

# Washington County Coalition for Children

the region's child advocacy organization, working to assure all children thrive—serving as *catalyst* and *facilitator* for community change via 3 primary roles:

## Advocacy

### Amplify Voices

To facilitate policy & systems change

## Collaboration

### Facilitate & Foster Partnerships

To develop workable strategies & solutions

## Innovation

### Spark Creative Solutions & Action

To achieve tangible change



Given the youth mental health crisis, our sole priority is *promoting child & adolescent mental wellness*. In 2024, we



## ADVOCACY

- ▶ Convened a 13-member Youth Advisory Council to develop the region's first youth-driven **ACTION PLAN** for mental wellness
- ▶ Organized a Youth Mental Health Summit with 80+ participants (including local legislators, town council members, school administrators, health/mental health providers and health insurer, social service agencies, youth program leaders, child advocates, and parents) in May 2024 to showcase Youth Advisory Council members unveiling their **ACTION PLAN**
- ▶ Worked with Rep. Teresa Tanzi & Sen. Alana DiMario to propose state legislation requiring private insurance coverage of **Community Health Worker (H7875/S2606)** and youth mobile crisis services (H7874/S2607) - the bills passed the Senate, but failed in the House
- ▶ Recruited Coalition's first *Health Policy Scholar* to support our legislative advocacy at the State House

- ▶ Partnered with Thundermist Health Center & Narragansett School System to provide **tele-behavioral health services** to middle & high school students during the school day with the support of a Community Health Worker
- ▶ Organized a 2-part training for local early childhood educators on creating trauma sensitive/ '**Compassionate Classrooms**' in partnership with URI's Early Childhood Institute
- ▶ Teamed up with Narragansett High School to teach **teen Mental Health First Aid** to the entire sophomore class
- ▶ Collaborated with the Chris Collins Foundation and URI Human Development & Family Science Dept. to foster **authentic youth engagement and county-wide action planning in the region**
- ▶ Leveraged support from the RI Dept. of Health-Center for Data & Analysis, Brown Univ. School of Public Health and Swearer Center-Data & Evaluation Partnerships to **document the magnitude of youth mental health concerns in Washington County**—Published results with Action Plan/Focus Group findings





INNOVATION

- ▶ Conducted **10 Focus Groups** documenting the reflections of 40 local youth about the factors impacting their mental wellness—*sparking action planning with youth, not for youth*
- ▶ Launched **The Greatest 8™** Text Messaging Service (TMS) in Spanish
- ▶ Worked with *LeadershipRI* to increase awareness of **The Greatest 8™**: impacting social media engagement from April to Oct 2024 significantly—  
**Facebook** ↑3,558%, **LinkedIn** ↑1,664%, and **Instagram** ↑347%
- ▶ Increased **The Greatest 8™** TMS subscriptions 50% in 2024 (totaling over 1,300 subscribers)



### Why Do We Do This Work?

**2023 RIDE SurveyWorks! Results** -Washington County 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders

**32.4%** admitted that in the last year they **felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more** in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities

**56%** reported that in the last 30 days **stress interfered with their ability to participate in school**

**33%** reported that they **worry about school violence**

**2023 EMS Response Calls** -Washington County Youth <Age 21



**~500** (496) requests for help involved youth experiencing a **behavioral health crisis** — **23%** related to **substance use**

**Emergency Dept. Visits (2018-2022)**-Washington County Youth <Age 24



**3,748 ED visits** occurred with primary diagnoses of **mental & behavioral health disorders (MBD)**, including substance use  
**982 (26%)** for substance use disorders only  
**1,603 (43%)** of youth were between ages 15-19  
**128 (3%)** of youth were under age 10  
All evaluated and discharged home

Youth Mental Health Matters!

### Organizational Growth & Development

- ▶ Secured organizational development consultation & adopted a **Board Action Plan**
- ▶ Conducted community outreach & appointed **2 new Members** to the Board of Directors
- ▶ Strengthened partnerships with URI and Brown University School of Public Health to secure more **student intern support**
- ▶ Secured **\$80,250** in foundation grants to support continued growth of **The Greatest 8™** Text Messaging Service
- ▶ Negotiated with funders to acquire 2 years of funding to continue our collaborative *School-Based Tele-Behavioral Health Project*
- ▶ Renewed Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) contract with URI to continue offering free **Youth & teen MHFA classes** in the region

### Board of Directors

- Lori Ann Hiener, *President*
- Andréa Martin, *Secretary*
- Nicole Faison, LICSW, *Treasurer*
- Rebecca Allen, BCBA, LBA, *Member*
- Lori Duffy, LICSW, *Member*
- Lorna Clause, *Member*
- Colleen Powers, MD, FAAP, *Member*
- Mary Sullivan, PhD, RN, FAAN. *Member*

### Coalition Director

Susan A Orban, LICSW



### Coalition Contact Information

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8 SKILLS FOR A LIFETIME OF MENTAL WELLNESS

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