assessed current services and gaps as part of the Regional Priority Report process to advocate for additional resources to meet regional and community needs.
- Worked with 26 local coalitions representing 30 towns to increase community behavioral health awareness and vaping prevention efforts.

Regional Prevention Team meets every other month with local prevention council coordinators and prevention partners to share updates, build capacity, and increase awareness of emerging substance use and mental health issues.

“SERAC is our Starship Enterprise-an innovative vessel guiding us through the vast universe of prevention. With a crew of knowledgeable and compassionate professionals, SERAC helps us strengthen the systems that guide our journey.

-Karen Ravenelle-Bloom, Windham Prevention Coalition”





REGIONAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ACTION ORGANIZATION GENERAL FUNDS GRANT

The Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization General Funds Grant funded by DMHAS primarily aimed at addressing the health risks related to unsafe adult alcohol use and improving engagement in treatment for individuals with co-occurring disorders. SERAC worked to engage new partnerships and establish referral systems for health providers in rural areas. Additionally, training sessions for community partners enhanced awareness of the health risks involved and identified service gaps in rural areas, paving the way for stronger support systems.

- SERAC collaborated with other RBHAO coordinators to organize a statewide conference on safe alcohol consumption, attended by 88 participants.
- Psychological First Aid trainings and Greater Resilience Information Toolkit presentations were provided to staff, partners, and community members on the health risks associated with alcohol consumption and co-occurring disorders.
- Distributed outreach materials, such as treatment guides in Spanish, updated guidelines for safe consumption and related health risks, and the "Talk to Your Physician" campaign for medical offices.

“ Thank you SERAC! As always, your trainings are top of the line! ”



STOP ACT GRANT

The STOP ACT grant is funded by SAMHSA funded the 9th year of the Adolescent Learning & Leadership Institute (ALLI) program. This successful initiative, which is designed for middle and high school students from across Eastern Connecticut, focuses on alcohol and drug prevention as well as promoting mental health. A special thank you to the Montville Youth Service Bureau for hosting this year's ALLI program and the Youth Summit event that featured motivational speakers and educational workshops.

- 55 students registered and attended the meetings between February and April 2025
- Participation from 9 schools, including students from 2 high schools and 7 middle schools
- Multimedia campaign materials (including posters, radio, and video PSAs) featuring underage drinking prevention and the "Stand Up Stand Out" tagline are currently being distributed this year.





STATE OPIOID RESPONSE GRANT

The SOR grant funded by DMHAS provides funding that advances opioid awareness initiatives and enhances prevention of opioid overdoses in our communities. This grant also provides \$5000 mini-grants to twelve local prevention councils, to increase opioid awareness and support prevention efforts in their communities.

- Conducted 46 naloxone trainings throughout 18 different communities
- Trained 393 people including community members, college students, school and youth serving staff, peer recovery coaches, and mobile crisis staff amongst others.
- Provided over 251 naloxone kits throughout the communities



“ It was nice to hear from people with lived experience ”

As part of the State Opioid Response Grant, **Recovery Friendly Workplace** is a statewide initiative to address behavioral health concerns and support recovery within the workforce. This includes training of the employer’s Peer Champion, resources for dissemination to employees, and technical assistance. The initiative has been extremely successful in Eastern Connecticut where SERAC has certified 24 employers and supported over 500 employees.

- Seven new businesses became Recovery Friendly Workplace Certified after completing an assessment, training for relevant staff, and notifying employees of the new initiative.
- Promoted the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative at over 80 events throughout the region.
- Continued supporting existing RFWs with free resource drops and over 17 trainings at no-cost to the employer.



CONNECTICUT PROJECT TO PREVENT OPIOID OVERDOSE DEATHS PROGRAM GRANT

The Connecticut Project to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths grant funded by DMHAS has a goal to reduce the number of prescription drug/opioid overdose-related deaths and adverse events among individuals 18 years of age and older. Through this grant, SERAC works to connect with regional first responders, as well as individuals that are first responder adjacent, for provision of Opioid Overdose Rescue Kits and brief opioid overdose response training.

- 17 Opioid Overdose Rescue Trainings
- 627 Opioid Overdose Rescue Kits Distributed to Organizations
- 150 First Responder/First Responder Adjacent Individuals Trained



“Thanks for bringing this presenter...this is something I will be able to immediately implement.”



REGIONAL SUICIDE ADVISORY BOARD GRANTS

The Regional Suicide Advisory Board Grants funded by DMHAS and DCF assist in integrating and coordinating suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention efforts across the region. Trainings offered include Question, Persuade, & Refer (QPR), Talk Saves Lives, and Youth Mental Health First Aid, Signs of Suicide, and Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM), and Connect Postvention as SERAC works across the lifespan to reduce suicide and the impact of an untimely death. These grants have also allowed direct support such as coordination with local providers, sharing resources and best practices and follow-up educational offerings to schools and communities following suicide losses.

- Over 700 people have been trained in a variety of suicide prevention presentations by SERAC
- SERAC has offered a variety of presenters and topics connected to suicide prevention with an additional 300 people attending.
- Regional Suicide Advisory Board Coordinators across the state were trained in NAMI NH's CONNECT Postvention training this year to better educate their communities on coordinated and comprehensive responses after a sudden loss.

The Connecticut Partnerships for Hope and Healing (PH2) Youth Suicide Prevention Grant (also known as the Garrett Lee Smith [GLS] Grant) funded by the United Way of Connecticut, Inc., focuses on assisting public K-12 schools with implementation of best practice mental health and suicide prevention strategies to combat suicide amongst individuals under the age of 24.

- SERAC is currently working with Thompson Public Schools to carry out Multi-Tiered School Suicide Prevention (MTSP) and Community-Led Suicide Prevention (CLSP) initiatives that involve community members and organizations, parents, as well as district staff and students.
- Over 100 staff and faculty from Thompson Public Schools were trained in Question, Persuade, and Refer.
- Conducted multiple large suicide prevention outreach initiatives in the Thompson community, including a billboard, radio commercial, mailers, and tablings

Regional Suicide Advisory Board meets monthly to share updates on state and national initiatives, review best practices for prevention and postvention including local initiatives and facilitate presentations on a variety of topics associated with suicide prevention to increase the knowledge and awareness of the membership.



GAMBLING AWARENESS GRANT

The Gambling Awareness Grant funded by DMHAS grant increases awareness of the risks associated with gambling, fosters a deeper understanding of disordered gambling, raises awareness of emerging trends such as gaming and sports betting, reduces harm related to gambling, and decreases stigma towards getting help. By educating communities and stakeholders, we aim to promote informed decision-making and healthy behaviors. Additionally, we seek to connect individuals in need with available local resources, ensuring they receive the support and assistance necessary to address gambling-related challenges.

- Delivered 15 comprehensive problem Gambling/Gaming Prevention Training Sessions to audiences across the lifespan, reaching over 218 participants.
- Actively contributed to statewide training initiatives, including co-sponsoring the first ever College Symposium on Problem Gambling and presenting the only Gambling Prevention workshop at the CT Prevention Network Conference.
- Expanded Regional Gambling Awareness Team membership

Regional Gambling Awareness Team meets monthly with state and local partners to discuss emerging trends, legislative initiatives and advocacy and assist in marketing and promotion to help prevent problem gambling. The team also provides resources, collects regional specific data, assesses community readiness to address problem gambling and raises gambling awareness across the lifespan.



“ Thank you for this presentation. I have seven grandchildren ages 4-15 whom I observe for warning signs of excessive gaming ”



CANNABIS PREVENTION GRANT

The Cannabis grant funded by DMHAS allows us to work with schools to support Alternative to Suspension programs, support youth cessation through implementation of Cannabis Quit Kits, and prevent youth cannabis use and accidental consumption by providing youth and parent education. Through this grant, SERAC works with dispensaries to promote safe storage and consumption of cannabis products and education of potential effects of over consumption/misuse. We have also provided the region with general and specific education and training opportunities related to cannabis safety and prevention efforts.

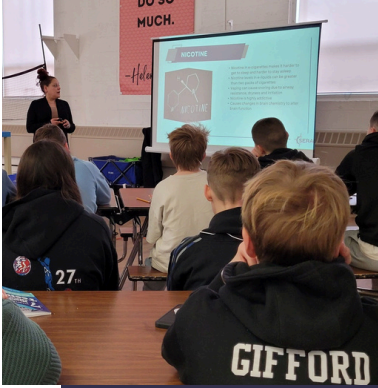
- Provided 19 trainings on Cannabis education for the general public, providers, youth, and parents which resulted in the training of more than 225 individuals on a variety of cannabis topics
- Hosted 31 community collaboration events which reached 113 individuals and provided 905 cannabis related educational materials to community members
- Established 13 new partnerships which serve all four community types in region 3, reach over 580 individuals, and provide more than 106 direct activities within the region



“ Really sparked a fire to better inform myself and my teammates, very inspiring, thank you ”



UNDERAGE NICOTINE PREVENTION GRANT



The Underage Nicotine Prevention Grant funded by DMHAS has strengthened youth vaping prevention efforts within the region. The grant has allowed for expanded youth and parent education, enhanced data collection to better inform local strategies, strengthened school and community partnerships, and supported statewide advocacy efforts that will reduce the risks of vaping and promote healthier, tobacco-free communities.

- Collaborated with 21 communities, schools, and local partners to deliver education, training, and cessation resources that reached more than 800 youth, parents, educators, and community members.
- Participated in 10 regional tabling events, delivery of evidence-based presentations such as Catch My Breath and You, Me, and Vape Free, and dissemination of more than 1,500 educational materials. Provided 60 nicotine Quit Kits.
- Played a key role in establishing the Connecticut Vape Disposal Workgroup, positioning the region as a leader in addressing safe disposal of vaping devices.



“ Thank you again for putting together such good presentations on crucial and intersecting issues! ”



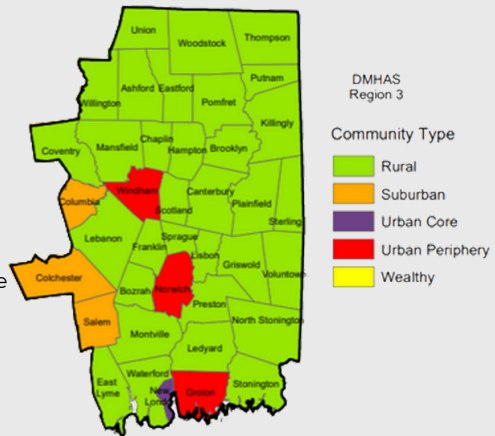
ADDITIONAL GRANTS

Drug Endangered Children Grant funded by DCF provides trainings designed to help participants understand the scope of children exposed to substances and the long-term impacts of drug endangered children. This training encourages implementation of appropriate and effective interventions strategies and collaborative efforts to meet DEC’s vision of 100% of healthy, safe children, families and communities free from the negative impact of substance misuse and drug activity.

Governor’s Prevention Partnership Grant promotes healthy and connected communities with a focus on Groton, New London, and Norwich. This grant allowed SERAC to provide supplemental technical assistance and training on current substance use trends, Naloxone, and youth mental health as well as supporting community-based work.

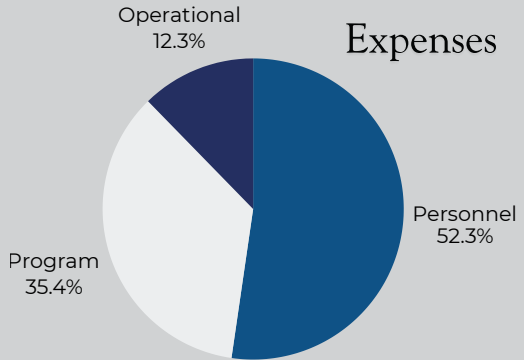
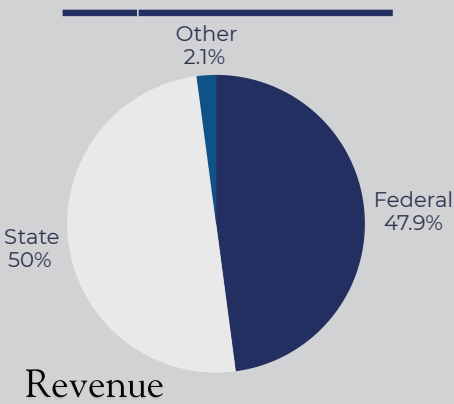
DMHAS Regional Map by 5 Connecticut Community Types

Community type, or "The Five Connecticuts" (5CT) is a categorization developed by DataHaven and Siena College to compare communities that are similar in terms of median income, per capita income, and population density. For more information, see Levy, Don and DataHaven. (2015): [Five Connecticut 2010 Update](#)





FISCAL REPORT



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CONNECTION IS PREVENTION

THANK YOU

SERAC works to Engage our 41 Communities by connecting them to prevention resources and build their capacity to address behavioral health issues. We believe Connection is Prevention!



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